

THE INGEBORG, TAMARA & YONINA RENNERT WOMEN IN JUDAISM FORUM

**JEWISH WOMEN CHANGING AMERICA:
CROSS GENERATIONAL-CONVERSATIONS**

SUNDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2005

PANEL DISCUSSION 2: "CHANGING JEWISH COMMUNITIES"

Janet Jakobsen: Good morning. I'm Janet Jakobsen and I'm director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women and this year's Ingeborg, Tamara and Yonina Rennert Forum on Women and Judaism. The Rennert Forum brings to Barnard scholars, artists, and activists—and you will hear from all three over the course of the day—whose work promotes understanding of the complex roles of sex, gender, and sexuality in Judaism today and throughout history.

One of the things that we're hoping that this conference will do is bring forward some of the great diversity of the work that Jewish women are doing in changing America. We structured the conference in the hopes of exploring that diversity—by looking at different Jewish communities, looking at different religious communities, looking at the making of culture and how that works. And, thanks to last night's discussion, we have a vivid sense of the wide range of communities that people are working in, both generational communities and also different racial and ethnic communities within Judaism.

We're very excited to be able to bring this diverse set of perspectives to the questions of the conference. As I also mentioned last night, the great difficulty that the planning committee had in formulating this event was how to bring forward any kind of comprehensive representation of the work that Jewish women are doing. We decided we couldn't do that, so what we are trying to do was start a conversation. And there has been no lack of conversation: we went overtime last night, and that indicated some of the excitement. We will try not to do that today.

So without further ado, I want to introduce this morning's moderator. We are very honored to have with us Paula Hyman. Many of you know either her or her work, but nonetheless I think it's important to name her accomplishments. She is the Lucy Moses Professor of Modern Jewish History at Yale University and president of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

While a graduate student at Columbia University, Professor Hyman became a feminist activist with a particular interest in bringing feminist change into the Jewish community. Many of these universities did produce feminists out of those of us who weren't. They had a particular knack for that.

And we are very glad that she is able to moderate this panel, as a result. She is a founding member of *Ezrat Nashim*, which led the charge for the admission of women to the Conservative rabbinate. Much of her scholarship has focused on the roles and representation of Jewish women.

She is a co-author of *Jewish Women in America* and she published *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* and co-edited, with Deborah Dashmore, the prize-winning encyclopedia *Jewish Women in America*. Needless to say, she is an expert on the topic of our entire conference. Most recently, she edited an English-language version of the memoirs of an otherwise forgotten Jewish feminist from Poland, *Puah Rakowski: My Life as a Radical Jew*. She is currently co-editing a multivolume encyclopedia on Jewish women from the Hebrew Bible to the present, and beginning a project on anti-Semitism, gender, and Jewish identity. We could not have done better than to have Pauly Hyman here. Thank you, Paula.

Paula Hyman: Thank you. I want to welcome all of you here and also thank Barnard College and the Center for Research on Women for bringing us all together to talk about this—as Janet said, to begin a conversation on this very important subject. Last

night we had a lively cross-generational conversation about Jewish feminists and the larger American society.

As the title of this session suggests, we are focusing this morning on changing Jewish communities. That title obviously is double-edged. It's about how Jewish communities have evolved and diversified over the past generation. But it's also about how we can be agents of change within the Jewish community today.

And part of what we heard last night was a sense of, I would almost say, weariness, particularly among the older members in this conversation. That we've been engaged in pushing for change, and have accomplished a great deal and yet, we still have to push. And we are passing on the torch to the next generation to define what it wants to accomplish within American society and within the American Jewish community.

And we do hope, even though we're starting 20 minutes late, that there will be sufficient time for you to participate in this conversation. I'm going to speak just a little bit about my generation. I'm the oldest on this panel. And I'm talking about the early 1970s.

We Jewish feminists started as utopians. We were energetic. We were *febrente* young women, to borrow a term that was applied to women activists in the Jewish labor movement in the early twentieth century. We felt that we could change our part of the world, that anything was possible.

That's because we had grown into political maturity in the 1960s and we were operating in a very different world from the one in which progressives find ourselves today. We had experienced the feminist click. Those of you who are my age will recognize what the feminist click was. I would define it today as receiving from the feminist movement a language that enabled us to recognize our own invisibility, and therefore, to assert our presence not only within history, but also within the contemporary world.

In Jewish terms, my feminist clicks were threefold. I had one whenever I had looked at a bema; that is, when I saw the stage in a synagogue on which there were no women. I had a click as a student of Jewish history in perhaps the best, at that time, program in Jewish history in the country. And in my years as a student at Columbia University, I heard the name of only one Jewish woman in history. (And that's Dona Grazia Mendes, for those of you who are interested. Gluckl of Hamlin, my favorite

Jewish woman from the seventeenth century—look for her memoirs, read them in English—I found her on my own. We didn't hear of her.)

As feminists and Jews, we envisioned a community, and it's important to recognize that both Jews and feminists must live within a community. Our selves are crafted in a community. We envisioned a community that not only recognized difference, but also valued it.

At the beginning, the only difference that we really saw was gender difference. And I think that the Jewish feminist movement evolved to recognize difference of class, difference of ethnicity, difference of sexuality, and difference of race. I'm not going to go through what we accomplished. I would sum it up in one sentence: Jewish learning and leadership have begun to be severed from gender. When you refer to a Jewish leader, you can be referring to a woman. I stress the "begun" because I think we are in the midst of an ongoing struggle for change.

Several years ago, Estelle Friedman, who was a Barnard graduate and a prominent feminist historian, wrote an important book on American feminism, which she entitled *No Turning Back*. I wish that I could share, at this moment in time, her certitude that

what feminism accomplished in American society and what we Jewish feminists accomplished within the Jewish community is ineradicable. I do not share that certitude, and I think we all have to be aware of the fact that changes do not necessarily occur in one direction only. So let me give you three brief examples. I want to refer to Letty Pogrebin's citing of Jack Wertheimer's article blaming women for intermarriage, a low birthrate, and the general decline of the American Jewish community.

This is important for a couple of reasons. First of all, Jack Wertheimer is a prominent American Jewish intellectual and a candidate for the Chancellorship of the Jewish Theological Seminary. But this is not the first time that we've heard these charges. I thought we had buried them for good. I wrote an article in 1975 about this issue, and I can point you to accusations that are very similar from the nineteenth century, both from Europe and America, also laying the burden for assimilation and Jewish decline at the feet of Jewish women.

Second example: When feminist scholars pointed to the centrality of gender in understanding the Holocaust in a book called *Gender and the Holocaust*, that book stimulated a derisive and nasty

article in *Commentary* magazine which soon became a news story in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Third example: The policy committee of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism issued a preemptive supportive letter in favor of John Roberts' candidacy for the Supreme Court, without expressing any concern for its possible impact on women's lives in America.

So I think we have to ask where we have failed as Jewish women to make our voices heard within American Jewish communal institutions. The vast majority of American Jews support gender equality, but the leadership of the American Jewish community seems reluctant to recognize that mandate for achieving and maintaining equality.

Members of this panel will reflect on the ways in which we can be change-agents within the American Jewish community. Whether it is the community as we have inherited it, or a community that we seek to reconstruct completely, as Aviva Cantor suggested in 1985.

Right now, we have a very well-articulated institutional community and we must work within it. So how can Jewish

feminists make the community more responsive to our needs as women, and as Jews? "Get involved politically" was a clarion call of last night's panel. How does that translate for us into involvement in communal life? What can we realistically seek to accomplish? And how can we do it? That was the mission that I gave to each member of this panel. I will introduce each speaker. They will each have no more than ten minutes. And I'm planning to be a fairly vigorous time-keeper . . . I'm a little long myself.

(laughter)

We will have a brief discussion among the panelists and then we will open the floor for your questions and comments.

Our first panelist is Shifra Bronznick, who is the founder of a change management firm that specializes in launching new initiatives, restructuring organizations, and developing programs for the not-for-profit sector. She is also the founding president of Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community—most relevant for our conversation this morning—and I will turn the floor over to Shifra.

Shifra Bronznick: Good morning. What I would like to talk about today is, What situation do we find ourselves in now, in the organized Jewish community? Why do we find ourselves in that situation and how could we change it? I also want to acknowledge that this work has very much been created as a collaboration with *Ma'yan*. Many of the people in this audience today from *Ma'yan* are here.

A number of years ago we came together to say, What can we do about this organized Jewish community of ours, to make it more reflective of the values that we hold dear about gender equity, transformation, being effective, being imaginative, and being inclusive?

And it has continued through this vehicle of Advancing Women Professionals in the Jewish community. Some people are going to ask why have we chosen to focus on these institutions in the organized Jewish Community? Many of them seem to be losing their hold in the public sphere and among the next generation.

Nevertheless, to go back to what Letty said last night about not giving up on the politics of the environments that we're in: these are organizations that raise about \$2 billion a year, and disburse those monies, and have a huge influence by the way they

disburse those monies, on the priorities and programs of our community.

So as I often say, "When they asked Willie Sutton, 'Why do you rob banks?' He said, 'That's where the money is.'" So I don't want to give up on where the money is because that money has not only fueled some of the more establishment priorities; it's also been a huge source of revenue for all of the new-entry organizations seeking to enter into our community.

And if you look at where most of these great new organizations get their money from, it's not from people who've never been part of the Jewish community before. It's usually from people who are very much part of the established Jewish community. So I wanted to comment on that.

I do have to take issue with one thing Letty [Cottin Pogrebin] said, which is, I don't think we're ahead of the curve in the Jewish community, when I look at it, despite my delight and pleasure at seeing women breaking the barrier of the rabbinate and the cantorate. The reason I don't think that we're ahead of the curve is, when I look at other fields in the not-for-profit sector, Jewish women are making their mark in almost every major arena, powerfully so. When I look at the foundation world, in

1986 23 percent of foundations were headed by women. Now, over 50 percent of foundations are headed by women, including some of the biggest in the world, including the biggest in the world. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, et cetera and so forth.

When I look at the Ivy League, I see three out of eight universities have women presidents, including one—University of Pennsylvania—that's now had its second Jewish woman president in a row, Amy Guttmann.

Yet, somehow in the organized Jewish community, none of the 20 largest federations and only two of the next group of federations; none of the organizations that are responsible for our religious denominational life, not the seminaries, not the organizations that work with congregations; none of the organizations that train rabbis and cantors; none of the organizations responsible for education, like JESNA; none of the organizations responsible for leadership activities, like Wexner or CLAL; none of the organizations that are part of the Israel lobby, like APAC; none of the organizations that represent us in the public sphere, like the American Jewish Committee, like the American Jewish Congress, like the World Jewish Congress, like the Anti-Defamation League; none of those organizations have a

woman at the helm. And in fact, of 45 major national Jewish organizations, only one most recently has appointed a woman. And that is the Jewish Council on Public Affairs—Hannah Rosenthal, who has left for the Chicago Foundation for Women—no surprise there—because she did not necessarily find it an environment in which women's voices were amplified in a way that made an environment conducive to creating change. She doesn't say that, by the way. She said something very nice and politically correct, but it's not accurate.

(laughter)

So, why is this the case? We set up Advancing Women Professionals determined to change this. We created a male/female research team—Steven M. Cohen and Sherry Israel and I—we went into communities; we interviewed people and brought back, in their own language, what the obstacles were to women who sought to be CEOs in federation. And they said: explicit gender bias, a double bind about the vision of women's leadership, a weak pipeline, work/family conflict, as well as the problem of lack of professional development in the field. We wrote this up, including many of the biased remarks of male lay leaders, and we were told, "Well, this isn't a surprise, you didn't find out anything new.

The surprise is that nobody thought that this was worth doing something about. We asked the federation community, when they set up their next executive development program, to set a recruitment goal of 50 percent women. This is in a field that has 75 percent women working in the field. And the people who were my friends and allies said to me confidentially, "If you do that, you'll have to set a lower track for women." They were convinced that there were not 12 women in this entire field who qualified, who had the ambition and the capacity to aspire to be a CEO of a federation. Those were the people who *liked* us, who told us that.

We now have an executive development program. We did succeed in getting them to set a recruitment goal of 50 percent women. There are 50 percent women in the program. Nevertheless, it continues to be a very steep road ahead.

Why is it such a steep road ahead? Why is the Jewish community behind the curve? Four reasons. One: we don't like to wash our dirty linen in public because, shhh, the goyim may hear us. Which means having full, open, clear, honest conversations about this has been very difficult in the Jewish world.

Two: we pride ourselves that we're saving the rest of the world. We're mission-driven. And focusing on our own little problems, which is how women's problems are perceived, takes away from a mission-driven zeal to save the world. And in fact, when I asked the heads of federations, if you knew all this that was in the report, "Why didn't you do something about it?" One of the people who I'm told is our greatest ally, said, "Because I don't think it's important."

Three: why us? Because we're the family culture. We prize the family culture. We think it makes us warm, loving, *hamish*, and connected. But in fact, the family culture allows us to fall into all kinds of stereotypes that are inappropriate in the professional world, that have been very difficult for women professionals and volunteer leaders to challenge.

Finally, the fourth reason is that, in most women's communities, what I find is gender is trumped by other affiliations. So if you're Jewish, it's more important to you in the organized Jewish community not to lose your standing as a Jewish leader, and that trumps your desire to advocate on behalf of gender.

It happens in a number of other communities as well. I say that because it finally takes me to—that was the what and the why—the

how—which I will do in two minutes, Paula, because it's really actually very simple.

One: we have to decide that it's our priority to create this change. We have to decide that we are not going to put our money into organizations that don't reflect a commitment to gender equity. We have to decide that there is no donation without representation. They did it when they started this country. We have not been willing to link our donations either of our minds or our money or our time to demanding—not requesting—that our organizations embrace our values. And I didn't get to the whole part of our values, which I know will be spoken about later on in the panel, in the conversation. And no, just in case you're wondering, I don't want to leave the community just as it is with women at the helm. We're no different than men.

Two: I hope that most women who assume these roles will be different than men by virtue of their experience.

And three: if they aren't, we should remind them in the same way that we need to remind the men in our community that we have a vision of transformation. My friend Marie Wilson always says, "If you thought that you were in the business of

transportation when you were making buggy whips, you found yourself out of business when the car came.”

As feminists, I don't think we're in the women business. I think we're in the transformation business, and I invite you to join me in it.

Paula Hyman: Our next speaker is Sally Gottesman, who has been a feminist from her youth. And I first met Sally when she was a student at the School of Management at Yale University and took a course with me on the Jewish family. She graduated from SOM and she has become a management consultant for not-for-profit foundations. And she is also the Chair of Moving Traditions, a new organization that seeks to be the premier resource for those who are looking for inspiration and information to practice Judaism.

Sally Gottesman: Thank you. As someone who is, in a lot of ways, a jill-of-all-trades in this world of Jewish feminism, I want to share with you three concerns I have about our community, where we've come from and where we're going. And the framework I'm going to use is actually from Shimon Hatzadik, which says, "Al shlosha devarim ha'olam omed: al ha'torah, v'al ha'avodah, v'al

gemilut chasadim." "The world rests on three things: study, prayer, and good deeds."

Or from my framework for today: Torah and God, and how we talk about God and power. Prayer—*amidah*—and life cycle, and how women and men and boys and girls do or don't participate in life-cycle events after the changes Letty listed last night, such as counting women in a minyan and women as rabbis and cantors. And *Gemilut Hassadim*—good deeds—or, relating to what Shifra says, giving philanthropy and setting the agenda.

So, first: Torah and God. How we talk about God and power. I was having a conversation with my niece, Sophie. She was five. And we were talking about God and she was saying "God, he's in the trees." We were driving and, "God, he's in the steering wheel. He's in the air." And I said to Sophie, "Can God be a she?" And she looked at me and said, "No." And I said, "Why not?" And she said, "Because God is a boy's name."

(laughter)

This really does indicate a great problem: how we talk about God. I think how we talk about God and the prayer language we use to talk to God in our synagogues and in our classrooms is

critical. Not because of what God thinks, but because it teaches us concepts, symbols, and norms that we superimpose upon everyday realities. In other words, it matters if we call God "he" or "she." It matters to us, and how we think and teach about male and female authority, power, compassion, vulnerability, and what we teach our children and nieces and nephews about these attributes.

I think a major error in the Jewish feminist movement in relationship to religion is that we allowed our synagogues to be called egalitarian when this symbol of power was not egalitarian, when it remained a "He." And it's certainly a "He" in Hebrew, and I've had lots of conversations about why people feel very stuck in that. It's a "he" in Hebrew and sometimes a "you" or a third person in English. But truthfully, I think we should talk about God as "you," "he," and "she," so that everybody can see themselves reflected in that.

Liz [Holtzman] spoke last night about why there aren't more women in Congress. I think it would give us a chance of having more women in Congress if we could talk about God as "She" and little girls could grow up and think that the power that we learn about and that word that we use—it's a framework, it's the container for power—they could see themselves reflected in that.

That would be a major change. We have to learn to do that. Yesterday's Torah portion said, "God created human beings in God's image and the image they were created, male and female." If you want to point to the Bible, we have a way to do that. So that's my first issue: God.

The second issues is *amidah*—prayer and life-cycle events. And my primary volunteer commitment, in essence, has been marketing Jewish feminism for the last eight years. And many of the intellectuals and the idea generators who I owe a great gratitude to are in this room, and many of them are speaking on a panel later or spoke earlier.

But I feel like I'm the line-worker; I'm their ad agency. I want to take the books that they write and the ideas that they generate and market them. How do we get them out to the people? And so, one of the most successful of these projects has been Rosh Hodesh, *It's A Girl Thing*, which now has over 2,000 adolescent girls participating in Rosh Hodesh groups across the United States and Canada, which strengthens their Jewish identity and self-esteem.

These groups have made important inroads in helping girls understand themselves as Jews and making Judaism relevant to

their lives. Feminist Judaism. Stories that we didn't grow up with, relevant to their lives. And that's critical.

One of the things we've been asked a lot is, What about the boys? Boys drop out of the Jewish community much faster than girls do. After *B'nai Mitzvah*, 60 percent of boys say they want to have nothing to do with the Jewish community, whereas 40 percent of the girls say that. And we see that funnel: bar mitzvah'd boys drop out and high school boys drop out at a faster rate in college. It's just this big funnel. So I have this real question, as a feminist: How are we going to keep women and men and boys and girls engaged in Judaism?

It's really a concern of mine and I want feminists, I want all of us in this room, to name that problem and own it. Because if we don't, others will. And I'm very concerned about a tipping point in the Jewish community and that this is going to become a women's occupation and that men are going to leave. I don't think it's good to have 5,000 years of Judaism written by men. And I don't think it's going to be a good thing to have the next 5,000 years of Judaism written by women alone. And I'm really concerned that, as feminists, we figure out a way to structure the conversation and to name the framework and to make that

happen. So that's my second concern, about prayer and *amidah*, sitting in that piece of Judaism together.

And finally, *Gemilut Hassadim*, good deeds, or giving philanthropy and setting the agenda. Some great things that Shifra alluded to have been happening with Jewish women changing communities in the past ten years. There's a host of organizations and they are represented here in this room: the Jewish Women's Archive, Kolot, Ma'yan, Advancing Jewish Women As Professionals, and Moving Traditions have all appeared on the scene. And this is great. I remember 15 years ago, giving money with a small group of people in this Jewish women's resource, and we gave away \$10,000. That was the only Jewish feminist giving that was happening. And now we have these multi-million, or million-dollar organizations, or close to \$2 million-organizations.

But these organizations struggle financially because, in part, many things *haven't* changed. Women haven't become vocal philanthropists in the Jewish community. We're not comfortable with the equation of money and power. Women and men, in large part, have not given with a "gender lens," as we were talking about. We don't say no, most people don't say no, when certain criteria aren't met. And women haven't become the mega-

philanthropists. They aren't the largest givers in the Jewish community, and really, a lot of the agenda is driven by the mega-philanthropists now. The people who have a lot of money are giving away more money than many of the federations are.

Birthrate Israel is one of those things. Day Schools. PEJE [Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education] is another one of those things. There are a lot of initiatives that were set by these people. So I ask myself some questions about that. First of all, don't these mega-donors have wives? Where are their wives?

On behalf of Rosh Hodesh, I recently called a mega-donor, and his staff person was a man, and—actually, interestingly enough, the more money you have, the more likely you are going to have a male staff person for your philanthropy—and I called and I was trying to raise money for Rosh Hodesh. And this was a foundation that gives to Jewish education and trying to get young people involved, and he said to me, we're not interested in this type of thing. Like here we are: it's Rosh Hodesh; it's a Jewish education program!

But I wasn't very quick on my feet. I regret that. I'll call back.

(laughter)

I want to add that I am concerned that as feminists we have set the bar too low. I don't think that Jewish women's funds have pushed women enough. I was once sitting at Kolot, and \$10,000 was our highest giving category. And I was there, and I realized that the organization that I rent space from had \$100,000 as their highest giving category. And suddenly, the light went on: I'm like, what is my problem? Why do we have that? We should list \$100,000 there and have people realize that this work is worth \$100,000. So I think that we need to be change agents and that's work that we have left to do. So, using that framework—that Torah is God, *amidah* is life cycle involving men and women, and *gemult hassadim* is giving more money—I think those are changes that we've yet to make.

Paula Hyman: Our next speaker is Khadijah Miller, who is an assistant professor of interdisciplinary studies at Norfolk State University in Virginia. She received her doctorate in African American studies from Temple University. And she concentrated in black women's twentieth-century American history. Right now she has a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities on extending the reach of year-long

programming on the African diaspora. And she's going to speak about her womanist Judaic community.

Khadijah Miller: Good morning. I am kind of coming from a different place. I'm not going to talk about philanthropy. But like the conversation last night, for me, identity is very important. And I think that distinct identities do unify us because we know where each person is coming from. I don't see those distinctions as dividers, but more as basic steps to getting closer together. I'm going to talk a little about identity politics and then I'm going to talk about this womanist Judaic community. When I was talking to Paula, she wanted to give our idea of an ideal Jewish community, so that's where I'm coming from.

It's interesting when we think of black women and Judaism. Some think of the Falashas of Ethiopia or the Limba of South Africa. Some think about the black Jews who went to Israel in the 1960s. But we don't immediately think of someone whose parents are not Jewish, but who identifies herself as Jewish ethnically or racially or culturally. Whose parents would be considered black or African American, but who taught their children Judaism. And that's me. Basically, that's where I'm coming from.

So I want to give just a little bit of historical background on identity and self-definition: when you look at the experiences of African Americans in the U.S., you'll find that a major issue has been to self-define and self-actualize. And that is what comes across in this womanist, Judaic community: working to self-define and self-actualize in a way that empowers.

And so, finding the term that best exemplifies or reflects that experience, you'll find that black Jews are called black Jews or Israelites or Hebrew Israelites, as well as others who don't even want to label themselves. But what we call ourselves also reflects our community, where the community is and where the community will go, its changes.

Alice Walker defined the term "womanist" in 1993 in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. And one aspect of the definition that I like that speaks to the experience that I'm going to talk about refers to you acting "womanish." It's a black folk expression of mothers to female children. And I like the example, "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." And the reply is "It wouldn't be the first time."

And so, this aspect of womanism is the social protest activism that has been happening, that just perhaps didn't have a name to

it. Walker clearly explains that womanism, for her, is used—not that it's better than feminism, but you don't have to put a color on it to include yourself and say black feminist. But if you say "womanist," it's understood that it's a woman of color. And it's not to exclude, but more so to include. And also, womanist theologians have taken the term to discuss a woman who is strong in her faith, whatever that is, whether one is Christian or Jewish or Muslim. A woman who is concerned about the multiple oppressive impact of race, class, and gender.

And womanism is a holistic representation of experiences of women of color. And so, that's where I'm coming from. A womanist perspective of Judaism. I'm also focusing on Katie Cannon. Katie Cannon wrote a book called *Black Womanist Ethics* in 1998. And in this book she has three defining characteristics of black women: invisible dignity, quiet grace, and unshouted courage. And these three characteristics can be applied to black women within Judaism, their relationships, their participation as well as their representation.

Black womanist ethics basically calls for black women to utilize their own historical reality, their spiritual knowledge and self-love to motivate actions that will empower themselves and members of their communities. Black womanist ethics allows for a

realization of the historical and moral situation of African American women. It provides an appreciation for the creative ways that women have sustained and maintained and empowered themselves in their communities.

Invisible dignity is basically a self-celebration of survival against great odds. It qualifies grace and it's a virtue of moral agency and resistance. And unshouted courage is the oftentimes forced responsibility, accountability and perseverance, inner conviction, resolution, and the boldness that are exhibited by black women.

And I think that this has been done. If you look at various black Jewish communities, I think of women perhaps like Ella Hughley, who has been studying Judaism for years and has written a book and lectures about the role that black women play in Judaism. And she's creating this space of inclusion.

I also think of women like Rabbi Regina Smith, who went to the Jewish Theological Seminary, studied at Colgate and has participated actively, has lived in Israel in creating and sustaining a place for women in a Judaic community.

And so, in my ideal community I would say, particularly as it relates to black women, we would do seven things. We would embrace difference. We would respect our particularities and our interests. We would provide space for separateness and togetherness. We would allow for collaborations. We would face challenges. We would move away from assumptions and stereotypes.

So if you meet me, you don't automatically think I'm Muslim. My first name is Khadijah, so you might think I'm Muslim, but I'm not. You might think that I'm Christian, but I'm not. So, in my ideal community, we'd move away from those assumptions.

For me, this changing Jewish community, or this womanist Judaic community, really finds itself in the African proverb: "I am because we are, and therefore we are because I am." We have to recognize that. We all have a significant place and space.

Paula Hyman: Our last speaker is Gina Nahai. She was born in Iran and came to the United States at the age of 16. She is the author of the Pulitzer-nominated *Cry of the Peacock* and of *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* and *Sunday's Silence*. She also teaches at USC, where she is an adjunct professor of creative writing, and has also done some consulting on Iran for the Department of Defense.

Gina Nahai: Hi. I want to say I'm very encouraged and delighted to see so many young faces in this audience. I usually have a lot of trouble picking out a topic for a talk that I have. This time it was very easy: changing Jewish communities. And my immediate reaction and my reaction upon a lot of reflection was: in some communities, the more things change the more they remain the same.

I am talking about specifically the Iranian Jewish community, but not as an insular entity. I'm talking about the Iranian Jewish community within the largest American Jewish community. This tendency to go back, to actually give up very willingly everything that women have acquired at great pains. And give it up willingly and adopt practices and ways of thought that perhaps, 30 years ago, they were fighting for. Let me just tell you a couple of things. I will summarize 3,000 years of Iranian Jewish history in three seconds.

(laughter)

Iranian Jews are the oldest Jews in the Diaspora. They go back to the destruction of the first temple. We are not Sephardic or Ashkenazi. Iranian Jews are Mizrahi Jews.

And we have gone—historically and literally within the span of 3,000 years—we've gone as a community through two major cataclysmic changes. The first was at the inception of the great Persian Empire, when Cyrus the Great freed all the slaves and issued the first declaration of human rights, and, within that context, gave the Jews freedom to go back to where they wanted to. And half of the Jews who were then in Iran went back and built the second temple; they were the half-state. I will tell you about the second change, but I'm sure most of you can guess. I'll tell you about that later.

But let's just say that something like 2,500 years went by, and during those 2,500 years—it's an easy number to throw out—during those years, Iranian Jews, by and large, were persecuted in the way—the stereotypical persecution of Jews. They lived in ghettos. They had absolutely no rights, no access to education whatsoever. The life of a Jew was measured by the market value of a cow at any given time. Jews were not allowed to leave the ghettos on rainy days because they were considered literally impure by the Muslim community and the mullahs and the ayatollahs.

And therefore, if a Jew so much as touched something that belonged to a Muslim, there would be massive pogroms. Entire Jewish communities—Iran is a very large country and it used to be much larger—were completely wiped off because of some little infraction such as this.

Things changed a great deal after the Second World War when the Allies invaded Iran and so on. And part of what had happened, let me just go back for a second, during these 2500 years—and this is something that happens in most communities that are under pressure from the outside—the Jews adopted a lot of the tyrannical, intolerant practices that were forced upon them from the outside. They practiced this among each other. The whole question of might being right. The belief that obviously women had absolutely no rights. Not only did they have no rights in the Muslim community as a result of Muslim laws, they had even fewer rights within the Jewish community, as a result of laws and edicts that were issued against them by other Jews. And I have the distinction of being the great grandchild of the first—and for decades, only—Jewish woman ever to have left her husband.

To this day, I will go places and other Iranian Jews will come up to me and say, "Oh, I knew your mother's grandmother; she left her husband."

(laughter)

For some reason, the women in my mother's family were, I don't think unwilling—they would have loved to—but they were unable to put up with the social restrictions that Jewish women were forced into. Such as marrying at age nine. Such as becoming the slave to an older women within the same family. It was *expected* that the mother-in-law beat the daughter-in-law because it's a generational thing. And as you get promoted by age, then you gain certain rights, and so on. And in my mother's family, the women started running away and doing crazy things, such as refusing to marry, at age seven or age nine, 80-year-old men.

And I'm just talking about, not even 100 years ago. And in the long run, for me, it became great material for novels. I don't know if they're great novels, but the material in them is great. The most outrageous stories in those books are actually true.

I don't have time to go into all of the details, but what I want to say is this: there was this intolerance of diversity of

opinion. Not just because we lived in a restrictive Muslim community, but especially because we lived in a restrictive Jewish community. There was a resistance to change, not just on the part of men for women, but on the part of women, on the part of older women refusing to allow younger women to so much as complain, much less ask for change. And here's the thing that is really stunning to me: there was this general outrage at telling the truth about things. At just talking about what happened.

I was a student at UCLA. I started when I was 16. By the time I was 18, I realized that there was not one single book or even pamphlet written about the history of Iranian Jews, after 2500 years. And the reason for that was that the Jews were so resistant to so much as chronicling their history.

So I went around for seven years and I interviewed all kinds of Iranian Jews, and I put together what became my first novel, *Cry of the Peacock*. Since then, there have been some other publications. But the thing that is interesting to me is that the gatekeepers for all of this were the men within the Jewish community. But the foot soldiers have always been women. We can talk later if we have time, why that is or how it actually happened.

But let's talk about the second cataclysmic change which was obviously the Iranian Revolution, the Islamic Revolution. And I was delighted last night when somebody mentioned the ayatollahs that we have here in this community. Because Rachel [Havrelock] knows that, years ago, when Ashcroft was first appointed Attorney General, I was talking about how we now have our own ayatollah in this Administration.

So the second enormous change was the revolution that, for Iranian Jews, by and large, was the best thing that has happened in their entire history. The fact that they were forced to leave Iran. Something like two-thirds of Iranian Jews left Iran, and one-third stayed. But the fact was that they were forced to leave Iran and they came to the United States, and they have thrived beyond anybody's expectations.

They came as very educated people, but they have become much more educated. They have risen, really, in this American society to the top in every field. In the arts, in education, in business, in science, in medicine and so on. And you would think that with this kind of change, with the women not just having college degrees but graduate degrees and doctorates and so on, that there would be a certain improvement, a certain change

in this whole resistance to people having any kind of diverse opinion.

In fact, the opposite has happened. And the opposite has happened because Iranian Jews—men and women—have found this fabulous supportive network of American Jews—Conservative and Orthodox—who reinforce in them, in us, the same kinds of fear of telling the truth. Fear of thinking differently. And these same kinds of principles that we lived with and suffered because of, are reinforced. Actually, this is controversial because now—oh, I won't even explain what I'm talking about and I can go . . .

(laughter)

Those restrictive, conservative principles have been reinforced and strengthened obviously in the last few years with the rise of the Christian right and the alliance between the American Jews and some Iranian Jews, and the Christian right.

So with this, thank you so much for listening and I will go sit down.

[DURING A BREAK IN TAPING, PAULA HYMAN ASKS THE PANELISTS WHAT KIND OF ALLIANCES NEED TO BE MADE AND WHAT KIND OF WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE TO EFFECT LASTING SOCIAL CHANGE.]

Gina Nahai: I'll go first because I'm using up the minutes. I think really, it sounds simple and perhaps—a willingness to be brave enough to actually speak out and air out the dirty laundry could be a first step. And I know that it's done in this forum and in similar forums, but perhaps taking it to a larger venue would be good.

Shifra Bronznick: One of the things that struck me as I was listening to everybody's presentation is that the underlying question that we're asking is, What conditions make change possible? And there were two points that kept recurring this morning: performing an honest self-assessment of where we are, where we actually are, as uncomfortable as that may be, and to be willing and able to not only orchestrate conflict, but to actually embrace it.

There's a student of congregational life, Nancy Ammerman, a professor of sociology of religion [at Yale], who analyzed about 500 churches and a couple of synagogues, to look at what made

change possible. And she, like Khadijah, had seven points. I'm only going to say two. One was honest self-assessment.

Actually, I'm going to say three.

Two was no congregation that wasn't able to manage and embrace conflict was able to adapt to change. And finally, one other point that came out was the need for some kind of spiritual discernment. And I use "spiritual discernment" not necessarily in a strict religious practice sense, but rather as a notion that there are higher values about what really matters to us that are core, and it is through commitment to those values that we are willing to do both the tedious work we talked about last night and the difficult work that we're talking about today. *That* will result in real change.

Khadijah Miller: I agree with what both Shifra and Gina said.

Change often comes about out of conflict.

But another thing to consider is that in any movement, there are leadership shifts. And when those shifts occur, we should take advantage of the shift in power as a way to create the change that we're looking for. If you look at any major movement, there

are often—sometimes traumatic—some type of leadership change that has allowed for that growing space and discussion to occur.

Sally Gottesman: I would just agree. One of the concerns that I have is that I see a lot of Jewish organizations where they get stuck in a certain leadership at a certain time. Like there's no term limits in some ways. And I'm fearful of that to a certain extent because a lot of the organizations or things that we're talking about were created by people who want to hang on to them, right? Like "founder's syndrome," in a certain way. And if you've been passed the baton of leadership from a group of people, then you think about passing it on. If you created it, I think it's harder to do that. And I think that I'm really in this place, at least around Judaism, that we have to bring men into the conversation.

Because I think that we speak a different language. And it just seems really important that there be some way to get more men to speak the language so that the change happens, and that men give what the gender lends as well. And that it just feels really important, all these shared visions. Women can't do it alone.

Shifra Bronznick: I just want to say one thing about men. It's really important: we, in structuring all of our projects, have

always brought males directly onto our team. And that's been really important, not just in terms of what we think about and how we communicate.

But the notion of shared leadership, Sally, that you were talking about—Ma'yan did a study recently of Jewish women who care about women. And one of the things they tried to identify were some of the obstacles to change. And one, of course, is feminization. And to some degree, in every field, men flee. Men flee every field but making money. Check it out.

(laughter)

It's really true. Lawyers, doctors, all kinds of things. Because money is power. Because power is money. Because they are directly linked, which is why I talked about money before. But we have to bring them into the conversation. Because one of the reasons that the men are holding on so hard to these leadership positions, and are so afraid to let go and to share them, is that leading is the only way they know how to participate. They don't actually know how to just participate. We need to create a different notion of participation.

But that fear of feminization in Jewish life translates into fear of assimilation. Meaning, if we feminize our community, the men will leave. If the men leave, we will die. And that's what Jews are always sitting around worrying about. They're worried that they're going to die. *That*, and that their children won't get into Barnard. So we have to deal with that head-on.

(laughter)

Paula Hyman: There is a scholar who wrote a work about Jews as the ever-dying people. And we're still here. So that's the good news. But one of the problems that I see—it's very easy to say, "Bring men into the conversation." But many of the men—and I must mention Steven Cohen again because Steven Cohen has been an ally of Jewish feminists for a very long time. He recognized, at a time when most men did not, that women had to be involved and included in every kind of academic conference. And he would often say to me, "Paula, you don't have enough women." So there are some like that. But so many of the men that you engage in conversation, even those people that you said are your greatest allies, in fact don't see this as an important issue. And so, the question for us is, How we can make it clear that a community that does not value difference and that does not value women is not going to be a community that sustains itself?

And so, I throw that open to this panel, but to a larger conversation as well. I think that maybe we can open the conversation to the audience. We have people with microphones and you should speak into the microphone so that your words will be recorded for posterity.

Audience Member #1: My name is Carol Sterling, Barnard Class of '58. It's a rather general question but it picks up on some of the points made by Letty last night, and that some of you folks built on this morning. And it has to do with the role of women in leadership advocacy positions.

I'm just beginning to wonder whether or not, built into the Jewish education curriculum, there needs to be a greater emphasis on, not just persuasion, but substantive information that will help the next generation realize that they are the future and they need to take responsibility for leadership. Can any of you comment on whether you feel that this is a priority?

Sally Gottesman: I would just say that the Rosh Hodesh curriculum that I talked about—we had two years of the Rosh Hodesh curriculum and the goal was to have girls join Rosh Hodesh groups, which are almost like friendship circles where

they can actually learn to talk about issues of concern to them. We started with two years of curriculum. And we are now developing six years of curriculum because they've been successful. You'll start in seventh grade and continue through twelfth grade; that would be the ideal. We're developing a third year of curriculum. We are partnering with American Jewish World Service for part of it and talking about citizenship and issues around what it means to be an engaged citizen as a Jew or as an American. What does it mean to take responsibility? We are talking about *sudaka* and giving, and also giving time and money. And then in the tenth and eleventh grades we are teaching leadership skills. using Rosh Hodesh as a place where we actually work with girls to teach skills. Partly we teach them how to run their own Rosh Hodesh groups, but more so we want to teach them how to engage themselves with the skills they need.

I know that once on "Take Your Daughters To Work" day—I was somewhere—they were teaching young girls how to shake someone's hand and look them in the eye. It's a *skill*. A leadership skill. In Rosh Hodesh, we are trying to address this question. Because you're right: women still say, "Can I be the leader? Can I take that leadership role?"

Letty Cottin Pogrebin: I'm really interested in the issue of leadership, to the point there I'm sort of caught in a fatal contradiction. I agree that leadership must be passed and I certainly want young people to pick up on it. At the same time, I've been in organizations where the institutional memory and past expertise and power and access that accrued through the existing leadership is completely lost and, in fact, dismissed as threatening by the new leadership.

I'd like to hear people speak to that, as to how do we create new models of integrating old leadership and all the skills and the resources that they bring to the table, with the need that new leaders have for making their own mark? That's number one.

Number two: How do we cope in the Jewish community with the fact that the only way you get anybody to a conference is call it a leadership conference? Everybody comes. Everybody kids themselves, they're a leader. And the other deep dark secret of the community is you can *buy* your way into leadership. You can have an inability to express yourself.

Unidentified Speaker: It's not such a secret.

(laughter)

Letty Cottin Pogrebin: It's not such a secret. You can be unable to express yourself, you can never have rallied five people to a cause, and you're called a leader because you've written a check for \$50,000. That also disadvantages women, obviously, because we are very often not in a position to do it.

And also because we're raised to believe that power is male. And also because we're at the moment in our history where we don't necessarily feel we will always have money and maybe we ought to save a little for our own retirement, in case we end up being bag ladies, which we've seen happen to people who have gotten divorced and suddenly lost everything.

So all that kind of complexity around money and what defines leadership and how to pass it on and how to keep it, I'd like to ask some of you to address.

Khadijah Miller: I'll address the first question of new and old leadership. It's key that, when the new leader comes in, she is shown some type of partnership or mentorship. It makes me think of the first question that Sally responded to and what Katya talked about last night, which is parenting. We have to

recognize the importance of parenting. And we know that most parenting is done by the mother.

Shifra Bronznick: I also would like to comment on that. My feminism started in fourth grade when I announced I wanted to be the first woman president of the United States, to much laughter. My daughter came home recently and said she and her best friend Liana had decided they wanted to be co-presidents of the United States. I say that because we are really living in a time where the next generation has grown up learning the skills of collaboration from early in their education, teamwork and collaboration in a lot of environments. Letty, your question is, What creates the opportunity for that kind of collaboration to take place across the generations?

One is that we need to be much clearer on what leadership is. I do not believe leadership is about shaking somebody's hand correctly, though I think it's a very important skill, and we should teach people these basic skills about how to function effectively in many environments. But that's not leadership. Leadership is really about taking on challenge and being prepared for risk. I asked somebody once, "How do we get women to work together who are so different?" And the woman who had

done a lot of this work said, "Give them really good work to do."

So, we have to really think honestly and carefully about what the challenge is that will allow all of us to move out of our comfort zones and our peer groups, to really figure out how to do that collaboration and how to create that space that you were talking about, so that that kind of collaboration can happen across the generations. That's one.

Two: that same honest self-assessment that we want to give to everybody else, we better give to ourselves and to one another about what's working well and what isn't working well. And what do people need to learn in order to be more effective in their leadership, which is often, again, very hard to do.

Three: I'm going to go back to Nancy Ammerman, from whom I've learned a lot. She talks about this notion of cultivating curiosity. One of the things that disturbs me is that when I look at my generation I don't feel that we are sufficiently nimble and adept at cultivating our curiosity about what the real-life truths are of the next generation. But, similarly, the next generation is not very curious about us. I know that when I've spoken to next-generation people about some of these gender

issues—and I've been noticing how many next-generation organizations are headed by men, and I won't give you the list now but I can, for those who want it—so I've heard from those women and men that that's not an issue for us. They are not curious about why it's an issue for me unless I am really assertive about trying to make them curious about it. That habit of genuine curiosity about other people's reality, when brought together with the right spaces and the right important work that will challenge us is going to create an alliance across the generations that I don't think currently exists.

Audience Member #2: I think we have a problem of democracy here, and it's a problem of democracy that we are seeing in our community. But it's also a part of a much larger issue. The question Paula asked at the beginning was, basically, How do we get our agenda into the brains of the men who are in charge of these mainstream organizations?

Because the majority of the people in the Jewish community are with us, perhaps, but somehow our agenda doesn't get into those organizations. Does this sound familiar? I mean, this is the country in which we are living now. And the Jewish community is probably less democratic—well, it's hard to say whether the Jewish community is less or more democratic than the country

more generally. But we don't have models here. And this, it seems to me, is something that can and needs to engage both men and women. It seems to me, Shifra's study as she reported it, did engage men. So it wasn't that the men weren't engaged. It's just that they didn't share the values.

Gina Nahai: Can I address that? It's true that it's not a terribly democratic society or community, ideally democratic. And it's true that men write the bigger checks, and women sometimes just don't have the means and sometimes don't have perhaps the inclination. But the larger problem is that women, especially the generation of women who are now in their teens and their twenties, are not actually raised with the expectation, and are not imparted the expectation to become leaders.

I think women have ambitions to rise to the top in every field. They want to be astronauts and writers and everything else. But to lead is a different animal than to be at the helm of something. To lead means to actually sit down, hear a whole diverse group of people with diverse opinions and then bring all of those together and resolve that diversity or use that diversity to move the cause forward.

And I really, truly don't know. I think what Shifra was talking about is true, that leading is more than knowing how to shake hands. And I think also, that knowing, for women, how to shake hands is very important. But the thing that we're missing in the middle of all this is that, with the best education that we give our daughters, we forget to teach them that they could expect to lead a community or to lead ADL and so on. You often do not hear them even expecting that of themselves. And perhaps a good example of that is all the women who say, "Oh, God, I wouldn't vote for Hillary because a woman is never going to get elected."

Audience Speaker #3: I've been resisting the urge to respond to some of the generational comments that have been spinning around, but sociologist Tobin Belzer's PhD research was on Jews who work in Jewish jobs. And the bottom line of her conclusion was that there were many, many Jews who wanted to be in Jewish organizations, in Jewish institutional life. And she was looking specifically at Generation X, Jews in their twenties and late thirties, and found that Jewish institutional life did not let them do the work that they wanted to. In terms of moving forward, getting serious, making a career, advancing, there were infinite barriers and obstacles to them often based on age factors.

And I anecdotally can say that I know it's a problem in the Jewish feminist world, in some parts of the Jewish feminist world and the broader feminist world. There's a desire to bring up the next generation, bring up younger folks, but then allocation of power becomes complicated and particularly if there's a founder who is very invested in a particular vision. Learning to share and include other ideas and other notions.

And so, I hear what a lot of folks have been saying in this room and I also want to ask, How can we transform our institutional lives to make more space for leaders who are trying to emerge and trying to develop the skills necessary but don't have access to the Rolodex already, or whatever?

Sally Gottesman: It's a really complicated thing. In *Moving Traditions*, the average age of our board members is 40 years old. So, one thing is putting younger women on boards. We range from 27 to 52 or something. And it is changing organizational life because people's kids get sick, the babysitter doesn't show up—how do we run our organizations in this way? We have to learn how to run things differently. When consulting, I was doing work with a board that was mostly 65-year-old men; 5:30 to 7:00 was the best time for them to meet; they could all show up, there was nothing distracting them.

5:30 to 7:00 is the *worst* time for us to meet. And it's a real challenge, and we have to think about doing our work to involve younger women. I was often the youngest woman on a board, or the youngest person on a board. I was the only young person there, and it didn't really revolve around what was good for me. It's a real serious challenge.

Shifra Bronznick: Can I ask a question to the audience? How many of you have ever written a letter to a Jewish organization, saying, "I noticed at your dinner . . . I noticed on your board . . ."? How many of you have ever written that kind of letter? That's great. Write more. Call more. Give less, until they change.

Because the kinds of things that we're talking about are only going to change when everybody becomes an advocate. One of the things I learned from Elaine Cohen's husband, Steve Cohen, was, if you want people to do things, make sure they hear about it from a lot of different places so that it's not just you.

I was with a group of young women in Baltimore who were in a mentoring circle as part of our project. Many of them are on flexible work schedules. Many of them are pregnant and having

children and they all are ambitious and want to advance. I said to them, "This is great, I'm proud of you, but is there a policy of flexibility in your organization? You should now advocate for that." By the way, they've all been promoted since being in this circle. But the woman who was in charge of their group, sort of the senior woman there—also young, but senior to them—said, "If you do that, you may lose the privileges you have."

We have to be fearless in deciding that we don't really want the privileges we have; they're really not so good. We really want to transform the environments we're in, so everybody can have the level of privilege to both lead and participate.

Khadijah Miller: Just to piggyback on what Sally and Shifra said: we need to create new models. Because if you just put women in the same institutions and models, then you're going to have a women doing what men were doing. We need to create our own institutions, and have boards that function in a way that is more conducive to what we want to accomplish. Maybe we have a board meeting at someone's house? And we can be just as productive. We have to look at creating new models, not just trying to work within the same models. Destroy it and try another one.

Shifra Bronznick: But I want to caution you that a lot of the new models—I know them because I work with them—are actually replicating more of the old models than we would like, and, as I said, are resistant to the notion that gender equity should be on the table because that's seen as so passé. So we have to make sure that that becomes understood as an essential part of the conversation.

Sally Gottesman: I don't think it's only that people think it's passé. I might be wrong about this, but I was having a conversation with somebody who really felt strongly that Moving Traditions shouldn't have gender as one of its issues, who thought we should only try to make more people Jewish. And this woman was on Wall Street, and is now getting a rabbinical—I think she's studying at JTS to be a rabbi or getting a Master's. I asked her why. We actually had an exchange about it and it was very interesting. She said that she doesn't think it's passé, but that it makes her *nervous* when we raise it.

Raising the issue of gender, for a lot of women who want to feel like we've made it, makes them nervous again. We need to figure out how to confront that. It was so interesting for me to hear that because she wants to think everything is okay.

If you go to JOFA Conference—the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance Conference—or the ADA Conference, which is the liberal modern Orthodox conference, it's very interesting, because they talk about gender very honestly and openly there. And for non-Orthodox feminists, men and women, we really have to learn how to name very carefully what we are talking about.

My best example is, I went to Wellesley and in my freshman year I walked into an econ class and half of the professors were women and the class was all women. I thought, "Oh, econ's for women." Then I went to Wesleyan in my sophomore year and all of the professors were men and 80 percent of the class was men. And I thought, "Oh, economics is for men."

It's subtle stereotyping and that's what's happening now. That's actually what having women becoming rabbis means. That's what you see with a woman here or there. We have to articulate better what it is, and what it is we mean, because otherwise, there are lots of these other women who think they don't know how to get there and it makes them nervous. Both things happen.

Audience Speaker #4: This is fascinating. Gina, I am interested in your observation that all of the education and success of Iranian Jewish women in the Diaspora does not translate into

power, and it does not translate into a wish for leadership, necessarily. Or even, if there *is* a wish for leadership, in the possibility of leadership. And I want to connect that to Shifra's closing observation that the hope of women in leadership is transformation, systemic transformation.

That systemic transformation needs to precede—and Shifra, I'm interested in the extent to which you think this is true—women entering into positions of leadership so that women will succeed as leaders. Some of these observations about when you hold board meetings and who's on boards are all well and good, but I'm wondering if you can deepen the formula for strategic change within significant organizations so that women will not only rise to positions of leadership, but will also succeed as leaders and be supported as leaders when they get there.

Paula Hyman: I'll answer that, although I don't work in the corporate world. You can't wait for systemic change to occur. The women who come in have to be leaders in energizing for systemic change. The fact is that in the university, which is not—you will be surprised to hear—a bastion of equality, that a woman on a search committee—one woman can make a difference. And it's not that people are necessarily opposed to considering gender. But they just didn't think about it. And when you come

up with three or four or five wonderful candidates, when you've created a list of people we should be looking at for this job, and there's not a single female on the list?

The fact is, if I hadn't been on that particular search committee, there would not have been a single female on the list. We developed a different list. We hired a woman.

Shifra Bronznick: My answer will be short: Both. We've got to do both.

Gina Nahai: Do you want me to answer the first half of your question? What's happened in the United States with women is that there's a splinter. There is the group of women, whether they are feminists or not, who pursue a career seriously, not because perhaps they have to, but because they want to, who aspire to equality and so on. And there is a group of women who have all the means—I'm not just talking about Iranian Jewish women—who have the means, but are looking back, who are becoming more Conservative or becoming more Orthodox.

Now, just because you're Conservative Orthodox, I know, it does not mean that you're not a feminist. But the truth is that a lot of injustice, a lot of the restrictions that have been forced

upon women have come with the stamp of Orthodoxy and Conservatism. That's how they've been justified. And once women embrace that way of thinking, they actually give up a lot of ambition. They *do* limit themselves. And what I was saying about the Iranian Jewish community—the women—is that they have found refuge within that larger American community. It's very interesting that there was no such thing as Orthodox Judaism in Iran, ever. There was no such thing as Chabad or that kind of Jewish practice. And all of the sudden—in L.A., which has the largest Iranian Jewish community, and in New York, which also has a huge one, and in many other many other places—all of the sudden you see the women practicing that kind of religion. These are very smart, very educated women who don't work because they've been told, they believe, that their job is to have as many children as possible, and that's what the Torah has said, and so on. That's what I am talking about.