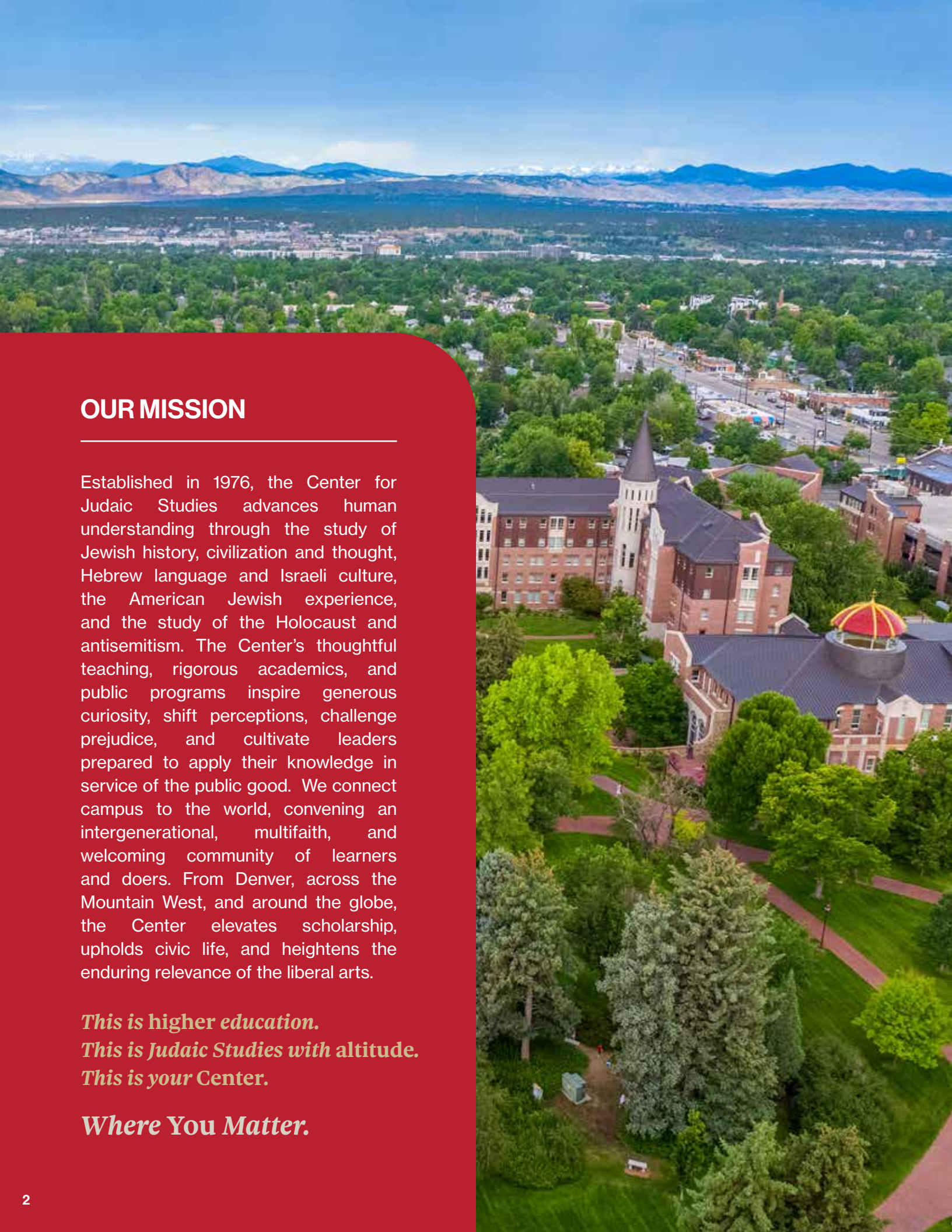


2025-2026 Annual Report

Center for Judaic Studies *Where You Matter*



Center for Judaic Studies
Holocaust Awareness Institute
Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society



OUR MISSION

Established in 1976, the Center for Judaic Studies advances human understanding through the study of Jewish history, civilization and thought, Hebrew language and Israeli culture, the American Jewish experience, and the study of the Holocaust and antisemitism. The Center's thoughtful teaching, rigorous academics, and public programs inspire generous curiosity, shift perceptions, challenge prejudice, and cultivate leaders prepared to apply their knowledge in service of the public good. We connect campus to the world, convening an intergenerational, multifaith, and welcoming community of learners and doers. From Denver, across the Mountain West, and around the globe, the Center elevates scholarship, upholds civic life, and heightens the enduring relevance of the liberal arts.

This is higher education.

This is Judaic Studies with altitude.

This is your Center.

Where You Matter.

LETTER FROM DR. ADAM ROVNER, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES

Sound the shofar loud!

In the Hebrew Bible, the Jubilee year trumpets liberty and revival in the Land of Israel. Here at the University of Denver, the Center for Judaic Studies will soon celebrate its own jubilee – our 50th anniversary.

Over the last few years, we have:

- Served more than **1,000 undergraduates** in Judaic Studies courses
- Added **24** new Judaic Studies courses
- Created **2** undergraduate awards for outstanding coursework
- Endowed **1 new** scholarship for Judaic Studies minors – the Gary & Terri Yourtz Scholarship
- Awarded **4** Dr. Helen Morris Jewish Life & Culture grants for curriculum development
- Launched our Holocaust Awareness Institute's *Survival & Witness* platform to support the Colorado state mandate for Holocaust education
- Awarded **2** Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society (RMJHS) & Beck Archives research fellowships
- Formalized the **1st** American partnership with the Institute of Jewish Studies – Barcelona
- Offered **20** travel subsidies through our Israeli Cultures Initiative to send Hebrew language students to conferences in the U.S.
- Announced a campaign to endow the **1st** professorship to link the Holocaust to historical and contemporary antisemitism – the Emil & Eva Hecht Professorship
- Welcomed **1,000s** of Front Range community members to **120+** events and programs featuring internationally recognized scholars, authors, filmmakers, and musicians from the U.S., Israel, and beyond

These are just a sampling of our many achievements. None of these successes would have been possible without our wonderful students and alumni, dedicated faculty and staff, eager community participants, and generous donors.

We hope you will attend one of our anniversary year programs, meet our impressive students, and see first-hand how our work is transforming DU and shaping the lives of the next generation of thought leaders. Our Center is truly at the center of higher education across the Mountain West, and you can help us shape its next 50 years. Spread the word – sound the ram's horn – about all that we have done and will yet accomplish.

B'shalom



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Adam Rovner'.

Adam Rovner, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Judaic Studies & Professor of English and Literary Arts

Where You Matter

ABOUT THE CENTER

Thanks to the foresight of Rabbi Dr. Stanley Wagner (z"l), who galvanized the Denver community to establish the **Center for Judaic Studies** a half-century ago, the Center is the number one destination for Jewish Studies within 1000 miles and stands at the heart of the University of Denver's College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

The Center is home to two public education and programming arms: the **Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society** (RMJHS) and the **Holocaust Awareness Institute** (HAI). RMJHS documents, conserves, and promotes the rich legacy of Jewish life across the Mountain West together with DU Libraries' Ira M. and Peryle Hayutin Beck Memorial Archives.

The Holocaust Awareness Institute is the second-oldest university-affiliated Holocaust institute in the United States and the only higher education institution to house a Holocaust Survivor Speakers Bureau. Through commemoration and education, HAI is committed to remembering the past, challenging the present, and transforming the future.



The Future Matters: Your gift transforms young lives



Support DU's Center for Judaic Studies
Scan the QR code or visit
bit.ly/supportcjs



Follow CJS
on Instagram

DU's campus hosts the Center's Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site, pictured here. The Center collaborates regularly with student affinity groups, DU Hillel, and Chabad of DU. In 2026, the ADL's Report Card graded Jewish life on campus 'excellent,' campus conduct and climate concerns 'low to none,' and DU administrative actions 'above expectations.'



Where Community Matters

CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

The Center has produced or co-sponsored more than 120 public events in the last five years. Below are a few highlights from last year:



March 4, 2025

Guest Lecture & Reading with Adi Keissar

Israeli poet and activist



March 5, 2025

The Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezin

Concert performance by DU's Lamont Symphony Orchestra
Co-sponsored with DU's Lamont School of Music and
The Defiant Requiem Foundation



April 1, 2025

The Livingston & Abrams Lecture in American Jewish History

Discussion and performance with Danielle & Galeet Dardashti, hosts of
The Nightingale of Iran



April 7-8, 2025

David Shneer Memorial Conference

International conference dedicated to the legacy of
Dr. David Shneer (z"l), former director of CJS
Co-sponsored with CU-Boulder's Program in Jewish Studies



May 15, 2025

31st Annual Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society Heritage Award Evening

"Honoring Colorado Jewish Journalism" gala at History Colorado

Where Community Matters

CENTER HIGHLIGHTS



November 4, 2025

7th Annual Vinnik Evening of Jewish Culture

Reading by Israeli author Etgar Keret with Denver premiere of Agnieszka Holland's film *Franz*

Co-sponsored with the 48th Denver Film Festival



January 25, 2026

23rd Annual Fred & Audrey Friedman Marcus Holocaust Lecture

Denver premiere of *Elie Wiesel: Soul on Fire* and discussion with director Oren Rudavsky, in conversation with Colorado Senator Dafna Michaelson Jenet

Co-sponsored with the Denver Jewish Film Festival



January 27, 2026

Announcement of an Endowed Professorship in Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies

and International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration with Governor Jared Polis, and survivors Oscar Sladek and Barbara Steinmetz



Governor Jared Polis speaking in the Colorado Capitol
January 27, 2026

Where History Matters

ROCKY MOUNTAIN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY LETTER FROM DR. JOSHUA FURMAN, DIRECTOR

Thanks to the vision of my dedicated predecessor, Dr. Jeanne Abrams, the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society (RMJHS) is nearing its 50th anniversary. Partnering with colleagues at DU's Ira M. & Peryle Hayutin Beck Memorial Archives, RMJHS serves students, researchers, genealogists, educators, and community members who explore and learn from our history. RMJHS works to preserve and promote Jewish history in Colorado and throughout the mountain region by highlighting the contributions of Jews to the development of the West, documenting the fight against antisemitism, and analyzing the dynamics of Jewish life in Colorado and across the Mountain West.

We serve our community through a variety of public programs throughout the year:

- Our quarterly book club meetings examine contemporary issues and scholarship.
- Our fall travel programs take participants across Colorado to explore history up close.
- Our annual Livingston and Abrams Lecture in American Jewish History brings leading authors and performers to Denver.
- Our Heritage Award Evening, held in May to coincide with Jewish American Heritage Month, celebrates the contributions that Jewish Coloradans have made to our state.
- Our newest initiative, the Digital Encyclopedia of Colorado Jewish Communities, will transform local education and research via an interactive website that shares stories from across the Centennial State.

Thank you for sustaining the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society and enabling us to reach our 50th anniversary in 2027. I hope you will join me this year in exploring local Jewish history!



Dr. Joshua Furman

*Jeanne Abrams Endowed Director, Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society
& Affiliate Faculty, American Jewish History*



Where History Matters

JORDAN BENNETT, PROJECT MANAGER



Jordan Bennett is a passionate public historian who approaches regional history with academic rigor and curiosity, bringing together archival research, museum practice, and community storytelling in her work. Jordan serves as Project Manager for the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society, overseeing the creation of the Digital Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Colorado, a multi-year initiative.

Jordan's work as project manager of the Digital Encyclopedia is made possible by the generous support of the Rose Community Foundation, which has provided RMJHS with the resources needed to launch and expand the platform.



DR. JEANNE ABRAMS, DIRECTOR EMERITA



Over the course of a DU career spanning more than forty years, professor emerita Jeanne Abrams served as director of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society (RMJHS) and curator of the Beck Archives. She oversaw the exponential growth of the Beck Archives, including the acquisition of numerous collections with national impact, and developed many exhibits for prestigious venues including History Colorado.

The Future Matters: Your gift makes the difference!

Support RMJHS
Scan the QR code or visit
bit.ly/givetormjhs



Follow RMJHS
on Instagram



Where Hebrew Matters

HEBREW LANGUAGE AND CULTURE PROGRAM LETTER FROM MICHAL LEV, DIRECTOR

The Hebrew program offers beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction that allow students to complete a minor in Hebrew. Many students who enroll in first-year Hebrew to fulfill their language requirement find their studies so enriching that they opt to continue with the second year. Students consistently say that Hebrew classes provide a space where they feel safe, welcomed, and connected. This sense of belonging became especially important after October 7, 2023, when many students expressed that their Hebrew classes provided a supportive environment, a place to process emotions together, and a community that understands their experiences.

Lessons integrate current Israeli culture and feature a variety of guest speakers who represent different voices in Israeli society. Students also participate in national leadership and cultural conferences where they meet students and professionals from around the world, build networks, and engage with global Jewish and Israeli communities. At DU, Hebrew matters.



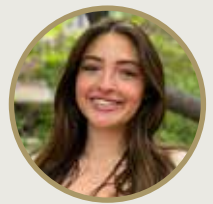
Michal Lev

Teaching Associate Professor, Hebrew Language & Culture

"When I received the Excellence in Hebrew Award, I was incredibly honored. The award has inspired me to share my experiences as a language learner and it serves as motivation to continue studying Hebrew inside and outside of the classroom!"

Sam Hornfeck, Senior

Winner of the 2025 Excellence in Hebrew Award



"The IAC conference was an empowering experience. The lively energy of the conference reminded me that there's so much strength in the Jewish-Israeli community, and that resilience is fostered through connection, support, and celebration."

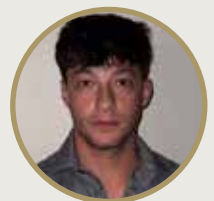
Rachel Coplon, Senior

Israeli American Council Conference Attendee

"Attending the IAC Conference was one of the most powerful experiences I've ever had. I connected with professionals in fields related to my major and left with actual contacts and inspiration."

Braiden Rogers, Junior

Israeli American Council Conference Attendee



Where Hebrew Matters

ISRAELI CULTURES INITIATIVE

The Center has hosted leading Israeli creatives through our Israeli Cultures Initiative, including National Jewish Book Award winner **Maya Arad**, Academy Award-nominated film director **Ari Folman**, L.A. Film Festival-winning documentarian **Tomer Heymann**, Rector Prize-winning actor **Roy Horovitz**, National Jewish Book Award-winning author **Etgar Keret**, and Sapir Prize-winning author **Noa Yedlin**. Now CJS announces a campaign to create a donor-named Israeli Cultures endowment to ensure that future generations of DU students are exposed to Israel's leading cultural figures.

The new Israeli Cultures endowment will bring a leading member of Israel's arts and humanities community to DU's campus each year as a Fellow and will provide subsidy grants for intermediate- and advanced-level Hebrew students to travel to Israel for further study. The endowed Israeli Cultures program offers a lasting legacy to a generous donor whose lead gift of \$500,000 will ensure that education will counter rising anti-Israel bigotry.



2nd and 3rd-year Hebrew students with Professor Michal Lev at the 2026 Israeli American Council annual conference in Hollywood, Florida
January 2026

The Future Matters: Your support changes lives!

Support DU's Israeli Cultures Initiative
Scan the QR code or visit
bit.ly/supportisraeliculturesdu



Where Education Matters

PROFESSORSHIP IN HOLOCAUST AND ANTISEMITISM STUDIES

On January 27, 2026, the 81st anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, DU's Center for Judaic Studies announced a campaign to endow a Professorship in Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies. As part of DU's Denver Difference Campaign, this pioneering position will advance Holocaust education, research, and the study of antisemitism. Gifts from the Michael Feiner Family Foundation and Helene and Marshall Abrahams launched this campaign to endow a professorship inspired by the life and legacy of Emil & Eva Hecht.

"This professorship represents a permanent commitment—not only to remembrance, but to making Denver a global hub for thoughtful Holocaust education and applied scholarship that helps future generations foster social change," said DU Provost Elizabeth Lobo. The campaign announcement was made on International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Colorado Capitol alongside Governor Jared Polis. He was joined by Osi Sladek and Barbara Steinmetz, both Holocaust survivors and members of the Center's Survivor Speakers Bureau.

"On International Holocaust Remembrance Day and every day, we double down on the promise of Never Again—by elevating Holocaust education, hearing the stories of survivors, and speaking out against antisemitism wherever and whenever we see it today.

The new endowed professor for Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies at the University of Denver is leading the way to bring these critical issues together and show what it means to build a kind, compassionate, tolerant Colorado for All."

—Governor Jared Polis, January 27, 2026

(L-R) Adam Rovner, Governor Jared Polis, and Provost Elizabeth Lobo



Where Education Matters

EMIL & EVA HECHT



Eva (Karfunkel) Hecht was born in Hungary in 1927. At the age of only 16, she and her sister Magda were deported to Auschwitz. There the two came face-to-face with the horrors of the Holocaust. Eva and Magda were later sent to Dachau and freed by American forces in April 1945.

Emil Hecht was born in Svalava, Czechoslovakia in 1924. He was deported to a Nazi labor camp at the age of 19, and later survived Auschwitz and Mauthausen. Emil weighed only 66 pounds when the US Army's 71st Infantry and 761st "Black Panthers" Tank Battalion, a largely African American unit, liberated the camp.

Eva and Emil Hecht met and married in 1947 while living as displaced persons. They emigrated to the U.S. in 1951 and rebuilt their lives. Emil trained as an accountant and opened a practice in Denver. By the late 1960s, he met local real estate developer Larry Mizel. In 1972, the two formed MDC Holdings, which became one of the most successful development companies in the country. Emil and Eva Hecht were leading lights of philanthropy at DU. They contributed the first endowed chair to the Center for Judaic Studies and were longstanding supporters of the Center's Holocaust Awareness Institute, becoming noted voices of conscience across the Rocky Mountain region.

In a 2004 speech for the Holocaust Awareness Institute, Emil reflected on the importance of education: "It was [...] the spirit and rule of morality instilled in me by my parents and teachers [...] as well as my understanding of Jewish history that kept me holding out against all odds and adversity." Emil Hecht died in 2010, Eva in 2022. They had two children, Judy and Jeff, and five grandchildren, who maintain the Hecht family legacy of education and renewal.

"It was [...] the spirit and rule of morality instilled in me by my parents and teachers [...] as well as my understanding of Jewish history that kept me holding out against all odds and adversity."

—Emil Hecht, Holocaust Survivor

Creating the Future by Honoring the Past



Support DU's Endowed Chair in Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies
Scan the QR Code or visit
bit.ly/DU_Holocaust-Antisemitism-Chair

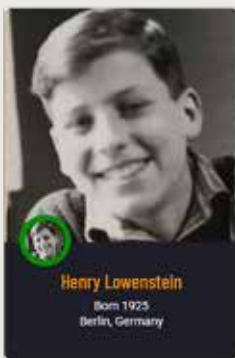
The Center's Holocaust Awareness Institute (HAI) developed *Survival & Witness* (survivalandwitness.org) to be Colorado's premier online resource supporting the state mandate for Holocaust education. The site – available in English and professionally translated into Spanish – draws on primary sources and current scholarship to provide accurate information about the Holocaust. Dozens of dedicated teachers from across the U.S. have participated in HAI training sessions on using *Survival & Witness* in classrooms thanks to an ongoing partnership between HAI and the Colorado Holocaust Educators (CHE). Tailored to the needs of Colorado public school teachers and students, *Survival & Witness* connects the history and memory of the Holocaust with Colorado today through the stories of survivors who made their homes in our state.



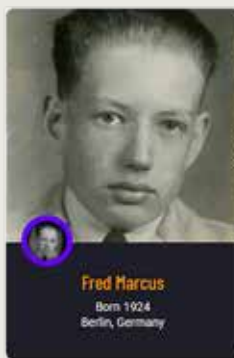
Jack Adler
Born 1929
Pabianice, Poland



Paula Burger
Born 1934
Novogrodek, Poland



Henry Lowenstein
Born 1925
Berlin, Germany



Fred Marcus
Born 1924
Berlin, Germany



Oscar Sladek
Born 1935
Prešov, Czechoslovakia



Barbara Bandler Steinmetz
Born 1936
Győr, Hungary

“Survival & Witness has been absolutely wonderful to use in my classroom. It’s a powerful tool that translates the history of the Holocaust into something more personal—my students express a strong connection with these stories.”

– **Abby Basile**, Teacher, Thunder Ridge High School, Highlands Ranch, Colorado

“Just what’s needed—accurate [...] easy-to-use, and admirably comprehensive [...] I can only hope your program of instruction will be widely adopted by educators in Colorado and emulated elsewhere.”

– **Dr. Alvin H. Rosenfeld**, Irving M. Glazer Chair in Jewish Studies and Director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, Indiana University, 2002-2007 Presidential appointment to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council

“The Survival & Witness initiative is an outstanding and vital resource for teachers. I have always been impressed by HAI and the caliber of their work. This initiative is an important addition to Holocaust education and a valuable resource.”

– **Dr. Alexandra Zapruder**, Author of *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers’ Diaries of the Holocaust*, Education Director of The Defiant Requiem Foundation, Member of the Board of Directors of the Educators’ Institute for Human Rights (EIHR)



Support *Survival & Witness* at HAI
Scan the QR code or visit
bit.ly/supportHAI



Explore *Survival & Witness*
Scan the QR code or visit
survivalandwitness.org

Where Giving Matters

PROFESSORSHIP IN HOLOCAUST AND ANTISEMITISM STUDIES

While in his twenties, Marshall Abrahams worked at an accountancy firm where he met Holocaust survivor Emil Hecht. “He was my mentor,” Marshall recalls. Their professional relationship soon became a friendship, and they continued to work closely together for nearly 20 years. “Emil was inspiring in his own quiet way,” Marshall remembers, “he was honest and straightforward – a moral pillar, and someone I wanted to emulate.”

Despite witnessing some of the worst atrocities in world history, Emil remained a man of generous spirit and strong convictions. “He had the moral clarity to do what’s right,” Marshall concludes. Helene recalls that Eva was also a powerful force. “She was genuine and forthright,” said Helene, who added that Eva was inspiring to all women.

As a testament to Emil and Eva’s lasting impact, Helene and Marshall have partnered with the Feiner family to support the Emil and Eva Hecht Professorship in Holocaust & Antisemitism Studies. This is the first faculty position in the U.S. to explicitly connect the lessons of the Holocaust to both historical and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism.



Marshall and Helene Abrahams

Donors – Professorship in Holocaust & Antisemitism Studies

Michael Feiner attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and later headed west at the invitation of Larry Mizel, founder of MDC Holdings. As Vice-Chairman and eventually CEO of MDC, he worked alongside Emil Hecht, a Holocaust survivor. The close friendship Feiner developed with the late Emil and Eva Hecht led him to endow the ADL’s long-standing Governor’s Holocaust Remembrance Program.

He remains a strong supporter of the Colorado state mandate for Holocaust education and has distributed thousands of copies of *The Triumphant Spirit*, photographer Nick Del Calzo’s collection of portraits of survivors who rebuilt their lives in the U.S. Michael Feiner and his wife Debbie are well known throughout the Rocky Mountain region for their commitment to philanthropic causes.

The Feiner family, along with Marshall and Helene Abrahams, has honored the Hechts’ legacy by supporting the Center’s Emil & Eva Hecht Professorship in Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies.



Michael A. and Debbie Feiner

Donors – Professorship in Holocaust & Antisemitism Studies

Where Giving Matters

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FACULTY GRANTS

Denver Jewish history is deeply personal for Dr. Morris. She and her brother, Albert, grew up on Denver's West Side as the children of immigrants during the Great Depression. Her father, Harry, sold fruit from a horse-drawn wagon. Her mother, Bessie, an opera lover who devoured Russian literature, had little formal schooling but instilled in Morris a reverence for learning. "She believed in education—she was the driving force," says Morris. That love for learning inspired Morris to push beyond the limits of an era saddled by quotas, discrimination, and diminished professional expectations for Jewish women.

Morris has been a core supporter of the Beck Archives and RMJHS, and has served on its board for many years. She recently endowed the Center's Dr. Helen Morris Grants for Jewish Life and Culture, which support Judaic Studies curriculum development, as well as the Morris Award for Excellence in a Judaic Studies course. Through her philanthropic gifts, Dr. Morris hopes to expose all DU students to the richness of Jewish culture.



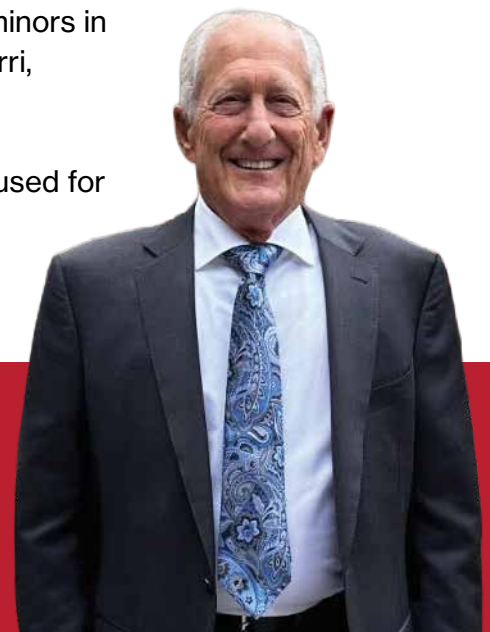
Dr. Helen Morris

Dr. Helen Morris Grants for Jewish Life & Culture

"You share, and you try to help people. Education is how you do it."
– Gary Yourtz, Donor

The Center is thrilled to announce a new scholarship for undergraduate minors in Judaic Studies. Longtime DU supporters Gary Yourtz and his late wife, Terri, established the Yourtz Endowed Scholarship in Judaic Studies.

Asked about the importance of education, Gary offers: "My wife and I focused for years on education and providing a safety net for helping those with food insecurities. These are the values I was taught by my mother: that you share, and you try to help people. Education is how you do it."



Gary Yourtz

Yourtz Endowed Scholarship in Judaic Studies

Where Learning Matters

JEWISH LIFE & CULTURE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



“This past fall, I first offered ‘Music in Jewish Spiritual Life.’ The class aims to give an overview of the kinds of music contemporary Jews make in settings related to worship and spirituality, across the whole spectrum of our geographic and ideological diversity. The community we formed together was amazing.”

Dr. Mitchell Ohriner

Assistant Professor of Music Theory

Recipient of inaugural Morris Jewish Life & Culture Curriculum Development Grant

KEIRA SEGAL, EXCELLENCE IN JUDAIC STUDIES



“I wrote my story, ‘The Secret Ride,’ because learning about World War II heroes in Professor Waldbaum’s Italian Jewish Literature class reminded me of my own grandma’s escape. Winning the Morris Jewish Life & Culture award has made me realize how valuable it is to share these stories and has inspired me to keep learning about my heritage.”

Keira Segal, Junior

Inaugural recipient of the Morris Award for Excellence in Judaic Studies

“Judaic Studies at DU has offered me tools to understand resilience, identity, and culture.”

– Jonah Kaufman, Sophomore

JONAH KAUFMAN, JULIA GROSS SCHOLARSHIP



Jonah Kaufman is double-majoring in jazz piano performance and the environmental science of sustainability, and intends to pursue conservation leadership, wildlife stewardship, and music education. He is honored to have been awarded the 2025 Julia Gross scholarship and looks forward to continuing to engage deeply with his studies and extra-curricular interests, taking full advantage of the university’s resources – something he encourages other DU students do as well.

Jonah Kaufman, Sophomore

2025 Julia Gross Scholarship Recipient

Where the World Matters

JUDAIC STUDIES IN BARCELONA



Starting in summer 2026, CJS will become the first American academic partner of the Instituto de Estudios Judíos – Barcelona (EJB). The partnership allows the Center to offer participating DU students elective credit in Judaic Studies through one of two EJB programs: the **Matanel Sefarad Seminar** in the heart of Barcelona's historical Jewish quarter, or the **Matanel Heritage Lab** in Belchite, Spain.

Please visit www.ejbarcelona.org/ for more information.

"This collaboration is a big step in advancing our mission to bring attention to Jewish culture past, present, and future."
– Dr. Zeev Maor, EJB Director

YIDDISH IN TEL AVIV



Starting summer 2026, the Center will be one of the first academic partners of the Naomi Prawer Kadar Yiddish Summer Seminar at Tel Aviv University. The partnership allows the Center to offer participating DU undergraduates and graduate students elective credit in Judaic Studies. This year's Yiddish Summer Seminar runs from July 5-30, 2026, on the campus of Tel Aviv University.

Full tuition waivers are available to students recommended by a DU faculty sponsor. Applications are open from February 2026.

Please visit https://international.tau.ac.il/Yiddish_Summer_Program for more information.

Where Alumni Matter

STACEY LOWENSTEIN



Alumna **Stacey Lowenstein** (Class of 2007) graduated with a major in Communications and a minor in Judaic Studies. The skills she acquired during her studies have benefitted her career, which has taken her from an elementary school classroom to the corporate offices of Nordstrom. In addition to taking classes in Judaic Studies, Lowenstein interned at the Center, helping to build the first CJS website! As a new mother, Lowenstein is excited to pass on Jewish history and traditions to her daughter.

MIRA HIRSCH



Alumna **Mira Hirsch** (Class of 1986) comes from a three-generation DU family. After earning her degree in Theater and her teaching certification at DU, she went on to launch her own company, the Jewish Theatre of the South, which she ran for 13 successful seasons from 1994-2008. She is very involved in Holocaust theater and currently trains teachers for the Holocaust Theater International Initiative. Hirsch recalls being “totally immersed in theater” as a student at DU, where she learned that theater could be both entertainment and a tool for social change.

AIDAN MILLER

English major **Aidan Miller** (Class of 2026) has developed a strong interest in Jewish literature and has taken three classes with CJS director Adam Rovner. As the official high jumper of the Center for Judaic Studies, the 6' 6" Miller stands above the competition proudly wearing a uniform bearing the Center's logo.



DU's Center is the only Judaic Studies program in the world to sponsor a collegiate athlete. And a winning athlete at that! Miller soared to a first-place finish at the Colorado School of Mines Winter Invitational in January 2026. Miller's personal best jump is an impressive 6' 10", a record he expects to surpass in the current season thanks to coaching by Rovner, whose flops are flawless, but whose Fosbury needs work.

***“It's important to make mistakes,
take chances, and live life to the fullest.”***

– Aidan Miller



David Fasman, MLIS, is the Curator of the Beck Archives of Rocky Mountain Jewish History and an Assistant Professor at the University Libraries. His current research focuses on the German Foreign Book Exchange during the Third Reich. David serves on the Association for Jewish Libraries Nazi Era Looted Book Task Force.



Joshua Furman, Ph.D., is the Jeanne Abrams Endowed Director of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society at the University of Denver, where he also teaches for the Center. At Rice University (2015 to 2023), he served as the Associate Director of the Program in Jewish Studies and the founder and first curator of the Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives. His most recent publications examine Jewish immigration to the U.S. through Galveston, Texas, and the evolution of Jewish neighborhoods in Houston.



Michal Lev, M.A., is the Director of the Hebrew Program and a Teaching Assistant Professor of Hebrew at the University of Denver, where she also offers courses focused on Israeli culture, media, and social issues for the Center. Michal is currently a doctoral candidate at DU's Morgridge College of Education. She is the author of the *Chaverim Belvrit* digital app and the *Chaverim Belvrit* workbooks published by Behrman House.



Selena A. Naumoff, MDiv, M.A., the Center's department coordinator, is an ordained minister and a member of the Association of Professional Chaplains and the American Association of Notaries. She sits on the Board of Directors for the Elemental Theatre Company and the Golda Meir House Advisory Board. She has presented on the Holocaust in comic books, interfaith dialogue, and more at conventions across the U.S. She is a published author, accomplished actor, and teaches directing for theater and improv in Denver.



Sarah Pessin, Ph.D., is Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy and serves as CJS Interfaith Chair and as DU's Director of Spiritual Life. This year, Sarah completed essays for the *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Philosophy* and the *Routledge Companion for Jewish Philosophy*. She continues to serve as a Senior Editor for the *Encyclopedia of Jewish Theology*, and launched a faculty antisemitism research group as part of her ongoing work developing campus-wide trainings for staff and student leaders.



Adam Rovner, Ph.D., is Professor of English and Jewish Literature and has served as Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver since 2019. Rovner was selected as a Lady Davis Fellow in the Department of English at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2015-2016). He has published academic work on literature and history in leading journals and scholarly volumes. He is the author of two acclaimed books, *In the Shadow of Zion* (NYU) and *The Jew Who Would Be King* (UC Press).

Where Education Matters

CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES FACULTY AND STAFF



Alison Schofield, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Judaic Studies, specializing in the Dead Sea Scrolls. She received her doctorate from the University of Notre Dame in Hebrew Bible, Judaism in Antiquity, and Dead Sea Scrolls. She earned her M.A. in Near Eastern Studies from Johns Hopkins University.



Jonathan Sciarcon, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of History and Judaic Studies and the current chair of the Department of History. Jonathan's monograph, *Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israelite Universelle's Girls' Schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895-1915* (SUNY), examines gendered education and its links to visions of an ideal modern society. Jonathan's current research focuses on environmental and financial history. He received the Provost Award for Teaching Excellence in 2022 and actively attends workshops on civil discourse and dialogue through the Institute for Citizens and Scholars.



Ingrid Weyher, M.A., is the lead content developer for the *Survival & Witness* platform and the Center's coordinator of teacher development programs in Holocaust education. She also manages the Center's strategic communications and public programs. Ingrid holds a master's degree in art history and history from the Freie Universität in Berlin. She is an alumna of Yad Vashem's Alan Cornell Faculty Seminar, the European Summer School of the Ravensbrück Memorial Museum, and Tel Aviv University's Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program.



“With great faculty, programs, and exciting opportunities, the Center puts our wonderful students front-and-center!”

– Dean Sahara Byrne, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Where Education Matters

50 YEARS OF THE CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES AT DU

- 1975** **DU announces plans to establish a Center for Judaic Studies under the directorship of Rabbi Stanley Wagner.** *“A Center for Judaic Studies at the University will offer expanded academic programs involving many disciplines [and] will include expanded library resources, internationally recognized scholars in residence, [...] annual public lecture series, workshops, and incentive scholarships.”* – DU press release, September 12, 1975
- 1976** **The Center for Judaic Studies (CJS) launches its program at DU in September** with course offerings in history, religious studies, philosophy, sociology, and Hebrew language.
- CJS establishes the Ira M. Beck Memorial Collection of Rocky Mountain Jewish History** in memory of Ira M. Beck, a prominent Denver businessman, under the direction of archivist Belle Marcus.
- 1977** **Dr. Jeanne Abrams serves as Director of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society and Curator of the Beck Archives.** Dr. Abrams established many longstanding programs of the RMJHS.
- 1983** **The Holocaust Awareness Institute inaugurated** to offer Holocaust-related programming. In November, HAI presents “An Evening with Elie Wiesel,” the first of several appearances in Denver by Wiesel.
- 1995** **Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society presents the first annual Heritage Award** to Dr. John C. Livingston.
- 1999** **Inauguration of the John C. Livingston Memorial Lecture in American Jewish History**, endowed in honor of the longtime DU professor of History. In 2024, upon the retirement of Dr. Jeanne Abrams, the lecture was renamed the Livingston & Abrams Lecture.
- Retirement of Dr. Stanley M. Wagner after 25 years as Director of the Center for Judaic Studies.** Between 1999 and 2003, Dr. Jeanne Abrams, Eugene Kay, and Dr. Nancy Reichman serve as interim directors of the Center for Judaic Studies.
- 2003** **Dr. David Shneer serves as Director of the Center for Judaic Studies.** A pathbreaking scholar and noted historian of Eastern European and Soviet Jewry, Shneer led the Center for five years.
- HAI’s Fred Marcus Memorial Holocaust Lecture** founded by Audrey Friedman Marcus in memory of her late husband, Jewish educator Fred Marcus. The lecture is renamed the Audrey Friedman and Fred Marcus Holocaust Lecture in 2022.



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- 2008** **Dr. Sarah Pessin serves as Director of the Center for Judaic Studies.** Dr. Pessin oversees the fundraising campaign, construction, and inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site on the DU campus, as well as convening the annual “Week of Jewish Philosophy” and “Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions” conferences. After eleven years at the helm of CJS, Dr. Pessin became the President of DU’s Faculty Senate in 2019, and later assumed the role of Director of Spiritual Life at DU.
- 2010** **Dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site on the University of Denver campus.** With the symbol of life (*chai*) at its core, the site is dedicated to learning and inter-cultural dialogue.
- 2018** **Inauguration of the Vinnik Evening of Jewish Culture**, established by Jonathan and Stephen Vinnik in memory of their parents, Denver physician Dr. Irwin E. Vinnik and Sandra Vinnik, passionate advocates for Jewish culture.
- 2019** **Dr. Adam Rovner becomes Director of the Center for Judaic Studies.**
- 2022** **Survival & Witness platform launched** to support Colorado’s new mandate for Holocaust and genocide education in public schools.
- 2024** **Dr. Joshua Furman appointed the first Jeanne Abrams Endowed Director of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society.** Dr. Jeanne Abrams retired after 42 years as RMJHS Director and Curator of the Beck Archives.
- Establishment of Yourtz Endowed Scholarship in Judaic Studies**
- Inauguration of RMJHS on the Road programs** with a visit to Leadville, Colorado
- 2025** **Launch of Dr. Helen Morris Jewish Life & Culture faculty grants for curriculum development and undergraduate award for excellence**
- Launch of Award for Excellence in Hebrew**
- First Israeli Cultures Initiative brings students to the Israeli-American Council annual conference.**
- 2026** **DU announces campaign to endow the first professor of Holocaust and Antisemitism Studies** with Governor Jared Polis under the Capitol rotunda.





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