

FROM SWASTIKA TO JIM CROW MUSEUM EXHIBIT
In association with the Museum of Jewish Heritage

With initial support from the HELEN BADER FOUNDATION, Pacific Street Films is developing a traveling museum exhibition based on the themes and experiences recounted in the documentary, FROM SWASTIKA TO JIM CROW. This exhibition – composed of artifacts, personal letters, vintage photos, memorabilia and an installation video – will highlight how Jewish refugee scholars established meaningful relationships with African-American students and professors at a number of Historically Black Colleges. The exhibition will also reveal how these black colleges provided opportunities for refugee scholars when the nation's mainstream colleges and universities would not. It is a complex tale, but one which offers a very simple lesson in understanding and diversity.

FROM SWASTIKA TO JIM CROW – a 60-minute documentary produced by Pacific Street Films – recounts the little-known but significant story of displaced Jewish scholars who found homes at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities of the South. Fleeing Nazi oppression, they quickly established strong bonds with their African American colleagues and students, themselves the victims of oppression. This shared experience, recounted in the documentary, served to drive home the point that these two communities – Jewish and African American – had much more in common than previously thought.

The film had its broadcast premiere on PBS during Black History Month in February 2000 and went on to become the centerpiece of outreach screenings that brought members of the African-American and Jewish communities together to discuss the issues raised in the film. Utilizing a study guide prepared by the Anti-Defamation League, the film became a tool for dialogue and discussion in venues around the country.

The current plan calls for an exhibit premiere at the Museum of Jewish Heritage sometime in early 2009. Talks are underway with a number of African-American museums regarding possible interest in co-sponsoring the exhibition. Current plans also call for a traveling exhibition to museums and venues, both in the United States and abroad that have an interest in Holocaust studies, Jewish history, Civil Rights, American history and social history.