

WE REMEMBER OUR COLLEAGUES

MURRAY FRIEDMAN 1926–2004

Michael Alexander



Murray Friedman was born in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York. He joined the Marines in 1944, serving as a mortar man. After the war he returned to civilian life to study history, earning a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in 1948, a master's degree from New York University in 1949, and a doctorate from Georgetown University in 1958.

Dr. Friedman's first job was as director of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League office for Virginia and North Carolina, which he assumed just before the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. He spent most of his time at the ADL battling segregation.

He became the regional director of the American Jewish Committee's Mid-Atlantic States in Philadelphia in 1959, where he served for forty-three years. In 1961 he served on a committee that wrote Philadelphia's first school-desegregation program. Later he became secretary to the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council,

where he worked for fair-housing legislation. He also began to dedicate himself to scholarship and developed an analysis of racial disorders in Philadelphia, *Case Study of a Riot*, which was the first major study of the civil disorders of the 1960s. His findings were utilized by federal and state agencies.

Friedman considered his best work for AJC to be a survey he commissioned in the early 1960s on anti-Semitic hiring practices of businesses in Philadelphia. He invited corporate directors to discuss the discouraging results of the survey in a program he called "Executive Suite." The program gained national attention and helped open doors to corporate America for Jews. A later survey he coordinated in 1988 determined that discrimination against Jews in the corporate world had essentially disappeared but that similar abuses against women and blacks continued. In 1986, President Reagan appointed Friedman to be Vice Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, a post he held for three years.

While in his post for AJC, Friedman also taught American Jewish history at La Salle, St. Joseph's, and Temple universities. In 1990, Dr. Friedman and Dr. Morris Vogel founded the Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History, which Friedman directed. Conceived as a partnership between Temple University and the AJC, the Feinstein Center was created to promote the study of the American Jewish experience. Under Friedman's direction, the Feinstein Center sponsored many academic fellowships, talks, publications, and conferences that received international recognition. At the time of his death, Friedman was coordinating an upcoming conference, co-sponsored with the

Jewish Theological Seminary and Baylor University, entitled "Uneasy Allies? Evangelical-Jewish Relations Today."

Friedman had a long and distinguished academic publishing career. He was the author of many books, including *The Neoconservative Revolution* (2005); *Philadelphia Jewish Life, 1940–2000* (2003); *What Went Wrong: The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (1995); *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America* (1993); *The Utopian Dilemma: American Judaism and Public Policy* (1985); and *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940* (1983). He also edited many volumes, including *Commentary in American Life* (2005); *New Perspectives on School Integration* (1979); and with Meltzer and Miller, *Overcoming Middle Class Rage* (1971).

In later years Friedman surprised many of his colleagues by joining the neoconservative movement and by arguing for increased church-state cooperation as well as increased dialogue between Jews and Evangelical Christians. His views were published in such forums as *Commentary*, *New Republic*, *Forward*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Times*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. He was proud of his political convictions and his public work, but never intended, as he liked to say, to "put my finger in anybody's eye." After Friedman's funeral, Philadelphia Mayor John Street said: "He was just a huge public figure—a sage—a man of great wisdom. Murray was always able to bring people together."

Michael Alexander is the Murray Friedman Professor of American Jewish History and the Director of the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University.