

Final Paper

As the semester comes to a close I reflect on the wide variety of texts we have read detailing the lives and hardships of Jewish Immigrants in the United States. Despite all the hardships and struggles Jewish immigrants and their ancestors have gone through in America they were still able to benefit their fellow Americans and their country in a multitude of ways. One of the texts we went through earlier in the semester is called “BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910” and it perfectly highlights how Jewish immigrants were able to help their fellow Americans while dealing with an abundance of hardships of their own. The author of this text was Miriam Frank who was a Jewish author and wrote this piece in order to inform about the great Triangle Fire along with its causes and effects. The main reason why I believe that this text shows how Jewish immigrants were able to benefit their fellow Americans and country is because in the text it detailed the unification of Jewish immigrant workers to get better working conditions for both themselves and their fellow American workers. Another article that shows how Jewish immigrants as well as their own ancestors benefitted America and its people is called “Jews in Early America”. Although we did not share this text in class I find it equally captivating and just as interesting as the aforementioned article we did read for class. The author of this article is Kate Kleiman and she is a Jewish author who writes for toursynagogue.org. Kleiman’s main purpose for writing this article in 2008 was to showcase the remarkability of early American Jews and all the ways they have helped this country. The reason I chose this article was because it supported my argument that Jewish immigrants helped their fellow Americans and their fellow country prosper by detailing the remarkable achievements of many early American Jews as well as their various feats that helped America. As amazing as that all sounds, first let’s talk more about what both these texts are really about and why I chose them.

Based on my understanding of both these texts you will soon see why I chose to support my argument using these specific sources. The first article I mentioned is called “BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910” and I chose it for a plethora of reasons. The main reason being it details exactly how Jewish immigrants helped their fellow Americans and progressed American society. For example in the text Miriam Frank states “In late December the union and the employers proposed a settlement. Though some terms were good – a shorter work week, employers paying for needles and power, shop-based negotiations for wage rates, reinstatement of the strikers...”. The previously mentioned quote explains the result of Jewish immigrants unionizing and striking for better working conditions for both themselves and their fellow Americans. The aforementioned quote explains why I chose this text to support my argument by showing how Jewish immigrants in the 20th century were able to bring better working conditions for the American working class. Another example in the text is shown when Frank states “Many of the biggest companies reached settlements individually and their workers returned to their jobs. On February 15, 1910, the strike was called off, with 300 shops agreeing to major terms, including the union shop.” The previous quote explains the further benefits and results of Jewish immigrant workers unionizing and protesting. This quote also explains why I chose this text because it again shows how Jewish immigrants benefited their fellow Americans. Moving on, my understanding of the second article I chose called “Jews in Early America” will also explain why I chose it. This article is mostly comprised of mini bios of notable early Jewish Americans and how their accomplishments benefited the American people. For example, one of the bios discusses the Jewish soldier Abraham Cohn (1832-1897) who fought for the union in the Revolutionary War and even won the Congressional Medal of Honor

for valor above and beyond the call of duty at the Battle of the Wilderness and the Battle of the Crater in 1864. Need I say more? This Jewish soldier literally fought for this country and through his sacrifices the American people still to this day enjoy the freedoms people like Abraham Cohn helped bestow upon us. Another notable early Jewish immigrant who benefited their fellow Americans was Solomon Bush (1753-1795). Solomon Bush was, and I quote, "...the highest-ranking Jewish officer in the Continental Army, a distinguished public servant, and a leader of the Masons in Pennsylvania." The previous quote is pretty self explanatory but unless you missed it Solomon Bush was a pretty amazing person who dedicated his life to the benefit of the American people. I chose this second article because I believed that my understanding of it would help prove my thesis that Jewish immigrants helped benefit the American people as well as this country but as you can see it certainly went above and beyond that. Moving on, although both these texts may talk about different things there are certainly still many ways that they are related to each other.

The text "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" and the text "Jews in Early America" are related to each other in many ways. One way both texts are related to each other is the fact that both texts talk about the struggles that Jewish immigrants faced when they immigrated to America. For example in "Jews in Early America" it states that "Early American Jews...worried about their children and worked to earn a living, just like other colonists." The previous quote highlights just a few of the struggles that Jewish immigrants faced in America. This quote shows how this text is related to "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" by talking about one of the common struggles Jewish immigrants faced in America which the first text also talks about. Similarly in "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" it states that "Their meager

wages contributed to their family's sustenance in immigrant neighborhoods where jobs were seasonal, poorly paid, and hard to come by even when times were good." The aforementioned quote is detailing the struggles of working class Jewish immigrants in America as well as their motivation for continuing to go through the hardships that they did. The previous quote shows how the text "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" relates to the text "Jews in Early America" by showing how both texts talk about the struggles of Jewish immigrants in America. Furthermore, another way both texts are related to each other is through the inclusion of information that showed how much Jewish immigrants helped the American people as well as America as a country. For example, in "Jews in Early America" the author Kate Kleiman talks about people like Solomon Bush and Abraham Cohn who I talked about previously. In the other text it states how Jewish immigrant workers were able to get better working conditions for themselves and other American workers. As you can see both texts are related to each other because they both talk about how much Jewish immigrants helped the American people as well as America as a country.

Something interesting I noticed about both of these texts is how much they relate to the things we discuss during class. For example, I remember earlier in the semester when Professor Elhanan was talking about antisemitism and racist stereotypes that Jewish people faced in America. For example, one of the racist stereotypes that we discussed was about how Jewish people were conspiring to hurt America from the inside and harm its people. I find this incredibly ironic because based on the two articles I was discussing throughout my paper you can see that Jewish immigrants contributed an enormous amount to both this country and the wellness and freedoms of its people. In fact, Jewish immigrants have done the opposite of hurting America if you look at the historical facts and the previous two texts I've been talking

about. Another issue we raised in Professor Elhanan's class was the various contributions Jewish immigrants made to American literature and theater. In addition, we talked about a Broadway play that originated from a Jewish story as well as various poems from Jewish laureates. Before having read the texts "Jews in Early America" and "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" I would have thought that art and literature were the places that Jewish immigrants had the most influence when in actuality Jewish immigrants have contributed to multiple aspects of American life and society. I'm glad to have learned so much about how Jewish immigrants contributed to our country as well as their history as immigrants.

In conclusion, it was really fascinating to read, analyze, and understand "BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910" as well as "Jews in Early America". It was interesting to see how both texts related to each other and the things we've been discussing in class all semester. It was even fun reflecting on why I chose to use these sources in the first place. I chose them because I knew they strongly supported my thesis and it was interesting and fun to read and write about. I hope you felt the same way.

Bibliography

1. Frank, Miriam. BEFORE TRIANGLE: THE UPRISING OF THE 20,000, 1909-1910.
2. Kleiman, Kate. "Jews in Early America." Touro 2.5 Joomla, 8 Jan. 2008,
<https://www.tourosynagogue.org/history-learning/jews-in-colonies>.