



GLOBAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP 2016–2017 FELLOWS AND STAFF BIOS

The AJWS Global Justice Fellowship is a selective program designed to inspire, educate and train key opinion leaders in the American Jewish community to become advocates in support of U.S. policies that will help improve the lives of people in the developing world.

AJWS has launched the latest Global Justice Fellowship program, which will include leading rabbis from across the United States. The fellowship period is from October (2016) to April (2017) and includes travel to an AJWS country in Mesoamerica, during which participants will learn from grassroots activists working to overcome poverty and injustice. The travel experience will be preceded by innovative trainings that will prepare rabbis to galvanize their communities and networks to advance AJWS's work.

The 15 fellows represent a broad array of backgrounds, communities, experiences and networks.

RABBINIC FELLOWS



JILL ABRAMSON

Jill Abramson has served as Senior Cantor of Westchester Reform Temple (WRT) for nearly a decade. In November of 2013, Cantor Abramson built a cohort of members from her synagogue who traveled with her to Israel to mark the

25th anniversary of the Women of the Wall, an organization committed to pluralism and the rights of women to pray openly at the Western Wall. She is also an active member and leader of the American Conference of Cantors and has served on the Admissions Committee at Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at HUC-JIR. Before coming to WRT, she served for five years at Congregation Sukkat Shalom in Chicago, where she was also Director of Education. Cantor Abramson received investiture from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 2002, and now serves as adjunct faculty. She holds a B.A. in anthropology from Grinnell College and brings a strong international commitment to her social justice work, having lived in Cameroon and West Africa and taught English in Indonesia. She is married to Rabbi Jonathan Malamy. They reside in lower Westchester with their 5-year-old son.



AYELET COHEN

Rabbi Ayelet S. Cohen is the inaugural Director of the Center for Jewish Living and The David H. Sonabend Center for Israel at JCC Manhattan. An activist, writer and teacher, Rabbi Cohen served for a decade at Congregation Beit Simchat

Torah, the world's largest LGBTQ synagogue serving Jews of all sexual orientations and sexual identities. She is the author of *Changing Lives, Making History: Congregation Beit Simchat Torah—the First Forty Years* and co-editor of *Siddur B'chol L'vavcha*. A graduate of Brown University, Rabbi Cohen was ordained at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. She serves as co-chair of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. She and her partner, Rabbi Marc Margolius, have five children and live in New York City.

**SERENA EISENBERG**

Rabbi Serena Eisenberg has served as the Executive Director of Hillel, the center for Jewish life at Stanford University, since 2011, and previously as the Hillel Director and Associate Chaplain at her alma mater, Brown University, from 2005-2008. Serena was ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 2002, where she studied as a Wexner Graduate Fellow. She lived in Israel for several years, most recently from 2008-2011 on sabbatical as a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Leadership Institute. Serena participates in several professional networks, including CLAL's Rabbis Without Borders, Hartman Hillel Fellowship, and Upstart's Executive Director Cohort. Additional Jewish communal work included serving as the Interim Director of the Israel and Overseas Department and directing a Jewish teen foundation for the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation.

Before entering the rabbinate, Serena worked as a family welfare advocate and ombudsman in such diverse settings as the Bronx County Family Court, the Alameda County Department of Social Services, and with UNICEF in Gambia, Africa. She received J.D./M.S.W. degrees from UC Berkeley in 1993. Serena has five sons, loves hiking and adventure, and officiated at a bar mitzvah on a trek at Mount Kilimanjaro.

**BRUCE ELDER**

Rabbi Bruce Elder was born in Youngstown, Ohio. He graduated from Indiana University, Phi Beta Kappa, with a bachelor's degree in history and psychology with certification in Jewish studies. Upon graduation, Rabbi Elder moved to Chicago, where he worked for the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA), a Jewish social justice organization dedicated to empowering Chicago's diverse communities. His work at the JCUA led him to become a rabbi. He entered Hebrew Union College, the Reform movement's theological seminary, and was ordained in 1996.

Rabbi Elder served as an assistant rabbi for a congregation in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, before moving back to Chicago in 1999. He served as associate rabbi of Congregation Hakafa in Glencoe, Illinois, and again on the staff of the JCUA until assuming the position of rabbi at Hakafa in 2002. A past chair of the boards of the JCUA and the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (now Arise Chicago), he currently serves on the board of Common Cause Illinois. Rabbi Elder lives in Highland Park, Illinois, with his wife, Rona, and their three sons, Joshua, Noah and Eli.

**SAM GORDON**

Rabbi Samuel N. Gordon leads Sukkat Shalom of Wilmette, Illinois. He was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1980 and received an M.B.A. degree from Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management. In 2005, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity from HUC-JIR. He is a former Vice President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Rabbi Gordon is a member of the President's Advisory Council of the Hebrew Union College and a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Hartman Institute of Jerusalem. He has served as a trustee of Chicago Theological Seminary and the Kiski School. In 2013, President Barack Obama appointed Rabbi Gordon as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. In 2015, the *Jewish Forward* listed him as one of America's most inspiring rabbis.

**LAUREN HERRMANN**

Lauren Grabelle Herrmann is the rabbi of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ), the flagship Reconstructionist synagogue in Manhattan, where she began in August 2015. Before, Rabbi Lauren served for 10 years at Kol Tzedek in West Philadelphia—a congregation she founded along with a handful of community members. During rabbinical school, Rabbi Lauren was a Cooperberg-Rittmaster Rabbinical Intern at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in New York.

Rabbi Lauren's belief in the power of community and the importance of outreach inspired her to become the founding co-chair of LimmudPhilly (2007), a festival of Jewish learning for the whole Philadelphia Jewish community, and a Rabbinic Fellow with CLAL's Rabbis Without Borders Program (2014).

Rabbi Lauren's passion for social justice has made her an activist for education, racial and economic justice, LGBTQ rights, and climate change. While in Philadelphia, she was the clergy co-chair of POWER, Philadelphians Organized to Witness Empower and Rebuild, a grassroots, interfaith movement for social change. She is currently a member of T'ruah and on the rabbinical councils of JStreet and JFREJ, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. She lives in New York City with her husband, Jonathan, and children Aviel and Nadiv.



DAVID INGBER

Named by *Newsweek* as one of 2013's top 50 most influential rabbis in the United States, Rabbi David Ingber promotes a renewed Jewish mysticism that integrates meditative mindfulness and physical awareness into mainstream, post-modern

Judaism. A major 21st-century Jewish thinker and educator, his approach to Jewish learning has brought him to speak throughout the United States and worldwide throughout Canada, Europe and Israel.

Rabbi Ingber has taught at the Academy for Jewish Religion, Columbia University, CUNY, The Jewish Theological Seminary, Limmud LA, New York University, the 92nd Street Y, Pardes, the Skirball Center at Temple Emmanuel, and Yeshivat HADAR. He sits on the Board of Directors of Aleph and Synagogue 3000 Next Dor's Working Group of Sacred Emergent Communities, where he continues to teach.

Raised Modern Orthodox in New York, Rabbi David studied at several distinguished yeshivot in Jerusalem and New York, including Yeshiva University, Beit Midrash L'Torah, Yeshivat Chaim Berlin and Yeshivat Chovovei Torah Rabbinical School. He also studied philosophy, psychology and religion at New York University. Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of Renewal Judaism, ordained Rabbi David in 2004. Prior to founding Romemu, Rabbi David was Rabbi-in-Residence at Elat Chayyim Retreat Center.



SHARON KLEINBAUM

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum has placed social and political activism, combined with a commitment to prayer, pastoral counseling and study, at the heart of her work as a congregational rabbi. Since 1992, she has served as spiritual leader

of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York City, the world's largest LGBTQ synagogue. She has been a leading social activist on behalf of the LGBTQ community, advocating from the pulpit and in the streets for full civil rights. Under her leadership as senior rabbi, CBST has become a powerful voice for equality and justice for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. She has testified before Congress on same-sex marriage and has served on New York City's Commission for LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth. Recognized by *Newsweek* as one of the 50 most influential rabbis in America, Rabbi Kleinbaum has also been named one of the nation's top 10 women religious leaders and among the 15 most inspiring LGBT religious leaders by *The Huffington Post*.



AMICHAU LAU-LAVIE

Amichai Lau-Lavie is the founding spiritual leader of Lab/Shul NYC and the founding director of Storahtelling, Inc. An Israeli-born Jewish educator, writer and performance artist, he received his rabbinical ordination from The Jewish

Theological Seminary of America in 2016.

Amichai has been hailed as "an iconoclastic mystic" by *Time Out New York*, a "rock star" by *The New York Times*, a "Judaic pied piper" by the *Denver Westword*, a "maverick spiritual leader" by *The Times of Israel*, and "one of the most interesting thinkers in the Jewish world" by the *Jewish Week*. In 2016, the *Forward* named him one of the 32 "most inspiring rabbis" in America. He was a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Israel (2008-2009), served on the advisory committee of Faith House Manhattan, is a consultant to the Reboot Network, and is a member of the URJ Faculty Team. Amichai is also the proud abba of Alice, Ezra and Charlotte-Hallel.



ANNIE LEWIS

Rabbi Annie Lewis is a passionate organizer, story-weaver, compassionate listener and teacher of Torah of the heart. Annie served for the past four years as Assistant Rabbi of Germantown Jewish Centre. She was ordained from

The Jewish Theological Seminary in 2012, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow, and received a master's degree in Jewish women's and gender studies. She delved into community organizing with JOIN for Justice and served as the student rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel in Gulfport, Mississippi.

Before rabbinical school, Annie worked to strengthen civil society in Israel as a New Israel Fund/Shatil Social Justice Fellow and studied linguistic anthropology at Brown University and at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Annie is a singer, poet and performance artist with roots in the Storahtelling ritual theater company. She lives in Philadelphia with her husband, Rabbi Yosef Goldman, and their daughter, Zohar. This year, Annie will begin training in marriage and family therapy with the Council for Relationships and launch a Philadelphia Social Justice Beit Midrash.



JOSHUA RATNER

Rabbi Josh Ratner is the Associate Rabbi and Jewish Educator at the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale University and the director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New Haven. Ordained by The Jewish Theological

Seminary in May 2012, he was a Joseph Neubauer Fellow and also earned a master's degree in Midrash and a certificate in pastoral care. During rabbinical school, Rabbi Josh worked as a Public Policy Fellow for the Rabbinical Assembly and as a Rabbinic Fellow for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. He also received training in congregation-based community organizing and was part of the original rabbinical student cohort of CLAL's Rabbis Without Borders fellowship program. He was an attorney for five years prior to entering rabbinical school.

Rabbi Josh is passionate about the interplay between Judaism, public policy and American culture, and his writing has been featured on *Huffington Post* and *MyJewishLearning.com*. He and his spouse, Dr. Elena Ratner, are the proud parents of Dimitri, Eli, Gabriella and Sasha.



PETER RIGLER

Rabbi Peter Rigler currently serves as the Rabbi of Temple Sholom in Broomall, Pennsylvania, where he has been for seven years. Rabbi Rigler was ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 2002. He served previously for

seven years as the Associate Rabbi at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel of Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. He worked as an intern during rabbinical school at Reform Congregation Kol Ami in White Plains, New York, and also at Rodeph Sholom in New York City.

Rabbi Rigler is also an active member of the URJ Camp Harlam Board, where he serves on the faculty for two weeks each summer. He is involved at the Broad Street Ministry homeless shelter, the Life Center of Delaware County and in many social action projects throughout Philadelphia. He is also a graduate of the Synagogue Transformation and Renewal Program, serves as a police chaplain, and recently completed the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, a two-year leadership training course. His wife, Rabbi Stacy Rigler, is the Religious School Director at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. They have three children: Maya, Nathan and Eli.



LARRY SEBERT

Rabbi Larry Sebert has been the spiritual leader of Town and Village Synagogue for 25 years. As a congregational rabbi, he has been involved with his community in numerous local and national initiatives to foster deeper Jewish engagement. Under

his leadership, the congregation created a new program for its seniors, established a vibrant 20s and 30s community, welcomed interfaith families and started *Ge'im ba-Village* for its LGBTQ members. He has established a partnership between the synagogue and The Center for Conversion to Judaism and loves to mentor the many Jews by Choice with whom he works.

Rabbi Sebert has taken a leadership role with Local Faith Communities, an East Village clergy group, and has fostered synagogue involvement in community organizing with Manhattan Together and IAF. He is proud of his role in helping establish the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan and was honored to have served on the editorial board for *Mahzor Lev Shalem*.

A native of Kansas City, Rabbi Sebert was ordained at The Jewish Theological Seminary in 1985. He is married to Dr. Jane Davidson and is the proud parent of Aliza and Avivah.



ELIE SPITZ

Rabbi Elie Spitz has served as a pulpit rabbi for 28 years in the same synagogue, Congregation B'nai Israel, which has made social action a center of communal engagement. He is an active writer, having composed three books published by

Jewish Lights Publishing and scores of articles and Jewish legal responsa. Elie has travelled extensively around the world with a desire to understand and help. In India, he and his family spent a week working at an orphanage alongside a nurse volunteer from AJWS. His three children were the first to volunteer at this site, and his teenage son wrote an article about the experience that was published in the *Forward*.



DANIEL STEIN

Rabbi Daniel Stein is the rabbi at Congregation B'nai Shalom in Walnut Creek, California. A creative spiritual leader who is committed to building spiritually-engaged communities, he served as the rabbi of Bnai Abraham Synagogue in

Easton, Pennsylvania, from 2010 to 2016. In 2011, he founded a new religious school at Bnai Abraham that fully integrates experiential models of Jewish learning in the curriculum. He also served as a faculty member in the Department of Foreign Language and Literature at Lafayette College.

Rabbi Stein is committed to religious pluralism and has fostered partnerships both within and beyond the larger Jewish community. Along with colleagues at Temple Covenant of Peace in Easton, he pioneered community-wide Chanukah and Passover celebrations. Rabbi Stein also holds a degree in music history from the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati and has performed professionally in a wide variety of settings. He has appeared on the stage of BB King Blues Club in New York City and on Israeli National Television as a member of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue Choir, and once shared a billing with Tommy Ramone, the last living member of the Ramones.

AJWS STAFF



ROBERT BANK, *President and CEO*

Robert Bank is President and CEO of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the world's leading Jewish organization working to end poverty and promote human rights in the developing world.

Robert, who joined AJWS as Executive

Vice President in 2009, has spent his career championing human rights as an attorney, activist and leader. Robert previously served in New York's municipal government and in the leadership of GMHC—one of the world's leading organizations combatting HIV/AIDS—where he played an instrumental role in the campaign to overturn the ban on HIV-positive people entering the United States and becoming U.S. citizens.

Robert received Harvard Law School's Wasserstein Public Interest Fellowship, and his leadership has been recognized with GMHC's Lifetime Achievement Award and the Partners in Justice Award from AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps. He is also an advisor to The Conversation: Jewish in America and is a board member of Peripheral Vision International, which supports advocates in East Africa who deploy media to advance social change. Robert's passion for human rights was shaped growing up in a Jewish family in South Africa, which was engaged in the struggle to end apartheid.



RUTH W. MESSINGER, *Global Ambassador*

After a remarkable 18-year presidency, Ruth took on a new role as AJWS's first Global Ambassador in July 2016, continuing her crucial work of engaging global leaders, activists, rabbis and

interfaith leaders to speak out on behalf of oppressed and persecuted communities worldwide. Ruth joined AJWS in 1998, following a 20-year career in public service in New York City.

As a leading activist for human rights around the globe, she lectures widely and holds leadership roles in the faith-based advocacy arena. She chairs the social justice committee of the State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group and is a member of the World Bank's Moral Imperative working group on extreme poverty. Ruth has been honored by many national Jewish organizations and has been named for the past decade among the "world's most influential Jews" and religious leaders by *The Forward*, *The Jerusalem Post* and *The Huffington Post*.



LILACH SHAFIR, Director of International Education and Jewish Education (IEJE)

Lilach Shafir is responsible for overseeing the creation and implementation of the Global Justice Fellowship. Lilach has spent more than five years living overseas, including three consecutive years in East Timor as a leadership trainer and one year in Israel as a Dorot Fellow. Lilach has led groups of North Americans on international travel programs in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ghana with AJWS, *National Geographic* and Putney Student Travel. Lilach holds a master's in international education from Stanford and a bachelor's in international studies and Latin America. Lilach is an advanced speaker of Spanish, Portuguese, Tetun and Hebrew.



JOSEPH GINDI, Program Officer (IEJE)

Joseph Gindi is the Program Officer for International Education and Jewish Engagement at AJWS, where he is responsible for the creation of Judaic content, including the weekly *Dvar Tzedek*, and engaging rabbis and North American Jewish communities. Joseph, who hails from the Syrian Jewish community of Deal, New Jersey, is a Jewish educator with over 10 years of experience across the Jewish organizational and denominational landscape. He has master's degrees in Near Eastern and Judaic studies from Brandeis University and in religious studies from the University of North Carolina, where he wrote his master's thesis on the use of classical texts in the Jewish environmental movement. Joseph has studied in *batei midrash* at the Pardes Institute, Mechon Hadar, and The Jewish Theological Seminary.



RONNATE ASIRWATHAM, Senior Policy Advisor (Civil and Political Rights)

Ronnate Asirwatham is a Senior Policy Advisor at AJWS, where she is responsible for the Civil and Political Rights portfolio in the Government Affairs department in Washington D.C. Ronnate takes the lead

on AJWS advocacy for a proactive, human rights centered U.S. foreign policy around the Dominican Republic citizenship crisis. Prior to joining AJWS, she worked extensively on the civil and political rights of marginalized people in countries as diverse as Sri Lanka, South Sudan and China. She holds a master's in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts, and a master's in international human rights law from the University of Essex in the U.K. She speaks Tamil and Sinhala.



CHARLES KARGMAN, Program Associate and Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Programs

Charles Kargman serves as the Executive Assistant to Vice President for Programs Shari Turitz and a Program Associate for the Department of International Education and Jewish Engagement (IEJE) at AJWS. As Executive Assistant, he supports the Vice President while working on special projects around her budget, grantmaking portfolio and publications. As Program Associate, he assists with the planning, logistics and implementation of the Global Justice Fellowship (GJF), AJWS's six-month social justice program for rabbinic leaders. Charley graduated from the University of Chicago with a bachelor's degree in political science and a minor in environmental studies.