ATLANTA, Oct. 24 . . . A landmark Black-Jewish seminarians conference, bringing together Black Christian students at the Interdenominational Theological Center and rabbinical students from three major Jewish seminaries, will take place here November 5 and 6.

Co-sponsored by the ITC and the American Jewish Committee, the two-day, two-night meeting will focus on biblical, historical and contemporary themes of particular importance to the experience and self-understanding of Blacks and Jews. In addition to exploring such themes as suffering (Holocaust, slavery), redemption (liberation, Zionism), identity, integration and separation, the conference will provide Jewish and Christian models of understanding and interpreting scripture, Christian and Jewish morning worship services conducted by the students, small group discussions and a seminarians panel looking to the future.

An evening musical program on November 5, featuring the ITC Choir and the Shirim Chorale of Atlanta, followed by a reception tendered by the AJC's Atlanta Chapter, will be open to the community.

Co-chaired by Dr. James H. Costen, president of the Interdenominational Theological Center, and Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of Interreligious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee; coordinated by the ITC's dean of faculty, Dr. David Shannon, and the director of AJC's Seminary Education Program, Judith H. Banki, the conference is a project of the Nathan Appleman Institute for the Advancement of Christian-Jewish Relations.

Planned by a committee of Christian and Jewish leaders and scholars from Atlanta communal and academic institutions, the meeting will feature presentations by such distinguished scholars as Dr. Edward Beasley, professor of History, Penn Valley College; Dr. David Blumenthal, chairman, Department of Religion, Emory University; Dr. Michael Fishbane, professor of Bible, Brandeis University; Dr. Carl Marbury, director, Higher Education, State of Alabama; and Dr. Gayraud Wilmore, United Negro College Fund, and visiting professor at ITC, in addition to presentations by Rabbi Rudin and Ms. Banki. Rabbinical students
from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (both of New York) and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (Philadelphia) will participate.

Dr. Costen has hailed the Black-Jewish consultation as "a journey into understanding" that would "plumb the depths of historical, cultural and religious roots" and forge relationships for the future.

Rabbi Rudin said: "This pioneering conference takes on added importance in the light of the dramatic emergence of religion as a powerful force in American life. Nothing is more vital to the health of our nation than the fostering of religious and cultural pluralism. For the first time, future rabbis and black ministers will systematically explore together the richness of our two traditions. What is the Black religious experience? The Jewish experience?"

"Hopefully, the Atlanta conference will increase mutual respect and understanding between the men and women who will be our religious leaders of the 21st century."

Ms. Banki also stressed the goal of mutual understanding against the need to probe sources of identity. "There is a Jewish-Black component of our relationship and a Jewish-Christian component," she noted. "This conference will give us the opportunity to explore both aspects, to see where our communities are coming from, religiously, ethnically and historically." Such understanding may not resolve differences, she added, but will "help confront stereotypes and set up networks of communication for Black and Jewish religious leaders of the next generation."

On the evening prior to the conference, the Student Christian League of the ITC will host a reception for the students. Beginning with Christian worship services on the morning of Nov. 5, the conference will be launched by greetings from Dr. Costen and a keynote talk by Ms. Banki titled, "Facing our Mutual Histories." The rest of the morning will focus on the theme of suffering, with audio-visual presentations on slavery and the Holocaust, followed by student discussion groups and responses by Drs. Beasley and Blumenthal. The afternoon session will focus on the theme of redemption, with presentations by Dr. Wilmore and Rabbi Rudin. The evening celebration of spiritual music featuring the ITC Choir and the Shirim Chorale of Atlanta will be co-chaired by Dr. Costen and Dr. Marvin Weintraub, president of AJC's Atlanta Chapter.

The conference will resume Nov. 6 at the Temple, with a Jewish worship service. The morning session at ITC will be devoted to Christian and Jewish models of understanding and interpreting scripture as demonstrated by Drs. Marbury and Fishbane. The afternoon session, moderated by Rabbi Zvi Shapiro of the ITC faculty and Emory University, will feature a panel of seminary students reflecting on their roots and their personal spiritual journeys, and offering perspectives for the future. This session, also geared toward practical problem-solving, will be followed by small group discussion and a final coming together.
Joining Drs. Costen and Shannon on the conference planning committee were Dr. Blumenthal; Rabbi Shapiro; Bertram Levy, vice president for Interreligious Affairs of the AJC Chapter; Sherry Frank, director, and Ronnie Henderson, assistant director, of AJC's Atlanta office.

The Interdemoninational Theological Center is a major training ground for Black clergy. Its graduates comprise one third of Black ministers who are seminary graduates and one half of all Black army chaplains in the United States today. The participating rabbinical seminaries ordain Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis in the United States.

While this is the first such conference between Blacks and Jews, The American Jewish Committee's Seminary Education Program has sponsored seminarians conferences in Dallas, Chicago, Southern California, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Yonkers, New York.

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

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