



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF  
AMERICAN JEWISH  
HISTORY

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**The National Museum of American Jewish History Underscores the Values on Which this Nation was Founded with New Signage Quoting George Washington’s Promise of Religious Liberty and Freedom for All**



PHILADELPHIA—The **National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH)** has installed new building signage asserting George Washington’s promise of religious liberty to the people of the United States. Quoting Washington’s iconic letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island in 1790, the large-scale banner reads, **“Happily the Government of the United States ... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”** The

Museum—a safe, open space for all—displays this text as a timely reminder of the ideals of inclusiveness on which this nation was founded.

Facing Independence Mall in the heart of historic Philadelphia, the Museum's signage refers to one of the most significant documents in American history. George Washington's letter, currently on view at NMAJH, was composed in August 1790 in response to a letter from the Jewish community of Newport. In it, Washington affirmed rights denied to Jews for millennia and underscored the nation's commitment to respecting religious liberty and equality for people of all faiths. Washington described his vision of a country in which "every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

"George Washington's call for religious pluralism is especially powerful today, given the rise in expressions of bigotry and exclusion in recent months," states Ivy Barsky, NMAJH's CEO & Gwen Goodman Director. "Just as Washington fervently promised to preserve this nation's acceptance of all people, the National Museum of American Jewish History remains committed as ever to our mission of inspiring a greater appreciation for the diversity of the American experience and the invaluable contributions to this country by immigrants."

The public can explore George Washington's original 1790 letter at the Museum thanks to a generous long-term loan from the Morris Morgenstern Foundation, or online at [religiousfreedom.nmajh.org](http://religiousfreedom.nmajh.org).

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#### About the National Museum of American Jewish History

The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the more than 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds 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.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. NMAJH is closed most Mondays, including some federal holidays and some Jewish holidays. Museum admission is \$12.00 for adults, \$11.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID. For the run of *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*, September 16, 2016 - January 16, 2017, the Museum will stay open until 8 pm on Wednesday evenings, except on December 28. The Museum is open and free of charge on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 16, 2017 and Presidents Day, February 20, 2017. Connect with the Museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Pinterest](#). For more information, visit [NMAJH.org](http://NMAJH.org) or call 215.923.3811.