

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

(925) 485-1049

Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

CulturalJews@aol.com

<http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/>



Affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Our mission statement: "A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion."

Upcoming Events for June 2013

Wednesday, 5, 7:00 pm: TVCJ Planning Meeting at our booth at the Pleasanton First Wednesdays Street Fair. All members welcome.

Sunday, June 2, 10:30-12:30: Jewish Culture School, at the Ireland's, Castro Valley.

Sunday, June 2, 10:45-12:15: Philosophers' Café/Culture Chat 10:45 AM - 12:15 pm, Cafe Rumi, 4799 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley. This month's topic: "What would a Utopian society, a heaven on earth, be like? Is it even possible to create a Utopia?"

Saturday, June 8, 6:00 pm: Shabbat for Everyone, Coren home, 720 Willow Creek Ter., Brentwood. A little ceremony, pizza, \$7.00 for adults. Please respond to the invite or call 510-888-1404. All members welcome.

TVCJ Outreach – We will be hosting a booth at the Pleasanton First Wednesday Street Fair, June 5, July 3, August 7, 5 – 9 pm. Please come and join us, even for a little while.

Upcoming – July 13, Havdalah at King's. August 17, Havdalah at the Berenson's. If you would like to host a Shabbat or Havdalah let us know!

Jewish Culture School

At the last JCS we made blintzes for our Community's Annual Meeting/Shavous potluck. We also finished our study of the Jewish Life Cycle events by inviting the parents of our students to share life cycle events they had experienced. We learned about birth, Bar and Bas Mitzvahs as well as weddings. This led to a discussion about our upcoming Bat Mitzvah class beginning to think about their preparation. We also learned about the meaning of Shavous as our celebration of springtime and eating of dairy products and we sang and we danced.

We're Changing Our Name!

But to what? At the annual meeting, we agreed that Tri-Valley Cultural Jews no longer expresses who we really are. Our membership ranges far outside the Dublin-Pleasanton-Livermore area to include Brentwood, San Ramon, Fremont and Castro Valley, and we want people in the wider area to know they have a place to belong.

Two issues to resolve are whether we need to indicate our geographical area ("Tri-Valley") and how to describe ourselves ("Cultural Jews). Do we want to say where we are located, or will just a description suffice, as it does for our sister organization, Sholem, in Los Angeles. And do we name ourselves in English, Hebrew, Yiddish or a combination of all? And how do we express our core values in our name? Do we call ourselves Beit Yerushateynu (house of our heritage), Kehillat Tzedek (Justice Community) or Hiloni (freethinking)? Or do we say "cultural," "secular," "gods-free," or "freethinkers?"

So, weigh in! Suggest names, pieces of names, combinations of names. Here's a start: East Counties Jewish Freethinkers. Cultural Jews of the East Bay, Kehillat Hilonim. Send us an email.

Anyone can suggest a name - or several names, but only members can vote. (If you'd like to join, please let us know! We'd be delighted to welcome you into our community.)

Message from the President

When we started the discussion of changing our name, I felt a little pang of apprehension. Why change our name? What's wrong with it? I'm used to it. TVCJ rolls off my tongue so easily now.

I think I only ever focused on the "Cultural Jews" part. The geography of the "Tri-Valley" didn't mean anything to me. It was just a name; I don't go around analyzing every name I come across.

Of course it's silly to keep a name because I'm used to it. We need a name that fits who we are and lets others know who we are as well.

Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612
Webmasters	Noah King 925-371-8585
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	open
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator	– Amy Greenberg
Publicity	open
Movie Coordinator	Wendy Berenson 925-829-0554

What it Means to Me to be a Cultural Jew

Noah King

Just last week we were discussing the idea of changing our group's name. "What is a Cultural Jew?" we asked... and, "Does that name give others an understanding of what we are?" I pointed out that even when I grew up in a traditional reform synagogue, I was still a Cultural Jew. My family celebrated the holidays, as believers (albeit reform believers), and culturally... we were Jewish. We were also religiously Jewish.

But in our group, there is a wide array of religious belief, spanning from interfaith families, to agnostics (like myself) to atheists (like my wife). And yet... we still consider ourselves to be Cultural Jews. What does *that* mean?

To my family, Cultural Jews are people who identify with the Jewish culture, but do not necessarily subscribe to the rules and tenets of the Jewish religion. We don't keep kosher. We don't attend Shabbat services. We don't even adhere to a strict belief in any sort of god. And yet... and yet... we still feel fundamentally tied to the history and traditions of the Jewish people. During Hanukkah, we celebrate and remember the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians. At Pesach time, we remember the Exodus and contemplate the Dayenu. Each Purim, we retell the story of how Esther saved her own people from the plots and schemes of Haman. We don't need a supernatural god to appreciate and learn from these stories. They bind us together, *as a people*. They remind us of our particular history, and they also remind us of how we overcame adversity to persist... as a group of human beings amidst others. They help to shape our moral and ethical values as a community.

It is enough for me, and it is exactly what I want for my children, to learn about and celebrate the rich cultural history of our people without any supernatural religious overtones. The culture... the heritage... the ethics and values... the history... *that's* what's important to us. That's what it means to me to be a Cultural Jew.

Mishpokha (Family)

Birthdays

Happy June birthday to Phyllis Looney, Lenore Kreit, Judy Seid, David Gates, Carol King and Eileen Aiken-Fagliano!

Yortseits

In June we remember Janice Green, friend of Daryle Talavera, Eliza Haile Cloe, grandmother of David Gates, Bruce Enge, stepfather of Erin Edwards, "papa" (grandfather) of Faith

Busy Families

Our thespian traditions continue with Emma Greenberg in "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" on June 15 and 16. Go to <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/388370> for ticket information.

Kevin and Levi Coren will be in Fiddler on the Roof, A Broadway Under the Stars Brentwood production. July 19 through August 4th. Come join TVCJ members who will be attending the show, followed by dinner and voting on the new name. Exact date TBA, one of the Sunday matinees.

CSJO Conference 2013 - Braided Together: Secular Jewish Communities, The Larger Community and The World Beyond.

We have just returned from the annual CSJO conference. This year it was near Philadelphia at the beautiful West Chester University. It was wonderful to see our “conference” friends and to get to know new ones from different areas.

Sarah Waslow-Washington did a terrific job of organizing the conference. She is one of a group of our Young Adults who are taking active leadership roles in the community. It is very exciting for the future of CSJO. The new Teen/Young Adult Advisor, Rob Kurtz, did an amazing job and really showed what he was made of.

We began the weekend with an Oneg Shabbat presented by the Philadelphia Folkshul Teens, including homemade challah! Lively Klezmer music put us in a festive mood. Saturday and Sunday brought a variety of interesting and thought provoking workshops to attend, as well as keynote speeches by Samara Cogan and Mindy Blatt. Musical entertainment and a Jewish Trivia Game were provided on Saturday evening. The Sunday Banquet was topped off once again by the very talented Talent Show.

A first time activity for us was the Intergenerational Lunch. We had assigned seats at tables with teens, young adults and adults, spouses were separated also. On each table was a list of questions for each of us to answer. It created good dialogue for all of us.

The highlight for Jerry and I is always the late night sing-a-longs. It’s like an old time hootenanny...folk songs, union songs, Yiddish songs, old and new favorites. Even those of us who cannot carry a tune have a great time!

Leslie:

I went to a teen workshop as I always do. Ari Haven, a first time conference attendee, presented her workshop about Jews and The Chocolate Industry. She did a terrific job. It was so nice to see the Young Adults give her so much support. This had been her Bat Mitzvah project. And, of course, she gave us yummy samples.

Jerry:

I attended a workshop entitled Baal Teshuva: A Journey into, and out of, Orthodox Judaism. The leader, Lesley Reuter, discussed her religious experiences starting with her non-religious family background. She then became an orthodox Jew in order to relate more to fundamental Judaism. After several years of orthodoxy, she left to become a secular humanist, which she is today. I enjoyed the discussion because I could relate to the issues she faced.

Another workshop we both enjoyed was “I don’t really think of myself as white: How Race, Ethnicity and Judaism are all mixed up.” Emma Petit discussed the nature of Judaism. Are we a race, ethnicity or cultural group? We thought we knew the answers. However, we learned that these terms are much more complex than we realized. It became a very thought provoking workshop with no easy answers.

We look forward to next year’s conference!

Leslie and Jerry Zwick

In the Community

From the Contemporary Jewish Museum: "We hope you will Visit this CJM this summer."

Bring a group for a tour, Plan a meet up with friends, Attend a public program, Take a "stay-cation" at the museum

Exhibitions *Beyond Belief: 100 Years of the Spiritual in Modern Art, Highlights from SFMOMA's collection & Beat Memories: The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg*

Outstanding Programs

- The Allen Ginsberg Festival**, Thursday, Jul 11–Sunday, Jul, 14 (ginsbergfestival.com)
- Wonder Tours**, lead by a spiritual thought leaders
- Beat Generation Instawalk**, Sunday, Aug 4

Booking a private tour is easy. Contact me with your preferred date, time, and approximate number of visitors. Let me help you plan your visit.

I look forward to seeing you at the CJM.

L'shalom,

Elizheva Hurvich, MA, Jewish Community Liaison

Contemporary Jewish Museum, 736 Mission Street | San Francisco, CA 94103, t 415.655.7857 f 415.655.7815 ehurvich@thecjm.org, thecjm.org

A's Jewish Heritage Night on 7/30 - Giveaway Item Announced!

The A's 3rd Annual Jewish Heritage Night is quickly approaching on **July 30** – we hope to see you here! I am happy to announce this year's giveaway item will be an **Oakland A's Yarmulke** that features the Athletics spelled out in Hebrew. Pictures of the yarmulke will be available on the A's website soon. In addition to the giveaway, tickets for the event will include a food item served in the Westside Club.

Groups of 25 or more people will qualify for discounted tickets. Please contact Josh directly to discuss the group options. To purchase individual tickets, please visit www.oaklandathletics.com/Jewish.

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Topic: A Torn Family Reunited through Discovery of an Ancestor's Diary

Speaker: Frederick Hertz

Monday, June 17, 2013

Congregation Beth Am

26790 Arastradero Road Room 5/6

Los Altos Hills, CA

Doors open 7:00 p.m.; program begins 7:30 p.m.

The diary written by the speaker's great-grandfather is a semifictionalized story of his family's life in Tukums, Latvia, their decision to leave for America, and the first 30 years of their life in their new world. The diary proposes many ideas for why Jews left Latvia/Russia and describes vignettes of life in Tukums. <http://www.sfbajgs.org/>

Updates and Events from Jewish Family & Children's Services/East Bay

Holocaust Survivors Memoir Reading

Thursday, June 6, 2013, 12:00pm , Magnes Collection of Jewish Life & Art, Berkeley

Please join us for the annual reading from JFCS/East Bay's ongoing Holocaust Survivor Memoir Writing Workshop. Local survivors will share their stories, recollections, and reflections.

Home Care for Seniors

JFCS/East Bay is proud to announce the launch of our new home care program, providing compassionate, professional, reliable, and personalized support for seniors in their homes. Contact us at homecare@jfcs-eastbay.org, (510) 684-6009, or (925) 949-6151.

Need Home Care?

JFCS/East Bay is now offering compassionate, professional, reliable, and personalized home care services for seniors. Contact us at homecare@jfcs-eastbay.org, (510) 684-6009, or (925) 949-6151.

Got Questions about Senior Services?

Our Senior Information Line can help you locate services for older adults in the community and through JFCS/East Bay. Call us at (510) 558-7800, ext. 716 or email information@jfcs-eastbay.org.

Would anyone like to read and review this book?

God Is Dead! Don't Blame Nietzsche: It Was Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking Who Killed Him *G.R. Pafumi*

From amazon. com, "Most college science students learn about the Big Bang theory and that our universe began from a single point in space and time. But what happened before the Big Bang? Hawking has argued that asking about what happened before the Big Bang is like asking what is north of the North Pole. I am not satisfied with this notion. How could a universe be created from nothing? And if the answer is god or "The Creator," who or what created the creator? And who or what created the creator who created the creator who created our universe? This presents an endless circle of questions for which there are no answers. Thus for a while I was an agnostic in that I could not reconcile in my mind what happened before the Big Bang or who or what was responsible for it. The question remained, if the universe was not created, how did it come into existence? Lawrence Krauss provided some possible answers to this inquiry in his book, A Universe From Nothing, Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing. Everything we see could have emerged as a purposeless quantum burp in space or perhaps a quantum burp of space itself. As Krauss explained, there really is no such thing as nothing. Even if all of the atoms are pumped out of a space and a perfect vacuum is created, the space is not really empty. There is still the energy which resides in the empty space. In empty space, the resident energy creates particles out of pure energy. In our universe, empty space creates particles and antiparticle partners continuously. They exist for a moment but as soon as they make contact, they annihilate themselves and convert the matter they contain back into pure energy. No matter or energy is created or destroyed. Energy is simply converted to matter and then matter is converted back to energy. This same concept can be applied to singularities, the particles which reside inside of black holes. A black hole can erupt into a universe when sufficient energy is provided to it by the fabric of the cosmos, in the same way that particle-antiparticle pairs are created continuously in the universe. Thus universes are created out of nothing all of the time, if one defines the fabric of the cosmos, which is a true vacuum, as nothing in that it has no matter. It is simply pure energy. God is not necessary to explain the origin of universe, and by extension, the origin of man."

For more information, contact VisionOfGod Public Relations at (845) 538-1892 or on the web at Amazon.com/author/grpafumi

Website of the month

Here's an article written by Dan Brook, recently published on *Tikkun Daily*, that you might find of interest:

My Jewish Atheism

<http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2013/05/08/my-jewish-atheism/>

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