

The Toby Nussbaum Jewish Heritage-NY2019 Writing Contest
Machloket L'shem Shamayim: Constructive Conflicts

SUBJECT: In honor of **Jewish Heritage-NY2019**, the annual observance of **Jewish Heritage Week (May 5-12, 2019)**, and the national celebration of Jewish American History Month in May, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, in cooperation with the New York City Department of Education, is sponsoring **The Toby Nussbaum Jewish Heritage-NY2019 Writing Contest** for New York City Public School students on this year's theme: ***Machloket L'shem Shamayim: Constructive Conflicts***. **Hon. Marco Carrión, Commissioner of the NYC Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, will host the award ceremony at City Hall in June.**

BACKGROUND*: Constructive conflict means advocating for one's needs and opinions while taking into account consideration of the opposing needs and opinions of others. Conflicts turn destructive when one side attempts to advance its needs or opinions without acknowledging opposing needs and opinions.

In Jewish tradition, constructive conflict is known as *machloket l'shem shamayim*. It includes arguing the issues while respecting and maintaining good relationships with the other side, making sure that one's personal motivation is to come to the best solution and not just to "win," at times admitting to being wrong, and acknowledging that sometimes both sides might be right.

Relevant quotes from Jewish scholars and American historical figures:

Who is wise? The one who learns from everyone.

Simon ben Zoma – Jewish scholar, late first/early second century

I never considered a difference in opinion, in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause from withdrawing from a friend.

President Thomas Jefferson in a letter dated April 20, 1800 to William Hamilton, a prominent African-American civil rights activist.

Let us remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.

President Abraham Lincoln from a speech on November 20, 1860

We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.

Civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968

Inclusive justice and compassion are...the central imperatives to guide our behavior

Dr. Yehezkel Landau, a modern-day Israeli-American interfaith educator and Founder of Open House, a Peace Education Center for Israelis and Palestinians in Israel

CONTEST: Students are asked to share their interpretation of *machloket l'shem shamayim* or constructive conflicts, using the quotes above, their personal histories, as well as the experiences of Jews and other religious, ethnic, and cultural groups, past and present, in New York and America. Students may refer to the background piece, *Jewish Life in New York City* (see next page), classroom material on the subject, authorized web sites and examples in their lives in school, at home and in the community.

PROCEDURES: Entrants are asked to write an essay (250-300 words) or a poem (minimum of 20 lines). Entries should be written in ink or typed, with a copy retained by the entrant. The attached cover page **must** be completed in full and stapled to the entry. The contest is open to students in grades 4-12. First, second and third place winners will be selected in three categories: grades 4-5, grades 6-8 and grades 9-12.

All entries should be submitted to Marcy Fishman, JCRC-NY, 225 West 34th Street, Suite 1607, New York, NY 10122. All entries are property of JCRC-NY. Contact: fishmanm@jrcny.org/212-983-4800, x142.

AWARDS: In each category: **First Place:** \$500.00 **Second Place:** \$300.00 **Third Place:** \$150.00

CEREMONY: Winners will receive their awards at a ceremony hosted by Marco Carrión, Commissioner of the NYC Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, at City Hall in June.

DEADLINE: Entries must be received by Tuesday, April 30, 2019.

Background source: The 9Adar Project, www.9Adar.org

The Jewish Heritage-NY Writing Contest was launched more than 30 years ago in New York City's Public Schools. In 2008, Toby Nussbaum's husband Bernard and family dedicated this project in her memory. Toby, JCRC-NY Vice President and Member of the Board of Directors for many years, was a compassionate, accomplished woman who truly represented the best of New York and its Jewish community.



JEWISH LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY

Jews have been migrating to these shores from all over the world for more than three hundred and fifty years. They have come from dozens of different countries, but they share a common heritage as Jews. Because of that bond, each generation has helped the next acclimate to a new way of life.

The first Jews arrived in 1654 from Brazil and were granted permission to stay in New Amsterdam in 1655. (They were the descendants of Jews who had been expelled from Portugal in 1492 and settled in Holland before going to Brazil.) More Jews followed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Holland, the West Indies, Poland, Germany, Spain and Portugal. Thousands of German Jews arrived in the early and mid-eighteenth century, but by far the largest wave of Jewish immigration began in the 1880's.

Events in Eastern Europe - pogroms (organized riots and massacres against the Jews) and other restrictive measures - precipitated the migration of millions of Eastern European Jews to this country between 1880 and 1925. As the twentieth century began, these Ashkenazic Jews were joined by Sephardic Jews from Syria, Greece, Turkey and North Africa. Most Jews arriving during this time settled in the large industrial centers and supplied skilled and unskilled labor.

In New York City, the Lower East Side was an incubator for the newly arrived Jews. Here they found employment, cheap housing, people who spoke Yiddish (the language of most Eastern European Jews), kosher food and synagogues. Outwardly, the Lower East Side was a depressing slum, and the new immigrants worked under miserable conditions. Inside, however, it was throbbing with ideas, arguments, talk, organization and boundless hope for the future. As a family-oriented people, parents sacrificed comfort in their own lives so that their children would survive and prosper. The importance of education was emphasized. The newcomers were lucky enough to have been preceded by fellow Jews who took an interest in their intellectual and emotional welfare. Soon, there were hundreds of communal and social service agencies, labor unions and theater groups. Many of these organizations exist today, improving the quality of life for both Jewish and non-Jewish New Yorkers.

As the children and grandchildren of these and earlier immigrants became more acclimated to the American way of life, they settled throughout New York City and began to influence the city's culture, politics and business. Although some Jews moved to the suburbs and other regions of the country, many stayed and were joined by new immigrants. A small number of Jews who escaped from Europe before World War II and some of the few who survived the Holocaust settled here. Many in this group were middle class professionals, white collar workers, businesspeople and scientists. Also included in this migration were Hasidim, Orthodox Jews who came mainly from Poland and Hungary. More recently, Jews with varying levels of education and vocational training have immigrated from the republics of the former Soviet Union, such as Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, from Syria and Iran, and a smaller representation from Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia and India and moved to neighborhoods throughout the metropolitan area. These new arrivals, along with the established Jewish community, will help sustain New York City's legacy as a thriving metropolis for centuries to come.

Adapted with permission from "Jewish Migration to America" by Evelyn Becker and "The Development of the Jewish Community in New York" by Harvey Goldenberg, Topics in Jewish-American Heritage, published by the United Federation of Teachers

COVER PAGE FOR JEWISH HERITAGE-NY2019 WRITING CONTEST

(Please complete in full)

STUDENT _____

GRADE _____

TEACHER/CONTEST COORDINATOR _____

TEACHER'S E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

SCHOOL _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS _____

SCHOOL TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

PRINCIPAL _____

STUDENT'S HOME ADDRESS _____

STUDENT'S HOME PHONE NUMBER _____

Please staple completed form to entry and return to Marcy Fishman at JCRC-NY, 225 West 34th Street, Suite 1607, New York, NY 10122 no later than **Tuesday, April 30, 2019**. If you have any questions, please contact Marcy at fishmanm@jrcny.org or (212) 983-4800, x142. Thank you for your participation.