To all the friends of the Jewish History Museum,

I hope this message finds you joyous and well as the new decade begins. The Jewish History Museum is approaching four years since the opening of the Holocaust History Center, and our work grows increasingly urgent. We have spent these first four years building relationships across Southern Arizona and with our colleagues in the field across the country. We have developed practices that embrace inclusivity and an intimate approach to presentations of the difficult past. Our museum, located in Barrio Viejo, places great value in the richness of the neighborhood where we are located and in the inspiring histories of the building our museum inhabits.

In the early 1940s, during another time of intense global antisemitism, Rabbi Joseph Gumbiner led Congregation Temple Emanu-El in what is now our museum building. He chose to respond to the threats of antisemitism and racism by reaching out to our neighbors at the Prince Chapel AME Church as well as faith leaders across various traditions. Together they created the Tucson Committee for Inter-Racial Understanding in 1943. He continued to work for racial justice by participating in the Civil Rights Movement, believing that no one is free until all are free. Our work today is informed by that courageous tradition.

2020 holds great promise for our museum. These times call us to fulfill our mission to serve as a site of conscience in our community. We will do this work together with you, our museum members, neighbors, visitors and supporters.

We have been aghast and appalled by the recent outbreak of antisemitic vandalism, violence and murderous actions. The Jewish History Museum & Holocaust History Center is resolutely committed to educating our community about the dangers of antisemitism. We are committed to using the numerous examples that history provides to show our visitors the catastrophic potential of antisemitism and the insidious ways in which it can become normalized in society. Education is central to our work. Building relationships and standing in solidarity with other marginalized and targeted communities is vital in this moment.

Throughout the spring, we will confront escalating antisemitism in numerous ways. We will educate students, teachers and local law enforcement officers. We will convene an all-day beit midrash (house of learning) study session on the history and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. We will continue to document the testimonials of individuals who have experienced antisemitism and other forms of discrimination. On January 24th, at 11:00am, we will host Holocaust survivors from the community who will share their stories of survival and resilience. Our community-wide Yom HaShoah commemoration on April 19 will focus on antisemitism within our communal memory and as we experience and understand it today. I encourage our members to attend the two-day conference on antisemitism being organized by the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies on February 23-24.

The work ahead is formidable. We will continue to do the work guided by the values of pursuing justice, welcoming the stranger, and repairing the world. Building community is at the core of our work, and we will continue to build a community of people committed to translating Jewish values into action. We will continue to draw strength and inspiration from the courage and moral integrity of our ancestors, histories of Jewish resistance, and the righteous persons who have stood alongside us.

We stand ready to do this important work alongside you.

With care,

Bryan L. Davis, Executive Director