



NEWS

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COLLECTION OF LILLIAN BUTLER HOFFMAN, A PIONEER OF THE SOVIET JEWRY MOVEMENT, DONATED TO THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Commemorative event to be held on Thursday, November 17

CINCINNATI, OH:--- Between 1967 and 1991, the American-based movement to free Soviet Jews —unable to practice their religion without fear from State persecution— resulted in over 2 million Jews (almost half of that country’s Jewish population) winning their freedom to emigrate to Israel, the United States and other Western countries. An American woman, Lillian Butler Hoffman (1913– 1996), was one of the first pioneers of the Soviet Jewry Movement, a diverse, grass-roots initiative that crossed all American party lines to free the oppressed Jews of the former Soviet Union.



Lillian Butler Hoffman

Now, Lillian’s daughter, Sheila Hoffman Bialek, founder of The Sheila Hoffman Bialek Foundation in New York, has announced that the foundation will donate two sets of six books entitled “Freedom from Tyranny: Lillian Butler Hoffman’s Struggles and Triumphs to Save Soviet Jewry,” and a documentary film highlighting her four decades of her Jewish activism, to the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. **An event marking the occasion will be held at The Marcus Center, located on the historic Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 3010 Clifton Ave., on Thursday, November 17, 2011 beginning at 12:45 p.m.**

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The archival collection was created by Sheila Hoffman Bialek, who participated in many of her mother's activities. Mrs. Bialek will be the keynote speaker at the event that will also include a film excerpt highlighting Lillian's life work. Other speakers will include Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center and Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, as well as Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman of The Jewish Center of the Hamptons, NY. Rabbi Zimmerman is the former rabbi at Central Synagogue in New York City and, subsequently, Senior Rabbi of Temple Emanuel of Dallas. He is also a past president of the College-Institute and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

The materials in the new archive include Lillian Hoffman's collection of U.S. Congressional Records citing her work, photographs, letters and protest posters.

Images of Lillian launching one of the early committees to save Soviet Jewry, the Colorado Committee, are part of the collection. Photographic and film images of protests, prayer vigils held around the world, and meetings with "Refuseniks" (a English word that emerged during the

movement, derived from the Russian "otkaznik", meaning "one refused permission to leave") in the U.S.S.R., Israel and Europe are also featured. The collection also contains photos of Lillian with international movement figures Natan Sharansky, Ida Nudel and Joseph Mendeleovich.. There are records of Lillian meeting with Presidents, Senators and Congressmen to push for freedom. Beginning in 1972, Lillian helped Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, to help pass his amendment, the Jackson-Vanik bill, which precluded the U.S. from conducting trade with the USSR until all of that country's Jews were freed. There are also photographs of the defining moment of the Movement in 1987 when a quarter of a million people held a mass event in Washington D.C. protesting Gorbachev's summit in Washington with President Reagan.



Rally for Soviet Jews, circa 1971

The stories of Lillian's struggles with the U.S.S.R. are numerous. Once, Lillian witnessed the KGB arrest Andrei Sakharov (father of the hydrogen bomb) and his wife. This fueled her determination to continue the fight. This was a historic moment in Russian history for the Sakharovs, Lillian and her friends.

"Lillian Hoffman protested for many years to save Soviet Jewry, but along the way she really knew how to enjoy life," said Bialek. "This is an archive of work marking a landmark victory (and moment) of Jewish history. These archives bring to life Lillian as a young woman in Colorado, as the wife of Harry, a leading wine and spirits retailer in the country, as mother to three, as activist with her colleagues in the Movement and for other Jewish struggles, including as chairwoman of the International Committee to Save Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who helped rescue 100,000 Hungarian Jews and disappeared in the closing days of WWII into Soviet Gulag." Hoffman convinced Congressman Lantos and Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, to honor Wallenberg with a bust that stands in perpetuity in Statuary Hall in the Capital Building. He is the second non-American to have this extraordinary honor. (Sir Winston Churchill was the first).

"One American woman's record of successful activism has implications for other Jewish issues today," remarked Bialek. "My purpose for this event is to inspire university students to protest the dangerous rise in anti-Semitism that is appearing on U.S. campuses and throughout the world." The Sheila Hoffman Bialek Foundation is dedicated to honoring Lillian Butler Hoffman's work for Soviet Jewry and to further understanding of transformative events in modern Jewish history.

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For more information, please contact Joyce Kamen at 513.543.8109/ joyce@kamencreative.com.

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.