

Save All Ethiopian Jews records, 1979-2007

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Save All Ethiopian Jews (Organization)
Title	Save All Ethiopian Jews records
Dates	1979-2007 (inclusive) 1979 2007
Quantity	5.00 cubic feet (7 boxes and 6 oversize vertical files)
Collection Number	4532 (Accession No. 4532-001)
Summary	Correspondence, financial records, client files, contracts, membership records, legal documents, and other records of Save All Ethiopian Jews, a human rights organization in Western Washington that worked covertly to expedite the immigration of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Access to portions of the collection is restricted. Contact University of Washington Libraries Special Collections for details.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

Save All Ethiopian Jews (SAEJ) was established in Mercer Island, Washington, in 1983 to assist in the immigration and resettlement of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. The organization was the brainchild of Sidney Weiner, a former Boeing engineer, and his nephew-in-law Eli Halpern, an attorney in Olympia, Washington. Eli Halpern's brother, Bill Halpern, had died in Kenya under mysterious circumstances in 1982 while working to help Ethiopian Jews. Sidney Weiner and Eli Halpern decided to memorialize Bill Halpern's efforts by forming a local organization dedicated to the rescue and resettlement of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle and several other Jewish service organizations, SAEJ was run completely by volunteers. Along with Sidney Weiner, his wife Margaret, and Eli Halpern, the founding members of SAEJ included Sol Goldberg and Samantha Ripley, who were working independently to raise awareness of and funding for Ethiopian Jews in local Jewish congregations.

At the time that SAEJ was founded, there were an estimated 30,000 Jews in Ethiopia, most of them living in the rural province of Gondar. Scorned as "falashas" (a pejorative term that means "strangers" in Amharic), Ethiopian Jews faced discrimination, poverty, religious oppression, and starvation. These conditions were exacerbated by widespread famine in Ethiopia throughout the 1980s, the repressive

policies of the Mengistu regime, and the ongoing war with Eritrea. To escape such conditions, many Ethiopian Jews traveled by foot to refugee camps on the Sudanese border. In late 1985, the Israeli government, which had no official diplomatic relations with Ethiopia at the time, airlifted 9,500 Ethiopian Jews from Sudan in a rescue dubbed Operation Moses. The rescue was suspended after news of the secret evacuation effort broke in the international media, and Israel did not actively pursue further large-scale evacuations of Ethiopian Jews until the Operation Solomon airlift of 1991.

Along with several other North American organizations, such as the American Association for Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ), the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ), and the Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews (CAEJ), SAEJ worked to fill the void left by Israel's official non-participation in repatriating Ethiopian Jews. The group first attempted to secure passports for Ethiopian Jews by "adopting" Jewish children in Ethiopia. When this strategy became unfeasible, Halpern and Weiner devised a covert program in which Ethiopian adults received "work contracts" from Washington employers, and children and teenagers received "scholarships" to Washington grade schools and colleges. Most of the schools were fictitious, and the supposed employers participating in the "contract" arrangements had only the vaguest notion of their role in assisting SAEJ's efforts. The falsified documents enabled Ethiopians to receive passports and leave the country. Once they reached the United States, they were immediately flown to Israel and entered absorption centers before resettling in their new country. Until late 1988, most of the documents were prepared by Eli Halpern and the employees of his law firm in Olympia. From 1985 to 1990, SAEJ worked in quiet cooperation with Israeli officials through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which reimbursed SAEJ members for travel and operating expenses.

SAEJ's model for rescuing Ethiopian Jews proved so successful that it was later adopted by the other North American organizations working on behalf of Ethiopian Jews. In 1989, SAEJ moved into an office in the Jewish Federation building in downtown Seattle, where its members continued to prepare, process, and track immigration documents not only for SAEJ but also for AAEJ, NACOEJ, and CAEJ for the next two and a half years. Because of the covert nature of their programs, SAEJ did not publicize its efforts, nor did it actively solicit donations outside local Jewish congregations.

In May 1991, the Israeli government airlifted approximately 14,325 Ethiopian Jews from Ethiopia to Israel in Operation Solomon, bringing the vast majority of the remaining Ethiopian Jews to Israel. After this monumental event, SAEJ members felt that their assistance with immigration efforts was no longer necessary and officially dissolved the organization on March 23, 1992. The remaining SAEJ funds were used to establish the SAEJ/Bill Halpern Ethiopian Scholarship Endowment Fund, which awards college grants to Ethiopian youths now resettled in Israel. The fund is jointly managed at present by the Jewish Federation of Seattle and the Ethiopian Scholarship Fund Committee, which includes Sidney Weiner, Eli Halpern, and other original SAEJ members.

Content Description

The Save All Ethiopian Jews (SAEJ) records document the organization's activities on behalf of Ethiopian Jews before, during, and after their covert immigration to Israel. The materials offer insight into SAEJ's administrative structure and organizational history as well as the development and maintenance of the group's programs to assist Ethiopian Jews, particularly the "work contract" and "scholarship" programs.

The records include the organization's articles of incorporation and by-laws, financial records, fundraising materials, membership rosters, notes of individual SAEJ members, photographic prints and negatives of Ethiopian Jews, client files, and document preparation files. Minutes of SAEJ meetings and other administrative records are spotty and incomplete. In order to educate themselves

about the history, culture, and socioeconomic status of Ethiopian Jews, SAEJ members collected a substantial body of clippings, pamphlets, reports, and other materials on Ethiopian Jews in Ethiopia and Israel. There is also material, mainly correspondence, documenting SAEJ's collaborations and communications with other organizations dedicated to assisting Ethiopian Jews. Major correspondents include: Sidney Weiner, Eli Halpern, Zimna Berhani, Charles Kaplan, Margaret Weiner, HIAS, NACOEJ, AAEJ, CAEJ, the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Other Descriptive Information

Forms part of the Washington State Jewish Archives.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Literary rights have been transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Preferred Citation

[Title of item], [date of item if known], [box/folder number], Save All Ethiopian Jews Records, Accession No. 4532-001, University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged into 3 series:

- Administrative files, 1983-1992, 2005
- Program files, 1979-2001
- Background information files, 1982-1996

Acquisition Information

Gift of Sidney Weiner, 1995, 2005, 2011, and 2015.

Processing Note

Processed by Abigail Bass in 2006. Additional material (ICDB12186) added to the collection in 2016.

Separated Materials

Material Described Separately:

[Save All Ethiopian Jews photograph collection \(PH2016-037\)](#)

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series 1: Administrative files, 1983-1992, 2005

Arranged alphabetically.

The Administrative files document the management and administration of Save All Ethiopian Jews (SAEJ) from its establishment in 1983 to its dissolution in 1992. Materials include by-laws, articles of incorporation, fundraising files, minutes, member notes, financial records, and an extensive history of SAEJ.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Articles of incorporation and sponsorship letters	1983
1/2	Buttons	undated
1/3	By-laws	1983
1/4	Dissolution records	1992
	Financial records	
Box/Folder		
1/5	Bills	1983-1984
1/6	Bills, paid	1985-1987
1/7-1/8	Internal Revenue Service and bank account files	1983-1985
VF:Oversize		
81a	Ledger	1985-1990
Box/Folder		
1/9	Requests for reimbursement	1984-1986
1/10	Book Publishers Statements	1986-1988

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/11	Save All Ethiopian Jews/Jewish Federation Community Relations Council account	1989-1990
1/12-1/13	Statements	1984-1985
	Fund raising records	
Box/Folder		
1/14	Clothing drive	undated
	General correspondence	
Box/Folder		
1/15	Appeals to and donations from Jewish congregations	1983-1987
1/16	Donations from individuals	1984-1989
1/17	Jewish Federation Endowment Fund grants	1984, 1990
Box/Folder		
1/18	Donor list	1984
1/19	Donor list: "Falashas"	undated
1/20	Sample donation envelopes	circa 1984-1986
Box/Folder		
1/21	History of Save All Ethiopian Jews by Sidney Weiner	circa 2005
1/22	Israel Independence Day celebration	1988
	Membership records	
Box/Folder		
1/23	Board and other committee members	1983
1/24	Key names and information	1989-1990

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/25	Mailing lists	undated
Box/Folder		
1/26	Minutes	1983, 1990
1/27	Miscellaneous papers	1984, 1990, undated
Notes		
Box/Folder		
1/28	Sol Goldberg	1984, undated
1/29	Sam Ripley	circa 1983-1984

Program files, 1979-2001

Arranged alphabetically.

Program files document the two major programs of Save All Ethiopian Jews (SAEJ): its immigration assistance efforts and the SAEJ/Bill Halpern Ethiopian Scholarship Fund. The Immigration files detail the "adoption" strategy SAEJ first employed in 1984 and 1985 and the "scholarship" and "employment contract" strategies they later used to secure passports for Ethiopian Jews from 1985 to 1990.

Materials include correspondence, individual client files, client rosters, notes, and document preparation files. The Immigration files contain the bulk of SAEJ's correspondence, which includes documentation of the organization's relationships with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and other North American agencies involved in rescuing Ethiopian Jews.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Immigration files		
Adoption		
Box/Folder		
1/30	Frank and Schleder trip to Ethiopia	1984
1/31	Halpern and Weiner trip to Ethiopia	1983-1984
1/32	Lachman, Mann and Kuper trip to Ethiopia	1984

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/33	General correspondence	1983-1985
	General correspondence	
Box/Folder		
1/34-1/35	American Association for Ethiopian Jews	1983-1990
1/36	American Jewish Committee	1987
1/37	American Jewish Congress	1988
1/38	Mordechai Ben-Porat	1984-1987
1/39	Zimna Berhani	1985, 1988
1/40	Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews	1988-1990
1/41	Consul General of Israel, Pacific Northwest Region	1989-1990
1/42-1/43	Ethiopian individuals	1983-1990
1/44-1/59, 2/1-2/2	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	1983-1989
2/3	Jewish Agency Israel	1984-1990
2/4-2/5	Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle	1983-1989
2/6	Jerry Maliner	1984
2/7	George P. Mann	1985
2/8	Bent Melchior	1984-1985
2/9-2/11	Miscellaneous	1979-1990
2/12-2/13	North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry	1983-1985
2/14-2/15	National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council	1983-1991
2/16	Regarding medical assistance for Birhanu Yiradu	1984

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/17	Religious Action Center (Washington, D.C.)	1984-1985
2/18	Armand and Michelle Szwarcburt	1984-1986
2/19	U.S. State Department, Coordinator for Refugee Affairs	1983-1986
Box/Folder		
2/20	International summit minutes and notes	1989
	Scholarships and employment contracts	
	Client rosters	
Box/Folder		
2/21-2/23	Lists of American Association for Ethiopian Jews, Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews, and North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry	1989-1990
VF:Oversize		
81b	Lists of American Association for Ethiopian Jews, Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews and North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry	1989-1990
81d	Names of Save All Ethiopian Jews Includes a photograph of a client of Save All Ethiopian Jews.	1988-1989
Box/Folder		
2/24	Status reports	1986, 1988
2/25	Unofficial rescues by all groups	1987-1989
	Document preparation files	
Box/Folder		
2/26-2/27	Addresses and zips for affidavits of support	1982-1989
2/28	Form letters -- schools	1988-1989

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/29	Form letters -- work contracts	1988-1989
2/30	Form letters to [Anne?] and Eli Halpern	circa 1989
2/31	Forms, letters, and embassy paperwork	1988-1990, undated
2/32	Instructions for work contract authorization by state	circa 1988
2/33	Instructions for work contracts and scholarships	circa 1988
2/34-2/97	Letterhead Files are organized alphabetically by name of school or business. School files precede business files. These files contain school and business letterhead and sample letters used by Save All Ethiopian Jews to obtain passports for Ethiopian Jews.	undated
Box/Folder		
2/98	Charles Kaplan papers Includes Kaplan's personal notes on preparing employment contract and scholarship documents, meeting minutes, correspondence, and other documents.	1989-1990
2/99	Miscellaneous notes	undated
2/100-2/102	Sidney Weiner notes	circa 1983-1988, undated
2/103	"Phone Log of All Contacts" The Save All Ethiopian Jews (SAEJ) phone log is a series of notebooks containing detailed, handwritten notes on SAEJ's telephone conversations with officials at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews, and other organizations and individuals working on the immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The log is almost entirely written by Sidney Weiner.	1983-1990
3/1	Processing reports	1987-1988
3/2	Employment contract status reports	1987-1988
3/3	General Correspondence (SAEJ/ Halpern & Smith, P.S.)	1985-1988

Container(s)	Description	Dates
3/4-3/8	Correspondence (Haim Halachmi c/o Karl D. Zukerman)	1985-1989
4/1	Correspondence (Margaret & Sid Weiner)	1997-2005
4/2-4/3	From binder entitled "SAEJ VII"	1999-2004
4/4-4/5	From binder entitled "SAEJ VIII"	2004-2007
4/6	From binder entitled "SAEJ IV"	1991-2014

Box

5	<p>Individual client files</p> <p>Individual client files contain copies of paperwork on Ethiopians rescued by Save All Ethiopian Jews, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews, and the Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews. Each file contains letters to the Ethiopian embassy and the individual client from a school or employer, completed work contracts or scholarship forms, affidavits of support, invitations from the U.S. State Department, and dated documentation of the entire process. The organization responsible for each client is noted on the folder.</p> <p>These materials have been minimally processed.</p> <p>RESTRICTED. Researchers must complete Access Agreement for Use.</p>	1989-1990
VF141	<p>Individual client file for Assefaw Bicha</p> <p>RESTRICTED. Researchers must complete Access Agreement for Use.</p>	1987-1990
VF142- VF143	<p>Case lists and status notes (G-1 to G-398, G-399 to G-425)</p> <p>RESTRICTED. Researchers must complete Access Agreement for Use.</p>	1984-1989

Box/Folder

6/1	Scholarship applicants/recipients	1993-2009
6/2	Travel arrangements to Ethiopia	1984-1988
6/3-6/5	Scholarship and employment, ticket refunds	1985-1988

Save All Ethiopian Jews/Bill Halpern Scholarship Fund

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
6/6-6/11	General correspondence Correspondents include the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, Micha Feldman, and Zimna and Sioux Berhani.	1991-2001
6/12	Notes of Margaret Weiner	1991

Background information files, 1982-1996

Arranged alphabetically by document type.

Background information files contain documents collected by Save All Ethiopian Jews members on various topics relating to Ethiopian Jews in Ethiopia and Israel. Materials include reports, pamphlets, newspaper and magazine clippings, notes, and the newsletters and mailings of other organizations focused on the plight of Ethiopian Jewry.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
6/13-6/16, 7/1-7/5	Clippings	1982-1996
	Mailings, newsletters, and other material	
Box/Folder		
7/6-7/8	American Association for Ethiopian Jews	1983-1992
7/9	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	undated
7/10	North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry	1984-1990
Box/Folder		
7/11	Notes for slide show	undated
	Reports	
Box/Folder		
7/12	"Ethiopian Jewry Aid Proposals"	1984

Container(s)	Description	Dates
7/13-7/14	Ethiopian Jewry -- general	circa 1982-1989
7/15	Political and socioeconomic conditions in Ethiopia	1985-1990
7/16-7/17	Resettlement and absorption of Ethiopian Jews in Israel	circa 1984-1991

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Jews, Ethiopian--Israel
 Jews, Ethiopian--Photographs
 Jews, Ethiopian--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Jews--Ethiopia--Civil rights
 Jews--Ethiopia--Migrations
 Jews--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
 Jews--Washington (State)--Seattle--Societies, etc
 Scholarships--Washington (State)--Seattle

Personal Names :

Berhani, Zimna
 Goldberg, Sol
 Halpern, Eli
 Kaplan, Charles, 1913-
 Weiner, Margaret (Frances Margaret), 1923-
 Weiner, Sidney (Sidney Nathan), 1920-

Corporate Names :

American Association for Ethiopian Jews
 Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews
 HIAS (Agency)
 Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle
 National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (U.S.)
 North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry
 Save All Ethiopian Jews (Organization)--Archives

Geographical Names :

Ethiopia--Emigration and immigration
 Ethiopia--Ethnic relations
 Israel--Emigration and immigration
 Israel--Ethnic relations
 Washington (State)--Ethnic relations

Form or Genre Terms :

administrative records
 By-laws
 Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)
 Contracts
 correspondence
 financial records
 legal files

logs (records)
Newsletters
notes
Pamphlets
Photographs
reports
rosters

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Washington State Jewish Archives (University of Washington)
(creator)
Washington State Jewish Archives (University of Washington)

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Washington State Jewish Archives (University of Washington)

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