

# THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

## Building our Future by Preserving the Past

### WHAT IS THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE “SCA”?

We are a group of concerned members of our Sephardic community. We are doctors, lawyers, prominent business people, presidents and board members of community institutions, and other concerned lay people.

### WHY WAS THE SCA FORMED?

For over 100 years our Sephardic community in America has maintained a unique balance making us one of the most unified, successful and envied communities the world over. We maintained and benefited from an enlightened and open attitude to the modern world, yet protected and maintained our traditional values—and it worked. However, we have become complacent about preserving this important balance and so, in many important ways, we now live in a community much different than the kind most of us grew up in. While the community has made great and positive strides in ritual observance and knowledge over the

past 20 years, we have sadly also witnessed an erosion of the underpinnings of our social contract: tolerance, moderation, unity, and mutual respect. In its stead we’ve seen different cultural, social and ideological influences strengthen in our midst, and with it the growth of sectarianism, intolerance and division that has plagued other Jewish communities but from which ours had for so long been immune. It is our grave concern over that development, among others, that the SCA was formed.

### WHAT DOES THE SCA SEE AS ITS MISSION?

To reinforce and preserve the traditional Sephardic way of life of our ancestors based on the principles set forth in our Declaration of Values. Our commitment is to serve as a platform for lay leaders to work in unison with Community rabbis, institutions and organizations in perpetuating these Values. We support all those that embrace our traditions and rich heritage and that uphold and endorse these Values.

### WHAT IS THE SCA’S AUTHORITY?

The SCA does not claim authority over any individuals or institutions. The SCA claims authority only over itself. It has no enforcement mechanism, nor does it seek any in the implementation of its agenda. It is exercising its right to organize and to support the institutions and the people that advance the values it believes in. However, it should also be noted, over 20 community institutions have endorsed the SCA Declaration of Values while a number of others have now expressed an interest to do so as well.

- Ahabe Ve Ahava
- Beth Torah
- Bnei Yitshak
- Hechal Shaul
- Kol Israel
- Magen David Synagogue
- Magen David of Belle Harbor
- Magen David of West Deal
- Ohel David and Shlomo (Manhattan Beach)
- Ohel Yitshak Synagogue (Allenhurst)
- Safra Synagogue of Deal (Hathaway)
- Safra Synagogue of Manhattan
- Safra Synagogue of Turnberry (Aventura, Florida)
- Sephardic Synagogue
- Sephardic Synagogue of Elberon
- Shaare Shalom
- Magen David Yeshivah
- Allegra Franco Women’s College
- Barkai Yeshivah
- Hillel Yeshiva
- The Sephardic Rabbinical College

While we do not claim to speak on behalf of those institutions, our agenda to return those values to the center of our lives together is a shared agenda. As has historically been the case in our community, our greatest institutions and accomplishments have almost always come from people who took it upon themselves to organize, not by referendum. In short, if all the lay people involved in building our community waited for formal authorization from “The Community” to embark on new projects most of the great institutions we now enjoy would not—and probably would never—exist.

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## HOW WILL THE SCA ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS?

Phase I was to get organized. Under the able leadership of our Chairman Morris Bailey the SCA was formed. Over the past year we codified our values and built our Alliance; we identified and then prioritized the problems most needing redress; and finally set our goals. Phase I-- a deliberate, important and thoughtful process-- has taken a little less than 1 year thanks to the hard work of many dedicated SCA members and consulting Rabbis. Phase II of implementing our agenda is launching a variety of innovative programs in coordination with our rabbinical advisors, each carefully designed to help restore what once was the indisputable preeminence of our Declaration of Values for future generations to enjoy. Phase II has already begun.

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## WHO ARE THE SCA MEMBERS?

About eight months ago we sent over 4,500 mailers to community members that introduced our organization and listed all the people on the board. Our Board members are listed below:

### SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FOUNDING MEMBERS

*Harry Adjmi  
Ezra S. Ashkenazi \*  
Jack Avital  
Marvin Azrak  
Solomon Barnathan  
Daniel Benun  
Jeffrey J. Beyda \*  
Ivor Braka  
Jack Cayre  
Joe Cayre  
Michael Cayre  
Abe Chehebar  
Albert Chehebar  
Haim Chera  
Isaac Chera  
Stanley Chera*

*Richard 'Ricky' Cohen \*  
Haim Dabah  
Lawrence Dayan  
Bobby Dweck \*  
Edmond Dweck  
Eddie Esses \*  
Joe Falack  
Abe Franco  
Ike Franco  
Morris I. Franco  
Eli Gindi  
Isaac Gindi  
Raymond Gindi  
Eli S. Harrari \*  
Ron Hersh  
David Hidary*

*Jack A. Hidary  
Morris Hidary  
Joseph Jerome  
Gabriel J. Khezrie \*  
Albert Laboz  
Morris Manopla  
Eli Matalon  
Michael Mishaan \*  
Saul Mishaan  
Joe Nakash  
Jack A. Rahmey  
Richard Rudy \*  
Steve Russo  
Charlie Saka  
Sam Saka  
Teddy M. Serure*

*Joe Shabot  
Alan Shamah  
Micky Shamah  
Joe Shamie  
Joseph J. Sitt  
Alberto Sutton  
Elliott Sutton  
Isaac Sutton  
Jeff Sutton  
Elliott Tawil  
Mike I. Tawil \*  
Saul Tawil  
Joseph Torgueman  
Nativ Winiarsky  
Gabe Zeitouni \**

*Morris Bailey – Chairman*

*Paul Kopyt – Executive Director*

\* Executive Committee

## HOW DOES THE SCA WORK WITH OUR RABBIS?

One of our main goals is to help strengthen the influence of our pulpit rabbis and increase their authority in managing the affairs of their respective congregations. It is our position that the pulpit rabbis continue to represent the sole rabbinical authoritative body empowered to deal with our congregations' challenges, opportunities, and complexities of modern life. These men, through their experience and knowledge, have committed their lives to Torah and possess the sensitivity that is essential to shepherd a community. Our programs speak for themselves and are being designed and implemented with rabbinical support, encouragement and direction. A strong and largely independent role for pulpit rabbis, together with strong lay leadership working in concert with them have always been the preconditions that made many of the community's greatest leaps forward possible. It is a formula that is tried and true, and we believe that is still the formula for success.

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## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THE SCA HAS IDENTIFIED AND HOW IS IT ADDRESSING THEM?

### **Issue: The Tuition Crisis:**

We see the tuition crisis as perhaps the major issue impacting every member of our community in one way or another. While we don't think any one program will be a panacea to the myriad of factors creating the problem, and a total solution is not 'right around the corner' there are still important incremental steps that can and should be taken immediately to mitigate the strain put on our member institutions and community families.

### **SCA Educational Alliance:**

We are actively engaged with our affiliated schools in identifying where collaborative efforts can produce cost savings, such as joint purchasing or services, while maintaining the unique nature of each individual school. The working group is also studying "best practices" so successful approaches to common problems can benefit all our member institutions. We're also coordinating within our other programs to establish consistent standards for youth development.

We're compiling the raw data to help us better understand the underlying realities that dictate the cost of yeshiva education in order to redirect our philanthropy so that it's in line with both the need and the primacy of our yeshivas.

### **Issue: Development of Torah Teachers.**

Our schools are our partners making teacher development a high priority.

### **SCA Activity:**

The Sephardic Rabbinical College (SRC) under the guidance of Rabbi Shimon Alouf and the Allegra Franco Women's College were two of the first institutions to adopt our Declaration of Values. Mike Tawil, President of the SRC, and Ezra S. Ashkenazi the founder of both institutions are not only founding members of the SCA, but sit on our Executive Board. Together with them the SCA is lending support to continue the success they have already demonstrated in their ability to train and deploy young rabbis and teachers whose ideology reflect those shared by the SCA.

### **Issue: Advanced Torah Studies:**

Many of our youth want to further their religious studies after high school at an advanced level and within the parameters of our traditional Sephardic customs and values. We are creating options that will strengthen all we've accomplished as a community.

### **SCA Post High School Israel Program:**

A year of study in Israel has become an important

rite of passage. As part of a joint effort between the SCA and Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim, a premier school in Israel, we have retained Rabbi David Zeit who has developed a program that will blend the best of what this established school has to offer with a uniquely Sephardic approach to learning and customs.

Rabbi Zeit is a role model whose life embodies the very value system we seek to promote. A graduate of the Yeshiva of Flatbush, with a bachelor degree in business from the Sy Syms School of Yeshiva University, Rabbi Zeit went on to study and receive rabbinical ordination from the Sephardic Rabbinical College (SRC) under the leadership of Rabbi Alouf. The SRC is a member of the SCA.

### **Issue: Combining Wholesome Social Environments With Torah Learning.**

We believe that part of being able to function effectively in the world and to develop healthy relationships is being well socialized in the context of a working knowledge of Torah concepts. Taken together this lays the groundwork for a stable, productive, and fulfilling life.

### **SCA Young Adult Division**

The goal of the Young Adult Division (YAD) is to produce strategic educational initiatives that offer an alternative for our young men and women who want to realize their religious aspirations within our traditional core values by supporting and enhancing existing programs as well as by creating innovative venues that will appeal to a variety of styles and interests. YAD offers our young adults a way to meet, learn and socialize in a wholesome Torah environment. This program began this past summer and hundreds of youth have already participated.

### **Issue: Developing Future Lay Leadership.**

#### **Israel Leadership and Development (I LEAD)**

I LEAD is a unique program open to men and women students following high school graduation. It is designed to develop responsibility, integrity, humility, leadership and tolerance and to prepare participants for roles as future professional, commercial and communal leaders. A select group will be chosen to spend 6 weeks during the summer in Israel engaged in a variety of unique activities that are designed to broaden them culturally as well as to challenge them physically, mentally and spiritually. The group will develop an appreciation for the world outside of our community while enveloped in the values of the SCA.

### Issue: Public Relations:

Although not part of our core agenda the unforeseen developments of this past summer thrust upon us and others a responsibility to mitigate the damage done to our community's reputation in the national as well as Jewish media.

### SCA Activity:

The SCA helped to fund an effort to ensure that the community was treated fairly in the press by retaining professional advice on how to deal with the media deluge. Our position throughout was to denounce alleged fraudulent behavior, while acknowledging our legal system's presumption of innocence and underscoring the many positive attributes of our community. We are now participating in an effort to work with experts who specialize in non-profit compliance and to make resources and recommendations available to our member institutions to help them insure compliance with all applicable laws and to be fully transparent and accountable.

### WHAT IS THE SCA VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY'S FUTURE AND ITS MEMBERS?

We hope to see the community continue to be a place where religious values bind us; where ideology embraces brotherhood, tolerance and family unity; where our community advances in the fields of religious studies while appreciative of higher secular education, philosophy, the arts and humanities. We want our community members to continue to place a high regard upon providing for their families and giving back to the community and world at large. And for all of us to always understand and appreciate the value of living in a place where many different paths can lead to the same goal: living a useful and important life in the eyes of G-d and of our fellow man. We hope to further cement the partnership between the lay and rabbinical leadership to insure our community's continued success in all these vital areas. Without a doubt it will require a team effort.

## SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE MISSION STATEMENT

The Sephardic Community Alliance is an organization established to reinforce and preserve the traditional Sephardic way of life of our ancestors based on the principles set forth in our Declaration of Values. Our commitment is to serve as a platform for lay leaders to work in unison with Community rabbis, institutions and organizations in promoting the perpetuation of these Values. We support all those that embrace our traditions and rich heritage and that uphold and endorse these Values.

## OUR DECLARATION OF VALUES

Our Community has, thank G-d, a long and proud history of Torah observance and adherence to traditional Sephardic values and customs. In order to perpetuate these values and customs and to help ensure the continuity of the blessings that we have long enjoyed as a Community, we hereby declare the following:

- **Commitment to Halakha.** We are committed to conformity to Halakha, based upon the Code of Law written by R. Yosef Karo, as shaped and developed through the generations by the long-standing customs and practices of the Sephardic community (minhag), and as expressed by the rabbis of our synagogues. At the same time we recognize that those who may not totally conform to Halakha today are still deserving of our respect and guidance.

- **Growth through Education.** We feel strongly that constructive change within the community will come about through education, cooperation and positive interaction rather than through coercion and through unilateral edicts.

- **Respect and Tolerance.** We assert that, regardless of ideological or other differences, community Rabbis are obliged to treat each other, and their respective congregants, with respect and dignity. It follows that all Community institutions, even those which have

philosophies with which we may differ, are to be accorded respect.

- **Torah and Higher Education.** We stand strongly in favor of higher secular education and recognize the value and necessity of a college and university education in creating a complete Torah-Jew who can function in the world at-large, fulfill his or her potential and appreciate all of God's work.

- **Interaction with Society.** In accordance with our Sephardic heritage, we believe that community members should be encouraged not only to prosper and grow in the practice of traditional Judaism, but also to engage the world in a productive and creative manner.

- **Learning and Earning.** We cherish the traditional way of life in which one combines the learning of Torah and observance of mitzvot together with earning a livelihood (Torah im Derekh Eres).

- **Medinat Yisrael.** We recognize God's providence in the establishment of the State of Israel, fully support its security and prosperity and, in prayer and indeed, celebrate its existence.

*If you wish to get involved or for more information please visit our website: [sc-alliance.org](http://sc-alliance.org) or email [paul@sc-alliance.org](mailto:paul@sc-alliance.org).* □