



A LIVING
MEMORIAL
TO THE
HOLOCAUST

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NEW EXHIBIT ABOUT THE EXTRAORDINARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MORGENTHAU FAMILY AND THEIR LEGACY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Opening on Nov. 16 at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

NEW YORK, NY—Robert M. Morgenthau, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Henry Morgenthau, Sr. —three men who courageously spoke out against injustice when no one else would —represent more than a century of one family’s dedication to public service. Together they are the subject of the compelling new exhibition opening on **November 16** at the **Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**. *The Morgenthaus: A Legacy of Service* features the fascinating personal histories of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, his father Henry Morgenthau, Jr., the secretary of the Treasury under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his grandfather Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. **Robert M. Morgenthau will speak at a press preview to be held on Friday, November 13 at 10 a.m.**

The Morgenthaus have embraced the promise of America since their arrival in 1866. Wanting to contribute to their country and their communities, they dedicated themselves to public service. Henry Morgenthau, Sr. became Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire at the outbreak of World War I, while Henry Morgenthau, Jr. served as Secretary of the Treasury during the Great Depression and World War II. As the longest-serving district attorney in New York City, Robert M. Morgenthau effected far-reaching change in the legal system, and inspired new generations of professionals and public servants. The exhibition explores the fascinating ways in which three generations of a family raised awareness of tragedy around the world, and in doing so changed the course of world events, American politics, and Jewish history.

Several rarely seen objects will tell this story including: a 1915 telegram from Henry Morgenthau, Sr. to the U.S. State Department about the scope of the Armenian genocide; a 1944 report prepared by Henry Morgenthau, Jr.’s staff entitled, “A Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews”; and the executive order that established the War Refugee Board, also in 1944.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Museum will launch a companion website in time for the opening that focuses on the themes of international aid, public service, and volunteerism. By visiting www.mjhnyc.org/morgenthaus, individuals of all ages will be inspired by the Morgenthau family to act locally or globally and devote their time to service projects that need their help.

About the Morgenthaus

For more than 150 years, the Morgenthau family has been an active part of the American and Jewish landscape. While still in Mannheim, Germany, the family participated in a vast array of causes including charities, synagogues, and community life. As Americans, the Morgenthaus found new outlets for public service. Through the stories of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Robert M. Morgenthau, visitors will learn how they were compelled by world events to respond as both Americans and Jews.

Henry Morgenthau, Sr. (1856-1946) graduated from Columbia Law School, ran successful businesses in law and real estate, and was the founding president of Rabbi Wise’s Free Synagogue. After his success in the private sector, he made the decision to devote the rest of his life to serving his country and the causes in which he believed. He was

(More)

appointed Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1913 at the outbreak of World War I. In the first two years of his post he witnessed the poverty of Jewish settlers in Palestine. He was also alerted to the Turkish persecution of the Armenians. He called attention to the sufferings of the non-Muslims in the Empire and helped supply direct aid and relief. Even after his ambassadorship had ended, he continued to speak out about conditions for Jews and minorities abroad, and to raise funds on their behalf. Starting in the 1930s he personally provided direct assistance to dozens of families that fled Nazism.

Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (1891-1967) began his career in agriculture in Dutchess County, New York, where he got to know his neighbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was Secretary of the Navy at that time. Morgenthau's passion for agriculture and his acquaintance with FDR led to positions as State Conservation Commissioner, head of the Federal Farm Board, and Secretary of the Treasury during Roosevelt's presidency. As Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau worked to strengthen America's economy during the Great Depression, and to prepare the Allies for WWII. In 1940, he initiated a program of savings and defense bonds — to keep taxation at a minimum and to mobilize the nation's citizens in support of the war. Ultimately, the program raised \$49 billion towards the cost of the war, strengthening the country's financial base and national morale. In 1943, he and his staff revealed the State Department's activities to suppress information regarding the Holocaust, which led to his famous report to the president urging U.S. intervention. His actions led to the establishment of the War Refugee Board and helped save an estimated 200,000 European Jews. After leaving his government post, he helped rescue and resettle surviving European Jews and raised unprecedented sums for the State of Israel.

Today **Robert M. Morgenthau** (born 1919) carries on the tradition of public service. After serving in the Navy during World War II, he engaged in a private legal practice and was appointed U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. Since 1974, he has served as District Attorney for New York County, under his leadership the Manhattan DA's office has been called "the country's premier prosecutorial office." In this post he fought corruption, fraud, organized crime, and white-collar crime. He addressed crime at multiple levels — by prosecuting criminals, restructuring the system of prosecution, and creating programs for the victims and communities affected by crime. Like his father and grandfather, his sense of duty compelled him to respond; in this, his last year as DA, the office initiated an investigation that revealed Iranian entities have moved money throughout the world to finance the development of nuclear weapons. He has long been affiliated with numerous charities. His civic causes include the Police Athletic League, which he has served as President and Chairman, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage, of which he is Chairman. He has also been active in many other organizations that serve Jewish and non-Jewish communities including the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund, B'nai Brith, and the Anti-Defamation League.

"The Jewish community, the country, and indeed the world, were all changed for the better because of the actions of the Morgenthau family," said Museum Director Dr. David G. Marwell. "I have been inspired daily by our chairman, Robert M. Morgenthau, and know that by looking back at his dynamic career, and those of his father and grandfather, this exhibit will inspire visitors to take action in their own communities and make clear that one person can make a dramatic difference."

About the Exhibition

Occupying the Museum's Overlook gallery, the exhibition will utilize newly discovered film footage, personal artifacts, and rare documents that changed the course of history. Visitors will discover the dynamic careers of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Robert M. Morgenthau, and the difficult choices they faced along the way. Their careers brought them close to world events—including the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, refugee crises, and the formation of the State of Israel — and compelled them to respond as both Americans and Jews. Highlights of the exhibition include rare, original artifacts that speak to the dramatic and urgent circumstances they faced, and the actions they took to intervene on behalf of others. *The Morgenthaus: A Legacy of Service* will provide a fascinating look at the ways in which individuals can influence the course of events in their own time.

Exhibit highlights include:

- Henry Morgenthau, Sr.'s menorah, which he acquired on his first trip to Palestine in 1914. He was moved by the beauty of the land, but was distressed by the poverty of the Jews living there. After his trip, he set out to

alleviate the hardship he witnessed by urging American Jewish organizations to provide significant funds for the impoverished.

- Telegram Henry Morgenthau, Sr. sent to the United States regarding the Armenian crisis. When Morgenthau received shocking dispatches from American consuls and missionaries stationed in the interior of the Ottoman Empire, he was compelled to inform the U.S. State Department about the nature and scope of the atrocities. In the telegram he states, “it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress...” This important document is on view from the National Archives.
- Tea Set Henry Morgenthau, Jr.’s wife, Elinor, used to entertain Eleanor Roosevelt . Elinor Morgenthau and Eleanor Roosevelt developed a friendship based on similar social and political concerns. They worked together for progressive causes at the state and national level for years.
- Telegram World Jewish Congress Secretary Gerhart Riegner sent to Rabbi Stephen Wise in 1942 about the Nazis’ plans to exterminate all Jews in Germany and German controlled areas in Europe; this information was breaking news obtained through Riegner’s private contacts.
- 1944 report about the State Department’s obstructionist activities prepared by Morgenthau’s staff entitled “A Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews.” Three days after receiving a report from Henry Morgenthau, Jr., FDR established the War Refugee Board. The executive order establishing the Board is on loan from the National Archives.
- Photo of Franklin D. Roosevelt driving with Henry Morgenthau, Jr. circa 1940, which will be displayed with a fedora that Henry wore regularly.
- Robert M. Morgenthau’s navy cap, medals, and oar from the USS *Lansdale*, which was sunk by an enemy torpedo on April 20, 1944. While attending Amherst College, Robert eagerly enlisted for a program that would accelerate his availability for the Navy. The day his ship sunk, he dedicated the remainder of his life to public service.

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About the Museum

The Museum’s three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include *Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges*, on view through January 4 and *The Morgenthaus: A Legacy of Service*, opening November 16. *Keeping History Center*, a new, interactive visitor experience, opens on November 6. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy’s memorial *Garden of Stones*. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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