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Out of a lab in his Brighton house, a rabbi tests clothes to make sure they don't violate the commandment of mixing linen and wool.

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**Facing down Shoah denial**

In her Our Turn column, the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor describes her encounter with Arabs who had been taught the death camps were fiction.

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The Kosher Food Lover ventures into the kitchen at Young Israel of Brookline for a behind-the-scenes look at the shul's annual culinary contest.

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Boston Conservatory hosts a centenary tribute to Anna Sokolow, a pioneering Jewish choreographer and modern dancer.

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The international alumni of Camp Szarvas in Hungary are waging a Web campaign to raise money as the economic crisis has slashed in half this summer's sessions.

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**Photographic memories**



Leslie Starobin's montage, "The Sketchbook of MZ," captures the story of a family torn apart by war. The charcoal drawing is of the same woman who is in the photo of the mother and son wearing skis.

**Teaching how to detect stories in family pictures**

By Dawn Swann  
Special to the Advocate

The funny thing about treasures: They're often hiding in plain sight. At least that's what the Jewish Women's Archive hopes.

The JWA's mission is to uncover, chronicle and publicize the rich history of Jewish women in North America. It is always on the lookout for lost pieces of histo-



Participants in the Jewish Women's Archive workshop scrutinize family photos for clues to the past.

ry in attic boxes and family albums or on the walls of homes.

Two JWA representatives, Emily Scheinberg and Judith Rosenbaum, brought their mission to Mayyim Hayyim, the mikvah and education center in Newton, in the format of a workshop called "The Album as Archive: the Photograph as Story."

A dozen women gathered around a table, sipping steaming mugs of tea and peering at photos they had brought from home. The goal was to ferret out the stories behind the photos, by examining the expressions of their subjects, their clothing and other telling details. It was also to prod the memories of the keepers of the photos.

For inspiration, the women looked at the montages on the wall by Leslie Starobin, a professor of Communication Arts at Framingham State College. Each mixed-media work was based around a single, mysterious image.

One montage in particular, "The Sketchbook of MZ," captivated the group's imagination. A haunting charcoal image of a woman's face takes up most of the canvas. She appears to be staring into the distance, as if longing for something lost. Elsewhere on the canvas are a young man's passport and a photograph with a cracked seam splitting the image of a mother and son. The mother is a smiling version of the woman in char-

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**Armenians, Jews push genocide legislation**

Local group launches national campaign

By Cara Hogan  
Advocate Staff

Local leaders from the Armenian and Jewish communities have launched a nationwide petition drive to press Congress to pass legislation recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

The petition reads, "As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama proclaimed 'a principled commitment to commemorating and ending genocide.' He then explicitly pledged, 'As President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide.'"

The petition calls for the United States to recognize the genocide on its 95th anniversary this April. Organizers say they have collected 3,400 signatures from people across the country since the drive was launched Feb. 2.

The petition (posted at www.change.org) was drawn up by the Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide, which was co-founded by Rabbi Howard Jaffe of Temple Isaiah in Lexington.

The coalition was formed two years ago by more than 20 local Armenians and Jews, including Rabbi Ronne Friedman and Rabbi Elaine Zecher of Temple Israel in Boston.

Jaffe said he was galvanized by the controversy triggered when the director of the New England chapter of the Anti-Defamation League broke with the national organization by saying it should recognize the Armenian genocide. The director, Andrew Tarsy, subsequently resigned.

"I thought the ADL did good work, but I learned more, and my eyes were opened to how so many of our national Jewish organizations weren't just silent on the Armenian genocide, but working to oppose recognition," Jaffe said. "I was horrified."

An estimated 1.5 million Armenians were massacred in the Ottoman Empire in the period around World War I. The Turkish government has rejected the label "genocide" for the killings. The

Continued on Page 2

## Costa Rica elects its first Jewish VP



Two Costa Rican firsts: one for women, one for Jews.

The Central American nation elected its first female president and first Jewish vice president in elections last week.

Luis Lieberman (above), a former banker and financier, ran with Laura Chinchilla, a social conservative, who won the presidency by a large margin.

Lieberman is the son of Polish immigrants and the grandson of Costa Rica's first mohel.

The newly elected Jewish vice president said that Jews have served in prior Costa Rican governments, and his religion was not a factor in his candidacy. Some 3,000 Jews live in Costa Rica out of a total population of 4.2 million.

# How to sleuth through the family album

Continued from Page 1

coal, and her arm is wrapped around a younger version of the man in the passport. The caption in an accompanying book reads: "My father carried a family snapshot with him through the war, throughout the camp, throughout the Gulag. It's a picture of my mother and myself, before the war broke out. We are on skis. It's tissue paper thin from years of being wound up in a tutga, a Russian cigarette holder."

The mother didn't survive the war.

Had the son not shared the photographs and his memories with Starobin, this slice of history could have been lost.

"The truth is rooted in the story, but we don't always

know it," Scheinberg told the workshop, referring to the history waiting to be discovered in old photos. "It's the instinct of the viewer to want to piece the story together."

With the mystery of history in mind, the group partnered off and set to sleuthing. The JWA recommends having a fresh pair of eyes check out your old photograph. Your friend probably won't be able to unlock the secrets that your great, great grandmother took to the grave, but her eyes might notice details rendered invisible by familiarity. For example, a close look at the photo of one woman's great grandfather from Krakow revealed that he wore side curls and carried his keys on a long cane. In addition, a partner can prod you with questions about the photo, perhaps triggering memories of family stories.

The pictures themselves offer plenty of clues as well. In the early days of photography, sitting for a portrait was an event. People wore their best clothes and backgrounds were arranged to appear as push as possible. People rarely smiled, but affected postures of seriousness (in part this was due to long exposure times). Candid shots became more common as photography became more portable and affordable.

The JWA recom-

mends that history sleuths keep track of all the stories pictures trigger, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Rebecca Sher brought a picture of her grandmother as a serious-looking schoolgirl with a big bow in her hair, a frilly white dress and a one-armed posing chair, crossing her legs at her ankle boots. Her feet didn't reach the floor. The granddaughter recalled hearing stories of how those boots had to be pulled on with hooks. As a child she would look at the boots in the picture and wonder how different it was for kids in her grandmother's day.

Where and how the pictures had been kept might be significant as well.

"I remember my father saying not to mix the photos, as if they wouldn't even get along in a Ziploc bag," said participant Lauren Teller.

The fact that someone kept all his pictures crammed together in a cardboard briefcase would reveal something of his personality to future generations.

Anyone can access the JWA's Web-based collection, which includes thousands of images and papers. You'll find prominent people like Estelle Getty of TV's "Golden Girls" and Judith Resnik, the second woman in space, as well as myriad other women whose stories are threads of Jewish history. "We need people to find those stories and tell them," Rosenbaum said.

For more information about JWA, including a documentary and lesson plans for educators, visit [jwa.org](http://jwa.org). For more on *Mayyim Hayyim*, visit [mayyimhayyim.org](http://mayyimhayyim.org). To see more of Leslie Starobin's artwork, visit [starobinartworks.com](http://starobinartworks.com).

## Keeping photos picture perfect

Judith Rosenbaum of the Jewish Women's Archive offers these tips for preserving family photographs:

- First, digitize all your old pictures. Scan them into the computer at a high resolution and save them as digital images.

- Scan in the back of the photo, too, if it contains a note or a photographer's seal.

- Upload images to an Internet site such as Flickr. Besides providing backup storage, the site will help you categorize photos and add taglines like names, dates, places and short descriptions. For example: New York, bow, book, student, birthday.

- Tagging photos with proper nouns is a way for long-lost relatives to contact each other. Don't forget to include details like the name of the ship that transported your great-grandmother to America.

- Instead of displaying a family heirloom on the wall where it can fade or break, scan it into the computer and make a high-quality print to hang instead. Original photos should be carefully stored on acid-free plastic sheets.

- Back everything up. CDs are one way, but they degrade quickly and are breakable. Other options include an external hard drive or a thumb drive.

- The number one tip JWA has to offer is to get all your stories from relatives or memory, and write them all down.

- A novel way to archive photos is to have them turned into a work of art by an artist like Starobin or to have them fashioned into a handbag by craftswoman Lauren Teller who uses pictures, trinkets and poems to tell stories with photographs.

## The new Jewish Advocate online

### Online debate

#### February poll question:

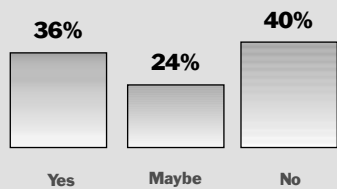
Israel has presented the UN with the findings of an Israel Defense Forces investigation of last winter's Gaza war. Critics say it doesn't go far enough. Should Israel:

- A. Stand pat
- B. Appoint a committee of senior jurists to conduct a limited investigation
- C. Conduct a full independent inquiry

Tell us what you think at [www.TheJewishAdvocate.com](http://www.TheJewishAdvocate.com)

## January Poll Results

In 2009, more North Americans made aliyah than in any year since 1973. While you may not be making the big move, do you plan to visit Israel in 2010?



Rebecca Sher said she was particularly struck by the shoes in this circa 1918 photo of her grandmother, Rachel (Rae) Baskin Green. "My grandmother showed it to me when I was around the same age," Sher said.

# Local Armenians, Jews push for genocide bill

Continued from Page 1

United States and Israel have been reluctant to officially use the term out of concern for their relations with Turkey.

Jaffe said the Jewish and Armenian communities in Lexington decided to create a grassroots organization to discuss the issue and resolve lingering ill will.

"It quickly moved from dialogue to a group interested in doing something," he said. "Eventually, after a number of meetings and conversations, we agreed that circulating a petition would be a positive step."

He said the group took two

years to come out with a final petition because of scheduling issues, rather than conflicts over the content.

Abraham Foxman, the national director of ADL, last commented on the issue in 2007, saying the actions of the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians during the period of 1915 to 1918 were "tantamount to genocide." As of press time, representatives from the local and national ADL did not respond to requests for comment.

Laura Boghosian, an Armenian community leader who co-founded the Coalition with Rabbi Jaffe, said today's diplomatic concerns

should not trump history.

"If you start denying the Armenian genocide, very soon people will deny the Holocaust for political expediency," said Boghosian. "We have a double standard as Americans. Our government does not officially acknowledge the genocide and neither does Israel."

Jaffe agreed. "If there were any group out there saying we're not going to recognize the Holocaust because it would affect diplomatic relations, we would be up in arms screaming."

Boghosian said that while the ADL controversy brought the group together, it does not define

them. "Genocide scholars tell us that denial of any genocide fuels current atrocities and emboldens those who would commit future crimes against humanity. Acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide is, therefore, a human rights issue for all," she said.

## Correction

A Jan. 29 story on J Street Boston incorrectly stated that JStreetPAC has a minimum donation. Donors to JStreetPAC give on average less than \$75.

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The Jewish Advocate • 15 School Street, Boston, MA 02108  
Advertising Fax: 617-367-2983 Editorial Fax: 617-367-9310  
Tel: 617-367-9100

### Editorial:

Steve Maas, Editor, Ext. 132  
Cara Hogan, Sections Editor, Ext. 133  
Elise Kigner, Community Editor, Ext. 147  
E-mail: [Editorial@TheJewishAdvocate.com](mailto:Editorial@TheJewishAdvocate.com)  
[CommunityNews@TheJewishAdvocate.com](mailto:CommunityNews@TheJewishAdvocate.com)

### Production:

Mary Ann Maynard, Production Director, Ext. 142  
Judy Gabriel, Production Coordinator, Ext. 129  
Alyse McGuire, Classified Advertising, Ext. 140

### Subscriptions:

Ext. 120  
E-mail: [Subscriptions@TheJewishAdvocate.com](mailto:Subscriptions@TheJewishAdvocate.com)

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