**The Ciesla Foundation**

**presents**

**a film by Aviva Kempner**

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From the award winning director of

*The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* and

*Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg*

www.rosenwaldfilm.org

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**Short Synopsis**

Aviva Kempner’s ***Rosenwald*** is the incredible story of Julius Rosenwald, who never finished high school, but rose to become the President of Sears. Influenced by the writings of the educator Booker T. Washington, this Jewish philanthropist joined forces with African American communities during the Jim Crow South to build over 5,300 schools during the early part of the 20th century.

Inspired by the Jewish ideals of *tzedakah (*charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), and a deep concern over racial inequality in America, Julius Rosenwald used his wealth to become one of America’s most effective philanthropists. Because of his modesty, Rosenwald’s philanthropy and social activism are not well known today. He gave away $62million in his lifetime.

**Synopsis**

Aviva Kempner’s ***Rosenwald***  is the incredible story of Julius Rosenwald, the son of an immigrant peddler who never finished high school, but rose to become the President of Sears. Influenced by the writings of the educator Booker T. Washington, this Jewish philanthropist joined forces with African American communities during the Jim Crow South to build over 5,300 schools during the early part of the 20th century.

***Rosenwald*** sheds light on this silent partner of the Pre-Civil Rights Movement. Rosenwald awarded fellowship grants to a who's who of African American intellectuals and artists of his day so that they could pursue their scholarship and art. They included: Marian Anderson, James Baldwin, the father and uncle of civil rights leader Julian Bond, Ralph Bunche, W. E. B. DuBois, Katherine Dunham, Ralph Ellison, John Hope Franklin, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Gordon Parks, Jacob Lawrence and Augusta Savage along with Woody Guthrie.

Inspired by the Jewish ideals of *tzedakah (*charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and a deep concern over racial inequality in America, Julius Rosenwald used his wealth to become one of America’s most effective philanthropists. Rosenwald also built YMCAs and housing for African Americans to address the pressing needs of the Great Migration. Because of his modesty, Rosenwald’s philanthropy and social activism are not well known today. He gave away $62 million in his lifetime.

The list of prominent alumni and educators who attended the Rosenwald Schools include Tony Award winning playwright George Wolfe, poet Maya Angelou, U.S. Representative John Lewis, Pulitzer Prize winner Eugene Robinson of The Washington Post and the ancestors of Loretta Lynch (US Attorney General) and law professor Anita Hill. Skip Gates writes in *Finding Oprah's Roots: Finding Your Own* that Oprah’s ancestor Amanda Bullocks became a trustee of the Buffalo Rosenwald School in Attala County, Mississippi.

**A Tribute To Julian Bond**

The Ciesla Foundation mourns the passing of civil rights activist Julian Bond, whose speech twelve years ago at the Hebrew Center at Vineyard Haven inspired me to make this film on Julius Rosenwald.  As a consultant Julian guided me every step of the way about who to interview, where to look for materials, what the story line was, what photo to use in the poster, and most of all how important Julius Rosenwald was to African American history.  He always guided me with humor and kindness.

Julian not only inspired me in the making of  *Rosenwald*, he delivered one of the best lines in the film that was edited towards film's closing: "You can look at the people who got grants from Julius Rosenwald, and say, these are the predecessor generation to the civil rights generation that I’m a part of. And I’m a predecessor generation to the Obama generation that resulted in the election of the first black president of the United States."

When we appeared together to speak after the film, Bond loved to tell the story about his father, who was working for the Rosenwald Fund.  His father, Horace Mann Bond, was once driving in the South when his car suddenly got stuck in a hole filled with mud. Julian’s father assumed that someone had put the mud there just so they could charge him money to be pulled out. Two African American men came out from behind the bushes and noticed that he was wearing nice clothes and was driving a nice car. When they asked whom Julian’s father was working for, he replied, “I work for the Rosenwald Fund”. The men responded, “Oh you work for Captain Julius?  There’ll be no charge”.

What I am most grateful is that Julian Bond and his beloved wife Pamela Horowitz became dear friends during the twelve years it took to finish the film.  We were all looking forward to taking ROSENWALD all over the country to show how Julius Rosenwald's vision for a better America was so needed today.  Am happy that Julian, Rabbi David Saperstein and myself presented the film at the NAACP convention in Philadelphia on July 14 and he was able to hear the warm response to the film.

From now on all my introductions to the film will be dedicated to Julian Bond's bravery and legacy.  The country lost a great hero today and his legacy made for a better America.

**Interviewees**

Maya Angelou; Peter Ascoli - Rosenwald's grandson and biographer; Julian Bond; Rep. Danny Davis; Rita Dove; Benjamin Jealous; Rep. John Lewis; journalists Clarence Page, Eugene Robinson, and Cokie Roberts; Ambassador David Saperstein, Eleanor Roosevelt Seagraves and Anna Seagraves First-granddaughter and great granddaughter, respectively, of Rosenwald Fund board member Eleanor Roosevelt; George Wolfe.

**Timeline**

May 12, 1854 Samuel Rosenwald, father of Julius, arrives in America from Germany.

August 12, 1862 Birth of Julius Rosenwald in Springfield, Illinois.

1879 Julius Rosenwald goes to New York City to serve as an apprentice in the clothing business.

1884 Julius Rosenwald starts own clothing business with his brother in Chicago.

1886 Sears, Roebuck and Company founded.

1890 Julius Rosenwald marries Augusta (Gussie) Nusbaum, daughter of a German immigrant who is also in the clothing business.

August 13, 1895 Richard Sears sells half of the company Sears, Roebuck & Co. to Julius Rosenwald and his brother-in-law, Aaron Nusbaum, for $75,000.

1901 Richard Sears and Julius Rosenwald buy out Nusbaum’s shares in the company.

1906 Richard Sears and Julius Rosenwald take Sears, Roebuck & Co. public. Julius Rosenwald’s friend Henry Goldman, of Goldman Sachs & Co., handles the offering.

1910 Rosenwald offers $25,000 to help build a YMCA for African-Americans to any city that can raise $75,000 for that purpose.

1910 Rosenwald reads *Up From Slavery* and *An American Citizen: The Life of William H. Baldwin Jr.*

October 24, 1911 Julius Rosenwald travels to Tuskegee with wife Gussie, Rabbi Emile Hirsch and others in a Pullman car.

December 1911 Julius Rosenwald joins the Board of Directors of the Tuskegee Institute.

August, 1912 Rosenwald gives $25,000 to Tuskegee as a gift in honor of his 50th Birthday and Booker T

Washington asks the funds be used to build rural schools.

1913-1914 Six rural schools for African-Americans in Alabama are built with funding from Julius Rosenwald, under the supervision of Dr. Washington. The following year, eighty more are built in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia.

November 14, 1915 Booker T. Washington dies and is buried in a brick tomb built by his students at the Tuskegee Institute.

October 31, 1917 Julius Rosenwald charters the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

1920 School building program headquarters moved from Tuskegee to Fisk University.

December 1, 1927 Edwin R. Embree hired as president of Rosenwald Fund.

1928 The Rosenwald Fund Fellowship Program is begun to provide grants to talented African Americans and white Southerners in various fields.

1929 Rosenwald’s Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments open on Chicago’s south side.

January 6, 1932 Julius Rosenwald dies in his sleep.

1933 The last Rosenwald School is constructed. Over 5,300 have been built.

April 19, 1941 Eleanor Roosevelt, new trustee at the Rosenwald Fund, takes a ride in a biplane with a Tuskegee flight instructor. This publicity stunt helped Blacks gain the right to serve in the Air Force.

1948 Under Julius Rosenwald’s direction to close 25 years after his death, The Rosenwald Fund ends, having spent down its assets several years early.

**Importance of Schools**

What did it mean to a community to have a Rosenwald School? At the time, most public rural black schools-- if there were schools at all-- were run-down buildings with few, if any, amenities. If the county didn’t provide a public building, the children learned in lodge halls and churches. To have a school and educators meant that the next generation would have a chance to move away from the often grinding poverty found in such areas, and not be solely dependent upon the land for sustenance. From 1915 to 1932, over 660,000 Southern black schoolchildren benefited from an initiative that truly speaks to the American Dream. The partnership between Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington and the African American communities to build schools was perhaps the most inspiring story during the hardships of the Jim Crow era.

**Biographies**

**Aviva Kempner**

**Director, Writer, Producer**

Aviva Kempner has a mission in life: Her films investigate non-stereotypical images of Jews in history and celebrate the untold stories of Jewish heroes.

Kempner recently made *Rosenwald*, (2015) a feature-length historical documentary about businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, who partnered with Booker T. Washington and African American communities to build over 5,000 schools in the Jim Crow South. The Rosenwald Fund also provided grants to support a who’s who of African American artists and intellectuals. This historical partnership as well as the modern-day attempts to restore the schools is an inspiring story of philanthropy and local self-determination. A DVD of this film with over four and a half bonus features was released in 2017.

She is currently working on a new documentary on Moe Berg, a Jewish baseball player, who caught and fielded in the Major Leagues from the 1920s through 1939 during baseball’s Golden Age. But very few know that Berg also worked for the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS), spying in Europe. He played a prominent role in US efforts to undermine the German atomic bomb program during WWII.
A child of Holocaust survivor Helen Ciesla and Harold Kempner, a US Army officer, Kempner was born in Berlin, Germany after World War II. Her family history inspired her to conceive and produce her first documentary, *Partisans of Vilna* (1986), a gripping documentary on Jewish resistance against the Nazis. It was the winner of a CINE Golden Eagle and the Anthropos First Prize, and received an American Film Festival honorable mention.

Kempner went on to write, direct and produce more films about under-known American Jewish heroes. The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg (2000) is about the career of the first Jewish baseball star in the Major Leagues. Facing anti-Semitism in the ’30s and ’40s, Greenberg welcomed Jackie Robinson in his debut in 1947. The documentary was awarded Audience Awards at the Hamptons International Film Festival and Washington Jewish Film Festival; Spirit Award for Best Sports Documentary, International Sports Video and Film Awards; top honors from the National Society of Film Critics, the National Board of Review, the New York Film Critics Circle and Broadcast Film Critics Association. It also won a CINE Golden Eagle and George Peabody Award.

*Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg* (2009) is an exploration of television pioneer Gertrude Berg, who received the first Best Actress Emmy in history and paved the way for women in media and entertainment. Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg won a CINE Golden Eagle and festival audience awards and Women's Film Critics Circle posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award winner for Gertrude Berg.

Kempner also made a short tragic comedy, *Today I Vote for my Joey*, about the 2000 election results in Florida.

She is also the co-writer and producer of *Casuse,* a film about Larry Casuse, a young Native American activist who kidnapped the Mayor of Gallup, New Mexico to draw attention to the plight of the Navajo people and to expose the hypocrisy of the establishment.

Kempner lives in Washington, DC where she plays a prominent role in the artist and film community. She started the Washington Jewish Film Festival in 1990. She is also an activist for voting rights for the District of Columbia.

Her many accomplishments include: A member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, recipient of the 1996 Guggenheim Fellowship and the 2000 DC Mayor’s Art Award: 2001 Women of Vision award from D.C.’s Women in Film and Video chapter, the 2001 Media Arts award from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and the 2009 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival's Freedom of Expression Awardee. Kempner received the Bernardo O'Higgins Award and in 2017 and a honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of the District of Columbia in 2018.

She writes film criticism and feature articles for numerous publications, including *The Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Crystal City Magazine, The Forward, Baltimore Jewish Times, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Legal Times, New York Times, The Wrap, Washington Jewish Week and The Washington Post.*

She has written chapters in these various books: God, Faith and Identity in the Ashes: Perspectives of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors, Hammerin’ Hank Greenberg: Call Him the Hero of Heroes, When You Need A Little Lift: But Don’t Want To Eat Chocolate, Pay a Shrink, or Drink a Bottle of Gin, Jews and American Popular Culture, What Israel Means to Me, and Daughters of Absence.

**Marian Sear Hunter - Editor**

Marian Sears Hunter is an editor of many award winning films including Kempner's *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg, Bad Blood: A Cautionary Tale, Harlem In Montmarte, Zora Neale Hurston: Jump At The Sun, Marcel Proust; a Writer's Life, Slavery and the Making of America*, one show in a four part PBS series about slavery, *Long Way From Home, School: The Story of American Public Education, To Be Somebody*, part of The *Great Depression* produced by Blackside and *Promises to Keep,* nominated for an Academy Award.

**Zane Mark -Composer**

Zane Mark is a composer, orchestrator and arranger with credits in a wide range of musical arenas in addition to his distinguished Broadway career. He co-wrote the Tony and Grammy-award nominated music for the award-winning musical *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk.* Mark most recently served as the Musical Director for Broadway’s *Holler If Ya Hear Me.* Some of his other Broadway credits include *Motown The Musical, Pippin, Leap of Faith, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels,* and *The Full Monty*. Mark also was a musical contributor for the film, *The Dancer Chronicles* and HBO’s *Lackawanna Blues.*

**Aviva Kempner’s Director's Statement**

For the past 36 years, my goal has been to make documentaries about under known Jewish heroes that counter negative stereotypes.

I decided to make a film on Julius Rosenwald when I heard Julian Bond speak about his family’s connection to the businessman and philanthropist 12 years ago at the Hebrew Center on Martha's Vineyard. I was immediately intrigued by Rosenwald’s story of being an enlightened businessman who wanted to *repair the world*. The son of a German immigrant peddler, Rosenwald had humble beginnings and left high school to follow in his family’s business. Taking a business risk he bought into Sears and Roebuck with a relative and rose to become the President by age 45.

 I was impressed that making money was not his only goal in life. Rosenwald was inspired by the Jewish ideals of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam* as espoused by his rabbi Emil Hirsch, so he decided to implement grants that focused on racial inequality in America.

He utilized matching grants as a vehicle for change. Rosenwald partnered with African-American communities in the South to build over 5,300 schools for them during the early part of the 20th century, as well as established the Rosenwald Fund, which awarded grants to a who’s who of African-American intellectuals and artists of his day so that they could pursue their scholarship and art.

Imagine what a difference these schools made. At the time, most public rural black schools were run-down with few amenities (if there were schools at all). With the addition of Rosenwald Schools, the next generation of African-Americans would have a chance to move away from the often grinding poverty found in such areas, and not be solely dependent upon the land for sustenance.

Rosenwald Schools were a household name in the Deep South. A portrait of Rosenwald would often hang on a schoolhouse wall along the side of Abraham Lincoln. This was especially poignant to Rosenwald since he was born in Springfield, Illinois and grew up in a house across from Lincoln’s home. His uncles had clothed Lincoln and one of them escorted Lincoln’s casket back to Springfield.

I was so impressed how the Rosenwald Fund helped artists and scholars early in their careers. The Rosenwald Fund awarded grants to African-Americans and white Southerners in order to give them one to three years to concentrate on their work and develop their abilities. The fellowships ranged from $1,500 to $2,000, a considerable amount during the Great Depression. Among the grant recipients were Marian Anderson, the father and uncle of civil rights leader Julian Bond, Ralph Bunche, W. E. B. DuBois, Woody Guthrie, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Gordon Parks, James Baldwin, Jacob Lawrence and Augusta Savage. Their accomplishments are American treasures.

 I greatly admire Rosenwald’s philanthropy. He gave away $62 million to various causes, which in today’s dollars is closer to $1 billion. I felt that this story was too important to go unnoticed. It is a great Jewish legacy that I am excited to make better known. At a time when financial hardships abound and civil rights issues unfortunately still exist, it is imperative that Julian Rosenwald’s story be told now. It is a vital part of the great story of Jewish and African American partnership.

**Interviewees**

MAYA ANGELOU (Author)

PETER ASCOLI (Grandson and Biographer)

HOWARD BERMAN (Rabbi Emeritus~~,~~ Temple Sinai)

TIMUEL BLACK (Historian)

JULIAN BOND (Civil Rights Activist)

TANYA BOWERS (Director of Diversity, National Trust for Historic Preservation)

BARBARA BOWMAN (Daughter of Robert Rochon Taylor)

FRANK BRINKLEY (Educator)

PHILIP BROOKMAN (Curator)

BILL BUCKNER (Graphic Artist)

A’LELIA BUNDLES (Author)

KINSHASHA HOLMAN CONWILL (Deputy Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture)

REP. DANNY DAVIS (D-IL)

OSSIE DAVIS (Actor)

STEPHANIE DEUTSCH (Biographer)

HASIA DINER (History Professor)

NORRIS DODSON (Co-founder, Thurgood Marshall Center)

RITA DOVE (Poet)

RICHARD DOZIER (Tuskegee University)

DAVID DRISKELL (Artist)

LAURANITA DUGAS (Daughter of Robert Rochon Taylor)

ELI EVANS (Author)

BENJAMIN JEALOUS (Past President, NAACP)

ANNA SEAGRAVES FIERST (Great Granddaughter of Eleanor Roosevelt)

JOHN FRANKLIN, JR. (Son of John Hope Franklin)

GERALD GOLDEN (Educator)

ALMA HACKETT (Educator)

KENNETH HAMILTON (Historian)

ANNE HESS (Great Granddaughter)

LESTER MAE HILL (Nurse)

MARY HOFFSCHWELLE (Historian)

CHARLENE DREW JARVIS (Daughter of Dr. Charles Drew)

GARY KRIST (Author)

DAVID LEVERING LEWIS (Historian)

REP. JOHN LEWIS (D-GA)

E. ETHELBERT MILLER (Poet and Educator)

STEVEN NASATIR (President, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago)

ANDY NORTH (Museum of Science and Industry)

CLARENCE PAGE (Columnist, Chicago Tribune)

LISA PAGE (English Professor)

GORDON PARKS (Photographer)

ALFRED PERKINS (Author)

DR. RICHARD POWELL (Duke University)

NEWELL QUINTON (Civil Servant)

DWANDALYN REECE (Curator, National Museum of African American History and Culture)

COKIE ROBERTS (Journalist)

EUGENE ROBINSON (Columnist, The Washington Post)

GILBERT ROCHON (Past President, Tuskegee University)

ALICE ROSENWALD (Granddaughter)

RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN (Reform Jewish Leader)

DANIEL SCHULMAN (Curator)

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT SEAGRAVES (Granddaughter of Eleanor Roosevelt)

JACQUELYN SERWER (Curator, National Museum of African American History and Culture)

ELSA SMITHGALL (Curator, The Phillips Collection)

DAVID STERN (Great Grandson)

DONALD STEWART (Educator)

ROBERT STEWART (National Park Service Ranger)

ELIZABETH ROSENWALD VARET (Granddaughter)

KENNETH WARREN (English Professor)

GORDON WEIL (Author)

GEORGE WOLFE (Director)

**Credits**

THE CIESLA FOUNDATION presents ROSENWALD

WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED by Aviva Kempner

EDITOR Marian Sears Hunter

COMPOSER Zane Mark

SOUND EDITOR Ira Spiegel

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS Andrew Geyer and Michael Rose

POST PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Emma Carlin

CONSULTANTS Peter Ascoli, Julian Bond, Stephanie Deutsch, Mary Hoffschwelle

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY Michael Moser, Christopher Conder, Roger Grange, Mirko Popadic, Allen Rosen, Chapin Hall, Tom Kaufman, Dana Kupper, Stephan Mazurek

PHOTO ANIMATION Ralph Quattrucci

ANIMATOR Carol Hilliard

ARTWORK Keshini Ladduwahetty

**Questions & Answers**

**What was your inspiration to become a filmmaker?**

Researching my own family roots in 1979 inspired me to become a filmmaker. I am dedicated to making films that span the years prior to and during World War II, since they so scarred my family.

**What is your family background?**

My Polish-born, Jewish mother passed as a Catholic working at a labor camp within Germany. Her parents and sister perished in Auschwitz and only her brother survived the death camps.

Upon liberation by Americans my mother met my Lithuanian-born father, a US soldier, in Berlin. My father’s mother had been shot by the Nazis. They married, and upon birth I was anointed the first American-Jewish child born in Berlin. We came to America in 1950 and settled in Detroit. My father, who immigrated to America in the late 1920s, made me aware of our country’s hardships during the Depression and the social discrimination against Jews and other minorities.

**What is the background of your previous films?**

As a teenager I fantasized about fighting Nazis. In 1979, I felt an urge to make a film about Jewish resistance against the Nazis to answer the unfair question, “why didn’t Jews resist?”  I produced and conceived of Partisans of Vilna to show Jews had fought despite the moral dilemmas. It was released in theaters in 1986, and on DVD 20 years later. I formed a nonprofit foundation, naming it Ciesla after my maternal grandparents’ last name to keep the name alive.

I chose Hank Greenberg, my father’s baseball hero, as the subject of The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg. Every Yom Kippur our father would tell us how Greenberg went to synagogue instead of the stadium. I believed Greenberg was part of Kol Nidre service. I was sick of seeing only *nebbish* Jewish males on the screen. Due to the difficulty in raising funds, it took 13 long years to make. The Ciesla Foundation issued a new DVD of the film in 2013 that includes over two and a half hours of extras.

I am also proud to have made a film on radio and television pioneer Gertrude Berg.  She was the creator, principal writer, and star of *The Goldbergs,* a popular radio show for 17 years, which became television’s very first character-driven domestic sitcom in 1949. Berg received the first Best Actress Emmy in history, and paved the way for women in the entertainment industry.  She was the most famous woman of her day, but almost forgotten when I made the movie about her. She paved the way for the *Honeymooners, I Love Lucy, Seinfeld,* and *Friends.*

**What do you see as the similarities between Hank Greenberg and Julius Rosenwald?**

What I realize now is that although both Hammerin’ Hank Greenberg and Julius Rosenwald’s careers spanned the years when our country faced the enormous challenges of the Great Depression and World War II, they both displayed great courage in performing as positive Jews in spite of the negative atmosphere swirling around them.  Most of all, they were heroes to all Americans.

**Closing thoughts on your films.**

I feel privileged to have spent the last 36 years making documentaries about such powerful heroic Jewish figures. I love how three generations can come together to view my films. In retrospect, I believe that Jewish baby born in Berlin was put on this earth to document such affirmative celluloid history of Jewish heroes.

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