

The Life and Legacy of Dr. Bernard Lander

DR. BERNARD LANDER, founder and president of Touro College from its inception in 1970 until his death in February, was a visionary leader who at the age of 55 built a vast educational institution that broke down barriers to higher education for thousands of students in the United States and around the world.

Dr. Lander died of congestive heart failure on Feb. 8 at the age of 94 at New York Hospital in Queens, not far from his Forest Hills home. His death was a major loss for Touro, not just because it was his vision that transformed the college from its beginnings as a small school for Jewish men in midtown Manhattan with just 35 students into a multi-campus international institution, but because he continued to put in full work days and remain involved in nearly all aspects of running the college until just shortly before he died.

“I’ve lost a friend, I’ve lost a partner, I’ve lost the man who built this great monument to education, a citadel of learning,” said Dr. Mark Hasten, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Touro College. “A man like Dr. Bernard Lander comes along once in a generation, or perhaps once in many generations.”

Dr. Hasten worked alongside Dr. Lander—a social scientist, educator and ordained Orthodox rabbi—for many years in expanding Touro College into a widely respected educational institution with over 17,500 students at 29 locations in New York, California, Nevada, Florida, Israel, Russia, Germany and France. Under Dr. Lander’s stewardship, Touro attained university status in California and Nevada, where it is known as Touro University, and became the fastest-growing independent institution of higher and professional education under Jewish auspices in the United States.

“Dr. Lander’s passing is a profound loss,” said Alan Kadish, M.D., who joined Touro as senior provost and chief operating officer last September and became the college’s new president and CEO in March. “He was truly a unique visionary leader who built Touro into a remarkable institution. Although I was able to spend only a few months with Dr. Lander, I was overwhelmed by his talent and his passion for education, the study of Torah and Judaism. His care and concern for the Jewish people and all of humanity knew no bounds. Rabbi Dr. Lander was the type of leader that has elevated the Jewish people for the last 3,000 years and he will be sorely missed.”

A preeminent leader in the Jewish community, Dr. Lander had already amassed a lifetime of accomplishments before he even founded Touro College at the age of 55—when most people are starting to think about retirement. In the end, he spent nearly 40 years building Touro College into the vast educational institution it is today and became one of the longest-serving college presidents in the United States.

An academic with a doctorate in sociology from Columbia University, Dr. Lander served as a consultant to three U.S. presidents—Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. He worked with the White House Conference on Children and Youth, served on an advisory council on public assistance established by Congress, and was a member of the President’s Advisory Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Dr. Lander also served as associate director of former New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia’s Committee on Unity, one of the nation’s first civil rights commissions, and worked as a consultant to



the Maryland State Commission on Juvenile Delinquency.

Dr. Lander worked as a professor of sociology for over two decades at City University of New York and was dean of Yeshiva University’s Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies from 1954 to 1969. He reorganized YU’s graduate programs into graduate schools of social work, education and psychology from 1954 to 1959. He served on the founders committee for Bar-Ilan University in the early 1950s, served as the rabbi of Beth Jacob Congregation in Baltimore, co-founded the former Yeshiva Dov Revel Jewish day school in Forest Hills, and established Yeshivas Ohr HaChaim, a rabbinical seminary for men in Kew Gardens Hills headed by his son, Rabbi Daniel Lander.

Dr. Lander also served as an officer of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU) for nearly 70 years, worked as senior director of a national



Former President Bill Clinton greets Dr. Lander at the White House

study on the problems of youth for the University of Notre Dame for eight years, and authored *Towards an Understanding of Juvenile Delinquency* published by Columbia University Press as well as many other articles.

In his final and most impactful role as founder and president of Touro College, Dr. Lander made it his mission to provide higher education opportunities to underserved populations in both his own minority Orthodox Jewish community as well as the African-American, Hispanic and other minority communities of the broader population.

“Dr. Lander was an extraordinary human being and an extraordinary educator,” said Touro College Senior Vice President Rabbi Moshe Krupka. “He was committed to higher education but most important of all, he cared about people. He created this institution so that individuals could establish and nurture their careers and become productive members of society. Through Touro College, he wanted people to have the opportunity to make the world a better place.”

Rather than try to attract students to a centralized campus like a traditional college, Dr. Lander built campuses in the communities from which he sought to recruit students. For example, he established colleges of osteopathic medicine and pharmacy as well as an undergraduate campus in the heart of Harlem. It was another visionary strategy orchestrated by Dr. Lander that made it easier for students who were working, older, had children or were struggling financially to attend college or graduate school.

“Dr. Lander’s record in creating, building and expanding new educational institutions is unparalleled,” said Dr. Anthony

throughout New York City. He also founded graduate schools of education, psychology, social work, health sciences, business, law and technology in New York, as well as schools of osteopathic medicine, pharmacy and health sciences in New York, California and Nevada, most of which have significant percentages of minority students.

“We in the African-American community thank Dr. Lander for his foresight and vision in transforming post-secondary education in the U.S. and abroad,” Hazel Adams-Shango, a student in the Graduate School of Psychology’s mental health counseling program wrote on a blog of remembrances about Dr. Lander on Touro’s website. “We are better human beings for our studies at Touro College and can contribute to the well-being of society for years to come.”

To enable members of the Orthodox Jewish community to attend college while continuing to study Torah and to avoid the secular influences at traditional American universities, Dr. Lander established the Lander College for Men and the Lander College for Women/The Anna Ruth and Mark Hasten School in New York, as well as separate divisions for men and women at Touro College campuses in Brooklyn, Los Angeles and Miami. He also founded the Machon L’Parnasa-Institute for Professional Studies and the School for Lifelong Education in Borough Park, Brooklyn, to provide higher education with practical working applications for the Chasidic and ultra-Orthodox communities that had traditionally shunned college education.

In addition, Dr. Lander established a Graduate School of Jewish Studies in New York and built campuses in Moscow, Paris, Berlin and Jerusalem.

He was inspired to launch Touro College after completing the study for Notre Dame on student unrest on college campuses and concluding that students were reacting to becoming numbers rather than individuals. At the same time, he was concerned that Jewish students, who he discovered were frequently the leaders of the college protests, were losing their sense of Jewish identity on college campuses.

“Dr. Lander was indeed a true role model and inspiration for many students and young professionals,” recent Touro graduate Mark Isakov wrote on Touro’s website. “This great man has done so much for the Jewish community worldwide, making it

continued on page 14



Dr. Lander meeting with former President George W. Bush prior to attending White House Chanukah reception in 2006