



A Report from the 2017 Boston Biennial

Dear Colleague,

There was not even a place to sit on the floor or an inch to squeeze in the doorway. Our Biennial presentation on “Negotiation Skills for Women” clearly reflected a deep need, as the room quickly hit overflow, with many turned away. This was just one of the four WRN presentations/events at the Biennial. All were successful. Here are the details:

In partnership with the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) and the Reform Pay Equity Initiative, WRN co-presented two sessions on pay equity, one for employers and the other for employees. This initiative aims to narrow the wage gap within the Reform Movement and beyond. On Wednesday afternoon of Biennial, we shared “Gender Justice: Women and the Workplace” as part of the Strengthening Congregations learning track. Rabbi Janet Offel (URJ), Martha Hausman (a lawyer who works on many clergy contracts), and Rabbi Mary Zamore provided an overview of the wage gap and its causes, its reality within the Reform Movement, and the interventions aiming to narrow the gap. We debuted the beta version of the Reform Pay Equity Initiative’s toolbox for employers, an on-line resource that synagogues and organizations can use to educate and train professional and lay leaders to ensure ethical and just employment: <https://wrj.org/reform-pay-equity-initiative>. These resources will be evolving over the coming weeks. Let us know if you would like to be a pilot congregation or organization, training with these materials.

On Friday morning we ran our oversubscribed session “Negotiation Skills for Women: Putting Reform Jewish Values to Work” as part of the Tikkun Olam learning track. Rabbi Marla Feldman and Rabbi Mary Zamore provided the Jewish context, while Babson professors Dr. Danna Greenberg and Dr. Nan Langowitz ran a training to help Jewish women, both lay and professional, gain needed skills and avoid traps. Our next step is to record this type of training to make it available to all who are seeking this guidance.

The narratives we heard during both pay equity sessions revealed the depth of frustration women are experiencing. WRN members are certainly well acquainted with the challenges Jewish women professionals face everyday in the workplace. Yet, it was surprising to hear lay leaders share stories affirming the bias we continually navigate in our synagogues and organizations. At the Wednesday session, several lay leaders told stories of sitting on search committees or boards and hearing outrageous comments about their female candidates, including fears that the rabbi may want to become pregnant, to the hope she could be paid less because of her husband’s earning capacity. It was painful to hear these stories, but gratifying to know that we have allies in many places who share our frustration and also want change.

Earlier Friday morning WRN & WRJ served as leaders at the t’filah option entitled, “Kolot Nashim: Women's Voices in Prayer.” Leaders included Cantor Jill Abramson, Karen Goldberg, Rabbi Amy Memis-Foler (WRN co-president), and Deborah Radin. The service highlighted the voices of women in prayers, poetry and song. We were honored to have Lesley Sachs, Executive Director of Women of the Wall, and Anat Hoffman, Chair of Women of the Wall and Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center, as well as Rabbi Marla Feldman and Rabbi Mary Zamore, participate with us to lead our morning prayers.

Finally, the WRN dinner was spectacular! What a nice opportunity to step out of the frenetic pace of the Biennial to be together with friends, new and old. These warm gatherings remind us that our Network is so important to our professional and personal lives! We are grateful the restaurant accommodated our ever-growing numbers as we blew past predicted headcounts.

We wish all our members a bright, uplifting, and inspiring (secular) New Year.

[Click to view photos from the URJ Boston Biennial 2017](#)

Next National Learning

Aggression: Yours, Mine, and Ours with Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 12:00pm EST

When someone speaks aggressively to you, it can move you out of your comfort zone and leave you feeling temporarily speechless and powerless. How to move yourself back into a comfortable place requires a step-by-step strategy, including recognizing your own discomfort, becoming aware of your own aggressive feelings, and figuring out how to use your feelings to craft an appropriate response. In our discussion, we will consider these questions (and more): How do you know when to take something personally? How do you know which feelings belong to whom? What is the goal of your response?

Register Here For This Session



Rabbi Ellen Lewis is a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Brown University. After her ordination at Hebrew Union College in 1980, she served congregations in Dallas, TX; Summit, NJ (named Rabbi Honorata); and Washington, NJ (named Rabbi Emerita). She recently retired from congregational work to practice full-time as a therapist, supervisor, pastoral counselor, and professional coach. Rabbi Lewis is a certified and licensed modern psychoanalyst in private practice in Bernardsville, NJ, and in New York City. She received her analytical training in New York at the Center for Modern Psychoanalytic Studies and has served on the faculty of the Academy of Clinical and Applied Psychoanalysis. She is also certified as a Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. Her essay on forgiveness appears in *Mishkan HaNefesh*, the new Reform machzor.

WRN at the Upcoming PARR Convention

Monday, January 8 at 5pm, WRN gathering with snacks. Come hear about our latest work and connect with colleagues over a drink.

Tuesday, January 9 at 2:30-4pm, "Gender Pay Equity: How to Solve Our Reform Problem" Learn about the wage gap within the Reform community and what you and your community can do to lead the fight in this ethical issue. We will look at texts that instruct us to pay fairly and the modern tools that can narrow the pay gap.

MEMBERSHIP

If you haven't already renewed your membership and are reading this newsletter, you are PART of this awesomely wicked and necessary organization. Make it official! Encourage others to do the same. We are doing important, WOKE things — and will continue to do so — but we need you.

Join Us!

No one is ever denied membership due to financial need.

Lauren Cohn,
VP of Membership and Outreach

SUPPORT WRN

Please consider in putting WRN on the list of organizations that you include in your charitable giving.

As you know, WRN functions on a very small budget. With your donation we can continue creating our unique community and advocating for the values we uphold.

Here is the link for donations:

<https://womensrabbinicnetwork.org/Donate>.



WRN would like to bring your attention to: A Webinar For Rabbis presented by [Jewish Women's Foundation of New York](#) and the [Good People Fund](#): #metoo From The Pulpit: A Rabbi's Role In Creating Safe Respectful Synagogue Communities

Please join us on Tuesday January 16th at 1:00 PM EST for a one-hour webinar providing useful concepts and tools for ensuring safe respectful communities for staff, clergy and congregants.

While not a full training, we will cover topics including:

- Best practices for fostering an environment where all staff and all congregants feel safe and respected.
- Boundaries (*yours and your congregants'*)
- Relations between congregants (*when to be restorative and when not to be*)
- And respond to your interests and questions.

Please register and submit your questions at <http://bit.ly/2yUrhtb>

Our presenters are Fran Sepler and Rabbi Rachel Ain:



Rabbi Rachel Ain is the Rabbi of [Sutton Place Synagogue](#) in Manhattan. Before joining SPS, Rabbi Ain was the Senior Director for National Young Leadership of the Jewish Federations of North America. She was the Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, a Conservative Synagogue in Syracuse, from her ordination in 2004 until 2011. Rabbi Ain sits on the Chancellor's Rabbinic Cabinet of JTS, the executive committee of the NY Board of Rabbis, the Partnership of Faith, which is an interfaith gathering of NYC Clergy, and is a co-chair of the Rabbinic Roundtable for the American Jewish Committee.



Fran Sepler is the President of [Sepler & Associates](#), which provides services and advice to organizations interested in creating the most respectful workplaces possible. She has developed techniques and protocols used throughout the United States and is the author of "Finding the Facts: What Every Workplace Investigator Needs to Know". Fran has provided anti-harassment, anti-bullying and implicit bias training to thousands of organizations. She has also conducted workplace climate assessments for workplaces of all sizes. Fran was selected by the EEOC to design their new national Training Program On Respectful Workplaces. She is currently developing standards for organizations to measure and improve their "fairness quotients."

Keep in touch at the [#GamAni Facebook Group](#)

OYs and JOYs

Our condolences to:

Shoshana Conover on the death of her mother, Carol Wolf.

Arlene Bernstein on the death of her mother, Mae Bernstein.

Rachel Timoner on the death of her family member, Joshua, the father of her children Eitan and Benji.

Mazal Tov to:

Courtney Berman on the birth of her son, Micah LeRoy Miller.

Amy Cohen on the birth of her daughter, Noa Clara.

Jessica Oleon Kirschner on the birth of her daughter, Maya Sybil.

Nicole Luna on the birth of her daughter, Iris.