FACTORS AFFECTING MOROCCAN AFFILIATION WITH UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

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This article explores the barriers to the Moroccan community's involvement with UJA Federation of Toronto. Although a large segment of the Moroccan population supports the organization financially, its involvement in leadership capacities is virtually nonexistent. For incoming Moroccans living with an Ashkenaz majority, the decisio was made during the initial stages of settlement to preserve their identity, rather than assimilate into the mainstream. Conversely, the Moroccan community continued to turn inward over a span of four decades as a result of UJA Federation's inability to accommodate their distinct cultural needs. Open channels of communication and mutual respect are needed to strengthen the fence of community.

Ashkenazim say they can't get Sephardim to participate in community organizations; Sephardim say they are frozen out, unwelcome.

Ashkenazim say that Sephardim do not contribute leadership; Sephardim say that the leadership training is not designed for them.

Ashkenazim say that Sephardim are not workers or donors in campaigns; Sephardim say that it is unreasonable to expect them to adapt so readily to a foreign system (C.J.F.-G.A. Forum, 1984).

These conflicting sentiments outlined over a decade ago by Charles Bronfman at a forum on North American Sephardi Jewry at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations are still prevalent. In fact, a series of formal discussions held recently between the mainly East European (Ashkenaz) leadership of United Jewish Appeal/Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto and North African and Middle Eastern (Sephardi) community leaders revealed that cultural, ideological, religious, and socioeconomic differences still divide the two communities. These differences may account in part for the lack of Sephardi leadership on UJA Federations' numerous boards and committees that govern the community.

Despite their differences, the fact that Sephardim and Ashkenazim are once again attempting to communicate demonstrates a mutual desire to build a stronger Jewish community. Both groups are slowly welcoming the idea that building community is a struggle to create a sense of belonging among groups while accepting the different patterns of their social being.

At a time of extreme local and global Jewish divisiveness, UJA Federation is striving to achieve first, a sense of mutual responsibility—*Arevim zeh bazeh*—mainly through its fund-raising and allocations efforts to Jews in need regardless of political, religious, or cultural affiliation. Second, it is attempting to foster unity—*Achdut*—by advocating, publicizing, and supporting such annual campaign slogans as "For one people. Forever." and "So no Jew stands alone."

In pursuing its communal and planning goals of inclusivity, UJA Federation's objective is to achieve domestic peace while enabling each member community to practice its particular traditions, cultural, and religious pursuits in an atmosphere of respect. Each community is encouraged to advance its own interests and needs while still working with other communities to sustain a core of shared values. Affiliation is defined not as assimilation, but rather is an acceptance of cultural distinctiveness leading to a more unified community.

This article examines the affiliation of the Moroccan community, the largest and most organized subgroup of the Sephardi community of Toronto, with UJA Federation. The

terms "Sephardi" and "Moroccan" are used interchangeably here. The analysis seeks to demonstrate that such factors as historical group experience, collective identity, ethnocentrism, ethnic retention, and mistrust between both groups have impeded this affiliation. By addressing these factors, communities can move toward a stronger path of inclusivity.

Information on the Moroccan Jewish community and its relationship to the federation was collected over a twelve-month period by various means, including three focus group sessions with synagogue presidents, board members, and other community representatives; informal discussions with Moroccan leadership; a review of synagogue affiliation as a means of determining Moroccan identification; an assessment of existing Moroccan institutions and associations; and finally a quantitative analysis of Moroccan involvement with UJA Federation.

JEWISH TORONTO

The more heterogeneous a society, the greater the challenge of maintaining one community (Etzioni, 1996).

Jewish Toronto is often described as a community of many communities. Comprised of various ethno-cultural groups, the Toronto Jewish community has grown tremendously in recent years, increasing by 70 percent since 1971 to 162,605 in 1991 (Torczyner et al., 1995) and to 175,000 by 1997. Almost 50 percent of all Jewish immigrant settlers in Toronto came from Eastern Europe, of whom 20 percent emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Another 14 percent emigrated from Western Europe, 11 percent from the United States, and an additional 11 percent from Israel. About 2,000 were born in Morocco and Algeria (Torczyner et al., 1995).

This dramatic population growth has been followed by an increasing segmentation of the Jewish community. There has been rapid expansion of new areas of Jewish residence, particularly the York Region, which has grown to over 45,000 Jewish residents in the past decade. In addition, over 27,000 immigrants have arrived in Canada in the last twenty years.

UJA Federation officials can no longer view the community as a homogeneous group. Groups once marginal, are now organizing and building their own communities to meet their distinct cultural, educational, and religious needs. Examples of this process include the recent development of the Jewish-Russian Community Centre, the Sephardic Kehila Centre (a community-educational center), Aish Hatorah (a progressive-Orthodox spiritual center), and expanding Chabad Lubavitch Centers. The emergence of the three latter organizations occurred in the York Region, north of Toronto, in just over a decade.

As a result, one of the key questions recently confronting UJA Federation was, "To what extent are sufficient institutional structures and community services in place to meet the needs of the expanding community in Toronto?" (Torczyner, 1995). More significantly, how does the federation view its role in this process? Does it need to redefine its notion of community in order to become more inclusive? If so, will the existing establishment relinquish power to other groups?

MOROCCAN AFFILIATION WITH UJA FEDERATION

The Moroccan Jewish community comprises approximately 5 percent of the total Jewish population in the Greater Toronto Area and historically, has held few if any leadership positions within UJA Federation. Virtually all UJA Federation affiliates are headed by Ashkenazim.

An analysis of United Jewish Appeal's (UJA) 1997 campaign leadership roster of about 160 positions revealed only one Moroccan female holding a semi-leadership position in Women's Campaign. A handful of Moroccan men were further identified sitting on various committees or agencies associated with UJA Federation, although none were in positions of leadership.

Although a lack of Moroccan leadership exists, an estimated 35 percent of the Moroccan community identified on UJA Federation lists contributes to the annual campaign. The number of gifts from that population has moreover increased by 19 percent since 1995. This may be attributed to the community's growing recognition of the support given by UJA Federation to the Sephardi day school, Or Haemet ($275,000), and the recent funding of various Sephardic programs such as Torah V'Haim's learning center ($25,000) and Petah Tikvah Synagogue's youth trip to Israel with the help of the Israel Experience Centre ($8,500).

Since a large proportion of the Moroccan community supports the mission of UJA Federation monetarily, why has it not affiliated with the organization in a leadership capacity? The following historical perspective of the Moroccan community attempts to answer this question.

Moroccan Settlement in Toronto

He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself (Simmel, 1950:402).

Moroccan Jews are also referred to as Sephardim because they are members of a large ethnic group dispersed some thirteen centuries ago throughout North Africa. Sephardim "are those Jews in exile who followed the Babylonian tradition—who derived their religious leadership and customs from Baghdad and then from Spain. Their culture was predominantly Mediterranean or Near Eastern" (Gabay & Levy, 1992, p. 10).

The Jewish community was established in Morocco as early as the second century, with a massive influx from Spain following the Spanish Inquisition in 1492 (Paris, 1995). By 1948, the Jewish population of Morocco numbered 265,000. However, because of poverty, pogroms, employment restrictions, forced confinement to ghettos, restriction of citizenship, and most significantly perhaps, messianic precepts centered around the return to Jerusalem (Laskier, 1994), almost the entire Moroccan Jewish community emigrated to Israel. About 12,000 moved to France, Spain, the United States, and Canada (Elazar, 1989).

Moroccan emigration to Israel was further stimulated by the strict immigration quotas in Western countries. Only about 6,605 Moroccans were admitted into Canada, of whom 75 percent settled in Montreal because they were French speaking.

The *aliyah* of Moroccan Jewry was largely subsidized by JAFI, which was primarily funded by North American Ashkenazim as part of the Zionist movement. According to Daniel Elazar (1989, p. 9), "The original myth of the backwardness of the Sephardim was fuelled by the necessity to raise large sums of money abroad to help integrate the newcomers to Israel. The focus was especially on the most backward Jews from the Atlas mountains or primitive villages of Southern Arabia—to use them to exemplify Israel's need for massive support in order to 'civilize' these new immigrants."

Thus, the inferior-superior dynamic between the two groups was constructed through much of the immigration process to Israel. However, this dynamic has also characterized Moroccan-Ashkenaz relations in Toronto. For example, in a focus group session where Moroccan community leaders were shown a video produced by the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) on its recent work in Morocco, the Moroccan leaders felt deeply agitated by what they expressed to be "just another condescending tactic by Ashkenazim to raise more money on account of the Moroccan community." One leader later stated, "This was a method used by North American Ashkenazim in the 1950s and I am surprised to see that such films are still being made. I think it's very insulting."

The emigration of some 12,000 Moroccans to Western countries was motivated by economic reasons and to avoid further subor-

dination to the Israeli-Ashkenaz establishment. In Sarah Taib-Carlen's 1989 study of Toronto's North African community, one participant explained, "Why should I leave a country where the Arabs oppress me to go to a country where my Jewish brothers are going to hate me and oppress me?"

FACTORS IMPEDING AFFILIATION

Individuals who live in groups hold common beliefs which define their reality, not only as persons, but also as group members. This reality becomes especially important when group members become aware that they share it (Bar-Tal, 1990).

Sephardim and Ashkenazim differ in their rituals, customs, prayer melodies, holiday celebrations, languages, physical appearance (in some cases), degrees of religiosity, historical experiences, and social organization. Despite its limited size, the Moroccan population has remained relatively unassimilated into the dominant Ashkenaz culture of Toronto.

For the incoming Moroccans living among a homogeneous majority, the decision had to be made whether to assimilate into the collective identity or to undergo a process of identity maintenance, leading to ethnic survival. They have chosen the latter option, following Isajiw's (1990) model of external aspects of ethnic identity retention:

- maintenance of language and traditions
- participation in ethnic personal networks
- participation in ethnic institutional organizations
- participation in functions sponsored by ethnic institutions

One way the community attempts to preserve ethnicity is by maintaining close ties with its ancestral homeland. Unlike Ashkenazim whose European bonds were destroyed by the Holocaust, members of the Moroccan community have become transmigrants: "immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders" (Basch, 1995, p. 7). Some still hold Moroccan passports and frequently travel to Morocco to visit family, conduct business, and practice their religion.

Ethnic identification, however, is most effectively maintained through a strong communal infrastructure centered around nine synagogues. The large number of synagogues for a relatively small community is indicative of the prevailing differences within the community of language, prayer style, level of religiosity, ritual practices and internal "politics." In fact, the formation of most of these synagogues is largely the result of hostile dissension from existing Moroccan synagogues.

Moroccan community leaders view their congregations as extended families. For them, they are absolute entities functioning independently of the larger Jewish community. When one president, for example, was asked why his synagogue was not affiliated with UJA Federation, his response was, "We must look after ourselves first. Who is going to take care of us if we don't? They don't care about us and our people can't afford to give (money) everywhere." The Moroccan community thus perceives itself as struggling to preserve its identity with limited resources while feeling constantly challenged by outside elements that threaten its very existence.

The threat of cultural disintegration prompted the recent construction of the Sephardic Kehila Centre, a $16 million multifaceted Sephardi community center housing a Hebrew day school, a synagogue, a religious learning center, a youth leadership program, and a *mikveh*. According to some Moroccan leaders, the formation of the day school Or Haemet was motivated by the lack of Sephardi content in the curricula of Jewish schools and the Board of Jewish Education's (BJE) unresponsiveness to the need.

UJA Federation has allocated millions of dollars to subsidize students attending Or Haemet since 1980. In fact, Or Haemet students receive one of the highest percentage

of per capita assistance (approximately 85%) of any BJE-affiliated day schools: its allocation is approximately $600 above the per capita subsidy average of funded elementary schools.

The Moroccan community's reaction to cultural marginalization in Toronto was to turn inward: "In Morocco, the more the Jews were treated as an inferior minority group and excluded from most economic, political, and social positions (the tighter the boundaries), the more intensive the Jews' ethnic and religious identity retention and the tighter their own internal boundaries" (Taib-Carlen, 1989, p. 7). As a result of UJA Federation's perceived inability to accommodate their distinct needs, Sephardi groups attempted to form their own "federated" system. An umbrella organization called the Ontario Sephardic Association (OSA) was formed in 1979 by the Moroccan community under the auspices of the Montreal-based Canadian Sephardi Federation and the American World Sephardi Federation.

Although OSA periodically puts on programs for the Moroccan community, the organization is often criticized by Moroccan community members for its inability to create an effective lay structure, for its underrepresentation of other Sephardi groups, and for its undemocratic decision-making processes. As a result, OSA has never achieved full support and recognition from the various Moroccan congregations and the Sephardi community in general.

Taib-Carlen speculates that North Africans have little political ambition today because they had no political rights for many centuries (1989). While her argument overgeneralizes, it is possible that some Moroccans became accustomed to the totalitarian and patriarchal environment in which they were socialized and, in effect, have applied it to current communal interaction.

CONCLUSION

Aristotle asserted that people came together in a community setting for the enjoyment of mutual association, to fulfill basic needs, and to find meaning in life (Christenson & Robinson, 1989, p. 5).

The affiliation of one group with another requires, first and foremost, a genuine willingness by both parties to form a relationship. For this to happen, both groups must perceive that they share a collective identity. According to Raymond Breton, "One of the requirements for the organization and conduct of collective action... is the sense among potential participants that they constitute a distinct social entity and that they have certain symbolic or material interests in common (1991, p. 133).

The lack of collective identity among Jewish groups thus accounts for their development into subcommunities. A collective identity, however, can only be achieved when "the public affairs of a community involve such phenomena as collective decisions, community events and activities, public ceremonies and rituals, debates and controversies over issues, fund raising for community projects, the selection of community leaders and the exercise of influence of power" (Breton, 1991, p. 2). In a sense, community building is an exercise in the development of relationships. Quite obviously, communities are about people, and people exist in a relationship.

The lack of Moroccan affiliation with UJA Federation is fundamentally grounded in the superior-inferior perceptions between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. While the philosophical "mission" of the organization may be acceptable to the Moroccan community, the sentiments felt by both groups impede their interaction. This may explain why the Moroccan community supports UJA Federation monetarily, but rarely as volunteers on committees

The misperceptions held by both groups as a result of historic stereotypes exacerbate their development into separate communities. Unless community leaders take steps to unite, the inherent divisions may grow. Yet, there is no question that both groups must first work together to strengthen their relationship. Although sifting through decades

of emotional baggage may prove difficult, a relationship may eventually emerge through open channels of communication and mutual recognition of distinct cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and institutional differences. In addition, assimilation through inter-Jewish ethnic marriage will likely provide a natural form of inclusion over the next several generations.

To create further dialogue between the two communities in addition to awareness about one another, leaders from the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities have recently formed the Sephardi Network of UJA Federation. The Network is inclusive to all Sephardi cultures and has thus far had success in involving Sephardim in community-wide fund-raising activities and major events. The Network has further evolved into a mechanism bridging not only Sephardim and Ashkenazim but also the various Sephardi groups. The creation of the Sephardi Network is a starting point that may lead to a stronger and more unified community.

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PROVIDING HIV/AIDS EDUCATION FOR JEWISH ADOLESCENTS

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AIDS: Jewish Voices, *a program of the Boston JFCS, aims to increase Jewish communal support and involvement in HIV/AIDS issues through educational workshops, a speaker's bureau, and support groups. This article describes an education and preventive program for Jewish adolescents offered in Jewish school settings that uses an interactive script format to engage participants in discussion and self-reflection.*

To date, there is no cure for AIDS. However, as treatment strategies become increasingly successful in slowing the replication of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and the progression of AIDS-related illness, a false sense of security has evolved. Combination drug therapies have enabled many people receiving this treatment to resume healthier, productive lives, but not everyone who is infected with HIV or is sick with AIDS is able to benefit from this treatment. Some people find these medications too toxic, some are unable to adhere to the very strict compliance schedule necessary to ensure results, and many people cannot gain access to facilities that provide this type of medical care nor afford its costs. Others have resumed engaging in unsafe behaviors, and the incidence of HIV/AIDS is once again rising.

AIDS is a national problem. As of December 1997, 641,086 Americans were diagnosed with AIDS, including 8,086 children under age 13. More than half that number have died from the disease (Centers for Disease Control, 1997). AIDS is now the sixth leading cause of death in youth aged 15 to 24 and the second in the 25- to 44-year-old group (CDC, 1997).

Hopefully, one day, AIDS will become a manageable chronic disease (Altman, 1997), and research continues on the development of a vaccine that will prevent infection with HIV and ultimately end AIDS. However, until a vaccine is developed, education continues to be the most effective method of prevention.

AIDS educational programs reflect the secular and religious values of each community. These values shape the focus of factual information and prevention strategies included in curriculum material. Parents seek environments that promote sound values, health, and safety for their children and that foster a positive self-image, self-confidence, and the ability to make wise decisions within the rapidly changing world in which we live. Educators are challenged by the need to provide factual information and promote the healthy development of students. AIDS education should be provided in a manner that is mutually respectful of potentially conflicting values (Merz, 1997; Price et al., 1993).

There are no accurate statistics on the number of Jews with HIV/AIDS because reporting mechanisms do not require religious information, and cause of death is often listed as a specific illness, such as cancer or pulmonary disease (International Jewish AIDS Network Conference, 1996). However, numbers don't really matter. What matters is the need for an organized Jewish communal response to everyone who is affected by HIV/AIDS (Solomon, 1988).

AIDS AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Several Jewish concepts and values guide the Jewish response to AIDS (Goldstein, 1994; Katz & Haase, 1993; Swarttz, 1992)

- *Tikkun olam:* repairing our broken world
- *Kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh:* every Jew is responsible for every Jew
- *Bikur cholim:* visiting the sick
- *Pikuach nefesh:* saving lives