

Roundtable on Regionalism: The Significance of Place in American Jewish Life

“For as Geography without History seemeth a carkasse without motion so History without Geography wandereth as a Vagrant without a certaine habitation.”

—Captain John Smith, 1627

The Roundtable on Regionalism will explore the usefulness of the concept of *regions* for American Jewish history. What do we gain, for example, by comparing religious and cultural groups in the South with their counterparts in the North, or in the Mid-West or Southwest? Why do some regions develop strong identities and others do not? How did the South earn its reputation as the “Bible Belt” of America? With Wal-Marts and McDonalds everywhere, is local distinctiveness fading? Do characteristic features of various communities depend more on *where* they are, or *what size* they are?

Panelists:

Deborah Dash Moore: Newly appointed director of the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, Moore brings to the job more than two decades of experience creating and directing the Jewish Studies program at Vassar College. Author and editor of nine books, she specializes in 20th-century American Jewish history. Her first work, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews*, explores how the children of immigrants created an ethnic world that blended elements of Jewish and American culture into a dynamic urban society. *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* follows the post-World War II migration of Jews to sunny south Florida and California. Moore’s other publications include *B’nai B’rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, the two-volume *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, which she edited with Paula Hyman, and *Cityscapes: A History of New York in Images*, co-authored with Howard Rock. Her recent prize-winning study, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Harvard University Press, 2004), examines the impact of WWII military service on American Jewish men.

John Shelton Reed: William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor Emeritus of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Reed helped to start the university's Center for the Study of the American South. Founding co-editor of the quarterly *Southern Cultures* and spokesman for the endurance of southern regionalism, he has written or edited over a dozen books, including: *Minding the South* (2003), *1001 Things Everyone Should Know About the South*, with D. V. Reed (1996), *Kicking Back: Further Dispatches from the South* (1995), *Surveying the South: Studies in Regional Sociology*, (1993), *"My Tears Spoiled My Aim" and Other Reflections on Southern Culture* (1993), *Whistling Dixie: Dispatches from the South* (1990), *Southern Folk, Plain and Fancy: Native White Social Types* (1986), *Southerners: The Social Psychology of Sectionalism* (1983), *One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture* (1982), *Regionalism and the South: Selected Papers*

of *Rupert Vance*, edited and with an introduction by J. S. Reed and D. J. Singal (1982), *Perspectives on the American South: An Annual Review of Society, Politics and Culture*, edited with M. Black (Vol. 1, 1981, and Vol. 2, 1983), and *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (1972).

Theodore Rosengarten: A native of Brooklyn, New York, Rosengarten is a writer and community activist who teaches courses on the history of the Holocaust at the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina. With his wife Dale, he co-edited *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, the book-length catalogue of the museum exhibition by the same name. Rosengarten holds a B.A. in American Studies from Amherst College and a Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization from Harvard University. Author of *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*, winner of the National Book Award for contemporary affairs, and *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter*, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for best biography, Rosengarten was named a MacArthur Fellow in 1989.

George Sanchez: George Sanchez is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Southern California and directs USC's Program in American Studies and Ethnicity. Author of *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1993), he co-edited the book series, *American Crossroads: New Works in Ethnic Studies* for the University of California Press. He is currently working on a historical study of the ethnic interaction of Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, African Americans, and Jews in the Boyle Heights area of East Los Angeles, California, in the twentieth century.

Moderator:

William R. Ferris: Associate Director of the Center for the Study of the American South and Joel R. Williamson Distinguished Professor of History, Ferris is the author of more than 100 publications in the fields of folklore, American literature, fiction, and photography. He also has produced 16 documentary films about art, music, and religion in the South. He was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi (1979–97), and, in 1989, he co-edited the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. From 1997 to 2001, Ferris served as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.