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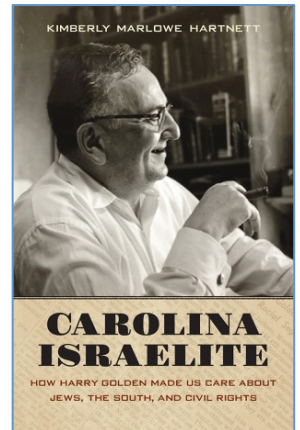
FACT SHEET

Carolina Israelite:

How Harry Golden Made Us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights

By Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett

- Harry Golden (1903-1981) was a Jewish immigrant who traveled with his family to New York's Lower East Side in 1907 aboard the SS Graf Waldersee from what was then Austria-Hungary, and is now Ukraine.
- Once he'd brought his family to America, Golden's father, Leib Goldhirsch, sought a life of the mind (he was especially fond of writing spirited Letters to the Editor) rather than selling from a pushcart. "I should start the story of my father by saying that he was a failure," Golden wrote. "But his type of failure has not yet been explored in immigrant sociology. We have had stories of the 'Horatio Alger' immigrant...But we have not yet had the story of the immigrant who failed because he refused to enter the American milieu on its terms—to start earning status on the basis of money."
- As a young man, Golden (then Harry Goldhurst) was a precocious bookworm who followed his sister Clara (one of the first female brokerage owners in the city) to Wall Street in the 1920s. His fast-talking sales pitches lured customers eager to buy stock on a "payment plan." One of his many clients was the famous Methodist bishop, James Cannon, Jr., a leading force behind Prohibition. When Cannon's enemies unearthed his questionable stock market practices, the scandal left Harry behind bars for fraud.
- Struggling to earn a living as a newspaper ad salesman, Harry wandered south, landing in Charlotte, N.C. in 1940. There he changed his name to Golden, hid his prison past, and founded his personal journal, the *Carolina Israelite*. The paper's first banner read: "To Break Down the Walls of Misunderstanding—And to Build Bridges of Good Will."
- Golden's first bestseller, *Only in America*, broke trade-book records in 1958, selling 250,000 copies in a matter of days. When an anonymous letter revealed his secret past as a convicted felon, Golden's book sales and the circulation of the *Carolina Israelite* rocketed even higher. At its peak the paper had some 55,000 subscribers, and Golden sold millions of books over his career.



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- Golden went on to write four more bestsellers and a host of popular books, more than 20 in total. His first two, *Only in America* and *For 2 Cents Plain*, hit the top slot on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and his next three books made the list as well—*Enjoy, Enjoy!*, *Carl Sandburg*, and *You're Entitled*. His syndicated column ran coast to coast. He was a regular guest on popular late-night shows hosted by Jack Paar and Johnny Carson. He continued publishing the *Carolina Israelite* until 1968.
- In his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., referred to Golden as a rare white writer who had "written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms."
- Along with several collections of his trademark short essays, Golden wrote *Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes*, about John F. Kennedy and civil rights; *Carl Sandburg*, a biography of the prolific poet and biographer of Abraham Lincoln; and *A Little Girl is Dead* about the infamous Leo Frank lynching case.