

# VISIONING JUSTICE

and the American Jewish Community

by Shifra Bronznick and Didi Goldenhar

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## CREDITS

**Shifra Bronznick** served as principal author and investigator for *Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community*, the research and action project launched by the Jewish Life and Values Program of the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

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**Rabbi Jennie Rosenn**, Director of the Jewish Life and Values Program of the Nathan Cummings Foundation, launched this inquiry and served as a wise and insightful partner throughout the process.

A complete listing of individuals who generously participated in interviews and conversations can be found in Appendix A.

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# A Letter from the Nathan Cummings Foundation

March 2008/Adar 5768

Since its inception, the Jewish Life and Values Program of the Nathan Cummings Foundation has sought to strengthen American Jewish life and create a more just world through advancing Jewish social justice.

Our work has taken many forms – from seeding new initiatives to helping established organizations increase their impact; from identifying and supporting emerging leaders to developing communities of practice. As a catalyst in developing the field of Jewish social justice, the Nathan Cummings Foundation has sought to be both prescient and responsive.

To expand our thinking about the best ways to advance this work, the Foundation launched *Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community*. The goal of Visioning Justice was to assess the field – through research, analysis, and reflection – and to identify key strategic directions for engaging more American Jews, more effectively, in issues of social and economic justice.

***Visioning Justice* grew out of our belief that we are at a pivotal moment. We have seen tremendous growth in the field of Jewish social justice. The new developments and collaborations that have emerged during this inquiry highlight the ripeness of the field for greater synergy. We now see the opportunity for bringing organizations and individuals together – to create a powerful vision and develop coordinated strategies that will bring the field to the next level of visibility, influence, and impact.**

**We also seek through this inquiry and report to engage and influence the Jewish community – that we may make more fully manifest our shared values, building movements for justice in this country and around the world.**

To design and implement *Visioning Justice*, the Foundation turned to Shifra Bronznick, a widely respected organizational consultant and researcher. Shifra brought to the project her broad expertise in helping nonprofit organizations navigate change, both in the Jewish communal arena and throughout the secular world, in areas of leadership, education, social service, and social change. Shifra also has been recognized as the Founder and President of Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community which through its research and advocacy, is creating real change in the Jewish community.

Our hope is that *Visioning Justice* will serve our grantees, funding colleagues, and the broader field and will stimulate new breakthrough thinking about how to fulfill the potential of this extraordinary moment.

As a family foundation rooted in Jewish values, this work grows out of our commitment to make real the visions of our prophets. May these visions of a world where “justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream” be close at hand, and may we do all that is humanly possible to bring such a world to life.



**Lance E. Lindblom**  
President and CEO



**Rabbi Jennie Rosenn**  
Program Director, Jewish Life and Values



# Overview and Key Findings

In 2006, The Nathan Cummings Foundation Jewish Life and Values Program commissioned *Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community* — an inquiry into the strategies that would engage Jews, Jewish communities, and Jewish institutions more widely, deeply, and effectively in Jewish social justice.

Through *Visioning Justice*, we sought to identify trends within the Jewish social justice sector and to understand the interconnected relationships between the organized Jewish community and the secular social change world. Concurrently, we took stock of trends in the external environment, including political and cultural trends that might affect the Jewish social justice field.

*Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community* culminates with a set of recommendations designed to leverage the progress that has been achieved and to root this growth in strategic initiatives. Our hope is that, by applying wisdom from a wide range of public sector projects, many more Jews – volunteers, philanthropists, activists, advocates, lay leaders and professionals – will engage in Jewish social justice, to deepen Jewish life and to contribute to social and economic justice, in the United States and around the world.

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## THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION AND JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE

Since its creation in 1989, social justice has been a pillar of the Nathan Cummings Foundation’s Jewish Life and Values Program. Guided by its two Program Directors, first, Rabbi Rachel Cowan and, subsequently, Rabbi Jennie Rosenn, the Foundation has led the way in supporting initiatives that link the vibrancy of American Jewish life to the creation of a more just world.

In 1993, the Foundation commissioned Leonard Fein, a prominent political scientist, writer and activist, to write about the American Jewish community. The resulting monograph, “Smashing Idols and Other Prescriptions for Jewish Continuity,” argued that the vitality of the American Jewish community depended on a renewed commitment to social justice. Fein exhorted the American Jewish community to assume its public role as “an agent of values” and a “community of intention,” beginning with the primacy of *tikkun olam* - repairing the world.

When the Nathan Cumming Foundation started supporting Jewish social justice initiatives in the early 1990's, most of these groups existed on the margins. Through seed funding, the Foundation helped a select group of local, regional, and national organizations increase their visibility and impact. At the same time, the Foundation supported a group of emerging leaders who demonstrated the talent and vision to transform their Jewish social justice organizations. The Foundation turned as well to the next generation of leadership, partnering with the Rockwood Leadership Program and the Jewish Funds for Justice to create customized training programs for Jewish social justice leaders.

Early on, the Nathan Cummings Foundation recognized the potential of Jewish service to foster deep commitment to Jewish social justice. Together with leading practitioners, the Foundation promoted service as a new communal norm in Jewish life. The Foundation also spearheaded the development of alumni networks for Jewish service participants, as an important resource for leadership and activism.

The Nathan Cummings Foundation has played a prominent role in engaging more Jews in advocacy and advanced the development of congregation-based community organizing (CBCO) in synagogues. Over time, the Foundation ushered new funders into the field, helping to increase and diversify the resources for Jewish social justice organizations. The Foundation also supported research related to the Jewish community and social justice; in particular, a study by Professor Steven M. Cohen that showed that the vast majority of Jews identify *social justice* as a primary Jewish value.

The Nathan Cummings Foundation's focused and consistent interventions over the past fifteen years helped foster a new narrative in the Jewish community. This narrative is about the purpose and passion of contributing as *Jews* to social justice.

# Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community

*Visioning Justice* was designed as an action research project, in which we strived to create a continuous cycle of conversation, learning, feedback, and experimentation. Over the course of this inquiry, we conducted more than two hundred interviews and group conversations. We analyzed the literature related to social change, participated in conferences, and convened group meetings.

While this report does not presume to serve as a comprehensive environmental scan of the Jewish social justice field, our hope — and hypothesis — is that the organizations and individuals consulted for this report offer a reasonable “fractal” of the field, in terms of critical findings, opportunities, and challenges.

We began by listening attentively to those who work on the front lines of Jewish social justice. *Visioning Justice* investigated both national and grassroots Jewish social justice organizations; CBCO synagogues and independent spiritual communities; local and national agencies in the organized Jewish community; foundations and individual philanthropists; academic scholars and practitioners in the fields of nonsectarian social change and advocacy; veteran and newcomer Jewish social justice leaders and activists; a wide range of Jewish media outlets; and leadership experts.

*Visioning Justice's* action research approach was intended to contribute to the field's ongoing evolution. First, through iterative discussions with Jewish social justice leaders, activists, lay leaders, and practitioners, the process cultivated an environment for strategic thinking. Second, individual and group meetings often functioned as “on the ground” coaching for leaders on the forefront of Jewish social justice. Third, *Visioning Justice* encouraged several new experiments for building alliances and partnerships. Now, as *Visioning Justice* moves toward completion, several exciting opportunities suggest that the field of Jewish social justice has matured and is ready for the next level of growth.

# What We Have Learned

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## PROGRESS IN THE JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE FIELD

**Field Growth:** The growth of Jewish social justice organizations – locally, regionally and nationally – has infused the field with greater vitality and diversity. Although most Jewish social justice organizations are still relatively small, some groups are expanding rapidly – through internal growth, mergers and alliances. The emergence of new spiritual communities dedicated to social justice represents another growth spurt, as do the growing numbers of traditional rabbis and congregations making social justice a central commitment.

**Dramatic Expansion of Key Organizations:** The growth trajectory of the key Jewish social justice organizations has been extraordinary. American Jewish World Service, virtually defunct ten years ago, now occupies a prominent position as a \$30 million organization, galvanizing more than 90,000 donors and activists around its agenda of global citizenship. Five years ago, Jewish Funds for Justice struggled to maintain its viability. Today, this \$4.7 million organization can be credited with two successful mergers and influential programs in leadership, social media, congregation-based community organizing, and service learning. Progressive Jewish Alliance, founded as a small Los Angeles operation, has now expanded to San Francisco, increasing its program budget from \$185,000 to \$1 million. AVODAH, the premier Jewish service corps, started in New York on a \$200,000 budget; since then, AVODAH has added programs in Chicago, Washington and New Orleans, with a projected budget of \$2 million in 2008.

**Increase in Numbers and Diversity:** Jewish social justice and service efforts are attracting diverse groups of Jews and increasing the numbers of engaged activists – from the organized Jewish community and from the secular social change sector. The “troops” for Jewish social justice are emerging from many venues, both locally and in broader regional and national collaborations.

**Visibility and Impact:** Jewish social justice organizations are becoming more visible, domestically and internationally, as they demonstrate their capacity to effect tangible change – from advocacy for hotel workers’ rights in California, to healthcare legislation in Massachusetts, from mobilization around the genocide in Darfur to the response to Hurricane Katrina.

**Influence:** The progressive Jewish voice has achieved greater “bandwidth” in the public policy arena and cultural landscape – through Jewish and mainstream print media, online publications, and social media. Organizational leaders and activists are finding new ways to communicate their values in the public square, whether reframing kosher certification to include decent working conditions or conveying the message that, in an election year, health care and education are Jewish issues.

**Service as a New Communal Norm:** Volunteer service projects are proliferating, with participation rising more than 20% annually for the past five years and waiting lists for many programs. Mainstream organizations, such as United Jewish Communities, UJA-Federation of New York and Birthright Israel, are all expressing interest in expanding service opportunities for young Jews. As service “goes to scale,” Jewish social justice practitioners are engaging in a new conversation with major funders. The goal is to find the balance point between authenticity and program expansion, to ensure that service programs remain rooted in core values.

**Congregation-based Community Organizing (CBCO):** Through the growth of congregation-based community organizing, Jews are joining with people of other faiths and cultures to address such systemic issues as health care reform and affordable housing. Just Congregations – a CBCO initiative launched by the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Reform Movement – has brought many more Reform rabbis and volunteer leaders into the Jewish social justice field.

**New Connections with the Organized Jewish Community:** Through most of the 20th century, the American Jewish community advocated for social justice issues alongside other minority groups and disadvantaged populations. Later in the century, tensions around Israel, anti-Semitism, and affirmative action frayed these alliances; these concerns, alongside the anxiety around rising rates of intermarriage, shifted the communal focus to Jewish identity and continuity. As the major organizations retreated from social justice advocacy, new Jewish social justice groups emerged to address these universal issues, as Jews. In recent years, as more young people flock to the newer groups and more “mainstream” Jews recognize the centrality of social justice to their Jewish identity, new opportunities have surfaced for Jewish social justice groups and traditional organizations to connect around common interests and shared values.

**Resources and Philanthropy:** As the Jewish social justice field matures and succeeds in attracting the next generation, forward-thinking Jewish foundations and philanthropists are responding with greater interest and increased contributions, some in the millions of dollars. Traditional Jewish funders – including the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and The Marcus Foundation – are committing major financial resources to service programs, which they envision as a path to stronger Jewish identity.

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## CHALLENGES FOR THE JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE FIELD

**Gaps in Leadership and the Workforce:** Given the field's rapid growth, there is an urgent need for systematic leadership training, workforce recruitment, and professional development. Leadership succession needs immediate attention, to create a well-stocked talent pool of CEOs, second-level leaders, mid-level managers, synagogue organizers, and service learning educators.

**Small Scale, Many Issues:** While their collective influence is growing, the Jewish social justice voice still occupies a minority position in the public square. Moreover, each organization is committed to its own agenda of social justice issues. The small scale, combined with the diffusion of the social justice agenda, reduces the potential impact that can be exerted on any single issue.

**Network Deficits:** Jewish social justice leaders and groups are connecting to each other, to volunteers and professionals in the organized Jewish community, to activists in the secular social change arena, to leaders of new Jewish spiritual communities, and to the next generation of young Jews. However, the demands of organizational life and the varying priorities of these individuals and groups make it difficult to create and sustain useful, mutually beneficial networks.

**Knowledge Gaps:** Throughout the Jewish social justice field, research and evaluation have been given low priority. For most organizations, programmatic reach already exceeds institutional grasp, such that "knowledge management" falls to the sidelines. For example, as service goes to scale, it has been necessary to "retrofit" a research agenda, with four new studies now underway aimed at meeting the needs of practitioners and funders. It would be preferable if processes for data collection and analysis were embedded in programs from the outset.

**Limited Resources:** Most Jewish social justice organizations face the challenge of building a more secure, diversified funding base. While new funders have entered the field, grants tend to favor particular kinds of programs; for example, community service initiatives are faring better than advocacy campaigns. Multi-year funding for general operations and capacity-building, recognized as key philanthropic investments in the secular arena, has not yet become a priority for most Jewish social justice funders.

# Strategies

The Visioning Justice recommendations are intended to build the field of Jewish social justice. Key elements of field building include cultivating leadership and the workforce; creating organizational norms; developing mechanisms for research and knowledge-sharing; identifying philanthropic resources; creating infrastructure, and fostering collaboration.

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## ROOT THE WORK IN STRONG ORGANIZATIONS

### **1. Accelerate Workforce Recruitment and Training**

A coordinated process for identifying, recruiting, and training professional talent would expand the capacity of the Jewish social justice field. For recruitment, a social marketing approach would help the Jewish social justice field become more “visible.” Professional development, also a pressing need, offers a logical context for collaboration among the Jewish social justice organizations.

### **2. Strengthen Leaders and Leadership**

A systematic approach to leadership development in the Jewish social justice field would include training, residencies, mentoring, and coaching. In addition, potential leaders might be identified and cultivated from secular and Jewish social justice organizations, CBCO initiatives, service alumni networks, and the seminaries. The Selah program, a leadership training program for Jewish social justice activists now in its second phase, may serve as a model program from which lessons can be extracted and adapted throughout the field.

### **3. Use Research to Build Field Expertise**

For newer initiatives, integrating a research component from the start will enrich the field overall. Scholarly research in congregation-based community organizing (CBCO), for example, will yield intellectual and practical knowledge about readiness factors and success in this kind of social justice endeavor. By comparing CBCO with other faith-based social action efforts, the Jewish social justice field can analyze and help customize the best fit for differing synagogues and spiritual communities.

#### **4. Grasp Opportunity as Service Goes to Scale**

The momentum around service is bringing “all hands on deck,” from the mainstream to the innovators, from the most politically active to the most spiritually inclined, nationwide and across generations. The expansion of Jewish service offers many opportunities for weaving Judaism and social justice, while expanding networks and strengthening leadership. Funders and key practitioners can play an important role by both protecting the integrity of existing service programs and nurturing the environments in which new service initiatives can grow.

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### **CREATE INFLUENTIAL NETWORKS**

#### **5. Build the Jewish Social Justice Table**

In this next phase, the field needs to become *network-centric*, branching out to connect diverse individuals and interests through shared values. We envision building a Jewish social justice “table” to expand the field’s potential for influence, impact, and the next level of breakthrough thinking. This table would function as a practical structure for moving individuals and groups out of their insular worlds and into a powerful network for social good. By facilitating collaboration and identifying opportunities for joint decision-making, the table would help organizations leverage local, regional, and national networks.

Based on this inquiry and lessons learned from secular change efforts in the areas of peace and security, education reform, the women’s movement, and the environmental movement, Visioning Justice has launched a pilot project, *The Jewish Social Justice Table*, to explore the viability of such a network. The first convening, held in January 2008, demonstrated the potential of such networks for motivating Jewish organizations and individuals to collaborate with one another.

#### **6. Connect to the Organized Jewish Community around Shared Values**

The Jewish social justice community and the organized Jewish community have an unprecedented opportunity, to move from *shared interests* to a more profound appreciation of *shared values*. Despite their differences, these two worlds are highly interdependent, with promising collaborations already in process. To develop a coordinated strategy for working effectively with the organized Jewish community, key Jewish social justice organizations might form a “G8” group. Working collectively will enable organizations to leverage current relationships and avoid duplicative efforts. Through this group, volunteer leaders and donors might be approached as potential “ambassadors,” to draw mainstream organizations closer to social justice work.

## **7. Bring Social Justice Advocacy to the Jewish Social Service Sector**

Given their important caregiving role, Jewish social service agencies seem well-positioned to revive Jewish advocacy around social and economic justice. As a first step, several Jewish social justice organizations and social service agencies might consider joining the Building Movement Project's national interfaith initiative which teaches the social service sector how to engage staff, board and clients in advocacy. Jewish social justice groups also might consider a strategy for bringing representation to the many interfaith coalitions now meeting on health care, the environment, education, housing and the economy.

## **8. Amplify the Alternative Jewish Voice in the Public Square**

To establish the alternative Jewish voice in the public square, there must be a continuous "hum" of individual and organizational voices around values and issues. Many opportunities exist to amplify this voice, through Jewish media, mainstream media, and social media. Fluency in the use of social media should be rewarded, with support of new efforts to use technology for "just-in-time" participation and mobilization and greater interactivity. Online social networks should be complemented by offline activities that link individuals and organizations in a shared progressive Jewish narrative. The Jewish social justice field will benefit overall by continuously offering cultural, religious and educational experiences that teach every leader, activist, and volunteer to tell the story of Jewish social justice in creative and compelling ways.

# The Strategic Moment for Jewish Social Justice

We believe this is a moment of tremendous opportunity for the Jewish social justice field – to leverage the growth, build organizational infrastructure, ensure long-term financial stability and develop the next generation of leadership. By securing the progress achieved thus far and responding to the challenges, we open the possibility of elevating social justice in American Jewish life.

From the Visioning Justice inquiry, we have come to understand that, to fully capitalize on this strategic opportunity, it will be important to embrace the diversity of purposes, motivations, and Jewish identities that bring Jews to the work of social justice. Rather than view this multiplicity as a threat to Jewish continuity, we see multiplicity as the core strength of Jewish life and the guiding concept for building a vital field of Jewish social justice.

For post-modern Jews, Jewish social justice is the bridge between universalism and particularism. *If I am not for myself, who is for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?* Jewish social justice offers a profound way to resolve this binary relationship between commitment to the Jewish people and commitment to the people of the world. Through Jewish social justice, these commitments are woven together with new strength and meaning.

Jews of every generation and affiliation – from Jews active in secular social change to Jews devoted to their federations and synagogues – live in multiple worlds. The Visioning Justice inquiry has revealed the extraordinary opportunities to engage people in all their complexity, as Jews and as global citizens.

The field of Jewish social justice has much to contribute to the blueprint for global change. Grounded in theology, culture, and history, Jewish social justice has been translated and transmitted through every generation. The mission is rooted in our collective purpose and values. If we act now, with full force and vision, to move this work forward, then the beginning of the 21st century will become an era of transformation, for American Jewish life, and for the world at large.

# Reader's Guide to the Report

This report unfolds in seven parts:

**Part I: Progress** presents trends in the Jewish social justice field over the past five years. These include field growth; the increase in individual numbers and the diversity of venues from which these activists have come; expanded public influence; and the entry of new funders to the field.

**Part II: Challenges** addresses obstacles and constraints faced by the Jewish social justice field during this same period. Some of these derive from rapid growth, including the need for leadership and an expanded workforce; organizational and field sustainability; and the challenge of integrating Jewish social justice and spirituality.

**Part III: The Jewish Social Justice Field and the Organized Jewish Community** considers progress and challenges in the relationships between these two worlds, with a brief history of the American Jewish community over the last century, relative to Jewish social justice and social change advocacy.

**Part IV: Multiplicity and Jewish Social Justice** presents the diverse ecology of the Jewish social justice field — as manifested in its organizations, issues, activists, and leaders — and suggests how the field might embrace this multiplicity as a virtue.

**Part V: Strategies** offers eight strategies for rooting the growth of Jewish social justice organizations and initiatives and branching out to create a vibrant, network-centric ecology for Jewish social justice.

**Part VI: The Strategic Moment** speaks to the urgency and potential of bringing more Jews and Jewish communities into the work of Jewish social justice.

# Part I: Progress

# Field Growth

## GROWTH OF JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

Organization		Staff	Income	Donors
<b>AJWS</b>	2001	14	\$5,527,750	6,876
	2006	74	\$25,139,051	22,572
<b>AVODAH</b>	2001	3	\$394,000	250
	2006	13 full time, 2 part time	\$1,500,000	1,030
<b>HAZON</b>	2001	2	\$135,578	464
	2006	9	\$784,209	7,932
<b>JCA</b>	2001	4	\$310,000	350
	2006	8	\$560,000	630
<b>JCPA</b>	2001	16	\$2,706,473	88
	2006	20	\$3,147,331	115
<b>JCRC, BOSTON</b>	2001	22	\$2,000,000	12
	2006	27	\$3,000,000	29
<b>JFSJ</b>	2001	13	\$2,900,000	3906
	2006	33	\$4,700,000	2406
<b>JUFJ</b>	2001	1	\$50,000	50
	2006	1 + interns	\$97,000	300
<b>PJA</b>	2001	3	\$137,000	275
	2006	11 + intern	\$783,300	823
<b>TZEDEK HILLEL</b>	2001	2	\$348,668	3
	2006	3	\$955,967	14

## The field of Jewish social justice has been growing in every dimension over the last five years.

The evidence of growth in the field can be measured in terms of breadth — by budget numbers, staff members, donors, and participants — as well as by depth — with new organizations taking root in local communities and the diversity of new constituents. Another index of growth is the way in which organizations have been collaborating or even merging, to make the best use of limited resources.

As a result, many venues now exist for Jews to engage in social justice, whether in support for workers' rights, the fight against global poverty, development of affordable housing, expansion of health care, or activism against genocide.

## Some Jewish social justice organizations are experiencing exponential growth.

Although most Jewish social justice organizations are relatively small, some of the larger organizations are expanding rapidly:

In 1998, American Jewish World Service was struggling to stay afloat. Under the leadership of Ruth Messinger, AJWS operates with a \$30 million budget and 86 staff positions in 2008 and has galvanized more than thirty-five thousand donors in support of a global citizenship agenda.

Until 2003, Jewish Funds for Justice focused primarily on grantmaking for grassroots community organizing projects. Starting in 2004, under the leadership of Simon Greer, JFSJ has completed two mergers — with the Shefa Fund and SPARK. The organization now has a \$4.7 million annual budget and runs leadership, social media, congregation-based community organizing, and domestic service programs.

In 2002, the Progressive Jewish Alliance was a small Los Angeles organization with an annual budget of \$185,000. Five years later, under the leadership of Daniel Sokatch, PJA has emerged as a significant Jewish presence working on behalf of such issues as the rights of low-wage workers and reform of the juvenile criminal justice system. PJA's budget is now close to \$1 million and has expanded statewide, with centers in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In 1998, Rabbi David Rosenn founded AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps, recruiting nine young Jews to live together, engage in Jewish learning, and work for agencies fighting urban poverty. AVODAH now stands as the premier year-long Jewish service program, with forty-five

Corps members living communally in New York, Chicago, and Washington D.C. AVODAH, in collaboration with AJWS, is creating new models for alumni networks, supported by major funding from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation. Over the course of a decade, AVODAH's budget has grown tenfold, from \$200,000 to \$2,000,000.

## Jewish service is reaching a “tipping point.”

By elevating the importance and prevalence of Jewish service, especially among young people, we can foster a community deeply rooted in and defined by the values of tikkun olam and tzedek. Advancing Jewish service is an imperative and an opportunity to forge a culture of Jewish civic engagement that will inspire and connect young Jews as they strive to make the world a better place.

- LISA B. EISEN

NATIONAL DIRECTOR, CHARLES AND LYNN SCHUSTERMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION

Jewish service provides Jews with the opportunity to express their values through hands-on service, both transforming themselves and changing the world around them.

In recent years, Jewish service programs have proliferated. When the Jewish Coalition for Service was founded, there were fourteen programs. As of 2006, sixty-two Jewish service programs run by thirty-one Jewish organizations were affiliated with the Coalition. These programs serve both Jewish and general communities in the United States, Israel, and around the world.

According to the Jewish Coalition for Service, the number of people engaged in Jewish service has increased an average of 21% each year since 2002, with waiting lists for some programs.

Several organizations are spearheading or expanding service programs. The Center for Leadership Initiatives launched Leading Up North, with five hundred college students serving in Northern Israel. JFSJ has entered the field, first through SPARK, and more recently through its domestic community service program in New Orleans, launched with guidance from veteran AJWS practitioners. Tzedek Hillel has focused on bringing more college students into Alternative Spring Break. AVODAH is opening a house in New Orleans and plans to double its numbers nationally over the next three years.

The mainstream Jewish community appears ready to embrace service as a communal norm. United Jewish Communities is conducting a major study to assess the impact of service. UJA-Federation of New York has dedicated major funding for new service programs for college students. The Joint Distribution Committee is expanding its service programs, and the American Jewish Committee has convened a task force to support national service. Birthright Israel is also surveying its alumni to determine their level of interest in Jewish service.

In 2007, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Schusterman Foundation, AJWS, Hillel, Danny Krifcher, and the Jewish Coalition for Service convened funders and practitioners for a conference of newcomers and veterans in Jewish service, *From the Ground Up: Advancing Jewish Service*. Subsequently, several of these funders and practitioners have met to collaborate on plans for sustainable growth.

## Congregation-based community organizing in synagogues is developing rapidly.

Synagogue leaders are learning to engage their members through community organizing efforts. They are joining together to act powerfully for justice in their communities. In so doing, they are transforming their synagogues into communities of connection and effective action.

- RABBI JONAH PESNER,  
FOUNDING DIRECTOR, JUST CONGREGATIONS

Congregation-based community organizing (CBCO) is a dynamic process of bringing congregants together, through one-on-one conversations, house meetings and trainings, to identify issues of shared concern. Congregations then engage in campaigns with other communities of faith, to address these issues.

CBCO has expanded dramatically in recent years. In Boston, for example, synagogues became involved in CBCO through the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) which organizes communities across religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines to “find common ground and act on faith and democratic values.” GBIO counts nine Boston synagogues (and three secular Jewish organizations) among its membership of fifty-six groups who are taking action to solve community and economic problems. The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Boston also has improved the capacity of synagogues to participate in organizing efforts.

Just Congregations was created in 2006 by Rabbi Jonah Pesner in partnership with the Union of Reform Judaism, with the support of the Nathan Cummings Foundation. The goal of Just Congregations is to enlist the URJ's network of nine hundred congregations and 1.5 million Jews in congregation-based community organizing.

On the national level, JFSJ provides technical and financial support to sixty-three synagogues involved in CBCO. JFSJ hosts national CBCO training and conferences and helps the major organizing networks work more effectively with Jewish communities.

JFSJ's Seminary Organizing Project trains rabbinic and cantorial students across denominations to engage their communities in CBCO. A select number of students then continue in supervised internships in CBCO congregations.

A growing number of rabbis are turning to congregation-based community organizing. In the past, rabbis concerned with social justice expressed their passion on the *bima* while social action committees carried out the work. Now, rabbis are being trained in CBCO alongside their lay leaders.

The increase in lay leaders involved in CBCO was evident at a 2007 conference, co-hosted by JFSJ and Just Congregations. Sixty-three congregations attended, compared to forty in 2005, a 50% increase. CBCO gives lay leaders the opportunity to develop leadership skills through network-sponsored trainings, e.g., Industrial Areas Foundation and Pacific Institute for Community Organizations. The skills can be applied to the broader Jewish social justice field, strengthening the leadership of volunteers and the professionals who work with them.

## New spiritual communities are emerging nationwide, and many of their leaders are making social justice a core value.

Many emergent spiritual communities and *minyanim* are making social justice a cornerstone commitment. In contrast to the *chavurot*, the first generation of participatory prayer communities of the 1970s, many of today's independent *minyanim* have asserted from the outset their commitment to social justice. In a recent Synagogue 3000/ Mechon Hadar study of emergent spiritual communities, between one-third and one-half of the members reported that they were motivated to participate in community activities because of their commitment to social justice.

Among the emergent rabbi-led spiritual communities, there is also a strong commitment to social justice. Rabbi Andy Bachman of Congregation Beth Elohim/Brooklyn Jews, Rabbi Sharon Brous of IKAR, and Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum of Kavanah, among others, are calling people into deeper connection to prayer and learning, and are experimenting with different approaches to social justice. At Congregation Beth Elohim/Brooklyn Jews, for example, Rabbi Bachman’s “blog pulpit” engages congregants in such discussions as determining just payment for the construction workers employed by their synagogue. At IKAR, congregants are incorporating programs for children in the Watts community into every holiday celebration.

## Increase in Numbers and Diversity

The Jewish social justice field is attracting diverse groups of Jews and increasing the number of engaged activists.

It’s not random that so many Jews are involved in social justice. People are motivated to act politically by their core values. They act politically, not out of economic self-interest, but as a community anchored in a powerful set of values.

- RABBI DAVID ROSENN,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AVODAH

Jewish social justice groups are attracting Jews across sectors, from the most established venues in the organized Jewish community to the secular social change sector. At the most traditional end of the spectrum, Orthodox students are joining pluralistic service programs. Yeshiva University and Orthodox Jewish day schools played a major role in mobilizing for Darfur. Rabbis from the Orthodox seminary Chovevei Torah are participating in social justice trainings with their Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist colleagues.

National campaigns launched by American Jewish World Service, Jewish Funds for Justice, Jewish Council of Public Affairs, the Religious Action Center, and Mazon are benefiting from the local involvement of participants and alumni of PANIM, AVODAH, the Jewish Organizing Initiative, and Hillel. The RAC’s L’Taken program trains two thousand high school students annually in lobbying and advocacy skills.

Local groups — the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (Chicago), Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (NYC), Jewish Community Action (Minnesota), Jews United for Justice

(Washington, D.C.), and Progressive Jewish Alliance (California) — are connecting Jews within their cities and building alliances with grassroots groups. These groups reach across affiliations and generations, offering cultural experiences that weave holiday observance with Jewish activism. Fueled by the energy of young people, programs like Tzedek Hillel, Panim el Panim, and Telem are linking social action to the Jewish life cycle, from bar and bat mitzvah to college community service projects.

The New Israel Fund fosters partnership between Americans and Israelis to build a more socially and economically just Israel. Newer groups like Rabbis for Human Rights – North America and Encounter are connecting leaders and activists in support of civil liberties, conflict resolution, and Jewish-Arab co-existence efforts.

Organizations focused on diversity and equity like Keshet and Mosaic (LGBTQ Jews); Ayecha (Jews of Color); and Advancing Women Professionals, Ma'yan, and Kolot (Jewish women) are connecting through social networks to the broader social justice field.

Progressive thought leaders like Rabbi Michael Lerner of *Tikkun* magazine and Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center mobilize hundreds and sometimes thousands of supporters from across the country for protests, conferences, and spiritual social justice gatherings.

As the grassroots and the grasstops grow in their level of involvement, the synergy between and among those on the edges and those in the mainstream is giving new vibrancy to the field of Jewish social justice.

## **New leaders are coming into the Jewish social justice field, bringing experience from the world of nonsectarian social change.**

New Jewish social justice leaders come from diverse backgrounds — politics, social change, civil rights law, academia, community service, and advocacy. Organizational boards in the Jewish social justice field are now enlisting trustees from American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Industrial Areas Foundations, UNITE, Sundance Institute, and the Women's Funding Network.

Since the mid 1980s, Jewish social justice organizations have sought to engage Jews from nonsectarian social change organizations. In 2004, to amplify this opportunity and develop leadership for the field more broadly, the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Rockwood Leadership Program created Selah, a training program for Jewish social justice activists.

In its pilot phase, in partnership with JFSJ, Selah enlisted activists not only from Jewish social justice organizations, but from the Working Families Party, the Midwest Academy, the Service Employees International Union, MoveOn, Gay Men's Health Crisis, Building Movement Project, Genocide Intervention Network, Good Egg Company, and other such social change organizations.

Through Selah, leaders from these organizations have built relationships with their peers in traditional Jewish organizations and Jewish social justice groups. Some of these social change leaders are now taking professional and volunteer roles in Jewish social justice organizations.

## Expanded Public Influence

The Jewish social justice field is advocating for a full spectrum of issues.

Jews have survived because we are both insiders and outsiders. America has been incredibly good to us. Part of the American ethos is to expand the people whom it includes. That's never been easy, but through that struggle, America has become more inclusive, and Jews have benefited from that spirit. Now we have to keep fighting for that expansion. That's part of our obligation.

- SIMON GREER,  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, JEWISH FUNDS FOR JUSTICE

Jewish social justice groups and CBCO synagogues advocate for many issues on the domestic and international fronts. Mazon uses advocacy to advance its anti-hunger agenda. Of the groups with a Jewish social justice agenda, the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism is the major force for advocacy in Washington. Under the leadership of Rabbi David Saperstein, the RAC lobbies to maintain separation between church and state, protect children's health insurance, oppose the war in Iraq, conserve the environment, and advocate on behalf of the Middle East peace process.

JCPA is spearheading a major campaign to confront poverty. COEJL focuses on the environment, and HAZON promotes community-sponsored agriculture. The Jewish social justice community has also taken on immigrant rights, reproductive rights, Muslim-Jewish dialogues, CAFTA, fair trade coffee, human rights of sex workers, domestic workers rights, gay rights, Save Darfur, universal health care, and affordable housing.

## The “multiplicity” of the Jewish social justice community is reflected in its diverse approaches to various issues.

So much of Jewish history is about what people did to us. In Jewish social justice we say: What can we do to change history? The Progressive Jewish Alliance wants to be a unifying voice for the Jewish community and offers a way for people to engage in Jewish work, in interfaith and interethnic contexts.

- DANIEL SOKATCH,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROGRESSIVE JEWISH ALLIANCE

In the Jewish social justice field, the criteria for selecting issues reflect the multiplicity of organizational interests and constituents. The issue may be a natural fit, as with MAZON’s anti-hunger agenda linked to charitable donations at life-cycle celebrations, or the National Council of Jewish Women’s focus on women’s reproductive rights.

For other social justice groups, advocacy around specific issues arises from local needs as identified by their stakeholders. For example, JCUA, the veteran grassroots Chicago organization, facilitates coalition building between African-Americans and Mexicans who are struggling to preserve their neighborhoods in the face of gentrification. In Boston, *Obel Tzedek* and the Jewish Community Relations Council, together with Keshet and the Jewish Organizing Initiative, supported *Freedom to Marry*’s successful efforts to defeat anti-gay legislation.

Some organizations stand at the intersection of class conflict between owners and workers, such as PJA’s campaign on behalf of hotel workers. Other groups select issues that resonate with a wide swath of Jews, as when Leibel Fein launched a major literacy initiative to engage the “people of the book” in tutoring.

Sometimes a single issue presents a strategic opportunity for advocacy. For JFSJ, responding to Hurricane Katrina was a lever for surfacing fundamental inequities around race and class in America. In 2007, Tzedek Hillel enlisted college students to lobby for environmental issues, taking advantage of the awareness of climate change following *An Inconvenient Truth*.

## Jewish social justice organizations are demonstrating their potential to effect real social change.

I want the people in South Africa to know that, while we are funding efforts to provide home care and education for HIV/AIDS, we are also in Congress saying, “Stop short-changing the Global Health Fund for AIDS, malaria and TB.” If there were more money from the United States for the Global Health Fund, everything on the ground would change.

- RUTH MESSINGER,  
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE

Jewish social justice organizations are moving their agendas forward. Progressive Jewish Alliance played a major role in fighting California sweatshops, with eighteen Jewish organizations signing onto its “No Shvitz” pledge campaign. This coalition effort resulted in the passage of Sweat-Free Procurement Ordinances in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

When Domestic Workers United decided to organize its workers, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice launched a “communal conversation” in synagogues, with the participation of Jewish employers. This initiative’s success at translating the concerns of domestic workers to middle class and affluent employers, positioned JFREJ as a model for organizing other ethnic groups who employ domestic workers.

Following Hurricane Katrina, NYU’s Hillel students were among the first volunteers to arrive in New Orleans, followed by 2,400 Jewish students from Hillels nationwide. AJWS’s mobilization for the Rally to Save Darfur led to the launch of a divestment campaign. Since then, AJWS has supported efforts in refugee camps in Darfur to secure access to food, water, and health care. They are also funding educational, recreational, and counseling programs to help rebuild Darfur’s civil society.

These Jewish social justice organizations are bringing their advocacy agendas to the federal level alongside mainstream Jewish organizations. For many decades, Jewish advocacy in Washington has been dominated by Israel-focused agencies like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and its centrist and dovish counterparts, Israel Policy Forum and Americans for Peace Now, respectively.

Other mainstream Jewish organizations — United Jewish Communities, American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League — have concentrated their efforts on support for Israel, separation of church and state, funding for the elderly, and religious rights of prisoners.

In recent years, mainstream Jewish organizations have worked to obtain significant federal dollars for security in Jewish institutions.

The most traditional organizations, the Orthodox Union and Agudat Israel, focus on funding for yeshivot, abstinence education, anti-pornography, zoning issues to support synagogues and yeshivot, and workplace rights for Sabbath observers.

Historically, Jews played a major role in immigration issues. Recently, new legislative approaches to undocumented immigrants motivated PJA, JFSJ, and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to create a coalition of Jewish groups around immigrant rights. The coalition, while short-lived, suggested how traditional organizations and social justice groups might work together on this issue.

In health care reform, the RAC is now launching a national advocacy effort, enlisting one Reform synagogue in every state to mobilize congregants around these issues.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Sid Schwartz, a pioneer in the social justice field, PANIM has taught hundreds of young people how to navigate the political system and introduced them to the benefits of civic engagement. Now, these organizations have been joined by AJWS, which has established a Washington-based advocacy office led by a seasoned D.C. professional. In addition, the Jewish Council on Public Affairs is stepping up its advocacy agenda through its campaign, *Confronting Poverty*.

## Congregation-Based Community Organizing is demonstrating impact on a broad range of social issues.

I have come to see that work being done through CBCO on the local and state level is critical. The reality is that we have lost the federal courts, and as a result, we no longer can look to the federal system or the courts to drive social change. CBCO can become one of the most important strategies for changing public policy.

- RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN,  
DIRECTOR, RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

In the current political and judicial climate, CBCO is emerging as a dynamic tool for advocacy. The accomplishments presented at the 2007 CBCO conference included Congregation Sha'ar

Zahav of San Francisco's involvement in a successful campaign for universal health care and a CBCO effort at Temple Beth El in Aptos that resulted in expanded affordable housing in California. The teen-organizing group at Temple Emanuel in Newton, Massachusetts launched a recycling program, and Temple Mount Sinai's CBCO helped to bring utilities to residents in El Paso, Texas for the first time.

In Boston, the success of the Jewish Community Relations Council's CBCO initiative and the effectiveness of GBIO, led to coverage in the *Boston Globe*, which reported in 2006 that "religious congregations [were] one of the prime movers behind the push for health care reform in the state."

Temple Israel, probably the best known of these initiatives, offers a vivid example of how CBCO engages congregants to participate collaboratively in public life and strengthen their connection between spirituality and citizenship. In 2000, Temple Israel began to develop *Ohel Tzedek*, the Tent of Justice, as a community-building campaign. Starting with eight hundred one-on-one meetings, the congregation developed "social justice stories" and common values that were then amplified during the congregation's Passover seders. *Ohel Tzedek* then developed action *hevre* (friendship groups) around affordable housing, health care, public education, and equal rights for gays and lesbians. Hundreds of congregants participated in these hevres and in larger-scale actions. *Ohel Tzedek's* involvement in interfaith CBCO helped to win significant legislative victories, including the passage of Massachusetts' groundbreaking health care legislation. Beyond the impact on target issues, *Ohel Tzedek* brought congregants into deeper relationship with each other, with congregational life, and with the Jewish texts that inspire their community activism.

## Jewish social justice organizations are becoming more *visible* on the domestic and international fronts.

Jewish voices can make a serious contribution on the global stage. The world is burning. We can profoundly impact the way the world works. Religious voices on the global stage are the voices that can fight brutality and can open minds.

- RABBI SHARON BROUS,  
FOUNDER, IKAR

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the Asian Tsunami, and in the midst of such ongoing crises as the genocide in Darfur, Jewish social justice organizations are mobilizing substantial support and becoming more visible on the domestic and international fronts.

Immediately following the Asian Tsunami, AJWS emerged as the preferred Jewish source for donations. It was considered to be one of the best organizations to help rebuild the region because of its effective partnerships with local grassroots groups. AJWS's work in India, Indonesia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand helped to move communities from "rehabilitation and reconstruction" to the longer term issues of economic sustainability, disaster preparedness, and human rights for marginalized groups affected by such catastrophes. Communicating the experiences of grantees in the region also enabled AJWS to share lessons with other relief organizations.

Two years after Hurricane Katrina, members of Reboot traveled with JFSJ to New Orleans on a service and learning trip. Upon their return, they created a video installation that was installed on the Reuters Building in Times Square announcing, "Two years later 250,000 people can't go home to New Orleans. Happy Birthday Katrina — from Jspot.org of the Jewish Funds for Justice." This installation attracted people to a new website: [www.happybirthdaykatrina.com](http://www.happybirthdaykatrina.com). and drew media coverage about the lack of progress in rebuilding New Orleans.

## The progressive Jewish voice is achieving greater "bandwidth."

When JFSJ's blog, [Jspot.org](http://Jspot.org), launched an Internet poll, inviting Jews concerned with social justice to tell the presidential candidates about their priorities, 8,600 people logged on. Despite the highly competitive media environment, the results received major coverage in the *Washington Post* and triggered an editorial in the *Jewish Week*, calling on the Jewish community to move beyond parochialism to address national issues, like health care and public education, as *Jewish* issues. This is one indicator of the potential to create a credible, alternative Jewish presence in the public policy and political arenas.

Another indicator can be drawn from the recent investigation of working conditions at the country's largest kosher meatpacking plant and the mobilization effort that resulted.

*The Forward* reported that meatpacking workers at the Agriprocessors plant in Iowa have wages among the lowest in the industry and suffer from an unusually high number of accidents because of inadequate safety training. In years past, this story might have remained on the sidelines, as the quixotic impressions of a few journalists and rabbis. This time the story continued to circulate, gaining traction in the blogosphere, despite Agriprocessors' efforts to discredit it.

*The Forward* then published an editorial on these worker conditions, calling for a redefinition of “kosher” — that would bring people from the “law” as written to “right action” in the world. Rabbi Morris Allen of the Conservative movement took up the charge, assembling an investigative team that visited the Iowa meatpacking factory. They then called upon the Rabbinical Assembly to adopt a new code for *kashrut*, with a “hechsher tzedek” stamp to denote that standards for decent working conditions have been met, in addition to traditional standards.

The story continued to circulate in the social media networks, amplified by *The Jew and the Carrot*, a blog created by Hazon, the Jewish environmental group. The *Washington Post* then published an article on the new “eco-kashrut” movement. The investigation and protest resonated throughout the Conservative movement and the mainstream media, with continuing coverage from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the *Jewish Week*.

Now the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Rabbinical Assembly are working with Jewish Community Action, the Minnesota-based social justice group, to launch a widespread “Hechsher Tzedek” program.

## The alternative Jewish voice resonates with new Jewish audiences.

Until recently, traditional Jewish organizations — AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, and the Conference of Presidents — represented the voice of American Jewry. They set the public policy agenda around the protection of Jews in a dangerous world — the perils of anti-Semitism, Israel’s vulnerability, and the pernicious rise of fundamentalism.

With the emergence of alternative Jewish voices has come a new narrative about Jewish values in the global community. This alternative agenda moves beyond the universalism/particularism debate, focusing instead on what Jews can and should do to protect the rights of others, at home and around the world.

This agenda is resonating with younger Jews, who find in it a meaningful way to connect their Jewish identities with their progressive politics. Jewish social justice groups are using it to create new pathways for Jewish influence in the world, providing venues where Jews of Generations X and Y can talk, volunteer, and advocate. The new narrative is also resonating with the Jewish baby boomers. What these different groups have in common is a preference for voices that link authentic Jewish values to progressive positions.

In the Jewish social justice movement, as in every field, the Internet connects people with common interests. Jewish blogs and online publications regularly comment on progressive issues, including *Jewschool*, the *Canonist*, *Ideas*, *Jewbiquitous*, and *Jewcy*. *HEEB*, *Guilt & Pleasure*, *ZEEK*, and *Present Tense* are all online and hard-copy publications, targeted to readers in their twenties and thirties that explore a full range of Jewish identities. While covering fashion, humor, culture, politics, and lifestyle, they also include provocative articles on social justice.

Simultaneously, some leading mainstream newspapers are covering Jewish issues more frequently, in part to maintain their circulation among Jews, who make up a large proportion of their readers. This makes it more likely that Jewish social justice stories in the alternative media will find their way into the mainstream press.

Creative activists are recognizing the synergies that are possible when the Jewish mainstream media, secular news organizations, and new media converge. Mainstream Jewish newspapers and magazines anchor social justice issues in Jewishness, while the general media confers credibility. Social media create new outlets for direct action, community building, and individual and collective expression.

## Increased Resources for Jewish Social Justice

**Major philanthropists are entering the arena of Jewish social justice.**

Over the past decade, the Nathan Cummings Foundation has taken the lead in seeding and developing the Jewish social justice field, followed by the Walter and Elise Haas Foundation, the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation, and the Righteous Persons Foundation. The Picower Foundation and the Dorot Foundation have joined these funders in supporting select initiatives.

Traditional philanthropists have not, by and large, ranked social justice as a funding priority. Several foundations have guidelines that support work that benefits low income populations, such as the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation's grants for direct service to the poor and their funding across religious and ethnic lines for youth development, public education, and community service programs. But their focus is on service rather than systemic change.

In recent years, Jewish service has drawn interest from a few established philanthropists and mega-foundations, like the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation. The Meyerhoff Foundations of Baltimore have become more involved in social justice and Jewish service initiatives. The Marcus Foundation is giving its first major Jewish service grant to JFSJ, to engage young people in Atlanta in service programs. The Jim Joseph Foundation is exploring how Jewish service meets its broader mission of Jewish education.

Individual donors are the backbone of most nonprofit organizations; this also holds true in the social justice world. Dick and Lois Gunther, Mark and Peachey Levy, the Chais Family, Alan Solomont — these donors (along with some major anonymous donors) stand with the hundreds of other donors whose gifts of \$1,000 to \$100,000 have helped Jewish social justice organizations to thrive.

*Slingshot*, a guide that annually identifies fifty of the most innovative and effective Jewish organizations in North America, has now become a funder of Jewish social justice. In 2007, Slingshot awarded grants to eight organizations, including three social justice initiatives.

The Jewish social justice field has also benefited from “sister travelers” — women philanthropists who have fostered receptivity to many social change initiatives in the Jewish community. Barbara Dobkin of the Dobkin Family Foundation and Sally Gottesman have championed gender equity and diversity, by providing major funding to establish Ma’yan, the Jewish Women’s Archives, Advancing Women Professionals, Kolot, and Moving Traditions. They are also major supporters of AJWS, JFSJ, and AVODAH.

The original founders of Joshua Venture — Righteous Persons Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund — have supported new initiatives around diversity by creative social entrepreneurs. Bikkurim, an incubator for social entrepreneurs, houses New York organizations committed to diversity and social change. The New Israel Fund, the Moriah Fund, and several other philanthropies support issues of social and economic justice in Israel.

These funders are not part of a formal affinity group, but are beginning to connect their issues and overlap in their funding with much greater frequency.

## The new relationship with mainstream funders is motivating Jewish social justice leaders to clarify core values and goals.

The growing interest in service is resulting in a more intentional conversation among service leaders, potential organizational partners, and traditional philanthropists. Jewish social justice groups are enthusiastic about the potential for growth that can result from new resources entering the field. They are also concerned about preserving the authenticity of their work when accepting funding from mainstream philanthropists. As this discussion continues, and the players surface their expectations and assumptions, new norms for engaging with the mainstream Jewish community may emerge.

This new “negotiation” is motivating Jewish service practitioners to define their purposes and goals, and to articulate how they will evaluate progress. The current paucity of research is soon to be remedied by several projects, including a study commissioned by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Jim Joseph Foundation on building capacity in the field of Jewish service; the Brandeis/Cohen Center study of the effects of Jewish service on an expanded cohort of New York students; and a study from the University of Texas, commissioned by UJC, on the impact of these programs. These projects may point towards a new level of rigor around documentation and research.

## The growth of Jewish social justice is consistent with a burgeoning social change sector.

The dramatic changes in the Jewish social justice field are part of a larger trend in the domestic and international social change arenas:

The number of charitable organizations in the United States has more than doubled since 2000, to 1.5 million groups employing 12.5 million people. The number of NGOs worldwide has increased as well, even in China and the former Soviet Union, which had virtually no such organizations twenty years ago.

While it is widely acknowledged that there is a growing gap between the rich and poor, the social change sector has realized some benefits from the new wealth. High net worth individuals have started to invest their influence and fortune in fueling nonprofit ventures of every kind, from education and the environment, to eradicating disease and closing the digital divide.

In the early twenty-first century, the boundaries between the private and not-for-profit sectors are becoming more permeable, with the rise of social entrepreneurship and venture philanthropy. New technologies are also leveling the playing field, enabling the world's citizenry to mobilize around inequity, crises, and conflict.

The most striking trend relates to the "Millennials," the generation born between 1980 and 2000. According to a recent study, 61% of Millennials feel responsible for making a difference in the world, with 78% stating that business should be held accountable for social responsibility. More than 50% of young people aged 12-18 volunteer their time. Young people of voting age have increased their presence at the polls by 20 percent over the past six years, and in the 2008 election we are seeing the powerful influence of young people's preferences. As the harbingers of cultural change, these young people will undoubtedly influence the ranking of domestic and global priorities. The convergence of these trends creates a receptive environment for growing the Jewish social justice field.



## Part II: Challenges

# Growing Pains

The Jewish social justice field is growing, but it is still small.

While there is ample evidence of the growth of Jewish social justice organizations, the field overall is still quite small. Most organizations still operate on the edge of financial viability. The field suffers from a lack of depth on its leadership bench. At the forefront, we see a handful of charismatic, capable individuals, with very few people occupying the “second tier.” The dependency on a few top leaders makes for more vulnerable institutions and makes it much harder to build and sustain networks in the field.

Field growth is uneven, with gaps between large groups and the grassroots.

We need more conversations across the country among the social justice groups. More work needs to be done on how we build things together.

- VIC ROSENTHAL,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEWISH COMMUNITY ACTION

Grassroots groups and large organizations often compete for limited dollars, particularly on the local level. The competition for resources in the modest donor pool, coupled with a strategic shift of the national organizations toward advocacy and local initiatives, has exacerbated the challenge of creating alignment among these players.

Local grassroots groups often feel marginalized both by the larger Jewish social justice groups and by the organized Jewish community. Furthermore, they often are skeptical about the ability of large national organizations to effect meaningful change on the local level.

For their part, many of the larger organizations have recognized the courage of the grassroots groups in taking on unpopular causes, such as their championship of controversial public figures in the Muslim community or their commitment to fighting gentrification even when they come into conflict with Jewish real estate developers. Yet larger organizations also have questioned the ideological rigidity sometimes displayed by grassroots groups.

Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) is a grassroots organization located in New York City, the epicenter of the Jewish social justice field. For its leader, Dara Silverman, the challenge is to frame JFREJ's distinct political and programmatic niche, to generate sufficient resources amidst the competition.

For the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA) in Chicago, the challenge is attracting funding and media attention, given its commitment to playing a "backstage" role in supporting the aspirations of minority-led groups.

In Minneapolis, Vic Rosenthal, executive director of Jewish Community Action, was selected by the Ford Foundation for its prestigious Leadership for a Changing World fellowship. In the process, he benefited from being part of a social network with his secular social change colleagues. But, like many of his grassroots colleagues in the Jewish arena, Vic Rosenthal expresses concern that there is not enough time or shared commitment to bring the larger and smaller Jewish social justice organizations together.

Meanwhile, new, locally based organizations continue to emerge and be dynamic forces; groups like the Moishe Kavod Houses, where college graduates live together and host a variety of communal activities, including many focused on social justice. Some local groups struggle to gain traction, like Jews United for Justice, in Washington D.C.; others, like Boston's Tekiah, have recently folded.

California's Progressive Jewish Alliance is now actively considering how to function effectively on the local level and increase its influence nationally. In response to interest from activists in Washington D.C., San Diego, Miami, and New Orleans, it is exploring a "third way" that would combine a strong presence on the local level with expansion to significant communities across the country. But, finding the proper balance between local autonomy, central control, and coordination remains a challenge in this approach.

# Gaps in Leadership and the Workforce

## Leaders are in short supply.

The key Jewish social justice organizations are led by talented, committed executive directors who function as round-the-clock strategists, ambassadors for the vision, chief fundraisers, and operational managers. With a few exceptions, they are shouldering multiple responsibilities and have few people on their senior team with the experience or training to manage the extraordinarily demanding levels of work, especially given the rapid pace of change in these organizations.

There is an urgent need for succession planning, especially at the most influential organizations. This need has not yet been addressed by the organizations, nor by the leadership development programs. What will happen if any of these leaders — many of whom are young — leave for other opportunities? Their replacements are not obvious — either within their organizations or in the field as a whole.

## Help wanted: the field lacks a system for workforce recruitment.

Just five years ago, the entire Jewish social justice field offered about 130 jobs. Today AJWS alone has a staff of eighty-six in 2008. Organizations are scrambling to fill finance and administration positions, aware that they cannot compete with salaries offered by larger secular nonprofits or the corporate sector. Overall, the pool of workforce recruits is so shallow that awkward situations frequently arise when staff members leave one small Jewish social justice organization for another.

The areas of priority for workforce recruitment include second-level leadership, senior and mid-level managers, finance and development staff, synagogue organizers, and Jewish service leaders and educators.

The challenge of workforce recruitment and professional development is complicated by the trend of people moving more often from job to job and by young people who leave the workforce to continue their education. High turnover limits the capacity of organizations to build “institutional memory” and systematically develop and promote from within.

## The field lacks a coordinated approach to professional development.

Across the nonprofit sector, the pursuit of the mission and the greater good often relegates internal human resource development to the sidelines. Most Jewish communal organizations (with the exception of a few large social service agencies) lag behind in providing career development, mentoring, job rotations, and customized performance evaluation.

In the field of Jewish social justice, some larger organizations have made positive strides, such as hiring a human resources director; however, most organizations treat professional development as a patchwork of trainings wedged between daily responsibilities and current crises. Program staffers often become managers without basic training in management. Charismatic organizational leaders who have content knowledge about specific social issues and a mastery of Jewish culture and tradition may lack experience in developing partnerships and working with a board of trustees; or vice versa. The skills required of all leaders have broadened and professional development is needed to help fill the gaps in knowledge and experience.

## Organizational Sustainability

### For many organizations, programmatic reach exceeds institutional grasp.

The growth spurt enjoyed by many social justice organizations has catapulted them into metaphoric adolescence. Typical of this stage, these organizations tend to focus on short-term tactics rather than long-term strategy, with programmatic reach exceeding institutional grasp.

A 2006 survey by JCUA found that local social justice organizations seek assistance in general fundraising, major donor programs, media and communications training, board development, and staff training. This inquiry found similar needs at most of the larger organizations as well. Many of these organizations, large and small, find their program growth outpacing the available infrastructure. One common example, repeated frequently, is the case of a funder who provides seed money for a specific program. The staff assembles the new program, only to discover that the organization does not have enough people to manage the new initiative alongside existing programs or that their technology is insufficient. This leads to hard choices and difficult conversations about funder-driven initiatives versus stable infrastructure.

Some groups have invested in strategic planning to manage their growth and resources over a longer time horizon. For smaller organizations, strategic planning is still a luxury. Furthermore, many organizations are outgrowing their early phase board structures. In the start-up phase, organizational leaders welcome board members who bring enthusiasm, commitment, and some knowledge of the issues. As these organizations grow to maturity, their budgets increase in size and complexity, and their programs expand and achieve more prominence. At this stage, the organizations need board members who bring high-level skills, public influence, and access to resources; with few exceptions, most of these groups find it difficult to recruit people with this profile.

## Sustainability is a challenge for CBCO, given its complexity and extended time horizon.

CBCO shows signs of great promise. However, the time and effort required can seem disproportionate to the modest outcomes, especially in the early stages. Every campaign makes tremendous demands upon congregants, rabbis, and lay leaders. The complexity of this work makes it challenging to manage, especially given the interfaith context. Also, the political fates are precarious, with victories overturned in the changes of an election cycle. Some veterans in the CBCO field argue against paid synagogue organizers. Others believe that without trained staff fluent in synagogue life, it will be difficult to sustain CBCO leaders and help synagogues maintain their commitments.

## Field Sustainability

The Jewish social justice field is not structured as an effective network.

What would have to happen so that we can be a bigger force in the Jewish world? Basic principles and issues unite us. But there is no center point in the national Jewish world for social justice. We are not sharing best practices, successes, or failures. We need a coordinated strategy.

- NANCY KAUFMAN,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BOSTON JCRC

Even as field growth continues on the local, regional, and national levels, the Jewish social field is “thin” overall. The lack of coordination means that timely opportunities are missed; program duplication is frequent; and local resources are not maximally utilized. While some discrete collaborations have taken shape, many executive directors and their organizations work in isolation, which only intensifies the competition for limited resources. Few opportunities exist for the players to participate in collective planning. While several Jewish social justice leaders want to influence federations, for example, no effort has been made to coordinate their respective strategies.

JCUA’s report of local groups concluded with the need to “forge a national movement that includes increased communications, collective advocacy on national issues, resource sharing, and technical assistance.” Among the needs identified were regional and national trainings, conference calls, listservs, web sites, and a common database for identifying skills across organizations.

While every group voices support for collaborative efforts, most of the smaller organizations do not have the time, staff, or resources to fully pursue collaborations or even take advantage of opportunities. In fact, less than a year after its survey, JCUA’s founder acknowledged that her own group’s advocacy campaigns had forced her to put some collaborative ventures on the back burner. This is an example of the tension between managing an organization and building the field.

## **The Jewish social justice community resists the idea of limiting advocacy to a few issues.**

Narrowing the advocacy agenda might enable Jewish social justice leaders to raise their profile at coalition tables. Focusing on a few issues might also make best use of limited funding and improve the chances for overall impact. However, there is tremendous resistance to this approach among the Jewish and secular social justice organizations. The integrity of the social justice agenda is rooted in relationships “on the ground” and the specific issues championed by stakeholders. Similarly, CBCO’s methodology — in which issues surface from the congregants’ own experiences — mitigates against a consolidated approach to issue-based advocacy.

During this Presidential campaign season, advocacy coalitions around healthcare are forming across nonprofits, unions, and businesses. As these efforts gain momentum, it’s possible that healthcare may serve as a “test case” for the efficacy of Jewish social justice organizations coming together around a single issue.

## The field's technology infrastructure is under-resourced and underutilized.

The paradigm shift around communications and social media has been well documented. Reaching an audience with issue messages or calls for action used to be costly and labor intensive. Technology has lifted these barriers. As Jay Rosen writes in “The People Formerly Known as the Audience,” the preferences of the next generation for interactivity are making one-way communication increasingly irrelevant. The communication habits of Generations X, Y and the Millennials are now influencing every demographic in the culture.

Social media has started to shift the power structure, with politicians and policy wonks courting MoveOn.org and Daily Kos. Prestigious foundations, such as MacArthur, are building relationships and exchanging ideas on the Second Life Web site. Individuals use Facebook and MySpace to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Howard Dean campaign was legendary for reversing the fundraising pyramid, and now on-line fundraising is the norm.

Many nonprofits struggle to master social media, according to a commissioned study by the Overbrook Foundation of human rights groups. More than half of the groups surveyed did not use social media tools, like blogs, and the majority found it difficult to incorporate web based interactive technologies into their activities. Yet, it is increasingly important for advocates to learn the art of “co-construction,” of engaging the public in creating messages and campaigns, if they truly want to move their agenda forward in this new era.

In the Jewish social justice field, social media tools are also a critical and underused platform for engagement. Some Jewish social justice groups are taking advantage of blogs and social networks. However, most groups use technology only as an alternative tool to print media, another platform for one-way communication with donors and allies. They have yet to harness the potential of technology to amplify the progressive Jewish voice.

## The Resource Gap

Despite growth, the field of Jewish social justice lacks sufficient resources and philanthropy.

Most grants from family foundations and individual philanthropists flow to educational and religious institutions. Social justice – Jewish or nonsectarian – has never been a primary focus.

While many Jewish social justice leaders express optimism about expanding the funding base, the Nathan Cummings Foundation still figures as the largest national funder of Jewish social justice. The 2007 Jewish Funders Network (JFN) Conference offers a useful snapshot of the current situation. On the one hand, JFN gave its Sidney Shapiro Award to Anne Heyman, a social justice entrepreneur who established a youth village in Rwanda modeled on Yemin Orde in Israel. Yet an “open space” conversation on Jewish social justice drew only a handful of participants, in stark contrast to the robust attendance at other groups.

Further complicating the picture is the fact that the newer funders of Jewish social justice organizations are motivated primarily by an interest in Jewish identity and continuity. Some of these funders are uncomfortable with the edgier work of their grantee organizations.

Another tension is common throughout the nonprofit sector: A funder decides to support one aspect of a program — for example, Jewish learning connected to service — but does not wish to support general operations. This increases the stress on management and organizational infrastructure.

In sum, the funding challenge is to cultivate new philanthropists and broaden the base of support while maintaining the authenticity of Jewish social justice programs.

## The Integration of Social Justice and Spirituality

At IKAR, we're trying to rediscover what it means to live as a Jew in the world. Our obligation is to reclaim the core voices and traditions that make central the pursuit of human dignity and equality. This is the core axis on which everything rotates at IKAR, that we are created in the image of God. As Jews we need to have an urgency about social justice. Shabbos should be a reaffirmation of this dream — not a dream about ourselves.

- RABBI SHARON BROUS,  
FOUNDER, IKAR

It remains a challenge to make manifest the integration of Jewish social justice with Jewish spirituality.

At its best, CBCO demonstrates how spirit and justice are woven together. Emergent spiritual communities like IKAR, Kavanah and Brooklyn Jews are predicated on a fully integrated model of torah, prayer, and justice. Participants in AVODAH and Alternative Breaks speak of the “holy communities” to which they belong, alive with activism, learning, communal ritual, and even prayer.

However, for many organizations, the work at the intersection of social justice and spirituality has proven to be difficult. While many organizations include language about the centrality of Jewish values or even link their programs to Jewish holidays and rituals, much of the rhetoric feels grafted onto the mission as an afterthought. Entering through the other door, organizations like the Institute for Jewish Spirituality are extremely sophisticated in their approach to Jewish spirituality and deeply committed to issues of social justice, yet also struggle to integrate the two.

The challenge of integrating Jewish spirituality with Jewish social justice derives, in part, from the discomfort with “God talk” in Jewish organizational culture, given the more secular orientation of many agencies. Furthermore, in their efforts to engage Jews of diverse backgrounds, many social justice organizations and leaders omit overtly religious references and downplay theology. The result is that the connections between and among social justice, ritual, prayer, and God often remain theoretical, or simply sub rosa.

Jewish social justice leaders and organizations need to find more ways to make manifest the theological and experiential truth, that social justice and spirituality are not separate paradigms.

Part III: The Jewish Social  
Justice Field and the  
Organized Jewish Community

To better understand how to best support the field's growth, as well as the challenges it faces in reaching its full potential, we found it important during the Visioning Justice inquiry to explore the complex relationship between the Jewish social justice field and the organized Jewish community.

Some Jewish social justice leaders take the position that, to build the field, it is crucial to develop relationships with the organized Jewish community. They view the organized Jewish community (OJC) as the source of money, power, and people that can be engaged in this work. Others see the OJC as increasingly irrelevant, and argue that these relationships should occupy low priority on the Jewish social justice agenda.

To help navigate these two perspectives, we offer our observations and analysis of the emerging opportunities and prevailing tensions for the field of Jewish social justice, in relationship to the organized Jewish community. This is preceded by an historical overview of the American organized Jewish community, respective to social issues.

## Context: The Organized Jewish Community and Social Change

The Jewish tradition's universal teachings about responsibility toward all human beings and to the entire world continue to bring us back to the needed equilibrium between self-interest — the Exodus impulse — and the interests of humanity — the Sinai impulse. Even when, or perhaps especially when, the Jewish world tends toward the parochial, there are voices in our midst that call us back to our prophetic legacy, to be agents for the repair of the entire world.

- RABBI SIDNEY SCHWARZ,  
PRESIDENT, PANIM

### Self-interest has been a driving force in shaping the agenda of the organized Jewish community.

During the twentieth century, the American organized Jewish community's dedication to social justice issues — from workers' rights to civil rights to the government safety net — derived primarily from self-interest. Self-interest was not construed as a narrow framework but as an organic part of Jewish narrative: "Be kind to the stranger because you were a stranger."

The Jewish values underlying the commitment to social justice emerge from the experience of slavery and oppression: Jews were slaves in Egypt and that compels them to work for the liberation of others.

American Jews forged alliances with great social justice movements, nourished by three powerful Jewish influences: the Reform movement, whose founding principles put social justice at the heart of Judaism; the labor movement, where Jews occupied the union ranks — and whose Jewish Labor Committee’s founding members were the Amalgamated Workers, the Workman’s Circle, the Bund, and the Forward; as well as the movement to end discrimination based on religion and race.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, American Jews saw themselves as a low-income, disadvantaged immigrant population, vulnerable to the negative effects of anti-Semitism. Being on the forefront of social movements was not about “noblesse oblige” but emerged from their self-perception as a vulnerable people who needed to build a society in which *their needs* would be met, as well as the needs of others.

Even as Jews moved up the economic and academic ladder and achieved prominent roles in business, politics, media, culture, and academia, they maintained their liberal commitments. It may seem puzzling that their progressive stance did not wither alongside their enhanced class status. However, the American Jewish community has always been deeply influenced by the American context, particularly in the forward-thinking movements of the 1960s and 1970s — Kennedy’s spirit of civic engagement; Johnson’s War on Poverty; the civil rights movement; and the women’s movement. These trends nurtured Jewish liberalism.

Starting in the 1970s, this liberalism was disrupted by countervailing forces. The fissure between African-Americans and American Jews that began over affirmative action was traumatic for both communities. The resulting mistrust infused the public policy agenda on both sides. The debates around affirmative action and the Jewish fear of “quotas” made it possible for a new cadre of Jewish neoconservatives to rise to prominence, first as intellectuals and then as members of the Reagan Administration and the leadership of the Republican Party. These neoconservatives promoted a compelling counter-narrative about American Jewish self-interest, especially after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Ongoing struggles about Israel’s peace and security fractured the Jewish community, alienating more liberal Jews and challenging the ability of Jewish organizations to maintain their alliances in the progressive world.

Starting in the 1980s, issues of economic and social justice moved even further to the margins of the Jewish communal agenda, with the exception of some local Jewish Community Relations Councils and chapter-based organizations. The growing influence of major donors with a more conservative agenda also prevented these issues from being discussed at the Jewish communal

table — from Newt Gingrich’s Balanced Budget Amendment in 1994 to Bush’s proposal for privatized Social Security in 2004.

In the 1980s and 1990s, small Jewish social justice groups stepped into the breach left by the mainstream organizations. However, their efforts and influence were tangential to the communal agenda. The organized Jewish community had become a haven for Jews who defined self-interest primarily – and narrowly - as the preservation of the Jewish people.

**Federations remain committed to social action, *chesed*, and service. However, they have not restored their former advocacy for “safety net” government policies.**

Over the past two decades, federations have maintained their commitment to social action, *chesed*, and service, through their funding of community-based agencies that care for low-income populations of every religion. However, the agencies often find themselves on the sidelines of the organized Jewish community. Most of their support derives from government contracts, and although these agencies belong to the network of Jewish federation agencies, there is a lack of clarity about their role and responsibility as “Jewish agencies.”

Jewish social justice leaders tend to focus on federations because of their abundant resources and their centrality to the Jewish community. However, the federations have largely narrowed their advocacy agendas to maintaining Medicare, supporting NORCS (naturally occurring retirement communities), and bolstering security at Jewish agencies. Advocacy for a “safety net” on behalf of the disadvantaged populations, such as those served by their own agencies, has moved far into the background.

## Progress

**The organized Jewish community is showing interest in community service, which is opening a new conversation about social justice.**

In recent years, the cumulative effect of several communal trends, widely documented by research studies, has brought social justice to the attention of many professional and volunteer leaders in the organized Jewish community.

First, there is the growing recognition that “next generation” Jews are disinterested in affiliation with mainstream Jewish organizations. In fact, the likelihood is that many young Jews will not pursue any “organized” Jewish path. This trend has been documented in *The Continuity of Discontinuity*, by Professor Steven M. Cohen and Ari Kelman and *OMG: How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the Ipod Era*, by Anna Greenberg, among others.

The mainstream Jewish organizations — federations, United Jewish Communities, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee, for example — have also seen evidence of this disaffection. Their donor and volunteer ranks are aging and shrinking. For a long time, the leadership linked the decline to the fact that young Jews are marrying and having children much later. They hypothesized that once Jews started marrying and having families, they would “come home” to mainstream Jewish venues.

That homecoming is not happening as anticipated. As a result, leaders of these institutions have acknowledged that the downward trend in mainstream affiliation by Generations X, Y, and Millennials may represent a more permanent shift in identity formation. However, these same studies also have hypothesized that some percentage of young Jews will find their own “way to Jewishness.” The cultural landscape appears to support this hypothesis, with a diverse array of new Jewish social entrepreneurs, cultural innovators, founders of new spiritual communities, and leaders of Jewish social justice organizations. This “new way” into Judaism is evidenced as well by the burgeoning interest of young people in Jewish service programs.

Some communal organizations are fielding questions from their donors about how to capitalize on this interest in Jewish service, given its appeal to young Jews. Mainstream leaders are taking notice of these developments and are meeting with social justice practitioners to see how they might respond to this growing interest.

When UJA-Federation began planning its funding for a major new service initiative for New York City college students, for example, it engaged a few select Jewish social justice groups to help draft the guidelines. These organizations set high standards to ensure that service trips are not “poverty tourism,” but rather opportunities for communities to have real needs met and for young people to engage with social issues in a reflective Jewish context. This partnership between social justice and communal groups is resulting in a new kind of conversation about a commitment to service that is rooted in authentic Jewish social justice.

## Save Darfur was a groundbreaking event, mobilizing a broad spectrum of Jews as Jews around an urgent global issue that affected non-Jews.

The Save Darfur campaign in the Jewish community was supported by synagogues, day schools, JCCs, Jewish service alumni, local federations, and the Jewish Council on Public Affairs. Jewish Community Relations Councils and Federations became involved in letter writing and advocacy, bringing their communities to the local rallies in their home cities and the national rally in Washington, D.C. United Jewish Communities also mobilized people at national and local rallies to join in interfaith, multiethnic coalitions. Jews figured as a prominent majority in the Save Darfur campaign, the first time that Jews participated in a mass mobilization — as Jews and as a Jewish community — to save non-Jews.

That the Save Darfur campaign was led by AJWS, a previously marginal group, conveyed an important message to the organized Jewish community: Jewish social justice groups were a force to be taken seriously. It is a striking example of the potential for the “edges” to influence the “center.” Moreover, the fact that some federations canceled their major fund raiser, the annual Super Sunday, to attend the Washington rally also sent a new message to the larger Jewish community about the primacy of this work.

The Darfur rally was more than a one-time event that resonated with mainstream Jews. Jewish social justice groups are now attracting synagogues, JCCs, day schools, and local organizations in efforts around Darfur, including lobbying and divestment. New organizations, such as Jewish World Watch, have involved dozens of synagogues in California in this effort. The American Jewish Committee used its connections with Hollywood producers to support the production of *Darfur Now*, a documentary aimed at inspiring continued activism.

## For Jewish social justice leaders, the organized Jewish community offers new volunteers, donors, and advocates.

The Jewish social justice community aspires to create contexts in which Jews contribute as *Jews* to social justice. It is logical that they would turn to the mainstream communal organizations where Jews meet, congregate and build relationships.

The Jewish social justice community also sees the organized Jewish community as a source of *funding*. In fact, every donor study of Jewish social justice groups — including AJWS, JFSJ, and the New Israel Fund — shows that the majority of their donors are affiliated with

traditional Jewish organizations, as synagogue members, federation donors, and members of JCCs.

This proved true as well, when AJWS analyzed the background of thousands of new Jewish donors who responded to its appeals for the Asian Tsunami relief efforts.

The Jewish social justice field also sees the organized Jewish community as the face of Jewish *access* and *influence*. The mainstream leaders lobby in Washington, meet with prominent legislators, get quoted in the media, and preside on policy councils. Their organizations can draw a crowd, whether it is the five thousand advocates who attend an AIPAC convention or the three thousand volunteers and professionals who participate in the annual General Assembly of the federation system. While most Jewish gatherings are not this large, Jewish social justice leaders would still like greater access to the meeting rooms and plenaries of these power brokers.

### Several new collaborations are gauging the interest of the organized Jewish community in social justice work.

For the Jewish Funds for Justice, engaging local federations in common purpose has been a gradual process. Following its merger with the Shefa Fund, JFSJ set out to expand its *Tzedec* program, originally designed to raise federation endowment funds for community development. *Tzedec* enlists federation philanthropists to give money to community development funds, to be drawn upon by low-income individuals who otherwise have no access to capital for housing and businesses.

For many years, the Shefa Fund struggled to give *Tzedec* a sturdy national foothold. Jewish Funds for Justice decided to focus *Tzedec's* efforts on just a few local regions; the idea was to build on the shared core values between mainstream Jews and social justice activists, instead of alienating donors by focusing on the systemic causes that leave low-income populations without access to capital. In 2007, this organizing initiative achieved a breakthrough when JSFJ enlisted Jewish donors in Baltimore to invest \$1.2 million to match funding from local black churches, and then together with BUILD, raised \$10 million for affordable housing. With twenty major Jewish donors at the table, it became relatively easy to interest the local Baltimore Federation, the Associated, to join this new fund.

This approach works for everyone. Whether you are an observant Jewish hedge fund guy or a Jewish activist raised in the prophetic tradition, you know that the erosion of the mortgage system in America is bad for business and the economy, and you also believe in caring for the widow and the orphan.

- SIMON GREER,  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, JFSJ

There are other examples of effective models of collaboration. The JCRC in Boston, under Nancy Kaufman's leadership, has developed an outstanding federation-supported social justice organization, with initiatives ranging from teen service programs to interfaith CBCO. This JCRC is inextricably linked to Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the Boston Federation. However, it is noteworthy that no other federation or JCRC has replicated the Boston model despite its impressive track record in building Jewish connections and influencing social change.

On the national level, the Jewish Council on Public Affairs launched "Confronting Poverty" in Fall 2007, to revitalize the social justice agendas of JCRCs nationwide. Its dramatic launch has already attracted media attention: In the ten days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, executive director Rabbi Steve Gutow took the "food stamp challenge" by living on twenty-one dollars a week in order to experience, on a personal level, the living conditions of this country's poorest members. The food stamp challenge acted as a springboard for JCPA's national campaign for increased advocacy around hunger, housing, and public education. With plans underway for local JCRCs to convene working groups and provide technical assistance within each issue area, the 2008 year will provide important data about the appetite of local JCRCs for restoring their commitment to social justice.

### **Some mainstream Jewish organizations are offering more fertile conditions for the integration of social justice.**

In recent years, the organized Jewish community has enlisted several new leaders who bring different perspectives to their agendas. The CEOs of Hadassah, Taglit - Birthright Israel, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Foundation for Jewish Camping, and the Foundation for Jewish Culture come to the communal world from other backgrounds — including think tanks, cultural centers, city government, and business. Some appear more receptive to a host of new approaches and ideas, including a genuine interest in social justice.

Their organizations are also attracting young people — as both program participants and professionals — who want to bring their social justice experiences to the agencies. For example, an AVODAH alumna is developing a social justice program for the Foundation for Jewish Camping. Service alumni are joining JDC as professionals. The leading seminaries, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and Jewish Theological Seminary, have each appointed presidents who are working together on a broad agenda for making Jewish religious life more vibrant and purposeful, and who see social justice as integral to this work.

## Challenges

### Jewish social justice leaders and mainstream Jewish leaders are managing a mutually ambivalent relationship.

Jewish social justice organizations were created, in part, as an alternative to the organized Jewish community, especially as the mainstream groups set their internal focus on Jewish identity and their external focus on the security of Israel and fighting anti-Semitism.

More recently, the paths of Jewish social justice groups and more traditional organizations have converged for specific purposes — for example, around service, Darfur, or relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina. As Jews responding to catastrophe, the tensions are often set aside, to cohere around shared values. Sometimes the tensions are more explicit, as in the varying interpretations of service and social justice, and the distinctions between *gemilut chasadim* (*acts of loving kindness*) and *systemic change*.

Some Jewish social justice leaders take a pragmatic approach to the organized Jewish community, in pursuit of more Jews as volunteers, donors, and activists. Others are more resistant, pointing to the inherent “culture clash” around class issues and power dynamics.

The tensions between these two worlds are intensified by the trend of mainstream Jewish organizations to elevate their wealthy donors to prominent board and decision-making roles. As these donors age, and as fewer people represent a larger percentage of monies raised, there is a tendency to let donor preferences prevail.

This special treatment of lay leader and donor elites cuts against the egalitarian values of Jewish social justice groups. Some Jewish social justice leaders feel compelled to keep raising the difficult issues of sweatshops, unions, human rights for sex workers, and fair trade. That these controversial issues make some large donors uncomfortable is immaterial to them. Other

Jewish social justice leaders try to select issues that are more palatable to the affluent: public education, literacy, or global hunger.

When the social justice people are talking about health care for everyone, there is general agreement and interest. In Chicago, we are working with the federations on some of these more traditional issues. But when we had a coalition-building project with the Muslim community, the federation tried to tell us whom we could and could not talk to.

- JANE RAMSEY,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JCUA

Another tension relates to the mainstream focus on the survival of the Jewish people – both physical survival and issues of continuity. By contrast, the Jewish social justice perspective construes Jewish survival as inextricably linked to a commitment to social change that goes beyond the well-being of one's own people. The leaders in the Jewish social justice field would like their counterparts in the OJC to acknowledge that, indeed, this is a deeply Jewish commitment, often anchored in serious Jewish learning and religious practice.

For their part, leaders in the organized Jewish community feel stereotyped by Jewish social justice leaders. They resist what they see as the forced bifurcation between their *gemilut chasadim* and social service missions, and the orientation of Jewish social justice activists to social change and root causes. They view these distinctions as unnecessarily divisive. The communal leaders see their agencies committed 24/7 to rescue operations for Ethiopian Jews, Israelis threatened by missiles, and the needs of the Jewish poor in the United States and around the world. From rescue to renewal, they see their agencies caring for the vulnerable and preserving the vitality of the Jewish people. They resent the message from social justice leaders — that they have abdicated their responsibility to move beyond charity by challenging the status quo in their communities around economic inequity.

There would be more room to engage with social justice at the federation level if social justice activists would stop making a distinction between what they do and what we do. Who does more for the poor than UJA Federation? But social service and chesed is often not properly valued in the Jewish social justice world.

- JOHN RUSKAY,  
CEO, UJA-FEDERATION, NY

Finally, there are practical concerns. Some of the mainstream communal leaders are reluctant to dilute their own agendas. Even though their organizations are larger and wealthier, they perceive themselves as overprogrammed and understaffed. Like their social justice counterparts, these communal leaders want to protect their donor bases.

Is social justice important to us? It is, but it competes with a lot of other priorities, even though we're really proud of what we've done in Boston.

- BARRY SHRAGE, CEO,  
COMBINED JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES, BOSTON

The tensions around moral and political integrity continue to keep Jewish social justice leaders wary of the organized Jewish community. As more opportunities for partnership are revealed, some will maintain their ambivalence, while others will come together around common interests or shared values.

## The Jewish social justice field is wrestling with Israel as an issue.

I want to suggest that the ways our community is and isn't talking about Israel are keeping us from having the kind of vibrantly alive culture of learning, openness, and creative problem-solving that we need to survive and thrive as a people and be compelling to the next generation - let alone to respond to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict effectively.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB  
NORTH AMERICAN DIRECTOR, ENCOUNTER

Further complicating these relationships, many Jewish social justice groups have been reluctant to take a position on Israel, fearing the political consequences among their donors, constituents, and community-based partners. That the next generation expresses negativity or indifference to Israel, also puts Israel lower on their priority list. Only a few organizations, like PJA and IKAR, have taken positions on Israel as a central part of their social justice agendas. Recently, new groups like Encounter and Just Vision are seeking to influence Jewish social justice leaders to explore their perspectives on Israel, rather than sidestep the conversation.

As Jewish social justice groups raise their profiles in the organized Jewish community, it will become more difficult to avoid the subject of Israel. This will continue to present a dilemma,

especially if the nascent Tikkun Olam Peace Corps and service programs for Birthright Israel alumni, as well as other Israel-Diaspora service programs take off, challenging Jewish social justice groups to make serious choices about how to engage with Israel and with Israelis.

## As service expands, Jewish social justice practitioners are seeking to maintain authenticity.

We want to bring service to scale in a way that reflects our values, not use poor communities to enhance Jewish identity. At what point does the goal of Jewish continuity overshadow Jewish social justice goals?

- RABBI DAVID ROSENN,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AVODAH

As service reaches a tipping point in the Jewish community, several new tensions have surfaced. The first tension is about ambition and capacity. The service practitioners, who possess deep expertise but limited capacity, are being asked to collaborate with institutions and foundations that can fund rapid growth but that have limited experience in the field.

The second tension, which informs the first, is between the people who come to service primarily from a commitment to strengthening Jewish identity and those for whom the impact of service and the shift to social consciousness are of equal import.

This arena offers a fertile context for experimenting with fostering connection around shared values, since there are intersecting interests between the OJC and the social justice groups that emerge around the issue of taking service to scale.

## Part IV: Multiplicity

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## THERE ARE MULTIPLE PURPOSES FOR ENGAGING JEWS, JEWISH COMMUNITIES, AND JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE.

A fundamental question of Visioning Justice focused on the purposes for *Jewish* social justice:

### **Why is it important for more Jews to be involved in Jewish social justice?**

We explored this question during interviews with professional and volunteer leaders in the field, as well as practitioners, philanthropists, organizational staff and volunteers.

We learned that Jews committed to Jewish social justice are fundamentally motivated by the passionate desire to engage in *tikkun olam* – to repair the world, alleviate poverty and inequity, and secure basic human rights for all.

But, in the process, we also identified many other motivations for bringing *more Jews, more deeply and more effectively into the work of Jewish social justice*:

**Increase the troops** by attracting Jews who are involved in Jewish life but have not been involved in social justice efforts;

**Build a more powerful social justice field** by harnessing the influence and resources of affluent and well-connected Jews;

**Enrich the lives of Jews** by giving meaningful connection to those involved in social justice but not Jewish social justice;

**Strengthen Jewish continuity** by connecting people to their Jewishness through the portal of Jewish social justice;

**Sustain the core community** by supporting those already involved in Jewish social justice;

**Connect Jews to the social justice work of broad coalitions** to strengthen local and national service and advocacy initiatives;

**Burnish the Jewish image** by showing society that Jews care about the world, beyond their own community;

**Maintain the centrality of social justice in Jewishness** by infusing Judaism and Jewish life with a spirit of purpose and meaning;

**Lengthen the chain of commitment** to Jewish social justice and transmit it through the generations.

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What we have come to understand, through this inquiry is that **multiplicity is the strength of the Jewish social justice field.**

The **multiplicity of motivations** for engaging in Jewish social justice has important implications, both enriching and challenging a field that is deep in vision and broad in aspirations, but still limited in human and financial capital.

**The Jewish social justice field has multiplied in every dimension** — locally and nationally, through collaborations and mergers, and with the entry of many individuals — staff, lay leaders, philanthropists, volunteers, activists and participants. As a result, we see new forms of engagement and new opportunities for impact in the world.

**The multiple identities of twenty-first-century Jews offer new opportunities for connection and engagement.** The Jewish social justice groups now can engage a more diverse range of Jews — Jews who do not connect to mainstream institutions and traditional Jews who have not yet crossed the social justice threshold. Every Jew, even among the proudly unaffiliated, has the potential to tap into that one aspect of his or her identity that is Jewish. Every traditional Jew has the potential to respond to social and economic inequity. This means that **every Jewish venue can be a home for social justice activity** — from the Jewish social justice organizations to JCCs, synagogues, camps, schools, and cultural centers.

Jewish social justice work needs both the serious activists *and* those who will be involved more episodically. It's unlikely that every new participant will devote his or her life to Jewish social justice. At the same time, the field needs to generate the next cadre of serious activists because the major endeavors — such as sustained advocacy, CBCO, Jewish service that has a real impact on poverty, the creation of strong spiritual communities — will require more than episodic engagement. The goal is to cultivate the serious activists and welcome those for whom Jewish social justice is one of many interests. As leaders and organizations become more adept at bridging diverse worlds, the Jewish social justice field will enjoy greater strength, creativity, and influence.



## Part V: Strategies

We have discussed the multiple purposes for engaging more Jews in Jewish social justice. What we have come to see is that the multiplicity of purposes calls for a multiplicity of strategies.

At first glance, this may seem counterintuitive. After all, the Jewish social justice field is still rather small and the resources relatively scarce. This might suggest that it would be more effective to pursue one or two strategies, support a few larger organizations, or focus on a few urgent issue areas.

However, each of the multiple purposes requires a different strategy — whether we are trying to increase the troops, sustain the believers, deepen Jewish continuity, or maintain the centrality of social justice in Judaism.

To develop these strategies, we also confronted the parallel findings that have been presented in this report. On the one hand, we see the dazzling growth in the field of Jewish social justice work. On the other hand, when we count the key players and catalogue the tangible achievements, we see that the field is still quite small. The nascent interest in social justice from the mainstream Jewish organizations is quite encouraging. At the same time, we must acknowledge how quickly one major initiative can be replaced by the next “mega-idea” in the Jewish community.

What we believe, as a result of the Visioning Justice inquiry, is that multiple strategies for multiple purposes and multiple identities will result in a rich ecosystem. The following recommendations are designed to leverage the momentum generated over the past several years while anchoring this growth in strong institutions.

While investing in promising organizations and approaches, we need to support vibrant networks, guided by effective leadership and sustained by diverse resources. The Jewish social justice field is poised to become network-centric. In the early years of the field, the organizations were marginal and the resources were scarce. As a result, leaders and organizations clung to their small bit of turf. Now, with more resources becoming available, there is the recognition that, by coalescing and collaborating, everyone can benefit. Notwithstanding two successful mergers in the field, the model that seems to be gaining prevalence is the creation of strategic alliances for discrete purposes. To realize the full potential of the field, there is a need to build mechanisms that knit people and organizations together.

The Visioning Justice recommendations are intended to build the field of Jewish social justice. Key elements of field building include cultivating leadership and the workforce; creating organizational norms; developing mechanisms for research and knowledge-sharing; identifying philanthropic resources; creating infrastructure, and fostering collaboration.

# Root the Work in Strong Organizations

## 1. Accelerate Workforce Recruitment & Professional Development

**Give workforce recruitment top priority.** Until recently, the Jewish social justice field was so small that there were very few job openings. Now, as job openings proliferate, a coordinated approach to workforce development will improve the field's overall capacity. A system is needed to recruit the full range of talent — from entry-level to the corner office, and from new college graduates to seasoned professionals.

Workforce recruitment might be pursued simultaneously from within the organized Jewish community, the secular social justice sector, and the corporate world. This effort might be pursued through several lenses:

The first lens might take the generational focus. Where do young Jews seek to build their careers following college graduation and in the years before, during, and after graduate school? Moving to the next phase of the life cycle, how might organizations employ enlightened approaches to workplace flexibility to draw socially committed Jewish parents into the field?

For Jewish professionals in the baby boomer or later years, how can the field take advantage of their wisdom and expertise in organizational life, as some retire or seek second careers? For example, just as the Experience Corps harnessed the talents of retirees to improve the school system, Jewish social justice organizations might build a cadre of highly skilled, part-time professionals. Jewish volunteer leaders might also be recruited for professional roles.

The second lens might focus on the Jewish communal sector and the secular social justice arena to attract professionals who are committed to Jewish life and social justice. The Internet is an obvious resource; it's possible for instance, to partner with sites like Idealist.org or JewishJobs.com and create a Web-based "career center" for Jewish social justice employment, with a dedicated database, talent bank, and job fairs.

Selah might serve as a valuable partner in this effort, to identify the motivations that bring nonprofit professionals to Jewish social justice. Similarly, the Professional Leaders Project might survey its "talent networks," which mentor Jews in their twenties and thirties. Focus groups and surveys could help pinpoint the incentives for working in the Jewish social justice field, as well as the disincentives.

The third lens might focus on corporate executives and practitioners in other fields, e.g., law, social service, and government. Where are the young and mid-career executives, entrepreneurs, social workers, and policy analysts who are ready to “jump ship” and start a second career in Jewish social justice? To learn more about this potential talent pool, executive recruiters might be enlisted to offer their observations about the career paths and preferences of Jewish executives and professionals in their databases and about the likely transitional moments. How might the field develop its own brand of brief alternative learning sabbaticals to introduce these people to the field?

**Provide professional development through effective collaborations.** The Jewish social justice workforce needs consistent, high-level attention to training and professional development. Given the overall growth of the Jewish social justice field, this is a logical area for collaboration among organizations, especially within the same cities. AJWS, JFSJ, and AVODAH might share their lessons learned, as three of the larger organizations that have begun to tackle this challenge in different ways.

Professional development might also be designed by areas of expertise, with individual organizations taking responsibility for discrete components. Where there are local clusters of organizations, (particularly in cities like New York, Boston, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago), support should be offered to organizations that join forces to provide professional development to their employees.

Jewish social justice organizations can tap into certificate programs in public administration and nonprofit management offered by universities. These general management programs can be supplemented by a Jewish curriculum on social justice, adapted from the service programs and other education efforts. Infusing professional development with core Jewish values will make these programs more compelling for the participants, and more meaningful for the field. Directors of the Wexner Alumni Institute, the Muehlstein Institute, Professional Leaders Project, and Hillel might also be consulted for best practices.

Finally, the Jewish community has many consultants with expertise in organizational development within its ranks. Jewish social justice groups might bring some of these experts together to synthesize their lessons learned and to employ their expertise to create professional development modules infused with Jewish and social justice content that can be shared throughout the field.

**Train synagogue organizers.** The training of CBCO synagogue organizers presents a special case of the workforce development challenge. Many synagogues have indicated that the development of a cadre of trained synagogue organizers would accelerate their progress; yet the organizing networks have questioned whether this is the right staffing model. The first

step would be to resolve these issues in advance of embarking upon recruitment. The next step would be to test the impact of training synagogue organizers in one geographic location, perhaps linked to the research project on CBCO recommended later in this section.

## 2. Strengthen Professional Leadership

At the Righteous Persons Foundation, our theory of change is that, if you invest in good people, good things will happen.

- RACHEL LEVIN,  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, RIGHTEOUS PERSONS FOUNDATION

**Identify and cultivate promising leaders.** We have seen firsthand the profound impact that talented leaders have had on several Jewish social justice organizations. However, with very few “leaders-in-waiting,” it is essential to identify and cultivate the next set of leaders for the Jewish social justice field.

The mandate for leadership development is not only about organizational effectiveness. The Jewish social justice field needs leaders with clarity of purpose, vision, and voice. These leaders will include activists who are not afraid of “God talk” and spiritual leaders who see their pulpits and their communities as homes for activism.

A system is needed to recruit and nurture these potential leaders from secular and Jewish social justice organizations, Jewish social service agencies, CBCO initiatives, service alumni networks, and seminaries. Parallel to this effort, a marketing approach is needed to make the field of Jewish social justice visible to professional leaders in other careers.

A pilot project for leadership identification and recruitment might be considered by funders who are committed to building the field. Several foundations and organizations have already done the groundwork in this area — the Leadership Learning Community, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robin Hood Foundation, the Coro Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Research Center for Leadership in Action, Bridgespan, and McKinsey. These organizations all have been involved in leadership development, have analyzed the effectiveness of various approaches, and are committed to sharing their knowledge to inform new initiatives.

One important question: How do you find talented people? We can lift up leaders and show others that they are valued. We've done this through fellowship programs which confer visibility and support. We must make sure that new, "out of the box" work by talented people doesn't get edited out.

- GARA LAMARCHE,  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

**Maximize the potential of leadership development programs.** Nearly every leadership development program, including those developed by the Ford, Rockefeller, and Kellogg foundations, has wrestled with the relative merits of individual learning versus organizational benefits. Like these programs, Selah started with a strong focus on individual transformation and a lesser focus on bringing the change home. Moving forward, in addition to individual participants, Selah will work with internal staff cohorts of several professionals from selected Jewish social justice organizations. This experiment will test whether the internal cohort model is more effective for applying leadership lessons to the home base.

Leadership development needs attention beyond the training period, with follow-up support that includes mentoring, coaching, retreats, and network maintenance. A talent incubator for school principals offers an instructive example. Six years ago, the NYC Department of Education recognized that 80 percent of its school principals were close to retirement. In response to this urgent demographic call, an independent consortium of funders supported the creation of the Leadership Academy, a rigorous "fast-track" program that trains qualified educators and school administrators for a NYC principalship. The fourteen-month program is structured around cohort learning and a ten-month school residency. Successful graduates are placed as principals in high-need schools and continue to receive training and coaching during their first three years on the job. This leadership initiative has since been adapted for other urban school systems nationwide.

While the Jewish social justice field is hardly comparable in scope to the NYC Department of Education, there is a comparable need for leadership development that includes intensive training, residencies, and longer-term mentoring and coaching while on the job.

**Stock the leadership pipeline.** The current CEOs of Jewish social justice organizations need skilled deputies who can assume internal management responsibilities and some of the external fundraising and collaboration-building activities. Leadership development programs should pay special attention to this "second tier," through the design of residencies that both support the organizations and prepare the next set of top leaders.

We need to build leadership holistically. Many activists need concrete, skills-based training. We can take the mystery out of advocacy.

- DAVID COHEN,  
CO-FOUNDER, ADVOCACY INSTITUTE

Leadership development should go hand-in-hand with alumni network development. The Barr Foundation provides a useful example. To create a new network of leaders for the city of Boston, the Foundation selected a cohort of Barr Fellows for a comprehensive program — including sabbaticals, retreats, and “learning journeys” to developing countries led by the Berkana Institute. The Foundation subsequently monitored the “connectivity” among the Barr Fellows to see how their cohort network contributed to building the city’s leadership. The foundation graphically mapped out the social network of these leaders at the beginning and again following the graduation of two cohort classes. These maps showed visually that there were many more interactions and connections between the Barr fellows, and more frequent and wide-ranging collaborations.

Several alumni projects in the Jewish community show promise for developing the next tier of leadership. The Wexner Foundation supports its alumni fellows through annual institutes and ongoing coaching, mentoring, and career assistance. This aspect of the program is seen as critical for protecting the foundation’s investment in its fellowships for Jewish clergy, educators, academics, and graduates of communal programs. Similarly, there are lessons to be gleaned from the leadership development initiatives being launched for alumni of AJWS, AVODAH, and Dorot, among others. A pilot project launched by Jewish Service Online (JSON) suggests another perspective: JSON offers micro-grants of \$5,000 for service alumni who propose special initiatives. More than sixty alumni proposed projects in the first cycle. This pilot may demonstrate the utility of a “bottom-up” rather than a “top-down” approach to leadership development.

### 3. Use Research – Starting with CBCO – to Build Field Knowledge

For most Jewish social justice groups, programmatic reach exceeds institutional grasp. Because of competing priorities, research and evaluation have been given low priority. To advance to the next stage of maturity, the field needs methods and measures for setting benchmarks and assessing readiness and impact. In the service arena, the paucity of research data thus far has made it necessary to “retrofit” a research agenda rather quickly, in response to the desire of practitioners and funders to evaluate how to best build capacity while ensuring authenticity.

Since CBCO is a relatively new strategy for the field, and one that is already demonstrating impact, it is a promising area for a research agenda. Also, since CBCO is a complex, time-consuming process, a social science framework would serve as a way to explore the distinctions between this model and other synagogue-based social justice practices.

The research agenda and methodology could be designed to show how the CBCO synagogues (and the control group congregations) are becoming agents of social change and how social justice is integrated with other aspects of synagogue life, learning, and practice. Over two to three years, the researchers could look for evidence of how CBCO helps congregations become more effective and cohesive, respective to specific indicators of social change and congregational change. The research also could chart the progression of congregants — from awareness to caring, and from caring to engagement and effective action. Furthermore, it could be important to assess how these shifts relate to their new congregational relationships and their own emergence as leaders.

Documenting the CBCO process and showing its effects — within the congregation and in the larger community — could educate synagogue boards and rabbis who are weighing the benefits and risks of a CBCO initiative. The research also could offer “indicators of readiness,” so that congregations can decide whether they are prepared to embark on CBCO. The research might also be useful for understanding how to embed other approaches to social justice in spiritual communities.

Interfaith research studies of CBCO have yielded knowledge about principles, practices, benefits, and “success factors.” To date, however, only one study has included a synagogue, a longitudinal study by Dr. Richard Wood, which examined four congregations — Catholic, Jewish, Evangelical Lutheran, and Church of God in Christ.

The field also has much to learn from research about the interfaith relationships built through CBCO. For many years, Jews actively participated as part of broader coalitions on behalf of social change movements. As the organized Jewish community shifted priorities, Jews receded from these coalition tables. CBCO offers a good testing ground for restoring these alliances.

Scholarly research of synagogue-based CBCO, implemented in this early phase, would give greater intellectual heft to the entire Jewish social justice field while yielding practical lessons about this particular approach.

## 4. Grasp Opportunity as Service Goes to Scale

You have to build a coalition that bridges the culture war between the social justice people and the continuity philanthropists. That's the only way to bring service to scale.

- SIMHA ROSENBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
JEWISH COALITION FOR SERVICE

**Encourage “all hands on deck.”** The momentum around service is bringing “all hands on deck,” from the mainstream to the innovators, from the most politically active to the most spiritually inclined, nationwide and across the generations. The growth of Jewish service thus offers the potential to expand networks, strengthen leadership, and improve agility at weaving together Judaism and social justice.

**Manage the momentum.** In this next phase, service practitioners need to maintain balance between the pressure for expansion and setting their own priorities for growth. They can lead the field by sharing their knowledge, experience, and best practices, transmitting their values, training the trainers for new programs, mentoring new service leaders, sharing curricula, and providing follow-up activities for participants.

**Affirm the authenticity of Jewish service.** For the newer practitioners, the priority will be creating authentic Jewish service in which Jewish identity is fostered alongside a sophisticated understanding of the root causes of inequity. Hillel is a case in point of how practitioners newer to the scene have responded to constructive feedback from seasoned organizers. Hillel revised its curricula to better educate student service volunteers about systemic issues and local conditions, in advance of their Alternative Spring Breaks in New Orleans. Consciously setting out to deepen the impact of Jewish service programs is a practice that should be cultivated and encouraged.

**Frame service as a communal norm throughout the life cycle.** The first wave of taking “service to scale” has focused on a “rite of passage” for young adults. The next goal is to make service a communal norm at every stage of life. People in their middle and senior years bring valuable skills and expertise to their service. In turn, these experiences educate and transform the participants, introducing new perspectives on core issues, such as poverty and inequity. Jewish service offers a powerful way for people of all ages to live out their values as Jews and citizens.

The veteran Jewish service organizations might play a strategic role by targeting diverse populations. They might, for example, develop programs that are geared specifically toward baby boomers, seniors, or multi-generational families. These new programs would call for

customized approaches to recruitment. Synagogues, communal agencies, and JCCs could become effective partners in this effort. The Experience Corps, Civic Ventures, and Atlantic Philanthropies, among others, have developed a body of knowledge about best practices for engaging boomers and seniors as volunteers. Their intelligence can be applied to pilots aimed at new Jewish service initiatives for older adults.

**Scan the expanded pool of service participants for potential advocates, activists, and allies.** The social justice groups will benefit from new entrants in the service arena, including traditional philanthropists and mainstream communal organizations. The result will be an expanded pool of alumni who want to stay connected to social justice work as professionals, volunteers, and advocates.

Jewish social justice organizations might experiment with forming social networks among service alumni to engage them in local advocacy or ongoing service efforts. AJWS, AVODAH, Adamah, and Selah already have valuable experience to share about cultivating alumni networks.

Some organizations in the Jewish social justice field are experimenting with the power of the Internet through Web 2.0. The JSON network, funded by the Schusterman Foundation, uses social network technology to connect alumni to one another and to diverse opportunities. MAZON is using MySpace to attract supporters and volunteers; their results over time will provide valuable intelligence to the field.

While interactive technology is a lively trigger and mainstay of many social networks, human contact is still important. MoveOn.org has learned that to build momentum, virtual relationships must be supplemented by house meetings and local activities. Jewish social justice organizations have increased opportunity to engage alumni in advocacy efforts, experimenting with a combination of online and offline activities.

# Create Influential Networks

We are told that God redeemed us from Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. But at each step of the way we're reminded that the work of transformation, of liberation cannot be done alone. It requires extraordinary partnerships – between individuals, between nations, between those with power and those without, between heaven and earth. Acting in the image of God to take on the work of creating change, we need to reach out to each other with our own strong hands and outstretched arms.

- RABBI SHARON COHEN ANISFELD,  
DEAN, HEBREW COLLEGE RABBINICAL SCHOOL

The challenge for social movements is to keep moving people forward, from awareness to caring, from caring to action, and from action to effective action. At each step along the way, circumstances conspire to diminish the capacity of individuals to contribute to social change. Social networks, rooted in shared values, sustain people in their commitments, helping them maintain the spirit of realistic optimism that is so often at the heart of successful movements for change.

The research on social change has found that **what sustains a movement over time is the strength of its social networks** — the diverse voices, skills, and spheres of influence that are bound together by shared values. In a recent article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Yale Professor Joel Podolny reviewed research literature to identify the variables that move people from caring about an issue to commitment and action. In one study, conducted during the civil rights era, 1,300 people signed up for a “freedom training” in Mississippi, and of that number, 975 people attended. Those who did attend already belonged to a network with shared experiences and values — at their college, labor union, or church. The 325 people who stayed away did not belong to a comparable social network. These findings were later replicated in a 2005 study of a disarmament march in Europe.

People mobilize around shared concerns and values. The problem with organizing around issues is that you get a lot of product differentiation. People will say, “I’m for this part of health care, not for that part.” When you organize around values, you have to do the work of arriving at a common focus.

- MARSHALL GANZ,  
LECTURER IN PUBLIC POLICY, HAUSER CENTER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

People who belong to social networks are more likely to show up and commit to a cause because of shared values and mutual commitment. The opportunity is ripe to create this kind of network for Jewish social justice and to cultivate shared commitment across a wide range of Jews.

## 5. Build a Jewish Social Justice Table

To get people working collaboratively depends on their willingness to be network-centric rather than organization-centric. People need to see that each of their pieces is value-added. We need to reward network-centric behavior. This requires strong facilitative leadership.

- ALLISON FINE,  
SENIOR FELLOW, DEMOS

Networks that knit people and organizations will expand the potential of the Jewish social justice field. The field's extraordinary growth is evidence that many individuals, organizations, and philanthropists can contribute to Jewish social justice. In the next phase, the field needs to become *network-centric*, branching out to reach diverse venues and individuals and connecting through shared values.

It is time to build a **Jewish social justice table** as a context for bringing individuals and groups together for strategy, collaboration, and the next level of breakthrough thinking. This table would function as a practical structure for moving people out of their insular worlds in order to maximize local, regional, and national networks.

In the nonsectarian social change sector, efforts have been made to build and deploy networks on behalf of far-reaching goals. In the environmental movement, the global warming challenge led to the formation of the Green Group, a consortium of CEOs from thirty-three national environmental organizations. The Green Group, supported by major foundations, includes the leadership of the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Environmental Defense, and the Audubon Society, among others. These CEOs meet twice annually to build the environmental movement through visionary and values-based leadership and to coordinate strategies for communications and lobbying.

The arena of peace and security offers another instructive example. Following 9/11, the Ploughshares Fund convened more than fifty activist organizations, scholars, think tanks, and funders to address troubling issues around national security and the declining support for nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament work. The Boston-based Interaction Institute

for Social Change designed a collaborative process that eventually involved more than 150 stakeholders in developing a shared vision, with strategies and tactics to reframe peace and security issues and recover their political relevance and effectiveness. That plan is now in the implementation phase.

Based on lessons learned from these experiences, the Nathan Cummings Foundation is developing a pilot project, *The Jewish Social Justice Table*, to explore the viability of such a network. This project, which held its first convening in January 2008, suggests potential for improving the way that Jewish social justice organizations, mainstream institutions, secular social change groups, and individuals collaborate with one another and inspire widespread public engagement.

The growth of the Jewish social justice field has softened the boundaries between the mainstream and the margins, and between the traditional and the secular. Many organizations now recognize the benefits of collaboration to enhance sustainability and deepen impact. Leaders, activists, volunteers, donors, and participants need a place where they determine when to intersect, when to move in parallel motion, when to aggregate, and when to disaggregate activities.

*The Jewish Social Justice Table* could serve as a context to bring these multiple stakeholders together — to make collective decisions, activate networks, and plan national and international campaigns. The resulting dialogues and collaborations — across issues, size, geography, and affiliation — could cultivate a rich ecosystem, with national players alongside local and alternative voices alongside the mainstream. With the establishment of this table, Jewish social justice leaders and organizations might also gain greater access to broader coalition tables, both within the organized Jewish community and at social change tables beyond.

## 6. Connect to the Organized Jewish Community around Shared Values

Alternative and mainstream frameworks have to come together through people, not programs. Right now, it's too much about the answers and not about the questions. We need to admit that we don't all have the same politics. From an organizational perspective, it's not worthwhile to spend time with people who don't agree with you. But from the perspective of Jewish pluralism, it's worthwhile to spend lots of time talking with people who don't agree with you.

- BRENDA ZLATIN,  
PROGRAM OFFICER, JACOB AND HILDA BLAUSTEIN FOUNDATION

**Identify shared values.** The Jewish social justice community and the organized Jewish community can deepen their connection — from discrete areas of common interest to profound understanding of common values. Despite their differences, there is no denying the interdependence of these two communities.

To the extent that the Jewish social justice field and the organized Jewish community come together around shared values, there will be an impetus on both sides to rise above the prevailing tensions. Collaborations already in progress evince this new, more dynamic relationship. PJA is working with the Los Angeles Federation to bring rabbis into campaigns on behalf of hotel workers. Just Congregations' CBCO initiative is part of the Union of Reform Judaism. Each year several AVODAH placements are in Jewish federated social service agencies; and JFSJ's Tzedec Community Development Project engages the resources of federations.

The “strategic values” approach demonstrates how traditional boundaries can be dismantled and new coalitions forged on behalf of far-reaching goals. The environmental movement and American labor certainly present different cultures and priorities. But by forming the Apollo Alliance, a coalition of American business, labor, environmental, and community leaders have come together to develop a common strategy to “catalyze a clean energy revolution” that will reduce dependence on foreign oil, reduce carbon emissions that are destabilizing the climate, and expand opportunities for job creation and safe working conditions for American workers.

The U.S. Climate Action Partnership offers another model. USCAP is a coalition of twenty-three leading corporations and six national environmental organizations, working together on climate policy, energy consumption, and environmental protection. The companies in USCAP represent nearly two trillion revenue dollars and more than two million employees in the United States. The environmental groups bring a combined membership of two million people and a history of leadership on these issues. As a landmark coalition, USCAP is catalyzing national action on climate change by calling for mandatory reductions of greenhouse gases.

## Form a “G8” group to develop a strategy for engagement with the organized Jewish community.

Where is the entire community in regard to social justice? We need to see the grid and we need to build our relationships. What would the next step be to get to the broader audience? We have to have lots of gateways and multiple entry points. We need a larger group of stakeholders to create a long-term strategy to advance social justice in the Jewish world. What would it take so that ten years from now the world will look different?

- NANCY KAUFMAN,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JCRC, BOSTON

Each social justice leader and organization is seeking to connect, in some way, with leaders and representatives of the organized Jewish community. Given the relatively scant attention that the mainstream leaders give to issues outside their own agendas, a coordinated strategy is the best course of action.

Jewish social justice organizations might form a “G8” strategy group to map the mainstream Jewish community, determine which communities and leaders represent likely levers for change, and construct a strategy for cultivating each relationship.

For example: Should PJA cultivate a long-term alliance with the California federations? Is the UJA-Federation of NY the best partner for JFSJ? How might AJWS build a cadre of ten large or large-intermediate federations through its service programs? Should AVODAH bring some of its alumni to meet with the CEOs of Jewish social service agencies, to draw the link between service and advocacy? How might the Boston JCRC showcase its achievements at selected federations to encourage replication? These questions suggest how different players might take the lead with selected corner offices in the organized Jewish community.

The G8 group also could assess how Jews can optimally participate in interfaith and interethnic coalitions. This is another area for creative partnership with representatives from mainstream organizations — federations, synagogues, community centers, and social service agencies — to identify the right Jewish representative to participate in specific coalitions, making the best use of each organization’s expertise, knowledge, and resources.

Finally, the G8 group could think about how the aspirations of Jewish social justice groups might be framed in a way that resonates for less progressive Jews in the organized community. This recommendation reflects the lessons learned by other coalitions that seek to foster social change. The Herndon Alliance, a health care initiative whose members include sixty groups

across the political spectrum, offers polling data, messages, and framing communications. Through polling and message testing, Herndon Alliance members came to see that the message of *health care for all* was more palatable across the political spectrum when translated as *guaranteed affordable choice*. Likewise, exploring different frames for Jewish social justice commitments might help the G8 develop compelling strategies and messages aimed at the organized Jewish community.

There's an assumption among people on the far left that it's better to work against the system rather than to co-opt the system. It's extremely important to have people on the inside that can move the organized Jewish community to the social justice position. If we have a relationship, we can be responsive. So we need to be in connection and conversation.

- RABBI STEVE GUTOW,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Build bridges with volunteer leaders and donors.** Jewish social justice leaders need to bring volunteer leaders to their “table.” Some of these volunteer leaders may be traditional philanthropists; others may bring a next-generation sensibility. The Jewish social justice leaders need these volunteer leaders to serve as ambassadors to the organized Jewish community.

The first step might be to expose many volunteer leaders and philanthropists to organizations and initiatives in the Jewish social justice field, perhaps through an experience, in the United States or abroad, that offers exposure to direct service, an understanding of the root causes of inequity, and reflection framed in a Jewish context. These experiences could serve as the entry for enlisting volunteer leaders and philanthropists in Jewish social justice work, within their own spheres of influence.

We need a big table where everyone can touch base. My experience in building coalitions and networks is that the zealots and extremists push the public discourse in a certain way, and we need people who will integrate that discourse into the mainstream. You need both. Look at AIDS. ACT-UP did outrageous things while other people took what they did and integrated what was reasonable. That led to big changes in health delivery.

- SIMHA ROSENBERG,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEWISH COALITION FOR SERVICE

Another approach is suggested by the 2007 Conference for Change, organized by Advancing Women Professionals and the Center for Leadership Initiatives, in partnership with the

Schusterman and Berrie Foundations. This convening was designed to accelerate progress in the Jewish community around diversity and equity. Over twenty-four hours, 120 communal professionals, volunteer leaders, philanthropists, and advocacy professionals gathered to develop new ideas and action plans. This model might help social justice practitioners connect to philanthropists and communal leaders by taking people out of their organizational “boxes” and giving them tools for articulating new commitments.

## 7. Bring Advocacy to the Jewish Social Service Sector

The Jewish Community Relations Councils are ideally positioned to create the synergy between service and advocacy. If you want somebody to sit down with a congressperson, to talk about the importance of fully funded food stamps, the best person is someone who has actually seen poverty firsthand and understands what it means in their community and their life.

- HADAR SUSSKIND,  
WASHINGTON DIRECTOR, JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Position caregiving on the forefront.** Social service agencies are already on the forefront of serving the most vulnerable, Jews and non-Jews alike. These agencies — practitioners, professional staff, board members, and volunteers — possess the moral authority to revive caregiving as a central value, within the Jewish community and throughout the larger society.

Some social service agencies are starting to confront the root causes of the problems that affect their client populations. The United Neighborhood Houses, an umbrella for thirty-five community-based settlement houses in New York City, has positioned advocacy as a priority in its strategic plan because it believes it can best serve its clients’ interests if it can change government policies.

Social service professionals bring their facilitative and collaborative talents to caregiving across boundaries of race and class. These talents also equip them to become vigorous participants in the movement for social change. Social service professionals can be valuable partners in launching a dialogue between federation leaders, JCC professionals, and clergy about giving social change a central position on the Jewish agenda.

**Bring advocacy to Jewish social service agencies.** The social service sector has the potential to become a hub for activism in the Jewish community. One possible approach is suggested by the Building Movement Project. BMP’s mission is to inspire activism in the nonprofit sector.

One of their initiatives is teaching social service agencies how to engage in effective advocacy. The process begins with agency staff learning about the social and economic issues that relate to their work with client populations. Next steps bring board members, funders, and clients into the learning process. These stakeholders develop an action agenda, leading to lobbying days with other organizations at the statehouse, voter mobilization, and candidate forums. Over time, this agency-by-agency organizing lays the groundwork for coalition-building and larger-scale efforts.

Mobilizing constituents allows people to give, instead of just being clients. When people feel they have something to give their community, it changes how they feel about themselves. That's part of social change on an individual level and on a systemic level. Sometimes a little action goes a long way. Individual transformation is the motivator, binding people to social justice efforts beyond the immediate campaign.

- FRANCES KUNREUTHER,  
BUILDING MOVEMENT PROJECT

The Building Movement Project has convened social service practitioners in the Lutheran and Christian communities. However, no Jewish organizations have yet joined these efforts. Several Jewish social justice groups might partner with social service agencies to join this national learning network. The experiences of these agencies might then be shared with the Association of Jewish Family Service and the Association of Jewish Vocational Service.

## Build the Jewish presence at coalition tables.

What does Jewish responsibility mean? Christians gather like-minded people to reflect on what they believe and what they can do. They have a lay ministry for building community and faith and a commitment to social action. When I look at the Jewish world as an outsider, even though I am Jewish, I wonder why people worry so much about continuing to be Jewish. Why? What is fundamental? Who is served?

- DIANE WINSTON, KNIGHT CHAIR IN MEDIA/RELIGION,  
ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

During this inquiry, leaders of nonsectarian social change initiatives frequently spoke about the absence of Jews, as Jews, from important coalition tables, unlike Lutherans, Catholics, and Protestants, who send formal representatives. One of the G8's most important functions would

be to determine which coalitions call for “Jewish social justice” representation and to develop a coordinated strategy for this work.

## 8. Amplify the Alternative Jewish Voice

People evolve through a network to become a system of influence. If the goal is a system of influence in which every Jew in America has a social justice role to play in the world, then what will that system look like? What are the processes and tools for people to emerge as hosts of meaningful conversations and meaningful spaces?

- PAT BRANDES,  
SENIOR ADVISOR, THE BARR FOUNDATION

To establish the alternative Jewish perspective, there must be a continuous “hum” of individual and organizational voices in the public square — around values, ideas, and debate, with the volume turned up as needed for journalism, advocacy, and campaigns. This distinctive voice needs to be heard, even as Jewish social justice leaders build bridges to the organized Jewish community. The work needs to proceed on parallel tracks — connecting to traditional Jewish communities around common values while simultaneously taking the alternative Jewish social justice message to diverse media and venues.

**Reward fluency in the use of social media.** The social justice field overall has arrived late to the tools of social media for public engagement, and Jewish social justice organizations are no exceptions. Allison Fine, the social media consultant and author of the book *Momentum*, speaks of the need for nonprofits to shift from their perception of Web 2.0 as technology and instead to understand it as connectivity.

While technology will never render face-to-face relationships obsolete, Jewish social justice groups now need to take a leap forward. Web 2.0 is cheap and accessible. Several steps might inspire groups to adopt it. First, the organizations might circulate the Overbrook Foundation’s technology survey for social change groups to obtain a baseline reading of field capacity. The results of this survey would surface the most urgent needs in this arena and could motivate the participating organizations to learn and experiment collectively with Web 2.0. Some organizations might seek counsel from not-for-profit organizations that make effective use of online advocacy, such as the ACLU and Environmental Defense.

Most Jewish social justice organizations are staffed by young people who are fluent in this technology, and whose enthusiasm for building online communities could be encouraged as a

means to help their organization establish a Web presence more quickly. In turn, the lessons learned by the social justice groups could be shared with mainstream organizations that are even further behind the curve in the use of interactive social media.

The question always has to be alive on the agenda: What's our narrative? Who are we addressing and how are we using the multiple forms of media to tell our story?

- RACHEL LEVIN,  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, THE RIGHTEOUS PERSONS FOUNDATION

**Tell the story in new, creative ways.** Finding the ways to make the Jewish social justice narrative compelling to multiple audiences in multiple ways requires that we make communications core to any organizational strategy. As the forms of media multiply and the potential audiences diversify, making a communication plan central to program strategy, rather than an ancillary support effort is essential. Taking full advantage of the field's increasing access to networks of creative social entrepreneurs will help foster this change in mindset.

**Link individuals and organizations to the progressive Jewish narrative through shared experiences.** The Jewish social justice field needs venues where alternative voices are included in the Jewish communal conversation and where social networks are created in real time. For example, Liberation sederim have served as the context for Jewish social justice activists and leaders since the early days of pioneering Jewish social justice leader, Rabbi Arthur Waskow's seder. Ma'yan's annual women's seder became so popular that it was extended to five nights and inspired women's sederim in dozens of communities.

An annual social justice experience might bring varied groups together for "new narratives" of the Jewish community. For example, the Progressive Jewish Alliance has made its Festival of Rights at Chanukah an occasion to connect Jews and social justice activists through an innovative mix of religion, music, and politics. Another possibility is to create Jewish experiences linked to other progressive events; for example, the Clinton Global Initiative, the YearlyKos Convention, or the Independent Social Forum. These connections need to happen in the Jewish social justice community, both online and offline, through real-time activities and experiences.

## Part VI: The Strategic Moment for Jewish Social Justice

Through globalization and technology, we have come to understand that our collective fate on the planet is interconnected. But no movement, sector, organization, or leader has suggested that there is a single answer to the question of how to navigate the turbulent beginnings of the twenty-first century.

In a world where growing economic inequality is fueling unrest and violence, enlightened leaders in the business world and the nonprofit sector are asking whether life on Earth can be sustained without a concept of collective self-interest, accompanied by a new set of shared values. There is a powerful convergence between the epiphanies of business leaders Warren Buffet, Bill and Melinda Gates, and Ted Turner; economist Jeffrey Sachs and ethicist Peter Singer; former heads of state Mary Robinson, Nelson Mandela, and Al Gore; cultural icons Bono and Oprah Winfrey; activist movie stars, George Clooney and Angelina Jolie; and journalists Nicholas Kristof and Samantha Power. These leaders, thinkers, entertainers, and public servants are reframing the role of the citizen in a global community and our collective responsibility for eradicating disease and poverty, preserving the environment, and upholding human rights.

As these voices speak from the “top of the mountain,” they are being joined by a resounding chorus from the grassroots, as the leadership of developing countries connects to NGOs worldwide and intersects with the imagination and business acumen of local and global social entrepreneurs.

This is a strategic moment for the Jewish social justice field. The field of Jewish social justice has much to contribute to the blueprint for global transformation. Grounded in theology, culture, and history, Jewish social justice has been transmitted and translated through every generation. The mission is rooted in our collective purpose and values.

We believe this is a moment of tremendous opportunity for the Jewish social justice field – to leverage the growth, build organizational infrastructure, secure long-term financial stability, and develop the next generation of leadership. By rooting the progress achieved thus far and responding to the challenges, we open the possibility of elevating social justice in American Jewish life.

Through the Visioning Justice inquiry, we have come to understand that, to fully capitalize on this strategic opportunity, it will be important to embrace the diversity of purposes, motivations and Jewish identities that bring Jews to the work of social justice. Rather than view this multiplicity as a threat to Jewish continuity, we see multiplicity as a core strength of Jewish life and the guiding concept for building a vital field of Jewish social justice.

Jews of every generation and affiliation live in multiple worlds. The Visioning Justice inquiry has revealed the extraordinary opportunities to engage people in all their complexity, as Jews and as global citizens.

For post-modern Jews, Jewish social justice is the bridge between universalism and particularism. *If I am not for myself, who is for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?* Jewish social justice offers a profound way to resolve this binary relationship between commitment to the Jewish people and commitment to the people of the world. Through Jewish social justice, these commitments are woven together with new strength and meaning.

Despite all that is looming darkly in these times, there is a growing convergence of urgency and optimism, and that convergence can fuel social change. If we act now to move this work forward, then the beginning of the twenty-first century will in fact become an era of transformation, for American Jewish life, and for the world at large.



# Appendix A

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## CONTRIBUTORS

This work was informed by interviews and conversations with many individuals who graciously shared their ideas with the authors of this report.

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## ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS

Interviews and conversations with the staff and boards of American Jewish World Service, IKAR, Progressive Jewish Alliance, and the White House Project helped inform this project.

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## CONFERENCES AND CONSULTATIONS

During the course of the Visioning Justice inquiry, the research team — Shifra Bronznick, Didi Goldenhar, and Steven M. Cohen — consulted and/or participated in research projects, meetings, and conferences of the following organizations:

### **From the Ground Up: Advancing Jewish Service**

This two-day conference, held in May 2007, educated community leaders and funders about the field of Jewish service and brought Jewish service and nonsectarian providers together to discuss best practices and field expansion. From the Ground Up was the first public forum to discuss the potential impact of creating a universal Jewish service agenda.

### **K'hilot K'doshot: Holy Congregations, Just Communities: JFSJ's National Gathering of Synagogues Engaged in Congregation-based Community Organizing**

In February 2007, nearly three hundred Jewish leaders convened in Santa Clara, California, to explore synagogue engagement in organizing. The gathering gave participants the opportunity to reflect on the advancement of the field, five years after JFSJ launched its effort to engage synagogues in congregation-based community organizing.

### **Jewish Funders Network Conference**

The Jewish Funders Network (JFN) is an international organization of family foundations, public philanthropies, and individual funders dedicated to advancing the quality and growth of philanthropy rooted in Jewish values. The JFN International Conference brings these influential leaders from the nonprofit and business worlds together to form strategic funding partnerships and to examine issues facing the philanthropic community.

### **Synagogue 3000/JFSJ Consultation on CBCO and the Research Agenda**

In May 2006, JFSJ partnered with Synagogue 3000 and thirty-five national leaders to explore new models of social justice work in the synagogue setting. For the S3K Synagogue Studies Institute, the conference highlighted the potential for new research around synagogue transformation. For the Jewish Funds for Justice, the impact of social justice initiatives on synagogue leaders and communities will inform their future congregation-based justice work.

Participants included clergy and lay leaders from every denomination; community organizers and other leaders working with the Gamaliel, IAF, and PICO national networks; synagogue coalition builders from Jewish World Watch and B-JEN; scholars from public and private universities and seminaries; and other key activists and thought leaders.

### **Rockwood/Selah Design and Selection Committees**

The *Selah Leadership Program* is a collaboration between the Nathan Cummings Foundation and Jewish Funds for Justice, in partnership with The Rockwood Leadership Program. *Selah* is creating a network of agents for social change by engaging a broad array of emerging Jewish leaders from both Jewish and secular organizations. *Selah's* innovative training model integrates personal transformation, organizational performance, collaboration, and social change theory, embedded within a Jewish framework.

### **The Sierra Club Leadership Development Project**

The Sierra Club Leadership Development Project focuses on the development of elected volunteer leadership teams in regional chapters and groups nationwide. The overall approach is to identify and recruit leadership, build community around this leadership, and generate power from the resources of each community. LDP is led by Marshall Ganz (Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University) and Ruth Wageman (Hay Group). This pilot project is expected to yield evidence about the relative success of the pedagogies employed and to serve as a model for a comprehensive volunteer leadership program throughout the Sierra Club organization.

### **Zeek — D.I.Y. Judaism: A Roundtable on the Independent Minyan Phenomenon**

The last decade has seen the proliferation of independent minyanim, lay-led communities for worship. Meeting in church basements and synagogue social halls, these minyanim attract young Jews — professionals, creatives, and intellectuals — who are quietly changing the shape of American Judaism. For this conversation, Zeek brought together the leaders of six minyanim for a conversation moderated by Shifra Bronznick.

# Appendix B

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# Appendix C

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## AREAS OF INQUIRY

The areas of inquiry, presented below, focused our exploration and analysis of trends in the Jewish social justice field and stimulated our thinking about the most effective strategies for moving forward:

- Define the purposes of Jewish social justice and the reasons for strengthening, widening, and deepening this work;
- Evaluate the overall capacity of the Jewish social justice field, and determine how to build leadership and develop the workforce;
- Assess the emerging opportunities for alliances, partnerships, and mergers in the Jewish social justice field;
- Project the potential for coordinating and aligning local, regional, and national efforts in the Jewish social justice field;
- Clarify the implications of the growing interest from traditional philanthropists and Jewish organizations in taking service to scale;
- Understand the effects of congregation-based community organizing on individuals, congregations, and targeted social issues;
- Explore the potential for Jewish social justice leaders and activists to develop relationships with the organized Jewish community;
- Identify the opportunities and constraints for issue-based organizing;
- Seek the overarching narratives in which Jewish social justice might be situated;
- Learn from other social movements how people are moved from awareness to caring, and from caring to action.



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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Shifra Bronznick** is a consultant who specializes in launching new initiatives and helping not-for-profit organizations navigate change. Shifra has consulted to a broad range of organizations including the Public Education Network, The Fresh Air Fund, Hebrew Union College-JIR, American Jewish World Service, the Medicare Rights Center, Ma'yan, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the United Jewish Communities, and the White House Project.

Shifra is the founding President of Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community, and co-author with Marty Linsky and Didi Goldenhar of “Leveling the Playing Field.” Together with CLI, she organized Conference for Change, a convening sponsored by the Schusterman and Berrie Foundations, aimed at accelerating progress in the Jewish community on inclusiveness and diversity. Currently, she is designing Women Rule! O, The Oprah Magazine and the White House Project’s leadership training program.

Previously, Shifra served as Executive Vice-President of Swig, Weiler & Arnow Mgt. Co., Inc., one of the premier commercial real estate firms in New York.

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