
What unites america...

Zip codes unite America. Our common culture is the dollar. It is the focus of our aspirations, the determinant of our ethics, and the goal by which we measure our achievement in life. We amass dollars, at any moral cost, by conquering the vast marketplace known as America, selling our product to the greatest amount of people for the greatest possible profit. We worship those who succeed in the marketplace, and shower those whom we admire (in entertainment and sports, especially) with money, and then worship them even more.

Zip codes are the key to what sells where, how to spend our marketing dollars best to make the most amount of money. Is this a cynical analysis or a realistic one? *Sh'ma* prints 5,500 copies of each issue. How many copies of *People*, *Business Week* and the *National Inquirer* are printed weekly?

Louis Berlin, North Miami Beach, FL

1. Americans are caring and generous in times of need or disaster.
2. Americans wish and need to build community (although the definition of community may be non-traditional).
3. Americans, by and large, still want to make the system work, even when the odds are against it, and even when we're complaining about the decline of practically everything.
4. Americans, even (or maybe especially) in this time of disunity, fragmentation and alienation, want to find a renewed vision and sense of purpose.

Susanne J. Greenberg, West Chester, PA

The ethic of voluntarism

French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville came to America in 1831. His travels took him all over the young nation, and formed the basis of his treatise *Democracy in America*. Perhaps his most important conclusion was that Americans helped each other in times of need. He applauded the voluntary spirit that lives in America's

heart: "When an American asks for the cooperation of his fellow citizens, it is seldom refused; and I have often seen it afforded spontaneously and with great good will." It is that calling together that unites America.

The uniqueness of this country's generosity impressed de Tocqueville. On the one hand, people's ability to come together around a cause. On the other hand, he saw individualism and self-centeredness. He states, "Providence has created man neither wholly independent nor wholly enslaved. Doubtless each man has his own circle of destiny from which he cannot escape, but within its wide circumference he is powerful and free." It is just this combination of democracy, charity and independence that has given America its strength. We need to reinstate these fundamentals.

Helping the Larger Community

We have a major challenge. We strive to maintain our cultural heritage. Some of us are concerned that as the country has grown, we have assimilated to the point that our ancestries are lost. de Tocqueville wrote, "...democ-

Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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Sh'ma welcomes articles from diverse points of view. Hence, the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the editors. Donations to *Sh'ma* are tax-deductible. *Sh'ma* is available in microform from University Microfilms Internat'l., Ann Arbor, MI.

Book reviews are by Eugene B. Borowitz.

Address all correspondence, subscriptions and change of address notices to *Sh'ma*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212-867-8888; FAX: 212-867-8853.

Sh'ma (ISSN 0049-0385) is published bi-weekly except June, July and August, by CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Subscription: \$29 for two years in U.S.; \$18 for one year; \$21 a year overseas; 10 or more to one address, \$9 each year. Retired or handicapped persons of restricted means may subscribe for one year at half price.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Sh'ma*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, S-300, New York, NY 10016-1599.

Second-class postage paid at New York, NY

December 23, 1994