The Law of the Land, The Law of God: Blacks and Jews in Civil Rights Era Alexandria, Va

by Yahney-Marie Sangaré

Introduction

Rabbi Emmet Allen Frank was born in New Orleans. He joined Beth El Hebrew Congregation in 1954. / *Alexandria Gazette* (Beth El Hebrew Congregation Archives)

During Yom Kippur services on September 23, 1958, Rabbi Emmet Allen Frank of Beth El Hebrew Congregation gave a sermon staunchly supporting school integration, lambasting Senator Harry F. Byrd, and calling for the congregation to play an active role in school desegregation:

"Our moral obligation as Jews [is] not to desist from being a light unto the nation . . . The Jew cannot remain silent to social injustice against anyone. The fresh wounds of Hitlerism, the ghettos of Europe: these are the results of silence."[1]

Rabbi Frank insisted that Jewish inaction on the segregation issue would eventually enable antisemitism to arise from the same segregationist causes.

"Speak out forcibly and you will be a social outcast and suffer economic reprisals for a while, but remain silent, fortify these satanic peddlers and let them be victorious, and they will march against every minority. No one can breathe – truly breathe free – as long as a chain of inequality hangs upon the neck of one – only one." Famously, Rabbi Frank also compared "Brydliness" – invoking the name of Senator Harry Byrd, who spearheaded the massive resistance machine against the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision – to "Godlessness."

On October 19 of the same year, Rabbi Frank's planned speech at a service conducted at the Arlington Unitarian Church was halted by a bomb threat emptying out the building[2]. After the sermon, the segregationist Virginia organization Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties' Arlington chapter said that Rabbi Frank "could not have been more effective" in damaging Christian-Jewish relations in Virginia[3].

Yet there was little noted reaction to Rabbi Frank's comments from within the Alexandria community. While several local rabbis and priests inside and outside of Virginia came out in support of him, his words held little tenable local impact. His rescheduled speech on October 27 was reported as an apolitical "general discussion of Judaism" that was highly attended without backlash[4]. And though the congregation was certainly split–and concerned–over Rabbi Frank's words, the *Detroit Jewish News* reported that "elements of Temple Beth El who marched against Rabbi Frank for speaking such controversial words rapidly backed down when it realized that repudiation of the rabbi would be capitulation to outright antisemitic pressure." Similarly, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin* reported "a leading member of Temple Beth El made known that a 'considerable' number of members feared the rabbi's stand might result in increased antisemitism and possible violence from segregationists," but that several members were supportive of the rabbi's comments[5]. The rabbi himself postulated that his position was the popular one at Beth El Hebrew Congregation, though perspectives vary:

"There was a big to-do at Beth El because our rabbi got involved in civil rights and spoke for the congregation, not for himself," said Ursula Hennessey[6], who was born and raised in Alexandria and graduated from George Washington High School in 1961. "I think his error was in not discussing this with the congregants or temple hierarchy before doing so, as his actions didn't reflect the feelings of many in the congregation.

Rabbi Frank's comments stand alongside several other Virginian and Southern rabbis as potential signs of a Black-Jewish political alliance in Northern Virginia and Alexandria, and he is remembered among such commentators as historian Leonard Dinnerstein as "the most dramatic Southern Jewish supporter of the Civil Rights movement[7]." But the lack of recorded response and action from Alexandrians, especially response from the African Americans at the object of Frank's call, signals another pattern–one that contrasts conventional narratives of an affinity between the two groups in the 1950s and 60s and closely mirrors the overwhelming pattern of Southern Jewry's inattention to Black America during the Civil Rights Movement.

In the North, the so-called "Grand Alliance" period in the 1960s of political collaboration between Jewish and African Americans was epitomized in the collaborative relationship and friendship between Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and in the rise of organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, founded in 1960[8]. Groups like the Anti-Defamation League and the American Civil Liberties Union worked with Black activists and organizations in securing mutual protections against ethnic and racial discrimination.

But Blacks and Jews in Alexandria did not seriously form an alliance between 1954's *Brown v. Board* and 1968's Fair Housing Act. Jews and Blacks in the city navigated distinct social structures, with segregation, the legacy of slavery, and racist practices in public and private affairs (including housing, employment, and social life) confining African Americans to intraracial spaces and a legacy of Jewish assimilation preventing Blacks and Jews from being within each other's purview, and from their interests majorly aligning, in the city. Why? Certainly, there is evidence of a distinctly *Southern* Jewish and African American culture resulting in large part from the circumstances and systems described above. Gwendolyn Day-Fuller, born and raised to a prominent African American Alexandria family, described her father, Ferdinand T. Day's, recollections of the city: "He loved Alexandria, number one, with all of its problems, and he many times referred to Alexandria as a typical Southern city with many of the inherent problems of the South[26]." Alexandria's positionality at the border of Washington, D.C. presented unique circumstances for both groups in many situations–For example, the prevalence of Black government workers in the city–that was unique to other areas in the South. In interracial, interfaith relations, the city seemingly closely followed the Southern pattern. But unlike in Montgomery and Selma, where local Jewish communities actively spoke out against Civil Rights organizing[11], the legacy of the Alexandrian Jewish community on Civil Rights largely is marked by silence.

Nevertheless, there is a tangible connection between Alexandrian Jews and the Civil Rights Movement. Rabbi Frank, a life member of the NAACP, was certainly and inexorably concerned with Civil Rights. It was two Jewish (though both New York-born) lawyers from Alexandria, Virginia–Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop–who brought *Loving v. Virginia* to the Supreme Court in 1968. Elected in 1964 alongside Ferdinand T. Day, the first Black man to serve on Alexandria's School Board, was Norman Schrott[12], with whom he maintained correspondence and friendship[13]. The positionality that failed to produce a political coalition between Blacks and Jews still differed in notable regards from other Southern counterparts, implicating a more layered truth than a paradigmatically Southern intercultural identity in Alexandria.

Blacks and Jews in Alexandria, Virginia

The first fleet of Jewish immigration to Alexandria happened while the city was the center of the nation's slave trade through the Franklin and Armfield Office. Arriving Jews in the 1850s largely originated from German-speaking areas and quickly assumed important positions in the city's economic and political life[14]. Unlike Jewish immigrants in other areas of the country, most Jews arriving in Alexandria "arrived neither en masse nor penniless[15]." As with many Jews in the South, Alexandrian Jews acclimated to the customs and institutions of their White, gentile neighbors. Several prominent Alexandrian Jews were slaveholders and/or Confederate soldiers (including the city's first Jewish mayor, German-born Henry Strauss), and several others refused to sign an oath of loyalty to the Union government after swift occupation at the beginning of the Civil War[16]. Prior to the Civil War, members of the Hebrew Benevolent Society, established in 1857, formed Beth El Hebrew Congregation in 1859, the city's first synagogue. Agudas Achim Congregation, following an Orthodox tradition, was formed in 1914, largely by later-arriving Jewish immigrants fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe, including Joseph Hayman, whose family would establish and maintain Hayman's Dress Shop[17].

Joseph Hayman, born in Courland (present-day Latvia, then part of Russia), founded various shops throughout Alexandria, and his family operated Hayman's Dress Shop in Old Town, Alexandria. / *The Record: Publication of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington*

African Americans had resided in Alexandria long before the Revolutionary War, both as Black freedmen and enslaved Africans. By 1870, around 5,300 Blacks lived in Alexandria[18], many of whom fled from other areas in the South during the Civil War, where Alexandria, under Union occupation, offered refuge for escaped enslaved peoples[19]. Several churches had been organized and maintained by African Americans, including Alfred St. Baptist Church, founded in 1803 by the Alexandria Baptist Society. By the 1950s, Black neighborhoods and communities developed throughout the city, including Uptown near King St., The Berg in Northern Old Town, and The Fort in the West End[21]. In the early 20th century, Alexandria's African Americans were subjected to racially restrictive housing covenants[22], racialized violence, and segregated public facilities. Though it was not uncommon for Blacks and Whites to live in and around the same neighborhoods, most aspects of public life were intraracial. African Americans had a profound impact on the community. Alfred St. was the organizing initial site for the city's chapter of the NAACP in 1933[23]. By 1954, the African American community supported its own schools[24], public and private, including Parker-Gray High School, had staged effective protests for the integration and creation and maintenance of public facilities, including Samuel Tucker's Sit-Down Strike in 1939 that resulted in the Robert Robinson Library for African Americans being built in the city[25], and maintained an economy of local businesses and services, including several prominent Black doctors and lawyers. Black civic organizations, often operating out of faith communities, would frequently voice their concerns and fight to have their input heard in city affairs[21].

Commerce, Interaction, and Visibility

An employer-employee relationship between White Jews and African Americans constituted the most direct, common, and legal interpersonal interaction between individuals from both communities. Many of the first-arriving Jews in Alexandria were attracted to the city due to its commercial potential, and hence many prominent Jewish families in Alexandria, like in other areas of the South, were involved in shop ownership[15.] Prominent Jewish businesses in Alexandria in the era included Hayman's Dress Shop, Gateway Market, Levinson's Clothing Company, and Bradshaw Shoes.

Day-Fuller did not recall distinguishing between Jews and White Gentiles growing up, with the exception of Hayman's Dress Shop in Old Town.

"I did not [distinguish between Jews and other Whites.] Except for Hayman's Dress Store. I don't know how that came up, that they were Jewish. I just remember that conversation," she said. "[Was it the predominant attitude] that you didn't distinguish between whether they were Jewish or not? I think so, you know. Unless people worked for a Jewish family or something like that. You know, I don't think there were that many relationships."

Some African American women may have worked as housekeepers or in other domestic roles for Jewish families. David Speck recalled having a Black housemaid growing up: "We had a housekeeper from Jamaica that lived with us that my mother arranged before she died so there would be someone that would be familiar with us and the family that would be available for taking care of meals and keeping the house up and all that sort of thing. She lived with us for many years." Though Speck did not recall this being a common practice, Ursula Hennessey described having a Black cleaning lady in the late 1950s who was "like a member of the family."

Gateway Market, near what is now Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center, was one of a few businesses owned and operated by the Terlitzky family in Alexandria[46]. Originally born in Washington, D.C., Gerald Terlitzky worked for his father, Samuel's, various businesses throughout the city. Gateway Market, alongside subsequent businesses like Rosenick's and Terlitzky's Delicatessen, employed Black and White customers–which was not necessarily a common practice for Alexandria businesses at the time[26]–and gave out credit for purchases to customers of all races.

"We were all together in one group and a small area, and we treated each other with respect. They knew that we were Jewish. As long as Dad was giving them credit, everybody was friendly," he said. "I mean, business is business. But the kids, we really never talked about religion too much. We didn't advertise that we were Jewish in the grocery store, but they knew, and we got along just fine."

Terlitzky went on to describe how in the aftermath of the King assassination “poor Black and White” surrounded Gateway Market to protect the store from potential rioting. Erwin Bondareff described African Americans protecting his wife’s family’s grocery store in Del Ray: “There were three Black men sitting on the steps of their store, and they said, ‘Don't worry, no one's going to bother Ms. Rose. She'll be safe here.’ And she was[32].” Bondareff, who operated a medical practice in Alexandria for several decades, noted that his office took Black patients and also employed Black nurses and nursing assistants. David Speck’s father, George Speck, was the first OBGYN to open a practice in Alexandria, and Speck remembers him taking Black patients from its inception.

But commercial relationships largely failed to germinate into the social ones necessary to conceptualize a coalition. The character of African American and White civic life in Alexandria, and especially the presence of legalized segregation, made it difficult for individuals to identify or relate to an exceptional relationship or kinship between the groups. The idea of “insular” communities–both Black and White–largely prevented serious interracial conversations in the era.

“That Parker-Gray area, that Fayette Street neighborhood and Alfred Street neighborhood, I think we were pretty insular,” said Day-Fuller. “You know, we had our own grocery store. We had our own florists, Miriam Bracey and Arthur Bracey. They had a floral shop [Peoples Flower Shop] right there. And, you know, pretty much our own doctors and our own lawyers. There was a drugstore, Miss Blue's Drugstore, on the corner of Alfred and Queen Street. And so, it was pretty insular. You had most of your activities with your neighbors and kind of right in your neighborhood.”

Social Life, Blacks, and Jews

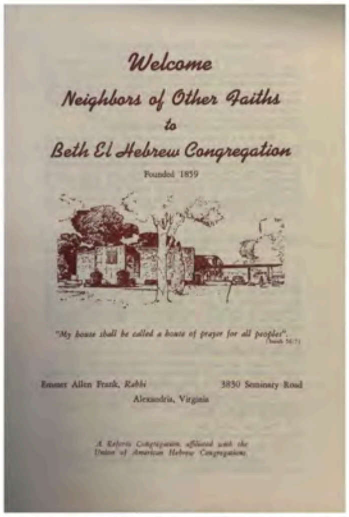
While Jewish-Christian relations were improving (including the opening of an interfaith chapel at Alexandria Hospital in 1962 and Rabbi Frank’s tenure as president of the Alexandria Ministerial Association[27]), Black clergy were not present in the development of fellowship within the Alexandrian interfaith community. Whether this exclusion was purposeful is unclear.

Rabbi Frank, Father Thomas Quinlan (Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church), and Reverend William Sydnor (Christ Episcopal Church) at a ceremony dedicating an interfaith chapel at the Alexandria Hospital on March 23, 1962. / Norman Driscoll for the *Washington Post* (Beth El Hebrew Congregation Archives)

The Alexandrian Jewish community was not small enough to be homogenous nor large enough to raise notable discourse. In 1960, Alexandria had around 6,400 Jewish residents[28], comprising 7% of the city’s population, whereas African Americans made up 11.4%[29]. And though Jewish life in the city existed, Alexandrian Jews seeking fellowship and membership in organizations did not need to risk attention or controversy in Alexandria when chapters of major American Jewish organizations were already established in Washington, D.C. and surrounding areas.

Still, many Jews in Alexandria were, at least outwardly, comparatively secular. "Judaism in the South–and Alexandria was certainly part of the South in those days–was very focused on assimilation," said Speck. "There was a period of time in Alexandria when the rabbi at Beth El had services on Sunday because everyone else did."

Interfaith relationships between White Jews and Christians in Alexandria showed signs of closening in the 1950s and 60s. Under Rabbi Frank, Beth El Hebrew Congregation produced pamphlets for gentile visitors to learn about Judaism upon visiting[30]. The attitude to interfaith romantic relationships in Alexandria, too, varied. Though Ursula Hennessey recalls some other Alexandrian Jewish children being forbidden from dating gentile Whites, David Speck recalled interfaith relationships occurring without much reaction. "I went out with girls without thinking a whole lot about religion," he said.



Welcome
Neighbors of Other Faiths
to
Beth El Hebrew Congregation
Founded 1859

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples".
(Isaiah 56:7)

Emmet Allen Frank, *Rabbi*
3850 Seminary Road
Alexandria, Virginia

A Reform Congregation, affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

This pamphlet, printed sometime during Rabbi Emmet Frank's tenure between 1954 and 1969, explained basic information about Jewish services and the Jewish religion for non-Jewish visitors. / Beth El Hebrew Congregation Archives

Conversely, Day-Fuller did not recall much in the way of *interracial* relationships in Alexandria at all. Few Black students attended George Washington and Hammond High School in Alexandria until the 1970s. Whereas Jewish social life in Alexandria often intersected with White Christian social life or was connected with Washington, D.C., African American structures were exclusive. Much of African American life in Alexandria was connected to one's church and neighborhood. "There were so many churches, and people had various programs. Of course, you would go pick and choose what you wanted to go to and do," said Day-Fuller.

Organizations such as the Secret Seven would meet in community members' households. "We had many meetings, for example, in this house and the house that we lived in on North Fayette Street," said Day-Fuller. "Some of those meetings involved a group called the Secret Seven, which I didn't understand at the time, but they were doing a lot of good work in the city . . . They worked in education, housing, anything that had to do with the uplift of African Americans in the city."

Blacks, in predominantly Black environments, and Jews, in predominantly White environments, unsurprisingly rarely encountered each other in social life. Heterogenous Jewish settlement patterns in Alexandria did not result in specifically Jewish areas or enclaves. There are few signs that Jews distinguished their views of Blacks in any way based on their experiences, just as Blacks likely did not distinguish Jews from other Whites per theirs. Though several Jewish community members recall what they called "liberal" synagogues, if this mindset existed among Jews, it was not communicated with Blacks en masse. Though individual relationships–especially those formed of other, non-ethnic affinities or connections, such as through partisan alignment, occupation, or class–may have occurred, the idea of a Jewish struggle in Alexandria had little correlation to the African American one, even when such connections were observed in other areas in the country.

"You know, the March on Washington and that sort of thing, where Jews were quite prominent in the cause of integration, desegregating, and education, and the level of activity was most pronounced, I think, between what at the time seemed like a natural affinity. Blacks and Jews: both oppressed, both subject to discrimination," recounted Speck. But Speck also pointed to skin color, specifically, as the divider in the city, and acknowledged that the social affinity did not translate to Alexandrian realities. "At the time, [in Alexandria] there were really only two communities of consequence: Blacks and everyone else, who [were] generally White." Day-Fuller concurred. "I didn't think of a lot of different groups until I got older. You know, if you were brown, then you were brown, if you were White, you know, that kind of thing."

Antisemitism, Racism, and Alexandria

Jewish assimilation in the city did not eliminate antisemitism. Even as in the 1950s White American identity began to include Judaism (see columnist Will Herberg's coining the "Protestant-Catholic-Jew" label of American multireligious identity in 1955[31]), Jewish Alexandrians recall being called antisemitic epithets around the same period.

"I got bad-named. I was a Christ-killer and a dirty Jew and things like that," Bondareff said of antisemitism in Alexandria growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. "[Being Jewish] meant that some boys wouldn't date me because I was Jewish. It meant hearing antisemitic comments here and there. My brother-in-law quit high school because of an antisemitic remark one of his teachers made (and went on to become very successful)," said Hennessey.

Black-Jewish interactions wherein Jews *were* distinguished from other Whites were not necessarily more positive. The predominant attitude of Black-White relations in the South was not removed from Black-Jewish encounters, including hostilities and prejudices.

"Now, every once in a while, we would have a customer come in and give us grief, and my father would, you know, really spurt out the words," said Terlitzky. Growing up living in the same communities as African Americans in Washington, D.C., Terlitzky recalled racial animus even between children. "I'll tell you the truth. Even though I had friends with the Black kids, we would get mad at each other, have rock battles, throw rocks at each other. Even though they were my friends, they would say something to us about being Jewish. And then, of course, I would say the N-word as a kid because I grew up in Washington, D.C., and that's what they used, the N-word. We would fight and have our arguments, and then the next day, we're back as friends."

African Americans in Alexandria dealt not only with social bigotry but systemic barriers to home ownership, civic engagement, and societal existence. Day-Fuller recalled an incident from when she was a pre-teenager where a group of White men came up to herself and her mother in a car and threw firecrackers out the window while calling them the N-word. Day-Fuller's family went to the police with the license plate, but no action was ever taken against the hate crime.

In the same period that this occurred (and for large parts of Alexandria's policies of massive resistance), Democrat Leroy Bendheim, from a prominent Alexandrian Jewish family, was mayor. Though Bendheim

Leroy Bendheim was mayor of Alexandria for two terms and spent three terms as a Virginia state senator. / *The Cyclopedia of American Biography* had shown support for Rabbi Frank's sermon as president of Beth El Hebrew Congregation[33] and had been open to negotiations with the African American community on such issues as urban renewal[21], he was far from universally progressive. In 1958, minutes from a Beth El Hebrew Congregation Officer meeting show that a "newly organized Boys School under Catholic auspices" had requested to rent facilities at the synagogue. During integration, private schools emerged en masse to prevent White parents from having to send their children to integrated schools. The motion was approved[34].

Still, Alexandrians were not unaware of the shared threat posed against Jews and Blacks, if at unequal proportions, by white supremacist hate groups. In Northern Virginia, the headquarters of the American Nazi Party, then under George Lincoln Rockwell, were based in neighboring Arlington. The *Richmond News Leader* reported that Rockwell attended Rabbi Frank's rescheduled October sermon[2], and he repeatedly opposed and antagonized school integrations throughout Northern Virginia, including in Alexandria.

Recalling the introduction of Black students to Hammond High School in 1959, David Speck remembers both Rockwell's influence and the militant protections present.

"The entire campus of Hammond was surrounded by police. Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria, State Police, and anybody, everybody. Sheriffs. Because there were so many threats. The biggest instigator of these threats was the leader of the American Nazi Party, George Lincoln Rockwell. He threatened to, you know--Nothing got to happen. But, you know, it was a very tense time because you didn't know what was going to happen."

If the American Nazi Party's presence signified danger for both Blacks and Jews in the area, other antisemitic incidents likewise invoked concerns from larger governing bodies. In a January 1960 letter to Regional Board Chairman Ben Strouse through the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Washington, D.C., Bill Korey wrote: "With our encouragement, major Negro organizations in Washington have been urging law enforcement officials to take action on the Rockwell matter."[10]

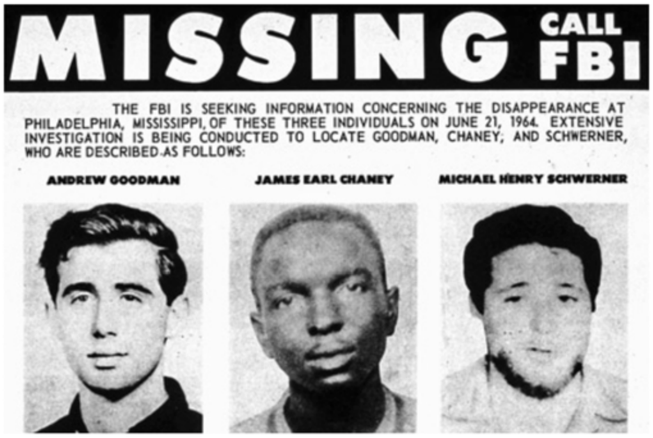
The experience of antisemitism was still deeply distinct from that of anti-Black racism. Jews were not excluded from White public facilities in Alexandria, and David Speck did not recall much othering based on religion.

"I don't recall much in the way of any antisemitism at all, because part of it was the long history [that] Jews in Alexandria, both politically and from a business standpoint, were very involved, and a lot of the old stores that you still see – aren't as many of them as there used to be – were all run by Jewish families," he said. "That's where I think probably it may have been different for the African American community"

During Leroy Bendheim's tenure as mayor, though, activity from the local NAACP was met with cross-burnings in his backyard. In Arlington, the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties party passed out antisemitic pamphlets after Samuel and Virginia Klein refused to let their child, Joel, take placement tests designed to reinforce segregation in public schools. These pamphlets were distributed to "all Arlington county parents that were not Jewish or Black."[35]

Even as it did not manifest, many Southerners were aware of national collaborations between Blacks and Jews. The national attention paid to the 1964 lynching of three Freedom Summer Activists: Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney in Philadephia, Mississippi shifted conversations among Jews of the South. Schwerner and Goodman were both White Jews, while Chaney was African American. The Department of Justice recounts that half of the volunteers for Freedom Summer were Jews, predominantly from the North, who went South to aid in Black voting registration. Speck and Terlitzky remembered their reaction to the news, though they recount that the relatively apolitical culture in the city did not lead to many conversations about it publicly in Alexandria.

“I think that my perspective was a function of the more liberal press reporting it in a way that it deserved,” said Speck. “You know, these were people that were committed to helping [secure] voting rights for others. They happened to be Jewish. That wasn't necessarily the first thing you thought about, but I think that was often how it was portrayed in the news. Which at the time, I didn't focus on as much as I did as I became more aware of it. ‘Why do they keep identifying them as Jewish?’”



THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1964. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

The top portion of the FBI Missing Poster for Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner. / Federal Bureau of Investigation

“It was like, ‘This is terrible. People [the lynchers] shouldn't be doing this, and these people are crazy, and they should be executed.’ I felt very much hatred against the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi Party: anybody that was non-Jewish that hated Jews and Blacks. It just made my stomach turn. I did not like what was happening. And I was afraid. Afraid for myself, my family, and those around me,” said Terlitzky.

Day-Fuller remembered the lynchings as part of a series of racial terror incidents in the era that impacted her. Like Speck, she correlated her feelings about the lynchings less with the ethnicities of the young men and more with their advocacy for civil rights.

“Those were the times we were living in, and voting, just as it is today, just brought up a lot of ire. And people would do anything they could to keep us from voting and from having our rights. You'd say you were surprised that that could happen, but then on the other hand, you really weren't surprised, because you kind of didn't know what was going to happen, particularly in the Deep South,” she said. “And I mean, you know, when I think of Mississippi and Alabama and Tennessee and different places like that is where I really remember those things happening. Emmett Till and, you know, all of those kinds of things happening.”

The general moral questions invoked by racialized violence in another Southern city actualized feelings of a shared threat. In the same spirit that the lynching of Leo Frank had ignited American Jews in the North to form such organizations as the Anti-Defamation League[8], the lynching of the Freedom Summer activists was a point of attention for many Southern Jews. At once, the deaths of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney verified the long-held concerns of Southern Jews about their safety in their homes if they spoke out with African Americans and yet also further illuminated the societal interconnection of both groups in the South.

Conclusion

Though Rabbi Frank's Yom Kippur sermon made the news, it was not the first time the rabbi had spoken to his congregation about civil rights. In a 1955 sermon on the penultimate evening of Hanukkah, the Rabbi had called his congregation to vote against a referendum sponsored by the Gray Commission. The referendum was to hold a Virginia constitutional convention surrounding the issue of the *Brown* decision that could potentially allow private school vouchers, mitigating the effect of integration for White families.[36]

"Is it not time to show the world that America has no second-class citizens?" said Frank. "When I read in the Bible, 'God created man,' I see no adjective of color or religion preceding it. When I read in Leviticus, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' I see no commentary following it which states Jewish neighbor or Christian neighbor–White or Black neighbor. The law of the land has always been the law of God."

Rabbi Frank left Beth El in 1969 for numerous reasons (and after several more controversies) for a temple in Seattle. The national American Jewish Congress, which would later be a part of the rightward shift ending the so-called Grand Alliance, had recognized Frank for his "fearless opposition to segregation" and "championing of the rights and liberties of all Americans."[37] By the end of his life, in Florida, Rabbi Frank was highly contentious for his support of interfaith marriages, as was his son, who was critiqued for his alleged "conversions while standing on one foot" in a book excerpt published in the Broward Jewish Journal[38].

In 1973, the implementation of busing in Alexandria saw school desegregation having a more tangible effect. Almost two decades after the *Brown* decision (and a decade after the City Council desegregated public facilities), Alexandria began to see a truly integrated population[29]. In the aftermath of years of tension, division, and separation, the community sought healing. Interracial dialogues began to emerge in various spaces.

"I think when busing finally came into the school system, things changed a lot. People were being mixed up with other people, Blacks and Whites. My kids went to T.C. Williams High School, and they had more Blacks than Whites at certain times, but the kids got along just fine with everybody," said Terlitzky. "And to tell you the truth, over the years, people are more respectful to each other."

After the integration of T.C. Williams High School, Beth El Hebrew Congregation held a meeting with members of Alfred St. Baptist Church regarding interfaith relationships between Blacks and Jews in the city[48]. Organizations such as The Forum in Alexandria brought together Blacks and Whites to talk and solve problems. Series of letters, including recommendation requests, between Ferdinand T. Day and leaders like Leroy Bendheim, Bernard Cohen, and Melvin Bergheim signify increased political interaction between Blacks and the larger community, including Jews. In 1970, African American high school students counterprotested–and outnumbered–a Nazi rally of six in the city after crosses were burned in Superintendent John Ablohm's yard.[39]

As early as 1969 and into the 1980s, Alexandria had a chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, with founding members including "Ira Robinson, Colonel Marion I. Johnson, Ferdinand T. Day, Reverend W. Chris Hobgood, Melvin L. Bergheim, William E.O'Neill, and Lillie M. Pollard."[41] Ferdinand T. Day chaired the 1979 Northern Virginia dinner for the national organization[42]. The NCCJ worked to establish the Alexandria Police-Youth program, connecting Black youth and police to try to ease tensions, and established the Coalition for Alexandria Public Schools upon the 1973 integration decision in the city.[43] Though it cannot be said that the attitude of the African American members of the NCCJ was paradigmatic for the Black community – Nelson Greene, who was a member, also had recommended that a young Gerald Terlitzky reach out to the Departmental Progressive Club when he was in search of a civic organization (from which he was redirected)– the coalition-building observed on a national, Northern level in the 1960s began to echo in Alexandria in the exact time frame that Black-Jewish relations theoretically dwindled elsewhere.

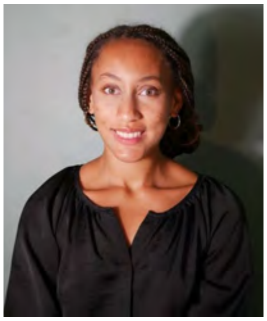
Modernly, Rabbi David Spinrad's participation in the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project signals tightening interfaith relations. Though in the North the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. concurred with a rightward shift for Jews and leftward shift for Blacks that would leave the "Grand Alliance" behind, in Alexandria, the enforcement of integration and busing conversely drew Blacks and Jews in closer proximity than they had been before.

"I think being Jewish in Alexandria . . . the undertone of antisemitism is something that I think everyone is more aware of, and I'm not sure I would have said that, you know, a couple years ago, that that's something we need to worry about, but it is something we need to worry about," said Speck.

Faith communities are now opening their doors to many people of diverse backgrounds. "And sure enough, with the temple we're doing now at Beth El, you're seeing more Black people coming in, Asians are coming in. Gay people are coming in, and we're inviting people to come and convert if they want to. I think that's the best thing our temple is doing. I think it's good. Now, even though we lost some people, that's because their minds are closed," said Terlitzky.

On May 23, 2023, the city recognized Jewish American Heritage Month for the first time in Alexandria's history under Mayor Justin Wilson[40]. Community initiatives like the Alexandria Remembrance Project are working to bring cognizance to African American history in the city, including the legacy of lynching victims and the journey of school desegregation.

Looking for a Black-Jewish relationship in Alexandria during the same period of its national rise, Rabbi Frank's comments then may serve less as a false signal but more so as evidence of something then yet unseen. Rabbi Frank's sermon heralded a pattern that would emerge only as Alexandria began to actualize desegregation long after 1954. As schools integrated and outward public discussion emerged, the patterns vested within Alexandria–in its particular positionality, various histories, and complex interracial, interfaith relations–at last manifested in incidences of alliance and solidarity.



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