



The Hero in Me

Local Heroes

From the Jewish Historical Society
of Greater Hartford

www.jhsgh.org



Fairness on the Job: Beatrice Fox Auerbach

- Beatrice Fox Auerbach was the president of G. Fox Department Store, one of Hartford's biggest businesses, from the 1930s until the 1960s. People came from all around Connecticut to shop at the large department store.
- It was unusual at this time for a woman to be in charge of a large business. She made it into one of the most successful department stores in the country.



Fairness on the Job: Beatrice Fox Auerbach

- She wanted to make sure to treat her workers well. She expected a lot of them but also made sure they had a good work schedule, health care, and other benefits.



Fairness on the Job: Beatrice Fox Auerbach

- She also wanted to make sure that people had an equal chance to get a job in her store.
- In Hartford in the 1940s, African Americans had a hard time getting good jobs – they were treated unfairly because of their race.
- Beatrice Auerbach made a special effort to hire African Americans to work as salespeople and managers at her store so they could have equal opportunities to advance.



In Her Own Words

- “Why should one race have opportunity in only special jobs? Why shouldn’t they become the best sales clerks, the best supervisors, or whatever they have the ability to become? This is our way of thinking.”

(Quoted in *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, 1948, vol. 26, p. 74.)



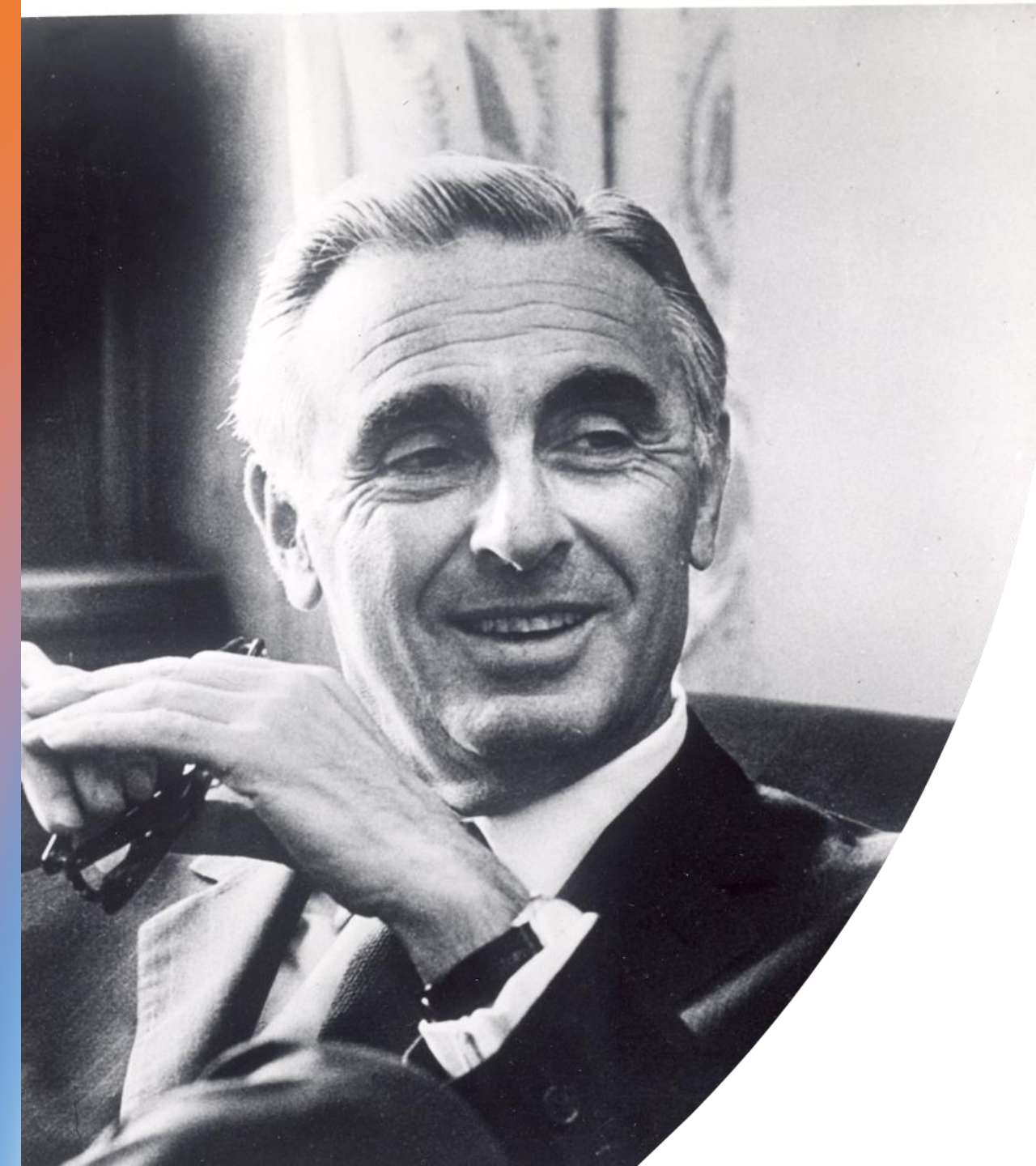
From the Text:

- Giving *tzedakah* through employment is the highest form of charity. “The highest level [of charity] of all is to steady the hand of the Israelite who falters, and give him a gift, or a loan, or make partnership or offer him work, in order to strengthen his hand so that he shouldn’t have to ask” (Rambam, *Matnot Aniyim* 10:7).
- In this way the employee maintains his self-image and his standing in the community.
- https://jewishaction.com/religion/the_ethics_of_hiring_and_firing/



What would you do?

- How can you make sure that people are treated fairly and equally around you?



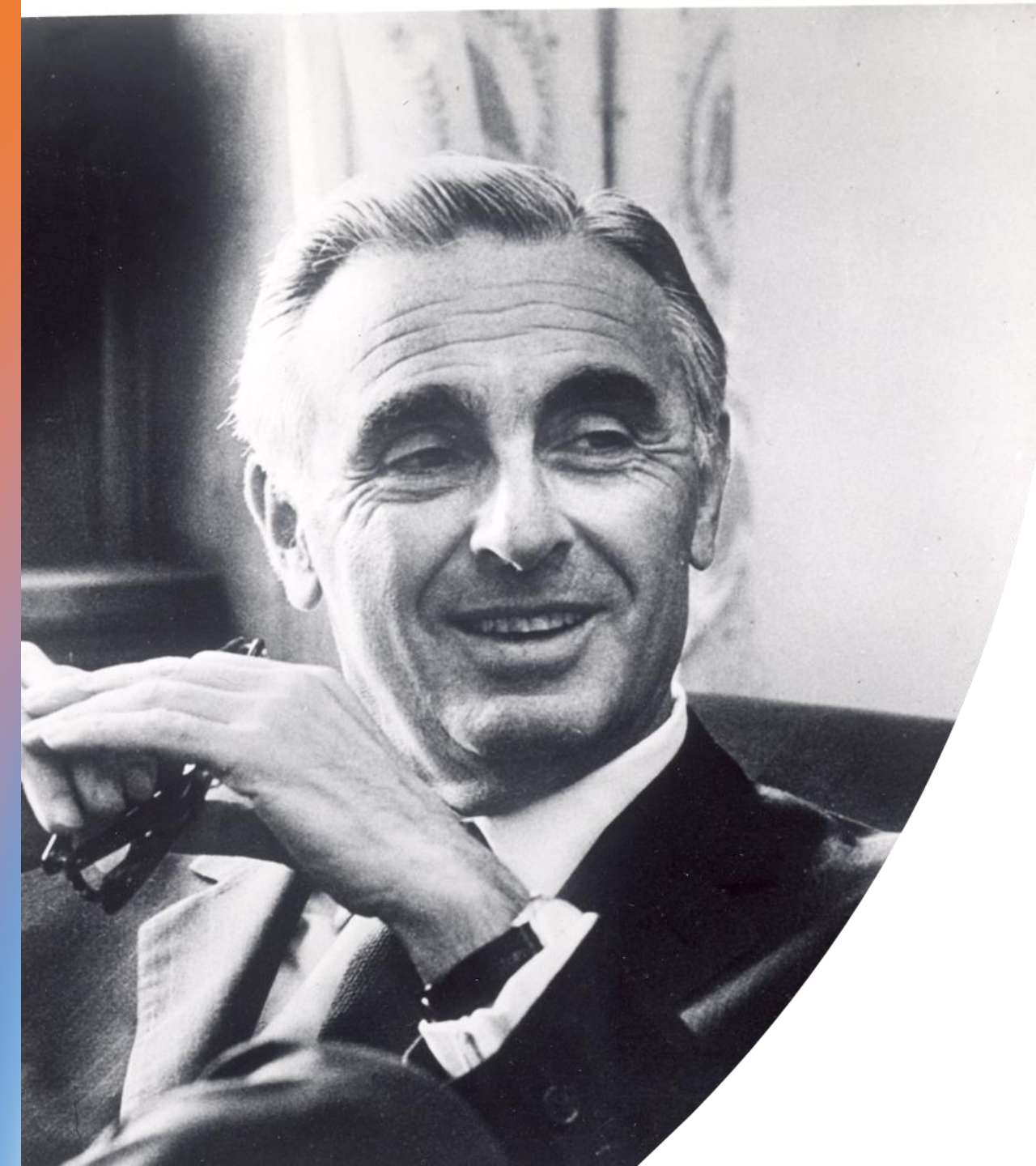
Fairness in Politics: Abraham Ribicoff

- Abraham Ribicoff was the first Jewish person to become the governor of Connecticut (1955-1961), and a U.S. senator (1963-1981), representing Connecticut in Congress. He was also elected to the state legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives.



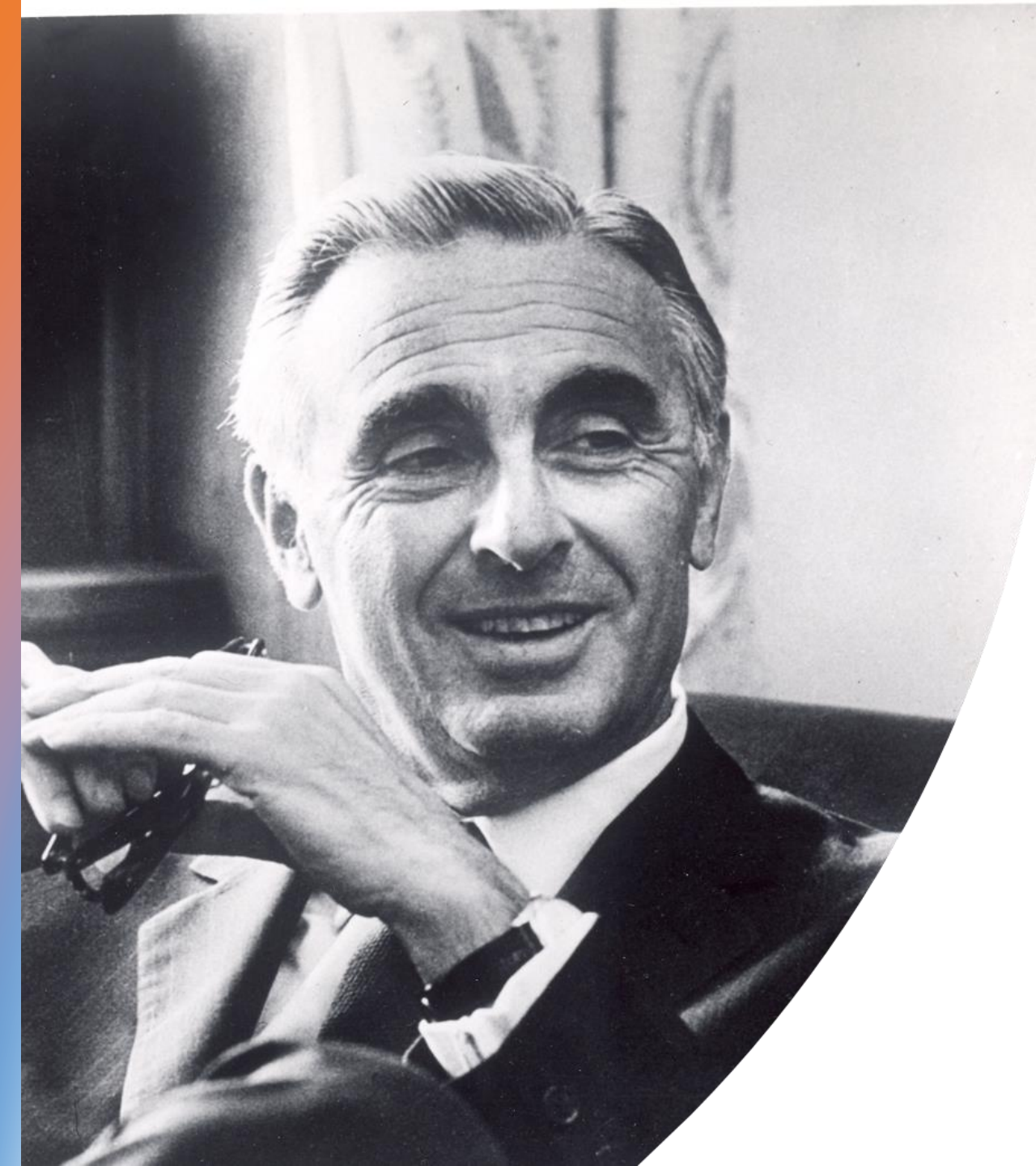
Fairness in Politics: Abraham Ribicoff

- He grew up in New Britain, where he had friends from many different backgrounds and religions. His family did not have much money and he worked at different jobs while he was growing up.
- He thought people should be treated equally and have equal opportunities.



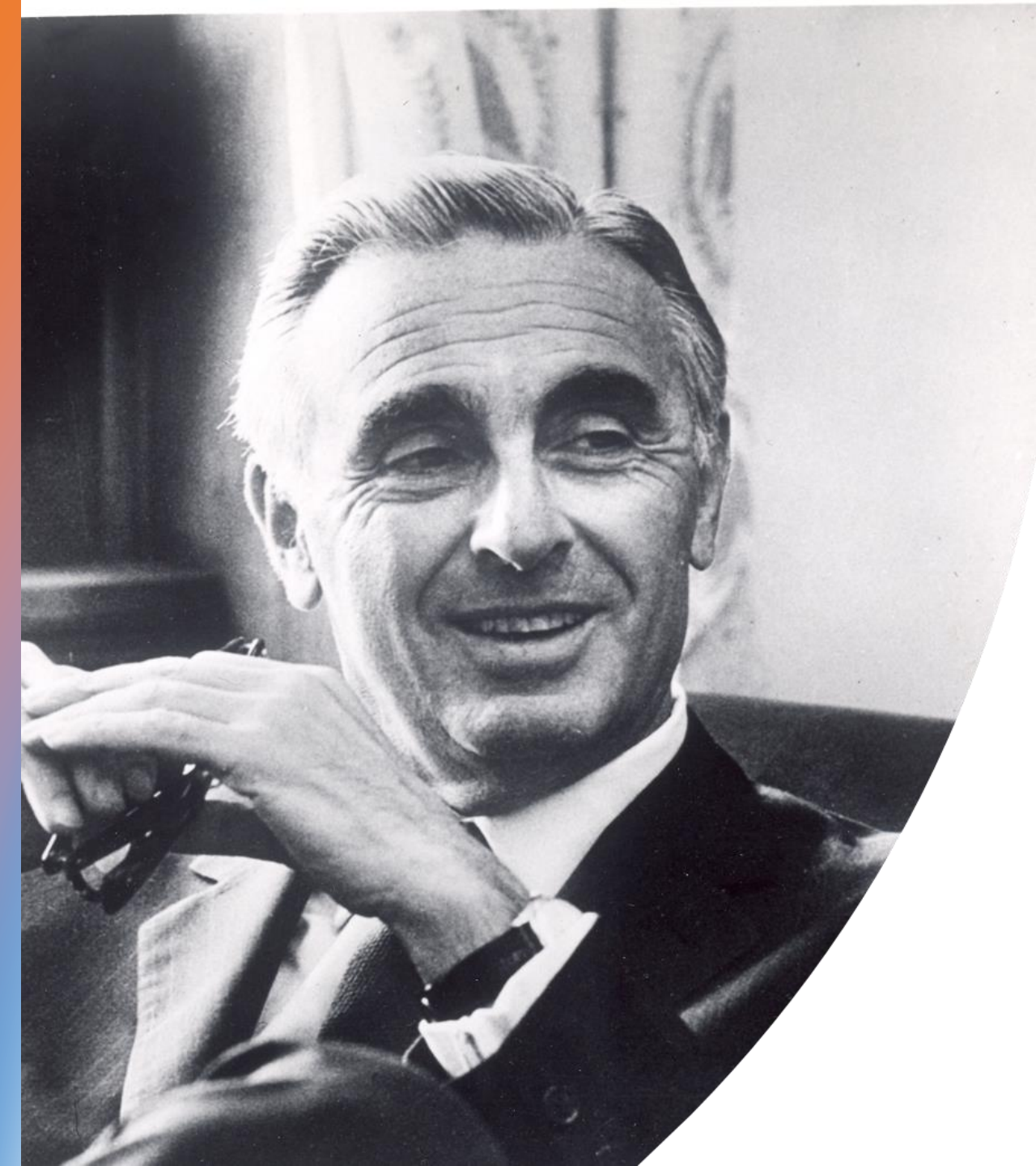
Fairness in Politics: Abraham Ribicoff

- He became a lawyer and was interested in politics. He wanted politics to be open to everyone, no matter what religion or background. When he thought that people were treating him unfairly because he was Jewish, he said so. In 1954 he became the first Jewish governor of the state.



In His Own Words

- As a child I had grown up in New Britain, and I had had this American dream that in this great country of ours, anybody could achieve any office he sought or any position in private or public life, irrespective of race, color, creed, or religion. A person was to be accepted for what he was—his character, his ability, his integrity—and I assumed that this is what the State of Connecticut really was and what Connecticut really meant.
- (Sketch written for *Connecticut Jewish History* issue on Jews in CT politics – cite]



Fairness in Politics: Abraham Ribicoff

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From the Text

- Rabbi Hillel used to say, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

Pirke Avot 1:14

<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/35125.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>



Kindness: Annie Fisher

- Annie Fisher immigrated from Russia to Hartford with her family when she was 5 years old.
- She was able to continue her education more than most people of her time (especially women) and was one of the first women to graduate from Wesleyan University in 1904. She went on to study in New York and Europe too.



Kindness: Annie Fisher

- Annie Fisher spent most of her life dedicated to educating children in Hartford. She showed kindness or *chesed* throughout her life.
- She was the first woman to be a school principal and later the first woman superintendent of all the schools in the city.
- She knew what it was like to be an immigrant, and she helped immigrant students learn English and how to adjust to the United States.
- She spoke Yiddish like many of her students which helped her connect with them.





Kindness: Annie Fisher

- She made changes to her schools to help her students with things like dental care, eyeglasses, and cleanliness.
- She introduced the first programs for students with special needs and for preschoolers.
- She also tried to make sure that teachers were treated fairly.
- She volunteered with different Jewish organizations to help people in Hartford and beyond.
- The Annie Fisher Montessori School in Hartford is named after her.



From the Text

- "The true guardians of a community are the teachers."

Talmud Yerushalami, Hagigah 1:7

- "Impress them [these words] upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up."

Deuteronomy 6:7

- "Teach a child in the way to go, and even in old age that one will not stray from it."

Proverbs 22:6



In Their Own Words

- *"When I was a child of immigrant parents you taught me English. You helped me overcome fears."*

Mrs. Max Zietz

- *"When I came here 45 years ago from Russia we were called 'greenhorns.' You understood our plight...gave us a grounding in English...saw to it that we became good Americans."*

Frank Novick

- A person who went to Barnard [School] was proud – you were in the incarnation of the Barnard spirit...All over Hartford, thousands of Barnard graduates rise and call you blessed."

Lewis Fox