

# the Atlantic

## From the Supreme Court Steps to a Museum's Collection, via Facebook

The story of how a poster celebrating the end of the Defense of Marriage Act made its way into history

[Rebecca J. Rosen](#) Jul 26 2013, 4:27 PM ET

NMAJH/Facebook



National Museum of American Jewish History shared a link.  
June 26 near Philadelphia, PA

Were you outside the Supreme Court today holding the "Mazel Tov" sign in this photo? Our museum collection needs your poster! Please message us if you see this. Thanks!



U.S. - Image - NYTimes.com  
www.nytimes.com

People celebrated outside the Supreme Court on Wednesday after it struck down the Defense of Marriage Act.

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Last week a container arrived at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. Inside was the newest piece in the museum's permanent collection, and, in a sense, the newest physical object of Official Jewish History.

Shira Goldstein, the museum's exhibitions coordinator, opened it up and pulled out the poster it held. As far as art goes, the poster wasn't much - text on a white background. But what it said and where it had been imbued the poster

with some greater significance. In bright rainbow letters it proclaimed: MAZEL TOV (to EVERYONE!). Three weeks earlier, on June 26, 2013, it had been outside the U.S. Supreme Court, held up in celebration as the Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act.

That the poster had arrived at the museum at all was a bit of a miracle in itself, a small miracle, facilitated by the formal structure Facebook gives to the social networks we are all a part of.

A colleague of Goldstein's had first noticed the poster in [an image on the New York Times's website](#), part of a gallery the newspaper ran covering the day. "We immediately knew it represented a wonderful Jewish response to the Court's decision and thought it would be a great

way to tell the story of this historic moment," Goldstein wrote to me. But how would they find it? Who had the poster?

Goldstein had the museum put up call for the poster on its Facebook page, which 46 people re-shared. Other people wrote their own posts announcing the museum's search. Additionally, Goldstein reached out to a couple of Jewish programs and institutions in DC, asking them to publicize her efforts. Two days later she got an email from Cody Pomeranz, a summer intern at the Center for American Progress. He had the poster.

How exactly the search made its way to Pomeranz is a bit unclear. Here's what we do know: His colleague at CAP, Hannah Slater, is the one who put the whole thing together. On Friday the 28th she opened up Facebook and saw a post from a friend of hers named Adam Berman, who had shared it from a friend of his, whom Slater does not know. The text was signed by yet a third person, "Adam S.," whom neither Slater nor Pomeranz knows. "I have no idea how many people may have shared the message before I saw it," Slater says. Here's what the post she saw looked like:

NMAJH/Facebook



How were these people all connected? They didn't know each other through Facebook; they knew each other from growing up or summer camp or college or work. Such networks have always existed, and they've always been used to convey news and gossip and opportunities. What Facebook did was to give those natural social ties a technological layer, and that layer allowed a message to spread far and wide at a speed that would once have

been unimaginable.

"What's crazy," Pomeranz says, "is how many people were talking about it." After he had contacted the museum, he went back read through the Facebook comments of people searching for the poster. "I think I remember one guy saying, 'I hope this mensche steps up!' It was a weird feeling, in a good way."

Left: Pomeranz with the poster at the CAP office. Right: Goldstein with the poster in Philadelphia at the National Museum of American Jewish History



Pomeranz credits another intern with the idea for the sign. "I'm Jewish and I tend to say 'mazel tov' a lot in place of

'congratulations,' " he wrote to me. "One of my fellow interns said, 'Why don't you do that for a sign?' " Pomeranz liked the idea, so he grabbed the markers and got to work.

"Back in September," he adds, "I saw my oldest sister get married. It was a Jewish wedding, and when her husband broke the glass and we all jumped up and roared "Mazel Tov!" It was an incredible moment of joy, love, and family."

"Everyone deserves that moment, regardless of sexual orientation" he continues. "So after I finished 'Mazel Tov,' I added, in parentheses, 'to EVERYONE!'."