

# YOUR AMERICAN DREAM

To The Teachers:

Two years ago, my wife, Lilly, and I established the Merage Foundation for the American Dream. We believe its mission is important to the nation and its citizens. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting expanded opportunities for immigrants. It hopes to inspire young immigrants to achieve their American Dream. It hopes to help promising immigrant leaders contribute to their communities and to the nation. It hopes to encourage Americans to understand and celebrate the contributions of immigrants to America.

The Foundation's initiatives include:

- The development of award-winning DVDs and educational materials (The American Experience) concerning the history of immigration and the lives of successful American immigrants for use in high schools throughout the nation.
- The provision of stipends and the creation of a Merage Fellows program for outstanding graduating immigrant students nominated by 21 universities throughout the country.
- The development of occasional papers and the convening of Forums concerning the impact of immigration on America and issues concerning immigration.

We are delighted that you want to use the DVDs and educational materials in your classrooms. Paraphrasing Ralph Waldo Emerson, the famous American author, the Merage Foundation hopes that the American Dream Experience will help students walk with their feet, work with their hands, speak their own minds and reach their own aspirations.

Paul Merage  
President

To The Teachers:

The Merage Foundation for the American Dream is pleased to send you DVDs and related educational materials for The American Dream Experience. Both describe in vivid terms the history of immigration to America and the lives and contributions of living American immigrants. Both reflect an effort by the Merage Foundation to create a library of DVDs and educational materials for high school teachers and principals throughout the U.S. Based on use of both in over 1200 classrooms last year, the Foundation believes that the American Dream Experience will inspire students—including immigrant students and students from immigrant families—to define and achieve their American Dreams.

We hope that teachers will incorporate the DVDs and educational materials in their lesson plans over a period of several weeks. We encourage teachers to invite local immigrant leaders to watch the DVDs and discuss their content with students. We urge teachers to involve all students, whether immigrants or not, in the planned activities related to the DVDs. Students, if they are not immigrants or children of immigrant families, are likely to be able to trace their roots back to immigrant grandparents, great-grandparents or great-great-grandparents. The Foundation welcomes teacher feedback concerning the impact of the American Dream Experience in the classroom.

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## THE AMERICAN DREAM EXPERIENCE

JACK ROSENTHAL:

From Palestine to Pulitzer Prize:  
A Courageous and Productive Journey

### SECURING THE MOST FROM THE AMERICAN DREAM EXPERIENCE

The Merage Foundation suggests that teachers consider the following approaches to enrich *The American Dream Experience* for students.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION:

*The American Dream Experience* has been created for use with tenth- and eleventh-grade students. High-school students are mature enough to grant thoughtful attention to the important themes explored in the DVDs. History, government, and civic classes provide the best settings in which to initiate *The American Dream Experience*. But teachers may want to carry out the program in other classes and in larger school assemblies or forums. What is most important, given the content of *The American Dream Experience*, is that the chosen settings include a relatively large number of immigrant and first-generation students.

### INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL LEADERS:

Students will benefit from the classroom participation of successful local government, business, and non-profit leaders who are immigrants. They should be invited to watch the DVDs and engage in classroom discussions. The guests should be asked to compare their experiences with the experiences of the individuals profiled in the DVDs. The Merage Foundation will gladly assist you in identifying local leaders who are immigrants if you need such assistance. Please call (949) 474-5882



Jack Rosenthal

for additional information.

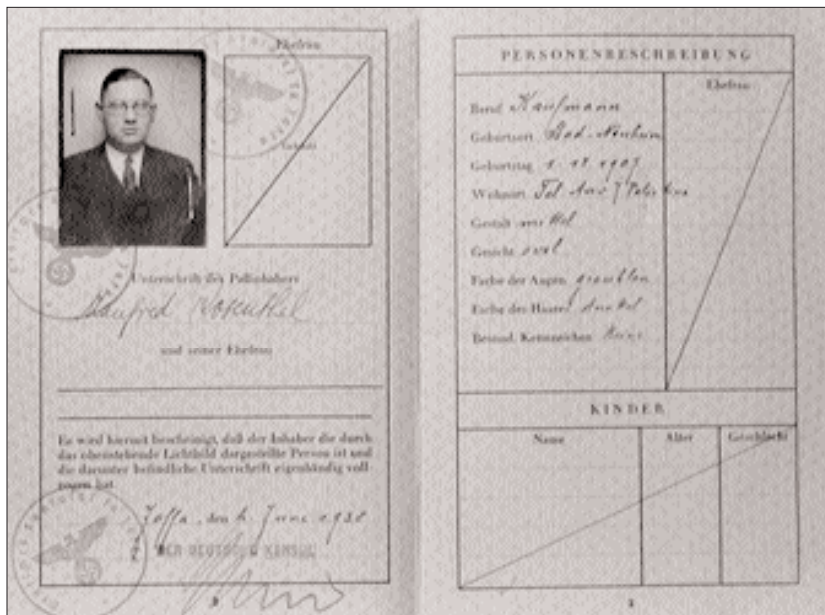
### INCREASING STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY IMMIGRANTS:

The DVDs are each different. The content of each DVD reflects three similar themes. The Foundation suggests that teachers organize their proposed lesson plans around these three themes. The themes are: "Leaving Behind Memories and Places," "Building a New Life in the United States," and "Achieving the American Dream."

### JACK ROSENTHAL: From Palestine to Pulitzer Prize

**Background:** *Jews and America—Prejudice, Discrimination, and Opportunity*

The Jews were among the early immigrants to America. They fought with valor in the American Revolution. They participated in the early development of the United States



Passport of Manfred Rosenthal

democracy and economy. President George Washington wrote a famous letter to Jewish leaders. It indicated that the United States would be a place where Jews and others could live without fear of intolerance.<sup>1</sup>

Well-educated and relatively affluent Jews from Germany migrated to the United States in the mid-19th century to build better lives for themselves and their families. Many quickly became successful merchants, bankers, and investors. Generally, they found it easy to accept the new nation's commitment to freedom, economic competition and opportunity. Many assimilated quickly into American society.

Russian Jews and Jews from Eastern Europe came to the United States in large numbers during the Industrial Revolution. They took the dangerous trip to the United States to escape frequent pogroms (the organized persecution of an ethnic group). In contrast to German Jews, most of the Russian and other Eastern European Jews who immigrated to the United States were poor and often uneducated. Many came through Ellis Island, a port of entry for millions of United States immigrants. They lived in older parts of larger cities, such as New York.

Relatively low numbers of Jewish immigrants came to the United States after the early part of the 20th century. World War I, combined with fear of communism and anti-immigrant bias, led to increasingly tough laws restricting legal immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia where most Jews lived. The Great Depression and World War II reduced Jewish immigration to a trickle. Although anti-Semitism towards European Jews has been recorded throughout history, the systematic persecution of German Jews escalated with Adolph Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Jews living in Germany and throughout Eastern Europe found their existence threatened by the rise of Nazism before and during World War II. However, Jews were precluded by law from immigrating in large numbers to many countries, including the United States. Over 6 million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust (1939 to 1945).

Immediately after World War II, the number of Jews—displaced persons—who came to the United States expanded by a relatively large amount. But, after just a few short years the totals diminished significantly because the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States led to a fear of immigrants and the enactment of restrictive immigration laws.

Over the past 35 years, United States laws have been amended to provide for increased immigration. As a result, more Jews were able to migrate from Israel and even some Arab nations. But, despite the desire of many Jews to leave the Soviet Union because of anti-Semitism and severe discrimination, Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union to the U.S. was limited by the

Soviet government until the late 1980s. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a significant increase in Jewish emigration from Russia and the once satellite nations during the early 1990s. Jewish immigration has diminished recently, in part due to the changes in laws that make it difficult to immigrate to the United States for economic reasons.

## THEME ONE: LEAVING BEHIND MEMORIES AND PLACES

Jack Rosenthal's father, a respected lawyer, faced discrimination and bullying from the Nazis in Germany. He decided to emigrate from Germany to Tel Aviv, Israel in 1933. Israel was then called Palestine. He left behind a good job, family, friends, and the Jewish community.

Jack's father met his mother, who was visiting Palestine from Lithuania. They fell in love and got married. Jack was born shortly thereafter. Fear of Arab terrorism led his mother to urge the family to move to the United States. An uncle from Oregon provided a required affidavit guaranteeing that the family would be able to cover all basic living costs. Subsequently, young Jack and his parents came by boat to the United States. They arrived in 1938. For a second time, Jack's father left behind a good job. The family also left behind friends and a cherished Jewish community. But, America seemed to offer safety, freedom and opportunity.

The boat trip was long. His mother was seasick. For Jack, a young three year-old child, the trip was tiring. When the boat entered the New York harbor and Jack saw the Statue of Liberty, he was scared by her appearance. Jack calls her "a giant, angry green woman."

### PLANNED ACTIVITY:

Jack's immigration to the United States resulted from experiences and decisions made by his father and mother. Ask the students to divide into small groups to discuss the DVD. Teachers should choose student discussion leaders for each group. During a 20-minute discussion period, each group should list the "good" and "bad" memories Jack and his family had of Germany and

#### Class Discussion Prompts:

Before teachers show the DVD and begin the planned activities, they should:

1. highlight the important events in Jack Rosenthal's life. Students should know that Jack Rosenthal is a Jewish immigrant from Palestine whose parents escaped the Holocaust. Students should understand that Jack Rosenthal overcame many problems facing immigrants while successfully pursuing his American Dream of becoming an outstanding journalist and contributing to America.
2. help students understand the meaning of several terms used by Jack Rosenthal in the DVD, including: *American Dream*, *anti-Semitism*, *becoming American*, *Americanization*, *melting pot*, *diversity*, *displaced persons*, *affidavit*, *public charge*, *McCarren-Walters Act*, *Nazis*, *Hitler*, and *Holocaust*.
3. ask students if they can define their American Dreams. If it is difficult for students to do so, teachers should ask students about their hopes concerning their education, jobs, family, and contributions to the community. Teachers should explain that each student's combined hopes constitute their American Dream. Teachers should ask students to pay particular attention to how Jack Rosenthal's American Dream helped him live a life of achievement. Teachers should indicate that American Dreams help provide direction.

Palestine. Each group should also briefly discuss and answer the following questions:

- Why did Jack's father leave Germany?
- Why did the family leave Tel Aviv?
- What were the hopes and dreams of the Rosenthal family when they made the decision to journey to the United States?

Each group should discuss their own or their family's journey to the United States and compare the reasons for their journey to the reasons for Jack's family's journey to the United States. The discussion leaders should be asked to summarize the groups' discussion to the class. The classroom discussion should result in an understanding of the similarities and differences between each of the students or their family's reasons for coming to the United States, and the reasons Jack's family immigrated to the United States. It also should increase student understanding of the different characteristics associated with each of their own or their family's journey to the United States and the journey of Jack's family to the United States (i.e., length of time, extent of difficulties, possible help from others, mode of travel, first impressions of the United States).



Jack and his parents, Manfred and Rachel Rosenthal

## THEME TWO: BUILDING A NEW LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Jack Rosenthal and his family had few resources when they arrived in the United States. After settling in Portland, Oregon, they lived in a small apartment owned by Jack's uncle. His father got a job as a bookkeeper. America was sometimes a scary and strange place to the Rosenthal family. For example, while they were still newcomers, they faced some frightening moments related to an FBI visit to their home. A neighbor mistakenly called the FBI thinking the Rosentals were German spies. The incident caused Jack Rosenthal, even at an early age, to understand how fear and prejudice sometimes leads to intolerance.

Jack Rosenthal's family was able to save enough money to bring an uncle who survived Dachau—a notorious Nazi concentration camp—to Oregon.

Jack and his family wanted to become Americans. His mother and father took "Americanization" classes from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Jack's parents never wanted to talk about their bad memories of Germany, Lithuania and Palestine.

Jack and his parents found it difficult to speak and understand English. Jack pushed himself to learn the language. Because they were poor, neither he nor his family could afford to buy books. He brought home books from the library to read. He read the daily newspaper, *The Oregonian*, and became fluent in English. Indeed, as a youngster, he helped other immigrants learn English.

Some of the students will not be immigrants or from immigrant parents. These students should be involved in each planned activity. Their involvement will be meaningful to them and to other students. For each planned activity, teachers should ask students to assume the role of an immigrant. They could be asked to play the role of Chinese or Vietnamese immigrants fleeing political persecution, Mexican immigrants seeking a better life in the United States, and Jewish immigrants fleeing the Nazis.

Jack's mother and father became proud American citizens. They worked hard at building a better life for Jack and themselves in the United States.

Jack's American Dream, even as a small child, was to become a journalist. He began as a young reporter at *The Oregonian*. He talks about his pride and his family's pride at having a byline (a signed article) in the paper. He indicates that talking and writing about sports became a way to show you were an American. Sports provided a common language.

Jack worked hard and did well at school. After he graduated, he wanted to go to Harvard University—one of America's best schools. His mother did not understand why Jack couldn't go to a less-expensive school in Oregon. A wonderful man—a successful immigrant—offered to "guarantee" Jack's costs to attend Harvard. He convinced Jack's mother that Harvard was important to Jack's ability to achieve his American Dream.

Jack's reaction to the differences between growing up in Portland and going to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts are insightful. To Jack, Portland was American. Everyone in Portland, he thought, became part of the "melting pot." While a youngster in Portland, he did not realize that an individual's name or place of residence sometimes indicated their ethnic background or religion. He thought Portland was how all of America was. Cambridge, on the other hand, was in Jack's terms, an "un-melted" city. It included different ethnic communities. Often, people were defined by their last names, their ethnicity, their religion and their neighborhoods.

After Jack graduated from Harvard, he went back to *The Oregonian* as a newspaper writer. Because of the quality of his work and his ideas, he was asked to work with Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the brother of President John Kennedy, at the United States Department of Justice. Subsequently, he became one of the nation's top journalists and editor of the editorial page of *The New York Times*.

### PLANNED ACTIVITY:

Jack Rosenthal defined his American Dream at an early age. He worked hard to convert his dream into a reality. His American Dream served as a compass. It helped give his life direction. He was aided by the advice and support of his parents and friends. As he grew up, he was helped by people who believed in him.

Jack was able to surmount his feelings associated with "standing out" in the United States. He overcame language problems, as well as other problems faced by many immigrants. Jack's ability to build a new life in and contribute to the United States reflects his continued willingness to take advantage of the educational and job opportunities open to him.

Teachers should ask students to develop a diary briefly describing their, or if they are second generation, their parents' key experiences after they came to the United States.<sup>2</sup>

At minimum, the diary should describe their or their parents' specific categories of experiences related to:

- learning English (Prompt: *Have they and their parents learned English? Was learning English difficult for them? For their parents? When and how did they*



1966 photo of Jack Rosenthal and his staff at the Department of Justice, joined by Attorney General Nicolas de B. Katzenbach, being awarded the Ruder & Finn's Press Office in the Federal Government by vote of the Washington Press Corps.

learn English?)

- finding a job (Prompt: *Do they work? When and how did they find their first job? Was it difficult? Do they like their job? Did their parents find it difficult to find a job when they came to the United States? Why?*)
- becoming Americanized (Prompt: *What does becoming Americanized mean? Is it important to become Americanized? Have they become Americanized?*)
- defining their American Dream (Prompt: *Do they and their parents have an American Dream? When and how was their own and their parents' dream defined? What role has their and their parents' American Dream played in their lives?*)

Students should be encouraged to compare their and their parents' experiences and American Dreams to Jack's experiences and his American Dream. Students should be asked to present the highlights of their diaries before the class.

## THEME THREE: ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Jack Rosenthal's travels from Palestine to the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, honoring his thoughtful, profound editorials written for *The New York Times*, present an amazing story of courage, conviction, commitment and intelligence. Jack's personal success and his contributions to the United States have been significant. While working for Attorney General Robert Kennedy, he helped develop the laws that opened the door to the United States for many immigrants. During Jack's long tenure as an outstanding journalist and editor of the editorial page of *The New York Times*, his articles and editorials helped the United States respond to its deep-seated social welfare, environmental, and economic problems. In 1982, Jack Rosenthal won the Pulitzer Prize for

Teachers should conclude the planned activities by, once again, engaging students in a discussion concerning their American Dreams. If some students still find it difficult to participate in the discussion, teachers should once again ask them to talk about their education, job and family hopes as well as their future desires to contribute to the community. Teachers should foster a discussion concerning student role models. The discussion should focus on the positive characteristics that Jack Rosenthal, immigrant leaders in their community, and their parents have that make them good role models (e.g., courage, ability to overcome problems, willingness to work hard to achieve goals, desire to contribute to their communities and the nation, personal achievements).

Editorial Writing. As the president of The New York Times Company Foundation,<sup>3</sup> Jack still lives and pursues his American Dream. His life continues to be one of accomplishment. He continues to give back to America.

## PLANNED ACTIVITY:

Teachers should ask groups of three or four students to interview two or three immigrant leaders who live in their community and who are from their or their parents' country of origin.<sup>2</sup> The students should ask the leaders about their present leadership roles and how they believe they contribute to their community. They should ask the leaders if they defined an American Dream for themselves when they first came to the United States and if they believe they have achieved or are on their way to achieving their American Dream. Finally, they should ask the leaders to describe how they overcame problems they faced as immigrants to America and took advantage of the opportunities offered by America.

Students should summarize their interviews in a brief paper and present the summary to the class. The presentations should be used to stimulate a discussion concerning students' American Dreams, as well as those of Jack Rosenthal, their parents and family members, and the leaders they interviewed. Students should discuss how immigrants who pursue and achieve their American Dreams increase their ability to build better lives for themselves and contribute to their community.

## RESOURCES

### Print

*Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools* by Laurie Olsen (New Press, 1998)

*Refugees (The Changing Face of North America)* by Clarissa Aykroyd (Mason Crest Publishers, 2004)

*The New Americans* by Michael Barone (Regnery, 2001)

*Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to Be American* by Tamar Jacoby (Basic Books, 2004)

*Bound for America: The Story of the European Immigrants (Great Journeys)* by Milton Meltzer (Benchmark Books, 2001)

*Primary Sources: Immigrants in America* by James D. Torr (Greenhaven Press, 2002)

*A History of the Holocaust (Single Title Social Studies)* by Yehuda Bauer and Nili Keren (Franklin Watts, 2002)

### Internet

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
[www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

The Holocaust History Project  
[www.holocaust-history.org](http://www.holocaust-history.org)

The Jewish History Sourcebook  
[www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishbook.html)

Jewish Virtual Library  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

### FOOTNOTES and SOURCES CITED

1. "To Bigotry No Sanction, to Persecution No Assistance. George Washington's Letter to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island (1790)." Jewish Virtual Library.  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/bigotry.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/bigotry.html)
2. If the teachers are showing the DVDs profiling individual immigrant leaders as part of a coordinated lesson plan, students should only prepare one diary and one set of interviews (see *scheduling the DVDs*, Page 2).
3. The New York Times Company Foundation conducts a range of philanthropic activities in New York, Boston, and in other communities across the United States. Their efforts include: grants in the fields of journalism, education, culture, environment and service; The New York Times College Scholarship Program; and The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund.