

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**Museum Launches Nationwide Search for Baseball Lovers' Personal Memorabilia
for *Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Jews in America*,
Major exhibition at the National Museum of American Jewish History**

The National Museum of American Jewish History invites fans of all ages and backgrounds to submit artifacts, photos, and memorabilia that illustrate their passion for baseball. This initiative will support the development of a major exhibition currently being organized by the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) entitled ***Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Jews in America***. The exhibition is scheduled to open in Philadelphia in March of 2014 before embarking on a national tour.

Chasing Dreams will be the first major exhibition to weave together the history of American sport, leisure, and national identity with the story of Jewish immigration and integration into American life. The exhibition will provide a context for an examination of how Jews sought to navigate American culture and how they addressed the challenges of being members of a religious and ethnic minority community in the United States. Through this examination, the exhibition will also tell the stories of other minority groups—including African-Americans, Latinos, and Italian and Japanese immigrants—for whom baseball provided an important sense of belonging and pride. The exhibition will celebrate well-known Jewish heroes such as Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax, as well as Jackie Robinson and Joe DiMaggio, in addition to all

those in the extended baseball family—mascots, vendors and ushers, interns, league owners, grounds crew, clubbies, investors and sponsors. And especially fans.

To make it possible for NMAJH to tell compelling stories through original artifacts of how baseball has affected generations of fans and communities, the Museum is launching a public collecting initiative. People around the nation, and the world, are invited to participate in the development of this pioneering exhibition through a tumblr site, ***chasingdreamsbaseball.tumblr.com***, where they can post images of their memorabilia and share them with the Museum's curatorial staff as well as fellow baseball aficionados. Visitors to the site will be able to comment on each other's posts and to communicate with the Museum's exhibition development team.

"To make *Chasing Dreams* a truly national effort that depicts why baseball has been such a compelling and meaningful facet of our national culture for well over a century, we are reaching out to baseball fans of all stripes and inviting them to share their cherished mementos and photographs," says Josh Perelman, PhD, Chief Curator and Director of Exhibitions and Collections for NMAJH. "The items that everyday people have chosen to keep and the stories that accompany them will help us tell a rich story about how Jews and other American minority communities have interfaced with the all-American game."

The museum is asking people to share items such as uniforms, signed baseball memorabilia, bobble heads and other giveaways; stickball, whiffle, and T-ball equipment; handwritten scorecards; signed tickets, balls, baseball cards, and other memorabilia (preferably with authentication or photo of the object being signed); baseball cards of personal significance; Little League trophies and championship bats; armed-forces or war-related baseball memorabilia (example: World War II V-mail commenting on baseball back home). Items specific to the Jewish experience in baseball might include any of the above related to Jewish players; baseball-themed bar- and bat-mitzvah memorabilia; custom Little League jerseys sponsored by Jewish businesses; and Jewish summer camp baseball artifacts and relics (t-shirts, signs with baseball calls in Hebrew). **People can post their items and learn more about the project at *chasingdreamsbaseball.tumblr.com*.**

"You don't have to be Jewish to love baseball, but maybe it helps," noted John Thorn, official historian of Major League Baseball and the lead consultant on *Chasing Dreams*. "*Chasing*

Dreams is about the Jewish experience in baseball, on the field and off, but it is especially about what this great game has meant to fans. We encourage them to now share their cherished mementoes and memories."

When it opens in March 2014, *Chasing Dreams* will explore the history of Jewish immigration and integration through dynamic stories of how baseball became what it is today, deepen our national appreciation for the role baseball has played in furthering diversity and equality, and illustrate the significance of family and the crucial role intergenerational storytelling plays in the transmission of values and traditions—in baseball, in Judaism, and in American life—even as they change over time. It will also provide families and communities of all backgrounds with a welcoming venue in which to consider and discuss issues of heritage, culture, and overcoming adversity. Finally, it will illustrate how these themes have evolved since baseball's origins in the 19th century, and how they resonate and/or are reinterpreted amongst 21st century Jewish players and fans.

"Our goal is to tell this story as it has not been told before," says Perelman. "There are innumerable stories of immigrants who discovered America through baseball, and there is something about that game that holds an undeniable appeal to Jews. It does not matter if the players were few in number as in the days of Hank Greenberg or Sandy Koufax—or more populous, as in today's game. The strategy, the trivia, the literature, the art, the memorabilia—all seem to hold a special place in the lives of American Jews."

Visitors to the exhibition will explore stories of fans, as well as the significant, game-changing roles of such people as owner Barney Dreyfuss (who created the World Series), Moe Berg (whose secret work as an OSS agent coincided with his career as a player), Sy Berger (father of the modern baseball card), Hal Richman (inventor of Strat-O-Matic baseball), Daniel Okrent (co-inventor of Rotisserie "fantasy" baseball), Albert Von Tilzer (who composed "Take Me out to the Ballgame"), Seymour Siwoff (head of the Elias Sports Bureau), Marvin Miller (whose labor union changed the business of baseball), Arnold Rothstein and Abe Attell (notorious for fixing the 1919 World Series), and former MLBers like Al Rosen, Ken Holtzman, Mike Epstein, and Shawn Green onto today's Kevin Youkilis, Ryan Braun, and Ian Kinsler.

Chasing Dreams has received the blessing of MLB Commissioner Allan "Bud" Selig. The full project team *Chasing Dreams* Project Team, in addition to Messrs. Selig, Thorn, Okrent and

Perelman, includes Martin Abramowitz (founding president of Jewish Major Leaguers, Inc.), Rabbi Rebecca Alpert (author and professor of religion at Temple University), Adrian Burgos, Jr., (author and director of graduate studies and professor of history at the University of Illinois), Jeffrey S. Gurock (author and past-chair of the Academic Council of American Jewish Historical Society), Jane Leavy (journalist and Sandy Koufax biographer), Peter Levine (author and sports historian), Bill Ressler (Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication at Ithaca College), Steven A. Reiss (author and sports historian), Justine Siegal (barrier-breaking pitcher, coach and founder of the non-profit organization, Baseball for All), Scott Simon (journalist and host of NPR's Weekend Edition), Ivy Weingram (NMAJH associate curator) and Beth Wenger (Director of the University of Pennsylvania's History Department and Jewish Studies program.”

Following its run in Philadelphia, the exhibition will make a national tour to major institutions and also circulate in a smaller, modular version without artifacts to ballparks and smaller venues.

The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the 350-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all heritages to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.