

Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Baltimore

During the Interwar Era

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On April 21, 1936, seven months after Germany's Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their citizenship, the Nazi warship *Emden* docked in Baltimore on a good will tour. Thousands of curious Baltimoreans flocked to Recreation Pier to tour the ship during its ten-day visit. The "genial" Captain Hans Bachmann exchanged courtesy calls with Mayor Jackson. At an officers' reception sponsored by the city's German societies, guests (including city and state officials) drank a toast to Hitler as "beer flowed freely." Nazi sailors fought a local German soccer club to a 4-4 tie at Gwynn Oak Park and some 450 Marylanders enjoyed a shipboard luncheon that showed off "sea life's gay side." When the *Emden* steamed away, 2,000 onlookers bade it farewell as its swastika flag fluttered and its band serenaded them with "Deutschland Uber Alles" and "Anchors Aweigh."¹

The *Evening Sun* praised the city for "living up to its reputation as a hospitable and tolerant place," while acknowledging that the Jewish community "behaved during what was to them a trying period, with signal dignity and restraint." The reaction of the organized Jewish community was indeed muted. The *Jewish Times* editorialized before the ship arrived that it would be "unthinkable" that "Baltimore should officially offer a friendly gesture of welcome," but showed no trace of a communal response to the city's hospitality toward the Nazis.²

To Jewish Baltimoreans, the *Emden's* visit was clearly a setback in their efforts to become part of mainstream society. The city's large immigrant Jewish population had made significant strides in that direction: for example, in 1919, Jews had confidently appealed to their non-Jewish neighbors in fundraising for European Jewish communities devastated by war. The

Sun had offered glowing coverage of gentile participation in their campaign. On one Saturday, “Gentile and non-Orthodox Jewish workers were at their ‘bucket’ posts downtown and collected large sums.” the paper noted. “The confirmation class of the Eutaw Place Temple gave \$8 after a little girl from St. Joseph’s School of Industry brought in \$5 from her classmates.”³

But through the 1920s and 1930s, rising xenophobia and antisemitism altered the landscape, nationally and locally. The Congressional debate over immigration in the early twenties brought virulent anti-Jewish and anti-Italian rhetoric to the fore and resulted in federal restrictions that virtually halted the flow of Eastern and Southern European Jews into America. Henry Ford’s Judeophobic newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, became widely circulated and achieved mass influence. By the time the antisemitic radio broadcasts of Father Charles Coughlin gained national popularity in the mid 1930s, it had become clear that Jews could not count on the good will of mainstream society.⁴

After Hitler gained power in 1933, Baltimore’s Jewish communal leaders led mass protests against events taking place in Nazi Germany. But for the organized Jewish community, rallying against Hitler’s Germany was easier than rallying against City Hall. Some Jews did protest the city’s embrace of the *Emden*, but they did so through labor unions, progressive groups, and radical organizations rather than communal groups. The one exception, the activist Rabbi Edward Israel of Har Sinai Congregation, led an interfaith delegation to Mayor Jackson challenging the city’s welcoming plans and was “roundly criticized by cautious fellow-citizens, both Jew and Christian.” When 2,000 demonstrators gathered near Recreation Pier the day after the *Emden* docked, hoisting signs such as “Don’t Let It Happen Here,” no Jewish communal leaders were among the speakers, who included Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP.⁵

Yet not all Jewish opposition came from the left. City Councilman Sidney Traub

criticized the city's reception plans and five state legislators asked the State Department to cancel the ship's permit to dock, including House Speaker Emanuel Gorfine. They were unsuccessful, though the city did mute some of its more lavish plans in response to the criticism. Also, the American Legion bowed to pressure from Jewish members, canceling its participation in welcoming activities.⁶ If the *Emden* affair illuminated the tenuous position of Baltimore Jewry and the reluctance of Jewish leaders to challenge the local powers-that-be, it also revealed the growing involvement of Jews in the diverse institutions of modern society, from politics to voluntary associations.

Historians use the phrase "insiders and outsiders" to refer to the position of Jews in American life, and especially during the interwar period. That's because it accurately describes a world in which, for example, a Jew could be Maryland's speaker of the house while Baltimore's mayor welcomes a Nazi ship to his city. Even as antisemitism reached its peak, Jews were more engaged than ever in Baltimore's civic and cultural life. While this dichotomy reflected national trends, circumstances peculiar to Baltimore gave the position of Jews its own distinct character. First, as the city's largest new immigrant group and the one making the greatest economic strides, Baltimore Jewry was in a position to achieve more influence in political, civic, and cultural affairs than elsewhere—but at the same time, its prominence presented a conspicuous target for resentment over the Depression and the rapid pace of change. Second, Baltimore's border city culture, and in particular its race relations, greatly influenced the position of Jews in the social structure and had a considerable impact on Jewish-gentile relations.⁷

No Jews Allowed

In 1918, to make room for its growing workforce and gain control of the expanding

harbor, the city annexed a large swath of surrounding land, tripling in size from thirty to ninety-two square miles. The largely undeveloped new territory underwent a residential building boom. Suddenly, people of all income levels were on the move: the wealthy and middle classes to the spacious new homes and rowhouses of the annex, the less well-off to the places they left behind.⁸

As the newly expanded city developed, discriminatory real estate practices decisively shaped the racial and ethnic landscape. Blacks, barred from the annexed area and the suburbs beyond, became concentrated in the city center. Jewish immigrants joined in the mass exodus of foreign born from the city core. Following in the direction of their Central European coreligionists, who had settled around northwest Baltimore's Eutaw Place district decades earlier, Eastern European Jews abandoned their immigrant enclaves in east and southwest Baltimore for a succession of northwest neighborhoods. An increasingly rigid system of residential exclusion kept them out of other areas, while close-knit networks of friends and family also influenced where they settled. This combination of residential discrimination and the desire of Jews to maintain community ties led to their rapid resettlement in northwest Baltimore: by 1925, more than half the Jewish population already lived in that section of the city, while only around a third remained in East Baltimore.⁹

According to longtime head of the Baltimore Jewish Council Leon Sachs, by 1941, "The Jewish community had been herded into the northwest section of the city to such an extent that we were labeled everywhere as probably the most ghettoized community in the country." Sachs placed the blame on the Roland Park Company, which, he claimed, made residential restrictions popular. "It was a sales technique," he explained. "You make something exclusive and people want it more." Certainly he was right to emphasize the major role played by the city's premier residential developer. Roland Park Company founder Edward Bouton stated in 1924 that he did

not sell to Jews “of any character whatever,” believing that they depressed property values because gentiles would not buy homes in Jewish areas. Because his company developed much of North Baltimore, its strict enforcement of this policy kept upwardly mobile Jews out of a large swath of the city’s new residential districts, including Roland Park, Guilford, Homeland, and Northwood.¹⁰

The methods developed by the Roland Park Company were copied by other firms—and since only a handful of companies controlled large tracts of land, their combined efforts effectively circumscribed Jews. The companies carefully screened initial buyers. Then, to ensure that these homeowners did not, in turn, sell to Jews, they typically relied not on explicit deed restrictions (which were used primarily against African Americans) but on a potent mix of advertising, signage, and a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with the city’s real estate board, which enforced discipline among realtors through control of the multiple listing service. Northwood was advertised as an “Ideal Location for Discriminating People,” while a sign at the entrance to Homeland announced the neighborhood as “restricted.” One 1930 brochure insinuated, “What kind of people are found in Homeland-Guilford-Roland Park? You probably know but these factors are so important that it does no harm to recall them.” Such marketing techniques signaled to Jews that they were not welcome even if they were not explicitly banned.¹¹

Jews who missed the warnings and slipped through the screening process found that the implicit could quickly become explicit. In 1941, thirty-five Ruxton residents signed a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Hecht Sr., who had recently purchased a lot in their upscale north Baltimore community. “You have had an offer to take the lot off your hands without any loss to yourselves,” the letter pointed out. “We respectfully, but urgently, request you to accept.” A real estate company canceled Israel Saffron’s contract to buy a home in northeast Baltimore’s middle

class Ednor Gardens when it was discovered that he was Jewish. The agent told him he “could not sell the property to a Jew” but would be “very glad to sell him any home in a Jewish neighborhood.”¹² Discrimination was not yet illegal, so the agent faced no penalty for being honest. But according to the social conventions of the day, subtlety was preferred in enforcing barriers against Jews, Italians, and other ethnic minorities. Jews were, after all, “white,” and many had attained a degree of civic or economic accomplishment.

Far from being a straightforward tale of antisemitism, the story of Jews’ increasing concentration in northwest Baltimore is a complicated one. For one thing, prominent Jewish real estate developers also discriminated against Jews. Joseph Meyerhoff, for example, partnered with the Roland Park Company during the depths of the Depression and scrupulously followed Bouton’s anti-Jewish policy. Though he later stated that he “wasn’t happy about it,” he and other Jewish developers accepted Bouton’s claim that gentiles did not want to live near Jews and saw restrictions as simply a matter of economics.¹³

Moreover, racial politics and white Baltimore’s ongoing concern to prevent the advance of African Americans into white residential districts played at least as large a role as antisemitism. As Antero Pietila points out in his groundbreaking study of housing discrimination in Baltimore, opposition to Jewish encroachment into non-Jewish areas was heightened by the fact that Jewish neighborhoods often became “transitional zones where sellers ultimately tapped the black market.” While this pattern could be found in other places, it was particularly significant in Baltimore, the only American city with sizeable black and Jewish populations. In 1920, the city was roughly 15 percent black and 9 percent Jewish; in contrast, other cities with large Jewish communities had relatively few African Americans at the dawn of the Great Migration of southern blacks to the North. Thus, in addition to the typical anti-Jewish tendencies

of real estate brokers, housing developers, and gentile homeowners that existed elsewhere, the large percentage of blacks in Baltimore made the white establishment especially determined to limit the spread of Jews who might later turn their housing over to African Americans.¹⁴

In fact, during the interwar years the city's Jewish neighborhoods did continuously give way to expanding black settlement, which could no longer be contained in the traditional African American district in West Baltimore. To escape overcrowding, African Americans looked to the heavily Jewish neighborhood to the north rather than the white, non-Jewish neighborhood to the west, where they faced greater resistance. As Leon Sachs later observed, "they followed the Jewish community because it was easier and safer." Jews didn't "throw bricks and break windows when blacks moved in." Moreover, Pietila points out, "The Real Estate Board did not generally accept Jews to membership. As a result, the board lacked capacity and will to enforce segregation in predominantly Jewish districts."¹⁵

Nor were Jews likely to initiate the genteel anti-black campaigns pursued by elite homeowner associations. When Harry Friedenwald was approached by segregationist leader William Marbury in 1929 to sign a petition for "the protection of our neighborhood from Negro invasion," he refused. "Our people have had such a long experience in the particular question of segregation . . . that I would never actively promote such a movement," he told Marbury, who replied that "nothing was going to arouse the animosity against the Jews more than this attitude of aligning themselves with the Negroes."¹⁶ Some Jews did join homeowner associations aimed at keeping blacks out, either out of agreement with the goal or because they wanted to fit in. But more commonly, they simply moved further northwest, the advance of the black population becoming another contributor to the geographic trajectory of Jewish Baltimore.

While racial dynamics and discrimination promoted residential segregation, it must be

noted that other powerful factors helped create the largely Jewish neighborhoods of northwest Baltimore. A strong element of choice shaped Jewish residential patterns. The expansive precincts of northwest Baltimore offered an ideal place for tight-knit networks of family and friends to not only enjoy better housing, spacious parks, and other amenities, but also to build new kinds of institutions and create commercial districts that catered to their evolving needs. Meanwhile, the city's landscape virtually guaranteed that after the Jewish community became established there, it would continue to advance in a northwesterly direction: the diagonal corridors of Park Heights Avenue, Reisterstown Road, and Liberty Heights/Liberty Road provided the pathways for future growth.¹⁷

But the formation of “second generation” Jewish neighborhoods in northwest Baltimore did not mean that Jews remained separate from local culture. Indeed, during the 1920s and thirties, such neighborhoods in cities across the nation offered a safe space for the children of immigrants to experiment with becoming American, without the danger of losing their Jewish identity. As Baltimore Jews absorbed influences from their surroundings, American pastimes—and their Baltimore variants—came to dominate neighborhood life. Easterwood Park had its softball leagues, Druid Hill Park had its tennis. The dance hall at Carlin's Park offered a place for teens to meet members of the opposite sex. For many families, the steamed crab feast became a valued tradition, although often this rite was confined to the basement and tables were scrupulously covered with newspaper to avoid contact with otherwise kosher surroundings. This strategy perhaps helped justify the large ads touting its “best seasoned steamed crabs” placed in the *Jewish Times* by Gordon Sea Food on West North Avenue.¹⁸

The emergence of northwest Baltimore as a Jewish space proved critical in determining how Jews would relate to the surrounding society. In regard to African Americans, the proximity

of northwest Jewish Baltimore to the city's major black district had important implications for black-Jewish relations. As for Jewish-gentile relations more generally, in some ways having their own "turf" served to isolate Jews and encouraged them to continue to see non-Jews (and be seen by non-Jews) as "the other," even as they shed the trappings of their immigrant lifestyle and became more American. But their northwest Baltimore enclave also served as a launching pad for Jewish entrepreneurs, who could then reach beyond the ethnic economy with the kinds of businesses that characterized a new era of consumerism. Moreover, it provided a base of support that allowed Jewish politicians and community leaders to play a major role in city politics and urban affairs.

Jewish-Gentile Interaction

Within the era's fraught national climate, Baltimore's racial and ethnic groups were on the move and often competed for housing, resources, and influence. Interactions between Jews and non-Jews became more frequent and more intense, especially among the younger generation. Many Jews who grew up during the period recalled serious clashes with non-Jewish youth. In southwest Baltimore, a tough, working class, predominantly Irish and German district, "we had to use our fists because of such words as kike, sheenie, zut, and Christ-killer," recalled David "Dutch" Baer. In East Baltimore, Jewish and Italian boys engaged in turf battles, though the two groups mostly got along. The Polish area to the east was another story. "As soon as we crossed over to the 1700 block of Gough Street, we'd hear 'sheeny, Jews, dirty Jew,'" recalled Minnie Schneider. Jews also faced hostility in newer areas of Jewish settlement in northwest Baltimore, where Maurice Paper protected younger children from clashes with neighborhood rowdies. "The little kids would walk with me when we passed churches so the gentiles didn't come out,"

recalled Paper. “They would beat the kids if I wasn’t around.”¹⁹

Such experiences shaped a generation of tough kids. “When you grow up in a climate like that you go from one problem to another,” noted Dutch Baer. When he was nine years old, five older boys attacked him in an alley. “They shouted Jew, kike, we are going to play ‘church on fire.’ They had my hands bound to a pole and they urinated on me. I was the church and they were putting the fire out.” After that, Baer learned to fight, eventually graduating to “blackjacks and brass knuckles” and becoming a self-described juvenile delinquent. As for Maurice Paper, “Nobody would mess with me. . . . I would fight for anybody for anything. Parents wanted to put me in reform school!” (Both outgrew their youthful “delinquency”: Paper served as a combat engineer in World War II; Baer was the athletic director at Easterwood Park before a career as a lawyer, state legislator, and IRS official.)²⁰

Searing encounters with antisemitism helped shape the world view of many young people, yet that was not the only contact Jews had with non-Jews in and around the neighborhood. Jews could be the aggressors as well: as Isadore Livov recalled, “We used to pick battles with the *schwarzes*. . . . We would hide behind the wall and we would have teasers to get the *schwarzes* to run by, so we could waylay them.” But friendships occasionally arose across racial and ethnic lines, especially in East Baltimore, where blacks, Jews, and Italians lived close together. Aaron Smelkinson roamed the waterfront with a black friend who lived in an alley street around the corner from his home, though he never set foot in his friend’s house or vice versa. Oral histories of Jews and Italians reveal much positive interaction. One Italian woman recalled enjoyable visits to the JEA with her Jewish friends. Italian men had fond memories of serving as “shabbes goyim,” turning on lights and performing other chores forbidden to observant Jews on the Sabbath. Prominent political figure Thomas D’Alesandro Jr., who later

developed close alliances with Jews, was one of them.²¹

Jews who lived above their stores in non-Jewish areas faced a different dynamic. Some experienced isolation: one gentile Highlandtown resident recalled, “Mr. Ruben, being the only Jewish man, the people would make fun of him.” But often, the local Jewish storeowner was a familiar, accepted part of life. “During the Depression, my father was good to his customers,” recalled Morty Weiner, who grew up in white, working-class northeast Baltimore. “That’s why we got along so well with them.” Rhea Feikin had many friends growing up in Hampden. “I would run around the neighborhood eating bacon.” she recalled. There was little danger of complete assimilation, however: most youngsters living in non-Jewish areas visited Jewish neighborhoods regularly to see relatives, shop, or attend shul and Hebrew school.²²

Compared to residents of the much larger and more densely populated New York Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn and the Bronx, Baltimore’s Jews were much less isolated from interaction with non-Jews. But if the outside world occasionally impinged—for good or ill—they nevertheless found security in their own Jewish surroundings. Indeed, for most Jews who came of age during the interwar period, the non-Jewish world was neither aggressively hostile nor a place to seek out friendship: it was a vaguely threatening fact of life that could be fairly easily ignored by staying on their own neighborhood turf. Gil Sandler and his buddies, for example, enjoyed exploring the woods that bordered Park Heights on the east, but would not venture beyond the forest into Woodberry, “a neighborhood as dangerously off-limits to us boys as if it were peopled by hostile aliens from another planet.”²³

Many youth received an eye-opening introduction to life beyond the Jewish world when they went off to high school. Attending all-girls Eastern High School in the late 1930s “was quite an experience for me, ’cause I more or less lived in a ghetto,” Norma Livov Wolod recalled. “I

was exposed to a lot of gentile young women, and some of them became my best friends.” One school came to take on a special importance for the Jewish community. For decades, Baltimore City College high school had provided an excellent public education for (white) boys of many backgrounds, including Jews. During the interwar years, the sons of immigrant tailors and shopkeepers flocked to City to receive the education their parents hoped would launch them into the middle class. By 1925, around 600 Jews attended City, almost 40 percent of the student body. It was Jewish enough to be comfortable, but it also provided many boys with their first opportunity to interact with non-Jewish peers. Since City served as a training ground for Baltimore’s future leaders, these connections would prove valuable later in life.²⁴

High school instilled confidence in many young Jews. Not only did they excel in academics, they joined wholeheartedly in activities from debate societies to athletics. City College shone in a variety of sports. When the 1923 basketball squad won the league title, four of its five starters were Jewish, including acting captain Dan Kolker. Yet, while they were accepted by non-Jews at their own school, they were marked as “the other” at schools where Jews were largely unknown. When City teams traveled to rival high schools to play, they were sometimes greeted with the chant, “City once, City twice, City is a bunch of lice, City College, the home of the Jews.”²⁵

Second generation Jews became accustomed to this double standard. As they grew older, they would continue to live in Jewish neighborhoods and socialize almost entirely with fellow Jews, but unlike their immigrant parents, most had neither the option nor the inclination to inhabit a completely Jewish world. Indeed, some of the people most deeply entrenched in the Jewish community also moved easily outside it—and this applied to both “uptown” and “downtown” Jews. Sadie Crokin was president of Baltimore’s League of Women Voters as well

as its Hadassah chapter, and counted fellow suffragist Madeleine Ellicott as one of her best friends. Three of Rabbi Rivkin's sons worked at the *Baltimore Post*, two as editors and one in advertising. Along with such participation came an understanding of the limits of social interaction; despite having gentile friends, Crockin belonged to a Jewish country club, and elite Jewish families continued to send their children to Park School, the only private school without quotas. Meanwhile, communal organizations also engaged in activities beyond the Jewish community, from the Council of Jewish Women's membership in the Maryland Federation of Women's Clubs to the JEA's many sports teams. (The JEA girls held the city's dodgeball title for the entire 1930s.)²⁶

As Jews moved deeper into the public sphere, they employed a range of strategies to deal with the bigotry they encountered: ignore, retreat, educate/enlighten, or fight. Ignoring bigotry or retreating into their own institutions generally seemed the judicious choice given the climate of the times. Jewish leaders may have hesitated to protest against the *Emden* partly because Jewish-owned businesses were being eyed suspiciously for hiring refugees from Nazism instead of Baltimoreans. Rumors circulated that Hochschild, Kohn had fired Christians in order to give jobs to Jews recently arrived from Germany; Isaac Potts was accused of "discharging American Bohemian help and replacing them with refugees" at his furniture store. "This got to be a major problem in this country, and it happened in Baltimore very severely," recalled former Hochschild, Kohn executive Walter Sondheim Jr. Ignoring the rumors seemed the only way to keep them from spreading. Meanwhile, refugee aid groups took pains to keep a low profile; being out front on the *Emden* risked drawing attention to their work.²⁷

On the other hand, initiatives to promote interfaith understanding and educate the public about Jews and Judaism took off during the era. Jews were not the only targets of xenophobia.

Anti-Catholic sentiment ran rampant, reaching a peak during the 1928 presidential campaign of the Catholic Democratic nominee, Al Smith. In response, the National Conference of Christians and Jews formed to promote interfaith cooperation, and local groups followed. Baltimore Jews helped found the Religious Good Will League in 1928. The Federation of Church and Synagogue Youth held its initial meeting at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1931. Rabbi Morris Lazon took a special interest in interfaith work, becoming part of the NCCJ's famous "Tolerance Trio" (a priest, minister, and rabbi) who drew large crowds and garnered wide publicity during barnstorming tours across the nation in the 1930s.²⁸

In the late thirties, the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, Jewish Labor Committee, and B'nai B'rith attempted to create a unified response to the rise in antisemitism. Their General Council for Jewish Rights lasted only three years, but during that time, they encouraged their local affiliates to form similar umbrella organizations. Baltimore Jews, building on the collaborative structure they had developed in the campaign against Nazism, created the Baltimore Jewish Council in 1939. The BJC immediately established itself as the community relations arm of Baltimore Jewry, a position it retains today.²⁹

As the first communal institution to engage in the "fight" strategy, the BJC went about its business quietly. Focusing at first on employment discrimination, its usual method was to investigate fully and then meet privately with the perpetrators, often calling upon highly placed Jewish business or governmental leaders to reason with them. Such methods enabled the BJC to end discriminatory hiring at some companies, but as executive director Leon Sachs later observed, the group was only "scratching the surface of a major problem." More systemic solutions—and a more aggressive approach—would wait until the 1940s, however.³⁰

Communal leaders kept a low profile on issues of Jewish defense not only to avoid giving

publicity (and hence legitimacy) to local antisemitism, but also to protect the gains Jews had undeniably made: they did hold positions of power, but didn't want to call attention to the fact. It was safer to protest non-local purveyors of bigotry. One well-reported campaign in defense of Jewish rights had a decidedly non-local enemy: in 1932, Rabbi Israel successfully crusaded to remove Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* from the high school curriculum. But his campaign did put school superintendent David Weglein in a difficult position. "It is worth noting," the *Afro-American* newspaper editorialized, "that Jews got nowhere with their Shylock protest until a Jew became superintendent of schools, and another was nominated to sit on the School Board." In this case, calling attention to Weglein was not a matter of bigotry (the *Afro* "heartily concurred" in the banning) but was rather fuel for the *Afro*'s campaign to have African American representation on the school board.³¹

Weglein faced a more explosive situation in June 1939 when Milton Bridge, a Jewish student at Gwynns Falls Junior High School, was attacked one Friday by a group of boys, many sporting inked swastikas on their arms. In the melee, they reportedly cut an "H" (for Hebrew) on the back of his neck with a "sharp instrument." Bridge's friend Morton Rosen, a nineteen-year-old ex-seaman, went to the school on the following Monday to protect him, got into a fight with two students, and was arrested for assault. Jewish students from City College also showed up to "get even" with Bridge's attackers and police chased some thirty City boys through the woods near the school. Four City students were suspended by Weglein, along with eighteen Gwynns Falls boys implicated in the attack on Bridge.³²

The episode inflamed the Jewish community. The *Jewish Times* devoted significant coverage as reports circulated of a "secret bund organization" operating in the schools. School authorities downplayed the incident, describing it as a "boyish prank" or "fracas between school

children.” Weglein promised a full investigation, which found no evidence of organized antisemitism at Gwynns Falls or any other school. Instead, the investigatory report deplored the “great amount of publicity” which created an “exaggerated impression of what occurred.” It made a plea for “real tolerance” but made no recommendations except to place the suspended students on probation for the following school year. Criminal charges against Morton Rosen were tossed out by a grand jury.³³

Rosen and the City students demonstrated that Jewish youth were ready for a more aggressive “fight” strategy than their elders. Indeed, young Jews had not been silent in the face of earlier incidents; in 1936, ninth graders at Clifton Park Junior High School had protested the required reading of Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, charging that their classmates had used antisemitic passages from the book against them. *Jewish Times* columnist Maurice Shochatt had chosen not to cover their protest at that time but three years later he proudly hailed Rosen’s “solid punches in the defense of Melvin Bridge.”³⁴ He was not the only adult to approve the teen’s actions: Rosen received pro bono representation from prominent attorney Ellis Levin and was given a job by a Jewish businessman. Taking heart from the younger generation, the Jewish community, it seemed, was now in a more fighting mood.

The Jewish Vote

Despite the climate of antisemitism, the interwar period saw Baltimore’s Jewish community become a political force to be reckoned with. Jews had been active in politics for decades, but now their growing numbers along with an increased level of political sophistication and organization allowed them to claim a share of real power. They were aided by Baltimore’s border city political culture, which had long combined the kind of ethnic-based machine politics

common to northern industrial cities with the penchant for disenfranchising black voters characteristic of the South. These dynamics provided opportunity to a Jewish community that was not only significant in size, but ever more concentrated into a single section of the city. It remained only for someone to come along with the insight and ruthlessness to forge the Jewish population into a powerful voting bloc.³⁵

That someone was James H. “Jack” Pollack. Pollack had grown up on the streets of East Baltimore and enjoyed a brief career as a boxer before becoming an enforcer in the bootlegging trade. Arrested often for assault and liquor violations in his twenties, in 1921 he and three accomplices were indicted for killing night watchman Hugo Kaplan during a robbery. The case never came to trial and Pollack soon embarked on a political career: in 1926, in the employ of Irish Democratic boss William Curran, he assaulted an East Baltimore election judge who questioned the qualifications of a man whom Pollack had brought in to register to vote. Curran himself represented Pollack at his hearing (he was fined twenty-six dollars).³⁶

Pollack rose in Curran’s organization and in 1933 Governor Albert C. Ritchie appointed him to the state Athletic Commission, which regulated the boxing industry. Ritchie admitted that Pollack “used to be quite a bad boy” but noted that most charges against him had been dropped. He was now a family man living in northwest Baltimore, serving as Curran’s co-leader in the fourth legislative district. The two were close; Pollack even named his son Morton Curran Pollack. Before long, however, he bucked his mentor and took over the district.³⁷

Through his Trenton Democratic Club, Pollack “wielded nearly absolute control over the Jewish vote.” The totals in his precincts “hit like a ton of concrete,” recalled a *Sun* editor. “Three hundred to six! Four hundred and fifty to ten! When the fourth district came in, elections turned around!” His personality aided his rise: astuteness, charisma and charm, and a vindictiveness that

struck fear into potential adversaries. When opposed, “he would take measures to destroy you,” a close acquaintance said. “He was a vicious enemy.” Forging alliances with highly-placed officials—after Curran, the most notable being Thomas D’Alesandro Jr., congressman, mayor, and former “shabbes goy”—Pollack emerged by the early forties as the city’s unchallenged political boss, a position he would hold for two decades as he “made” mayors and governors, city councilmen and state legislators, judges, housing inspectors, and liquor license holders.³⁸

Pollack’s motive was to amass personal wealth and power. While doing so, he gave his fellow Jews access to the political spoils of a burgeoning welfare state: government jobs and contracts, city services, and favorable treatment from regulatory agencies, zoning boards, and other public bodies. Easterwood Park athletic director Dutch Baer found himself on the receiving end of Pollack’s largesse; an obsessive softball fan, Pollack made sure the park was kept in top shape. He also had a habit of hiring ringers for his Trenton Democratic Club team, “which he had no right to do because it was amateur sports,” Baer noted. To many people, Pollack was a beneficent presence. “He did for everybody,” stated neighbor Louis Bluefeld, who recalled Pollack dispensing favors to families who called his home daily. In return, “everybody on the block” helped Pollack at election time.³⁹

Many Jewish public officials owed their elections to Pollack, who expected to be rewarded in turn. But, though obsessed with political power, he was uninterested in public policy. He often backed candidates who, “in keeping with the Jewish tradition, could be counted on to take the lead in the enactment of progressive legislation in the areas of education, health, welfare of the poor” without his interference, a politically connected observer noted. These included labor champion and New Dealer Jacob Edelman, elected to the City Council in 1939, and state legislator E. Milton Altfeld, who sponsored anti-Jim Crow bills and other civil rights

measures.⁴⁰ Yet it would be wrong to credit Pollack with advancing the interests of African Americans. With blacks making up a large portion of the fourth district, he took up the Baltimore power structure's ongoing project of keeping African Americans politically powerless, following a dual strategy of suppressing the black vote and playing on the racial fears of his Jewish constituency. Excluding blacks became a keystone of Pollack's organization, "one of its strongest cohesive forces," says political scientist Harvey Wheeler. Jews advanced politically, at least in part, at the expense of blacks.⁴¹

Pollack's rise to power was not without opposition in the Jewish community. In 1934 House of Delegates member Alexander Goodman organized a slate of anti-Pollack primary candidates; he never won another election. Other Jewish politicians, uncomfortable with Pollack's corrupt ways, dropped in and out of the fold. Altfeld temporarily broke from him in 1935, proclaiming that the fourth district had become "a political cesspool." (House Speaker Emanuel Gorfine condemned the "unwarranted attack upon Mr. Pollack.") An anti-Pollack faction coalesced in the 1940s around Judge Joseph Sherbow, known for his anti-gambling crusade. But even reform-minded Jewish Democrats were implicated in machine politics one way or another: Sherbow himself was a Curran ally.⁴²

Jews and blacks had long been mainstays of Baltimore's perennially downtrodden Republican Party, and Republicans may have been the only Jewish office holders to escape the taint of the machine. Popular Jewish reformer Daniel Ellison served as the "social conscience" of the City Council and its lone Republican, despite running from the heart of Pollack territory; among other things, he lobbied "long, hard, and successfully" for the 1937 creation of the Baltimore Housing Authority. The *Afro-American* saw Harry Levin, the city's sole Republican state legislator in the late 1920s, as a staunch ally. Simon Sobeloff, once a protégé of Republican

mayor William Broening, was responsible for enforcing Prohibition laws as U.S. Attorney for Maryland in the early 1930s and somehow “emerged with the respect of both wets and dries.”⁴³

But the days when Jews split their vote between the two parties were drawing to an end. The interwar years saw American Jews move solidly into the Democratic camp, and Baltimoreans were no exception.⁴⁴ The rise of Pollack’s machine no doubt helped, but ultimately it was the Depression that transformed the Jewish electorate into a solidly Democratic constituency. From machine hacks to progressive reformers, from the labor movement to small businesspeople, Baltimore Jews embraced the New Deal.

Beyond the electoral process, Jews influenced local politics through their participation in the social movements that spanned the era. It was a time of broad-based alliances: suffrage leader Sadie Crockin worked with union women in the campaign for women’s right to vote; upper-class friend of labor Jacob Moses became a prominent advocate for a women’s Equal Rights Amendment; socialist Samuel Neistadt and Rabbi Israel helped found the Maryland ACLU. The Jewish-led Amalgamated Clothing Workers became an important part of the city’s political culture, sponsoring a popular lecture series for workers that served as a gathering place for a wide spectrum of progressives. Though reformers and radicals made little headway in the reactionary years after World War I, once the Depression hit, the networks they had created helped revive the labor movement and forge the citizens’ movements that pushed for solutions to the economic crisis. Given the anti-New Deal stance of key public officials, the ACW and other progressive groups were critical in getting the New Deal to work in Maryland. Their efforts, the tactics of the Democratic machine, and the popularity of FDR and the New Deal brought Jews and other ethnic groups into the political process more than ever before.⁴⁵

Embracing the Popular Front strategy of building alliances with liberals, Maryland’s

Communist Party—with much Jewish participation—reached the height of its influence in the 1930s and early 1940s. Jewish Communists worked as union organizers and attorneys, particularly in the maritime, shipyard, and steel industries. They promoted racial equality at forums sponsored by civil rights groups and held mixed-race dances that were often raided by the police. Johns Hopkins University professor Albert Blumberg was the Communist candidate for mayor in 1938 and senator in 1940. Baltimore attorney Bernard Ades achieved fame defending Euel Lee, an African American accused of killing a white family of four on the Eastern shore, in a case that drew comparisons to the Scottsboro boys. Before the trial, Ades and a colleague were beaten by a mob that gathered outside the courthouse in hopes of lynching Lee. Ades succeeded in having Lee’s conviction overturned based on the exclusion of blacks from the jury; the *Afro* praised what “two Jewish lawyers, backed by the Communist Party,” had accomplished. (Lee was convicted in a second trial and executed, however.)⁴⁶

The heroic actions of Bernard Ades and racist ploys of Jack Pollack represented the extremes of Jewish political behavior toward blacks during the era. Jewish elected officials like Ellison, Levin, Goodman, and Altfeld were among the few white politicians to ally with African Americans. When Ellison sponsored a resolution urging the U.S. Senate to pass an anti-poll tax bill in 1942, only the Jewish City Councilmen voted in favor (no blacks served on the Council at that time). Indeed, as author Lillian Potter put it, “No other community in Baltimore aided the Black struggle as the Jewish community did.” Nevertheless, members of the two groups often found themselves in opposition. In politics as well as in other arenas, interactions between Baltimore’s two largest minorities were both intertwined and complex.⁴⁷

Jews and Blacks

In addition to politicians, several Jewish civic leaders demonstrated their support for black civil rights. Sidney Hollander, an Urban League founder, led a biracial committee charged with making the city's parks more responsive to blacks. He personally challenged segregation by bringing African American friends to concerts at the Peabody Conservatory. (In the 1950s, he would arrange for the first black performer, Marian Anderson, to appear at the Lyric Theatre.) Joseph Ulman served as president of the Urban League for several years. Edward Israel fought for a black presence on the staff of the city's new employment agency and insisted on equal pay. He also angered Jewish department store owners—including members of his own congregation—by calling on them to desegregate.⁴⁸

Yet, aside from Rabbi Israel, Jewish leaders were unwilling to confront Jewish-owned businesses that discriminated against or exploited blacks. Indeed, despite Jewish support for civil rights, economic and social relations between blacks and Jews were fraught with tension. African Americans' frustrations at the oppression they faced often found expression against Jews, who were highly visible in the black community as landlords, storeowners, and competitors for the same real estate. Articles in the *Afro-American* in the early 1920s pulled no punches: "Jews Making Barrels of Money from Colored Folk" is how the paper described the role of Jewish real estate speculators in northwest Baltimore's changing neighborhoods. One article depicted a woman's attempt "to save her home from the clutches of Simon Needle, a Jewish real estate dealer." Perhaps because of the *Afro's* developing relationship with Jewish political allies, however, such crude stereotypes disappeared from the headlines by the end of the decade.⁴⁹

The most concentrated Jewish retail presence in black West Baltimore was along Pennsylvania Avenue. Lined with shops, movie theaters, clubs, and concert halls that showcased America's top black entertainers, "the Avenue" was the thriving "hub of Negro life and activity

in Baltimore.” As one female patron recalled, “downtown you couldn’t try on a dress or stop and have a snack with a friend, but the Avenue was ours and, I’ll tell you, it was a mighty fine place to go.”⁵⁰ That most of the stores and many entertainment venues were owned by Jews had broad implications for Jewish-black relations. Among other things, the reluctance of Avenue merchants to hire black employees led many African Americans to suspect that “their Jewishness was somehow related to their discriminatory behavior,” notes historian Andor Skotnes. In the 1930s, activists led a “Buy Where You Can Work” boycott of the Avenue’s stores. The campaign had mixed success, but one clear result was an increase in tension between blacks and Jews.⁵¹

However, relationships between customers and merchants, employees and storeowners, and black and Jewish neighbors could be positive as well. Mickey Steinberg’s family lived above their store in an African American block of West Lanvale Street. “All my friends were ‘colored,’” he recalled. “We played ball on the street.” He rarely ventured into the white, gentile working-class area across Fulton Avenue, where, as a Jewish kid, he was more likely to encounter hostility. And while some African Americans complained of high prices and exploitive credit practices, others believed that Jewish merchants provided a valuable service and that the Jews’ experience of oppression made them sympathetic to the plight of blacks. “In the Jews’ stores, they would give you credit,” one woman explained in an oral history. “You couldn’t go into the white stores and say my children need a loaf of bread or a chicken or whatever, and have them give it to you. But in a Jew’s store, you could get that. It’s interesting because the Jews also have a history of being oppressed. . . . And I think that’s why they did for us, because they were also downed people.”⁵²

To many African Americans, that history of oppression made discrimination by Jewish-owned businesses all the more infuriating. As Baltimore NAACP leader Lillie Mae Jackson put

it, “the Negroes naturally expect better treatment from the Jewish group.” And nothing aroused the anger of Jackson and other black leaders so much as the racist policies of the downtown department stores, most of which were Jewish-owned. Hochschild, Kohn chief Martin Kohn later admitted, “Colored customers, or blacks as they are called now, were not welcomed in any Baltimore department store. . . . They were not extended credit regardless of their worth. They could not try on clothes and they had no return privileges.” They also were not served at store lunch counters.⁵³

Kohn claimed the stores had little choice. “Baltimore was a border city, and all prejudices were a little stronger here than other places.” His use of the word “all” hints at the vulnerability felt by Jewish merchants; they would not risk the good will of the white, gentile majority. But more important, the owners believed that changing their policy involved too great a financial risk. Confronted by the NAACP in the 1930s and 1940s, Kohn relates, “I am ashamed to say that we put them off by saying that it was not us, but our customers, who determined our policy. . . . We had customers who would get off an elevator if a black got on, and who would leave a counter if a black stood next to them.” Ironically, his rationale echoed the rationale of real estate developer Edward Bouton for keeping Jews out of Roland Park.⁵⁴

Similar alliances and tensions between Jews and blacks could be found in other cities, but in Baltimore, the only city where “large Jewish and Black communities were juxtaposed in a southern-like Jim Crow environment,” as Skotnes puts it, their interactions were likely more charged than elsewhere. Local tensions burst onto the national scene in a 1936 exchange between Rabbi Israel and Lillie Mae Jackson in the NAACP magazine, *Crisis*. Israel, a noted civil rights supporter, expressed dismay about the anti-Jewish sentiment he encountered at a civil rights forum. Jackson responded with a barrage of angry charges against Jews, with special mention of

the department stores.⁵⁵

On the Civic and Cultural Scene

It is not surprising that civil rights leaders—drawn primarily from the black middle and upper classes—found exclusion from the downtown emporiums particularly galling. As “prominent sites of civic culture and modernity,” in historian Paul Kramer’s words, the department stores symbolized Baltimore’s very identity during an age of rising consumerism. Hutzler’s “was so ‘Baltimore-ish’ and very classy,” as one former customer put it. “It was one of the big Baltimore traditions.” Novelist Anne Tyler considered the store so defining that for years, her characters shopped there at least once per novel. Hochschild, Kohn’s Thanksgiving parade was “one of Baltimore’s biggest and best-loved spectacles.”⁵⁶

Their role in fashioning the downtown experience was not the only way Jews shaped Baltimore as it grew into a thriving modern city. From their circumscribed turf in northwest Baltimore, their contributions to civic and cultural life were citywide—and major: from the foods Baltimoreans identified as their own to the places they spent their leisure hours to the art that hung on the walls of that newly-built monument to civic pride, the Baltimore Museum of Art. Despite antisemitism and the limits imposed by a segregated social life, the Jewish community became an integral part of the cultural fabric during the interwar era. And not just through the contributions of old elite families like the Hutzlers, Hochschilds, and Hechts, but, even more so, through the ambitions and preoccupations of the Eastern Europeans—acculturated immigrants and their children—who made up the bulk of the Jewish population.

A new generation of Jewish-owned businesses began to rival the department stores in cultural influence. Jewish-owned car dealerships, movie theater chains, advertising agencies, and

radio stations represented the cutting edge of consumerism. Delis such as Nates and Leon's became hangouts where (white) Baltimoreans from a variety of backgrounds could congregate. Isadore Rappaport's Hippodrome Theater offered the latest in live entertainment, from big bands to comedy acts like Bob Hope and the Three Stooges. Hendler's Ice Cream ("The Velvet Kind") entered the peak of its popularity, while German Jewish refugee spicemaker Gustav Brunn created the spice blend that he named "Old Bay." Even the traditional Baltimore game of duckpin bowling received an update when the Shecter family opened the Charles Bowling Center in 1937, its 100 lanes making it the largest of its kind.⁵⁷

As the Eastern Europeans' elder statesman and Baltimore's biggest booster, Jacob Epstein exerted a major influence on his adopted city. His wholesale firm, the Baltimore Bargain House, had long been one of the city's largest businesses, and by the 1920s he was devoting most of his energies to civic life. In the early 1920s he served as one of five members of the powerful Public Improvement Commission, charged with overseeing the development of the land the city had annexed in 1918. This role gave him a hand in the expansion of the city's water supply and school system, among other public projects. Meanwhile, he joined the board of the nascent Baltimore Museum of Art in 1923 and his personal art collection became one of its founding collections when it opened in Wyman Park in 1929.⁵⁸

Other Jewish Baltimoreans played key roles in creating the institutions of a modern era. As Maryland's relief administrator during the New Deal, Harry Greenstein set up the state's first welfare system while Abel Wolman oversaw numerous city infrastructure projects as head of another New Deal state agency, the public works administration. Dr. Bessie Moses, the first female obstetrical intern at Johns Hopkins, opened Baltimore's first birth control clinic in 1927 with the support of Hopkins faculty. In 1938 she established the Northwest Maternal Health

Center, the first in the nation staffed by black physicians. Civic leader Jacob Moses led the drive to convert the former Hebrew Orphan Asylum into the West Baltimore General Hospital, an institution desperately needed in a rapidly growing part of the city.⁵⁹

Jews contributed to Baltimore cultural life from high to low. The Cone sisters amassed a good part of their renowned modern art collection during the interwar period; after Claribel died in 1929, Etta continued the sisters' close relationship with Matisse, who visited her in Baltimore in 1930. The Cone Collection later became the "crown jewel" of the Baltimore Museum of Art. Their cousin Saidie Adler May, an equally adventurous collector, made her first substantial gift of art to the BMA in the 1930s. The May and Cone donations would give the museum one of the nation's finest collections of modern European art.

At the other extreme was Max Cohen, whose marketing genius helped make Baltimore's red-light district, The Block, a cultural institution that may have exceeded the art museum in popularity, if not in taste. Cohen advertised his Oasis night club as "the worst night club in America" with "the lousiest shows in the world." The Oasis drew fashionable uptown "slummers" and even developed a national reputation: famed showbiz reporter and emcee Ed Sullivan termed it the "most unusual night club I've ever seen." The Block would remain a key part of Baltimore's night life into the 1950s.⁶⁰

Some cultural figures bridged the gap between high and low. Immigrant violinist Benjamin Klasmer founded the Jewish Educational Alliance youth orchestra in 1919. Under his baton it became a respected ensemble, and he recruited many of its musicians to join him in the fledgling Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. At the same time, he served as the city's leading director of pit orchestras, arranging and conducting the live music that accompanied silent movies and vaudeville. After sound replaced silent films, Klasmer settled into a permanent gig at

the Hippodrome, where he led the orchestra and performed as part of a two-person musical comedy act. His most significant contribution to Baltimore's civic life may have come in 1947 when he co-wrote the Baltimore Colts theme song with Jo Lombardi.⁶¹

Having embraced local influences, Jews became adept at reflecting them back out. As a boy in the late 1930s, Jerry Leiber delivered goods to the black families who lived around his mother's West Baltimore grocery store. "Inside those households, radios were always playing," he later wrote. "Music was everywhere, running through my head and coursing through my veins." He grew up to become half of the Leiber-Stoller songwriting team, which gave the world such seminal rock & roll hits as "Jailhouse Rock," "Hound Dog," and "Stand by Me."⁶²

Individuals such as Leiber and Klasmer exemplify the boundary crossing that characterized Jewish life and culture during the interwar era. Though Jews resided within well-defined geographic boundaries, the borders of their interaction with the larger society were porous in ways less visible, from political alliances to economic interdependence to civic and cultural activities. It was a time of transition, bridging the gap between the immigrant era and the period after World War II, when a fully American Jewish community would emerge. And it was the time when the Jews of Baltimore embraced their identity as "Baltimore Jews."

NOTES

¹ *Sun*: “Hitler’s Birthday Observed Aboard Cruiser Emden In Bay,” Apr 21, 1936; “Emden’s Officers Guests at Dinner,” Apr 22, 1936; “Emden Guests See Sea Life’s Gay Side,” May 1, 1936; “Bund Rally Recalls the Emden,” Feb 26, 1939; Fred Rasmussen, “Nazi Ship Docked here in 1936,” Sep 29, 1996.

² Rasmussen, “Nazi Ship;” *Jewish Times* (hereafter *JT*) Apr 17, 24, and May 1, 1936.

³ “\$277,000 Is Given to Jewish Relief Fund,” *Sun*, Nov 23, 1919; “Fund Short \$200,000,” *Sun*, Nov 30, 1919.

⁴ Ford required his dealerships to carry the paper, guaranteeing a wide distribution. On the national rise in antisemitism during the interwar period, see for example, Beth Wenger, *The Jewish Americans: Three Centuries of Jewish Voices in America* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁵ Abraham Shusterman, *Legacy of a Liberal: The Miracle of Har Sinai Congregation* (1967), 53; “Rabbi Raises Cry of Politics Over Welcome To Nazi Cruiser,” *Sun*, Apr 20, 1936; “Emden Protest Recruits Sought,” *Sun*, Apr 19, 1936; “One Arrested as Nazis’ Foes Jeer Crew of Emden at Pier,” *Sun*, Apr 23, 1936.

⁶ “Emden’s Welcome Reported Changed,” Apr 14, 1936; “Emden to Receive Official Welcome,” Apr 17, 1936; “State Legion Decides Not to Greet Emden,” Apr 21, 1936, all *Sun*.

⁷ On Jews as Baltimore’s largest immigrant group during the 1880-1920 period, see Joseph Arnold, “Thinking Big about a Big City: Baltimore, 1729-1999,” in *From Mobtown to Charm City: New Perspectives on Baltimore’s Past*, ed. [J. Elfenbein](#), [J. R. Breihan](#), and T. L. Hollowak (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002).

⁸ Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 292-304 (quote, 302). See also Joseph L. Arnold, “Suburban Growth and Municipal Annexation in Baltimore, 1745-1918,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 73, no. 2 (Summer 1978).

⁹ Olson, *Baltimore*, 325; “Study of the Recreational, Social and Cultural Resources of the Jewish Community of Baltimore,” 1925, 2, 13, 135-136, The Associated Collection, MS 170, folder 297, Jewish Museum of Maryland (hereafter JMM). This study (hereafter 1925 YMHA study), conducted by the Jewish Welfare Board of New York, was commissioned by the Baltimore YMHA. On discrimination against blacks and Jews in Baltimore, see Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010).

¹⁰ First quote: Leon Sachs, “Review of Baltimore Jewish Council Program,” 8, c. 1958, Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) Vertical File, JMM. Second quote: ¹⁰“The Only Mink He Ever Saw,” *Evening Sun*, Dec 19, 1972. Third quote: Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 65.

¹¹ Olson, *Baltimore*, 325; Garrett Power, “The Residential Segregation of Baltimore’s Jews,” *Generations* (Fall 1996), 5-7; Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 56, 74; Beth Rubinsky, “Restrictive Covenants Do Not Explain Jewish Migration into the Northwest Suburbs of Baltimore” (unpublished paper, 1986, JMM Vertical File), 32-33; James F. Waesche, *Crowning the Gravelly Hill: A History of the Roland Park-Guilford-Homeland District* (Baltimore, 1987), 113.

¹² BJC memo, Jan 31, 1941, Baltimore Jewish Council Collection, MS 107, Folder 352, JMM; BJC memo, Mar 4, 1942, MS 107, Folder 331.

¹³ Joseph Meyerhoff oral history, OH 77, JMM, transcript p. 19; Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*.

¹⁴ Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, xi. Baltimore led the nation in efforts to segregate blacks, first through pioneering segregation ordinances, and then (when these were declared unconstitutional) through restrictive covenants and racial steering. See also Garrett Power, “Apartheid Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910-1913,” *Maryland Law Review*, 1983.

New York City’s population was less than 3 percent black in 1920; blacks in Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland made up around 4 percent; in Philadelphia, around 7 percent (U.S. Census). Even after a

decade of the Great Migration, in 1930 Baltimore had the largest percentage of blacks of the nation's ten largest cities: almost 18 percent. Southern cities had large black populations but small numbers of Jews.

¹⁵ Phyllis Orrick, "Northwest Exodus: The Migration of Baltimore's Jews," *City Paper*, Jun 5, 1987; Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 56.

¹⁶ Quoted in Alexandra Lee Levin, *Vision: A Biography of Harry Friedenwald* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), 338-339. Marbury was a longtime leader of attempts to enforce segregation in Baltimore. See Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*.

¹⁷ Orrick, "Northwest Exodus," 13; Gilbert Sandler, "On the Avenue," *JT*, Oct 31, 1997 and "Staying on Track," *JT*, Aug 28, 1998; Roderick N. Ryon, *Northwest Baltimore and Its Neighborhoods, 1870-1970* (Baltimore: University of Baltimore Educational Foundation, 2000): 56.

¹⁸ Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Gilbert Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ David "Dutch" Baer, OH 114, JMM, 1980; Ellie Ginsburg, *American Jews and the Holocaust: History, Memory, and Identity*, at userpages.umbc.edu/~jonfeng1/thesisproject/ellieginsburg/homepage.html (Paper interview); Minnie Schneider, OH 66, JMM; Perry Siegel, OH 248, JMM. See also JMM oral histories of Ida Marton, OH 177; Edward Attman, OH 678; Martin Lev, OH 301; Milton Schwartz, OH 676; Aaron Smelkinson, OH 620.

²⁰ Baer OH; Ginsburg, *American Jews and the Holocaust*.

²¹ JMM oral histories, Isadore Livov, Smelkinson, Attman, Blanche Green, Rosalie Abrams; Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project (BNHP) oral histories, Catherine Mancuso, John Pente, Joseph Sergi.

²² Rubinsky, "Restrictive Covenants," 36; Deborah Rudacille, "On the Corner: Growing up Jewish in a Gentile Neighborhood," JMM blog, jewishmuseummd.org/2013/04/on-the-corner-growing-up-jewish-in-a-gentile-neighborhood-1/ (accessed 7/15/13).

²³ Sandler, "Front-Row Seat," 27.

²⁴ Norma Wolod, OH 687, JMM; 1925 report, 102.

²⁵ *Green Bag* (City College yearbook), 1923, 186; Sandler, "City Forever!" *JT*. In 1941, the City football squad traveled to Florida to play against a Miami team in a contest of the nation's two best high school football teams, according to Sandler. One-quarter of the City team was Jewish.

²⁶ *VOTE! The Life of Sadie Crockin*, JMM exhibition, 2010; "Owners of the Post," *Baltimore Post*, Oct 23, 1929; *JT*, Mar 24, 1944 (on dodgeball); Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*.

²⁷ *Enterprising Emporiums: The Jewish Department Stores of Downtown Baltimore* (Baltimore: JMM, 2001), 71; Dirk Bonker, "Matters of Public Knowledge," *Lives Lost, Lives Found, Baltimore's German Jewish Refugees, 1933-1945* (Baltimore: JMM, 2004), 68-9; Sidney Needle to Isaac Potts, May 11, 1939, MS 107, folder 121. Little Potts and Hochschild, Kohn did make special efforts to hire refugees, however, they did not fire other employees in order to do so.

²⁸ Friedenwald correspondence, MS 161, folders 269, 271, 273; "Federation of Church and Synagogue a Joy," *JT*, Sep 30, 1932; Clementine Kaufman, "A Rabbi's Daughter Remembers," *Generations* (Fall 1999): 1-5.

²⁹ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "'Big Four' Forms General Council for Jewish Rights," Aug 17, 1938; Feingold, *ATFS*, 238-239; Leon Sachs, 1979, BNHP OH 174; *JT* Feb 5, 1971.

³⁰ "Review of BJC Program," 6, quote; Leon Sachs, OH 257, JMM; Sachs OH, BNHP.

³¹ *JT*, Oct 28, 1932; "School Board Bans Shylock as Offensive," *Sun*, Oct 16, 1932; *Afro-American*, Nov 12, 1932.

³² "Anti-Jewish Acts in School Here Charged," *Sun*, Jun 13, 1939; "City College 4 Suspended in Fight Probe," *Sun*, Jun 14, 1939; "Anti-Semitic Attack on Jewish Boy in Public School Arouses Stir in U.S.A.," *JT*, Jun 16, 1939; Maurice Shochatt column, *JT*, Jun 30, 1939; "Board Finds Schools Free of Race Rows," *Sun*, Jul 7, 1939.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ In his June 23, 1939, column on the Gwynns Falls incident, Shochatt revealed that in 1936 he had received a copy of the Clifton Park students' letter of complaint, but did not report on it at the time.

³⁵ Harvey Wheeler, "Yesterday's Robin Hood: The Rise and Fall of Baltimore's Trenton Democratic Club," *American Quarterly* 7 (Winter, 1955): 337 on the latent power of the city's Jewish population.

³⁶ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 160-163; "Four Indicted for Murder," *Sun*, Aug 2, 1921; "Fined for Attack on Election Judge," *Sun*, Sep 25, 1926.

³⁷ "Ritchie Places Ex-Pugilist on Sports Board," *Sun*, Dec 31, 1933.

³⁸ Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood* (first quote, 112); Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 164, *Sun* editor quote; Baer OH (third quote); Wheeler, "Yesterday's Robin Hood."

³⁹ Wheeler, "Yesterday's Robin Hood;" Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 113; Baer OH; Louis Bluefeld, BNHP OH 159.

⁴⁰ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 163; Edelman VF, JMM; "E. Milton Altfeld, Former State Senator, Writer, Dies," *Sun*, Nov 30, 1965.

⁴¹ Wheeler, "Yesterday's Robin Hood," 339. In the early 1930s, boundaries were redrawn to split black voters among several districts, thus shutting blacks out of the City Council and state legislature. Since most blacks voted Republican, the gerrymander may have been motivated more by partisanship than racism. Another goal may have been to create a Jewish district rather than deliberately reduce black voting power. In effect it did all those things. See "Would Redistrict G.O.P. Stronghold," *Sun*, Feb 20, 1931; "Redistricting Bill Hits Fourth District," *Afro-American*, Mar 4 1933; "Gerrymander of Fourth District Hit at Forum," *Afro-American*, Apr 8, 1933.

⁴² "Fourth District Clubs Pick Slates to Fight Curran's," *Sun*, Aug 29, 1934; "Goodman, Council Official, Dies," *Sun*, Sep 20, 1956; "House Speaker Declares Fight against Politician is Unwarranted," *Sun* 25 Mar 1935; Altfeld letter to Gorfine, Mar 25, 1935, E. Milton Altfeld Collection, MS 7, folder 2, JMM. On

Sherbow, memo, n.d., “Material in Baltimore Jewish Council Files Pertaining to Jack Pollack’s Embarrassment of Jewish Community,” BJC VF.

⁴³ Avrum K. Rifman, “Jewish Public Officials,” *Generations* 1 (Dec 1978): 17-28; Argersinger, *New Deal*, 184 (on Ellison); “Harry Levin Dies at 77,” *Sun*, Jan 5, 1966. Levin later became the *Afro-American*’s attorney. Sobeloff went on to become U.S. Solicitor General in the Eisenhower administration. See Anthony Lewis, “Our Extraordinary Solicitor General,” *The Reporter*, n.d. (quote), Sobeloff VF, JMM. On Baltimore’s Republican Party, see Joseph L. Arnold, “The Last of the Good Old Days: Politics in Baltimore, 1920-1950,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* (71/3, 1976): 443-448;

⁴⁴ Moore, *At Home*, chapter 8, “The Rise of the Jewish Democrat.”

⁴⁵ “VOTE!” exhibition; Samuel Neistadt Papers, MS 175, folder 1, JMM; Deborah R. Weiner, “Ten in the Twentieth: Baltimore Jews and Social Justice,” *Generations* (2009/10): 164 (on Moses); Argersinger, *Amalgamated*, 75-78, 108, and *New Deal*; Skotnes, *New Deal for All?*

⁴⁶ Leonard M. Helfgott, “Enduring Idealism: Baltimore Jews in the Communist Party,” *Generations* (2009/2010), 74-87; Skotnes, *New Deal for All?* (quote, 62). Ades headed the Baltimore branch of International Labor Defense, the Communist-backed group that defended the Scottsboro boys. After the Lee case, he went off to fight in the Spanish Civil War, one of thirteen Baltimore Jews who joined the fabled Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

⁴⁷ “City Council Avoids Anti-Poll Tax War,” *Afro-American* Oct 31, 1942; Potter, “Political Cooperation,” 16.

⁴⁸ *Afro-American*, Feb 22, 1930 on parks; Weiner, “Ten in the Twentieth,” on Hollander; “Late Rabbi Was Staunch Interracialist,” *Afro-American*, Oct 25, 1941.

⁴⁹ *Afro-American*, Aug 22, 1919; “Mrs. Pitts Asks for Injunction,” *Afro-American*, Jun 3, 1921. “Husband Sues Jewish Grocer,” Jan 2, 1920, and “Jewish Boy Kills Botts,” Apr 3, 1920, describe violent confrontations outside Jewish-owned stores.

⁵⁰ Thomas Edsall, "Pennsylvania Avenue Declining for Generation," *Evening Sun*, May 10, 1967.

⁵¹ "Don't Spend Your Money Where You Can't Work," *Afro-American*, Jan 10, 1932; Andor Skotnes, "'Buy Where You Can Work:' Boycotting for Jobs in African-American Baltimore, 1933-1934," *Journal of Social History* 27 (Summer 1994): 735-61, quote, 754.

⁵² Conversation with Mickey Steinberg; Ruth Stewart OH, "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" Project (Langsdale Library Special Collections, University of Baltimore). See also Juanita Crider and Harold Knight oral histories in same collection.

⁵³ First quote, Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 183. Second quote, Kohn, "Hochschild, Kohn." For a full account, see Paul A. Kramer, "White Sales: The Racial Politics of Baltimore's Jewish-Owned Department Stores, 1935-1965," in *Enterprising Emporiums*, 37-59. On African American grievances against Jews, see Skotnes, *New Deal for All?*

⁵⁴ Kohn, "Hochschild, Kohn."

⁵⁵ Skotnes, *New Deal for All?*, 283. On other cities see for example Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*. On the *Crisis* exchange, see Edward Israel, "Jew Hatred Among Negroes," *Crisis*, Feb 1936, and Jackson's response in the April issue.

⁵⁶ Kramer, "White Sales"; Michael J. Lisicky, *Hutzler's: Where Baltimore Shops* (History Press, 2009), 143; Rosemary Hutzler, "Ghost of Christmas Past: Reflections on Baltimore's Grand Old Department Store," *City Paper*, Dec 3, 1997, 18; Sandler, "H-K Days."

⁵⁷ "Entertaining America," *Generations* 2003 (JMM); Arthur Hirsch, "A Seasoned Veteran," *Sun*, Aug 9, 2000; "Louis E. Shecter, promoter and activist," *Sun*, Nov 11, 1992.

⁵⁸ Deborah R. Weiner, "Filling the Peddler's Pack: Jacob Epstein and the Baltimore Bargain House," paper delivered at the Southern Jewish Historical Society annual conference, Baltimore, 2005.

⁵⁹ Weiner, "Ten in the Twentieth," 165.

⁶⁰ Deborah R. Weiner, “Always Have Kind Words for the Place that Feeds You: Jews on ‘The Block,’” *Generations* (2003), 6-17.

⁶¹ Blanche Klasmer Cohen, “Benjamin Klasmer's Contribution to Baltimore's Musical History,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 72 (Summer 1977): 272-276.

⁶² Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, *Hound Dog: The Leiber and Stoller Autobiography* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2010), 10.

The Interwar Era 1920-1940 Introduction Issue Summary Contributing Forces Perspectives Impact Notable People Primary Sources Suggested Research Topics Bibliography See Also Source for information on The Interwar Era 1920-1940: Historic Events for Students: The Great Depression dictionary. It was during this interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s that modern America emerged, an American culture distinct from its predominately European roots. These new developments affected all other facets of U.S. society and laid the foundation for a post-World War II (1939-1945) economic boom. Chronology The overwhelming majority of Jews in America and European nations, have at some point in their political life (or continually) utilized slavery as a malicious moral weapon against White European or American folk, not only to demonize our ancestors, but also to infer that contemporary Europeans are. Quotes about Jewish slave trade. "Almost all the early Jewish settlers in America belonged to the wealthy classes, it was natural for [Jews] to accept the institution of slavery as they found it, and to derive as much benefit from it..." "[slavery] was principally in the hands of the Jews." Wiernik. Peter, History of the Jews in America, Jewish Press Publishing CO., New York, 1912. The Interwar Era lasted from about 1918 AD until 1922 AD. It began with the end of World War I, and the implications of the peace settlement. It then ended with the rise to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany. The interwar era years were marked by political and economic turmoil as Europe struggled to recover from the devastation of World War I. World War I did not cause World War II, but its aftermath still caused an extreme form of embittered nationalism in several countries. While the terms of the