

POWER OF THE MOVEMENT TO FREE SOVIET JEWS PROTEST

Moscow
Дорогие наши друзья
От всей души поздравляю
с праздником Ханука
Света, надежды и
любви, что это
поможет всем нам
встретиться и
озаренной светом
Раз все мы так
как вы, куда провозим
которое все так
милосердием и
будем вместе и с
Вас и наших детей



TRAVELING PANEL EXHIBITION

TOUR SCHEDULE

National Museum of American Jewish History..... Philadelphia, PA: December 6, 2017 - January 15, 2018
Ohev Shalom—The National Synagogue Washington, DC: February 3 - 26, 2018
Fielder Hillel at Northwestern University Evanston, IL: March 8 - April 16, 2018
State Historical Museum of Iowa Des Moines, IA: May 18 - June 7, 2018
Mandell JCC & JHS of Greater Hartford..... West Hartford, CT: June 25 - August 31, 2018
Rider University Multicultural Affairs Lawrenceville, NJ: October 1 - November 16, 2018
Oregon Jewish Museum and Holocaust Ed. Center..... Portland, OR: December 6th, 2018 - February 24th, 2019
Memphis Jewish Community Center..... Memphis, TN: January 2 - 31, 2019
Washington State Jewish Historical Society..... Seattle, WA: March 12 - April 2019 (closing dates TBD)
San Diego Center for Jewish Culture..... La Jolla, CA: August 19 - September 29, 2019

Book now!
**Two identical sets are traveling allowing
for multiple bookings on similar dates.**

PLEASE CONTACT

Shira Goldstein, Associate Director of Exhibitions
National Museum of American Jewish History
101 South Independence Mall East
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106
215-391-4660 | sgoldstein@nmajh.org

SPECIFICATIONS

FEES: Available with no rental fee. Borrowing organizations will pay for one-way shipping to their venue and provide proof of insurance coverage. Fully refundable deposit required to reserve time slot.

SIZE: 400 square feet recommended, minimum of 50 linear feet required. Multiple display options available.

STRUCTURE: Modular system of 11 double-sided, free-standing panels; includes AV hardware for two media presentations.

- (3) panels 93”H x 75”W
- (8) panels 93”H x 39”W

Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews is created by the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. The exhibition is supported, in part, through a Museums for America grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a government agency dedicated to advancing innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. The exhibition has also been made possible with the generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group. Additional support provided by the Charlestein Family in memory of Malvina and Morton Charlestein.

POWER OF PROTEST: THE MOVEMENT TO FREE SOVIET JEWS

The stories of American Jewish activists and Soviet Jews, known as refuseniks, are brought to life in this new traveling panel exhibition created by the National Museum of American Jewish History.

Developed especially for smaller or non-museum spaces, the exhibition will explore the significance of what *The Atlantic's* Jeffrey Goldberg has called “the most successful human rights campaign of our time.”

Power of Protest is small-scale, flexible, and composed of durable and easy-to-install free-standing panels intended for installation in a variety of venues such as galleries, libraries, synagogues, Jewish community centers, university campuses, and historic societies. Through text, imagery, and media, it expands upon the compelling history of activists, *refuseniks*, and the legacy of the movement in America today.

The Museum will provide venues with custom curricula, a programming guide, marketing templates, and suggestions for how borrowing organizations can supplement the exhibit with stories from their own communities.



Stamps, “Protest Oppression of Soviet Jewry,” ca. 1980. National Museum of American Jewish History, 1995.78.8. Gift of the Soviet Jewry Council of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia.

DESCRIPTION

The movement to free Soviet Jews provides a fascinating example of how American activists have played, and continue to play, significant roles in promoting religious liberty at home and abroad. Drawing on 1960s-era social protest movements, they responded to the restrictions forced upon *refuseniks* by staging public demonstrations, holding a massive rally in Washington D.C., and calling for politicians at all levels of the government to speak out against Soviet oppression. The exhibition will serve as a reminder of the unique promise of religious freedom in America and our continuing responsibility to preserve and protect that freedom. **This dramatic, risky, international human rights movement brought together organizations, student activists, community leaders, and thousands of individuals—and reached the highest echelons of the American government.**



Cleveland youth group rally, ca. 1968. The Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism Records. Western Reserve Historical Society.

The exhibition combines first-hand accounts, historical images, and film to explore the effective use of protest across all levels of society. The movement to free Soviet Jewry arose during a period of international protest, linking Jewish activists in U.S., Israel, and the U.S.S.R. Moreover, it took place, and was influenced by, the worldwide protest movements that began in the 1960s and continued throughout the following decades. Inspired by the American civil rights movement, it took cues from the international women's rights, antiwar, anti-nuclear, and free speech movements.

Power of Protest provides examples of how the movement to free Soviet Jews also had a religious dimension. For some activists, the movement offered a new and profound connection to Judaism. For others, it became an extension of their previously established religious commitments. The exhibition will show these connections—such as the “twinning” program in which American adolescents celebrating their Bar or Bat Mitzvah adopted a Soviet Jew forbidden to perform this rite of passage, an empty chair on the synagogue *bimah*, and a “Matzah of Hope” added to the Passover *Seder* in recognition of the persecution of Soviet Jews.

The exhibition also features voices from the generations of Jews from the Former Soviet Union who came to the United States and their children. Not only does this offer a new dimension on American Jewish identity from the perspective of recent immigrants who came long after the era of mass migration, it illustrates how these identities change across generations—a process that all immigrant groups have undergone throughout history.

This new exhibition is supported, in part, through a Museums for America grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a government agency dedicated to advancing innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement.

INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPHY



Photos by Jessi Melcer

PROTEST GOES MAINSTREAM



WASHINGTON, D.C., 1984

Holocaust-survivor Elie Wiesel wrote in his 1966 book *The Jews of Silence* that “the condition of the Jews in the Soviet Union is at once more grievous and more hopeful than I had imagined.” A visit to the Soviet Union had revealed both state-sponsored repression and grassroots efforts to keep Jewish culture alive. Wiesel’s message inspired Jewish readers and reached activists like Martin Luther King, Jr., Boston’s Richard Cardinal Cushing, and Sister Ann Gillen of the Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry. Both the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry were founded in 1971 and that same year, hundreds of delegates from 38 countries gathered in Brussels for the first World Conference on Soviet Jewry.

1971
 The National Conference on Soviet Jewry was held in New York City. It was the first major gathering of Soviet Jewry activists in the United States. The conference resulted in the formation of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, which became the primary national organization for Soviet Jewry in the U.S.



1986
 “We shall kindle our candle and lift it on high united in strength and fierce determination that you will soon emerge from the darkness of suffering to the light of freedom.”
 Linda Flaxman, Hoboken National Board Member, 1986

ПРОТЕСТ СТАНОВИТСЯ ВСЕОБЩИМ



Selected exhibition panel elevation, *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*.

REVOLUTIONARY HOPE, FEW CHANGES

РЕВОЛЮЦИОННЫЕ НАДЕЖДЫ, СКУДОСТЬ ПЕРЕМЕН

The Russian revolutions of 1917, first in February and then the Bolshevik coup in October, abolished ghettoization within the “Pale of Settlement” and ended Tsarist economic and political restrictions, including permitting Jews to live and work in Russia’s capitals, Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg). Jewish culture thrived following the Revolution, but vicious pogroms during the Russian Civil War of 1918-1921 left nearly two hundred thousand Jews dead. Then, in the 1930s, Russian dictator Joseph Stalin targeted and murdered Jews, first during his “Great Purge” and then again following World War II. Soviet Jews carried internal passports that marked them as Jews, suffered discrimination in academia, employment, and across Soviet society.



1917

In February 1917, the Bolsheviks abolished tsarist national chaos. Feodorovskiy government and in October 1917, the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace and seized a bloodless coup.

Illustration: David Katz, 1971, from the exhibition *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013.



1922-1939

The Soviet government, supporting all forms of religious repression, forced synagogue and Jewish school closures, and severely restricted Jewish support for protesting. Jewish culture thrived during the 1920s. A clampdown on all expressions of Jewish life.

Illustration: David Katz, 1971, from the exhibition *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013.



1941-1945

Half a million Jewish soldiers fought in the Soviet Army during World War II and received the status of Soviet citizens. After World War II, German soldiers revealed the U.S.S.R. in June 1945, some still in uniform. Soviet Jewish citizens perished in the Holocaust.

Illustration: David Katz, 1971, from the exhibition *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013.



1948-1953

A campaign against “rootless cosmopolitanism” swept up Jews. During the “Night of the Broken Plates,” August 16, 1948, thousands of Jewish scientists were fired from their jobs. In March 1953, Soviet Jewish citizens perished in the Holocaust.

Illustration: David Katz, 1971, from the exhibition *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013.



1967

In June 1967, the heavily censored Soviet press reported Israel’s invasion of the Sinai Peninsula. When news of Israel’s triumph in the Six Day War reached Soviet Jews, they celebrated. But authorities pushed back and demonstrations targeted Jews.

Illustration: David Katz, 1971, from the exhibition *Power of Protest: The Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013. Photo: © David Katz, 2013.

THE AMERICAN CAMPAIGN

КАМПАНИЯ В АМЕРИКЕ

Haunted by memories of the Holocaust and inspired by 1960s social protest movements, American Jews joined with *refuseniks*, Israelis, and human rights activists around the world in the struggle to save Soviet Jewry. They marched, protested, and lobbied the American government to exert pressure. National organizations raised the alarm and community leaders organized local advocacy efforts. New national organizations arose dedicated to the cause. Some people went on secret “missions” to visit persecuted Soviet Jews, while sons and daughters from across the religious spectrum “twinned” their bar and bat mitzvah celebrations with Soviet youths denied the opportunity to celebrate.

Major Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Committee (AJC), American Jewish Congress, World Jewish Committee (WJC), B’nai B’rith, Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah, and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council made freeing Soviet Jews a top priority. AJC spent three decades leveraging political ties in Washington D.C., Europe, and Latin America. In 1971, WJC co-sponsored the first World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry in Brussels, Belgium. And Charlotte Jacobson, national president of Hadassah, met with *refuseniks* and faced Soviet officials.

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1973





NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN JEWISH
HISTORY

A Smithsonian Institution Affiliate

NMAJH.org/SovietJews

Front Cover: SSSJ activists heading to a rally at the Statue of Liberty,
September 29, 1968. Photo by Yona Zaloscer. Yeshiva University Archives,
Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry Records.

101 South Independence Mall East
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215 923 3811