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American Jewish History Museum Explores '30s Education Links Among Blacks, Jews

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By *Cherri Gregg*
 PHILADELPHIA (CBS) — The [National Museum of American Jewish History](#) has opened a new exhibition that explores the little-known relationship between Jews and historically Black colleges during the 1930s.

The exhibit opened today — Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s actual birthday — to honor his legacy.

(Prof. Ernst Borinski, a Jewish refugee from Germany, teaching in the social science lab of Tougaloo College, ca. 1960. Photo courtesy of Miss. Dept. of Archives and History)

Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugees and Scholars at Black Colleges tells the story of how Jewish professors exiled from Nazi Germany found a home and an audience at historically black colleges and universities in the United States.

"In our memory, when we think about the relationship between Blacks and Jews, our minds tend to go straight to the Civil Rights movement after the war," says Josh Perelman, chief curator of the museum on Independence Mall. "What this exhibition does is help push this history back. And even though the relationship is much longer than even the 20th century, it illuminates how the bonds between these communities were forged over time."

Perelman says Jewish professors and African-American students at historically black colleges and universities had a co-mentoring relationship that led to special collaborations between the two communities at a tumultuous time in their joint histories.

One example is the relationship between Jewish professor Viktor Lowenfeld and renowned African-American painter John Biggers.

"They met at Hampton Institute and together kind of formed this bond through their art that lasted a lifetime," says Perelman, noting that examples of their work are part of the exhibit. "Another example is Donald and Lore Rasmussen, who taught in Alabama and who, building on their own experiences and their own search for freedom, became very involved in the formal Civil Rights movement and became activists in their own right."

Hear the full interview in this CBS Philly podcast (runs 5:51)...

ond Swastika and Jim Crow'
 Cherri Gregg / Josh Perelman 00:00 [Download](#)

Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow includes more than 120 artifacts and includes videos and other interactive media. It runs through June of this year and will include numerous programs, including a collaboration with the [African American Museum in Philadelphia](#).

And, to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, the museum — at Fifth and Market Streets in center city Philadelphia — will be free and open to the public on the MLK national holiday, January 21st.

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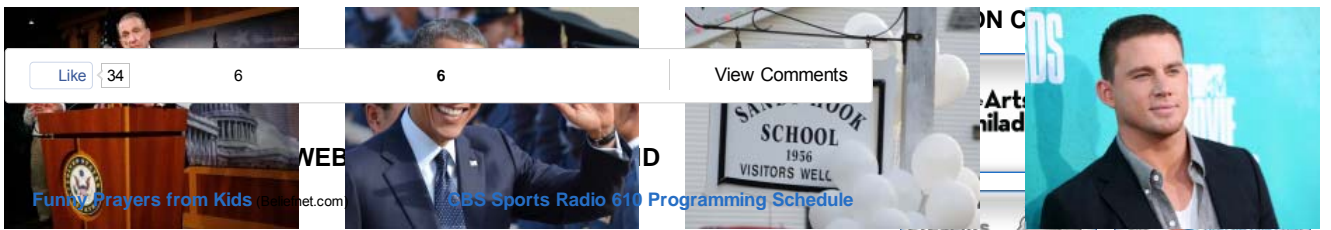
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