



Gratz Insider, April 2016 - Story Continuation

[To return to the newsletter, close this page.]

Rabbi Steve Gutow, Cantor David Tilman and Board Chair David Weinstein to Be Honored at Gratz College Commencement

“As a social justice activist and an advocate for building community through civil discourse, **Rabbi Gutow** exemplifies the Jewish values that are part of the fabric of Gratz College,” explains Gratz President Joy Goldstein.



Rabbi Steve Gutow

In addition to receiving an honorary doctorate, Gutow, a nationally renowned lawyer-turned-rabbi, has also accepted the honor of delivering the commencement address. Recently retired from his position as president and CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), Rabbi Gutow has a resume that reads like an encyclopedia of *tikkun olam*, the Jewish concept of repairing the world. At JCPA, he focused on combating poverty, protecting the environment, opposing the genocide in Darfur, building interfaith cooperation and working on other social justice issues. He also opposed the demonization of Israel, and to this end, played an integral role in the creation of the Israel Action Network as a resource for refuting attacks on Israel’s right to exist.

In September 2015, Rabbi Gutow was also appointed by President Obama to the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, where he works with other council members to address the problem of economic inequality in the United States. He is also board chair of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a coalition of religious leaders from different faiths who are focused on environmental protection.

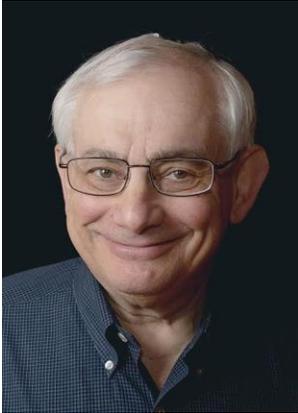
Honored to address the graduates at Gratz College, Rabbi Gutow says, “Asking me to give a talk on social justice really speaks to the Gratz students and to the work Gratz does.”

While Rabbi Gutow is a giant in the realm of Jewish activism, **Hazzan David Tilman** is a giant in the world of Jewish music. Hazzan Tilman describes music as “the most powerful vehicle to teach Jewish values, Jewish identity and Jewish belief in almighty G-d.” According to Gratz College Professor Saul Wachs, Tilman has become a “model for the role of *hazzan*-educator.”

Hazzan Tilman, a Juilliard School graduate and former Jewish Exponent music columnist, is completing a five-year tenure as adjunct associate professor at The Jewish Theological Seminary’s cantorial school in New York. He is also director of the adult chorus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, and *hazzan emeritus* of nearby Beth Sholom Congregation. During his 36-year career at Beth Sholom, he established an award-winning music program through which he created four choirs and

taught thousands of adults and children to lead services and chant *Torah*. Since 2004, he has also organized a popular annual winter concert, jointly performed by the synagogue choirs along the Old York Road corridor in Elkins Park.

In addition to traveling to Israel, Eastern Europe and Cuba with his Beth Sholom choirs, Hazzan Tilman has lectured and sung in Chile, conducted in Berlin, led Shabbat services in Munich, and lectured at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia prior to a performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has worked with Leonard Nimoy, of “Star Trek” fame, and with Stephen Schwartz, composer and lyricist for “Godspell,” “Pippin,” “Wicked” and other shows.

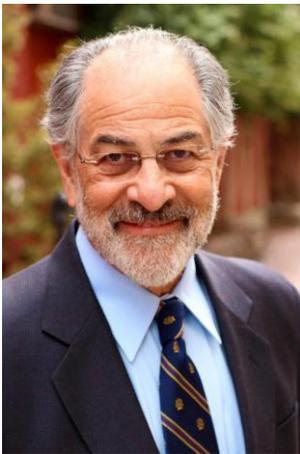


Hazzan David F. Tilman

Hazzan Tilman says that he is humbled to receive the honorary degree from Gratz College because it has been awarded over the years to people of significant accomplishment. In his case, he considers the degree “a validation of the important role of the cantor in the Jewish community.” In addition to receiving this honor at commencement, Hazzan Tilman will lead the singing of the Israeli national anthem, “*Ha Tikvah*.”

The third honorary degree recipient, **David Weinstein**, is the outgoing chair of the Gratz College Board of Governors. Weinstein is a respected attorney who has dedicated much of his life to service, both in and outside the Jewish community. Two years ago, he became an Israeli citizen, now splitting his time between Jerusalem and Philadelphia.

As part of his practice in complex commercial litigation, Weinstein has pursued cases imbued with the public interest. For their efforts, he and his legal team have received the Human Rights Award of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the Public Justice Achievement Award of Trial Lawyers for Public Justice. Currently, Weinstein is also one of four court-appointed lawyers in a suit against Hungary and the Hungarian National Railway on behalf of both Holocaust survivors and the heirs of Holocaust victims.



David H. Weinstein

Within the Jewish community, Weinstein has served in positions of lay leadership for decades, primarily for Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El in Wynnewood. He has also been deeply and personally committed to Jewish education and has pursued his own path of study. Impressed as a child by his parents’ devotion to Jewish education, Weinstein was also affected by the transformational experience of visiting Jews in the former Soviet Union, which reinforced for him the importance of education to the perpetuation of the Jewish People.

Believing that Jewish learning is “at the heart of leading a meaningful Jewish life,” Weinstein joined the Gratz College Board of Governors in 2010, and assumed the position of board chair three years later. With his chairmanship coming to a close, Weinstein will continue his work on the board, explaining, “Gratz College fits neatly into my own value system because I believe that ongoing Jewish education is a fundamental part of being Jewish.”

The commencement ceremony, which is open to the public, will take place on Sunday, May 15, at Gratz College, beginning at 3 p.m.