

JEW_S AND BLACKS_{IN} AMERICA

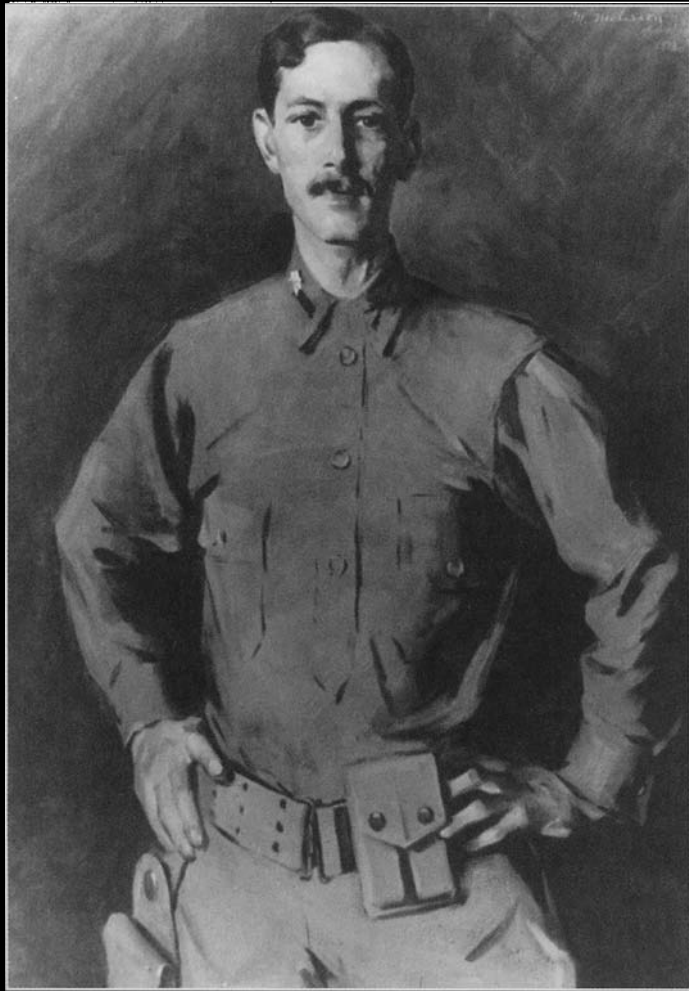
Jews and blacks forged a political alliance in the early 20th century that led to the civil rights movement. This historic bond broke apart in the late 1960s. Barack Obama's election as president has brought us full circle. *Moment Magazine* looks back at one hundred years of history, 1909-2009.

“It would be impossible to record the contribution that Jewish people have made toward the Negro's struggle for freedom, it has been so great,” the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. once said. From fiery abolitionists and quiet philanthropists to eloquent rabbis and pragmatic leaders, American Jews helped lay the groundwork for achieving full citizenship for African-Americans. During the Civil War, some Jews fought on behalf of the Confederacy; others saw a parallel between Jewish bondage in Egypt and the chains worn by blacks. Jews who immigrated in the latter half of the 19th century were staunchly against slavery: many had been denied equal rights in Europe and recognized that the scourge of anti-Semitism would not be eradicated as long as racism persisted. And so, by the dawn of the last century, a partnership had been forged—one that culminated in the Selma Civil Rights march on March 21, 1965, about which Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously said: “When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying.”





After a 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois, a group of prominent blacks and whites signed a petition calling for action against racial intolerance and violence. “Silence under these conditions means tacit approval,” they stated. The petition led to the National Negro Committee conference in 1909 at **Lillian Wald’s** (bottom right) Henry Street Settlement House in New York, resulting in the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was the first of many civil rights groups in which blacks and Jews would work side by side toward equality and justice. Among attendees were **W.E.B. Du Bois** (top right), the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. at Harvard University and a professor of sociology. He became the driving force behind the NAACP. Also at the conference was **Emil Hirsch** (above left), a Reform rabbi from Chicago.



Early NAACP leaders included **Henry Moskowitz** (bottom right), an outspoken New York civil rights activist and an advocate for the Jews of Europe, and **Stephen Wise** (top right), a New York City Reform rabbi and founder and president of the American Jewish Congress. Other Jews, including Wald, a nurse-turned-social activist, Jacob Billikopf, Herbert Lehman, Arthur and **Joel Spingarn** (above left) and Jacob Schiff played important roles in the NAACP and other organizations like the National Urban League. Spingarn, a Columbia University professor, was an active NAACP board member who became president of the organization in 1914. The NAACP still gives out an annual Spingarn medal, established in 1915, to African-Americans of great achievement. Spingarn's words, "I have a dream...of a unified Negro population" are thought to have influenced King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.



Jews provided major financial support for civil rights causes. **Julius Rosenwald** (above left), the Chicago businessman who transformed Sears, Roebuck and Company into a national mail order colossus, was one of them. Inspired by his rabbi, Emil Hirsch, Rosenwald used his wealth to advance black education in the South, battling reluctant officials, defiant education departments and the Ku Klux Klan to build more than 5,300 public schools for black children. Working with the highly respected **Booker T. Washington** (above right), he made generous donations to black institutions of higher learning like Howard University, Dillard University and the Tuskegee Institute; provided training for black doctors and nurses; supported the building of YMCAs for blacks in inner cities; helped create the United Negro College Fund and funded the Rosenwald Fellowship, which supported black artists. When Rosenwald died in 1932, W.E.B. Du Bois declared: "He was no mere philanthropist. He was, rather, the subtle, stinging critic of our racial democracy."



Jewish professors taking refuge from the Nazis often found jobs at America's black colleges. Sociologist **Ernst Borinski** (above), who fled Germany in 1938, took a teaching position at Tougaloo College, a black school in Jackson, Mississippi. In the 1950s and 1960s, Borinski hosted what were for the time revolutionary gatherings—dinner parties where blacks and whites sat next to one another and critiqued segregation. In Merriam, Kansas, **Esther Swirk Brown** (top left), was furious about the terrible conditions of black schools. She organized a legal team to challenge the exclusion of black students from South Park Elementary School. *Webb v. School District 90* went to the Kansas Supreme Court, and the school was desegregated in 1949. The victory helped pave the way for the historic 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*. In New York, **Justine Polier** (bottom left), the daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise, fought segregation in the city's schools. The state's first female judge, she helped open the integrated private Wiltwyck School in 1936. In 1958, Polier ruled that the New York schools were indeed "separate and unequal" and demanded that the Board of Education rectify the situation.

TOP: COURTESY OF MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHIVES; ESTHER BROWN: COURTESY OF THE JOHNSON COUNTY MUSEUM; JUSTINE POLIER: COURTESY OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE



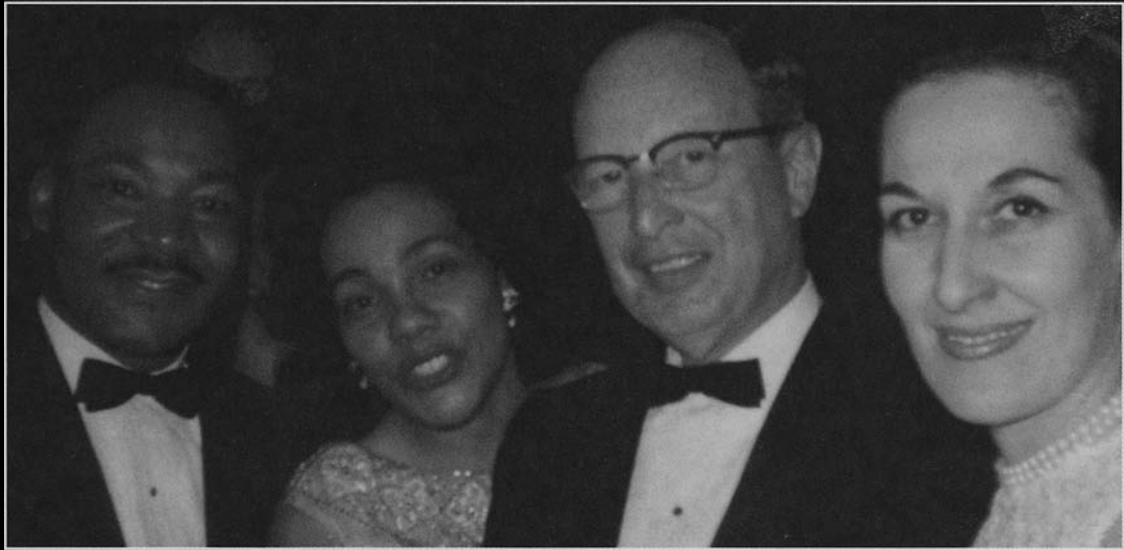
Both before and after they argued *Brown v. Board of Education*, legally ending segregation, **Thurgood Marshall** (far right) and **Jack Greenberg** (second from left) were at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the courts. Marshall was the NAACP's chief legal counsel from 1940 until 1967, when he became the first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court. He was replaced by Jack Greenberg, who had worked for the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund since he graduated from Columbia Law School in 1948. Greenberg led the NAACP's legal team until 1984. In 1952, Greenberg and Marshall, along with NAACP attorney **Paul Perkins** (far left), defended **Walter Lee Irvin** (second from right) during his trial for the rape of a Florida woman. Irvin was found guilty despite questionable evidence. Originally sentenced to death, he spent 17 years in prison.



In 1960, college students staged a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and sit-ins soon spread throughout the nation, leading to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC helped organize Freedom Rides on which blacks and whites rode together on buses throughout the South to challenge local segregation laws and customs, often coming under violent attack. In 1962, Freedom Singers **Cordell and Bernice Reagon** and **Willie Peacock**



(bottom photo, center forefront) rallied an audience of SNCC activists in Nashville that included Chuck McDew, **James Forman** (top photo, second from left), June Johnson, **Bob Zellner** and many others. McDew, SNCC's first chairman, was instrumental to the group's adoption of nonviolent resistance and would later convert to Judaism. In 1963, SNCC activists **Bob and Dorothy Zellner** (top photo), the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, shared a table with Forman, the group's executive secretary, in a Danville, Virginia café. As much as 75 percent of the funds received by SNCC, as well as other nonviolent civil rights groups such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), came from Jews, who were estimated to compose one-third to one-half of the young whites who traveled the South to register African-American as voters in 1964's Freedom Summer. One of these young Jews was Danny Lyon, who joined SNCC immediately after graduating from the University of Chicago, and documented the movement through photographs.



The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, during which Martin Luther King, Jr. told America of his dream for a racially fair nation, took place on August 28, 1963. Sponsored by the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, the National Urban League and King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the march was attended by 200,000 people. A major fundraiser for the



SCLC was Stanley Levison, King's adviser and closest Jewish friend. Earlier that year, **Mrs. Gunther Lawrence** (bottom photo, far left), **Rabbi Richard Hirsch** (bottom photo, second from left), **Kivie Kaplan** (bottom photo, second from right) and **Kenneth Kudith** (bottom photo, far right) protested too. Rabbi Hirsch led the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism from 1962 to 1973, and Kaplan was the president of the NAACP from 1963 to 1975. In 1964, King, 35, became the youngest person to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize. **Rabbi Jacob Rothschild** (top photo, second from right), a civil rights advocate whose Atlanta synagogue, the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, was bombed by white supremacists on October 12, 1958, organized a dinner in King's honor. **Coretta Scott King** (top photo, second from left) and Rothschild's wife **Janice** (top photo, far right) attended what was, at the time, the largest interracial event ever held in Atlanta.



In 1964, CORE organizers **Michael Schwerner**, **Andrew Goodman** and **James Chaney**—two Jews, one black—disappeared after having been arrested for speeding by a Philadelphia, Mississippi sheriff's deputy who was a Klansman. Their burned-out car was found the day after they were reported missing. Their bodies were unearthed five weeks later. The public outcry sparked by these murders—the man responsible, Edgar Ray Killen, was not convicted until 2005—helped accelerate the passage of crucial legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which outlawed segregation and discrimination in schools, public places and employment, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which made illegal poll taxes, literacy tests and other barriers to black enfranchisement. Both laws were drafted by Jewish, African-American and other activists at the Religious Action Center in Washington, DC.

HEAR! HEAR!
 HOW OUR BROTHERS
Died For Freedom
 AND HOW WE ARE CARRYING
 ON THE FIGHT IN MISSISSIPPI

Mickey Schwerner James Chaney Andrew Goodman

HEAR
Mrs. Fanny Chaney
 Courageous Mother of James Chaney
At New Zion Baptist Church
 2319 THIRD STREET
THURS., AUG. 27, 1964
 7:30 P. M.
C O R E

TOP: AP IMAGES; BOTTOM: MAGNUM, DANNY LYON



By the late 1960s, younger, more radical black leaders in the civil rights movement had begun to challenge King's leadership: They objected to the pastor's Gandhian tactics and thought integration too modest a goal. When SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael was arrested in Greenwood, Mississippi during a 1966 march, he declared: "This is the 27th time I've been arrested. We've been saying freedom for six years. What we are going to start saying now is Black Power." Soon, whites—including Jews—were ousted from SNCC. Around the same time, SNCC published a virulently anti-Israel article in its newsletter. While Carmichael joined the Malcolm X-inspired Black Panther Party, whose violent ideology and hostility to whites were increasingly in the public eye, King continued to use peaceful means. On February 6, 1968, King, **Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath** (above, holding Torah) and **Rabbi Heschel** (far right) carried American flags and a Torah to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia to protest the war in Vietnam. Heschel, born to a rabbinical family in Warsaw and educated in Germany, came to the United States in 1940 and rose to prominence as a professor of Jewish ethics and mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary. On March 25, 1968, in an address in honor of Heschel's birthday, King called Heschel "one of the great men of our age, a truly great prophet." Ten days later, King was assassinated.

In 1967, King wrote, “You declare, my friend, that you do not hate the Jews, you are merely ‘anti-Zionist.’ And I say, let the truth ring forth from the high mountain tops, let it echo through the valleys of God’s green earth: When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews—this is God’s own truth.” By the 1970s, many black political leaders had come to see their struggle as part and parcel of a worldwide uprising of the oppressed. Jews, in their view, were part of the problem, not the solution. In 1984, then presidential candidate Jesse Jackson referred to New York as “hymietown,” and Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam made waves by claiming that Jews were manipulating blacks. Just as Jews felt betrayed by some black leaders’ support of the Palestine Liberation Organization, many blacks were dismayed when major Jewish organizations supported Allan Bakke’s suit before the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the University of California’s decision to deny this white Vietnam veteran’s

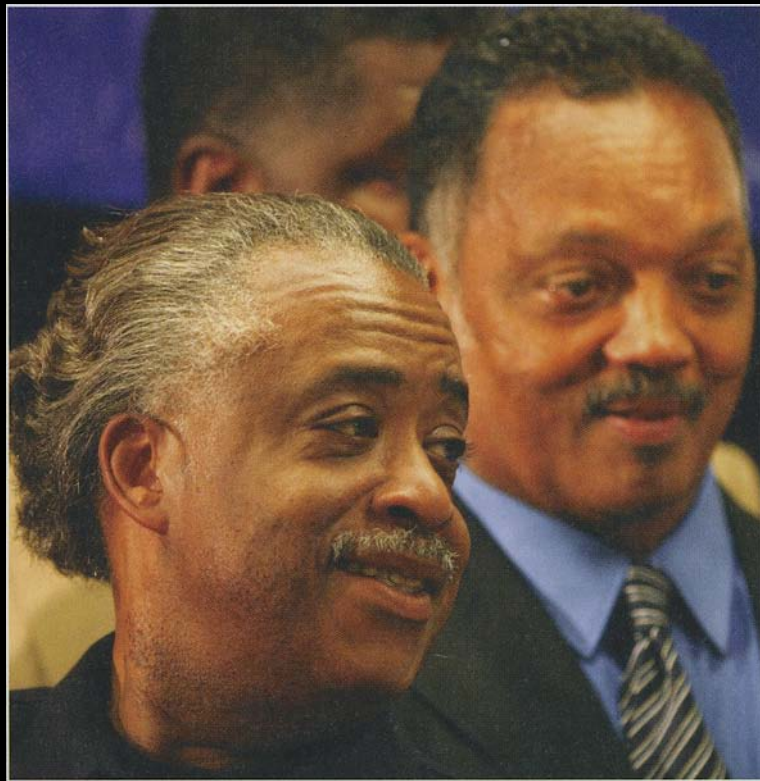


medical school admission on the basis of race. But black-Jewish relations were not uniformly negative. In the early 1980s, **Rabbi Alexander Schindler** (top photo, far left), head of American Jewry’s Reform movement and **David Saperstein** (top photo, far right), among other Jews, participated in a NAACP demonstration in support of affirmative action. (Saperstein serves on the NAACP’s board and delivered the invocation before Barack Obama’s speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention.) Among the many Jewish civic organizations devoted to improving racial understanding and cooperation is the Chicago Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA), founded in 1964 by **Rabbi Robert Marx**, (bottom photo, far right) which helped to integrate the South Side of Chicago. In the 1970s, the JCUA joined with African American groups to ease racial tensions and to oppose a 1978 Nazi march in Marquette Park. During the 1980s, longtime executive director Jane Ramsey (bottom photo, second from left), former JCUA president **Kurt Rothschild** (bottom photo, far left) and Rabbi Marx rallied behind **Mayor Harold Washington** (bottom photo, second from right), Chicago’s first black mayor.

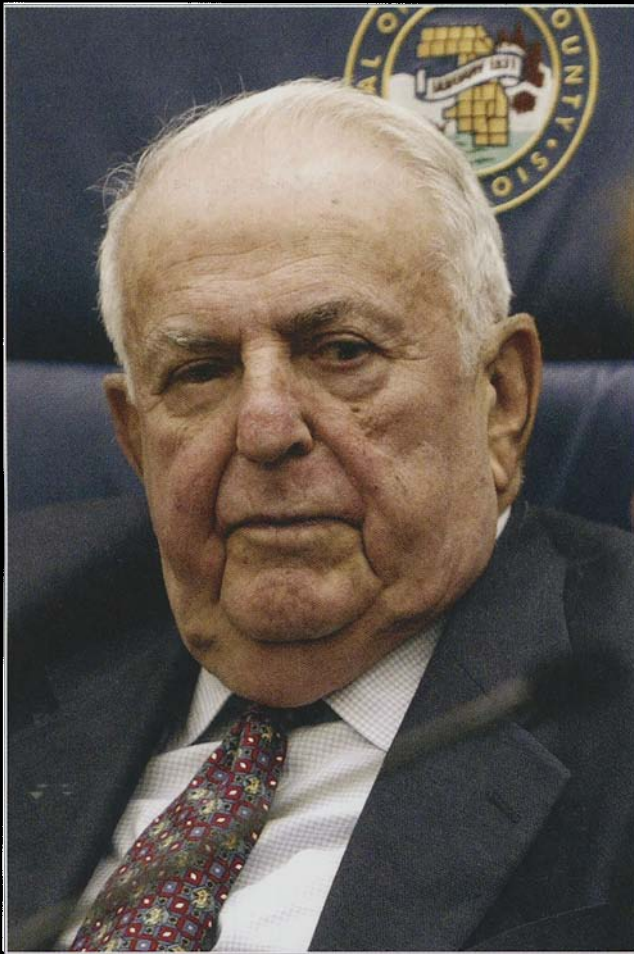
TOP: COURTESY OF THE RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM, BOTTOM: COURTESY OF JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS



New York City's Crown Heights riots began on August 18, 1991, when a car in Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Schneerson's convoy struck and killed a black child. Violence and destruction ensued in the poor, racially divided community. Within hours, Yankel Rosenbaum, a student visiting from Australia, was murdered. The mayhem, which lasted three days, was a tragic indicator of the level of misunderstanding and mistrust that had grown in the previous two decades. For many, like **Rabbi Beryl Epstein** (opposite page, top photo) of the Chassidic Discovery Center, a non-profit that educates people about Hasidism, the riots inspired efforts for reconciliation. Interfaith and black-Jewish dialogue groups such as Rabbi Marc Schneier's Foundation for Ethnic Understanding and Crown Heights groups like Mothers to Mothers and Project Care emerged, helping forge alliances anew. Black leaders during this period include the **Reverends Jesse Jackson** and **Al Sharpton**, both polarizing figures for the Jewish community. Through the 1990s and first years of the new century, memories of the Black Power movement, Crown Heights and other tensions have receded and racial cooperation has come to the fore once again. Despite lingering suspicions, most blacks strongly identify with Israel. More recently, the enthusiasm with which young Jews and blacks have worked to stop the genocide in Darfur has reignited a sense of common purpose and social activism. Many American synagogues display "Save Darfur" banners and send buses of congregants to attend demonstrations. The Save Darfur Coalition itself was co-founded by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Jewish World Service in 2004.

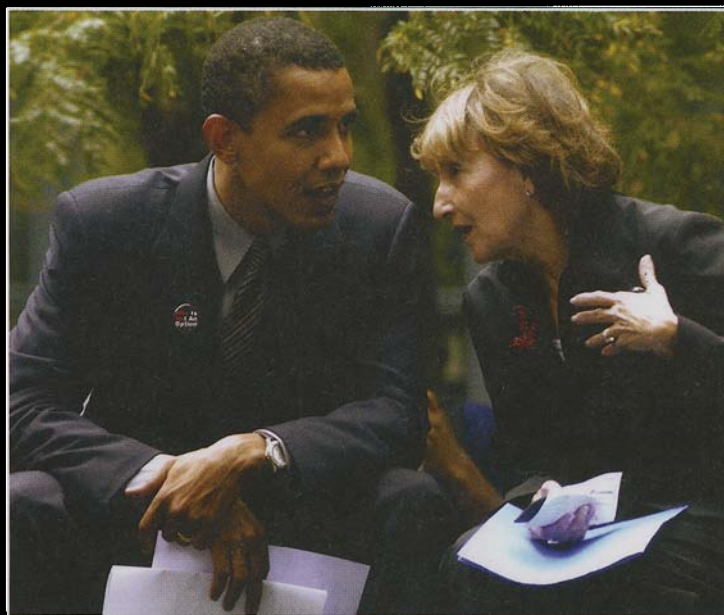


TOP: AP IMAGES; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING



Enter the meteoric rise and historic win of Barack Obama. Throughout his presidential campaign rumors circulated that he was a Muslim, an Arab and an Israel hater. The national media featured Jewish voters who spoke of race as a barrier and speculated that the crucial Jewish constituency would desert the Democratic Party, swinging the election against Obama. In the end, 78 percent of Jews voted for Obama—the highest percentage among any voting group except for African-Americans. Jews have also been among Obama's closest friends and supporters since he entered politics in Chicago. **Abner Mikva** (left), a former Chicago congressman, federal judge and White House counsel to Bill Clinton, befriended Obama in 1990 after he tried to recruit the young Harvard Law School graduate for a clerkship at the U.S. Court of Appeals. Obama turned him down to become a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago. Mikva was one of the key people with whom Obama met when deciding in 2006 whether to run for president. Since some called Clinton the first black president, Mikva has dubbed Barack Obama the first Jewish one.

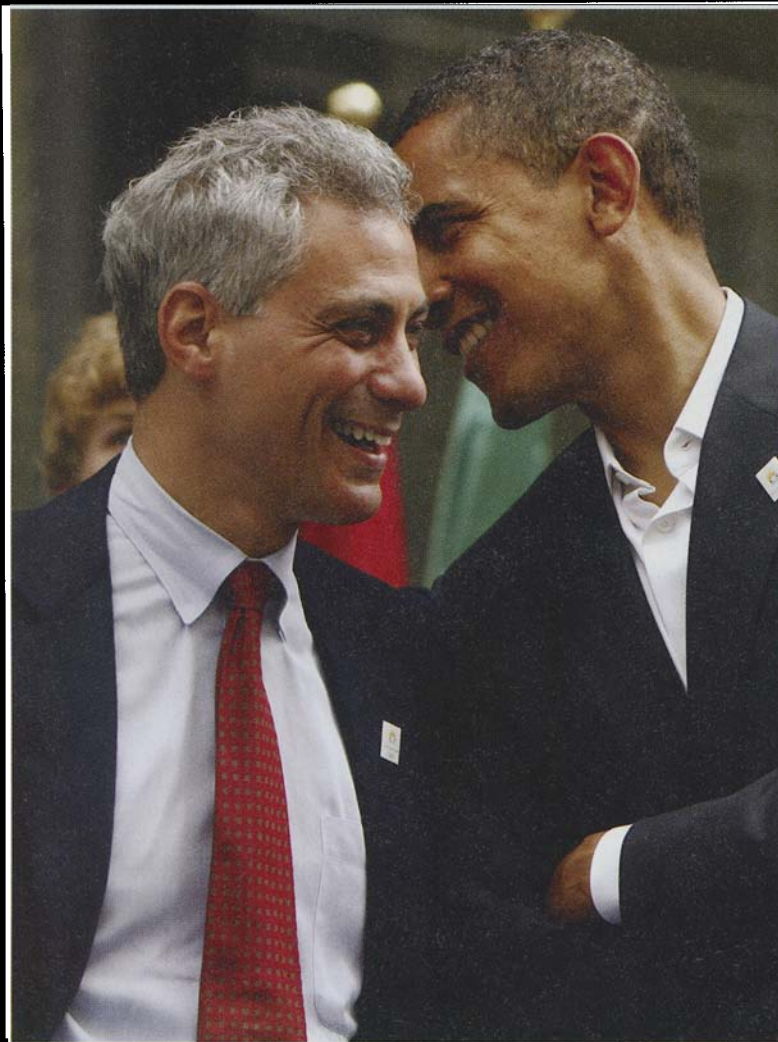
Many other Jewish Chicagoans contributed to Obama's political emergence. **Bettylu Saltzman** (top photo, right), a long-time progressive activist, organized an antiwar demonstration in 2002 and invited Obama to speak. He urged the U.S. to stay out of Iraq, a message that later became a centerpiece of his presidential campaign and ultimately helped him defeat Senator Hillary Clinton. Saltzman also introduced Obama to Chicago political strategist David Axelrod and supported his 2004 run to fill Republican Peter Fitzgerald's Senate seat—a campaign largely financed by **Penny Pritzker** (bottom photo, right), founder of the Hyatt retirement communities and CEO of Pritzker Realty Group. Pritzker later became national finance chair of Obama's presidential campaign. Also key to funding Obama's campaigns is the Crown family, which owns Henry Crown and Company, a manufacturing, real estate and securities company that has partial ownership of the New York Yankees and the Chicago Bulls. James Crown is said to have encouraged Obama to run for president. He also convinced his father, Lester Crown, to support Obama. Likewise, his sister **Susan Crown** (bottom photo, left) backed Obama. Numerous Jews from outside Chicago also joined Obama's team early on. These include Alan Solomon, head of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston; Julius Genachowski, a Washington, DC venture capitalist who attended law school with Obama; Dan Shapiro, who was Obama's Jewish Outreach Coordinator; foreign policy advisors Anthony Lake and Dennis Ross; and former ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer, as well as Democratic members of Congress, including Jan Schakowsky and Robert Wexler.



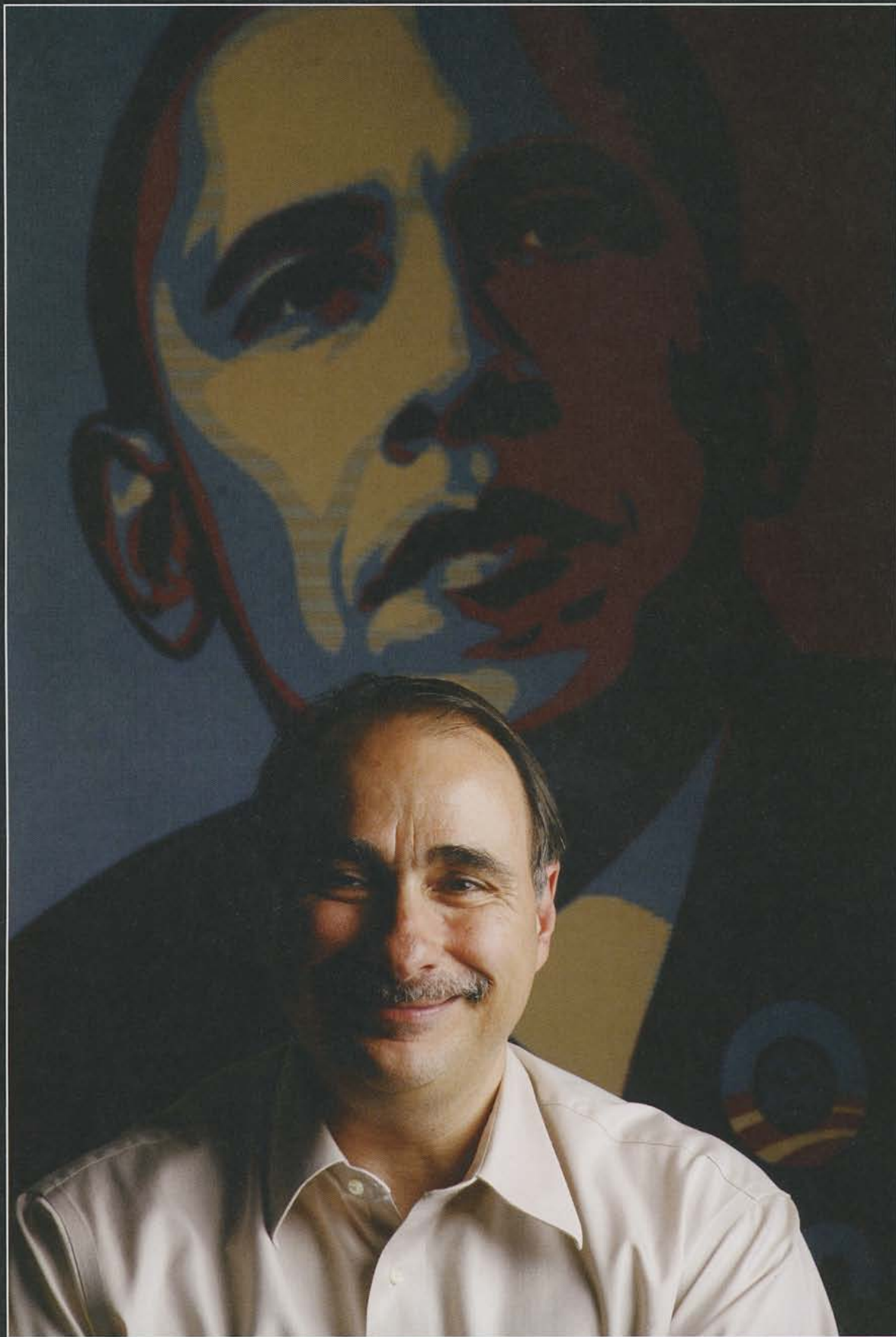
TOP COURTESY OF BETTYLU SALTZMAN, BOTTOM COURTESY OF SUSAN CROWN



Shortly after the election, Barack Obama announced the selection of **Rahm Emanuel** (bottom, left), the Jewish Illinois congressman since 2003 and former IDF volunteer, as his White House chief of staff. In addition, Obama appointed **Lawrence Summers** (top, left) to be head of the National Economic Council, Paul Volcker has been named to the finance team and Peter Orszag, the director of the Office of Management and Budget. **David Axelrod** (opposite page), a New York-born, Chicago-bred Jew and former journalist, served as a chief adviser in Obama's 2004 Senate campaign and as his chief presidential campaign strategist. He has advised other black politicians including the late Chicago mayor Harold Washington and Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick. Axelrod has been named as a senior adviser in the White House. Barack Obama is well aware of the historic nature of the black-Jewish bond. "There is a commitment embedded in the Jewish faith and tradition to freedom and fairness, to social justice and equal opportunity, to *tikkun olam*, the obligation to repair this world," he told the attendees of AIPAC's 2008 conference. "I will never forget that I would not be standing here today if it weren't for the commitment that was made not only in the African-American community, but also in the Jewish-American community. In the great social movements in our country's history, Jews and African-Americans have stood shoulder-to-shoulder."



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