



Spring 2009/Aviv 5769

As Jews, we must remember to our core what it is to be the stranger, the immigrant, and act accordingly.

-JCA Community Organizer Lauren Bastien, in an opinion piece published by JTA, April 2009.

More than two decades of Liberian civil war began in the 1980s. This West African democratic nation of three million people was devastated by one of the bloodiest conflicts in recent history. People were traumatized by horrific violence and human rights abuses, including mass executions, torture and dismemberment, rape, looting, banditry, and the widespread use of child combatants. About half of Liberia's citizenry was displaced.

T'kiah

*the voice of
Jewish Community Action*

President Obama extends legal status for Liberians

Intensive community organizing pays off.

Jewish Community Action, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, Advocates for Human Rights, Minneapolis Urban League, and others have organized for two years for permanent residency for Liberian refugees in the U.S.

On March 20th, America's Liberian community came a step closer: President Obama signed an executive order of deferred enforcement departure just days

before Liberians' right to remain here would have expired. This affects at least 3,600 individuals who fled Liberia's civil war—and it affects their many U.S.-citizen family members, as well. Minnesota is home to our nation's largest Liberian community.

Now, the JCA-staffed Coalition for Permanent Residency begins its next phase of work: organizing for the support of groups around the country, to encourage Congress to embrace legislation that provides a path to permanent residency for Liberian refugees. JCA

will involve new partners in the coalition, including other African and Latino community groups.

On June 14th, Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D.- Ill.), a leading proponent of comprehensive immigration reform, will visit Minnesota. This event, planned by multiple local groups including JCA, will be an opportunity to link the issue of temporary status with comprehensive reform.

FFI: Vic@jewishcommunityaction.org; 651-632-2184.



Kerper Dwanyen & Mayalan Keita Brown (both, Minnesota's Liberian community), Paul Rael & Father Paul Ouder Kirk (both, Postville, Ia.) recognized at JCA's annual Immigrant Freedom Seder. More photos from the seder, inside.

(Photo: Vic Bloomfield.)

Progress by Pesach on immigrant rights

Progress by Pesach is a very important campaign. From a historical point of view we have had no stronger allies than those in the Jewish community. As more people stand in solidarity with the immigrant community, we will achieve comprehensive immigration reform.

-Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., March 2009.

Progress by Pesach is supported by many local and national Jewish organizations, including HIAS, Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, National Council of Jewish Women, The Rabbinical Assembly, Union for Reform Judaism, and others.

"Welcome the Stranger," Steve Date's documentary about the Postville raid, premiered in March at the Minneapolis Jewish Film Festival. FFI/arrange a screening for your congregation, men's club/sisterhood, book group, or social action committee: call JCA, 651-632-2184.

**100 days. 14 signature drives.
6 panel discussions. 5 Shabbat programs.
4 church events. 2 press conferences. 1,000 signatures.**

All part of Progress by Pesach, a campaign to urge President Obama to end raids as a means of immigration enforcement.

These JCA-led local activities were part of a national effort, in which nearly two dozen Jewish organizations from around the U.S. urged an end to the devastating raids, which separate fami-

lies, terrify communities, and harm people who have come to the U.S. seeking a better life, as our own ancestors did.

Recently, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano called for investigation before additional raids are conducted.

At press conferences in D.C. and Minneapolis, JCA was well repre-

sented by Rabbi Morris Allen (Beth Jacob Congregation) and Vic Rosenthal (JCA's executive director).

At least 10 local and national news sources have covered Progress by Pesach, which joins labor-led and Christian calls for immigration reform.

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May 12th is the anniversary of the immigration raid in Postville, Ia. That raid detained nearly 400 people, imprisoning some, deporting others, separating families, and depriving many of their livelihood. At JCA's annual Immigrant Freedom Seder, we were honored by the participation of Paul Rael and Father Paul Ouderkirk, who have been on the front lines in Postville, providing critical assistance to those families in crisis.



"This is the bread of affliction. Let all who are hungry come and eat" was spoken in a dozen languages. Above, holding matzot: Julie Plaut, Isaac Kaufman, & Phil Raskin.

(Photo: Vic Bloomfield.)

Schmooze and Booze draws crowd

On February 19th, more than 60 people, including six Jewish people holding elected office, attended Schmooze and Booze with Elected Jews, convened by Jewish Com-

munity Action's Indie Jews. This annual event, now in its third year, was co-sponsored by Young Leadership of UJFC and TCJewFolk, and held at Common Roots Café in

south Minneapolis. State legislators Rep. Frank Hornstein, Rep. Phyllis Kahn, Rep. Jeremy Kalin, and Rep. Steve Simon spoke to the group about the importance of civic engagement, and about

the overlap between community organizing and state policy-making. To learn more about Indie Jews: Carin@jewishcommunityaction.org, 651-632-2184.

Foreclosure prevention brings communities together

Dozens of JCA members reviewed Minneapolis mortgages and compiled a list of residents at risk of foreclosure and eviction. JCA volunteers paired with Urban League volunteers to visit each at-risk homeowner or renter, to urge them to seek free foreclosure and tenants' rights counseling. We'll expand this intensive outreach into other hard-

hit areas of Minneapolis and inner-ring suburbs.

Two recent events (held at Temple Israel and New Salem Baptist Church) drew more than 200 people, who learned about the nationwide foreclosure crisis.

JCA is spearheading an effort to direct a portion of newly-available federal homelessness prevention funds to

extend foreclosure prevention counseling services to landlords in Hennepin County. This represents an 'upstream' and cost effective way to prevent evictions that throw families into unstable housing and homelessness.

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Want to reach 1,000 households and businesses in the Jewish community?

Then, consider purchasing an advertisement in JCA's 2010 Social Justice Calendar.

Reasonable ad rates start at just \$36. FFI: Suzanne@jewishcommunityaction.org, 651-632-2184.

Want even greater exposure for your business or organization? Become a calendar sponsor!

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Mount Zion wins national award

As part of a joint community organizing initiative of Mount Zion Temple and Jewish Community Action, Minnesota State Senator Richard Cohen (DFL, 64) met with 45 of his constituents on March 29th. During the meeting, participants encouraged Sen. Cohen to champion health care coverage for all Minnesota children. The "Cover All

Kids bill" would expand access to health coverage for Minnesota's 80,000 uninsured children. The Minnesota Health Security Act goes even further: it would build in access to health care coverage for all Minnesota adults by 2012. At the group's urging, Sen. Cohen promised to be a champion for children's health care in Minnesota.

In recognition of Mount Zion's continuing effort to expand health care coverage to all Minnesota children, the Union for Reform Judaism awarded Mount Zion the 2009 Irving J. Fain Award for outstanding synagogue social action programming.

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Eve Shapiro,
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-Shlay (Jewish
Youth Organiz-
ing Leadership
Team mem-
bers), at JCA's
Immigrant
Freedom Seder.
(Photo: Vic
Bloomfield.)

Seeds of Justice/Gar'inay Tzedek Fellowship
for youth taking applications for 2009-'10 school year

Want to connect with others interested in making a better world? Want to discover the intersection of politics, arts and culture in the Twin Cities? Want to meet organizers, activists, scholars and community leaders who believe in equal rights and justice? Want to apply what you learn by volunteering with a local social change organization?

Want a community mentor to help you make connections between social justice and Jewish ethics, and put it all into action?

If you answered yes to any of the above and are in 9-12th grade, then the Seeds of Justice Fellowship is for you. You will gain leadership and community organizing skills, participate in a special group project, get real

life experience by shadowing Jewish Community Action staff on a campaign, be part of a community of fellows, and have the opportunity to explore and reflect during the end-of-fellowship summer trip.

Seeds of Justice is a seven-month program running from mid-October through mid-April. We will kick off the year with a Social

Justice Shabbaton and wrap it up with a graduation ceremony and summer trip.

Space is limited, and applicants are encouraged to apply early.

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