

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

History, Mission, and Goals

The National Museum of American Jewish History's mission is to present educational programs and experiences that preserve, explore, and celebrate the 360-year history of Jews in America. Its purpose is to connect Jews more closely to their heritage and to inspire in people of all backgrounds a greater appreciation for the diversity of the American Jewish experience and the freedoms to which all Americans aspire.

We are the only institution in the country that tells the story of American history through the lens of the Jewish experience, uniquely tracing how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans. Through dynamic, interactive exhibitions, and engaging cultural programs, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to celebrate their own heritages, histories, and traditions by reflecting on how immigrants shape and are shaped by the American experience.



Originally founded by members of historic Congregation Mikveh Israel during the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration, we concluded a successful \$154 million campaign and opened the Ennead Architects-designed, newly constructed 100,000 sf state-of-the-art building in November 2010. Located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, the Museum sits adjacent to Independence Hall and The Liberty Bell - the icons of freedom in American history - and contributes to the national dialogue on religion, ethnicity, and pluralism.

We have been recognized for our work by leading national funders and nonprofit organizations. In 2013, the Museum received a \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for its exhibition, *Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming American*, two versions of which are now touring across the country. The American Association of Museums selected the Museum for the 2011 MUSE Award for its use of digital media to enhance the museum experience and engage new audiences. Importantly, our unique mission is underscored by our being designated a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate, thus enabling us to borrow artifacts from the Smithsonian's estimated 142-million-piece collection. Presently, two of the objects featured in the Smithsonian's "*History of America in 101 Objects*" are on loan to the Museum: Albert Einstein's pipe and Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine.

The Museum's 2023 vision is to be the preeminent national museum creatively teaching, interpreting, and inspiring dialogue about the American-Jewish experience in the context of American history. The Museum will be a force fueling the American spirit of courage and imagination, aspiration and hard work, leadership and service, through active engagement with the stories of American-Jewish life and tradition.

Exhibitions and Collections

The centerpiece of the visitor experience is a 25,000 sf of core exhibition—whose constellation of historical artifacts, imagery, hands-on and media interactives, films, and soundscapes immerse visitors in 360 years of Jewish



life in the United States. Visitors engage in and explore stories of American Jewish life, values, and traditions throughout every phase of this country's history.

In addition, the Museum presents a growing array of special exhibitions and concourse installations each year which attract strong, diverse attendance, and visibility, as well as popular traveling panel exhibitions which expand our national footprint and impact. In 2012, the Museum presented its first special exhibition in its new home, *To Bigotry No Sanction: George Washington and Religious Freedom*. This exhibition featured an array of foundational documents in our country's commitment to religious freedom, including the historic correspondence between President George Washington and the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island. The Museum's first large-scale exhibition, *Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming American*, uses the story of Jews and baseball as an opportunity to highlight ways in which our national pastime has been a key pathway for how immigrants and minorities become more fully American. As noted above, this exhibition received major support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Major League Baseball.

The Museum also stewards the preeminent collection of American Jewish artifacts ranging across American geography, with objects and documents dating from the colonial period to the present day, vividly evoking the diversity of the American Jewish experience. We have developed extensive institutional experience in preservation, conservation, and collections management supporting the fulfillment of its mission to preserve the material culture of American Jews.

Education



The Museum is committed to providing enriching educational opportunities for children and adults. We are now serving almost 10,000 school visitors and draw across area public schools, independent schools, day schools, charter schools, and home-school students. We raise \$50,000 annually in funding to cover transportation and admission costs for nearly 3,000 students, removing potential barriers for young people and schools in need to visit the Museum.

Our instruction methods and materials offer a range of hands-on and inquiry-based activities in an informal educational setting and are aligned to the Common Core, National, and State Standards. The Museum received national recognition from the U.S. Department of Education for curricula developed for *Chasing Dreams*. We also offer professional development and outreach programs to train teachers in new subject matter and teaching methodologies; nearly 1,000 guided tours annually; Family Days; distance learning sessions; traveling lectures; adult education workshops; and training for the dedicated team of more than 60 docents. In 2015, the Museum received a challenge grant to launch a National Educators Institute in the summer of 2016 for day school educators from across the country to attend an intense, immersive training institute for the teaching and learning of American Jewish history. Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, leads the development of the American Jewish history curricula, as well as lead the team of instructors at the upcoming institute.

Public Programs

The Museum presents a lively series of public programs each year that expand on themes in our special and core exhibitions and other topical subjects. Through lectures, panel discussions, authors' talks, films, festivals, family programs, children's activities, theater, and music, the Museum fulfills its educational mission as a national center for fostering civic dialogue by providing opportunities to



generate honest and open dialogue among diverse voices in our community. In 2013, we launched a new annual public program, *Freedom Seder Revisited*, which evoked the spirit of the historic 1969 Freedom Seder while exploring its contemporary relevance and captured the Museum's vision to present engaging programming for audiences of various backgrounds. Both last year's and this year's programs drew a diverse audience of more than 230 attendees and over 100 online viewers. Both the presented speakers, artists, and attendees represented various cultural and faith communities, and the event was structured to provide attendees with opportunities for small group conversations on race, identity, and freedom.

In 2013, the Museum launched its *Dreamers and Doers Speaker Series* which tells the stories of individuals who embody an entrepreneurial, philanthropic, and uniquely American spirit. The annual series honors an individual whose story is characterized by the values critical to the success achieved by immigrants who came to America in search of opportunity and a better life - courage and imagination, aspiration and hard work, leadership and service. A second signature program is its *OPEN for Interpretation*, which is the Museum's novel artist-in-residence program. The third signature program is the New Jewish Culture Network, for which we became the national convener in 2014. This is a collaboration of arts presenting organizations across the country designed to commission and present Jewish artworks and music.

In addition to our public programs, the Museum offers on average 18 member programs each year to deepen engagement with our more than 7,000 members, 55% of whom live beyond a 50-mile radius of the Museum, by creating opportunities for enhanced personal connection to the Museum's themes and exhibitions, including exhibition previews, quarterly book clubs, and film screenings. The Museum also presents monthly programming for our Young Friends and members as a way of developing the Museum's next generation of leaders.