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HEADLINE: U.S. JEWS CALLED ON TO EMPHASIZE THEIR IDENTITY

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BODY:

Shoshana Cardin has been involved in most of the major decisions made by the American Jewish community during the past decade, from the immigration of Soviet Jewry to the United States to chairing the United Israel Appeal to being president of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, a global news service.

That vantage point, Cardin said, has crystallized for her the most important need for Jews in America today: to identify Jewishly.

"We have to recognize the culture and tradition which have brought us to this point in our history," said Cardin, who will be guest speaker tomorrow at NA'AMAT USA Pittsburgh Council's annual dinner. She cited morals, a sense of justice and respect for individuals as elements of Jewish identity.

The key, Cardin said, is for Jews to be "aware of the options to blend or meld Jewish tradition with the culture of the United States." For too many Jews, she said, "it's more important to be American than to be an American Jew."

NA'AMAT, a Hebrew acronym for the Movement of Working Women and Volunteers, is the largest Jewish women's organization in the world, with more than 900,000 members. Also known as the Women's Labor Zionist Organization of America, it has 50,000 American members and helps support 350 day care centers for 25,000 youths, plus 14 vocational high schools.

Cardin was a logical choice as guest speaker for tomorrow's dinner. Born in 1926 in what was then called Palestine, she and her family moved soon after to Providence, R.I., and then to Baltimore to seek medical care for Cardin's mother. Cardin said her mother was a NA'AMAT member, and both parents were lifelong labor Zionists who believed Jews should work the land of Israel as a way to reclaim their historical homeland, which, in fact, occurred in 1948.

She said most Americans have a "skewed picture of the history and longevity of this particular war" between Israelis and Palestinians, beginning with their misunderstanding of the Palestinian people and their history in the area. The media have not helped clarify the picture, she said.

"It's an extremely biased presentation" in the media, Cardin said. "There was no Palestinian people when the United Nations voted to separate Palestine" between Jews and Arabs in 1947, she said. Nor was there a Palestinian language. No Palestinian claim on the land came until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, when Israel captured the West Bank and Jerusalem from Jordan.

"It has become a propaganda war," Cardin said. "We do not see the trained Palestinian police — who are actually soldiers — behind the stone throwers, who I believe are innocent victims. We do not see the [Palestinian] summer camps for children where they are taught hatred..."

The local NA'AMAT dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. at Congregation Beth Shalom, Shady and Beacon avenues, Squirrel Hill. Dinner tickets are \$25. Call 412-521-5253 for more information.