

the jfrej broadside

Over the past year, the landscape of social justice organizing has shifted and JFREJ is leading the Jewish response in New York City. Our members are finding innovative ways to make change in this new political climate. The taking back of Congress by the Democrats underscored the changing tide of public opinion — voters spoke out against the War in Iraq, the U.S. government’s lack of response to Katrina and the corruption of our broken political system.

JFREJ, in partnership with other grassroots groups in New York City, is seizing this moment to win real victories. We are fighting for immigrant and worker rights, and against the local effects of war, racism and empire-building. We are also engaging in the deep work of movement building by developing leaders, forging strategic partnerships, and creating a joint vision of a future for all people.

JFREJ has been addressing the changing political climate internally as well. We completed a strategic planning process to assess our past work, survey the current moment, and map our next steps. This process engaged more than 300 members, board, staff, allies and donors through interviews, focus groups and an online survey.

Our strategic planning process reaffirmed that our core work as an organization is to pursue racial and economic justice in NYC by winning systemic changes that result in concrete improvements in people’s daily lives. Our exploration surfaced four key findings from our membership:

1. **JFREJ members want to be a part of JFREJ in meaningful ways**, but only have time to join us at events once or twice a year. So we are creating a variety of opportunities for members to engage with our campaigns. *(see pages 2, 4)*
2. Long-term members want to learn together and feel more connected to JFREJ. So we are finding more ways to offer JFREJ tools and perspective so members can build their understanding of crucial issues through our intergenerational study group, issue fora, and our queer *beit midrash* (study group). *(see page 3)*
3. **Most importantly, we need to build a campaign that JFREJ can make our own.** We began an outreach campaign to our membership and allies to find out which issues are the most pressing in NYC, and where a Jewish voice could have the most impact. *(see page 4)*
4. Over the past four years, JFREJ has focused on organizing for immigrant rights. We accomplished more than 150 meetings with Jewish immigrants, leaders and organizations. Through this, members realized that there is a crucial need to organize among immigrant Jews, but the drive for this work must come from *within* those communities. At this point our membership is not primarily immigrant Jews, so we are not situated to be the most effective leaders of this effort. JFREJ is still committed to maintaining and building relationships with those communities, and mobilizing and organizing for immigrant rights.

Our planning process made clear the truth we have always known. You are the heart of JFREJ. **Please join us on February 4th to choose our next campaign**, and be a part of a community of Jews working for racial and economic justice in NYC and across the country. Bring your voices, hearts, and resources to JFREJ — together we are building a Jewish movement for radical change!

In struggle,
Dara Silverman

letter from the director

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broadside (n):
a form of street literature popular from the 15th through the 19th centuries. often printed on large sheets of paper, designed to be plastered on walls to disseminate information.

jfrej in action

shalom bayit: justice for domestic workers

the shalom bayit campaign has been moving at a swift pace over the last few months working for change on the personal, community, and policy levels.



JFREJ and DWU members at a spirited rally at the May 23rd Lobby Day in Albany

Policy In May, 20 JFREJ members traveled to Albany with Domestic Workers United (DWU) to lobby for the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights. DWU packed in a full day for the lobbyists, including a press conference, visits with officials from the state government, and a rally. For many JFREJ members, the lobby day clarified the campaign and offered a personal perspective on the issues facing domestic workers.

In September, DWU convened a summit at New York University on Domestic Workers where DWU formally presented their groundbreaking report, "Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Worker Industry." This report illustrates the landscape of the domestic worker industry in New York, which employs over 200,000 workers. Rabbi Peter Schweitzer, a member of JFREJ's Rabbinical Council, and Pam Galpern, JFREJ member and former employer of a nanny, spoke on behalf of JFREJ. Pam explained why justice for domestic workers benefits the whole community, and drew connections between her experiences as a union member and as an advocate for domestic workers' rights.

Community Most of the work for the Shalom Bayit campaign is taking place in ten synagogues in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Congregation members have learned about domestic workers rights through one-to-one conversations, living room gatherings and synagogue events organized with the help of JFREJ members. The campaign engages people in conversations about employment, race, class, and gender. These topics, usually limited to anxious and guilt ridden conversations between friends, are now brought into a public sphere where people can join together to address their concerns and act for change.

JFREJ members are developing a three-session adult education course on labor justice, using the Shalom Bayit campaign as a case study, for Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST) and the Kollel at Hebrew Union College.

With support from JFREJ, members of Kolot Chayeinu and the Park Slope Jewish Center (PSJC) in Brooklyn are creating campaigns and standards for the treatment of domestic workers in their own communities. Rabbis have been instrumental in their synagogues through sermons and text studies, and by offering their leadership to help build support. Many of the rabbis in the synagogues organizing with Shalom Bayit are also members of JFREJ's Rabbinical Council.

Personal As part of our efforts to streamline and focus the goals of the campaign, we have developed criteria for "Employers for Justice" that set standards for best employment practices. Employers involved in the campaign are asked to take steps beyond where they currently stand vis-à-vis their relationship with their employee and to contribute to community support for domestic workers' justice. The campaign is supporting employers to change their own practices, to build their confidence and to take action. Within one year, we plan to have a large network of employers as well as a core group of employers who will show leadership on this issue.

get involved!

Domestic workers, employers, concerned allies — please come to the next Shalom Bayit Meeting at JFREJ on Tuesday, January 9th at 7pm.

For more information, contact Danielle at danielle@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x11.

“As the only group reaching out to domestic employers, JFREJ is in the right place at the right time, doing exactly the work that needs to be done. They share our vision and hand-in-hand we will change the industry to bring respect and dignity to the work.”

— Joycelyn Campbell and Carlene Charles of Domestic Workers United

intergenerational study group

The Intergenerational Study Group allows members to step back from the day-to-day bustle of social change work. At the bimonthly sessions we study texts related to our racial and economic justice work, reflect upon our unique journeys and share with each other lessons learned from our personal histories and involvement with movements for social change. Member Naomi Sobel says of our September 18 gathering: “The folks who came to the Intergenerational Study Group really connected the text [selections from Marla Brettschneider’s new book *The Family Flamboyant*] with their own experiences around Judaism, age, race, privilege, and passing.”

queer beit midrash (study group)

Five times last year the JFREJ office was converted into a makeshift yeshiva (institution for Torah study) for meetings of the Queer Beit Midrash, a group committed to studying ancient Jewish texts through a contemporary activist and Queer lens. The Queer Beit Midrash brings together Queer Jews and their allies of all denominations and all levels of experience with text study, and allows them entrance into an area of Judaism that is often reserved for exclusively male or observant Jews. Each meeting focused on an unconventional topic, from homosexuality in the bible, to cross dressing, to the appropriateness of certain sex acts, but coupled these subjects with traditions such as reciting blessings, dedicating the study session and chevruta (partnered) learning. Facilitated by JFREJ’s own Rabbi Eli Kukla and Reuben Zellman (a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College), these study sessions successfully brought outsiders inside the text and into the world of Jewish learning.

— Sarah Braunstein

political analysis and skills building at jfrej

In September we kicked off our training program with a day-long session that covered topics most requested by active members: Meeting Facilitation, Anti-Oppression, and Outreach. Fall trainings supported the one-to-one initiative and selection of our new campaign.

October—One-to-Ones: The Building Blocks for Organizing for Justice

November—Power Analysis: Mapping NYC Political Landscape

December—Campaign Selection: What Makes a Successful Campaign?

For more information about education at JFREJ, contact Dara Nussbaum, Organizing Director, at dnussbaum@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x12.

Are you a domestic worker who wants to unite with others for justice? Do you employ a house-keeper, nanny or elder care-giver? JFREJ and DWU are building a network of domestic workers and employers and have many resources to support community members in fighting for justice. For more information, check out the on-line resource kit at <http://www.jfrej.org/ShalomBayit2.html> or contact Danielle Feris, Community Organizer, at danielle@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x11.

education
at
jfrej



Rabbi Eli Kukla, JFREJ’s Rabbi-in-Residence, with the JFREJ Rabbinical Council welcoming the community to the 2006 Meyer Awards

nu? what's new?

stay tuned for a new campaign and a new batch of jfrej leaders

JFREJ's one-to-one organizing campaign is well underway. Perhaps you've already been visited and shared your personal story with a JFREJ member. We want to know:

- * What makes JFREJ meaningful to you?
- * What else do you want from JFREJ?
- * What social justice issues are most pressing in New York City?
- * What makes you angry?
- * What makes you hopeful?
- * What keeps you up at night?

Our goal is to do hundreds of one-to-one conversations and living room gatherings across the city in order to inform our next campaign, based on which social justice issues most personally resonate with JFREJ members and where we can make the biggest impact in NYC. It is our practice to take leadership from communities of color and low-income communities fighting for racial and economic justice in NYC. We are simultaneously meeting with ally organizations to learn more about their organizing and to hear how JFREJ could add unique value and strategically push specific campaigns forward.

So how will we decide? Your participation is crucial. On Sunday, February 4, JFREJ will hold a general membership strategy session in which the core committee of members holding one-to-one meetings will offer its findings from the campaign, and share potential new campaigns for JFREJ. JFREJ members will move towards a decision and recommendation to the JFREJ Board of Directors. To prepare for this event, we will also hold an open planning meeting in mid-January — call the office at 212-647-8966 x 12 for details.

jfrej re-focuses our work for immigrant rights

We have spent the past four years building Jewish support for immigrant rights across New York City. This spring, the massive marches and action from immigrants demanding rights and recognition, spurred JFREJ to further our work.

ACTION Throughout the year, JFREJ mobilized Jews to join hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the streets of New York to demand justice. We also launched the first grassroots Jewish response to the massive immigrant movement in the form of a petition entitled, "This Passover, We Stood For Freedom." JFREJ stepped up and created a petition for immigrant justice and against repressive policies that would criminalize immigrants. More than 2,000 people signed on in less than two weeks. JFREJ also raised money to run the petition in the *Jewish Forward* [4/14/06] and *the Jewish Week* [4/21/06] to get the message out to an even broader audience.

COALITION WORK JFREJ continues to work as a member of various New York City immigrant coalitions — most notably Immigrant Communities in Action and the New York Immigration Coalition. We are also working in alliance with Jewish organizations from across the country as a founding member of the Jewish Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, which is building a Jewish voice for immigrant rights in the United States. With JFREJ's leadership, this coalition created a High Holiday postcard, wishing members of Congress a *sweet new year for immigrants to America!* 20,000 postcards were collected across the U.S.

LEARNING On July 20, 2006, over sixty JFREJ members and allies came together at Congregation Rodeph Sholom to learn about recent growth of the immigrant rights movement and how Jews have been, and continue to be a part of it. Chana Rothman and friends played uplifting music. This was followed by a lively panel and break-out discussions. The evening was moderated by JFREJ Board Member Jon Moscow, and panel participants included Raquel Batista, Director of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, Associate Rabbi at Congregation Rodeph Sholom, and Ari Rotramel, an active JFREJ member and graduate student at Rutgers. Katie Zavadski, JFREJ member and Brooklyn High School student said: "The stories from Rabbi Grushcow and Raquel Batista about the daily experiences of immigrants helped me understand the growth of the immigrant rights movement and the need for Jews to be a part of it."

rabbinical council gains momentum

The JFREJ Rabbinical Council unites 25 rabbis from across the Jewish spectrum to build the relationships and resources rabbis need to be effective advocates for social justice. On June 27, 2006, the Rabbinical Council gathered at Hebrew Union College to discuss the challenges rabbis face as they act for racial and economic justice and to strategize about the future of Jewish social action. Rabbis Ayelet Cohen (Congregation Beth Simchat Torah), Ellen Lippman (Kolot Chayeyinu), Felicia Sol (B'nai Jeshurun) and Scott Weiner (Hebrew Tabernacle) took part in a panel on Jewish social change for the 21st century. Since this session, Council members brought JFREJ's campaign work to their congregations and communities through sermons, text studies, living room gatherings and panels. *For more information, contact our Rabbinical Intern, Alissa Wise at alissa@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x15.*

events



jfrej house party

On Sunday, April 23, 2006, Tami Gold, Karen Zelermyer & Ellen Gurzinsky hosted a house party to benefit JFREJ. They invited their friends, families and colleagues to an entertaining afternoon filled with food, music and a program exploring Jews, baseball, and of course, JFREJ. Rabbi Rebecca Alpert — special guest and friend of the hosts — led a fascinating discussion about her latest exploration of Jackie Robinson as a Jewish icon. This event brought together like-minded people to support JFREJ financially and raise awareness of our important work for racial and economic justice in New York City. Thank you so much to Ellen, Tami, Karen and Rebecca and all our guests for such a scintillating afternoon and for raising more than \$4,000 for JFREJ.

Support JFREJ by hosting a house party of your own!

Hosting and sponsoring an event is a great way to inspire your community and increase financial support for JFREJ. Please contact Helena Tubis at helena@jfrej.org or (212) 647-8966 x14 to start planning today.

jfrej benefit screening

On September 13, 2006, JFREJ held a benefit screening of the new documentary *Young Jewish and Left* at Anthology Film Archives. Through discussions with young Jewish activists and organizers, *Young Jewish and Left* illustrates how “outside the mainstream because of their race, spiritual practices, sexuality, gender, and politics, young Jews build radical communities.” Afterwards the audience had a Q&A session with filmmakers Irit Reinheimer and Konnie Chameides and interviewees featured in the film, including JFREJ’s Executive Director, Dara Silverman. For more information and to watch the trailer, visit www.youngjewishandleft.org.



jfrej annual member picnic, august 2006



Danielle Feris, JFREJ Community Organizer (left) and JFREJ members enjoying a beautiful day together in Prospect Park at the JFREJ Picnic, August, 2006

the 10th annual rabbi marshall t. meyer risk-taker awards

A DECADE OF RISK-TAKING

On November 16, 2006, over 500 JFREJ members, friends and allies gathered at the Brotherhood Synagogue for the 10th Annual Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Risk-taker Awards to honor an awe-inspiring collection of artists, activists and union members. On this special evening, we recognized the work and achievements of playwright Tony Kushner, short story writer Grace Paley, and the members of Transport Workers Union Local 100. Each of our honorees regularly and consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty, taking personal and political risks in the name of change and justice, not just for themselves but for others. As Esther Kaplan so eloquently wrote in the evening’s program, these “honorees know how to speak at times when the rest of us have forgotten our voices, and they know how to act. And when it comes with a price, they shrug and pay for it.”

the jfrej community

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JFREJ is seeking new Board Members

If you are interested in joining a committed, diverse and active NYC-based Board, please contact Dara Silverman at 212.647.8966 x13 or dara@jfrej.org

Special Thanks: Micah Bazant, Domestic Workers United, Jenny Levison, Vered Meir, Deirdre Silverman, Lee Schere, Shawn Setaro and Katie Zavadski
Meyers awards photos: Carolina Kroon
Newsletter design: Dolly Meieran
Printing: Philmark Lithographics Inc.



welcome new staff

Dara Nussbaum is excited to join JFREJ as Organizing Director. Her background is in grassroots, membership-led community organizing and political education from an anti-oppression framework. Dara was a founding organizer of the Immigrant Rights Committee at Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, and also served there as Clergy Coordinator where she worked on multiple social justice campaigns, including education and tenant organizing.



Nicole Solomon is the Office Manager at JFREJ. She graduated from Eugene Lang College in 2000 with a degree in Cultural Studies. Nicole is a long-time activist for racial, economic and gender justice, she is also a zine writer and frequent contributor to online and small press publications.



Helena Tubis is our Director of Development. Prior to working at JFREJ, Helena was the Development Associate at Congregation Rodeph Sholom and the Program Coordinator at Project Sunshine. Helena is also involved with *interrupcion**, a global grassroots organization that works to create social change through the integration of social responsibility in all sectors of society.



Alissa Wise is a third year rabbinical student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia. Before beginning the pursuit of the rabbinate, she worked as a tenant organizer with the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn and was a participant in AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps. As a rabbinical student she has worked as a chaplain at Planned Parenthood, authored a pastoral counseling curriculum on queer reproductive rights and loss, and is the Education Director at String of Pearls Hebrew School in Princeton, NJ.



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thank you for supporting JFREJ in 2006

We attempt to list all of our contributors. We apologize for any omissions.

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get involved!



january–february calendar for jfrej members

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9

Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers Campaign Meeting

Join JFREJ members at this monthly meeting to build on JFREJ's partnership with Domestic Workers United (DWU) and work for domestic workers rights in synagogue communities around NYC.

Time: 7pm

Location: JFREJ, 135 W. 29th St. Suite 600 (btwn 6th and 7th Aves.)

Contact: danielie@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x12

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

Rabbinical Council Breakfast

The rabbis of the JFREJ Rabbinical Council will gather to move forward their

work of learning and taking action on social justice in their communities.

Time: 9am

Location: TBA

Contact: alissa@jfrej.org

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Choose JFREJ's Next Campaign!

JFREJ members and leaders of social change movements in NYC will present possible issue areas for JFREJ's next campaign based on our work this fall and our collective membership will help determine which new campaign JFREJ initiates.

Time: 11am–4pm

Location: JFREJ, 135 W. 29th St. Suite 600 (btwn 6th and 7th Aves.)

Contact: dnussbaum@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x12

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Social Justice Shabbat: Education & Action about Shalom Bayit

Join JFREJ, Park Slope Jewish Center, Kolot Chayeinu and other communities from across NYC at this family-friendly educational event to build the campaign for domestic workers rights.

Location: Park Slope Jewish Center (PSJC), 1320 8th Ave, Brooklyn

Contact: danielle@jfrej.org or 212-647-8966 x11

Please check for updated news, actions and events at www.jfrej.org.

Yes! I want to join JFREJ and the struggle for Justice!

\$1,080 Visionary \$540 Strategist \$100 Agitator \$1,000 Organizer
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