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## ***Be'chol Lashon (In Every Tongue)***

**We are different cultures, languages and colors,  
yet we share Israel, Hebrew and Torah**

*A Program of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research  
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### ***Be'chol Lashon Update 4/27/04***

#### **Featured Articles:**

**Book: African American Lives**  
**Groups Question Own Inaction on African Killings**  
**Genocide and Conscience**  
**Shades of Black and Shadows on the Life of a Writer**  
**A Torah Goes to India Where a 'Lost Tribe' Awaits**  
**New Jewish Educational Center for the Bnei Menashe of India**  
**An Orphan no More - Foster Kid Finds Mom**  
**Raising Our Jewish Children: An Adoption Conference**  
**For Spain's Jews, a Tense Time after Bombings and Terrorist Plots**  
**Sephardi Faithful Seek the Miraculous**  
**Jewish Philanthropist Funds Writing Contest to Improve Christian-Jewish Relation**

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**Mazel Tov to Rabbi Sholomo Levy on the completion of African American Lives!!!**

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#### ***Book: African American Lives***

**From: Sholomo B. Levy, Associate Editor**  
**African American National Biography**  
**W.E.B. Du Bois Institute**  
**Harvard University**

B"H  
Shalom L'khol,

It is with great pleasure that I announce the book I have been working on for over a year, African American Lives edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies and director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University, and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, renowned scholar of the African American religious experience, is now available to the public.

As an associate editor and senior writer on this project, I had the honor of writing many of the biographies presented in this extraordinary volume of over 600 entries totaling more than 1,000 pages of text. None gave me more pride to write than the biographies of the first black rabbis in America—Rabbi Arnold Josiah Ford and Chief Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew—whose life stories speak to the realities of being black, Jewish, and human in America. Many of you will also find my articles on Noble Drew Ali, Sammy Davis Jr., Amiri Baraka, Louis Farrakhan, Amy Jacques Garvey, Father Divine, Maya Angelou, and Tiger Woods (just to name a few) to be extremely interesting. You will also be delighted by Lewis Gordon's wonderful biography of philosopher and visionary Cornel West.

Our ambitious project, which will ultimately consist of 10 volumes, has been praised by the New York Times, received accolades from Publishers Weekly for being "well-written, even lyrical, and balanced," and the Library Journal recommends it as being "essential for any serious African American collection." In referring to my colleagues and me in the acknowledgments, Professors Gates and Higginbotham wrote that, "The quality of this book owes much to their scholarship, their skills as writers and editors, and to their energy and unflagging dedication." I wish that I could give each of you a free copy of this book as a token of my appreciation for your love and support.

Video Interview with Prof. Gates on CBS The Early Show  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/26/earlyshow/leisure/books/main613888.shtml>

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## Groups Question Own Inaction on African Killings

By Nathaniel Popper

The Forward

April 16, 2004

With the commemoration last week of the 10th anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, amid growing warnings of new atrocities in Sudan, human rights activists complain that the organized Jewish community has failed to act on its implied commitment to see that such tragedies "never again" be allowed to occur. Jewish organizations, with a handful of exceptions, have remained largely mute as government-sponsored militias in Sudan have routed black Muslims from the western province of Darfur over the last 14 months, in what United Nations observers have called a campaign of "ethnic cleansing."

The conflict in Darfur persists at the same time that attention is being drawn to the failure of the international community to stop the Rwandan genocide, which began 10 years ago this month and left 800,000 dead in less than 100 days. In the discussions surrounding that anniversary, the Jewish community's lack of protest to the killings in Rwanda has come under public scrutiny for the first time. "We, who say that the lessons of the Holocaust should never be forgotten, failed to act as we could have," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Washington-based Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Jewish organizations have mounted widely praised campaigns for human rights in the recent past, most notably a coordinated push for intervention in Bosnia, where the Serbian military was decimating the Muslim and Croat populations in the early 1990s. Jewish activists at the time frequently cited the silence of the world community in the face of Nazi atrocities during World War II, which they vowed would not be repeated. "The Jewish community's voice has a special moral resonance when it comes to issues of genocide," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "It is a voice that we would like to enlist wherever large-scale murder takes place." Roth said, however, "it has been an inconsistent alliance."

The Sudan crisis is widely described as the world's most pressing right now. In the past month, reports of atrocities there have been issued by leading humanitarian agencies, ranging from Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Experts say nearly 750,000 black Muslims have been driven from their homes in the desert province of Darfur over the past year by aerial bombing campaigns in concert with raids by government-sponsored Arab militias. The campaign is not directly related to a decades-long Sudanese civil war pitting Arab Muslims in the north against Christian and animist blacks in the south.

Government forces agreed to a cease-fire in Darfur April 8, but observers have not reported any halt in hostilities. USAID has predicted that 100,000 civilians may die in the coming months. The situation in Darfur has gone mostly unnoticed for the past year, but commemoration of the Rwanda genocide this month put Africa's woes back on the Western agenda. In the past week, President Bush and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan both criticized the Sudanese government publicly and called for immediate humanitarian aid to Darfur.

The Jewish institutional community, rather than leading the push for international acknowledgement of the "ethnic cleansing" — as it did in the case of Bosnia — has itself been prodded to make its first public mentions of the Darfur crisis in the past weeks. The executive director of the American Jewish Committee, David Harris, briefly mentioned the need for action in Darfur during his weekly radio address on April 12, and a "genocide warning" was issued on April 7 by the Committee on Conscience, a body formed to lead the genocide-prevention efforts of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

These remarks don't represent the first Jewish institutional involvement in Sudan. In 2002, Jewish organizations — notably the Reform Action Center — were instrumental in pushing the Bush administration to negotiate a cease-fire in the 19-year Sudanese civil war. Concerning Darfur, however, most human rights observers interviewed by the Forward agreed with Smith College professor Eric Reeves, a leading proponent of intervention in Darfur, who told the Forward that "given the clear evidence that this is genocide — I don't see a response to it by constituents from the Jewish community." Expectations of a Jewish communal response to Sudan today, and Rwanda 10 years ago, stem in large part from the successful campaign on behalf of Bosnian Muslims and Croats in the early 1990s. Agitation by Jewish organizations is widely credited with influencing the decision of the Clinton administration to approve NATO bombing of Serbian forces in 1995.

"In Bosnia and Kosovo, the American Jewish community was the single most important voice for protection and bringing an end to ethnic cleansing," said Holly Burkhalter, who was the advocacy director at Human Rights Watch during the 1990s. The resources devoted to Bosnia in 1994 have been cited by communal leaders as a prime reason that the Jewish community was unable to turn more attention to Rwanda. Looking back to 1994, Felice Gaer, director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights at the American Jewish Committee, said: "What I see from that time is a great deal of activism with regards to Bosnia. On Rwanda I don't see any formal public statements or meetings." That silence was not unusual. Most religious and ecumenical groups, like most of the international community, stood silent while the Hutu-led Rwandan government carried out its coordinated massacre of ethnic Tutsi

Rwandans.

But even with the general silence, Will Recant — an executive at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which led an \$800,000 relief effort to Rwanda after the killings ended — said he remembers that during the genocide he was "a little surprised that there wasn't more of a consciousness being raised from the Jewish world." Explanations for the differing responses to Bosnia and Rwanda are manifold, said Samantha Power, whose recent book "A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide" chronicles U.S. responses to genocide in the 20th century. Activism on behalf of Rwanda, Power said, was made difficult by the speed of the killings there, coupled with aftershocks from the bungled American mission to Somalia a year before. Moreover, media depiction of the Rwandan conflict as "age-old tribal warfare" made intervention seem hopeless. But, Power said, nothing had a greater impact, at least on the Jewish community's involvement in Bosnia, than the stark images from Serbian-run concentration camps. "There was a really strong sense of identification with people who looked like those from the Holocaust," Powers said. "That is what moved Jewish groups — not immediately, but after a few months." Such identification has gone lacking in Rwanda and Sudan, she implied.

Gaer, like many in the human rights community, is now preparing concrete policy proposals for Darfur that will give the community a position around which to mobilize. "So far the Jewish community has not been ahead of the rest of the pack on Darfur," Gaer said. "But once aroused, don't underestimate the capacity of this community to mobilize action."

[top of the page](#)

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## Genocide and Conscience

Editorial

The Forward

April 16, 2004

The continuing agonies of the African continent — in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Congo and now Sudan — are a constant reminder to the rest of the world of the fragility of what we call societal decency. The inability of the international community to address those agonies and aid the sufferers is an ongoing stain on the world's conscience.

In the litany of African suffering, Sudan holds a special place. The continent's largest country, it has been a flashpoint for decades in the confrontation between the expansionist Islamic culture of Arab North Africa and the Christian and animist traditions of sub-Saharan Africa. It is home to what is believed to be the world's most persistent slave trade. The Islamist government in Khartoum has given important aid and comfort to Al Qaeda and other terrorist gangs. The confrontation between Sudan's two warring cultures has led to continuing bloodshed in recent decades, on a scale that has repeatedly raised charges of genocide. Its continuation is an affront to humanity.

The silence of the organized Jewish community in the face of repeated atrocities and incidents of genocide on that bleeding continent is an affront of a different order. Jewish organizations and their leaders have earned the prominence and credibility they enjoy on the world stage in large measure because they speak for a community that has known suffering and sought to learn from it. They speak often and powerfully on memory and its lessons. They remind the world of its failure to intervene when it mattered to stop the Nazi genocide during World War II. They call on the world community to learn from its failure, so it will not recur.

And yet, confronted with new atrocities in today's world, they fail again and again to take the lead and speak out. They failed in Rwanda. They failed in Liberia. They failed in Congo. And, as Nathaniel Popper reports on Page 1, they have — with a handful of brave and noteworthy exceptions — failed in Sudan.

As the Jewish community prepares for the annual observance next week of Yom haShoah, the Holocaust Remembrance Day marking the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the most appropriate way of honoring the dead might be a serious accounting by the living. The leaders and spokesmen of the Jewish community should begin a process of study, reflection and debate. What, we need to know, did the Holocaust actually teach us? And when will we learn it?

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## Shades of Black and Shadows on the Life of a Writer

By Felicia R. Lee

The New York Times

April 21, 2004

"Ah just couldn't see mahself married to no black man. It's too many black folks already. We ought to lighten up the race."

— From "Their Eyes Were Watching God," by Zora Neale Hurston

When you begin a book with a quotation like that, you're inviting trouble to come in, kick off its shoes and stay awhile.

That's Marita Golden's intention. She wants to ignite debate about one of the oldest, rawest issues among African-Americans. The aching honesty in the words of Zora Neale Hurston's character, from 1937, Ms. Golden says, evokes a continuing aesthetic hierarchy among African-Americans that puts light skin at the top and dark skin at the bottom. It's the subject of her new book, "Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex," which was published this week by Doubleday.

This book, Ms. Golden's 11th, showcases her penchant for writing that weaves personal experience into explorations of topics like single parenting. She first won critical attention for her 1983 autobiography "Migrations of the Heart," about coming of age in Washington in the 1960's. She also won acclaim in 1989 for her novel "Long Distance Life." Today, at 53, the soft-spoken Ms. Golden has become something of a black literary godmother. In 1990 she founded the Hurston/Wright Foundation, named for Hurston and Richard Wright, which supports black writers. In 2002 she and the writer E. Lynn Harris held the equivalent of a literary rent party for the foundation, together editing an anthology of black writers called "Gumbo."

For "Don't Play in the Sun," Ms. Golden interviewed black people, including a psychotherapist, a cultural historian, a biracial writer, a TV producer and her friends and her husband. The book's title comes from her mother's warning that the sun would make her deep brown skin even darker and less attractive. Through the prism of her own skin, Ms. Golden explores the belief that light skin and European features remain the highest standard of beauty in most places in the world. Color, though, is not just a black thing, she says. It is not even an American thing, with versions of lighter-is-better in India, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Ms. Golden considers this global obsession a legacy of colonialism.

But this book focuses on black Americans. In America, she says, the color hierarchy is a legacy of slavery, when light-skinned blacks often fetched more on the auction block and were prized as house servants because they looked more like whites (and sometimes were their relatives). While there is sharp disagreement among blacks about the degree, or even the notion, of a color hierarchy, Ms. Golden leaves that dispute unplumbed. For her, even in the 21st century, gradations in color make a difference, and the topic still needs airing.

"The topic of color-ism is a powerful metaphor for all forms of marginalization," Ms. Golden said over lunch in Manhattan, her long silver earrings dangling, her hair in a short, natural style. Even for whites the theme resonates, she said, in the idea that "tall, blond, blue-eyed Nordic types are privileged over shorter, darker, non-Nordic types." Researching the book, she said, she went to high schools in Washington and read articles in Essence and in Vibe, she heard young black men say "the dark girls are O.K., the light-skinned girls are pretty." Essence magazine's May issue excerpts Ms. Golden's book with the cover headline "Blue-Black, High Yellow. Yes, We Still Have Color Issues."

When the Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. did a four-part PBS television series on blacks in America this year, the segment on "Black Hollywood" showed black actresses complaining that lighter-complexioned actresses had it easier. Mr. Gates concluded that the beige coloring of an actress like Halle Berry or a pop singer like Alicia Keys has helped their careers, as it did for light-skinned entertainers like Dorothy Dandridge and Lena Horne.

In the 1960's the "black is beautiful" moment promised change, and Ms. Golden said she eventually learned to love her hair, her skin, her features. But she also writes about parties among the black elite today in which dark-skinned men escort light-skinned trophy wives. She reports on the pain within black families in which color shapes affections. "My mother was well aware that the world attempted every day to erase me," Ms. Golden writes. "She knew how little love lay in wait, how few open arms stood ready to embrace little brown-skinned girls with nappy hair and Negroid facial features."

But the color complex is not just her personal musing, Ms. Golden contends. She grew up in Washington, long considered a capital of black bourgeois color and class fixations. Check out who wins beauty contests, stars in rap music videos, plays the female love interest in Hollywood films, she argues. Light-skinned women on and off screen are often hypersexualized by society, Ms. Golden believes. By comparison, skin shade seems not to be such an issue for black male actors, Mr. Gates said in an interview, suggesting that sex plays a role in the color complex.

If nothing else, Ms. Golden said, she hopes her book prompts blacks to sit down in churches, book clubs and in family meetings to wrestle with the color complex as a painful remnant of slavery. She says it can ensnare light-skinned blacks in a web of stereotypes about their racial allegiances or feelings of superiority to darker blacks. But not everyone agrees. David J. Dent, an associate professor of journalism at New York University, sees a broader standard of black beauty and a marked erosion of intraracial colorism. Mr. Dent spent years traveling around the country talking with blacks for his book "In Search of Black America," (Simon & Schuster, 2000).

"I admire Marita Golden, but you can't take her personal story and impose it on the whole of black America," Mr. Dent said. "That's a problem with a lot of contemporary black memoirs." Recently, he said, "the most visible woman in the world was Condoleezza Rice. She's a dark-skinned woman. Was she concerned at all about her skin color?" The issues for Ms. Rice are "the commission and 9/11," Mr. Dent said. "People were not focused on her skin color and features. That's where the world has gone."

She has heard that argument, Ms. Golden said. She concedes that Americans seem to live in the best and the worst of times for dark skin and black features. What's new is that although Americans are furiously blending and culture

sampling, she said, the country's pop culture — music videos, films, advertisements — also increasingly exports gorgeous black people who look racially ambiguous. "The world still becomes a village with one standard — McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Jennifer Lopez and Madonna," Ms. Golden said, her voice rising a bit. "Can Halle Berry open a path for darker-skinned black actresses? The reason pop culture is so important is, whether we like it or not, it tells us where we fit into the culture, how we're valued, what we're valued for."

Contemporary writers of color are now weaving the legacy of colorism into their fiction and nonfiction stories, Ms. Golden said. She mentioned the novels "The Darkest Child" by Delores Phillips, "Song of the Water Saints" by Nelly Rosario and "The Farming of Bones," by Edwidge Danticat. And as a challenge to those who dismiss its prevalence, Ms. Golden notes that the color complex is also a frequent topic or subtext of the work she sees at the Hurston/Wright Foundation's writers workshops. "Whether they know it or not, people really do want to talk about this," Ms. Golden said. "The job of the writer in fiction or nonfiction is to shape a language we can use to explore, discover and shape this legacy/reality into something we actually can use to free us, and not feel we have to deny or run from it and what it has meant."

[top of the page](#)

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## A Torah Goes to India Where a 'Lost Tribe' Awaits

**Retired lawyer seeks to bring Judaism to the Bnei Menashe, who believe their ancestors were driven from Israel 2,700 years ago**

**By Geneive Abdo**

**Chicago Tribune**

**April 26, 2004**

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/printedition/chi0404260125apr26,1,754213.story?coll=chi-printnews-hed>

Rabbis have branded a biblical tribe in northeast India heretical, even though its members chant songs from their mud-walled synagogues about returning to Zion. And Israel's interior minister has banned them from the country. But Sam Pfeffer, a retired Chicago lawyer, is not deterred: If the tribe can't enter Israel to get religion, he will take Judaism to them. On Sunday, Pfeffer boarded a plane with a hand-copied Torah he bought for \$12,000 from a West Devon Avenue bookseller and is heading to the Indian states of Manipur and Mizoram. There, members of the Bnei Menashe, who believe they are descendants of an Israelite tribe driven from the Holy Land some 2,700 years ago, will receive Pfeffer's help in their efforts to convert officially to Judaism.

"They don't have a Torah, which is the most important thing to have in Judaism," said Pfeffer, 78. "That's why I am bringing them one." The Torah Pfeffer chose is not just any holy book; he has even reserved a separate seat for it on the plane. Believed to be crafted in the 1950s by a Jewish scribe, the Torah was recently restored, and Pfeffer was especially drawn to it because an image of the Western Wall is embroidered on the front. "Now the Torah goes on its long journey to the Bnei Menashe, and with God's help, once they are absorbed into Israel, the Torah will go back to Israel, where I think it belongs," said Avrom Fox, owner of Rosenblum's World of Judaica bookshop, who sold the Torah to Pfeffer. "I hope Israel will open its doors to these people as they did to Jews from the former Soviet Union," Fox said.

The road to converting the Bnei Menashe, however, is likely to be longer than Fox hopes. When Pfeffer arrives in the Indian states later this week, religious ceremonies will be held for the locals, who will see a Torah for the first time. Eventually, Pfeffer hopes Israel's religious court will come to the region to perform bona fide conversions that would confer the legal right to immigrate to Israel, like all recognized Jews. Efforts to convert the Bnei Menashe began in earnest about 18 months ago, when Amishav, an Israeli organization committed to reaching out to "lost Jews" seeking to return to Israel, established a Hebrew school in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. Over the last decade, Amishav brought about 800 members of the Bnei Menashe to Israel and helped them convert to Orthodox Judaism. They now live predominantly in the communities of Kiryat Arba, Gush Katif and Beit El. Last year, Israeli Interior Minister Avraham Poraz decided to bar additional members of the tribe from immigrating to Israel, said Michael Freund, director of Amishav.

"Sadly, I can only conclude that Mr. Poraz's policy is one of racism, which discriminates against the Bnei Menashe because of the color of their skin," said Freund, referring to their dark skin and Asian features. The Bnei Menashe claim a connection to Judaism from the time of King Solomon, though these ties are disputed. At that time, the tribes of Israel split into two kingdoms. In 723 B.C. the Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel and took 10 tribes into exile, and they roamed across the world. Some say they escaped to China. The Indian tribe believes that Christian missionaries in the 19th Century forced them to abandon their Jewish identity and convert to Christianity.

In 1951, three years after the state of Israel was established, a local chief told the tribe that God had told him his people should return to their religion and original homeland. That began the movement for the Bnei Menashe to go to Israel. The tribe has tried to maintain rituals that resemble those in Judaism, including their use of the lunar calendar. They also chant songs about crossing the Red Sea and returning to Zion. But because theologians and politicians disagree on their connection to Judaism, the tribe is ineligible to immigrate to Israel under the country's Law of Return.

Neither politics nor religious arguments discouraged Pfeffer, a member of the Beth Hillel congregation in Wilmette. Added a member of the Beth Hillel Congregation in Wilmette. While he was teaching English in Israel last year, Pfeffer met a woman from the Bnei Menashe who was among the 800 allowed into Israel. Pfeffer became determined to help the estimated 6,000 others left behind. When Pfeffer returned to the United States, he headed for the Indian consulate in Chicago to try to get a visa to visit Manipur and Mizoram. But officials told him the states were off-limits to foreigners. Pfeffer then used his connections through Jewish firms doing business in India and eventually received the permits.

His next obstacle was to find a Torah, and that's when he found Rosenblum's. "There are many things involved in getting a Torah," Pfeffer said. "I had no idea that the Torahs go for so much money. Mr. Fox had just received a Torah from Israel so I told him I wanted to speak to my rabbi to make sure it met all the religious requirements." Once his rabbi gave the green light, friends and Pfeffer pitched in the \$12,000 for the Torah. Then he made plans with two members of the Beth Hillel Congregation to make the trip. "I am so excited, and the elders in the village are excited," Pfeffer said. "They say they could have 1,000 to 2,000 people for the reading of the Torah because they never had a scroll to read from before."

[top of the page](#)

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## **New Jewish Educational Center for the Bnei Menashe of India**

**JTA Email Edition  
Thursday, April 22, 2004**

A new Jewish educational center was built in northeastern India to serve a group that believes it is one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. The center in the Indian state of Manipur aims to serve the local community of Bnei Menashe. Many members of the group are undergoing formal conversions to Judaism and making aliyah.

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## **An Orphan no More - Foster Kid Finds Mom**

**Woman, 40, adopted in Contra Costa by the mother she was denied 30 years ago  
By Joan Ryan  
San Francisco Chronicle  
Sunday, April 25, 2004**

Regina Louise Ollison was 40 years old with a 17-year-old son of her own when she became, after a lifetime as an orphan, somebody's child. "Everybody needs a mother, and it doesn't matter when you get her," she said. In an unusual Contra Costa County court proceeding, Regina was adopted by the woman who had been denied the opportunity three decades ago. The two had fallen in love with each other when Regina Louise was a headstrong 11-year-old bouncing from one foster home to another. Jeannie Kerr was a young counselor at the Contra Costa children's shelter where Regina returned after each failed placement.

But back then, the courts and the social workers refused to place black children with white parents. Both were devastated. Jeannie ended up marrying a military man, having a son and moving to the South. Regina was never adopted and left foster care at age 18. When she attended San Francisco State on scholarship, she had no name to offer when asked for an emergency contact. She had no place to go when the dorms closed for school breaks. There was not a single person in the world who claimed her as family. "You need somebody to show up for you," Regina said, talking over quesadillas at a little Mexican place on Fourth Street in Berkeley. She sat next to Jeannie, holding tight to her adoptive mother's hand in a way that seemed somehow theatrical as much as it was clearly emotional, as if she had watched other mothers and daughters for so many years and now wanted everybody to see her with her own mother.

"You need that flat mirroring from somebody who loves you unconditionally and who is so proud of you," Regina said. Her story, and her need even at age 40 to reconnect with the long-lost woman she now calls mom, reinforces the growing realization that every foster kid needs an adult who will be there well beyond childhood -- not just because it makes sense for the adolescent but because it makes sense for society. The average American child lives at home, at least part time, until age 26. Yet the foster system tosses kids into the world alone at 18. "Older kids haven't been looked at as a group that needs a home," said Mardi Louisell, consultant for California Permanency for Youth Project. "The system is set up to consider kids over 11 not adoptable, so social workers often don't go about finding an extended family that will be there for them beyond the age of 18."

According to the California Department of Social Services, about 25 percent of the kids emancipating from foster care become homeless, 30 percent end up on welfare, 33 percent land in jail, 45 percent have no jobs and 50 percent fail to finish high school. Those numbers drop when kids have adults in their lives who provide love and safe harbor. And

some visionary social workers are realizing that these adults do not have to be foster or adoptive parents. They can be anybody who has an emotional, permanent commitment to the child: a coach, a teacher, a counselor, the parent of a friend. This kind of thinking is something of a revolution in foster care. "It's about coming at it from a relational perspective rather than a bureaucratic one," said Anthony Barrows, a former foster kid from Massachusetts who spoke at a national conference about foster-care "permanency" last week in San Francisco. "You have to ask the kids: 'Who's important to you?' And then help facilitate that connection so it becomes something permanent in the kid's life."

On paper, Regina is a foster-care success story, but it didn't feel that way to her. When she left San Francisco State, there was no one to advise her about getting a car loan or an apartment. There was no one to share the exciting news about opening her first hair salon or about the birth of her son or about landing a two-book contract from Warner Books to write a memoir of life in the foster system. She never stopped missing Jeannie Kerr, the only person who ever called her "Pumpkin" and "Sweetheart" and who told her she was smart and capable of anything. Regina spent years trying to find Jeannie through former counselors and the Internet. A letter sent to an old address came back "Addressee Unknown." Last June, she gave up. "I waited for 40 years for somebody to claim me, and I decided it was never going to happen," Regina said.

But soon after her first book, "Somebody's Someone," was published last summer, Jeannie -- whose last name is now Taylor -- heard about it and sent an e-mail through Regina's Web site. "I am so proud of you, Sweetheart," the subject line read. Jeannie left her phone number in Alabama. When Regina called and heard Jeannie's voice, she couldn't speak. "Is this my baby? Is this my baby girl?" Jeannie asked. They both cried. They reunited days later, meeting up at LaGuardia Airport in New York during a stop on Regina's book tour. "She was so polished and refined," Jeannie recalled. "When I saw her gray hair, I flipped," Regina said. "Last time I saw her she had dark curly hair."

She gave Regina a photo album filled with pictures from their time together so many years before. "It took my breath away because I had no pictures of myself as a child," Regina said. For the cover of her book, Warner Books had to use a stock photo of a skinny little girl, her face covered by an umbrella. Jeannie asked why Regina had used "Regina Louise" on her book jacket instead of her full name, Regina Louise Ollison. Regina said Ollison was the name of neither her biological mother nor father. It was the name of a random boyfriend of her mother when she had her first baby, given to the child so no one would know the baby was the product of incest. When Regina came along five years later, her biological mother gave her the same meaningless last name to keep things simple. "The name wasn't mine," Regina said.

With her son grown, Jeannie and her husband moved back to the Bay Area. On Nov. 20, 2003, in the same Martinez courtroom where their adoption petition had been rejected 25 years earlier, Jeannie and Regina became mother and daughter. Regina changed her name legally to Regina Louise Kerr-Taylor. "To have this happen was like seeing Jesus resurrected on Easter," Regina said. Mother and daughter now live a block away from each other in Walnut Creek, where Jeannie works as a computer software instructor. "We all need to feel as though we belong," Regina said, kissing her mother goodbye before returning to her hair salon across the street. "We all need somebody to hear us when we say, 'I'm out here by myself. I'm scared. What am I going to do?'"

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## Raising Our Jewish Children: An Adoption Conference

**Sunday, May 16, 2004**  
**12pm to 6pm**  
**Mayer Kaplan JCC**  
**5050 Church Street**  
**Skokie, IL 60077**

While last year's conference focused solely on issues of trans-racial and multi-ethnic adoption, this year's conference will also explore medical, legal, developmental and parenting issues. Stars of David: A Jewish Adoption Information & Support Network is a non-profit organization providing a compassionate network of support, adoption information, and education to prospective parents, adoptive families, adult adoptees, birth families, and the Jewish community. For those of you in the Chicago Area, please check out our beautiful conference brochure by going to: <http://jcbchicago.org> and hitting the pdf link with the conference brochure and complete information.

For more information call 773-467-3747

[top of the page](#)

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## For Spain's Jews, a Tense Time after Bombings and Terrorist Plots

**By Jerome Socolovsky**  
**JTA Email Edition**  
**Friday, April 23, 2004**

Nicholson family members love getting out of Madrid on weekends, and often they round up other young families for the weekly kosher barbeque at Masada, a Jewish retreat in the mountains outside Spain's capital. Masada, it turns out, was on a list of bombing targets police found in the hideout of the Islamic militants suspected of blowing up four commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, killing 191 people. So will the Nicholsons go back to Masada?

"Absolutely I would. You cannot let that sort of thing stop you from continuing with your life," Paul Nicholson said, several days after his wife Dalia gave birth to a baby boy, their second child. After the train bombings, Spain's 35,000 Jews -- like most other Spaniards -- were outraged that Islamic terrorists had struck in the country. Videotapes and statements on behalf of Al-Qaida said the attacks were meant to punish Spain for supporting the United States in the Iraq war. Most Jews already accepted the importance of stringent security measures for a small community in a country with a large and rapidly growing North African population, and a long history of anti-Semitism.

But at least this time, it seemed after the March 11 bombings, the Jewish community had been left out of the terrorist vendetta. Many Jews thus were taken aback when, a few weeks after the train attacks, the newspaper El Mundo published the terrorists' plans for further attacks -- including a map showing Masada's precise location. "Masada is pretty well off the beaten track," said Nicholson, a New Zealand-born business consultant. "For them to have been able to track it down, get information about it -- you really wonder a bit about the security in Spain for Jews." In addition to Masada, the suspected terrorists also had planned to blow up a suburban shopping mall and bullet trains.

None of these attacks took place thanks to a cell phone, found March 11 attached to an unexploded bomb as a makeshift detonator. Police used the phone to track the suspected leader of the train bombings -- a Tunisian named Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhel -- to an apartment in Leganes, a southern suburb of Madrid. When police tried to storm the building, Fakhel and a group of followers triggered an explosion, killing themselves and a policeman and ripping off the front of the apartment building. Police believe several suspects remain at large, and the Jewish community is taking no chances.

Jacobo Israel Garzon, president of Madrid's Jewish community, said synagogues in the city are beefing up their own security, and Spanish law enforcement authorities have been asked for additional help. Some people are staying away from Jewish activities, he said, but "those of us who are not afraid are more numerous." In Barcelona, where another 8,000 Jews live, Yitzhak Levy's home is next door to that city's Masada. "When I went last weekend there were only four families, when usually there are 20 or 30," said Levy, a spokesman for the community.

He says there has been no specific threat against Jewish institutions in Barcelona. Still, there is reason for caution: Investigators believe the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington were planned about an hour away, in the beach resort of Salou. In addition, many of the Al-Qaida suspects detained in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks lived in Catalonia, the northeastern Spanish region of which Barcelona is capital. Levy says it's clear the Madrid train bombings, which came just three days before Spain's national elections, influenced the outcome. Yet he accepts the common analysis that many Spaniards voted for the Socialist government not because of its stance against the Iraq war but because they felt deceived by the conservative government of then-Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

Aznar's government first blamed the attack on the outlawed Basque separatist group ETA, despite increasing evidence of involvement by Islamic extremists. Aznar has said the government released new information pointing to Islamic radicals as soon as it became available, but many Spaniards felt the government was trying to hide something, afraid its support for the Iraq war might backfire electorally. "For many people, it was the last straw," Levy said. But, he concedes, "I've heard Jews say the winner of the Spanish elections was Osama Bin Laden." On Sunday, a day after being sworn in, the new Socialist prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, announced that he would make good on a campaign promise to withdraw Spain's 1,400 troops from Iraq.

He previously had said he might reconsider if the United Nations were given control of Iraq as planned by June 30. After his inauguration, however, Zapatero said it seemed clear the transition wouldn't happen, and he promised to bring Spanish soldiers home "as soon as possible." Opinion polls showed that around 70 percent of Spaniards agreed with the decision. Many also are wondering if the previous government's focus on the Basque terrorist threat blinded it to the possibility of an attack by Islamic extremists, especially given Spain's pro-U.S. stances and its crackdown on the local Sept. 11 cell. An investigative report in El Mundo claimed Spanish authorities had received warnings from the intelligence services of several countries, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Israel.

"On at least 10 occasions, Israeli intelligence agents had let their Spanish colleagues know" that "Islamic militants were preparing a major attack in Madrid," journalist Fernando Mugica wrote. Madrid's Garzon said the rapidity with which Zapatero announced the pullout "gives the impression that we are submitting to the threats" of the terrorists. "Most of my Spanish friends disagree with me," Nicholson said. "But one Spanish government made the decision to go in there, and for another Spanish government to come in and change that, all you're doing is answering the terrorists' request. Whether that was right or wrong doesn't really matter anymore."

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**Sephardi Faithful Seek the Miraculous**

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Sephardi faithful are flocking to see the "miraculous" likeness of a Moroccan sage on the wall of an Israeli home. A fervently Orthodox family in the northern village of Rehassim invited reporters to see the stain left by the soot of Sabbath candles, claiming it formed the outline of a famous portrait of the late Baba Sali.

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**Jewish Philanthropist Funds Writing Contest to Improve Christian-Jewish Relations**

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A young Jewish philanthropist is funding a writing contest to bolster Christian-Jewish relations. In the wake of the debate surrounding Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," Elizabeth Goldhirsh, 25, is funding a writing contest on essays on the shared history and values of Judaism and Christianity. The first-place winner of "Reaching Common Ground" will receive \$25,000.

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