Alternative Jewish Philanthropies:
Creating New Opportunities
For Giving Among Jews

Lawrence Sternberg
Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
Brandeis University

David Arnow
The New Israel Fund

Marlene Provizer
The Jewish Fund for Justice

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Foreword

For more than a decade, observers of American Jewish life have been concerned with assessing the real and potential growth or decline of the American Jewish community. Scores of books, articles, speeches, and sermons have focused on whether American Jewry is, as optimists believe, experiencing its own "golden age," or whether the American Jewish experiment, as pessimists project, is doomed to fail. One critical measure of the success of the American Jewish enterprise has been the ability of the organized Jewish community to raise substantial amounts of money to fund a network of Jewish organizations locally and nationally, to provide support for the State of Israel, and to promote Jewish well-being worldwide.

Today American Jewish organizations and leadership are concerned with combatting the perceived erosion of the American Jewish community, as evidenced by increases in intermarriage and non-affiliation among a younger generation of American Jews. At the same time, there is a sense of urgency regarding the need to resettle the masses of Soviet Jews who are fleeing to the State of Israel. Meeting these dual challenges will demand substantial increases in American Jewish philanthropic giving.

To address these issues a major conference on "Trends in Jewish Philanthropy and Communal Leadership" was convened in December 1991, under the auspices of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, the American Jewish Committee, and the United Jewish Appeal. The conference was also funded in part by a grant from the George and Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust.

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies has undertaken to publish several papers delivered at this conference. This
booklet is the second in a series of four. The first, Gary A. Tobin's *A Profile of Major Donor's Attitudes Towards Jewish Philanthropic Giving*, appeared in March 1992. Two additional booklets will be published in the fall of 1992: one regarding the nature and extent of Jewish giving and volunteering, and a second exploring changing lifestyles of Jewish women and their participation in women’s organizations.

**New Jewish Philanthropies**

This booklet focuses on two innovative Jewish philanthropies as case studies for new initiatives in American Jewish philanthropy. Originally titled "Alternative Jewish Philanthropies," the conference session was designed to inform conference participants as to how the new philanthropies see themselves and their donors: the functions they serve within the Jewish community — both in terms of the projects they fund and the donors they attract. Do these philanthropies believe they reach Jews who otherwise might not be givers? In attracting donors who are already givers do they believe they compete with or complement established philanthropies?

While there has been a very pronounced trend over the last decades for individual Jews not to become involved in Jewish organizational life, during the past ten years the number of national Jewish organizations has increased. This is most visible in the annual listing of American Jewish organizations found in the *American Jewish Year Book*. During the period 1961 to 1981 the number of national organizations which are Israel-related or social welfare-related (the two principal areas which pertain directly to American Jewish philanthropy) barely grew. Thus, neither events in Israel nor events in the United States seemed to have a great impact in the creation of new organizations addressing these concerns. However, from 1981 to 1991 a 25% growth (from 105 to 131) in the number of national Jewish organizations devoted to Israel or social welfare occurred.

Part of this increase has been attributed to the flowering of the *havurah* movement.* Just as important, especially among Israel-related organizations, are the increased connections between individual Israeli institutions and American donors. While some believe the increased proliferation of Jewish organizations simply divides the community, further straining its resources, others point to the important opportunities new organizations can provide for people to be involved and feel their efforts really make a difference. Both David Arnow and Marlene Provizer indicate that their organizations are now engaged in what had previously been neglected concerns. They indicate their organizations’ commitment to the projects they fund, and they describe how this translates into greater donor involvement in the philanthropies and in the issues they address.

The model followed by these philanthropies can be adopted by the more "established" Jewish philanthropies without great difficulty. The principle of donor involvement and participation is certainly an accepted axiom in the fundraising world. For many years UJA and Jewish federations may have been able to rely upon a sentimental attachment to a vision of Israel and a gut-level commitment to the local Jewish community, where monies often went primarily to support Jewish hospitals and social welfare organizations. The climate in the United States today is more competitive: non-Jewish philanthropies are appealing to a new generation of Jewish donors for whom Israel can no longer be idealized, and who are significantly less attached to the local Jewish community, its priorities and needs. Jewish organizations generally can learn from the new Jewish philanthropies to focus greater attention on the specific product/result of giving and less on a form of sentimentalism.
which is more deeply rooted in a previous generation’s vision of what it means to be Jewish.

Lawrence Sternberg


The New Israel Fund
David Arnow

The New Israel Fund was founded in the San Francisco area in 1979, and the first meeting took place in the San Francisco Federation offices. Our mission in 1979 and now is to help strengthen Israel’s democratic character by really focusing on one paragraph in Israel’s declaration of independence: "To be a state based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel, it will insure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex." To help Israel fulfill that rather lofty series of promises, the New Israel Fund has established an innovative program of grant-making, and we have likewise established a number of our own programs that involve leadership training in Israel and the provision of technical assistance to Israel’s public interest sector, because we know that it takes more than money.

It takes more than a grant to an organization to enable that organization to play its role in shaping and changing a society. The grants, however, that we have made are in a sense the bread and butter of the New Israel Fund. The grants have involved hundreds of organizations over this 13-year period, and the organizations are in the areas of Jewish outreach and affiliation, religious freedom, the status of women, civil and human rights, and an area that we call bridgeing social and cultural gaps.

The Fund started off very small and pretty much as a secret in San Francisco. We raised $80,000 from 80 donors in that first fiscal year. Now we have over 10,000 donors, and this year we’ll be raising about $7.2 million. The New Israel Fund is a partnership in the full sense of the word. We have one board, and Israelis, Canadians, and Americans participate. And all of our decisions are made jointly, from the allocations decisions
to policy decisions. That partnership is really symbolized in the fact that we don't just raise money in North America and send it to Israel. We raise money in Israel, and of all of the things that we have done and have tried to do, that is probably the most difficult.

"Alternatives" is a word that's used, in my judgment, too often in connection with the New Israel Fund, especially when it's used in some kind of competitive sense. The roots of this, I think, are interesting. Journalists have had a hand in that, because often when they write it is the conflict angle that is most appealing to them. So it's difficult for them to get the idea that we are really a complement rather than an alternative. Our own words, in a standard New Israel Fund brochure, put this very well. There's a question and answer section in the back. "What's the New Israel Fund's relationship with other philanthropies?" For a large number of NIF supporters this is their first connection to Israel. Many others are already actively involved in other Jewish philanthropic efforts. They see their involvement with NIF as a way of contributing to Israel's democratic, pluralistic character. Much of their support of other causes furthers the state's security, immigrant absorption, social services, etc.

The New Israel Fund seeks to complement other philanthropic efforts by doing x, y, z. Complement is the key word. The American Jewish Committee and the UJA, and Brandeis are not really alternatives to one another, and neither is the New Israel Fund an alternative. We're not a new, improved version of anything. We're really quite different. Some of this was borne out in a survey that we conducted of our donors. We are not, by and large, an organization that people support instead of other organizations. Almost two-thirds -- 64% -- of our donors are donors to UJA/Federation, with only a relatively slim 9% that says that they do regard us as an alternative.

More significant than donor surveys, an issue that's connected to where dollars are going, is the question of leadership. New Israel Fund leaders are the leaders of established Jewish organizations. Our leaders have chaired Operation Exodus campaigns in large cities in this country, have chaired allocation committees in federations around this country, have chaired campaigns, federation campaigns. This is not an "us or them" type of thing. I don't know that it ever was, but certainly in the past decade it hasn't been. I myself am deeply involved with the New York UJA/Federation. To the extent that we continue to talk about this as a sort of an alternative framework, we're really adding to the confusion and misunderstanding.

There is, however, a group for whom the New Israel Fund does represent an alternative. But it's not an alternative between the New Israel Fund and UJA/Federation, or the New Israel Fund or Israel Bonds, or some other group. It's an alternative from the option of walking away from Israel altogether. It's some alternative, perhaps, from walking away from the Jewish community altogether. There is a group of people for whom the New Israel Fund is the only that they can find a way in to Israel, and a way in to the American Jewish community. And for that group, in a sense, we are an alternative, and I guess we should always be an alternative for that group. The door needs to be open for those people.

The Fund has had four different kinds of impact on organizations and on the Jewish community. First, the New Israel Fund has contributed to really expanding the notion of support for Israel and has helped to deepen the basis for Israel/Diaspora relations. Second, we've had a constructive influence on the Jewish Agency. Third, we have played an important role in helping other organizations, or providing a language for other organizations to begin to speak -- a language that relates to the concerns of the New Israel Fund, the
democratic character of Israel. We've translated that into a language that makes sense to a lot of other organizations that are concerned with continuity, that are concerned with Israel's security in a narrower sense of that term. Fourth, I think that we've made an important contribution to the notion of power and civil discourse within the Jewish community. These are not completely independent areas. They are related to one another in many ways. Moreover, it's not just that the New Israel Fund has set an example out there and others have followed us. There has been a very wholesome and healthy kind of interrelationship and reciprocal influence.

Let's begin now with this first question of broadening the notion of support for Israel. Following the 1967 war there was a proliferation of organizations from Israel coming to the United States to raise money, and I think that this represented something -- and in a way that was very healthy. It was a yearning on the part of American Jews to be connected with some of the most promising institutions in Israel, to be more deeply and more personally, and more directly connected with Israel and its institutions. The 1967 war cemented the relationship that American Jews had with Israel in a way that 1948 really did not. The New Israel Fund grew out of that trend for more contact, as did Project Renewal. In fact, the Fund and Project Renewal were born in the same year, in 1979. However, NIF was something different nonetheless because we were not another Israeli organization coming to the United States to raise money. We had a general fund, but in addition we gave donors the opportunity of donors advising their contributions to organizations or to areas that were most important to them. And with that, and with a full disclosure of where every dollar went, with meaningful progress reports on what our organizations in Israel were accomplishing, I think that we provided many donors with what was felt to be kind of the missing philanthropic link -- accountability. People could see where their money was going, and they could actually determine where it would go.

We raise money in a different way also, with very few of the incentives beyond the knowledge that you had given to a just cause. No plaques -- still no plaques. Two dinners in the 13 years. And I would have to say that by the standards of most organizations, our dinners are sort of like the hors d'oeuvres. But more important than the style, our message is different. We were not saying that Israel needed better universities, and of course it does; stronger cultural organizations, and of course it does; a better network of social service agencies, which it certainly does. We were saying that in the rush to build those basic institutions, not enough attention was being paid to the foundation of Israel, the foundations of Israel's democratic character which really give meaning to all of that sort of superstructure of organizations. Not enough attention was being paid to the budding problems -- and I'm going back to the late 70s, the early 80s - the budding problems that were beginning to pull Israel apart from the inside; conflicts between Jews and Arabs, conflicts between Jews and Jews, between mizrahim and ashkenazim.

When these problems were talked about in the early days of the New Israel Fund, they were either denied completely or they were regarded as kind of insignificant, minor blemishes on the otherwise still shining image of Israel. American Jews in those days were at the height of their romance with Israel, and we wore blinders and rose-colored glasses, whatever you want to call them. We did it for our own reasons and because we were encouraged to by Israelis. One of the great ironies is that many of the very issues that were so central to the organizations of the American Jewish community -- issues that dealt with religious freedom, civil rights, intergroup relations -- when those were raised in the Israeli context by credible Israelis, they were marginalized. American Jews, when the NIF was
born, were not ready for that much reality. A lot of myths were glowing very, very brightly in those days.

When the Association for Civil Rights in Israel approached the New Israel Fund back in 1979 for its first grant, and we started raising money in the United States for the Association for Civil Rights, this was something that was very new in the whole notion of what supporting Israel meant. The very idea that Israel needed an Association for Civil Rights was sort of like an eye-opener. It was very much as if American Jews expected that if justice were to well up as a mighty stream in the Holy Land, it would not take lawyers going to the Supreme Court in exactly the same way as it does here. I believe that we've helped American Jews to understand that it works the same way there as it does here.

The romantic vision of Israel -- the myths -- prevented American Jews from understanding another basic fact of Israeli society: that one in six Israelis is an Arab citizen of that country. When we first started making grants to organizations that promoted dialogue between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, to organizations that were trying to narrow the still huge economic gap between the Jewish/Arab sectors in Israel, this was in a sense redefining the notion of who is an Israeli. Whenever those critical definitions are approached, there is a lot of emotion that comes up. When we used the words "Israeli Jews" in the early days, people assumed we had made a typographical error. And when we spoke about Israeli Arabs, that was considered a non sequitur. The level of understanding was limited; today it's not so limited any more, but it is not as great as it needs to be either. So in that light I think the Fund represented a fundamental maturation in the perception of Israel by American Jews and a comparable maturation in Israel/Diaspora relations. The honeymoon, in a sense, was over, and it was time to start building a durable, loving relationship based on realism, honesty and affirmation of the work of both partners.

It is not as if the notion of civil rights, or Jewish/Arab relations, or religious freedom, is where it needs to be today in terms of our commitment to those issues and our understanding of those issues. It's great that the New Israel Fund is raising a little over $7 million for those issues. That's wonderful, on the one hand. It's also, in light of the gravity of those issues, a little bit sad in terms of where the community's priorities still are. Now, part of why we've been able to take a responsible seat in the world of Jewish communal organizations has been made easier by the fact that other very significant organizations have followed our lead. The Jewish Agency in particular has begun to make grants to some of the organizations that the New Israel Fund has been supporting for a long time. There are now 10 organizations that we co-fund, including the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Israel Women's Network, the National Council for the Child, and others. The dollar amount involved here on the Jewish Agency side is still very small. We're talking about a couple of hundred thousand dollars in terms of this area of overlap, a year. But it is meaningful.

A few years ago the Jewish Agency adopted a resolution which sounds like it could have come out of our New Israel Fund brochure. It specifies that as part of the process for the review and evaluation of new projects the Jewish Agency should include criteria for projects that emphasize opportunities to explore, experience and promote Jewish pluralism, tolerance, democratic values among Jews, and tolerance and understanding between Jews and Arabs. Now, prior to the adoption of that resolution I wrote a letter that went to all of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency. And I reminded them that this resolution was in perfect harmony with the spirit of mutual separation and dependence, and I quoted something that has
really moved me a great deal, a statement that Chaim Weizmann made a long time ago, reminding people of the Jewish Agency that it wasn’t just an issue of morality that we’re talking about, but there was a pragmatic reason for doing this as well. Weizmann said: “Our security will, to a great extent, depend not only on the armies and navies which we can create, but on the internal moral stability of the country, which will in turn influence its external political stability.”

But it obviously was not my letter -- good as the letter was--that moved the Jewish Agency to adopt that resolution. The times had changed. Communism was a frightening reality. The scandal of "who is a Jew" had burst upon the scene. The Intifada had begun. Israelis were shocked by the image that they were seeing of their own country, and those blemishes were now beginning to appear to be anything but superficial. Even Israel’s president began to exhort American Jewry not to sit idly back and watch Israel as it struggled with the problems of extremism. And he used the word "racism" when he was talking about Jewish extremism. And he said that despite the dangers from the outside, Israel’s most serious problems were internal.

There was another reason, too, I think, that the Agency decided to go in this other direction, and that was that, in a sense, the New Israel Fund provided a valuable market research undertaking. We proved that it was possible to go into these rocky fields of religious freedom, Jewish/Arab coexistence, civil and human rights, and raise money. The Jewish Agency and the UJA did not want to be on the sidelines if there was money to be raised in those fields.

One morning I woke up and opened my Long Island Jewish World and saw tremendous ads for the Israel Women’s Network and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. And I felt, wow, the New Israel Fund has done something great! This was a whole ad campaign and I didn’t even know about it. I got to the bottom of the page. These were UJA ads, taken out in different Jewish papers around the country. UJA wanted to get that message out very clearly that it, too, was on this cutting edge.

Where will this trend go? Frankly, I have to say I don’t know. Is it a shift, a substantive shift, the beginning of a substantive shift in priorities, or is it kind of a tactical ploy -- a fund-raising gimmick -- to put it crudely? I hope it’s not the latter. I very much hope it’s the former. I imagine also that there are many of you in this room here that would have better insight as to what this really means and where it’s going. But I would certainly like nothing more than to see the Jewish Agency begin to give these fundamental questions of Israel’s democratic character the attention that they deserve.

The third kind of influence is the translation of the language of democratic values into a language that other organizations really speak. To be concerned with Israel’s democratic character is not just a moral or a liberal kind of issue. It’s an issue of enormous strategic significance for Israel. Anybody who cares about Israel’s existence, Israel’s healthy future, needs to care about what happens with Israel’s democratic character. Israeli think-tank people have begun to realize this, and I’ll quote something that Shai Feldman of the Jaffa Center wrote a couple of years ago: "The American constitution does not contain an amendment which stipulates that the United States must provide Israel annually with three billion dollars in aid. Strategic cooperation that has been institutionalized can be de-institutionalized. We Israelis, who value America’s support as a central pillar of our grand strategy, must be on constant alert against sources of possible erosion. America’s support for Israel cannot be taken for granted. First-and foremost, it is Israel’s very essence as a western-style democracy that explains America’s support for Israel."
Tom Dine writes and speaks in very much the same way. One of the recent AIPAC monographs begins with this phrase: "Support for Israel in the United States because Americans recognize that Israel shares with America a fundamental commitment to democracy and human rights." That’s Tom Dine. Now, when he says that, it has the ring of a guarantee, or a promise. But no nation’s democratic character can be taken for granted. No nation’s democratic character comes with a guarantee. If we truly appreciate the threat to Israeli democracy, we should react to that statement as an implicit warning that Israeli democracy is simply too important to take for granted. Keep Dine’s statement in mind when you listen to polling data like this: 45% of Israeli Jews would ban criticizing the government’s handling of key foreign policy issues; 46% say that Israel is too democratic; 70% said that the vote should be taken away from Jews who favor the establishment of a Palestinian state; 85% of recently arrived Soviet immigrants believe it is both feasible and desirable to deport Israel’s Arab citizens -- not people in the territories -- but those one in six Israeli Arabs.

Israel did not take those polls lightly. It launched a crash course to inculcate democratic values in the school system. The results of that crash course, which is still going on, have been less than encouraging. And the worst of trends, of extremism, have brought Israel’s president to speak in some of the most sharp words that an Israeli president has ever uttered in his second inaugural address a couple of years ago. He warned of "the unbridled political incitement, the poisoning of the atmosphere, the demonization of political adversaries, the manifestations of racism, and the fanning of hatred between Jew and Jew and Arab." He added: "Violence serves as a tool in the hands of fanatical ideological groups which regard their views and beliefs as standing above the law. They take the law into their own hands, and most seriously, they sometimes enjoy the understanding silent consent, or at least permissiveness, of Israeli society." And he concluded: "Our first and foremost duty is to protect the democratic character of the state." Sharp and surprising words for a president of Israel.

I would say that this is the message that the New Israel Fund has been bringing to the American Jewish community little by little. Through years of public education, the Fund has helped this community and our organizations understand that without work that democracy in Israel that we so cherish could appreciably erode. And the implications for Israel’s security are enormous. The implications for affiliation in the American Jewish community for continuity of the American Jewish community are obvious. The implications for antisemitism are equally obvious.

There’s another translation that we’ve made that involves linking democracy to the issues of peace. And there’s a short formula which I’ll take a minute to read here. Should Israeli democracy appreciably weaken, the basis for American support will crumble. A non-democratic Israel will be a weaker, more isolated Israel, and a weaker Israel will be less likely to take the inevitable risks of peace. Democracy in Israel may not be enough to insure peace, but it is certain that without democracy Israel will never find peace among Israelis, or between Israel, its Arab neighbors, and the Palestinians.

This brings me to the last point I want to make: the issue of discourse and tolerance in the Jewish community. And to bring the point home I have to tell a story -- a short one. There was an organization that was born and died before the New Israel Fund was on the face of the earth. It had a vision of Israel that was new and fresh. It called for a real rethinking of Israel/Diaspora relations. It called for seeing behind some of the myths that Gerry spoke about last night. The name of that organization was Breira, and its goals were very different than
the New Israel Fund. There’s no question about that. But they were sort of fresh, and they were new, and these were hopeful people. These were important people who were involved. That organization, as many of you may remember, did not last long. It was attacked in a rather ferocious way. Its leaders were called subversive traitors, etc., and the death warrant really for that organization came out. And that was the end of the organization. It died rather quickly, but very painfully.

Many of the people associated with it carried a deep pain and a sense of stain, almost, for many, many years. And once upon a time not so long ago, less than two years ago, the New Israel Fund was attacked in very, very much the same way by the same people who had attacked Breira. We were called the "new fund for the enemies of Israel." We were PLO lovers. We were traitors, and a lot worse. And this story, of course, was picked up widely in the Jewish press. It was a very Jewish and juicy morsel. But this story had a different ending. It had a happy ending. Important organizations, the American Jewish Committee, the National Council of Jewish Women, and others came out behind the New Israel Fund. And there was a statement that was signed that ran in the Jewish press that was signed by unbelievable leaders in the Jewish community: two past presidents of AIPAC, the honorary president of B’nai B’rith, the national president and secretary of UJA, four past presidents of NJCRAC, two past presidents of the Conference of Presidents, the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, of UAHC, etc., etc.

These were not the usual people to be signing such statements. Many of them had kind of come out for the first time in their lives on an issue like this. Teddy Kollek sent a strong letter supporting NIF to the editor of every newspaper that covered the attacked. The attack, in a sense, had a silver lining. I’m sure that attacks of this sort will continue, unfortunately, but the community’s response to this one sent a very very sharp, and I think, healthy warning. There are many ways of helping to enhance Israel’s safety, and no organization has the right to appoint itself the judge of what other organizations do, and to decide for the community who are Israel’s friends and who are its enemies. Branding as traitors those with whom we disagree is a disservice to the Jewish community and a disservice to Israel. And ultimately, I believe, it is only that realization that will enable this community to deal with the incredibly divisive issues that Israel presents us with.

The questions that divide Israel can never produce a consensus in the Diaspora, and we have to learn how to deal with that and live with that in a constructive way. And I believe that the attack on the New Israel Fund helped us learn how to do that. I believe that the New Israel Fund will help the Jewish community and other organizations to build a more honest and still loving relationship with Israel. The dream of Israel has yet to be fulfilled. Israel has yet to keep all the promises in its declaration of independence. But neither have we in the United States kept all the promises of our constitution. This is a lifelong task for any nation. Even making those basic promises, it turns out, is always a major struggle. And that’s what the life of any nation is all about. With our partners in Israel, leaders from the grassroots to the highest echelons of Israeli society, and with a network of hundreds of Israeli non-profit organizations, the Fund has helped Israelis, American Jews, and our organizations to appreciate how much is at stake in securing the democratic fabric of Israel and assuring that that democratic fabric will be passed down intact and possibly even more secure, even stronger, to the next generation. And I believe that the New Israel Fund has led the way, not only in doing that, but in showing other organizations and other Jews around the world how to join that very critical endeavor.
The founders of the Jewish Fund for Justice didn’t set out to create an alternative public policy, intergroup relations and service provider agency, but rather to establish a unique grant-making institution that would complement the work of other Jewish institutions. To quote from our basic question-and-answer pamphlet, we say: "In carrying out its distinct mission, JFF complements the work of other Jewish institutions. Through their affiliated agencies local federations that provide social services that often benefit the non-Jewish community. Similarly, Jewish community relations agencies advocate on public policy issues affecting non-Jews as well as Jews. However, neither is organized to directly provide financial support on a non-sectarian basis to community advocacy and anti-poverty groups addressing the causes of poverty around the country." The founders of the Jewish Fund for Justice really saw themselves filling a gap in Jewish institutional philanthropy.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the work of JFF, let me give you some background on our mission and activities. The fund is a national operating foundation that was launched in 1984 with several goals. First, to provide grants and technical assistance to grassroots organizations working directly with low income people to combat poverty in their own community. From the very outset the Fund sought to do this through a distinctly Jewish presence in the name of Jewish values and tradition. This is a very important and fundamental part of our mission that distinguishes the Jewish Fund for Justice from a lot of other worthwhile foundations and philanthropies that focus on similar concerns. Since the grant-making program was initiated in 1985 and, interestingly, drew initial support that was

provided by a Unitarian funder, we have made over $1 million in grants to groups in 41 states and the District of Columbia. Grantees have received support to promote low-income housing, neighborhood revitalization, jobs and economic development, to improve access to health care, combat drugs and crime, counter the feminization of poverty, invest in youth and in America. The groups we are supporting are small, struggling, innovative and risk-taking. They are generally outside the parameters of what the vast majority of foundations support, and in nearly all cases have never previously had contact with or any support from the organized Jewish community.

The very existence of the Jewish Fund for Justice sends a powerful message about the Jewish community’s commitment to social and economic justice, and it does so in a way that no amount of individual Jewish giving, however generous to similar causes, can accomplish. Our commitment to carrying out this work in the name of Jewish values is intrinsic to the Fund’s identity. We do so not only by continually educating donors about the links between tzedakah, tikun olam, and contemporary social problems, but also to programs that resonate with Jewish life and experience. At the Jewish Fund for Justice we continually try to connect our work to religious ethics and moral imperatives. After eight years of working in the Jewish community relations field and now coming into the Jewish Fund for Justice, I am called upon much more on a daily basis to draw upon my ten years of Jewish education and to explain what the meaning of this work is all about than I did when I was working in the field.

Important links have been made between JFF and Jewish religious institutions, not only through the endorsements of all of the major branches of Judaism, but also through working partnerships. Through our Synagogue Challenge program, we match funds raised by synagogues to carry out social action
projects in partnership with local community organizations -- projects in which the participants and congregants must go beyond writing a check and include hands-on involvement. Through the Purim Fund for Women in Poverty we educate donors about the special barriers confronting women in poverty; inadequate access to child care, housing, and employment opportunities. Through youth endowment funds, usually established at the time of a bar or bat mitzvah, we teach young people about the link between pro-active philanthropy and coming of age in the Jewish community as they are annually asked to choose which of three projects directed to help low-income youth they want the proceeds of their endowment to support. Thus, our work help to transmit core Jewish values into the next generation.

There is a tension between earmarked giving and general support, a tension that is felt by emerging philanthropies -- that’s the term I like to use instead of alternative philanthropies -- as well as by more established philanthropies. Programs such as the ones that I have described link ways of giving, donor education, and grant-making. They creatively address that tension. We are continually exploring new ones in the Jewish Fund for Justice, such as a major grant we just received from a family foundation to further our work in low-income housing. This particular foundation was interested in the issue and chose the Jewish Fund for Justice because we have the resources to identify groups all over the country to monitor them, to provide technical assistance to them, as a vehicle for supporting efforts that they themselves couldn’t carry out as a relatively small family foundation.

The second part of our mission is to bring a dynamic Jewish presence to interdenominational efforts grappling with poverty, such as efforts that before the founding of the Jewish Fund for Justice had long consisted only of Catholic and Protestant denominational funders. Through the National Ecumenical Review Board we now sit at the table with groups like the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which, incidentally gives out $6 million a year in grants for purposes quite similar to JFJ, to exchange strategies and information and make recommendations on issues and projects that we can support together.

The third part of the mission is to link Jewish social action with community action through our technical assistance, publications, and outreach. We do this in several ways. The first is really an interpretive role the Jewish Fund for Justice plays. I spend a lot of time on the phone with our grantees, trying to explain to them the map of the Jewish community. We know that Jews who are not actively affiliated often have a very difficult time distinguishing what the different branches of Judaism are, what the different roles are of the various community relations organizations, who does what. Imagine how much more difficult it is for a struggling community organization to try to figure that out. What we try to do is decipher and interpret that for them so that they can have some sense of where to begin in their efforts to seek local Jewish support.

Second, by assisting Jewish participants in local interfaith projects and coalitions with efforts to broaden that participation. The third way is by supporting innovative social justice projects that emanate from the Jewish community. This type of bridge-building doesn’t happen with all of our grant-making, nor is it in any way a condition of funding by the Jewish Fund for Justice. Indeed, many of our grants are made in places like Chipaloon, Alaska, where there is no Jewish community, or no real prospects for leveraging all the Jewish support. Rather we look for windows of opportunity to make these kinds of connections.
In Long Island, where we made a grant to the Central American Refugee and Education Center to improve the harsh conditions in which some 80-90,000 undocumented Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees live and work, CAREC has had a small but dormant Jewish support committee. Less than a year later, with intensive technical assistance from us, they put in place a strategic plan, held its first public event, raised over half the amount of our grant, initiated a speaker's program reaching out to synagogues all over Long Island, and has inspired the Catholic support committee to replicate their outreach.

Also last year, we gave a grant to YAHAD, a Jewish low-income housing corporation in Washington, DC, the first of its kind in the nation. Our grant to them was their first grant from the Jewish community. The impetus for YAHAD's founding had evolved out of struggle earlier synagogue challenge projects that we funded in Washington, DC, which focused on affordable housing. A year later, with several limited equity co-op projects under way in which YAHAD is working directly with the African-American and Hispanic inner city community, YAHAD has now won the endorsement of virtually every local Jewish organization, has with our help leveraged our support to win grants from two major Jewish family foundations. It has recently sponsored a month-long program in the Washington area Jewish community on the problems of affordable housing. That's what I mean by trying to seek out windows of opportunity for promoting a Jewish involvement in our grant-making and making it go a lot further.

Jewish Fund for Justice started with a core of 50 donors, which has now grown to over 7,000. Our first year of grant-making raised only $26,000. Last year it raised about $370,000. In fiscal year '91 we raised about $880,000. We expect to raise about a million in this fiscal year. We have experienced a particularly dramatic rise in revenues over the last couple of years, although, obviously as compared with the New Israel Fund, although we're on a similar growth curve, the New Israel Fund in its early years, our current revenues are at a much lower level. I can't give you an analysis of what percentage of our donors contribute to UIA/Federation because we do not have that kind of survey data. As is the case with New Israel Fund's leadership, many of our board and advisory committee members are actively involved in federation, Jewish communal and synagogue leadership.

We receive donations from many synagogues, religious schools, classes, tzedakah collectives, and a number of federations and from Jewish endowment funds. At the same time, many of our donors and some of our leaders, although they strongly identify as Jews, do not affiliate or contribute in any other way to Jewish organizations. So, for them, their sense of being involved with the Jewish Fund for Justice is not an opting out of something else that they would do but, in fact, is a way of opting in. Their sense of Judaism is integrally bound up with their commitment to social and economic justice. For those supporters the Fund and its work is indeed a way of strengthening Jewish identity and involvement with the community.

There is a lot of untapped Jewish leadership that is currently participating in major national, civic, public policy and advocacy organizations. Individuals that we have tapped for leadership from those kinds of sources, and I'm talking about the national boards of organizations like People for the American Way and Common Cause, and others, not only provide valuable expertise in guiding our grant-making programs, but also can provide access to important new networks about fundraising. At least 75% of our board is under the age of 50. While it's very important for everybody on the board to be involved in major donor fundraising, and I think that point has been made over and over again because none of
us can really reach our financial goals without a very important emphasis on major donor fundraising, we also need to validate how people in leadership positions can be useful in fundraising in other ways.

There are several people in our leadership who said to us, "Look, I don’t have access right now to major networks of major donors. There are people I can approach who can give $500 or $1000 now. These people are relatively young, but in five or ten years they’re going to be in a position themselves to be major donors and to bring other major donors into the organization as well." So I think we need to validate different kinds of strengths that people can bring to fundraising.

Emerging foundations, I think, approach how they bond people to their mission in ways that are somewhat different from those utilized by more established philanthropies. I want to underscore what David said about having none of the usual incentives beyond the conviction of having given to a just cause. Donors give for the to link up with the religious, moral or ethical imperative. In my own experience with the Jewish Fund for Justice, this sense of bonding translates not only into identifying with their goals, but also more specifically into identifying with the work of the grantees. And that, in turn, makes our responsibility as funders a very important one. That responsibility translates into telling their stories, communicating their accomplishments, even communicating their failures. Because, frankly, in the map of trying to do something about economic and social justice community groups, no matter terrific their work is, are not going to overnight radically change systemic problems in their communities.

We must hold ourselves to a very high standard of accountability for our decisions and monitoring the work of our grantees, and link people through direct human experience. The people who are going to be most affected are fundraisers, and the people who are going to be most bonded as donors are those who have a positive experience either by visiting the work of local grantees or by having an opportunity to hear about their experiences first-hand.

One of the key differences between the NIF and the JFJ is the centrality of Israel in the agenda of the organized Jewish community. While I believe that the Jewish Fund for Justice also has overcome some additional mistrust about our motivations, and I think very misplaced concerns about diverting funds away from more established philanthropies, and has also made important strides in communicating our message and bonding a number of people that previously hadn’t been aware of it to our activities.

We have a very, very long way to go before reaching the stage of broad embrace of our agenda by the organized Jewish community — a very long way to go — and that is reflected not only in the dollar figures.

This challenge is, in fact, at the very heart of the raging debate between universalistic and particularistic interests, or perhaps more accurately, the distinction between stated commitment to universalistic concerns and how much time, attention and resources are actually being directed to them by the Jewish community. It’s a challenge, I think, that speaks to rekindling Jewish values, to overcoming the distance that has grown up between Jews and other minority groups, and to breaking down the cynicism about the ability to make a difference in seemingly intractable social problems. It’s also the challenge of appealing to Jewish self-interest. It’s being directly tied to building a just society in a way that is healthy and not vulgar. The more we can do through what our own grantees tell us about the positive intergroup relations, ramifications of our work, the better.
And it is for that reason that I want the Jewish community to very clearly hear the message of people like Zack Now, who is the coordinator of the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice. This is a group we made a grant to about a year-and-a-half ago, working on fighting tax abatements for corporations that dump toxic waste in that state. This was dated long before the current furor over the David Duke campaign, and was given in an interview provided to the Jewish Week, and he said: "The Jewish Fund for Justice grant sends a message to Louisiana that we need to develop an alternative populist agenda. The only choice people have here now is between the status quo and people like David Duke, the fringe who are drawing on the wellspring of frustration and hate. As long as there are no alternatives people will turn to that."

This grant says that the Jewish Fund for Justice wants to help create alternatives. That's one context in which I don't have any trouble with the use of the word "alternatives."

I want to conclude on a somewhat optimistic note. I believe that there can be a constructive cross-fertilization between established Jewish philanthropies and emerging philanthropies. We have a lot to learn and exchange with one another about some very important questions. I believe that the real challenge, even at this time of deep recession and the struggles that we are all having to reach our fundraising goals, is not support for the one or the other, but for all of us to squarely face the challenges and opportunities to do a more creative job of mobilizing the insufficiently tapped resources, talent, hunger for connection to a sense of community, and financial resources that are out there in the Jewish community.

**About the authors:**

David Arnow is the North American Chair of the Board of the New Israel Fund. He obtained his doctorate in psychology from Boston University and is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brandeis University. Dr. Arnow is currently involved in a family real estate business in Manhattan, and divides his time between business and a wide range of Jewish communal activities. A former member of the UJA Young Leadership Cabinet, he serves on the boards of the New York UJA/Federation and the Jewish Community Center of Harrison, New York, and is active in the Jewish Funders Network and Project Nishma.

Marlene Provizer is the Executive Director of the Jewish Fund for Justice. She serves on the Board of the Shalom Center and the National Network of Grantmakers, and is a member of the steering committee of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. Ms. Provizer has served as an administrator, social policy analyst, program planner and fundraiser for national Jewish communal, public interest and advocacy organizations in New York City and Washington, DC. She was Deputy Director of National Affairs for the American Jewish Committee, Assistant Director of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Social Policy Director of the League of Voters Education Fund, and served on the national education staff of the Children's Defense Fund.

Lawrence Sternberg is Associate Director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, and Assistant Professor in the Nathan Perlmutter Institute for Jewish Advocacy, a component of the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service at Brandeis. Prof. Sternberg has published articles on intermarriage, relations between American and Israeli Jews, Jewish political activity and Jewish voting behavior, the role of Israel in American Jewish identity, the
value of research for American Jewish social policy, and Jewish child care in America. He is an editor, with two Cohen Center colleagues, of the recently published book, Changing Jewish Life: Service Delivery and Planning in the 1990s (Greenwood Press).