

Re://collections

JUDY CHICAGO

Remembering Arlene Raven



Arlene Raven

I CALLED HER “BEANIE” AND SHE CALLED ME “TUTTI,” nicknames from our past—hers from the camp she attended when she was a child, mine a relic of my second marriage, a marriage Beanie watched disintegrate when she came to visit me in Bellingham, Washington in the late spring of 1974. I had gone there to visit my sculptor husband who was doing an Artist in Residence gig that I had helped to arrange, and also to begin work on the first studies for “The Dinner Party” plates. My work plans were more fruitful than the visit, which was disrupted by my husband’s confession about his numerous affairs during the course of our relationship. We three traveled together back to Los Angeles where we all lived, a trip that was marred by the dissension between me and my husband.

By the time of this ill-fated journey, I had known Beanie for several years. She moved west from Maryland in 1972, not long after our meeting at the infamous Corcoran conference on women in the arts in Washington, D.C., a conference that brought disgruntled artists, art critics and art historians together to share stories about our respective frustrations with the entirely male dominated art world. Together with artist Miriam Schapiro, I had shown slides of “Womanhouse,” the first openly female-centered art installation, created under Mimi’s and my guidance by the Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts (Cal-Arts). I had been invited to bring my original program—established in 1970/71 at California State University, Fresno—to Cal-Arts with the idea of expanding it by team teaching with Mimi, an idea that unfortunately proved not to be workable, at least not after the opening of “Womanhouse” which, in contrast to Mimi’s and my partnership, was a big success.

Raven Takes Wing in L.A.

Sometime after we met in Washington, I was shocked to discover Arlene at my door. In what I would soon learn was her characteristic determined manner, Beanie announced that “L.A. was where the action was in terms of feminist art” and that she intended to move there as soon as possible. Beanie’s name then was Arlene Corkery though that was her married name. She was studying for her Ph.D. in Art History at Johns Hopkins University. However, her marriage, her name, and her life were turned upside down by a painful experience that caused her to dramatically change her life. Even then, her courage and determination were evident when she put that behind her along with her marriage, reverting to her maiden name, Rubin, as soon as she arrived in California. But she wanted to change that as well and I can recall the conversation in which I suggested she

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WHAT’S INSIDE & ONLINE

Discover

“Keeping up with Jewish feminism is like changing a wheel on a moving bus,” Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell, who joined Rabbi Ayelet Cohen to discuss “Reenvisioning Ritual” as part of JWA’s “Heirs to a Revolution: Intergenerational Dialogues on Jewish Feminism” series this past spring.

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Discover more about Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution at www.jwa.org/feminism

Research

“Our hope is to record the small and heroic acts of kindness performed not only by Jew for other Jews, but also by Jews for their fellow Americans who were displaced and in need.”

Katrina’s Jewish Voices Oral Historian Rosalind Hinton is gathering the stories of 100 historic witnesses to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

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See Katrina’s Jewish Voices online collection at <http://katrina.jwa.org>

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Discover

“HEIRS TO A REVOLUTION”:
EXPLORING THE LEGACIES OF JEWISH FEMINISM

RABBI SUE LEVI ELWELL SAYS that “keeping up with Jewish feminism is like changing a wheel on a moving bus.” After 30 years of activism as an Orthodox Jewish woman, Blu Greenberg declares, “I’m burned up but not burnt out.” Both comments capture the continuing energy of Jewish feminism.

During May 2006, JWA held a three-part public program, co-sponsored by Hebrew College, called “Heirs to a Revolution: Intergenerational Dialogues on Jewish Feminism,” to initiate conversations about how far Jewish feminism has come and where it is headed. Changes that have arisen as a result of Jewish feminism include new opportunities for women in learning and religious leadership, ritual life, and new perspectives on Jewish texts and traditions.

“There is a mistaken notion, though, that because of these advances we’re done with feminism,” comments series organizer Judith Rosenbaum, JWA Director of Education. “We want to celebrate our successes—and there have been many—and acknowledge that the story is far from finished. The series presented a diversity of Jewish feminists and demonstrated that this is an ongoing conversation that is now intergenerational—and that’s exciting.”

“One question we asked was: what happens when a movement that had been radical becomes more mainstream? In what ways does it gain support and in what ways might it lose momentum? The series reminded us all that Jewish feminism is continuing to expand the possibilities, to pay attention to who and what is still on the margins, and continuing to open new doors,” Judith adds.

The dialogues centered on three vital topics in contemporary Jewish life: Blu Greenberg and Devorah Zlochower debated the relationship between feminism and Orthodoxy;



Three generations of Messinger women: (l to r): Miriam Messinger, JWA Executive Director Gail Reimer, Miriam’s daughter Amani, and Ruth Messinger.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



There are books one is destined to read. One hundred pages into Daniel Mendelsohn’s *The Lost*, I feel that tug of destiny. As a child of two Holocaust survivors, and the descendant of many who perished, I well understand why Mendelsohn set out to “search for six of the six million.” The six were his lost relatives. How keenly and how often I wish I knew my grandmothers, my aunt, my uncle, my grandfather. I know why Mendelsohn travels the globe seeking bits of information about the lost. Most of us will never undertake these elaborate searches for the lost; but when a talented writer depicts the search, who can resist the pull of his tale?

I felt that same pull earlier this summer when reading about Henry Louis Gates Jr., the noted Harvard professor of African American literature and history. Perhaps some of you caught Gates’ PBS documentary on the family histories of prominent African Americans whose histories were lost in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and all that followed. While the most discussed and debated aspect of the show and the research behind it was the use of DNA testing to trace ancestry, as I watched the show I was vividly reminded of the value of the work we at JWA do in reconstructing the hidden history of American Jewish women.

Where Mendelsohn’s search leads, I have yet to discover. But Gates’ search for the history of his family led to many startling discoveries. One of these was of an ancestor who fought as a Colonial soldier in the American Revolution. That discovery made Gates eligible to join in the Sons of the American Revolution and indeed he

has. The SAR, an organization most think of as a bastion of WASP culture, not only welcomed Gates, but is now working with him on a project designed to identify other descendants of African Americans who fought in the American Revolution.

Reflecting on this effort Gates recognizes that in one sense “it is perfectly irrelevant what one’s ancestors did two centuries ago.” But he also believes that “reimagining our past, as Americans, can sometimes help us to reimagine our future.” Understanding “that the founding of this republic was not only red, white and blue,” but “also indelibly black,” can change how all Americans envision and shape the future of this republic.

In her recollection of Arlene Raven in this issue, Judy Chicago reminds us that preserving the history of women is a continuing challenge. As Mendelsohn and Gates have done, Raven embraced the challenge. Chicago writes movingly of Raven’s determination, to the very end, to break through “the erasure that continues to marginalize or eclipse women’s achievements.”

Gates and Mendelsohn, Raven and Chicago, each in his or her own way, envisions a time “when erasure becomes a thing of the past.” We, at JWA, share that vision. And we share their understanding that the realization of the dream demands recovering the obscured stories of the past, chronicling the marginalized ones of today, and giving them all the permanence of indelible ink.

Gail Twersky Reimer

Gail Twersky Reimer, Executive Director



Devorah Zlochower (right) with Blu Greenberg.

Rabbis Sue Levi Elwell and Ayelet Cohen examined the process of ritual innovation; and mother-daughter pair Ruth Messinger and Miriam Messinger shared their personal and political approaches to social justice activism.

JWA’s online exhibit, *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution*, creates a historical context for exploring Jewish women’s leadership in American feminism and the impact of feminism on the Jewish community. “Heirs” built on the exhibit and looked to the future, engaging Jewish feminist foremothers and today’s torchbearers in conversation about the next phase of Jewish feminism.

JWA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTRODUCES GRACE PALEY AT AJL



Grace Paley and JWA Executive Director Gail Reimer

THE HIGHLIGHT of The Association of Jewish Libraries 2006 Annual Meeting in Cambridge, MA this summer was a public appearance by literary icon Grace Paley, the esteemed, award-winning writer, educator and social critic, who delivered the keynote address.

In introducing her dear friend, JWA Executive Director Gail Reimer said, “Grace Paley is surely one of America’s most beloved and respected writers. At times called the ‘bard of Jewish New York,’ the 83-year-old Paley is as feisty and funny, as warm and passionate as ever.” Other conference participants included librarians, writers and scholars from universities, archives, synagogues, public libraries, and schools from across North America, Israel, Europe, and South America.

DISCUSSION
GUIDES NOW
ONLINE

Recently, JWA has launched a series of online discussion guides intended to help continue these important discussions in our communities. The first two guides are designed for mother-daughter workshops and adult women discussion groups. They can be found at: www.jwa.org/feminism/html_lessonplans.htm

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Teach: Summer Institute for Educators Creates Model for Learning

[The following are excerpts from a report on JWA's National Summer Institute.]

THE JEWISH WOMEN'S ARCHIVE HELD ITS FIRST National Summer Institute in Brookline, MA, from July 9-12, 2006, bringing together a diverse group of Jewish educators for a collaborative learning experience with other educators, historians, and artists. The Institute was funded through a generous grant from The Dorot Foundation.

The 18 educators who participated in the Institute teach in a range of Jewish educational settings: adult education; congregational or community supplementary schools; day schools; and informal education. They teach students from 3rd grade through senior citizens, the majority teaching teens or adults and represent JWA's national reach, hailing from California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington State.

The goal of the Institute was to cultivate a core group of educators who are committed to teaching Jewish women's history, who will share their expertise with JWA as we develop future educational resources, and who will serve as JWA ambassadors in the field of Jewish education. Participants, presenters, JWA staff, and JWA's professional program evaluator agree that this ambitious pilot Institute was highly successful in achieving its goals. In their evaluations, participants reported that the most successful achievements of the Institute were (1) respect for participants as educators; (2) the modeling of good teaching; and (3) the opportunity to learn from colleagues. Respect, they said, was evident in the quality and timeliness of mailed materials and well-organized format of the meeting. They also mentioned the honor (and necessity!) of receiving funding to participate and having their own rooms to retire to after long days. Presenters, they noted, were not only of the highest caliber, but also exposed participants to different models of pedagogy and creative ways of presenting materials. No less important, they added, was the time spent learning and sharing with one another.

JWA will continue to cultivate and work closely with the Institute participants over the coming year, to support them in their teaching of Jewish women's history and use of JWA resources, to support creation of a core community of educators committed to teaching Jewish women's history, and to learn from their feedback and experiences teaching Jewish women's history and/or using JWA resources.

"A brain spa for a woman educator."

"The Institute was stimulating, with many different opportunities to learn."

"Since I was fortunate to meet staff and educators from all over the country, I now know who to call upon for help in any of my future projects."

"The Institute as a whole was nourishing for mind and soul."

COMMENTS FROM ATTENDING EDUCATORS



Holly Litwin works on creating her shadowbox during the art project.



Sharing advice during the Institute art project, (left to right) Barbara Rosenblit, Marya Axner, Elise Ginsparg, and Jen Wakefield.



Summer Institute participant Debra Aarons at morning coffee with JWA staff.

Nominate a Narrator for Katrina's Jewish Voices Oral History Project

The Jewish Women's Archive has partnered with the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) in Jackson, Mississippi, to conduct 100 in-depth oral histories with members of the Jewish communities of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the Gulf Coast. (See accompanying story about oral historian Rosalind Hinton.)

Project directors are still collecting the names of individuals whose stories and recollections might round out the oral history collection. Every effort is being made to ensure that the interviews include women and men, young and old, rescuers and evacuees, members of the communal Jewish world and those who may not be. To nominate someone you believe should be considered, please visit: <http://www.jwa.org/research/kjv/nominate/>

Research: Recording Katrina's Jewish Voices

ROSALIND HINTON'S VOICE CARRIES WITH IT A HINT of camellias, collards (acquired in Mobile, Alabama), and New Orleans as a life-long resident of the Gulf Coast. She has honed her listening skills over cracked crabs and beer on long beach weekends at the Gulf of Mexico. Those who grow up along the Gulf South have these accents. Raised in a region of the country where food and music are religion, Dr. Hinton, a Ph.D. in Religious and Theological Studies from Northwestern University, brings these skills and accents to her work as oral historian for *Katrina's Jewish Voices*.

This summer Rosalind began interviewing 100 "historic witnesses" to Hurricane Katrina—a watershed event in our communal history—through a joint venture between JWA and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL). Her work will carry her through August 2007. The physical tapes and transcripts of interviews will be permanently housed at ISJL. The digitized oral histories will become an integral part of the *Katrina's Jewish Voices* online collection at www.katrina.jwa.org where they will be available to the public 365 days a year.

"Our hope is to record the small and heroic acts of kindness performed not only by Jew for other Jews, but also by Jews for their fellow Americans who were displaced and in need," Rosalind explains. "Understanding the loss that comes with diaspora, Jewish communities across America reached out to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in the spirit of *tikkun olam*. This is one of the most compelling documentary projects not only in the history of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, but also in the history of our nation."

"The Jewish community has been a significant part of the fabric and flavors of New Orleans from food to music to commerce since the city's beginnings," she continues. "It's an honor to document the vitality of this community at such a pivotal point in its history."

Rosalind Hinton is an assistant professor in religious studies at DePaul University in Chicago where she's taught for four years. While on leave from DePaul, she is a visiting scholar at the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women at Tulane University in New Orleans.

Rosalind's love of the South "in all of its pain and glory" is an impetus for much of her scholarship. Her mother's family hailed from Birmingham and Atlanta. Her grandfather, Israel Kaufman, was a member of The Temple in Atlanta and a founding member of the National Association of Women's and Children's Apparel Salesmen Guild. He traveled across the South selling Herbert Levy, Hyman and Juliette apparel. Her New Orleans roots go back to 1848 when her father's family arrived in the port city from Ireland.

Rosalind moved to New Orleans in 1974 to attend the *continued on page 9*

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHOSE STORY BELONGS IN JWA'S ONLINE COLLECTION OF KATRINA'S JEWISH VOICES?

If you, or someone you know, received digital photos, emails, letters, blogs, or other digital files in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, or you know someone who traveled to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to lend assistance, these materials and stories are now a valued part of the historical record.

Encourage family and friends to search their computers & talk to others.

Help us uncover materials that capture the experiences and responses of American Jewry to this vast humanitarian crisis.

Contributions can be submitted in a variety of forms and are easily uploadable.

Learn how by visiting the Katrina's Jewish Voices website at: <http://katrina.jwa.org>

simply change Rubin to Raven, a seemingly fitting appellation in that—like a bird—she had flown far from home to begin her life again.

She was frail in terms of her health, suffering from some unclear blood disorder, not that she ever allowed her physical limitations to hold her back. And she had her share of health challenges over the years. Nevertheless, she always seemed to bounce back, more determined, braver, and more adventurous than ever each time infirmity threatened to prevent her from living life to the hilt. And she was beautiful, with long hair as dark as a raven's that gave even more meaning to her new name, which seemed to suit her perfectly. From the moment she adopted it, she fit into it as if it were a glove waiting to be donned by her.



The early days, left to right: Arlene, Sheila de Bretteville, and Judy Chicago seated below.

During the first year she lived in Los Angeles she taught some classes at Cal-Arts, where I had already tendered my resignation as of the end of my two year contract. Throughout spring 1973, while I was finishing my unhappy tenure at Cal-Arts, Arlene and I began to make plans to set up our own school. We teamed up with Sheila de Bretteville, who was teaching design at Cal-Arts (she is now director of the Graduate School of Art at Yale). In an odd twist of circumstances, the old Chouinard building (which had morphed into Cal-Arts) would become available and we would take up residence there as the Feminist Studio Workshop, the first independent feminist art educational institution ever attempted.

A Framework for Feminist Art

But we began classes in Sheila's living room, having recruited a number of students from around the country. It is difficult to describe the atmosphere of the seventies; suffice it to say that many of us thought we were going to change the world, to transform it into a paradise of justice and equity. Ah, the hubris of youth, particularly in the fervor

of a revolutionary period of history. However, it is important to understand the time in order to comprehend both our ability to imagine that we could start a new school with nothing—no funds, no building, no equipment—and to understand how students could appear, students in search of an environment that would nurture rather than disappoint their needs as women to make art “in their own image and likeness,” an altogether new idea at the time.

I had first gone to Fresno with the goal of forging such an education and figuring out how to create a Feminist art practice. It seems crucial to point out that there was no term “Feminist Art” at that time; we forged it, along with educational methods that could train an entire generation of young women to become Feminist artists, which is what the Feminist Studio Workshop did. My own association with the school I helped start was brief; within a year I resigned, impelled by a burning need to focus all my energy on “The Dinner Party.” I've often said that if I were Arlene or Sheila, I would have been furious with me for abandoning the school we three had founded. But they were fabulous, far more understanding than I would have been under the circumstances. Because of them, the Feminist Studio Workshop flourished. Arlene went on to initiate the Lesbian Art Project, which produced numerous important young lesbian Feminist artists, many of whom she mentored. She was also a creator and editor of *Chrysalis*, an influential magazine of women's culture.

During the remainder of the 70s and into the early 80s, Beanie and I remained close though we saw each other less than we had during earlier times. She was busy with the FSW (Feminist Studio Workshop), the magazine, and an array of other activities—also, with writing art criticism. In 1983, she moved to New York to be with artist Nancy

Grossman, who would become her life companion. Although we stayed in touch, we didn't see each other often since we were both occupied with our extremely busy lives. In the mid-1980s, Beanie became the chief art critic for the *Village Voice*, a job I had some part in her losing.

“Holocaust Project” Takes a Toll

In 1993, the “Holocaust Project” premiered at the Spertus Museum of Judaica in Chicago, my home town. Eight years in the making, the “Holocaust Project” was created out of an intense collaboration with my new husband, photographer Donald Woodman, and with the aid of selected artisans. This was the most daunting of all my collaborative undertakings, involving a long immersion in the darkness of the Holocaust, material that has caused more than one sojourner to choose suicide. Looking back at that period, I can see that I was often on the brink of madness, saved only by the partnership with Donald that led both of us to a confrontation with the potential for evil that lurks beneath the surface of even the most civilized of nations, a potential that has been realized too many times in history.

The *Village Voice* sent a reporter to write a major piece about the project and the opening. Donald and I were sanguine about the choice; after all, she was Arlene's colleague and a close friend of my old pal, writer Lucy Lippard (whom I've known since the late 1950s). We therefore let down our guard, allowing the reporter to freely interact with us and all the many friends who came in from all over the country for the opening. So much for trust; the reporter savaged the project, ridiculing everything about the show including the art, the opening events (particularly the food), and most of all, the enthusiasm of friends and viewers—among whom were Holocaust scholars and knowledgeable art collectors and patrons. When Arlene protested what she felt was an extremely unfair article, she was fired.

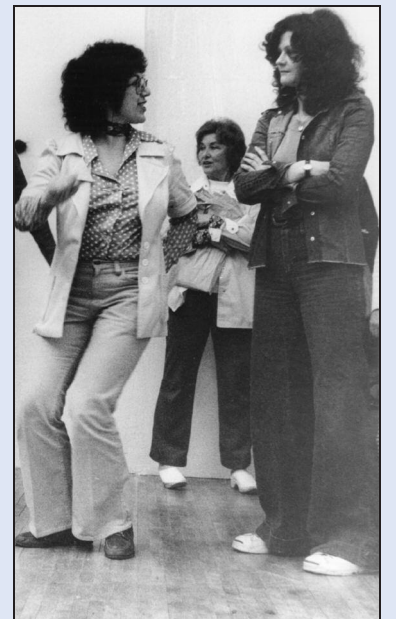
I am sure that she felt devastated by this turn of events but she never said anything to me. Instead, when given the opportunity she

wrote an article entitled “Judy Chicago, the Artist the Art World Loves to Hate” for a magazine called *Images and Issues*, an article that could be credited with starting a turn-around of sorts in terms of the critical assessment of my career. It's not easy standing up to the New York art establishment, and the fact that Beanie did not budge from her belief in my work—even in the face of sustained and intense critical vitriol by many other writers—provides some insight into her integrity, courage, and intellectual honesty. For once extended, her support was unwavering, support that she extended to many artists over the years, writing monographs on the artists June Wayne, Betye Saar, Michele Oka Doner and her partner, Nancy Grossman, whose work she genuinely admired.

I do not recall when Beanie and I again began to see each other more frequently. Some of my most precious memories are of having dinner with Arlene and Nancy, then being driven back to where I was staying in the “Nancy-mobile” as we called the cars that Nancy cherished. Over the last few years, Beanie and I discovered that although many miles still separated us, both of us had pursued lives built on the deeply-held Feminist values that had first brought us together. Our most recent partnership involved the formation of what has come to be called The Feminist Art Project, a national initiative housed at Rutgers.

One day, not long after the newly renovated and expanded Museum of Modern Art re-opened, I phoned Beanie to express my dismay that—in addition to erasing the work of many early women artists in their own collection (Sonia Delaunay, Natalia Goncharova and Meret Oppenheim and her famous “Breakfast in Fur/Fur Teacup” 1936 come to mind)—there was absolutely no acknowledgment of the Feminist art movement.

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Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven

And although a number of women artists from the 1980s were included, it was as if they had sprung out of thin air rather than as a result of both the Feminist Art movement and the political organizing of innumerable women artists, including the Guerilla Girls (those saucy upstarts with their gorilla masks), poster campaigns, and irrefutable statistics about the sad state of affairs of women in the arts.

The issue of erasure was much on my mind at the time because I was re-researching the 1,038 women represented in “The Dinner Party” for a final and definitive book on the piece, to be published by Merrell Publishers in relation to its 2007 permanent housing in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. My new re-search was making it eminently clear that the issue of erasure was far more central to the problems faced by women in the arts than I had previously realized. When I first created “The Dinner Party,” it was with the goal of teaching women’s history to a broad and diverse audience as a way of countering this very erasure, an ongoing erasure that the Museum of Modern Art in New York was now exemplifying—and I was pissed.

As always, Beanie was up for making some trouble. We agreed to meet the next time I was in New York, a few weeks later. I can vividly recall opening the door to my rented apartment and seeing Arlene, older, heavier, walking with a cane but still just as full of life as ever; as if the tolls of aging could not fell her. By then, I believe that she had already undergone surgery for kidney cancer and months of grueling chemotherapy; but the strength of her voice and her convictions were undiminished. We teamed up with Susan Fisher Sterling, chief curator of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., and soon thereafter with Judy Brodsky and Ferris Olin of Rutgers. Several others joined what became the Coordinating Committee of The Feminist Art Project, including Maura Reilly, curator of the Elizabeth Sackler Center. It was she who suggested the title of what is now a rapidly spreading series of exhibitions, events, panels

and activities aimed at breaking through the erasure that continues to marginalize or eclipse women’s achievements.

The outcome of our efforts is still unclear; we stand at the brink of an unprecedented series of events that we hope will mark the time when erasure becomes a thing of the past. These include not only The Feminist Art Project, but also the opening at Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art of Connie Butler’s exhibition, “WACK: Art and the Feminist Revolution” (the first historic survey of Feminist Art); the opening of the Elizabeth Sackler Center (the first such institution devoted to Feminist Art); the permanent housing of “The Dinner Party” (my lifelong goal); and the “Global Feminism” exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, curated by Maura Reilly and renowned art historian, Linda Nochlin, which will demonstrate that the Feminist art movement of the 1970s ushered in an historic and worldwide change in that—for the first time—women artists all over the world have the freedom to work out of their own experiences as women. Who knows? Perhaps even the Museum of Modern Art will get the message.

Unfortunately, Beanie will not be here to see the outcome of our most recent initiative, and her absence is palpable to me. I knew that the cancer had returned, that she did not have long to live. But she went so fast; too fast. Her loss is inestimable; she was a rarity, a seemingly unstoppable spirit. Even as she was failing, she was working, unwilling to let go of the mission that had given meaning to her life, a mission shared by many but especially by me; to help bring about a change for the better in this often dismal world. Beanie, I miss you and I shall always treasure the little porcelain box I painted for a birthday celebration we shared many years ago; the lid commemorating Beanie (the flower) and Tutti (the butterfly). Although the lived years may seem long, at the end it is clear that our life span is brief—in your case, way too brief.

Judy Chicago is an artist, author, feminist, educator, and intellectual whose work and philosophy have had a worldwide impact on both the art community and the larger culture. For over three decades Ms. Chicago has remained steadfast in her commitment to the power of art as a vehicle for intellectual transformation and social change.

Field Notes From an Oral Historian

We asked *Katrina’s Jewish Voices* oral historian Rosalind Hinton to share some of her field notes to entice us with the kind of information she has been gathering. Here are the notes from one of her first interviews for the project:

Florence Schornstein’s volunteer career began in the Civil Rights Movement. When the mayor of New Orleans asked Florence to run his Parks and Parkways Department in 1982, she took on the challenge with gusto. With no experience in horticulture, her skills as an organizer and coalition builder allowed her to marshal a corps of 13,000 volunteers—the Parkway Partners—dedicated to keeping the city’s green spaces healthy and beautiful. It was for this work that Florence was honored as a *JWA Woman Who Dared* in 2004. Today, almost 26 years after she first rallied the troops, Parkway Partners are once again planting tons of green space. In a city browned by the flood, they’re making the city livable again. As Florence said in 2004, “Whatever I learned about Judaism I pretty much learned at Sunday school, which was rather sparse. But one thing that I did learn though—because we were in a classic Reform congregation, Temple Sinai—the one thing that I did learn was *tikkun olam*, repairing the world; that we are here to make it better. And that has stuck with me always.”

School of Music at Loyola University where she received a Bachelors degree with an emphasis on flute performance. Fifteen years later she received a Masters degree in Pastoral Studies, also from Loyola. She has authored many scholarly papers and publications and is finishing a book, *Making a Life, and Building a Community, The New Orleans Years of Alma Lillie Hubbard, 1895–1932*. Alma Lillie Hubbard was born to a Mississippi sharecropper and was recognized as “New Orleans’ Queen of Song” before moving to New York and the Broadway theatre.

This past January, Rosalind became intimately involved in relief efforts in New Orleans through the Women of the Storm Advocacy—a non-partisan, non-political citizens’ group of mothers, housewives, lawyers, and business owners that was created to persuade Members of Congress to visit hurricane-ravaged Louisiana—and as a first responder for Rebuild New Orleans Libraries. Her work as oral historian for *Katrina’s Jewish Voices* is an organic evolution that she barely could have imagined a few years ago.

JWA INTERNS MAKE MORE POSSIBLE

Earlier this summer JWA Director of Education, Judith Rosenbaum, and Director of Oral History, Jayne Guberman, began writing an article based on 12 oral history interviews they conducted at a 2005 conference at Barnard on “Jewish Women Changing America: Cross-Generational Conversations.” Almost immediately, they realized that they needed assistance sorting through the wealth of information contained in those oral histories.

Enter Sarah Karpman, JWA’s 2006 summer intern. A recent Brandeis graduate, Sarah was eager to put her research skills to work in the area of women and gender studies.

JWA provided her with the perfect opportunity. Sarah uploaded the oral history interviews, created interview logs, assembled material according to general themes, and excerpted quotes for each theme that she subsequently used to make audio clips. The audio clips will be part of Judith and Jayne’s article, soon to appear in *The Scholar & the Feminist Online*, a web journal published by the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

“JWA is a professional, focused workplace where people are informed and engaging,” Sarah says. “They’re willing to invest in supervision and training—I was able to gain expertise in Adobe Audition, for example, a new skill that should be really useful to me in the future.”

Sarah has moved to San Francisco but is continuing to do some research and writing for JWA long-distance.



Sarah Karpman

New to the Board of Directors

FELICIA D. HERMAN, PH.D.

Felicia Herman has devoted her professional career to ensuring that Jewish communal organizations get the financial support they need to thrive. As executive director of The Natan Fund in New York, she collaborates with young Jewish philanthropists dedicated to supporting innovative projects that effect change in the Jewish community in the U.S. and Israel. A Wellesley graduate, she completed a Masters in Jewish Women's Studies and Ph.D. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University in 1997 and 2002, respectively. She has published several articles from her dissertation, "Views of Jews: Antisemitism, Hollywood, and American Jews, 1913-1947." At a recent JWA board retreat, Felicia cited her own attempts to research source documents from a multiplicity of voices (both female and male) to arrive at a three-dimensional image of history that gets closer to "the truth." "As activist historian Gerda Lerner taught us, there is actually no truth. People will listen with different ears, see with different eyes, analyze in different ways, and remember events differently. This is the challenge of history and of JWA—to bring these multiple voices together, much as we are doing with *Katrina's Jewish Voices*. Think of it as creating a holographic image, so that one can sit in the middle of history and see it from all perspectives and through a variety of lenses."



Felicia D. Herman, Ph.D.



Anne H. Meyer, M.P.H., J.D.

ANNE H. MEYER, M.P.H., J.D.

Anne Meyer has been a practicing attorney at Goulston & Storrs in Boston since 1981 where she is a partner in the real estate department. Her advice and counsel was instrumental in securing a five year lease renewal allowing JWA to remain in their current offices at 138 Harvard Street. In addition to her commercial real estate practice, she devotes significant time to pro bono matters, particularly representation of affordable housing developers in Boston and Cambridge. A graduate of Wesleyan University, Anne earned a Masters of Public Health from the University of Michigan and a J.D. degree from Boston College Law School. She sees JWA "as a living tribute to Jewish women who have played a role in the advancement of women, families and communities," and says, "Being part of JWA reminds me of the importance of documenting, preserving, and teaching the achievements of all Jewish women in our society."

STAFF PROFILES



Marya Axner, Education Resources Coordinator, has a compelling record of commitment to activism in her community and to causes in which she believes. A graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, IL, Marya earned her M.F.A. at the University of Oregon and a Masters in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Marya helped launch a 21st Century after-school program for 4th–8th graders, directed a state-funded program that supported families of school-aged children, and developed conferences with a multicultural focus for the Education Collaborative of Greater Boston. She also taught art for 12 years in Portland, Oregon. Marya is co-chair of the Jewish Labor Committee, New England Region, and has served as a literacy volunteer with Haitian grade school children. Marya helps educators make maximum use of JWA's resources, designs materials for online exhibits, and is liaison to a growing community of educators, including participants of our first-ever Summer Institute.



Stephen Benson, Executive Assistant, is the first voice and face that people encounter at JWA. A graduate of Tufts University with a B.A. in English and Drama, Stephen offers a calm presence amidst the daily flurry of JWA activity. Stephen seamlessly manages the office to ensure that everything runs smoothly. Before coming to JWA Stephen worked as executive assistant to the director of the New England Eye Centre in Boston. He has also worked

at Columbia University Medical Center in New York and at Jackson & Company Public Relations in Boston.



Anna Engle, Web Production Specialist, serves as our adept Web designer, frequently explaining technical details in understandable ways to many of us who are just learning this language. Like her supervisor, Ari Davidow, Anna has a passion for typography—waxing rhapsodic about serifs and sans serifs, and the intricacies therein. Anna earned a Bachelors degree in Mathematics at Smith College, and has taken graduate computer courses at Harvard University Extension School. More recently, Anna has pursued her passion by taking courses in Typography, Bookbinding, and Letterpress Printing at the Mass. College of Art in Boston. Anna's primary role is to build and maintain JWA's website. She is also the design power behind JWA's Monthly *Re://view* e-newsletter. Her vision helped refresh the publication to improve readability and her programming allows readers to scan more quickly to meet their reading preferences.

10th Birthday Party an Intimate Affair

JUST BEFORE 6 P.M. THEY BEGAN TO ARRIVE. They had gathered to pay tribute to the founders of the Jewish Women's Archive who, ten years earlier, had acted in concert to, as Gail Reimer said that evening, "render visible those who have been invisible, and to give women a voice in the telling of their stories and the unfolding of our story."

The evening honored the 19 original visionaries: Founding Chair Barbara B. Dobkin, Founding Executive Director Gail Twersky Reimer, and founding board members Joyce Antler, Peggy Charren, Ruth B. Fein, Susan Galler, Penina Migdal Glazer, Sally Gottesman, Barbara W. Grossman, Beth S. Klarman, Martha Minow, Suzanne Priebatsch, Brenda Brown Rever, Jeane Ungerleider, Nancy Schwartz Sternoff, Prudence L. Steiner, Nicki Newman Tanner, Henny Wenkart, and Doris Zelinsky.

As the skies deepened to slate, toasts and tributes to the Founders of JWA ensued. Joe Reimer (Gail Reimer's husband), Harron Ellenson (JWA friend and advisor), Vicki Gabriner (a JWA "Woman Who Dared"), and Michael Hill (executive director of The Dorot Foundation), each spoke eloquently of their connections to JWA, of the early days, and of the passion that underlies our work.

Pausing to take in the moment, Gail noted that the celebration was, for her, intricately connected to affirmation of the continuing importance of JWA's mission, "To uncover, chronicle and transmit the rich legacy of Jewish women and their contributions to our families and communities, to our people and our world."

"Given the deeply troubled times in which we find ourselves today, and the many pressing issues calling for our attention, I can't help but ask (and it wouldn't surprise me if many of you do as well) whether this mission is worthy of our time and commitment?" she ventured.

"And when I let myself really grapple with the question, I emerge more, not less committed to the mission. Today, more than ever, we need stories that inspire, stories that remind us that ordinary citizens like Rose Schneiderman, or Bella Abzug or Idit Klein can organize and lead movements for change. Stories that recall for us the gains won by women in human rights, civil rights and women's rights—gains they struggled hard and long for, frequently against overwhelming odds."

Then it was time "to gather 'round the fire" as performance artist Ellen Kushner put it—to come close and listen to the words culled from our own archive and brought to life for this one evening through the magic of a contemporary storyteller.



JWA Founding and current Board members (1st row): Nicki Tanner, Karen Levy, Gail Reimer, Jeane Ungerleider, Ann Lewis, and Toni Wolfman. Second row: Joyce Antler, Penina Glazer, Prudence Steiner, and Beth Klarman.



Ellen Kushner



Board members (l to r) Karen Levy and Sarah Perry get comfortable for Ellen Kushner's performance.

ENDNOTE: FROM THE CHAIR

Nicki Newman Tanner



THE MISSION
OF THE
JEWISH WOMEN'S
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IS TO UNCOVER,
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AND OUR
COMMUNITIES,
TO OUR PEOPLE
AND OUR WORLD.

I COLLECT QUOTATIONS, and every now and then actually re-read them. The other day I lingered over this one: "Be prepared to understand before you hope to be understood." I thought immediately of the most recent JWA board meeting when we board members, in the best position to "understand" JWA, searched for ways to describe it so that its vital work and purpose would "be understood" quickly by the greatest number of people.

The difficulties of reducing a complex, multi-faceted organization to a few sentences should have been anticipated. Each of us emphasized a different aspect of JWA's work. "Our web site says it all," said one. "We DO uncover, chronicle, and transmit the rich history of American Jewish women." "But we also help people understand what Jewish women have accomplished in their communities," countered another. "It's more important that we are technological innovators," said a third. "We are changing the way history is researched, recorded and taught"; "We are providing powerful role models for our daughters"; "... and material for teachers"; "We support scholarship"; "We are building a lasting internet-based archive with commitment to depth of content." The discussion was long and passionate, but no "elevator speech" simple enough to be delivered in under a minute emerged. We vowed to continue the effort and I returned to my quotation collection.

"Composing a life involves a continual re-imagining of the future and a reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present," wrote Mary Catherine Bateson. Not quite it, but my personal answer was beginning to emerge. The next time someone asks me (on or off an elevator): "So what IS this Jewish Women's Archive you're so proud of?" I will forego my usual, "We're the first to...and we're the best at..." Instead, with a bow to M.C. Bateson, I will say: "The work of the Jewish Women's Archive gives meaning to the present and re-imagines the future by re-interpreting—or providing a more complete picture of—the past."

And with a little luck, it will be the beginning of a wonderful conversation.

Nicki Newman Tanner

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LOOK FOR JWA

Upcoming Conferences

Little Rock, Arkansas

November 10-12, 2006

Southern Jewish Historical Society:

Jayne Guberman presents on

Katrina's Jewish Voices

Atlanta, Georgia

December 17, 2006

"Pentimento: The Art of Honoring and Transmitting Oral Histories"

Co-sponsored by JWA

Celebrating four years of art exhibitions

by Weber School seniors in a course

taught by JWA Board Member Barbara

Rosenblit and Sheila Miller

Gail Reimer—Keynote speaker

Jayne Guberman presents on

techniques of collecting oral histories

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

January 21–24, 2007

Council of American Jewish Museums:

Jayne Guberman presents on

Katrina's Jewish Voices

New York, NY

February 26 & 27, 2007

New York University Jewish Women's

Postwar Conference, "A Jewish Feminine

Mystique? American Jewish Women in

the Postwar Era"

Co-sponsored by JWA

New York, NY

March 5, 2007

Sh'ma B'kolah (Listen to Her Voice):

Incorporating Jewish Women's History

Into Jewish Education

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