



NEWS

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Dr. Gary P. Zola and Abby Schwartz Among Cincinnatians Invited to Attend White House Reception Honoring Jewish American Heritage Month

May 27 event will celebrate Jewish American contributions to American culture

CINCINNATI, OH:--- When President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama host the first ever White House Jewish American Heritage Month Reception on Thursday, May 27, 2010, several Cincinnatians will be present for the historic event. Since taking office, President Obama has continued the tradition started under the previous Administration of proclaiming May Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM).

Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives—one of the original conveners of Jewish American Heritage Month in 2006—has been invited to attend the reception along with Abby Schwartz, JAHM's Cincinnati-based National Coordinator.

The White House press office issued a statement saying that the reception will serve as an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the range and depth of Jewish American heritage and contributions to American culture, with guests representing the many walks of life that have helped weave the fabric of American history. Invitees include a range of community leaders and prominent Jewish Americans from Olympians and professional athletes to members of Congress, business leaders, scholars, military veterans, and astronauts.

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The vision for a national month to celebrate Jewish contributions to American history was developed following the highly successful 2004-2005 celebration of the 350th anniversary of American Jewish life— led by the congressionally recognized ***Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History***. **The national commission was chaired by Dr. Zola.** Impressed by the depth and breadth of the 350th celebration, U.S. Representatives Deborah Wasserman Schultz (D, FL) and Henry Hyde (R-IL) introduced a resolution to the United States House of Representatives calling for the creation of Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM). This resolution won strong support in both chambers of Congress; and President George W. Bush issued a Proclamation on April 20, 2006 calling on the nation to commemorate JAHM.

In this year's proclamation, President Obama said, "The Jewish American story is an essential chapter of the American narrative. It is one of refuge from persecution; of commitment to service, faith, democracy, and peace; and of tireless work to achieve success. As leaders in every facet of American life -- from athletics, entertainment, and the arts to academia, business, government, and our Armed Forces – Jewish Americans have shaped our Nation and helped steer the course of our history. We are a stronger and more hopeful country because so many Jews from around the world have made America their home."

"The White House reception hosted by the President and First Lady will help to raise the national consciousness about the important role that Jewish Americans have played in this country for more than 350 years— in every field of endeavor," said Zola. "And while it is important for Jewish Americans to celebrate these myriad achievements, it is also vital that all Americans learn and understand the impact that American Jews have had on our country— so that we might become a more tolerant nation."

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Dr. Zola and Abby Schwartz are available for interviews. Photos are available upon request. Please contact Joyce Kamen, JAHM Cincinnati Public Relations at 513.543.8109.

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Throughout May, Jewish congregations and Cincinnati community organizations are planning programs, events and activities to honor Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM). Through a Congressional Resolution and Presidential proclamation, JAHM is a national month of recognition of the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. In Cincinnati, celebratory programs range from lectures, community service activities, art and photography exhibitions to films and an evening with comedian David Brenner. View all activities at www.jahm.us; or on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBbxgEM4F14>.