



Press Release

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Dr. Gary P. Zola Named to the Congressionally recognized Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission

2009 celebrations to illuminate Lincoln's lasting impact on America

CINCINNATI, OH---Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives—located on the Cincinnati, Ohio campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)—and Associate Professor of the American Jewish Experience at HUC-JIR, has been appointed to serve on the national Advisory Committee of the congressionally recognized Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. 2009 will mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, a man who many historians have called America's greatest president.

The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission was created by Congress to inform the public about the impact Abraham Lincoln had on the development of our nation, to emphasize the contribution of his thoughts and ideals to America and the world and to find the best possible ways to honor his accomplishments. The President, the Senate and the House of Representatives appointed a fifteen-member commission following the passage of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act in 2000 (Public Law No: 106-173). Commission members were chosen based on their knowledge and study of President Lincoln and their dedication to educating others about Lincoln and that time in our history. The Commission is supported by the Advisory Council, which is comprised of American leaders who will stimulate Lincoln observances throughout the period leading up to the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth -- February 12, 2009. They will encourage and undertake contributions of lasting value such as publications, presentations, numismatics, philately, films and video productions.

“I am honored to serve on the Lincoln Commission’s Advisory Council and to highlight the life of this remarkable human being,” said Zola. “The 16th president has often been called ‘the great Emancipator’, and this is because of the pivotal role he played in both preserving and enlarging freedom and justice in the United States of America. All Americans are indebted to this extraordinary man who stood at the nation’s helm during the stormiest of times.”

The official public Bicentennial Commemoration launches February 2008 and closes February 2010, with the climax of the Commemoration taking place on February 12, 2009—the 200th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth. Across the country, communities, organizations and individuals have already begun to plan parades, museum exhibitions, performances, art installations and much more. The Commission has established a website, www.lincoln200.gov which contains comprehensive information about the upcoming commemoration.

This appointment marks the second time that Zola, who was born and raised in Illinois—the “Land of Lincoln”—has served on a congressionally recognized commission. From 2003-2006, he chaired the *Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History*.

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, founded in 1947 by its namesake on the Cincinnati, Ohio, campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, is committed to preserving a documentary heritage of the religious, organizational, economic, cultural, personal, social and family life of American Jewry. The Marcus Center contains over 15,000 linear feet of archives, manuscripts, nearprint materials, photographs, audio and videotapes, microfilm, and genealogical materials.



Dr. Gary P. Zola

Executive Director

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

Associate Professor of the American Jewish Experience

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Advisory Committee

The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission

Dr. Gary P. Zola is a respected historian and a notable scholar of the American Jewish experience with a unique ability to make his subjects come to life for his students and audiences. He is a widely published author with numerous articles appearing in many scholarly publications including *American Jewish History*, *American Jewish Archives*, *Canadian Jewish History*, and the *Journal of Reform Judaism*.

Dr. Zola is only the second director of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) having succeeded his teacher and mentor, Jacob Rader Marcus (1896-1995), a pioneering scholar in the field of American Jewish history and the institution's founding director. Under Zola's leadership, the American Jewish Archives (AJA) has initiated an impressive array of innovative projects that have captured the attention of both the Jewish and general communities. Zola served as national chair of the **Commission for Commemorating the 350 Years of American Jewish History** which was organized to help our nation mark the 350th anniversary of Jewish communal life in North America (1654-2004). The Commission was comprised of four institutional partners: The Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, the American Jewish Archives and the American Jewish Historical Society (New York). Dr. Zola has also served as President of Cincinnati's Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition.

Zola spearheaded a 6-year physical renovation and expansion project at the AJA—which holds the world's largest catalogued collection of documentary evidence on the history of North American Jewry. The renovated center, which includes state-of-the-art distance learning facilities, is now a vast complex of three interconnected buildings, making it the world's largest freestanding archival research center dedicated exclusively to the study of the American Jewish experience. (www.americanjewisharchives.org)

Zola has edited a new collection of essays on women in the rabbinate entitled: *Women Rabbis: Exploration and Celebration* (HUC-JIR Alumni Press, 1996). Additional edited volumes include a revised edition of *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, written by Michael A. Meyer (1993); *To Learn and To Teach: Your Life as a Rabbi*, by Dr. Alfred Gottschalk (1988); and *The Dynamics of American Jewish History: Jacob Rader Marcus's Essays on American Jewry*, (2004). Professor Zola also edits The Marcus Center's biannual publication, *The American Jewish Archives Journal* — one of only two academic periodicals focusing on the total historical experience of American Jewry.