



GLOBAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP 2025 FELLOWS AND STAFF BIOS

The AJWS Global Justice Fellowship is a selective program designed to inspire, educate and train American Jewish clergy to become national advocates for global human rights. The 2025 cohort includes leading clergy from across the United States and represents a broad array of backgrounds, communities, experiences and networks.

RABBINIC FELLOWS



RABBI JULIA ANDELMAN

Rabbi Julia Andelman is a community educator who served most recently as director of community engagement at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). There, she innovated and oversaw a vast range of learning initiatives that brought JTS Torah to 40,000+ unique individuals through live in-person and online programs, plus hundreds of thousands more through podcasts, videos and other digital content. She previously served as Rabbi of Congregation Shaare Zedek in New York, director of adult education and programming at Park Avenue Synagogue and director of the iEngage Project at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. Rabbi Andelman is a highly regarded *ba'alat tefilah* (service leader) and prayer educator/consultant. She has recorded two albums of Jewish liturgical music and offered prayer education through organizations including Hadar, Wexner Heritage, Cantors Assembly and MyJewishLearning. Ordained at JTS, she is a member of the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) and has served on the RA executive council and strategic planning task force.



RABBI JONATHAN BERKUN

Rabbi Jonathan Berkun is the spiritual leader of the Aventura Turnberry Jewish Center, the second largest Conservative synagogue in the state of Florida and the proud home of one of the largest groups of Holocaust Survivors of any synagogue in the United States. Rabbi Berkun received his ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary and is a Senior Rabbinic Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He served as President of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami and Vice President of the Rabbinic Cabinet for Jewish Federations of North America. He is a member of the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council of South Florida, the National Rabbinic Cabinet for Israel Bonds, the National Council for AIPAC and JNF's Rabbis for Israel.



CANTOR JASON KAUFMAN

Cantor Kaufman has served at Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, Va. since 2013. Social justice is at the heart of his cantorate and he is a leader in LGBTQ+ advocacy. Cantor Kaufman is proud to serve on the executive board of the American Conference of Cantors, the J Street Rabbinical and Cantorial Cabinet, and is Vice Chair of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Commission on Social Action. Since 2018, he has been deeply involved in voting rights work as part of the URJ's civic engagement campaigns. Cantor Kaufman received his cantorial ordination from the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in New York City. A native of Monsey, N.Y., Cantor Kaufman holds a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Fredonia. He lives in Alexandria, Va., with his husband, Kirk McPike, an Alexandria City Councilman.



RABBI SANDRA LAWSON

Rabbi Sandra Lawson serves as the inaugural director of Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Reconstructing Judaism. In this role, she collaborates with senior staff, lay leaders, clergy, rabbinical students, and Reconstructionist communities to advance the organization's mission of becoming an anti-racist entity. Rabbi Lawson is also a sought-after guest lecturer and keynote speaker, focusing on topics such as Judaism, antisemitism, and racism. Previously, she was the associate chaplain for Jewish Life and Senior Jewish Educator at Hillel at Elon University in North Carolina and worked as an investigative researcher for the Anti-Defamation League. Rabbi Lawson holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in sociology and received her rabbinic ordination from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. She lives in North Carolina with her wife, Susan, and their two dogs, Bridgette and Simon.



RABBI LYDIA MEDWIN

Rabbi Lydia Medwin joined the clergy team at The Temple in Atlanta, Ga., in 2014 and currently serves as associate rabbi. A native of Memphis, Tennessee, Rabbi Medwin attended the University of Texas in Austin (hook 'em) and Hebrew University in Jerusalem for undergraduate studies, earning degrees in Middle Eastern studies and honors humanities. She was ordained on the Los Angeles campus of Hebrew Union College in May of 2010. Rabbi Medwin is a certified Jewish Meditation Teacher and (hopefully soon) a certified yoga teacher. She is a co-author with Dr. Ron Wolfson and Rabbi Nicole Auerbach of "The Relational Judaism Handbook: How to Create a Relational Engagement Campaign to Build and Deepen Relationships in Your Community" (Kripke Institute) and is co-founder of the Multifaith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration. She is married to Rabbi Dan Medwin and they have three awesome kids who are hopefully going to add goodness and justice to the world.



RABBI ROBIN NAFSHI

Rabbi Robin Nafshi was ordained by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 2005 and joined Temple Beth Jacob in Concord, N.H. in July 2010. Rabbi Nafshi is a graduate of both New York University and Cornell Law School and was a Wexner Graduate Fellow while in rabbinical school. Rabbi Nafshi currently serves on the Concord Mayor's Committee to End Homelessness, the Concord DEIJB Committee, the board of the New Hampshire Center for Justice and Equity and the board of Riverbend Community Mental Health Center. She was also a board member of The Friendly Kitchen, Concord's soup kitchen. She has taken teens to Washington, D.C., for the Reform Movement's L'Taken seminar nearly 15 times, and has testified in New Hampshire for or against more than 20 pieces of legislation.



RABBA RORI PICKER NEISS

Rabba Rori Picker Neiss serves as the Senior Vice President for Community Relations at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. She previously worked as Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis and as a member of the clergy team at Bais Abraham Congregation. She is on the faculty of the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership, a Senior Rabbinic Fellow and David Hartman Center Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute, co-editor of "InterActive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook" and a member of the Board of Directors for HIAS and the Parliament of the World's Religions. Rabba Picker Neiss is one of the first graduates of Yeshivat Maharat, a pioneering institution training Orthodox Jewish women to be spiritual leaders and halakhic (Jewish legal) authorities. She lives in Philadelphia with her husband and three children.



RABBI MIRIAM TERLINCHAMP

Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp is the Executive Director of Judaism Unbound. Rabbi Terlinchamp served as Senior Rabbi of Temple Sholom in Cincinnati, Ohio, for 13 years, founded JustLOVE, a multi-faith movement for activists and teaches in the UnYeshiva. She is active on several boards and committees within the Cincinnati community, including serving as the immediate past president of the Board of Rabbis and the Amos Project. Rabbi Terlinchamp was ordained in 2010 at HUC-JIR, Los Angeles, and received her bachelor's degree in philosophy of religion and studio art from Scripps College. She loves to write, paint, and make ridiculously fun videos about Jewish values. She lives in Ohio with her daughters, partner, and dog.



RORI KRAMER
Director of U.S. Advocacy

Rori Kramer is the Director of U.S. Advocacy and leads AJWS's advocacy work in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining AJWS, she served in the Obama Administration in several roles at the State Department, including as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Senate Affairs, where she led the Department's legislative priorities and managed its relationship with the United States Senate. She also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional, Global and Functional Affairs and Senate Director.

Previously, Rori worked as the Senior Foreign Policy Adviser to U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), member of the Senate Foreign Relations and the Finance Committees. There, she played a key role in developing the Senator's legislative priorities on foreign policy, international human rights, development and trade. Rori began her career in the Senate, working for several years on the staff of former U.S. Senator Bob Graham (D-FL). She also has experience in the advocacy community, working as the Director for Global Trade and Agriculture Policy at Women Thrive Worldwide, an organization that focused on gender and international development issues. She has also worked in the Trade and Development Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Rori holds degrees from the College of William and Mary, University of Oxford and the London School of Economics and Politics.



RUTH W. MESSINGER
Global Ambassador

Ruth W. Messinger, President of American Jewish World Service (AJWS) from 1998 to July of 2016, is currently the organization's inaugural Global Ambassador, continuing her crucial work of engaging rabbis and interfaith leaders to speak out on behalf of oppressed and persecuted communities worldwide. She also works as a social justice consultant and as a teacher and facilitator for rabbinic students and for women social justice entrepreneurs. Additionally, she works independently on issues affecting our newest New Yorkers, the immigrants and asylum seekers coming to New York to escape oppression and establish a better life for themselves and their families.

Before her 18 years at AJWS Ruth had a 20-year career in public service in New York City as a City Council member and Manhattan Borough President. She was a strong advocate for children, public education, campaign finance reform, gay rights, community policing, neighborhoods and small businesses. She maintains many connections to and involvement with urban issues.

Ruth has been honored for her leadership with awards from many national organizations and seminaries. She is an active member of her congregation, SAJ - Judaism That Stands for All, and serves on the boards of Aegis Trust and the Interfaith Center of NY. She holds a B.A. from Radcliffe College and an M.S.W. from the University of Oklahoma; is married to Andrew Lachman, a retired educator, and has three children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



CORINNE PAUL

Senior Policy Advisor for Civil and Political Rights

Corinne Paul is the Senior Policy Advisor for Civil and Political Rights at American Jewish World Service. In this role she leads advocacy with the U.S. government regarding human rights and democracy in countries around the world. She comes to AJWS from CARE, an international non-governmental organization, where she advocated to increase women's health access and improve conditions for health workers internationally. Previously, she was a foreign policy legislative aide in the U.S. Senate. Prior to that, she worked for a nonprofit organization in Les Cayes, Haiti. Corinne earned her Master of Public Policy with a specialization in international development policy, and a Bachelor of Arts in Government & Politics with minors in International Development and U.S. Latina/o Studies from the University of Maryland. Corinne also serves as the board president of Write to Be, an organization that supports women and girls in Haiti.



SANTANA PEREZ

Program Associate of Sexual Health and Rights

Santana Perez is the Program Associate of Sexual Health and Rights at AJWS, supporting the department in a variety of functions. Prior to AJWS, they worked as an Administrative Assistant at the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), a partner organization of the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan. As part of LBI's small team, they facilitated relationships between financial and material donors, researchers and visitors. They also previously held the role of Associate Proposal Writer in the Treasury Management Department at PNC bank, where they both maximized the efficiency and quality of work produced by the Senior Proposal Writers and assisted the Content Manager with organizing and updating the company database.

They hold a Bachelor of Arts in Writing, Literature, and Publishing from Emerson College with a double minor in psychology and sociology. They completed an internship with Jewish Vocational Services in Boston as part of this undergraduate degree, establishing community connections as well as a digital and physical organization system to strengthen their ability to serve their constituency.



RABBI ELIZABETH RICHMAN

Associate Director for Jewish Engagement and Advocacy

Rabbi Elizabeth Richman leads AJWS's Jewish Engagement team, working with American Jewish clergy and institutions to advance AJWS's mission and overseeing AJWS's broader Jewish engagement work. Before coming to AJWS, she spent 13 years in executive leadership at Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). There, as Managing Director & Rabbi in Residence, she played a central role in building and sustaining a rapidly growing legislative campaigning organization, and she oversaw the advocacy, education and communications work that brought precedent-setting change, including groundbreaking paid family and medical leave legislation, to the Washington-Baltimore region.

Ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow, Elizabeth is actively engaged in the work of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable and is a Senior Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute. She currently serves on the steering committee of Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), and previously served as Co-chair of the DC Jobs with Justice board and as a member of the Interfaith Worker Justice board. She has also served on the Rabbinical Assembly's Social Action Commission the Resolutions Committee, and the Rabbinic Career Development Commission.

Elizabeth holds an AB in Public & International Affairs from Princeton University and a certificate in Senior Nonprofit Leadership from Columbia Business School. She lives in Washington, DC with her family.