



Ideas

THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE NEW JERSEY
COUNCIL FOR
THE HUMANITIES

SUMMER 2003



Humanities Awards

*NJCH turns 30 this year!
Celebrate this important mile-
stone by attending the Council's
Humanities Awards Luncheon
on Sunday, October 26, at the
Somerset Hills Hotel in Warren.*

*This year, Thomas H. Kean,
Jr., New Jersey State Senator;
David Grant, Executive
Director, Geraldine R. Dodge
Foundation; and Barry V.
Qualls, Dean of Humanities
at Rutgers University/New
Brunswick, will join the Council
in honoring three outstanding
voices for the humanities in
New Jersey. Also on the agenda:
The Humanities Book Award,
which will go to Arthur
Hertzberg for his work, *A
Jew in America; My Life and
a People's Struggle for Identity*
(see page 4), and the *Teacher of
the Year Award*, which will go to
Kathleen Stokes, history teacher,
Cherokee High School North,
Marlton.*

*Since this promises to be
another sellout, reserve tickets
early by calling 1-888-FYI-NJCH
or visiting www.njch.org.*

A Chance That Can't Go Wrong

New Jersey ceramicist
Bennett Bean has con-
tributed a vessel valued at
\$6000 for a raffle to benefit NJCH.
This is a rare chance to own a
piece by an artist whose work is
exhibited at major institutions
across America, including the
Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the
Whitney Museum in New York
City, and the Fine Arts Museum
of San Francisco. For additional
information on Bean's work, visit
www.bennettbean.com.



The drawing for the earthenware
vase, which is pit-fired, painted,
and gilded, will take place at the
2003 Humanities Awards Luncheon
on October 26. To purchase raffle
tickets at \$10 each, as well as to
sell them, call the Council office
at 1-888-FYI-NJCH or e-mail
njch@njch.org.

Civic Leadership THOMAS H. KEAN



Who would expect a shy boy, a boy who stuttered and who lacked confidence in both his academic and athletic abilities, to later become Governor of New Jersey? Yet that is the very story of Thomas H. Kean, who led the state so ably from 1982 to 1990 that *Newsweek Magazine* declared him one of the five most effective governors in the nation.

Kean was known as the "Education Governor." The Education Opportunity Fund, which he had helped to create during his days in the Assembly and which he called his "proudest accomplishment" there, provided basic skills training and grants for college to
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Humanities Citizen THE FUND FOR NEW JERSEY

Nothing short of shaping public policy, especially as it relates to individuals and communities in our state, is the paramount mission of The Fund for New Jersey. Executive Director Mark M. Murphy elaborates: "Our role is to speak truth to power. To inform, report, monitor, and recommend ways to make government responsive and responsible." This private foundation, established in 1969, also seeks to influence community problem solving and to educate citizens about options. Though not yet a household word, The Fund for New Jersey touches profoundly the lives of all citizens of the state.
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Mark M. Murphy, Executive Director,
The Fund for New Jersey

Public Humanities JACKSON LEARS



Jackson Lears is one of America's pre-eminent cultural historians. Particularly important to him have been the origins and evolution of American consumerism and our quasi-religious beliefs in providence and luck. Board of Governors Professor of History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, he has written three books and is editor of the *Raritan Quarterly Review*, the university's literary magazine. He also writes regularly for *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and other magazines. The delight and profundity of his prose are captured by Susan Sontag: "Nobody is thinking with more spiritedness and subtlety about the
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HUMANITIES PROGRAMS:

The Autumn Agenda

A variety of humanities programs will occur around the state this fall. Imaginatively designed and provocative, a feast for the heart and the mind, they are, like all programs funded by NJCH, free and open to the public. A few highlights:

TRANSCULTURAL NEW JERSEY

Developed by more than thirty museums, galleries, and other art and cultural centers and organized by the Office for Intercultural Initiatives at Rutgers University, this series features exhibits, interpretive cultural programs, digital education programs, and televised broadcasts. They explore the cultural impact of New Jersey's Hispanic, Asian, African American, Caribbean, and Native American traditions, providing a window into minorities whose history is an integral part of the state's cities and towns from as early as the 1840s. Most of the programs are planned for 2004, but the following two can be enjoyed this fall.

Alternate Routes

Aljira, A Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, plans four exhibitions celebrating artists over 60 years of age who have distinguished themselves by their commitment to advancing contemporary art and culture. The first of these, a showing of the abstract expressionist paintings of Frank Bowling, whose roots are in the Caribbean, will be on

display September 18–December 10 at 591 Broad Street, Newark. Bowling's works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Tate Gallery in London. *Project Director: Shana O'Hara, Associate Director of Aljira, Inc; 973-622-1600; sohara@aljira.org.*



Italian family leaving Ellis Island by ferry – 1905.
Courtesy National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument

Transcultural New Jersey: The Religious Landscape

An interactive CD-Rom, produced by NJN Public Television, focuses on the Religious Architecture exhibit to take place at the Stedman Gallery at Rutgers/Camden in 2004. Among the sites featured on the CD are an Islamic center, a Hindu temple, a Buddhist temple, and an AME church. Also included are video stories, a narrated slide show, and a map including information about each site, as well as lesson plans and other resources for further exploration. Targeted to grades 6–12, as well as the general public, the CD will be tested in the New Brunswick school district in 2003–04 and made available statewide by spring 2004. *Project Director: Susan Wallner; 609-777-5267; swallne@njn.org.*

Italians in America: Stereotypes, Struggles, and Successes

The History Department of Camden County College in Blackwood presents a lecture series on each Wednesday in October and the first Wednesday in November about various aspects of the Italian immigrant experience. Included among the topics are "Lynchings, Race and Italian Immigrants," "Sacco-Vanzetti Revisited," and "The Portrayal of Italian Americans in Contemporary Media." In conjunction with the lectures, a community forum on October 23 focuses on "The Sopranos"
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The Humanities Book Award 2003

A JEW IN AMERICA

My Life and a People's Struggle for Identity

by Arthur Hertzberg

This passionate memoir by one of the most prominent leaders of the American Jewish community over the past fifty years provides a moving account of his life as a scholar, man of conscience, and activist for many causes, from Israel to civil rights. The scion of a rabbinical family that emigrated from Poland to Baltimore, Arthur Hertzberg tells us what it was like for him to grow up as the son of immigrants in Depression-era America, how he came of age in the dark days of the Holocaust, and

how he has sought over a lifetime to reconcile a devotion to traditional Jewish values with citizenship in modern America. As rabbi for many years of Temple Emanu-El in Englewood, as professor at Columbia and Dartmouth, and as leader of many Jewish organizations, Hertzberg tells a story of deep involvement in the world and commitment to humane values. It is also a story of courage, of idealism, and of advocacy on behalf of human rights for all people. Look for a full review in the next issue of *Ideas*. ■

Congratulations to the authors of the 2003 Honor Books, also to be reviewed in the next *Ideas*:

Gerald N. Grob
The Deadly Truth: A History of Disease in America

Tim Lefens
Flying Colors: The Story of a Remarkable Group of Artists and the Transcendent Power of Art

Bernard Lewis
What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response

James Tackach
Lincoln's Moral Vision: The Second Inaugural Address

George Tice
Urban Landscapes

examined included the Newark Renaissance and its impact on the downtown, on neighborhoods, and on residents; education, especially capital improvement needed for school buildings; and the city as contributor to the regional and local economy. In 1999, The Fund also established the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies, named in honor of one of its founders, a Princeton graduate deeply committed to advancing the interests of all New Jerseyans. Located on the campus of Rutgers University/Newark and an integral part of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences there, the Center is dedicated to advancing public understanding of issues affecting Newark and other communities in northern New Jersey.

Although The Fund devotes more than half of its resources to the advancement of social and economic opportunity and to the influencing of public policy in the state, virtually every citizen is also affected by its endeavors for a cleaner environment and better land use. From the Delaware to the Hackensack Rivers to the Hudson-Raritan Estuary, from the Pinelands to the Skylands region of the state's northwest section, New Jerseyans have The Fund to thank for supporting work to preserve and protect our fragile environment.

Throughout its history, The Fund has been guided by an idea of the political philosopher John Rawls. Rawls believed that when considering any public proposal we should proceed with the least among us foremost in mind. This philosophy explains why The Fund supported a website to provide a database of programs and services for people leaving New Jersey prisons. It explains support for New Jerseyans for a Death Penalty Moratorium to educate citizens and governmental leaders about the disparate use of capital punishment. It also explains a grant to the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for the Asylum Program in New Jersey, providing legal representation to indigent political asylum seekers detained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, their legitimate claims notwithstanding.

The compassion, imagination, and dollars of The Fund for New Jersey are helping to inform the demands citizens make of their government, as well as the quality of life they expect for themselves and their children. In addition, as Trustee Clement A. Price explains: "The Fund enables people in the public policy realm to connect the dots that sustain New Jersey's civic society."

NJCH is delighted to recognize The Fund as perhaps the most important New Jersey nonprofit organization harnessing the intellectual power in the State for the pursuit of the common good in public policy. ■

THE FUND FOR NEW JERSEY

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When The Fund began, virtually no government watchdog groups were in place in the state. To fill the void, The Fund initiated and has since supported the Center for Analysis of Public Issues. In its 33-year history, the Center has published dozens of policy studies; state political leaders rely upon its award-winning magazine, *New Jersey Reporter*. Early in its history, The Fund also helped to establish the Coalition for Fair Broadcasting, hoping to redress the backseat that news of public affairs in New Jersey always took to coverage of issues in New York and Philadelphia. By using the leverage of license renewals, the Coalition nudged commercial and public television networks into devoting more time to Jersey. Former Director Gordon A. MacInnes, Jr. notes: "We tried to improve the quality of public life in New Jersey by improving the quality of information available to its citizens."

Many outstanding initiatives stem from more recent years. Shortly after the 2001 state elections, The Fund published a series of six reports, known collectively as *Agenda*

New Jersey. In the reports, 24 recognized public policy leaders, many of whom served on the transition team of Governor James E. McGreevey, presented ways to solve pressing issues facing the state. Kinship care for foster children, classroom improvements in our poorest school districts, neighborhood economic revitalization of our cities, improved medical insurance for the working poor, open space preservation, transportation infrastructure repairs, election fundraising reform, new corporate taxes, and enhanced progressivity in the state income tax are just some of the benefits that have been inspired by the pages of the reports. To encourage public dialogue on these topics, The Fund for New Jersey sponsored a series of six programs on the Emmy-winning public affairs television program "Caucus: New Jersey."

Nothing has been more important to The Fund than the problems of our cities, including Newark, Trenton, Camden, and Englewood. The Task Force on Newark in the 21st Century, initiated by The Fund in 1998, invited civic leaders to look back over the 30 years since Newark's civil uprising and to assess the city's condition at the turn of the century, as well as its future prospects. Critical issues

THE AUTUMN AGENDA

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"The Plague of Locusts, against the Pharaoh," from an Old Testament manuscript produced in Northern Italy about 1650
Courtesy Walsh Library Archives, Seton Hall University

and the Image of Italian Americans." Another component of the project assists teachers in meeting the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards in social studies. The idea for the series originated locally, as project director John L. Pesda explains: "A number of respondents mentioned that they would like to learn about the experience of immigrants to the United States, particularly those who came from Italy."

Telephone Pesda at 856-227-7200 ext. 4432; or e-mail jpesda@camden.edu.

The Beauty of Sacred Texts

The Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University in South Orange hosts an exhibit of art and calligraphy relating to prayer and worship in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. In the art gallery of Walsh Library from October 31 to December 18, viewers may see examples of the sacred writings of these traditions. Visitors are encouraged to consider similarities among the approaches that four major religions take to the making and use of sacred texts. On November 13, a symposium featuring speakers from each of the religions explores the process of making texts for worship and study, as well as their use historically and contemporaneously.

Project Director: The Reverend Lawrence Frizzell; 973-761-9751; frizzella@shu.edu.

Frankenstein in Our Time

The Humanities Department of Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken presents a lecture, workshop, and forum, November 19-21, about Mary Shelley's 1818 novel. Susan J. Wolfson, Professor of English at Princeton University, looks at the novel as a literary text for our time.

This presentation is paired with a viewing of the traveling National Endowment for the Humanities exhibit on *Frankenstein* at the Jersey City Public Library, one of a select group of libraries in the United States chosen to host the exhibit. The series is also taking place at the time of the "common reading" of the novel sponsored by the Hoboken Public Library. The workshop concerns writing, analyzing, and publishing science fiction. The forum considers ways in which science and science fiction converge; authors of science fiction, as well as a physicist and a historian of science will participate.

Project Director: Susan Levin; 201-216-5396; slevin@stevens-tech.edu.

The Health of Women, Where Literature and Medicine Meet

The Atlantic City Medical Center sponsors a conference on November 21 at the Atlantic City Convention Center featuring medical faculty, residents, and students interacting with members of the community, including patients, poets, and other writers. Underlying the conference is the idea that the "human" side of medicine can best be understood by looking at literature. Lucille Clifton, Barbara Daniels, Mimi Schwartz, and Pamela Swallow, writers who are also cancer survivors, read from their work, speak on panels, and lead roundtable discussions, along with medical personnel. Among the topics for discussion are gender, sexuality, multiculturalism, and biomedical ethics, as well as the relationship between the health of women and the way in which their health determines the health of our society. Project Director: Victor A. Bressler, MD; 609-441-2128; vbressler@atlanticare.org. ■

LEARS

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roots (and ethical tangle) of American culture and the distinctive pursuit of happiness than Jackson Lears."

His first book, *No Place of Grace* (1981), was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His second, *Fables of Abundance* (1994), won the 1995 NJCH Book Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award in History. Lears has been the recipient of fellowships from the

Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Smithsonian Institute, among others.

Barry V. Qualls, Dean of Humanities at Rutgers and former Chair of the Council, notes that Lears' subjects have always been "the ways in which American ideals and realities get articulated in the messy world of cultural practices." Qualls marvels at how Lears "listens to the sounds and claims of the culture and surprises us into new appreciations of the material environments in which we live.

He probes the richness and contradictions of American culture, suggesting what Thomas Jefferson and P.T. Barnum have in common, or William James and Donald Trump, or John D. Rockefeller and Damon Runyon; he sees how Cotton Mather and the Marx brothers may readily claim the same territories of the promised land."

Fables of Abundance is the story, Lears writes, of "how advertising collaborated with other institutions in promoting what became the dominant aspirations, anxieties, even

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TEACHER INSTITUTE DRAWS RAVES

The Teacher Institute is the Council's direct pipeline to the classrooms of New Jersey, a channel by which teachers, and through them their students, are infused with a greater understanding and appreciation for the humanities. Each of this summer's four seminars, held at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, was booked to capacity; each had a waiting list as well. The excitement generated among teachers about the Institute is captured by Melissa Bahrs, an English teacher from Shore Regional High School in West Long Branch and a veteran of a number of courses in the Institute. She exudes: "It totally nourishes me."

Offered for the first time in 2003, "A Reconsidered Past: New Scholarship in African American History," was led by Clement A. Price, Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, Rutgers University, and Director of the Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience. Price observed that the seminars "sustain and honor lifelong learning for New Jersey educators. They also bring K-12 teachers and college professors into mutually respectful encounters of learning, discovery, and fun."

All seminars strike a balance between helping teachers incorporate into lessons the standards outlined in New Jersey's Core Curriculum and inspiring educators with cutting-edge research in the humanities. Price's seminar responded to the 2002 Amistad legislation challenging New Jersey to become more committed to public literacy in



"Literature of Immigration" seminar leader Hiram Perez, right, with Melissa Bahrs and Master Teacher Peter Murphy

African American history. The course presented recent scholarship that places African Americans and race relations at or near the center of virtually every chapter in American history. In addition to Price, other stellar scholars and teachers of black history participated. Howard Dodson, Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, kept the audience rapt as he spoke for two hours—without notes. Dodson's research revealed that traditional instruction about slavery, which has emphasized the slave as victim, is less than the whole truth. Although he in no way denies the atrocities of slavery, his study of the diaries of slave owners suggests that they weren't all-powerful, that the relationship between master and slave was often a negotiated one because slave labor was the basis of the economy not only in the South but in parts of the North and Europe as well. When a slave refused to work, ships loaded with cotton couldn't be processed in New York City, and mills in England lay idle. Dodson also noted the importance of the Amistad legislation, explaining



During a break from the seminar, "A Reconsidered Past," teachers continue the discourse. Left to right: Sharon Leathers, Glenda Branch-McDowell, Gail Mitchell, Dorothy Senner, Nancy Wallace.

that when he was in school almost no attention was paid to African American history, especially slavery. Because whites felt guilty and blacks felt embarrassed, everybody wanted to get over the subject as quickly as possible. Dodson's admonition: "We get over it quickly at our own peril."

"Literature of Immigration," another seminar offered for the first time this summer, was led by Hiram Perez, a professor of literature at Montclair State University, who felt "inspired by the dedication of the teachers and the spirit of collaboration at the seminar." Beginning with European immigrants of the early twentieth century and continuing with Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean immigrants of more recent years, the course examined racial and ethnic identities revealed in literature by first and second generation Americans, exploring how the works shed light on conditions that either bind or divide us as communities. Discussions of the literature were grounded historically through investigation of laws restricting immigration and naturalization.

Even though the United States is often defined as a nation of immigrants, when newcomers first arrive on these shores, crises repeatedly erupt, as New Jersey educators appreciate all too well. Their classes teem with faces from all over the world. Katherine Midili, who teaches fifth grade at North Dover Elementary School, Toms River, reported that in one class of 30-some students, 22 were immigrants. Institute Master Teacher Peter Murphy, a member of the English Department at Atlantic City High School, said 40 languages are spoken in his school. Perez understands that teachers must intervene when students from one group react angrily toward those from the "other." Moreover, as he pointed out, "the events of September 11 and the war with Iraq make such interventions especially urgent." He also demonstrated that stories, novels, and poems, whose very subject is the human heart, are arguably the most effective way to transform that "other" into my sister/ brother.

Two other seminars were offered in 2003. "Religious Diversity in America," led by Joseph Devlin, a professor of religion at LaSalle University, examined a variety of Eastern and Western religions, observing

ways in which their underlying principles influence political and social order. "Citizenship in the 21st Century," led by Eileen Sullivan, a professor of political science at Rutgers University/ Newark, explored what it means to be an American, reflecting on how our increasingly multicultural country can be united by a common bond of national identity. Expect to hear more about these seminars in the next issue of *Ideas*.

Teachers who enroll, many of them year after year, best realize the quality of the seminars. This summer, Michael Szweczyk (chef-chick), a language arts and science teacher at University Middle School in Irvington, took "A Reconsidered Past." He noted: "I work with kids who do not have a strong sense of their own cultural identity and history. The NJCH Institute represents an opportunity to broaden my understanding and appreciation of African American history so that I can help guide my students on the journey into their past."

Few other programs in the state are as important for continuing education in the humanities as the Teacher Institute. Elizabeth Meola Aaron, a history teacher at Summit High School and a veteran of various seminars, says it well: "I love that NJCH recognizes the value of exposing teachers to the highest level and most recent scholarship in various fields. The seminars really give us the opportunity to re-energize, and that makes us better teachers when we return to our students in the fall."

Elizabeth was among the 100 educators who attended the seminars in 2003; some sixty others wanted to enroll but could only be wait-listed. That's enough to fill two additional seminars. However, instead of being able to provide the two, NJCH may be forced to reduce next year's Institute by that number. Contributions from the private sector and from foundations help; in 2003, Johnson & Johnson gave \$40,000 to support the Council's seminars devoted to tolerance. Nevertheless, state funding is also an essential component. Without the latter, the Teacher Institute cannot remain the strong and vibrant source for humanities education that it has been throughout the past decade. ■



L to R: "A Reconsidered Past" seminar leader Clement A. Price with guest presenters Zain Abdullah and Howard Dodson

LEARS

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notions of personal identity, in the modern United States. It is an effort to show how advertising helped recast our relationships with material goods and the surrounding environment." Not content to write another diatribe against the corruptions created by Madison Avenue, Lears realized that "modern advertising could be seen less as an agent of materialism than as one of the cultural forces working to disconnect human beings from the material world." Our consumer culture is based not on the pleasures of possession but on continuous striving for disposable goods. Alan Trachtenberg, Professor of English and American Studies at Yale University, praises *Fables of Abundance*: "Advertising becomes his occasion for an argument at once cogent, subtle, and elegant about the redemptive role of art and

play in an acquisitive culture ruled by a corporate, managerial ethos."

Lears' most recent work, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*, published last January, is not a history of gambling per se, but a history of conflicting attitudes toward luck, especially in America, where "longings for a lucky strike have been counterbalanced by a secular Protestant ethic that has questioned the very existence of luck." In an interview with Rutgers' *Focus Magazine*, Lears elaborates: "We are a country that was essentially begun in a series of risky real-estate ventures. We have always celebrated the risk-taking entrepreneur, and yet we are the country that has lived by the Protestant work ethic more insistently than most other countries of the world." His book analyzes the "fault lines in American character" that gambling reveals, the "sharp tensions between an impulse toward risk and a zeal for control." Although Lears acknowledges the destruc-

tiveness of compulsive gambling, he shows that the worldview of people hoping for a lucky break may be healthier for society than that of those who imagine they control everything. He writes: "A culture less intent on the individual's responsibility to master destiny might be more capacious, more generous, more gracious.... An emphasis on the precariousness of wealth, the impermanence of life, and the arbitrariness of money as a measure of worth—if these are tenets of a gambler's worldview, it may be a perspective worth cultivating."

Ray Suarez, a senior correspondent on "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer," admires the work not only because it conveys complex ideas but because "it is fascinating fun. During our current mania with virtue, Lears helps us remember what we have forgotten about ourselves. Take a chance on *Something for Nothing*," he writes. "I like your odds." ■