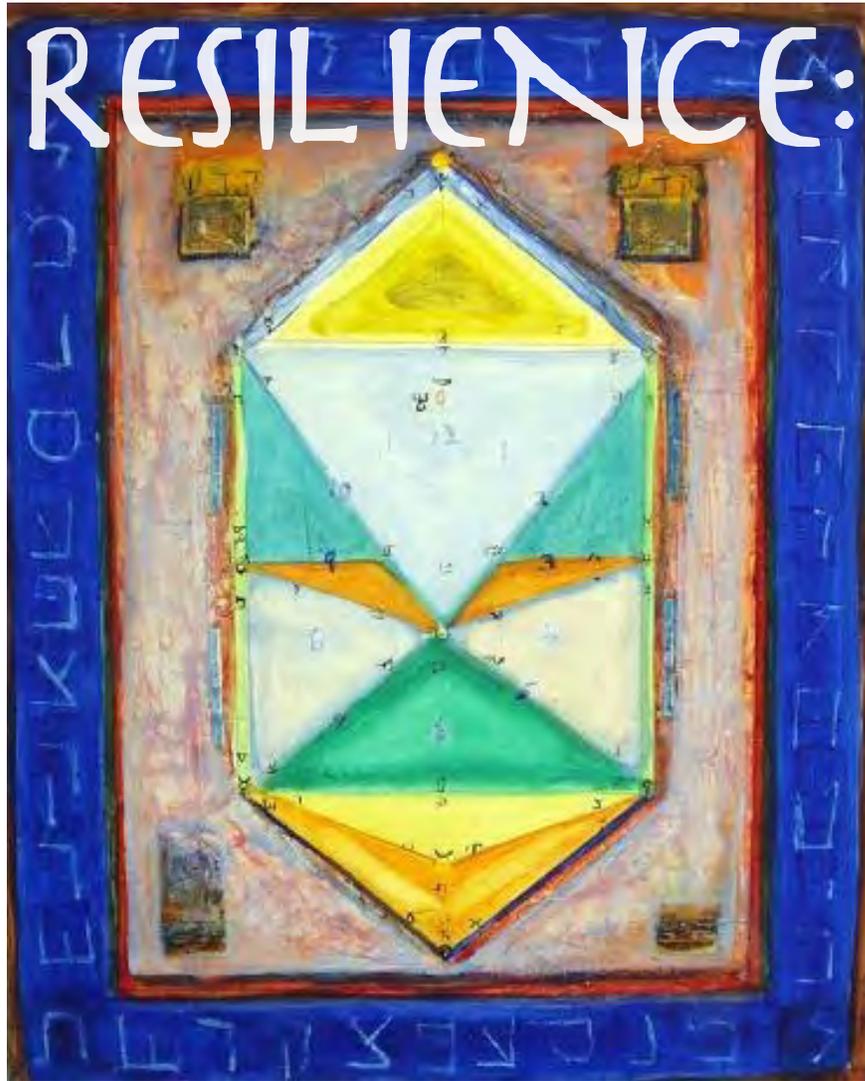


# A TAPESTRY OF RESILIENCE:



## WRESTLING WITH OUR JEWISH EXPERIENCE

A Photovoice Project on the Lived Experiences  
of Jewish Community Members in the Bay Area

City and County of San Francisco

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Theresa Sparks  
Executive Director

Edwin M. Lee  
Mayor





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We wish to extend our gratitude to the Jewish community members who shared their life experiences for this Photovoice project.

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**Welcome** to A Tapestry of Resilience: Wrestling with Our Jewish Experience, an exhibit on the lived experiences of Jewish community members in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**This exhibit** is the culmination of a year-long Photovoice project, during which seven participants delved into their lives as Jewish members of our community. From the novice to the more experienced camera user, all participants used photography as a tool for personal expression. Here you will see their reflections on Jewish identity, anti-Semitism, and resilience, captured through photographic images and first-person narratives.

Jewish people have long experienced anti-Semitism and discrimination in the United States and worldwide. In 2014, the FBI reported that approximately 57% of religious hate crimes in the U.S. were targeted at Jews, who comprise only 2.2% of the U.S. population, making Jewish people the most frequent victims of religious hate crimes in our country.

**Participants**, who represent a wide range of backgrounds (age, gender, religious observance, sexual orientation and ethnic subgroup), bring us into the rich complexity of their lives as they wrestle with and contemplate alienation, discrimination, and questions of belonging and identity, reflecting the incredible diversity of the Bay Area Jewish experience. They also demonstrate what they share: resilience, strength, pride, and a desire for social justice and tikkun olam, repairing the world.

**Our goal** is to bring you into the lives of our participants, to urge you to cross over the bridge into their world, so as to foster empathy and greater understanding. Ultimately, we intend to provide a venue for participants to communicate important issues to policymakers and the community at large.

**We invite** you to explore and gain insight into how this thoughtful group of people has wrestled with and responded to prejudice and discrimination. As you step into their shoes, take a moment to reflect **and commit:**

What am I willing to do to better understand others?

What will it take for me to connect more meaningfully with others?

How will I make this happen?

# TO HIDE OR STAND OUT?



This photo shows people passing by my friend near Sather Gate as he stands there contemplating whether or not to display his Jewish Star on campus. Two photos are layered on top of each other – one of him wearing the Star around his neck and one without – to give you a feeling of the frustration and sadness I feel as a college student.

Every day on campus, I have these feelings of isolation and having to choose whether to blend in and lose my identity or to stand out and be judged for my upbringing and religious and cultural ties. There have been several times on campus where I've walked by, and if I'm wearing a Jewish symbol, I get dirty looks. It is a constant struggle.

There are so many movements to accept people who are different, to not judge or stereotype them, but when it comes to Jews, we are seen as different and many think it is okay to cast their prejudices on us.

As a Jewish person, I feel I have to choose whether to hide or stand out. Do I want to be labeled as a Jew, which has a lot of negative attention associated with it, or do I want to just blend in and hide my history and culture?

~ Joshua

# KEEPING MY JEWISHNESS HIDDEN



I was a cabinetmaker from the time I was 15 until I was 30. My Grandma Esther used to say, "Oy, Scott, why are you a cabinetmaker? Don't you know Jewish boys don't work with their hands? You have a good mind. Be a doctor or a lawyer. That's what a good Jewish boy should be!" Alas, I had other ideas.

One shadow on those days for me was that I felt it wise to keep my Jewishness hidden. There was quite a bit of bigotry in the trades. Blacks, Mexicans, Southeast Asians, Jews, women all were targets of slurs at one time or another.

Prejudice is always ugly, and in those days I felt the threat of co-worker judgments might not only endanger my job but also my physical safety.

This photo makes me uncomfortable. The angle of things makes me feel like they are sliding toward the ground. I felt that way about my Jewish identity. The Menorah is in the background on its side because that was how my relationship to Judaism felt.

~Scott

# A MEMBER OF A MINORITY



I have looked at this huge cross up on the hillside just north of the plaza in Sonoma for a number of years. There is a dichotomy that exists between our primarily Christian country and the place of Jewishness in it.

So I made a Jewish Star and stuck it into the fence, photographing it intentionally out of focus to reflect our minority status. I like the juxtaposition of having this relatively small Jewish Star appearing larger than this much larger cross.

For me, the picture clearly shows my reaction to being a member of a minority. The challenge is being Jewish – and proud of it – while being overwhelmed culturally by the Christian norms surrounding me.

I've always had anxiety about large religious displays, and that includes Jewish as well as Christian, and everything else. I'm even uncomfortable when the Hanukkiah (Hanukkah Candelabra) is put up in Union Square because it's like "a Jewish thing," and I want to be a little hidden.

Jews have been a persecuted people for millennia, for no other reason than Jews are somehow "different." Showing our Jewishness opens us to reactions from non-Jews.

~ Richard

# I CAN'T GO BACK



The most intense way I experience anti-Semitism is the historical destruction of my people in the towns in which they resided.

My friends who are Italian American, Chinese American, Irish or Turkish American are always talking about visiting their homelands and learning the language of their people. But as a Jew, my predecessors are all dead, their Yiddish language is all but gone, their villages and neighborhoods destroyed. I can't go back. And that's the biggest hole in my life.

Some of these photos were taken in France. The corridor that leads nowhere represents the missing part of my ancestry, a dark, empty space that can't be filled. There are armed guards in front of every Jewish venue in Paris right now, and were before the latest attack, and even before the Charlie Hebdo and Hypercacher grocery attacks. Aux Morts means "To the Dead" - it's a memorial to the people who went to the gas chamber. In the corner, you have people who were exterminated in Treblinka.

There is no undoing history. We can only struggle for acceptance and move on with our lives.

~ Joan

Photo credit for collage segment containing guard and rifle: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-paris-reassessing-how-nations-thwart-attacks/> (AP/Christophe Ena)

# STOP JEWS!



I have seen graffiti all over Berkeley that targets Jewish people, both on campus and around the city. I've found actual etchings of graffiti that reads, "Stop Jews," so I re-created this photo to represent the pain I feel when seeing this type of graffiti.

For some reason, we are viewed as negative. Seeing graffiti like this reminds me of the struggle I have in comfortably expressing my Jewish identity. When I walk through my campus and surrounding area, I feel judged. I get dirty looks for just expressing some sort of pride in my Jewish identity.

Just the other day one of my good friends was spit on and called a "dirty Jew" for wearing her Star of David. This makes me feel really sad that there are people in our communities that want us to hide our Judaism.

This picture reveals something I think about every time I decide to do something Jewish in Berkeley. I always have this image or other anti-Semitic images in mind when I decide to express my faith.

Whether it is walking into a Jewish building, wearing a Jewish symbol, or telling someone that I am Jewish, I think about how there is a chance they will have these negative feelings toward my culture and heritage.

~ Joshua

# ALIENATION



At the center of this photo, taken in front of the façade of Stanford Memorial Church, is a young American male wearing a Kippah, which is a Jewish head covering. That's the only thing that tells you about his Jewishness.

As a Jew in a society where I am a minority, I've always struggled with whether or not I want to wear a Kippah in public. I feel uncomfortable expressing my Jewishness, for fear of being harassed or discriminated against.

Judaism is a very important part of my life – it suffuses my life entirely. I engage in Jewish prayer and other rituals daily, and yet for me it's always been a constant life struggle whether to wear the Kippah, because it's what singles me out - somehow when I wear it I feel more alienated within American society. I worry about being the object of bigotry and prejudice in a society that is Christian dominated.

Wearing my Kippah and seeing a church remind me that as much as I may look like a regular American, I'm not.

~ Isaac

# STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND



I grew up in Sacramento, California. When I was in my 20s, I lived in many different places: Arcata, Phoenix, Eugene, Austin, Santa Barbara; but I always returned to Sacramento during the Christmas holiday.

On Christmas Day, my two younger brothers and I would get together to play Frisbee in the park. While it seemed like the whole world was with their families celebrating Christmas, we ran around in the park laughing and throwing that little disc around.

I remember feeling some sense of grief in that separateness from everyone else. We felt like we had nowhere else to go. Everything was closed. We took some solace in our togetherness as brothers, but I also felt we were in some sense strangers in a strange land.

Even today during Christmas, I feel like an outsider. Perhaps to some extent I always feel that way, but it is never in such sharp relief as at Christmas time. And now my middle brother has passed and so when I see Frisbees, it often reminds me of him.

~ Scott

# THE RIGHT TO SPEAK FREELY



I decided to go to the Contemporary Jewish Museum here in San Francisco, and I thought the exhibit "Chasing Justice" represents part of the Jewishness that I love: Tikkun Olam, to fix the world. I'm proud about being Jewish, but it's also a challenge.

This piece is about an artist, Arnold Mesches, who is still alive and who was harassed and under surveillance by the FBI. Under the Freedom of Information Act, he went and got his files and made art from it. I added the Jewish Star. I come from a Holocaust family and so I wanted to bring the issue of the lack of justice into this.

My mom told me that being a child of the Holocaust meant a loss of all her friends – the betrayal of her friends. So justice is about feeling safe to be able to identify myself as Jewish and say what you believe in.

This photo is about the right to be free, to speak freely and not to worry about what will happen to oneself by sharing that one is Jewish.

~ Sonia

# A POWERFUL SEPARATION



The Holocaust has always been a powerful influence in my life. People transported to the concentration camps were able to see through the enclosing fences, but the world went on outside without regard to the conditions of the Jews in the camps. They were separated emotionally and intellectually from what should really have been available to them.

So I actually chained the Jewish Star I made to this broken fence, intentionally out of focus, and there's beautiful foliage, in focus, on the other side. But now there's the addition of this Jewish star that's creating a much more powerful separation between what's going on inside, we'll call this a prison, and what's going on outside, which is freedom.

This country is supposed to be about freedom, and we have situations where that freedom doesn't exist, whether it's the Latino community, the Black community, or the Jewish community being pushed out of things. Putting Jews "outside" through prejudice locks them up much like being in a prison.

~ Richard



# HOW NORMAL IS THIS?



This is a photo that I took of a metal detector in a local synagogue. It was taken in the afternoon while a security guard was waiting for parents to pick up their kids from the synagogue school. It's so normal to see metal detectors and guards at synagogues and local Jewish institutions that most of us don't give their presence a second thought.

But when you really think about it, you start to ask yourself, how normal is this? If you go to a church or a Buddhist temple, are there security guards and metal detectors?

The fact that Jewish institutions need so much security, including security to enter our places of worship, our schools, our offices and our community centers, speaks volumes to the anti-Semitism and potential threats facing the Jewish community.

It's sad to me that we need to walk through metal detectors to Jewish spaces. I wouldn't expect to see this in the United States in the year 2015, and I think it's a testament to the realities that continue to face our community.

~ Sarah

# A DOUBLE STANDARD



At a rally on campus, I saw a sign that read, “Zionism is Racism,” and I heard shouts comparing Zionists to Nazis and chants calling for the killing of Jewish people. I re-created this image to reflect those frightening shouts.

When I see signs and hear shouts like this on campus, I feel really scared and uncomfortable. I am the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, and when I shared these images and stories with my grandparents, they couldn’t even let out any emotions, because some of my family members were murdered in Nazi extermination camps. Luckily my grandparents got out of Germany. But to see this on my campus, a part of my home, makes me feel scared to express my Jewish identity.

Often I fear publicly displaying my feelings for Israel because I know that it can lead to anti-Semitic statements such as diminishing memories of the Holocaust.

It’s something that I think as a Jewish person I shouldn’t have to experience, just like there are certain statements that are triggering for other minorities that bring back very bad memories, that we can’t use. So I feel like there’s a large double standard for Jewish people when it comes to hate language.

# WHERE I HOPE OUR COUNTRY NEVER GOES



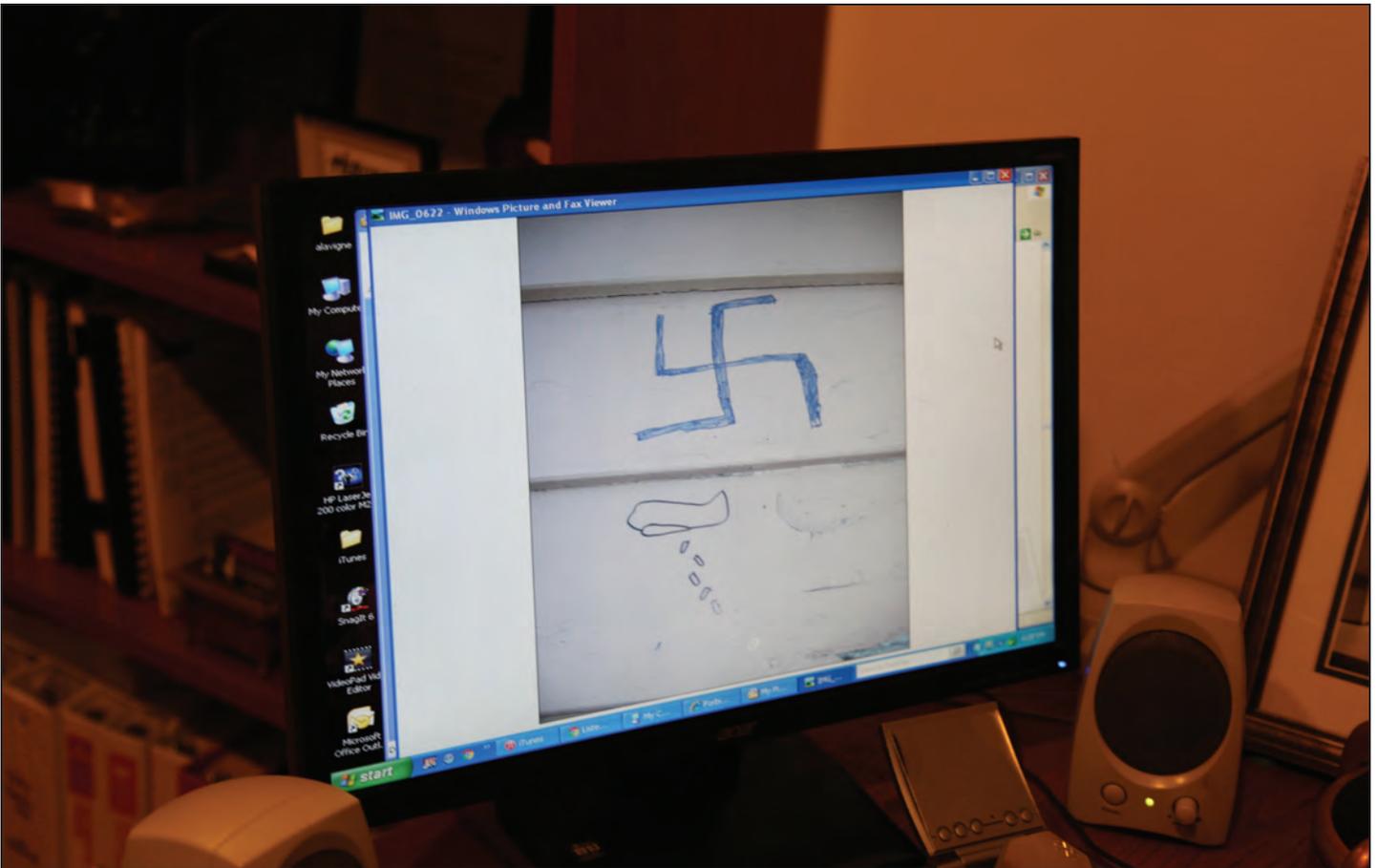
This is the Great Synagogue of Rome, Italy. It was built from 1901-1904 and is on the banks of the River Tiber in Rome, overlooking the site of the former Jewish ghetto. The synagogue was attacked by terrorists in 1982, when a 2-year-old toddler was killed and 37 civilians were injured. In response to this attack and other threats over the years, the synagogue is protected by armed Italian soldiers carrying automatic weapons.

The juxtaposition of a Jewish religious institution with armed guards is one of the strongest images of how religious hatred, specifically anti-Semitism in this case, impacts all people. I guess we are “luckier” in the U.S. in that we do not have armed soldiers outside our synagogues, but this image remains with me always, and provides an example of where I hope our country never goes.

To me, this picture is most graphic in providing a powerful understanding of where religious extremism can take our societies. We must not tolerate anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim, anti-Christian, or anti-anything that can cause hatemongering.

~ Richard

# A CHILLING REMINDER



I met with a security advisor to San Francisco's Jewish community, and he showed me this photograph of a photograph of a swastika that was found at a Jewish elementary school in the South Bay. Knowing that this type of anti-Semitic defacement happened at a school is chilling.

During the meeting, I learned that according to the FBI's website, more than 60% of all religiously motivated hate crimes in the United States target Jewish people, and that includes incidents right here in our own community that we don't often hear about.

After my visit with the security advisor, I stopped by a large San Francisco synagogue. During my unannounced visit, I saw kids playing behind a metal detector and a security guard waiting for their parents.

It's disturbing that in 2015, young Jewish children have to go through metal detectors to enter sanctuaries, places of worship, and Jewish schools. To me, this is a testament to the threats posed by anti-Semitism.

Aside from this photograph, I have seen swastikas spray painted in other locations in the Bay Area. This image is obviously troubling. It is a reminder of the hatred, discrimination, and genocide of my people, and it is chilling to know people still embrace the symbol and the ideology it represents.

# HATE



As you can see, this is a photo of an Israeli flag billowing in the wind, draped across a barricade that's in the foreground.

On a number of occasions when I have participated in pro-Israel events publicly, I have been confronted with hatred not just of the State of Israel, but also of its Jewish citizens as well as myself personally just because I am a Jew. It is hurtful and a very scary feeling to know that someone hates me as a Jew just because I support Israel.

People can disagree with the policies of a country, but there's no justification for hating the people. Israel is one of the few countries in the world where its enemies hate not only the State but also its citizens and Jews in particular. It makes me feel hated and not safe to participate in pro-Israel events publicly, and not entirely free to express an important part of my Jewish identity.

This picture serves as a reminder that political discussion, debate and dialogue are to be encouraged, but these should not cross the line into religious or cultural hatred.

~ Isaac

# IT'S REALLY HURTING



This photo is of a Jewish student picketing at an anti-Israel protest on campus. What you don't see is that, as she was holding up this sign, there was a student on a microphone screaming what I understood to be an expression of support for violence against Jews.

Almost every time I enter a Bay Area university campus, I am confronted with some degree of tension, confusion, and isolation amongst Jewish students. Many engaged Jewish and pro-Israel students are facing a rise of anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviors on their campuses, and they are not necessarily getting the support they need from their universities.

I think that there is a great deal of anti-Semitism that's masked as anti-Israel/anti-Zionist activity on college campuses, and it's really hurting not just our Jewish college students, but also our Bay Area communities to not address it honestly and openly.

This picketer was very brave. A lot of these pro-Israel and Jewish students are very brave. It was hard for me to see any kind of support for violence. It wouldn't matter if it were against a Jewish or Israeli community or a non-Jewish community. I am strongly opposed to any expression of support for violence, and it was very hard to hear students in California screaming in support of violence that would inevitably target Jews.

# ALWAYS BE PREPARED



When I was a very young boy, I was shown films of the Holocaust. I saw gaunt people lining up for the gas chambers, and bulldozers pushing bodies into mass graves. These images had a powerful impact on me.

One story I heard repeatedly was that many Jews were trapped in Germany and other European countries because their travel papers were not in order. I vowed at an early age to always be prepared.

I got my first passport when I was 16. I always renew it early. I got my daughter her first passport when she was 1 year old. She too got her own passport at 16. I made sure she renewed it recently before it expired. She knows the story well of why I feel this is important.

There are some who might say those horrifying conditions could never happen here. Just ask the Japanese who were forced into camps in World War II or the young Blacks shot down in cities across America or the Muslims who are persecuted today in this country. Bigotry is alive and well in the USA. Who is to say when the next target will be Judaism or Zionism?

~ Scott

# NOSTALGIA



This is a combined photo using an old and new silhouette profile of myself. The original photo was from my bar mitzvah in 1963, and the new photo is me now. I'm wearing the same yarmulke (head covering) in both photos.

It provides a simple look at two significant parts of my life and journey - my teenage years in Brooklyn, and the 65-year old me, a 52-year span.

The younger me appears serious, but also indicates the excitement of an unknown future. The current me looks back at the younger me with some nostalgia, but also with love.

I feel that I'm seeing a teenager who is looking for guidance and mentoring, but also I am still that 13-year old inside. I have the wonder and wanderlust, but it's tempered with the understanding that my future is way shorter now than it was then. I need to make the most of it, but appreciate where I come from.

I have always had a strong Jewish identity, and after a 22-year break from observance have become involved in a number of local Jewish institutions.

The greatest pleasure out of all the reconnection has been making new friends with similar heritage, and gaining a better understanding of my need to be part of the Bay Area's Jewish world.

# RECONNECTING THROUGH KABBALAH



This is a painting of a Kabbalah diagram, which is part of Jewish mysticism, and is in the traditional form of a tree. It uses astrology and numerology - every letter has a meaning.

I lived in Prague, Amsterdam and Berlin, and in each place had to deal with some issues regarding anti-Semitism.

This Kabbalah painting is an expression of something I created to reconnect with my Jewishness. It was a way to reconnect positively, with the present and the past, and it just really helped me talk with people more than any other painting I did.

~ Sonia

# FINDING STRENGTH IN HISTORY



This shows Jewish venues in France and Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland. My ancestors in Europe are all dead; my immediate family members are deceased as well. The only living relative I have is my sister.

I think about the death of so many in the Holocaust. I believe that all Jews are Holocaust survivors in a certain way. This is not to minimize the real experience of the people who were actually in the concentration camps, but the tremendous psychological toll affects the entire Jewish community.

From an early age I believed I was stronger than people from other ethnicities because I was Jewish. Mistaken or not, this persistent feeling helped me survive the death of the two women closest to me when I was twenty-two. My mother died of ovarian cancer that year and her mother, my grandma Ruthie, who also raised me, committed suicide three months later.

I rationalized that I was strong enough to deal with anything because of the horrors the people I was descended from endured. This faith in my own strength helped to see me through a very difficult period in my life.

Photo credit for collage segment containing guard and rifle: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-paris-reassessing-how-nations-thwart-attacks/> (AP/Christophe Ena)

# AN ANCESTOR RITUAL



Once a year, my men's group hosts an Ancestor Ritual at my house. We invite men from the community to join us and share their memories, stories, grief, and gratitude for those who have died before us.

The large wooden circle in the photo is a symbol of the Portal that connects this world to the next. I made the Portal from driftwood I collected near Jenner where the Russian River returns to the sea.

Whoever looks through the Portal sees something different. For me, the Ancestors on the other side of the Portal are all Jews on both sides of my family forever. When I seek their support, wisdom, guidance, and love, I call out into the Portal and speak to them.

This symbol is a powerful conduit that links my soul to the endless chain of Jewish women and men who lived and died and in doing so, brought me into this world. I draw strength and comfort from that lineage.

~ Scott

# PRESERVING MY JEWISH IDENTITY



The various symbols in this photo represent important aspects of my Jewish identity. As a student far from my family and Jewish community, I make many efforts to observe Shabbat (the Sabbath) in whatever way possible, whether it is to not work from Friday night to Saturday night, or to attend Shabbat dinners.

This is an important aspect of my life in the Bay Area, as it is difficult to engage in my Jewish identity during the week. We often get caught up with school, work, and other things. I see Shabbat as an opportunity for me to stop and relax and focus on being Jewish. The Challah, the traditional bread, represents Shabbat.

I included my Siddur (prayer book), and my Tanach (Hebrew bible) because it reminds me of my rabbi from Southern California who gave it to me as a high school graduation present. He played a significant role in not only my Jewish growth, but in my leadership abilities and making me who I am today.

I placed these items in front of a photo I took on the beaches of Tel Aviv, because Israel is a large part of my Jewish identity, and I care deeply about it. Overall, this image reflects how I preserve my Jewish identity while living a busy life.

~ Joshua

# WISHING FOR JOY



This statue of the Happy Monk lives on the path between the house and the cottage in my backyard. He is wearing the Yarmulke (Jewish head covering) I wore to my Grandpa Barney's funeral when I was 19, forty years ago.

My maternal grandfather was an unhappy, long-suffering man. He died early at the age of 62. While it was his heart that gave out, I've always felt that it was unmetabolized grief that took his life.

This photo reminds me of the strength and spiritual support my grandfather received from his Jewish identity. I like to think that upon his passing, he found the peace and joy denied him in life.

The monk, wearing what is for me my grandfather's Kippah (Jewish head-covering), embodies the joy I wish for my grandfather and no doubt for myself as well.

The monk has a body type similar to my grandfather's although his dress is much different. And the smile on the monk's face symbolizes for me the joy too often denied my Jewish ancestors. May my efforts to metabolize my own grief bring them, and me, some of the peace we all long for.

~ Scott

# THE CORNERSTONES OF MY RESILIENCE



This is a collage with myself surrounded by the cornerstones of my resilience. They are writing, reading, traveling, and seeking out support and community by going to workshops.

The keyboard represents me as a writer. Writing is cathartic - it helps me express ideas that don't necessarily arise in conversation. They form a bridge to others who can identify with them.

Reading is a way of learning about people who share intimacies with you. When you read from another perspective in prose or poetry, you gain insight into that world. It breaks down barriers and is a sure way to see and feel the commonality of different cultures.

Community is really important to me as a Jew, a lesbian, and a peace and justice activist, so I go to workshops to help build community. One of the photos was taken from the kitchen of the Human Rights Commission offices, where I attended this community Photovoice project workshop.

It's important to channel negative emotions into positive and constructive activity. This is a fundamental component of resilience.

~ Joan

# ILLUMINATING MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



This is a self-portrait in which I'm sitting in front of a large wooden sculpture I made. It is a very symbolic piece for me. The Portal represents the Other Side, the territory of the Ancestors where we all are headed.

I am contemplating my relationship with my modern, secular life and the call of my Jewish Ancestors. My legs look very thick, my head appears to be quite small in proportion, while my neck looks elongated. I feel the distortion of my body symbolizes my relationship to Judaism – an embodied experience rather than an intellectual one.

I am holding lighted Shabbat (Sabbath) candles. A few years ago I was invited to a friend's Shabbat dinner where they lit candles. I had not done that for many years. I felt deeply moved. It was like going home in a certain way. After that dinner I felt compelled to have my own Shabbat candlesticks which now sit on my dinner table. I still have never celebrated Shabbat with those candlesticks. Yet they are my own private reminder of my Jewish heritage, as they provide illumination on my personal spiritual journey.

For me this photo displays the unresolved tension between my intellectual detachment from traditional Judaism and my embodied, soulful connection to my rich ancestral lineage.

~ Scott

# SAY SOMETHING!



The main way I am resilient to discrimination is in the center, and it's with my big mouth. I don't have a problem calling people on things that bother me. If you hear something, say something!

The Mountain View Cemetery's Home of Eternity represents spiritual resilience - spiritual rituals respecting the dead.

The glass represents humor and nostalgia – these were actually glasses my parents, sister and I drank out of in the house where I grew up. Read it right to left from the bottom up. Humor is really important in Jewish culture and is one of the ways Jews in general and myself in particular are resilient.

This is my bookcase at home. I read a lot – I appreciate a Jewish, cultural approach to storytelling. I mobilize my internal resources with my hobbies and passions, such as reading, walking and hiking, and photography.

Finally, there is an image of me, using Photoshop filters, which represents creativity, another source of resilience.

~ Joan

# THE SYMBOL OF MY ANCESTORS



This is a close up of a Menorah (candelabra) in mosaic style from Israel. It's not a Hanukkah (a candelabra specifically for celebrating Hanukkah) - I want to make that clear.

To me the Menorah represents perseverance – a continuity of being linked from the ancient Jews to the present, and into the future, and not what Hitler wanted (to annihilate all Jews).

The Menorah links me to my heritage, and I'm proud of that. Just like other people from other cultures celebrate their ancestors with rituals of ancestry, to me the Menorah IS the symbol of my ancestors.

~ Sonia

# FEELING “NACHES”



This is Congregation Beth Shalom in San Francisco. The architect, Stanley Saitowitz, created a wonderful design that is in the form of a Hanukkah (Hanukkah Candelabra). This makes it clear to all Jews and others that this is a Jewish synagogue – celebrating our culture and place in community.

I get my strength from my family, friends, acquaintances, and community. When the Jewish community makes powerful contributions, I celebrate and feel “naches” (pride and joy).

A colleague asked me if my grandsons call me “grandpa.” It was a wonderful opportunity to explain that they call me “Z,” short for Zaide (Yiddish for grandfather). I was able to share a bit of Jewishness with a San Franciscan of Italian heritage – and I hope that it will add something good about his respect for his Jewish neighbors.

Many synagogues appear as churches with Jewish Stars added. This building simply screams “Jewish” to me. No different than explaining to a non-Jewish colleague what I am called by my grandsons, this building provides an opportunity to expand the understanding of San Franciscans about Jewish culture, community, and religion.

# TEACHER, TORAH, AND TRADITION



This is my Rabbi standing in front of an open Torah scroll at one of the two synagogues where I pray. There are some parishioners in the background, following the Rabbi as he reads from the Torah.

The guidepost in my life is my Jewish religious tradition, best symbolized by the Torah, the primary instruction for Jewish ethics and Jewish social values. The Rabbi of the synagogue is a pivotal role model for me, and teacher of the Jewish tradition in my community.

I draw strength and resilience as a Jew by clinging to Jewish tradition, to Jewish teachings and Judaism in general. I combat anti-Semitism by embracing and enhancing my Jewish tradition and my Jewish identity. Being Jewish means many things to different Jews, but to me it all starts with Jewish religion and Jewish tradition.

By fortifying my relationship and connectedness to G-d and the Jewish religion, I cling to the ultimate Strength, and I have a sense of timelessness, devoutness, and resilience.

~ Isaac

# CONNECTING WITH G-D AND HERITAGE



My strength and comfort as a Jew is centered around connecting with G-d, my family, my community and the State of Israel. This is my son standing in synagogue before a wooden ark that holds the Torah, the primary instruction for Jewish ethics and social values.

He is wearing the traditional Jewish arm and head phylacteries called Tefillin, which enable a physical connection with G-d's word and Oneness. Inside each box on his head and his arm is scripture that contains the "Shema," a prayer about the unity and existence of G-d as all pervasive.

Jewish scripture, prayer and Tefillin bind me to G-d spiritually, and give me strength by connecting me to Judaism and Jewish tradition.

My son is also wearing an Israeli t-shirt. Another source of strength for me is knowing that there is a physical place in the world, Israel, where Jews are freer to live Jewish lives than any other place. I'm safe, I have a refuge, I have a place to go to given the persecution that Jews have experienced in the past.

Jews have a right to express their uniqueness and national pride no differently than any other people in the world.

~ Isaac

# THE LIGHT OF JEWISH WOMEN



This is my mother-in-law's hand as she lights the Shabbat (Sabbath) candles and says the Shabbat blessing, thanking G-d for his commandments and for giving us light. Shabbat candle lighting is something I've been doing my entire life, and I think it might be the most central part of my Jewish observance.

Photographing my mother-in-law's hand instead of my hand or my mother's hand is meaningful, because she's somebody I invited into my life as a family member. I have a lot of respect and love for her, and she exemplifies holding light and love for family better than almost any Jewish person I know.

At the end of each week, lighting the Shabbat candles helps me recalibrate, give thanks, and sets the tone for Shabbat. It personally connects me to my mother, my grandmothers, my great-grandmothers, all of my female ancestors, and I also think that as a Jewish woman, this sacred tradition connects us all to each other.

It's a reminder for me to be a peaceful, loving, thoughtful person, and it represents the resilience, strength, love, and light of Jewish women.

~ Sarah

# CONTEMPLATION AND CONNECTEDNESS WITH G-D



This young man is absorbed in prayer, reading from a prayer book called a Siddur, and the emphasis here is on prayer, tradition, and ritual. He is wrapped in Tefillin, the phylacteries bound on his hand, arm (not visible), and head. The prayer service is taking place in the synagogue, which evokes community and belonging.

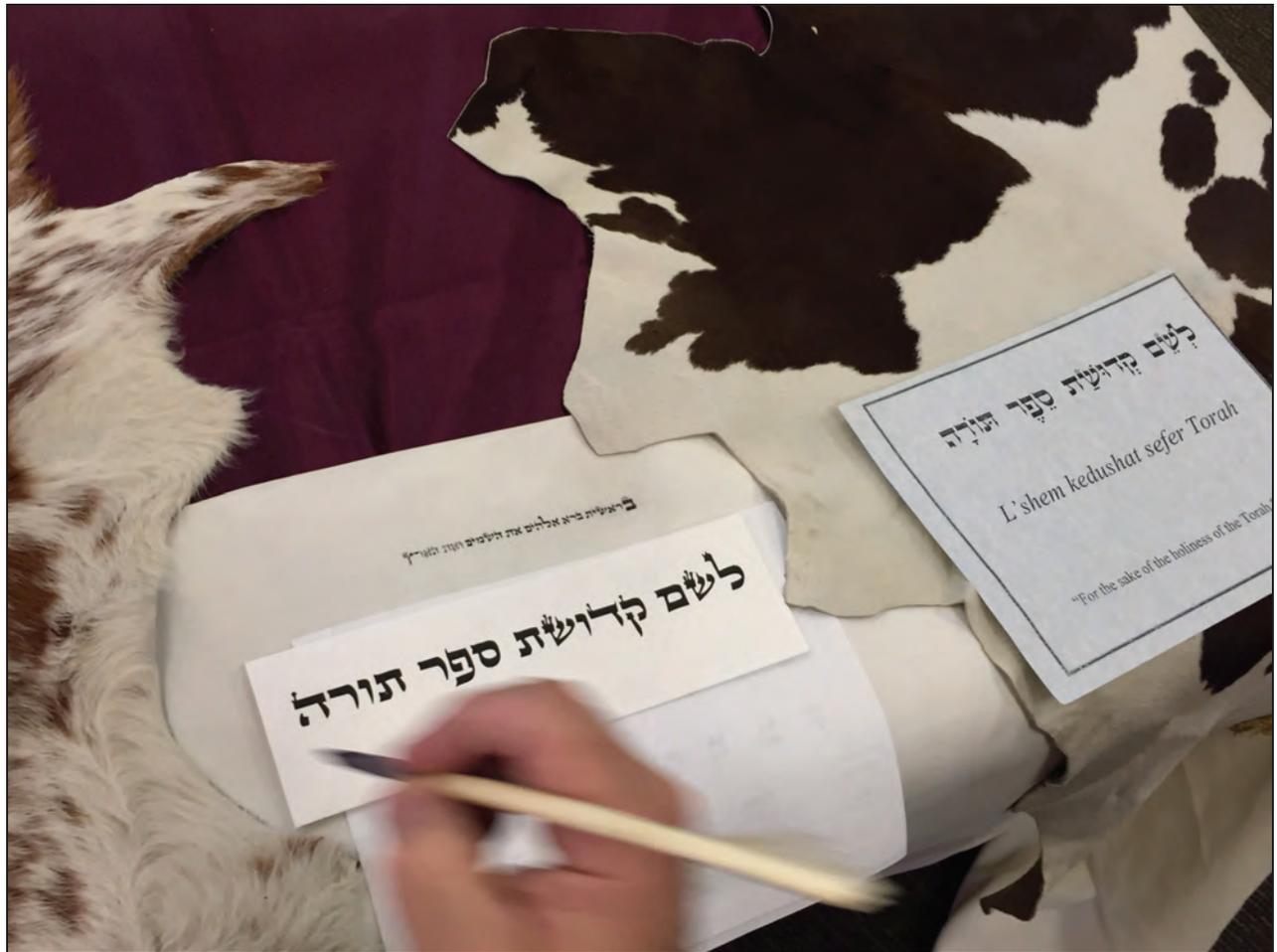
The main theme here is connectedness with G-d and community, but primarily with G-d. Jewish tradition encourages us, through the spiritual expression of prayer and through the physical phylacteries, to try to connect in multiple ways with G-d. Inside each box on his head and his arm is scripture that contains the "Shema," a prayer about the unity and existence of G-d as all pervasive.

Through Tefillah (prayer) and Tefillin (head and arm bindings), I bind myself to my ultimate source of strength, G-d, and also with the principles of truth, goodness, justice, fairness and kindness that I believe G-d stands for.

In these ways, I remind myself I have nothing to fear as long as G-d is with me. Human hatred is meaningless and cannot affect my inner being in the face of this Strength with a capital "S."

~ Isaac

# ACTIVE AND VIBRANT



This photo, taken at a Jewish community organization (Hillel) at Stanford University, depicts the beginning of transcribing a new Torah scroll (the primary source for Jewish teachings) on cow parchment by an expert Jewish scribe, called a Sofer.

The new Torah scroll will be completed by the Sofer in Israel, and returned to Stanford Hillel by the end of the year, to be used by students and other community members in Jewish religious services.

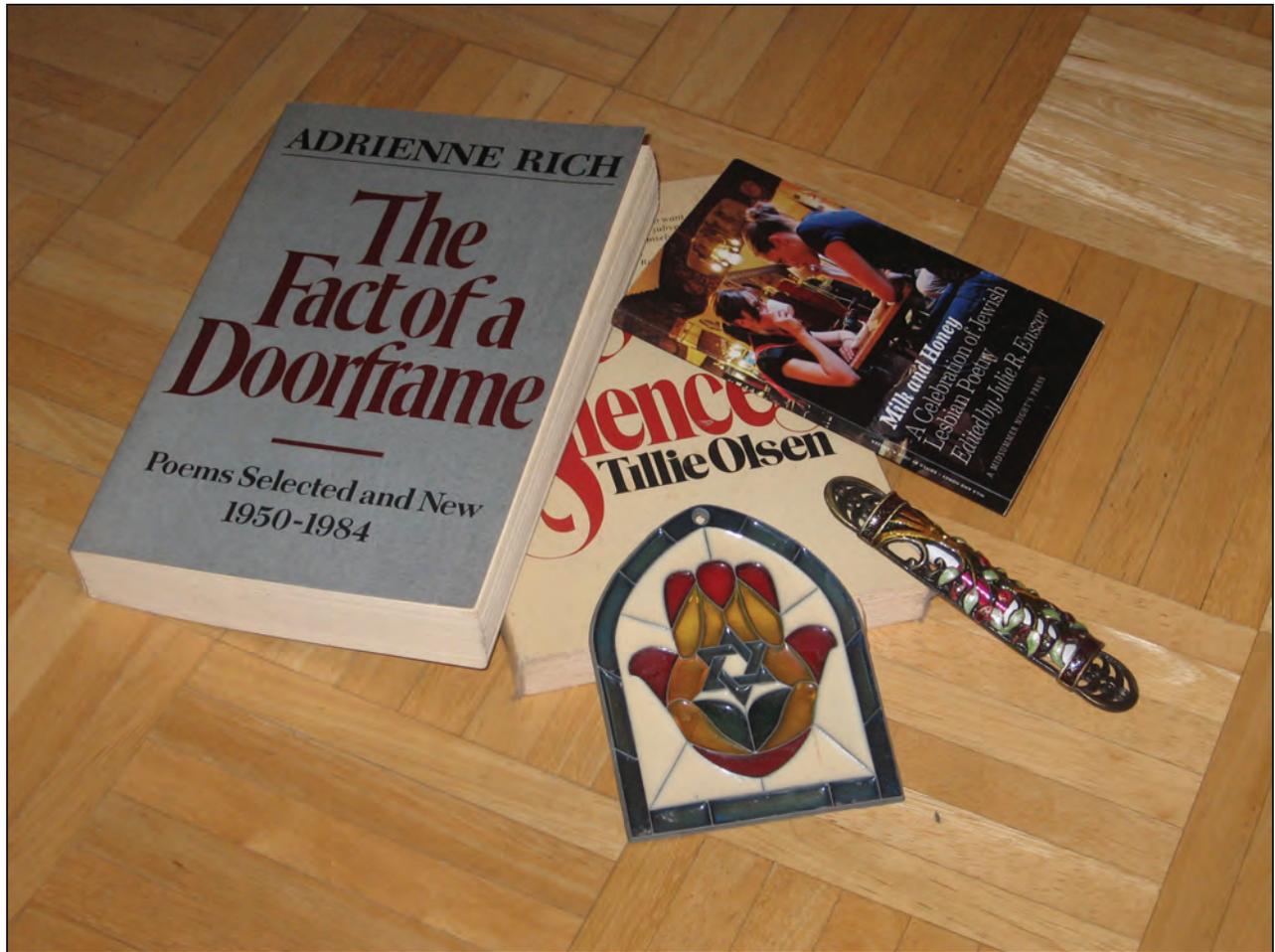
The initiation of writing a Torah scroll is a very important event in any observant Jew's life, and this time it was particularly moving and special for me because of my long-standing connection to Stanford Hillel, which, incidentally, is how I met my wife.

So in a sense, I owe the best aspects of my life – my wife and my children – in no small part to Stanford Hillel. It is very edifying to see Jewish life and Jewish culture flourishing at Stanford even more now than it did when I attended.

This picture reminds me that I am an active, present and vibrant member of the Bay Area Jewish community, and that my own spiritual journey has progressed substantially as a result of living my adult life in the Bay Area.

~ Isaac

# A FOCUS ON EDUCATION



I'm culturally and ethnically Jewish – but spiritually Buddhist. Besides humor and food, what I value most about Jewish culture is the focus on books, reading, and writing.

The focus on education is inherent in Jewish culture. In this photo, I placed “The Fact of a Doorframe,” a poetry collection by Adrienne Rich, one of my favorite authors. There is also Tillie Olsen’s “Silences,” one of her best-known pieces of writing, and Julie Enszer’s anthology called “Milk and Honey - a Celebration of Jewish Lesbian Poetry,” which contains one of my poems.

I included a mezuzah my sister gave me (a piece of parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses, and hung on the doorposts of Jewish homes), and a decorative faux stained-glass hanging with a Hamsa (hand of Miriam or Fatima) and a Star of David.

~ Joan

# A WAY TO SHARE MY JEWISHNESS



This is my collage of the Kabbalah tree (the central mystical symbol used in the Kabbalah, the body of Jewish mystical teachings). It is a way to share my Jewishness with Jewish people and all people - to reach out through art.

To me, the Kabbalah represents a way to be both mystically and spiritually Jewish, without practicing as a Jewish person in terms of religion.

It's a way for me to identify that I'm Jewish and that I can celebrate being Jewish culturally.

Being Jewish is a very diverse identity -there is not one way of being Jewish. The Kabbalah tree brings out the positive aspect of being Jewish for me, and it's a way of celebrating the beauty of Judaism.

~ Sonia

# A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD



This is a travel collage. As a Jew I feel like I am a citizen of the world, and find that to be a quintessentially Jewish thing. Jews, as a disenfranchised people with no particular country or allegiance, have always been travelers. We went everywhere, learned languages, were merchants and traders. This collage is a tribute to the “wandering Jew” side of me.

The center picture is Deborah, my partner. We travel together. She just retired, but she’s been a high school teacher, so has always had summers off. As long as I could get time off in the summer from my job, we would travel.

These are photos of Guatemala, a mosque in Turkey, a Buddha in Thailand, Greece, some native people in Peru, and the two of us in front of a big paper-mache woman in Mexico that represents an artist and a traveler.

Meeting and getting to know people from other countries and cultures is the best way to break down stereotypes. I have always known this as both a Jew and a lesbian. People hate out of bigotry and ignorance. From personal interaction they connect and understand.

~ Joan

# STRENGTH, DIVERSITY, AND CONNECTION



This is a Menorah (candelabra) in mosaic style from Israel, a Jewish symbol connecting us to the past, present, and future. I've added a Menorah from a Jewish calendar, celebrating that we have our own lunar calendar from ancient times.

When I hear Chinese people talking about their lunar calendar and celebrating their Chinese New Year, I think about how I share the Jewish New Year with my friends. For me the New Year starts in September as part of my heritage.

The Menorah is a significant symbol to me – it represents strength, diversity of Judaism and a connection to the Jewish community.

~ Sonia

# A SENSE OF BELONGING



The Jewish Community Center (JCC) is an integral part of my routine, and a place where I feel a sense of safety, belonging, connection and pride. I also love the flags, which remind me of the Jewish values I was taught as a child.

In this photo, people are going to the gym while walking past flags promoting the Jewish values of Tzedakah (charity), Hachnasat Orchim (hospitality), and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of loving kindness).

The value of Tzedakah is a defining aspect of my Jewishness. Every Friday I had to put some money in our family Tzedakah box, and to be reminded of this value in the JCC is wonderful.

Having a community center provides my local Jewish community with a space where we can take pride of ownership and warmly welcome others into our community space. It is a place we know we can comfortably, unapologetically be Jewish, and this feels safe and good.

~ Sarah

# COEXISTENCE AND COOPERATION



This picture shows the main entrance to both the Jewish Congregation Shir Shalom and the First Congregational Church in Sonoma. Shir Shalom needed a home, so they worked out an arrangement with the church, and they have been sharing the facility for 20 years.

I remember when I first saw it driving down the street and saying, "WOW!!!!" because, rather than two religious facilities competing for congregants, the sharing of a common campus says volumes about how people of different religions can successfully get along.

The way the sharing works between the two facilities is that Friday night or Saturday morning Jewish services are held in the church sanctuary, with the Christian services on Sundays. For the High Holy Days, Jewish services are in the social hall to accommodate a greater number of people.

A church helping to house a Jewish congregation makes it clear that we are all people trying to work our way positively through our short time on earth. Coexistence and cooperation is absolutely possible and should be celebrated.

~ Richard

# STRENGTH IN OUR DIVERSITY



This is a young Jewish woman of Algerian and Tunisian descent modeling her hands, which had just been adorned with a traditional North African Jewish henna design at a henna gathering in San Francisco. The preservation of the ancient Middle Eastern Jewish tradition of henna exhibits the resilience, beauty, centrality, and reverence of tradition in our culture.

Jews are a diverse, multi-ethnic people who come from all parts of the world. We don't all come from Eastern Europe - we also come from Morocco, France, Yemen, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Syria, and so many other regions of the world. I feel that there is incredible strength in the diversity of Jewish people in the Bay Area and am proud and enthusiastic to share this lesser-known aspect of our Jewish community with others.

As American Jews, we are rich and poor, white and brown, educated and uneducated. Our grandparents and ancestors spoke not just Yiddish, but also Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), and our cuisine is so much more than matza balls and bagels. I feel it is important to share our incredibly diverse Jewish traditions and backgrounds.

~ Sarah

# UNITY



This is a photo of two rabbis at a candlelight vigil on campus for the victims of terrorism in Israel. On the left is a conservative rabbi and on the right is an orthodox-Hasidic rabbi. The two rabbis are standing next to each other to show strength and unity as Jewish leaders in a time of pain and sorrow.

For me this is a very special moment, because I have friends who live in this danger and who first-hand experienced the recent acts of violence in Israel, so I felt very passionate about going to this vigil.

Judaism has a lot of diversity - all these sects with a lot of different ideas. It's nice to know that in times of pain and violence toward Jews, we as a community can come together as one for the purpose of remembering lives lost and praying for peace.

It is incredibly powerful and reassuring for me that two Jewish leaders of different sects of Jewish student life came together to stand for these basic principles that unite Jews throughout history.

~ Joshua

# FAMILY: MY BIGGEST LINK TO JUDAISM



I took this photo of my grandparents, smiling for their grandchildren a few days before their 66th wedding anniversary. This photo is pretty special for me; neither of them is looking at the camera, which I kind of like.

My Grandma is almost 92 and my Grandpa is almost 95. They were both born in Germany and moved here right after Kristallnacht (a wave of violent attacks on Jews throughout Germany and other Nazi-controlled areas on November 9, 1938).

They moved when they were in their teens and experienced a lot of anti-Semitism growing up, and they've been the biggest driving force in me carrying on Jewish traditions. So my biggest link to Judaism is family, and that's where a lot of my passion comes from. It's something that I hold really close to me, and I see the importance of family in my Jewish values.

When I moved to the Bay Area, I faced many challenges to my Jewish identity. I always keep in mind my grandparents' struggles and experiences with anti-Semitism in Germany, and their family members who perished in the Holocaust. Family ignites my passion to not give up my link to Judaism, even in vulnerable times.

~ Joshua