

G&S Reflections: What Does Jewish American History Month mean to Noam Gilboord of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York?

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Noam Gilboord

Goulston & Storrs has proudly provided [pro bono legal services](#) since 1900, taking on numerous causes that make our communities and our planet better. We are honored to work alongside our pro bono client [JCRC-NY](#) as they proactively advocate for and ensure the rights, interests, and values of the New York Jewish community. The below reflection was written by Noam Gilboord, Chief Operating Officer and Director, Israel & International Affairs, of the JCRC-NY.

As we celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month, we commemorate not simply the countless scientific, cultural, and political contributions of Jewish Americans to our country and the world, but the upholding of the *raison d'être* for this country's existence. America is based on a belief that the Jewish people have cherished long before 1776: All people are created equal – in the image of God. Recognizing this, President George Washington famously promised American Jews in 1790 that his new country would give “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” This revolutionary thinking was transformational for the American Jewish people, who were free to be their whole true selves, while their cousins in the Old World were rarely afforded such grace.

We, the American Jewish people, are descendants of an ancient nation that has sought to live in peace with our neighbors for nearly 4,000 years. Despite being victims of discrimination, persecution, expulsion, and genocide, our light has not been extinguished, and we continue to shine. Our tradition is built upon the moral calling to love thy neighbor as thyself, and from this emanates a culture that demands that we pursue peace, help those in need, and repair the world – all concepts shared by the American ethos. Indeed, the United States has provided a uniquely safe haven for us who wish to practice our faith and be our whole true selves without fear of persecution.

The United States has established itself as the single largest diaspora Jewish community in the world. Our people have landed here in waves as refugees from all corners of the Earth and created diverse, flourishing, knowledgeable, and civically engaged Jewish communities. Though antisemitism still remains in the hearts of some, our community is resilient and our story continues.

I'm proud to work for the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, an organization proudly committed to building relationships and being in partnership with the hundreds of diverse

communities in our City. JCRC-NY is also proud to be the originator of Jewish Heritage Week in New York – the precursor to Jewish American Heritage Month. We as Jews, and we as Americans, are stronger when we ensure our leaders are continuously rededicating themselves to the promise that Washington made to the American Jewish community in 1790.