

Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow

by

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In 1920 Aaron Bronson, a Russian Jewish immigrant, moved his family to a small town in western Tennessee with the intention of establishing a retail store. After his arrival in the United States, for a short time Bronson had worked in the employ of a Jewish merchant in Savannah. From this experience he had learned the two essential rules necessary for a Jew to operate a successful business in the American South. The first rule was that, unlike in his native homeland where Jewish stores "in observance of the Sabbath, were closed on Saturdays and open on Sundays, here it was the other way round." The second rule concerned the treatment of African Americans. According to his employer, there was sufficient suspicion of Jews among the white Protestant majority without their stirring up trouble over the race issue. No matter what personal sympathies the merchant might have with African Americans, good business sense dictated public acceptance of the status quo. As he curtly informed Bronson: "I'm here for a living, not a crusade." Bronson adhered strictly to these rules when he opened his own store. Although he held no prejudice towards African Americans, he refrained from any overt action that might risk retaliation from enraged whites. Instead he contented himself with small acts of kindness towards his black customers. As his daughter reflects, "What he did was keep quiet about it and do the best he could do."¹

The story of Aaron Bronson is symptomatic of the experience of Jewish merchants operating in the small towns of the South during the Jim Crow era. Scholars have scrutinized in some detail the friction between Jewish merchants and African Americans in northern inner cities, especially Chicago and Harlem.² The relationship between Jewish retailers and African Americans in the southern states has, in contrast, received only passing reference from the occasional journalist or memoirist.³

Before the end of the nineteenth century, Jews had established an eminent position within the southern retail trade. As historian Stephen Whitfield asserts, "When we study the Southern Jewish past in particular, we really mean business."⁴ Further research needs to be done in order to assess accurately the scale of Jewish activity in all areas of retail. Anecdotal evidence does nonetheless suggest that Jews were a significant economic force from the immediate postbellum era onwards. Be it dry goods or groceries, clothing or kitchenware, Jews appeared to open their stores at almost every country crossroads and on almost every city street. Frances Butler Leigh, the daughter of a planter in Darien, Georgia, observed with obvious displeasure that "A good many Israelites have found their way to this remote district," each of them with "their tumble-down shanties and Cheap Jack goods." Such was the ubiquity of the Jewish storekeeper, observed sociologist John Dollard, that southerners were wont to remark: "If there is a Jewish holiday, you cannot buy a pair of socks in this whole country."⁵

It was through acts of commerce that African Americans and Jews in the South experienced their most regular points of contact. A study of these commercial transactions, therefore, serves as a prism through which to study the broader interaction between the two peoples. This article examines Jewish businessmen in both rural and urban contexts. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War Jewish peddlers roamed the southern countryside selling their assorted wares. Business success enabled them to establish their own stores which served as commercial centers in many rural areas. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jewish merchants were also well established in southern

cities. The smaller of these stores traded exclusively with African Americans. The larger ranked among the most successful department stores in the region.

There are essentially two interpretations of the interrelationship between southern blacks and Jewish businessmen. The first is most commonly associated with contemporary observers, both black and white, who portrayed Jewish merchants as cunningly and mercilessly exploiting African Americans. Such an interpretation is rooted in the traditional stereotype of the "shrewd Hebrew" intent on amassing a personal fortune at the expense of others. Skilled in the art of small talk, the Jewish merchant duped unsuspecting African Americans into buying goods they did not need or receiving credit at a rate of interest they could not afford. As the German travel writer Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg wrote of the Jewish merchants he encountered on his travels through the Lower Mississippi in 1879-1880, "How wrong it would be to believe they have become more high-minded and merciful in the American South than they were in Russia or Poland."⁶ These accusations have in later years gained increasing currency among African American writers. According to Harold Cruse, "it was from the Jewish storekeeper and trader that the Southern Negro got his latent anti-Semitism."⁷

The second interpretation can most clearly be seen in the often sentimental recollections of Jews who grew up in the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to this interpretation, Jewish merchants welcomed all customers without regard to their race. Historian Louis Schmier has, for instance, painted a particularly romantic portrait of the relationship between Jewish peddlers and their black customers. According to Schmier, the relationship was based on mutual benefit and trust. The peddler for his part offered African Americans fair prices and courteous treatment, which enabled them "to reclaim their dignity and afford a better life." In return, the black customer provided the peddler a regular income. As a result, the interaction between Jewish peddlers and black customers assumed more than a purely commercial character, binding them together through ties of loyalty and affection.⁸

The experience of Aaron Bronson suggests that the relationship between Jewish merchants and their black customers did not wholly comply with either interpretation, but was in truth fraught with ambiguity. Although many Jewish merchants endeavored to treat their black customers with greater dignity and respect than did other whites, their actions were constrained by broader social forces. Despite their religious differences, Jews enjoyed the fundamental rights and privileges of the white race. Their relationship with African Americans was shaped by the social and economic power which they exerted over them. This was true not only of the wealthy department store president but of the small businessmen who established their operations in the black section of town. The strains and tensions between African Americans and Jews can therefore at least partly be understood by the social and economic inequalities between the two peoples.⁹

The interaction began with those Jews at the lowest rung of the economic ladder, the peddlers. Peddling was surely not the easiest way of making a living. With between fifty to seventy pounds of goods stuffed into the pack on his back, and a further forty pounds strapped on in front, travelling must have been exhausting. Squeezed into each pack, or "pekl," was a variety of merchandise including cloth, curtains, laces, needles and thread, ribbons, tablecloths, and trinkets. With no horse or wagon to share his burden, the weary peddler walked the streets on the outskirts of a city, or trudged the deserted and dusty paths from one remote farmhouse to the next. When Abraham Goldstein of Milledgeville, Georgia, died, his children "noted that his right hand was stretched fully two inches longer than the left, due to the heavy burdens he carried for so many years." Trekking the tedious miles was dull and dispiriting. "We used to say that there was only one way to tell the summer from the winter out there," observed Louis Lazarus of his father, Henry, who peddled his wares in north Florida and south Georgia early this century. "In the summer, the trips were hot, monotonous, dusty, and slow; in the winter, they were cold, monotonous, dusty, and slow."¹⁰

It is commonly accepted that peddlers derived much of their income through their trade with impoverished rural blacks. What

is less certain is why they should have so openly and enthusiastically solicited African American customers. Three possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that, as a stranger to the South, at least initially the immigrant peddler did not share the region's racist notions. Secondly, the immigrants themselves had often experienced discrimination as a persecuted minority in their country of origin and could thus empathize with African Americans. While there may be substance to these assertions, the evidence is inconclusive and hard to pinpoint. Alternately, one might argue that the Jewish immigrant, struggling to sustain a regular income, was obliged to sell to any customer regardless of race. As Charles Rubin, a Polish Jew, stated, his father received "pitiful earnings" as a peddler on the outskirts of Atlanta. "A streetcar would take him to the end of the line," recalled Rubin. From there he walked with a pack on his back from shack to shack, farmhouse to farmhouse, selling his wares, mainly cheap items from novelty stores and dry goods houses. Most of his buyers were poor people, both white and black."¹¹ As this, one of many examples, illustrates, an enlightened self interest encouraged peddlers to trade openly with their black clientele. As Stephen Whitfield asserts, peddlers were "more interested in customers than in customs of racial discrimination."¹²

There is abundant anecdotal evidence that African Americans welcomed peddlers not only into their homes but into their hearts. David Cohn, for example, recalled the experiences of Tommy Ruben, a Lithuanian Jew who peddled his wares in the Mississippi Delta during the early twentieth century. Ruben was kindly and attentive towards his African American customers who, in return, referred to him affectionately as "Jew Mistuh Tommy."¹³

Stories such as this tend to sentimentalize the relationship between African Americans and Jews by implying a certain kinship between two peoples scraping an existence on the margins of southern society. The limitations of this picture are illustrated by an episode in Brunswick, Georgia, where African Americans boycotted a Jewish peddler whom they alleged had made some insulting racial remarks.¹⁴

Assaults and acts of petty thievery against peddlers and shopkeepers also were not unknown. For example, a report from the *Baton Rouge Gazette*, reprinted in *The Israelite* in May 1873, told of how early one morning three black men had allegedly clubbed an unsuspecting peddler to death and robbed him of his pack and money. The peddler's dead body was then dumped by the side of the road. It was eventually identified as that of Jacob Kriss, a Jew who had arrived in America only three months earlier and who had been attempting to save enough money to bring the rest of his family over from Germany. Outrage over the incident meant that the arrested assailants never made it to court but were "executed by the excited multitude." In November 1906 a young African American named Jesse Jones was hanged for the murder of Matthias Block, a store owner in Waco, Texas. And in Atlanta, Jacob Hirsowitz was murdered by a gang of blacks as they attempted to steal a revolver from his pawnshop. Anti-Semitism as a motivating factor can not be documented in any of these incidents. What they do illustrate is an area of difficulty in the lives of the Jewish businesspeople which could have contributed to divisiveness and negative feelings.¹⁵

Successful peddlers were eventually able to invest their earnings in the establishment of a wholesale or retail store. Jewish store owners in the rural South earned a bad reputation for their supposed mistreatment of black sharecroppers. The rates of interest which they charged for credit purchases were allegedly exorbitant. As Mark Twain observed, the Jewish merchants who established their businesses in the countryside after the Civil War "supplied all the Negro's share of the present crop and of part of his share of the next one. Before long, the whites detested the Jew and it is doubtful if the Negro loved him."¹⁶

It is uncertain whether or not the credit prices charged by Jewish merchants were exorbitant or justified by market risk. According to Herschel Feibelman, Jewish businessmen "would lend money, but they would also charge more than the larger groceries would charge." Since stores in poor rural areas operated on low profit and high risk it was inevitable that their owners should charge higher interest rates. Feibelman nonetheless insists

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that greed also played its part. As he puts it, Jewish merchants "took advantage of the whole pattern of society that was designed to keep the black where he was."¹⁷ This is not a statement of fact, but of opinion. What is needed is a quantitative study of the interest rates charged by Jewish merchants. Only then will we be able to determine if they deliberately exploited black sharecroppers. From another perspective, most black storeowners, undercapitalized and struggling to remain in business, were unable to extend credit to needy African Americans, and many white non-Jewish merchants were unwilling, worried as they were that the more sharecroppers purchased on credit, the less likely they were ever to pay the money back. By contrast, Jewish merchants earned a reputation for extending credit to African Americans whenever it was needed. This they did cautiously. As Harry Golden affirmed, the Jewish merchant sold to the sharecropper on credit "only on the same ledger sheet with the name of the farmer from whom the Negro was renting or for whom he was sharecropping. The 'boss man,' as the Negro called the white farmer, had to go surety on the credit sheet for the Negro's supplies." Credit on condition, however, was better than no credit at all. The system, as Sam Kallin suggested, worked to the mutual benefit of both the Jew and the African American. Of the credit extended to sharecroppers, "the white owners of the farm would stand good for it and we'd get paid for it next trip."¹⁸

It was not in remote rural areas but rather the towns and cities of the South where Jewish merchants most commonly established their businesses. Peddlers who laid down their packs and set up permanent places of business could seldom at first afford rents for shop space in the more prestigious parts of town. Many settled on the other side of the railroad tracks, often opening stores sandwiched between streets of black-owned homes. With his family living above, behind or near the small wooden framed store, the East European Jew was one of the few whites to be seen in the black section. These Jewish establishments provided one of the most familiar points of contact between African Americans and Jews. Of his childhood in Atlanta, black educator Horace Mann Bond recalled: "the Jew was the man who kept the

pawnshop on Peter and Decatur Streets, where I sold papers on a Saturday; he was the man who operated the clothing store where my father took his five boys occasionally to lay in a stock of clothes." As such reminiscences suggest, Jewish merchants catered to every need of the African American community. Jewish names appeared above the doorways of dry goods stores, clothing outlets, groceries, pawnshops and saloons. Nowhere was this more obvious than on Beale Street in Memphis, commonly known as the black cultural capital of the South. Nearly all the bars, clubs, and gambling joints had Jewish proprietors. As George W. Lee remarked, Beale Street was "owned by Jews, policed by the whites, and enjoyed by the Negroes."¹⁹

Jewish merchants such as those on Beale Street earned a positive reputation for their willingness to provide services that other retailers refused to offer. The treatment which African Americans could expect from most white storeowners scarcely encouraged their business. Always last to be served and seldom allowed to try on clothes, black customers were allowed only to point at untried, ready-to-wear merchandise. It was only when the Depression left them desperate for business that the majority of white merchants began to adopt a more amenable attitude.²⁰

Jewish tradesmen, in contrast, placed a much greater emphasis on personal service. By treating African Americans with care and consideration, they accorded them a stronger sense of personal respect than other storeowners. The historian Bell Wiley observed that the Jewish owner of a dry goods store in his Tennessee hometown "got most of the black trade because he treated Negroes as human beings and was kindly to them, taking time to joke, inquire about their families and otherwise manifest interest in them." Unlike other white businessmen, Jews extended such courtesies in times of economic boom as well as bust. Jewish merchants therefore seemed more sincere in their respect for African Americans. The civil rights activist Aaron Henry recalled that the black community of Clarksdale, Mississippi preferred to trade with Jewish merchants precisely because "you would consider them the better of the white element that you had dealings with."²¹

The greater willingness of Jewish businessmen to attract black customers can also be seen through their use of advertising. Jewish merchants from the smallest storekeeper to the most successful department storeowner advertised extensively in the black press. In January 1907, for instance, readers of the *Nashville Globe* were met with an ominous message: "NOW IS THE APPOINTED TIME." Those who read past this dramatic headline discovered that this was less an announcement of Judgement Day, than an invitation to buy "heavy fleece underwear" and "Imported Fancy Sox" at "unheard of low prices." The establishment where such offers were to be discovered was "Nashville's Biggest Store! Hirshberg Bros." As the *Globe* later observed, Hirshberg Bros. was one of only two white stores in the entire city which advertised to its readers. It was small surprise that the paper continued to "heartily recommend" the store.²² Black newspapers across the South carried advertisements from other Jewish retailers, all encouraging African Americans that their money was as good as that of any white person. A study of the *Atlanta Independent* in 1907, for example, reveals a wide variety of Jewish advertisers, among them grocer P. Laubenstein, tailors Kalish and Schwartz & Berin, store owners Eiseman Bros., and credit loan company Cohen and Russ.²³

Another means by which Jews sought to attract African American customers was the employment of a black salesperson. This provided prospective shoppers with a double incentive, quality goods and more considerate service. As the *Savannah Tribune* observed, Jewish storekeepers on the city's west side employed black sales clerks because they saw them as "a great drawing card for Negro trade." Savannah was not the only southern city where Jews took the initiative in employing African Americans. Abe Goldstein, owner of a tire company in Atlanta, appreciated the potential profit to be made long before his competitors. His decision to hire O. B. Smith as a black salesman during the 1930s constituted a clear breach of conventional employment practice.²⁴

Several factors explain why Jews should have so assiduously courted black customers. The most important of these was pure

financial necessity. Eastern European Jews usually established their businesses on very little capital. As Jacob Allen asserted of the Jewish immigrants who arrived in Birmingham, Alabama at the turn of the century, many were "right on the verge of poverty, having just enough to get by for food and never quite enough for clothing."²⁵ Unable to compete with wealthier retailers, the Eastern Europeans turned instead to the relatively untapped trade with African Americans. A second factor stemmed from the historical experience of Jews in Eastern Europe. Russian Jews in particular had considerable experience in dealing with an impoverished peasant population, and were therefore temperamentally disposed to dealing with African Americans.²⁶

The commercial relationship thus established was reinforced by a certain sense of empathy between the two peoples. One should retain a certain degree of skepticism about the recollections of memoirists, sentimental and self-serving as they often are. The idea that Jews shared some kind of kinship with African Americans is nonetheless a common theme in such writings. Unlike the assimilated German Jews, many Eastern European immigrants remained on the margins of southern society, isolated by the strangeness both of their tongue and their dress. Mina Sursky Tropp, an artist from Aiken, South Carolina, maintained that her family was always conscious of its marginality. When the family first arrived in Aiken during the 1890s, their neighbors "offered my father \$2,000 profit if he would sell them the house because they did not want Jews on the block." Young Mina also had to endure the rocks and taunts hurled by other children as she walked to and from school. Rejected by the white community, the family reached instinctively to other outsiders. "My father never treated a Black customer differently than a white. Once my father told of hearing one Negro say to another, 'If it wasn't for the Jews, we would be considered the lowest people on earth.' Lie or joke, it amused papa." This apparent sensitivity towards another oppressed minority also influenced Benny Grusin, a Latvian Jew who opened a small retail business in Sipse, Alabama. Grusin "treated black customers like all customers, though he

probably had more empathy for the blacks, knowing full well what suffering and discrimination meant."²⁷

One should nonetheless caution against arguing that there was a special relationship between African Americans and Jews. Other marginalized immigrant groups including Greeks and Chinese also traded openly with African Americans. In July 1899 five Sicilian storekeepers were lynched in Tallulah, Louisiana. The murdered men had aroused the ire of the local community by trading with black and white customers on an equal basis. While more comparative research is needed, it would appear that the decision of white ethnic minorities to trade with African Americans was driven by two common factors: their minority status coupled with commercial exigencies.²⁸

Despite the determination of many Jewish merchants to treat their African American customers with decency and respect, their efforts were impeded by the pervasive forces of white racism. Jews offended the white community through their contravention of caste principles. Their actions risked economic reprisals, social opprobrium, and even violence. On August 15, 1868, S. A. Bierfield, a young Russian Jew, was seized by Klansmen and shot dead. Bierfield had caused offense to the white folk of Franklin, Tennessee, by fraternizing with the blacks who shopped at his store. Fourteen months later, Samuel Fleishman, a Jewish hardware merchant, was murdered in almost identical circumstances in Marianna, Florida.²⁹ Blame for the outbreak of the Atlanta race riot in September 1906 was leveled at the largely Jewish saloon owners who, it was alleged, had openly encouraged black drunkenness and debauchery. City authorities responded by closing many of these establishments.³⁰

Although Jewish merchants continued to trade with African Americans, they were therefore compelled to exercise a certain degree of caution. Jews were forced to tread a fine line, retaining their friendliness towards African Americans without risking overfamiliarity which might risk unpleasant repercussions from whites. While some Jewish merchants felt sufficiently secure to call their black customers "Mr." and "Mrs.," others, as John Dollard suggested, sought what they hoped would be a safe

compromise, "such as by saying 'What can I do for you?' and letting it go at that." The situation was especially awkward in smaller towns where white racism and political conformism forced Jews onto the defensive. As one storekeeper recollected: "We took no chances. We did not even offer any of this ready-to-wear apparel to our white customers, so they could never say a Negro had tried it on. We made sure that there was never the slightest suspicion of this."³¹

The actions of the Jewish merchant were also impeded by another powerful ideological force, anti-Semitism. African Americans' attitudes towards Jews were shaped by the Protestant fundamentalist culture of the South. The conception of Jews as Christ killers, first learned by their forebears on the plantations of the Old South, continued to exert a powerful influence in the postbellum era. Not only had Jews rejected Jesus, but their every action was impelled by sinful impulses. In June 1927 the *Atlanta Independent* reported the story of a Jew named Cerf, who had been running an illegal movie show for African Americans in Sunset Park until it was broken up by the police. "It is well known that the Jews do not accept our Christian Sunday," seethed the paper, "but while they are entitled to serve God according to the dictates of their own consciences, they have no right to desecrate our Sabbath and insult our religion by conducting places of amusement that interfere with the sanctity of our Sabbath."³²

As this editorial would suggest, religious and secular stereotypes intersected in the minds of many African Americans to create the caricature of the immoral and avaricious Jewish merchant. Although African Americans did not entertain any ideas about Jews that were not commonly shared by whites, anti-Semitism was clearly widespread within the black community. "The Jews," asserted William Wells Brown, "are good only at driving a bargain and getting rich."³³

The black folklore of the time is full of tales about the unscrupulous Jew. North Carolina blacks told of Jim Johnson, who bought a suit at Mr. Rubenstein's store. The first time Johnson wore the suit, he found himself caught in the rain. So badly did

the suit shrink, that the trousers ended up around his knees, and the coat would not button. Enraged, Johnson returned to the store, where he asked the proprietor, "Mr. Rubenstein, does you remember me, Jim?" To which the Jew replied: "Sho, I remembers you," looking at the suit, "but my! how you has growed!" Similarly, the *Huntsville Gazette* ran a story concerning a shoe-store owner named Hoffenstein. In this tale, Hoffenstein attempts to sell a pair of shoes which he claims are made of the finest Prussian leather. When the customer tries them on, they are evidently too tight. "You don't vant to buy a pair uf shoes more as dree sizes too big," retorts Hoffenstein, "und go around de ladies mit your feet looking like a gouple of railroad scrapers." When the customer does agree to buy the shoes, he is appalled to learn that they cost six dollars. After much protest, Hoffenstein lowers the price to four dollars. Although the wholesale price for the shoes was a mere one dollar and fifty cents, Hoffenstein is aghast. "My g-r-r-acious," he exclaims, "dink how small de profit vas."³⁴

So strong a hold did these ethnic stereotypes have on the imaginations of African Americans that they often refused to accept even the kindest behavior of Jewish merchants on face value. The novelist Richard Wright recalled of his childhood in Mississippi and Arkansas that African Americans held an irrational hatred of Jewish merchants. Although the owner of one store had done nothing to exploit his African American customers, Wright and his friends would, whenever he walked past, sing: "A rotten egg/ Never fries/ A cheating dog/ Never thrives." Black sociologist St. Clair Drake remembered a similar episode which occurred as he walked past the house of a Jewish family who owned a chain of stores in Staunton, Virginia. The lady of the house invited Drake and his grandmother in for a glass of water, which they accepted. No sooner had Drake returned home, however, than his grandmother solemnly warned him: "They'll cheat you. You got to be careful."³⁵

Although in many respects African Americans distrusted and disliked Jewish merchants, they also admired their commercial acumen. During the early twentieth century African American leaders argued that the best means by which their own

people could enhance their economic fortunes was to emulate the business practices of Jews. Particularly in urban areas, African American retailers were able to earn a good income serving the needs of their own community. Nonetheless, it is largely true that black businesses blossomed only in those areas, such as undertaking and barber shops, where there was no direct competition from whites. The National Negro Business League, organized in Boston in August 1900, was supposed to serve as the instrument of change, stimulating the development of local black enterprise and advertising the achievements of black businessmen. Its accomplishments, however, were negligible. The Negro Cooperative League, founded by W. E. B. Dubois in 1918, was equally short lived.³⁶

The most persistent problem facing black businessmen was the desperate shortage of capital needed to invest in their operations. African Americans who sought to establish their own businesses were obliged to seek loans from white bankers who charged exorbitant interest rates. Consequently, the typical black businessman was able to invest no more than between \$500 and \$1,000 in a new enterprise.³⁷

The impact of this was that few black businesses were ever started and even fewer survived. Most remained small, shoe-string operations. Without the ability to afford more than a narrow range of goods, black businessmen could never hope to compete with white storeowners. Many African Americans preferred to patronize white stores, where they could be sure of buying more for less. Appeals to "buy black" and help establish a self-sustaining economy within the African American community were largely ignored. As J. Harmon, Jr., put it, black consumers "could not be expected to give a man ten cents for an eight-cent pound of sugar and two cents for race pride." The *Atlanta Independent* agreed. "If there is a Jew store on the corner and a Negro store around the block, or vice-versa, and the Jew store sells for two or three cents less, the Negro will go to the Jew store because he can get the same thing for less money."³⁸

As this editorial suggests, there was initially a great deal of resentment that Jewish retailers had attained their success at the

expense of their African American rivals. This is certainly clear from an address delivered by Hattie G. Escridge at the Atlanta University Conference of 1899. In an impassioned speech on "The Need of Negro Merchants," Escridge asserted that Jews attained their wealth through the willful exploitation of others, none more so than African Americans. When the Jew first settled in a black community he was often as poor as the other residents. Yet soon, by selling unsuspecting blacks unwanted goods at grossly inflated prices, he "has a large brick building, a number of clerks, and he and his family ride in a fine carriage drawn by expensive horses." African Americans would be better off buying from black business establishments. Insisted Escridge, "I am sure what we might buy from the Negro could be no more inferior than some of the things we have bought from the Jew, and I suspect his recommendation of the article would be as truthful as that of the Jew."³⁹

During the early twentieth century this resentment appears to have given way to a genuine respect for the business acumen of Jews. African American commercial leaders began to argue that instead of begrudging Jews their business success, they should learn to emulate their example in order to bolster the economic strength of the black community. Telling comparisons were made between the supposed entrepreneurial skills of Jews, and the ignorance and incompetence of their African American competitors. Black merchants were, for instance, accused of dirtiness in their stores and discourtesy in their conduct. By contrast, Jews were commended for their presentation and politeness. According to a *Nashville Globe* article of 1910, when a black store opened, the best brands were stacked on the shelves, but very soon these were substituted with shoddier goods. "His customers complain," the paper exclaimed of the black merchant, "and he promises them that all defects will be remedied, but the promise is not kept." While the black merchant was busy putting himself out of business, his Jewish rival was "doing his best to please his customers . . . Goods are kept up to the standard, the store is neat and clean, fly specks are washed off the window, every employee is ordered to keep their clothes clean and well arranged, and he

invites the public to come in and see how politely he can have them served. Ask yourself the question, who will get the business?" The obvious answer was supplied by the South African author Maurice Evans. Writing in 1915, Evans observed that Jewish stores "were crammed with Negroes, full of importance, pricing and buying." By contrast, "The Negro stores were empty of customers."⁴⁰

Inspired by the resounding success of Jewish retailers, African American spokespersons urged that their methods be observed and imitated by black entrepreneurs. The recipe for Jewish success in the retail industry, black businesspeople were told, contained a number of special ingredients. Jews, for example, kept their overheads low and reinvested a large percentage of their profits in their businesses. "The Jewish race is no race of spendthrifts," observed an anonymous author in the *Voice of the Negro*. "They believe in the strictest economy." With the Jew to guide them, black merchants would discover how to create as well as satisfy demand, how to keep their accounts straight, and their window displays sharp.⁴¹

Yet even as they extolled the example of the Jew, African Americans unwittingly betrayed their anti-Semitic prejudices. By playing upon the traditional stereotype of Jews as shrewd businessmen, African Americans were at best paying their rivals a backhanded compliment. "They wax fat and profiteer on Christian holidays," Kelly Miller informed readers of the *Richmond Planet*. "They violate their own Sabbath, gathering in shekels, to supply Christians with their requirements for Sunday." Jews were selfish, insistent, and ruthlessly single-minded. In short, the perfect role model. African Americans therefore adopted an inverted stereotype of the Jew, portraying his supposedly merciless instinct for money-making as a virtue rather than a vice. According to Henry Clay Bruce, a former slave then working as a federal government employee in Washington, Jews had amassed enormous individual and collective wealth in spite of persistent prejudice and discrimination. "By turning their attention entirely to trade, they have been enabled to command respect by reason of their money solely, so that to-day, especially in this country, they

have a very high standing in the commercial business of the country, and are gradually increasing it each year, so that it is only a matter of time, when they will be able to control such business." As has already been suggested, African Americans resented what they believed to be their economic exploitation by Jewish merchants. Bruce shared the same conviction that Jews were essentially parasites, living off the producers of wealth. Although disliking Jews personally, he nonetheless admired them professionally.⁴²

That professional success was most dramatically illustrated by the scores of department stores operated by Jewish entrepreneurs across the South. Polish immigrant Louis Pizitz arrived in the United States in 1889. After peddling his wares across Georgia, Pizitz eventually opened a dry goods store in Birmingham. Such was the scale of his success that by 1937 the store was the largest of its kind in Alabama, employing some 750 people.⁴³

The experience of Louis Pizitz was characteristic of the striking business success achieved by Jewish retailers throughout the South. Upon arriving in Richmond in 1842, William Thalheimer opened a small dry goods store. Fifty years later Thalheimer Brothers was the largest department store in the city and boasted branches throughout Virginia and North Carolina.⁴⁴ The triumphs of Thalheimer and Pizitz were echoed elsewhere, with Jewish department stores to be found on the streets of almost every major southern city. In Atlanta there was Rich's; in Birmingham, Loveman, Joseph, & Loeb; and in Dallas, Sanger Bros. and Neiman-Marcus.⁴⁵

The atmosphere which African Americans encountered in department stores was utterly alien to that of the small independent retail establishment. When African Americans entered a Jewish store in their own neighborhood, they were encouraged to leave their second-class citizenship at the door. Department stores, in contrast, reinforced every idea of African American inferiority. Reliant upon white customers for a high percentage of their profit, Jewish department store owners were bound by local law and custom. Water fountains, restrooms, and restaurants

were rigidly segregated. Such facilities were not just separate and unequal, sometimes they did not exist at all. Dan Phillips, whose family operated the M. M. Cohen department store in Little Rock, Arkansas, testified that African American women even "had a problem buying foundations, because stores didn't want them to try them on." Where Jewish storeowners in black neighborhoods might employ black sales clerks, there was no such sign of them on the sales floors of southern department stores. "There were no black employees in selling," admitted Richard Pizitz, son of Louis, "they were essentially in house keeping, restaurants and back functions."⁴⁶

The discrimination suffered by African Americans unsettled those Jews who became actively involved in southern liberalism during the inter-war years. These activists found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the social activist teachings of their religion with the blatant segregationism of many Jewish businessmen. Evidence of this can be found in a caustic item of correspondence written by David Pearce, which appeared in a 1925 edition of *The Crisis*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Pearce, himself a southern Jew, complained that Jewish merchants were so dependent upon the goodwill of their white customers that they did not dare to extend even basic courtesies to African Americans. The Jewish tradesman, he alleged, "is satisfied to accept the situation as he finds it. He must make money, he must be in the good graces of his gentile neighbors, and whatever personal inclination he may possess to combat Negro hatred must be suppressed in the more vital and immediate issue of earning a livelihood." In April 1936, *The Crisis* printed a letter from Samuel Rosenberg of Hampton, Virginia, which blamed the exploitative practices of Jewish merchants for sinking African Americans deeper into the doldrums of the Depression. "One of the obstacles which helps to lower his standard of living is the retail merchant . . . Southern Jews from Rabbis to merchants regard the Negro as a second or third class being."⁴⁷

During the early decades of the twentieth century, African Americans had little expectation that Jewish department store

owners should be any more racially enlightened than their white gentile rivals. Yet during the decade before the Second World War a new racial consciousness began to stir within the black community. African Americans perceived in the Nazi persecution of German Jews a startling parallel to their own suffering. In increasingly strident tones the black press called on the Jewish community to recognize its common status with African Americans and to unite in a struggle against the forces of racial and religious extremism. As Dr. R. H. Butler, an African American minister, asserted: "We want their sympathy, and it is their duty to give it. They should line up . . . always to lighten the burdens of the oppressed."⁴⁸

The belief that Jews had a responsibility to assist the black civil rights struggle became a recurrent theme not only in the press, but in literature, music, and fine art. Although it trades in ethnic stereotypes, the choral work *Wailing Woman*, written by composer William Grant Still in 1946, suggests an innate empathy between African Americans and Jews.

He said they shunned him because his skin was black,
Underneath I felt akin because my nose was hooked, my
folk despised.
Adonoy!⁴⁹

This optimistic rhetoric was contradicted by the economic reality of Jewish discrimination against African Americans. By the late 1930s black activists singled out Jewish department store owners for particular criticism, not because they were any worse than other whites, but because they were expected to know better. As Cheryl Greenberg has astutely observed, African Americans fostered a profound sense of betrayal.⁵⁰ Indicative of this, and of the incipient struggle against segregated facilities in department stores, were efforts made in 1938 by the Mobile, Alabama branch of the NAACP to negotiate with Berney L. Strauss, president of the L. Hammel Dry Goods Co., for the provision of rest room and comfort facilities for black women and children. Since African Americans accounted for a large percentage of his business,

Strauss had no option but to appear sympathetic when he met with a delegation of NAACP activists. However, he soon reneged on his initial commitment, stating in no uncertain terms that it was "not a custom of department stores in the South to have comfort facilities for colored shoppers." Local NAACP leader J. L. LeFlore fired back a furious response. It was obscene, he stormed, that, far from standing together against their common foe, one oppressed ethnic minority should be inflicting suffering on another: "Thousands of thoughtful colored people throughout the United States have contributed efforts aimed to alleviate the plight of Jewry . . . We are bewildered that a member of one oppressed group, because of favorable geographic and other conditions, would be unsympathetic and recalcitrant in regard to the rights of another persecuted minority." The NAACP would be issuing leaflets to black churches and fraternal organizations criticizing Strauss's stance. As for LeFlore himself, he and his family would refuse to shop at the store in the future.⁵¹

The confrontation between Strauss and the NAACP anticipated the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s. It was no coincidence that when black demonstrators organized direct action protests against downtown department stores they deliberately targeted those owned by Jews. In 1959, for instance, the Miami chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality focused its sit-in campaign against one particular store precisely in order to "get the Jew first."⁵² There was therefore an anti-Semitic undercurrent to some of the black student protests of the postwar era. The belief that Jews would take the initiative in integrating their own businesses gave way to a bitter disappointment. In this sense African Americans betrayed a certain naiveté about the constraints that Jim Crow imposed upon Jewish businessmen. Integration of the department stores during the war would have been economic suicide as well as illegal. Whatever the reality of the situation, it is clear that by the 1940s there were considerable tensions in the relationship between African Americans and Jews in the South. As an editorial in the black-owned *Carolina Times* of 1945 boldly asserted, "Jews and Negroes must get

together . . . those of the Jews that violate the racial bonds . . . must be publicly denounced and desecrated."⁵³

In 1943, the African American scholar L. D. Reddick published an article in which he asserted that black anti-Semitism was a phenomenon of the northern inner city.⁵⁴ It is true that the southern states did not witness direct conflict between African Americans and Jewish merchants on the same scale as in the ghettos of Chicago and New York. There was no repeat in the South of the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns which were organized in northern ghettos during the Great Depression.⁵⁵ On the contrary, Jews were widely considered as the only southern whites who commonly treated African Americans with compassion and respect. By the outbreak of the Second World War relations between black customers and Jewish merchants were nonetheless becoming increasingly fraught with tension. Pronounced class distinctions between the two peoples positioned Jews with the white community and undermined the potential for a closer relationship. Ultimately African Americans perceived Jews as an element of white oppression.⁵⁶

NOTES

¹ Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 3, 25, 26, 61-63.

² See, for instance, Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 202-207; St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York, 1945); Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation & Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York, 1995), 87-96; and Roi Ottley, *"New World A-Coming": Inside Black America* (Boston, 1943).

³ The need for closer scholarly study of this subject is discussed in Hasia R. Diner, "Between Words and Deeds: Jews and Blacks in America, 1880-1935" in Cornel West and Jack Saltzman, eds., *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 95

⁴ Stephen J. Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau: Jews in American Life and Thought* (Hamden, CT, 1984), 230.

⁵ Arnold Shankman, "Friend or Foe? Southern Blacks View the Jew, 1880-1935," in Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky, eds., *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*

(Charlottesville, VA, 1979), 106; Edward King, *The Great South*, 2 vols. (New York, 1969 [1875]), I, 274; Frances Butler Leigh, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation Since The War* (London, 1883), 302; John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New Haven, 1937). See also Hortense Powdermaker, *After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South* (New York, 1968), 9.

⁶ King, *The Great South* 274; Frederic Trautmann, ed., *Travels on the Lower Mississippi 1879-1880: A Memoir by Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg* (Columbia and London, 1990), 74, 204; W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, 1989 [1903]), 138-139; Timothy Thomas Fortune, *Black and White: Land, Labor and Politics in the South* (New York, 1968 [1884]), 190-191.

⁷ Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York, 1984 [1967]); Oscar R. Williams, "Historical Impressions of Black-Jewish Relations Prior to World War II," *Negro History Bulletin* 40 (July-August 1977), 728-731.

⁸ Louis Schmier, "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough': A Jewish Peddler and His Black Customers Look at Each Other," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 73 (September 1983), 54. See also Harry L. Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer* (Cleveland, OH, and New York, 1963), 68; and Rudolf Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana* (New York, 1970), 59.

⁹ Diner, "Between Words and Deeds," 100-101.

¹⁰ James C. Cobb, ed., *The Mississippi Delta and the World: The Memoirs of David L. Cohn* (Baton Rouge and London, 1995), 89, 91; Leo E. Turitz and Evelyn Turitz, *Jews in Early Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1995), xvi; Ruth D. Scheinberg, "The Pekl: Folk Histories of Jewish Peddlers in the South, 1890-1914," (Unpublished MA thesis, Emory University, 1980), 49; Louis E. Schmier, "Hellooo! Peddlerman! Hellooo!" in Jerrell H. Shofner and Linda Ellsworth, eds., *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society* (Pensacola, FL.: Gulf Coast Society and Humanities Conference, 1979), 75-88.

¹¹ Charles Rubin, *The Log of Rubin the Sailor* (New York, 1973), 13-14.

¹² Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob*, 241-242; Turitz and Turitz, *Jews in Early Mississippi*, xvii; Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973), 70; William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son* (New York, 1972 [1941]), 17; Kelly Miller, "The Negro and the Jew in Business," *Richmond Planet*, April 13, 1935.

¹³ David L. Cohn, *Where I Was Born and Raised* (Notre Dame and London, 1967), 218-219; Cobb, *Mississippi Delta*, 90-91.

¹⁴ Shankman, "Friend or Foe?" 114.

¹⁵ Shankman, "Friend or Foe?" 114; Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, 61; *The Israelite*, May 23, 1873; William Curry, *A History of Waco, With Illustrations to Six Shooter Junction* (Waco, 1968), 85-86; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 188.

¹⁶ Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, 68; Mark Twain, "Concerning the Jews," *Harper's Magazine* 99 (September 1899), 530. See also Bradley G. Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth-Century South: Mississippi 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge and London, 1995), 148-149; E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge and London, 1947), 202-203.

¹⁷ Schmier, "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough,'" 79; Rachele Saltzman, "Shalom Y' All," *Southern Exposure* 11 (1983), 34.

¹⁸ Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, 68; Schmier, "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do

Enough," 79. Other qualities which Jewish merchants possessed, according to one source, were their "infinite patience in dealing with the simple people in small business affairs," and their willingness "to bargain over prices." Thomas D. Clark, "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 55 (June 1966), 430.

¹⁹ Thomas C. Parramore with Peter C. Stewart and Tommy L. Bogger, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville and London, 1994), 279; Horace Mann Bond, "Negro Attitudes Toward Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 27 (January 1965), 4; William Wells Brown, *My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its People* (New York, 1969 [1880]), 167; Jonathan Daniels, *A Southerner Discovers the South* (New York, 1938), 84; Hollis R. Lynch, *The Black Urban Condition: A Documentary History, 1866-1971* (New York, 1973), 212. An identical remark to that made by Lee was later used to describe West Ninth Street, the main black business district in Little Rock. Of Decatur Street in Atlanta, Jewish resident Louis Geffen recalled that it was cluttered with Jewish pawn and second hand clothing shops. "The black population," he also observed, "used that particular street as their main street." *State Press*, May 2, 1958; Louis Geffen interview, conducted by Cliff Kuhn, August 21, 1979. Living Atlanta Collection, Atlanta Historical Society; Jack Mazuir interview, conducted by Lila Beth Young, May 16, 1990, Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Jewish Community Archives, William Breman Jewish Museum, Atlanta Jewish Federation.

²⁰ Harry L. Golden, "Jew and Gentile in the New South: Segregation at Sundown," *Commentary* 20 (November 1955), 410; *Nashville Globe*, March 8, 1907; Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (London, 1908), 40; Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago and London, 1941), 457; Dollard, *Caste and Class*, 129-130.

²¹ Clark, "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," 430; Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 14 vols., (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1972-1984), VIII, 97; Jack Nusan Porter, "John Henry and Mr. Goldberg: The Relationship Between Blacks and Jews," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 7 (1979), 80; Eli Evans, *The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of A Jewish Southerner* (Jackson, MS, 1993), 11; Adam Nossiter, *Of Long Memory: Mississippi and the Murder of Medgar Evers* (Reading, MA, 1994), 204; William "Sonny" Walker interview, conducted by Clive Webb, December 9, 1993.

²² *Nashville Globe*, January 18, February 1, 1907. Other Jewish advertisers in the *Globe* included David J. Kuhn, whose name appeared regularly from March 22, 1907; Rosenheim Millinery Store, which first appeared on May 24, 1907; and tailor Abe Ulvavitz, who offered his services to readers from June 21, 1907.

²³ *Atlanta Independent*, March 30, 1907, May 11, 1907. Jewish businesses also advertised heavily in the *Savannah Tribune* and *Huntsville Gazette*. Jewish advertisers in the *Tribune* included B. H. Levy, Bros. Co., Louis Rubin's Grocery Store, and Shapiro's Cut Price Shoe Store; among those in the *Gazette* were P. J. Kaufman and Herstein & Lowenthal. *Savannah Tribune*, August 23, 1913, June 27, 1914, July 3, 1924; *Huntsville Gazette*, June 18 and October 15, 1881.

²⁴ *Savannah Tribune*, August 7, 1924; *Atlanta Constitution*, January 5, 1983.

²⁵ Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, Alabama, 1974), 61-62.

²⁶ Diner, "Between Words and Deeds," 98; Steven Hertzberg, "Southern Jews and Their Encounter with Blacks: Atlanta, 1850-1915," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 23 (Fall 1979), 11.

²⁷ Mina Surasky Tropp, "Memoirs—Mostly about a South Carolina Childhood," *Jewish Currents* 24 (February 1980), 14, 29-30; Scheinberg, "The Pekl," 61. See also Hertzberg, "Southern Jews and Their Encounter with Blacks," 11-12; and Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob*, 243.

²⁸ Richard Gambino, *Blood of my Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian-Americans* (Garden City, NY, 1974), 118; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994 [1955]), 169; Jean Scarpaci, "A Tale of Selective Accommodation: Sicilians and Native Whites in Louisiana," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 5 (1977), 43.

²⁹ *New York Times*, August 19, 1868; Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875* (New York, 1971), 515-517; Jessie Fortune, "Among the Children of the East Side Jews (1905)," *Jewish Currents* 29 (1975), 4-5.

³⁰ Davis, et al., *Deep South*, 459; Glenn Weddington Rainey, "The Race Riot of 1906 in Atlanta" (MA thesis, Emory University, 1929), 30-35. Jews who lost their licenses included P. Abelman, Clein Brothers, I. L. Clein, J. Cohen, Pete Cohen, Goldberg & Feen, L. Hersovitz, H. Jacobs, J. and L. Klein, Emile Heyman, M. Schurman, M. M. L. Shatzen, A. Spitz, and Steinberg & Abelson. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 5, 1906.

³¹ Dollard, *Caste and Class*, 129-130; Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, 73; Suberman, *The Jew Store*, 63; Saltzman, "Shalom Y'All," 35.

³² Rainey, "Race Riot," 33-34; *Atlanta Independent*, June 23, 1927.

³³ Brown, *My Southern Home*, 248.

³⁴ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1977), 305; *Huntsville Gazette*, August 27, 1881; Daryl Cumber Dance, *Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore from Contemporary Black Americans* (Bloomington and London, 1978), 158; Walker interview; J. C. Fairley interview, conducted by Clive Webb, March 19, 1994.

³⁵ Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York, 1978), 113; Richard Wright, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (Harlow, Essex, 1986 edn.), 52-53; Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York, 1988), 33-34.

³⁶ Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South, 1865-1920* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1992), 59; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York and London, 1944), II, 815-816.

³⁷ J. H. Harmon, Jr., "The Negro as a Local Business Man," *Journal of Negro History* 14 (April 1929), 153.

³⁸ John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880* (Chicago and London, 1973), 70-71; Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), 191; Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, I, 304-305; Harmon, "The Negro as a Local Business Man," 131; *Atlanta Independent*, July 8, 1926; Davis, et al., *Deep South*, 473.

³⁹ W. E. B. Dubois, ed., *The Negro in Business: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University* (Atlanta, 1899), 61.

⁴⁰ Philip S. Foner, "Black-Jewish Relations in the Opening Years of the Twentieth Century," *Phylon* 36 (Winter 1975), 360-361; *Nashville Globe*, December 2, 1910; Maurice S. Evans, *Black and White in the Southern States: A Study of the Race Problem in the United States*

from a South African Point of View (London, 1915), 105. See also Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 41.

⁴¹ Anonymous, "The Hebrew Race in America," *Voice of the Negro* 3 (December 1905), 20; "Taking Advantage of our Disadvantages," (1894) *Booker T. Washington Papers*, III, 408-409.

⁴² Miller, "The Negro and the Jew in Business"; H. C. Bruce, *The New Man: Twenty-nine Years a Slave, Twenty-nine Years a Free Man* (Lincoln and London, 1996 [1895]), 143-144.

⁴³ Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie*, 125-128; Richard Pizitz interview, conducted by Clive Webb, February 15, 1994.

⁴⁴ Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979), 237.

⁴⁵ Leon Harris, *Merchant Princes: An Intimate History of Jewish Families Who Built Great Department Stores* (New York, 1977); Robert G. Corley, *Paying "Civic Rent": The Jews of Emanu-El and the Birmingham Community* (Birmingham, AL, 1982); Nancy Faires Cohen and Nora Faires, "'Colored' and Catholic: The Lebanese in Birmingham, Alabama," in Eric J. Hoggund, ed., *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States Before 1840* (Washington, DC, and London, 1987), 72; Natalie Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans: Their Impact on Texas and American History for Four Hundred Years, 1590-1990* (Dallas, 1989), 150-155, 157-163; Louis Schmier, ed., *Reflections of Southern Jewry: The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, 1878-1879* (Macon, GA, 1982), 115. On the growth of other Jewish department stores elsewhere in the South see, among others, Carolyn Gray LeMaster, *A Corner of the Tapestry: A History of the Jewish Experience in Arkansas, 1820s-1990s* (Fayetteville, 1994), 112-116; Selma S. Lewis, *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee, 1840s-1960s* (Macon, GA, 1998), 15-20, 84-85; Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob*, 233; Audrey Daniels Kariel, "The Jewish Story and Memories of Marshall, Texas," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 14 (1982), 195; and Burton Alan Boxerman, "The Edison Brothers, Shoe Merchants: Their Georgia Years," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 57 (1973): 511-525.

⁴⁶ Dan Phillips interview, conducted by Clive Webb, June 15, 1994; Pizitz interview.

⁴⁷ David H. Pierce, "Is the Jew a Friend of the Negro?" *The Crisis* 30 (August 1925), 184; Samuel A. Rosenberg letter, *The Crisis* 43 (April 1936), 122.

⁴⁸ Winston C. McDowell, "Keeping Them 'In the Same Boat Together'? Sufu Abdul Hamid, African Americans, Jews, and the Harlem Job Boycotts," in V. P. Franklin, Nancy L. Grant, Harold M. Kletnick, and Genna Rae McNeil, eds., *African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century: Studies in Convergence and Conflict* (Columbia and London, 1998), 217-218; Shankman, "Friend or Foe?," 118.

⁴⁹ *Wailing Woman*, music by William Grant Still, poem by Verna Arvey, William Grant Still Music, 1946. A sense of common suffering between African Americans and Jews also can be seen in the painting *Deliver Us From Evil* by John Wilson, reproduced in Jack Salzman with Adina Back and Gretchen Sullivan Sorin, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews* (New York, 1992), 214. For a literary depiction of this same subject, see Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (New York, 1946).

⁵⁰ Cheryl Greenberg, "The Southern Jewish Community and the Struggle for Civil Rights," in Franklin, et al., *African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, 130-131.

⁵¹ J. L. LeFlore to Berney L. Strauss, October 12, 1938. Papers of the NAACP, Part 12: Selected Branch Files, 1913-1939. Series A: The South. Reel 4, Group 1, Series G: Mobile,

Alabama Branch.

⁵² Raymond A. Mohl, "South of the South? Jews, Blacks, and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1960," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (Winter 1999), 22.

⁵³ Greenberg, "Southern Jewish Community," 131-132.

⁵⁴ L. D. Reddick, "Anti-Semitism Among Negroes" in Salzman, et al., *Bridges and Boundaries*, 79-85.

⁵⁵ Ronald W. Bailey, ed., *Black Business Enterprise: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York and London, 1971), 80.

⁵⁶ Greenberg, "Southern Jewish Community," 128