



## Reflections from the CCAR Convention

Co-leader of the Reform Pay Equity Initiative (RPEI), Mary had the opportunity to present in two different sessions. Our colleague Marla Feldman, Executive Director of WRJ and the other co-leader of RPEI, was not able to be at the convention. In the first session, Jonathan Cohen, head of the CCAR Responsa Committee, presented the draft of his Responsum to Mary and Marla's submitted *she'elah*, "Is there an obligation under Jewish law to pay men and women the same for comparable labor?" In the second session, Mary and employment lawyer Michael Gan reflected on the gender-based data revealed by the 2017-18 CCAR salary study. They discussed the trends documented by the study, the benefits and challenges of such studies, and how female rabbis can use this data in salary negotiations.

### *Mary shares:*

The Responsum highlighted our tradition's ability to address the wage gap, teaching us that we must fix this injustice within our communities. I shared the practical interventions available to synagogues/organizations through the RPEI's on-line toolbox (<https://wrj.org/reform-pay-equity-initiative>). This session, with its foci on halacha and practical interventions for employers, was a good compliment to the session on the 2017 CCAR Salary Study. The data session demonstrated how the wage gap has persisted steadily over the last 6 years since the last gender-based salary study. We highlighted ways women can utilize this data; we also spent time discussing how women in non-congregational or part-time congregational positions can create data for salary comparisons. The RPEI on-line toolbox has resources for employees, too. If your community wants to be a pilot congregation to test drive these resources, let us know.

Other highlights were the WRN dinner, hangout time in the WRN hospitality suite, and the powerful session run by the CCAR's taskforce on the Experience of Women in the Rabbinate. With almost 90 women at the WRN dinner, we had a wonderful time connecting. Our program featured highlights from our June 2017 WRN convention with Sally Priesand sharing the funny book titles of her special "story time" activity. We also heard testimonials from colleagues, describing the ways WRN strengthens their rabbinates. We thanked our outgoing board members, including Ellen Nemhauser, co-President. We celebrated her years of WRN service filled with passion, leadership and vision. We blessed our new board under the stunning WRN tallit as they begin serving on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### *Ellen shares:*

For some women WRN is the safe space where they can appeal to colleagues for very specific support. Others especially appreciate WRN's focus on issues such as family leave, sacred aging, and wage parity. I identify with both reasons and more for my own deep connection to WRN. There is a qualitative uniqueness to our all-female collective. Our society at large continues to grapple with issues of gender equality, ongoing misconduct, and simple misunderstanding about the needs and aspirations of women. The WRN provides a lens through which female, as well as male, rabbis can reflect on ways to right age-old wrongs toward women. We are poised to lead the way for our greater Jewish communities to be the sacred spaces they should be. Additionally, as a member of the CCAR Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate, I am committed to representing the experience of WRN members to help inform this investigation that ultimately will inform our general rabbinic community. I cherish my years in WRN leadership and look forward to continuing as past-president.

## **2018-2019 WRN BOARD**

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*Thank you to our board members who are completing their service: Ellen Nemhauser, Adrienne Scott, Kelly Levy, Elizabeth Zeller and Loren Filson Lapidus.*

## **#metoo Programs at HUC-JIR**

### **Cincinnati Campus:**

As the first American Reform rabbinical school to ordain a female rabbi in 1972, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati has an important and sacred legacy to live up to when it comes to pursuing gender equality. Thus, we at the Cincinnati campus have dedicated much of the past two years to fully and deeply addressing issues of the way gender affects our work as rabbinical students, graduate students, faculty, staff, administration, and rabbis. Throughout the year, the Gender Task Force (a committee of rabbinical students, graduate students, faculty, staff and administration) has facilitated four different events for the campus addressing gender and our work - delving into issues such as gender bias, micro-aggressions, and flat out discrimination. We organized these events in the hopes of not only sparking a campus conversation about the varied experiences people have had based on their gender, but also to strengthen our skills in identifying and acting upon areas of inequality in our midst.

One of the meaningful events we held this year was a lunch conversation with Rabbi Sally Priesand - who shared her experience about being the first female rabbinical student and Reform Rabbi in the United States. She spoke about what it was like to be the only female voice in the room, lacking a bathroom for her on every floor, missing the same housing opportunities, and not being easily accepted during the pulpit placement process. These are all issues which the College and the Reform movement as a whole have come quite far in addressing for women. That being said, she also remarked that there is still work for us to accomplish as the next generation of rabbis - we still need to achieve equality among people of all genders. Regardless of the roadblocks she faced, it is important to note that Reform Judaism's persistence in creating gender equality began with her ordination. It is an honor to live in the wealth of her influence and to continue to make it our mission to bring equity to the way others are viewed and treated. Rabbi Sally Priesand said at this lunch conversation: "Everyday the world is improving because someone was willing to take a risk--you can be that someone." We should all strive to be that someone, someone who makes great efforts to repair our world, making it a more equal place for all.

—Zoe McCoon, second year rabbinical student

—Natalie Louise Shribman, third year rabbinical student

## New York Campus:

The entire HUC-JIR New York Campus engaged in a Yom Iyyun earlier this semester on the topic of #MeToo issues. A committee of faculty and students planned the day, to provide students with a forum to talk about this important topic, how it relates to their own lives in general, and as future clergy and Jewish professionals. We opened the day with a student-led community ritual, framing the day with music, prayer, and poetry. Throughout the day we had multiple guest speakers provide their expertise on various aspects of this issue. The day continued with our Goldner-Panken Symposium speaker, Jodi Kantor, one of the New York Times correspondents who broke the story on Harvey Weinstein, sparking the #MeToo movement. (Jodi Kantor subsequently won a Pulitzer Prize for her reporting on Harvey Weinstein and #MeToo issues.) She simultaneously brought in Jewish and universal perspectives on how we talk about these issues in our world. After some small group reflection time, we continued our learning with Rav Aviva Richman of Yeshivat Hadar. She led us in a beit midrash-style text study on sexual harassment and violence in rabbinic texts. Her learned Jewish perspective gave us grounding to continue to discuss how these issues affect our professional and religious lives. Our third and final guest was Rabbi Hara Person of the CCAR, speaking specifically about her role on the CCAR Task Force for the Experience of Women in the Rabbinate. She provided further insight on how these issues are being addressed in our professional world. Our day of learning ended with a final reflection session and *Asher Yatzar*, blessings for the health and wellbeing of our bodies. These conversations have continued among students and faculty throughout the semester, and we hope that this day of learning was the beginning of a long-term commitment to engaging with these difficult issues in all aspects of our work.

—Ariel Milan-Polisar, second year rabbinical student

—Rachael Pass, second year rabbinical student

## Los Angeles Campus:

Over a year ago, a group of HUC-LA students came together with a similar curiosity. What would it look like to discuss gender-based violence and experiences within the seminary space? Would our male classmates be interested? Would our female classmates? We talked amongst ourselves, thought about ideas for trainings, but the conversations mostly stayed in the theoretical realm.

Several months into our discussions, the #metoo movement began. It became incredibly clear that these conversations needed to move from the private sphere to the public conversation on both campus and in movement wide spaces. Thankfully, the LA campus felt a similar desire and we began to act.

Our yearly Spiegel Seminar, a series of lunch and learns that discuss a challenging psychosocial topic not thoroughly dealt with in classes, decided to focus on learning about harassment, sharing problematic language, and thinking about opportunities for culture changes within our own community. Over three sessions, we developed a safe space to reflect on our own experiences, shared how language translates to different individuals, and talked about how to be an upstander. We learned how much we do not know about our individual perspectives and the importance of listening and honoring one another's stories. We discussed the various power dynamics on campus and committed to continuing the conversation; creating a campus culture that holds everyone accountable to using inclusive language and actions.

Additionally, HUC partnered with Ziegler to offer sessions for the female-identified rabbinic students at both seminaries to talk about how our gender expression influences our positions currently and in the future. Leaders in both programs, Rabbi Cheryl Peretz and Rabbi Dr. Dvora Weisberg, believed it was important for us to feel more prepared to deal with situations of sexual harassment and sexualized inappropriate behavior. When the facilitators asked the room, nearly all of us had stories of supervisors, congregants, professors, or classmates who had made inappropriate comments. We had been made to feel small or less significant because of our sex. By working across denominations, we were able to identify similarities and differences between our movements and learn from one another about how we can act as allies and advocates for one another. We practiced language, worked through case studies, and learned about our legal rights.

In all of these programs, we built a community of like-minded colleagues and committed allies. By sharing stories, we no longer feel alone in our experiences. By discussing best practices, we feel empowered to speak up and speak out in our classrooms and congregations.

Of course, there is still so much to do. I hope this topic remains in public discourse, within and outside of the rabbinic community. I believe it is imperative for all of us to keep sharing and talking about this important issue as we include action and policy changes in our discourse. I am grateful for HUC's interest in bringing this conversation to a campus-wide level, and hope that we can continue to grow as a model for equitable, honest, and Teshuvah-focused discourse around harassment and power dynamics.

—Julie Bressler, fourth year rabbinic student

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### **#metoo: Ally Engagement**

Our recent webinar explored the role of allies in creating safe workspace which recognizes the authority of our positions.

**WRN members** can catch the recording via the WRN website. [Click Here.](#)



## Pack Your Bags for the WRN Convention

Scripps College  
Claremont, CA  
June 2-5, 2019



### The WRN Convention is coming soon!!

We look forward to three amazing days filled with renewal, connection, learning, and engagement. WRN is now accepting pre-payments up to \$500 towards the convention.

YOU make our convention what it is! If you'd like to help with planning, please email Jessica Marshall, [jessica@judaismyourway.org](mailto:jessica@judaismyourway.org), and Marla Hornsten, [mhornsten@temple-israel.org](mailto:mhornsten@temple-israel.org).

### **OYS and JOYs**

#### *Our condolences to:*

**Zoe Klein Miles and her husband Scott Miles** on the death of Scott's brother Rabbi Mark S. Miller.

**Beth Lieberman and her husband Steve Landau** on the death of Steven's father Daniel Landau.

**Sarah Hronsky and her husband Yuri** on the death of Yuri's father Dr. Ivan Hronsky.

**Sue Levi Elwell and her wife Nurit Shein** on the death of Sue's sister-in-law Martha Poulter.

**Jennie Rosenn and her husband David** on the death of Jennie's father Paul Castleman.

**Janet Liss and her spouse Grace Blank** on the death of Grace's mother Luba Blank.

**Stacy Eskovitz Rigler and her husband Peter** on the death of Peter's mother Raleigh Rigler.

#### *We celebrate with:*

**Sue Levi Elwell and her wife Nurit Levi Shein** on the birth of their granddaughter Juno Claire Elwell Higgins.

**Debby Hachen and her husband Peter Weinrobe** on the births of their grandchildren Alice Elizabeth Lippitt and Samuel David Zeitlin.

**Ellen Nemhauser and her husband Jeffrey** on the occasion of their son Carmi's Bar Mitzvah.

## **WRN Remembers Our Teachers**

*WRN mourns the loss of our teacher, leader, and friend, our beloved HUC-JIR President, Rabbi Aaron Panken, Ph.D.* Our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Lisa Messinger, their children Eli and Samantha, his parents Beverly and Peter, his sister, Rabbi Melinda Panken (Glenn Cohen) and their family, his father-in-law Martin E. Messinger, and his sisters-in-law Daryl Messinger (Jim Heeger), Rabbi Sarah Messinger (Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat), and Alice Messinger and their families.

*WRN mourns the death of our teacher Rabbi Isaac Jerusalmi, Ph.D., esteemed faculty member of HUC-JIR.* Our heartfelt condolences extended to his family: his wife Nimet Neama Jerusalmi, their children Stella and Rabbi Cy Stanway '87, Professor David Jerusalmi, Rabbi Dr. Hanna Garcia Yerushalmi '96 and Rabbi Ari Goldstein '97, and Peninna Jerusalmi, and grandchildren Abraham Isaac Stanway, Naomi Rebecca Stanway, SaraAnn Stanway, Sela Jerusalmi Goldstein, Nava Jerusalmi Goldstein, Sammy Jerusalmi Goldstein, Juda Jerusalmi Goldstein.