



RRC Offers Course for Improving Muslim-Jewish Dialogue

by Gerald S. Cohen

RRC, the first and only rabbinical school to require its students to take courses in religions other than Judaism, will offer a course this spring on Muslim-Jewish relations.

The course, Contemporary Manifestations of Islam, will include a service-learning component so that students can supplement book learning with community work that teaches them how to improve Jewish-Muslim relations.

The new offering was conceived by Associate Professor Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, Ph.D., and will be team-taught with Adnan Ahmad Zulfqar, a student in his final year of a joint J.D./Ph.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania. His doctorate will be in Islamic jurisprudence.

Fuchs-Kreimer says the course will help students understand the variety of ways Islam has developed in the last several centuries. It will cover a number of hot-button issues, including the role of women, war and terrorism, and how Muslims approach non-Muslims. Midway through the semester, RRC students will break bread with Muslim graduate students from Penn over a three-hour kosher/hallal meal at Penn's Hillel House. The rabbinical and Muslim students will then pair off and meet on their own to plan how they will team-teach a class section at a Jewish and Muslim day school.

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"Understanding Islam is important for American Jews, both as Americans and as Jews. As Americans, we need to understand both the growing Muslim population in our country and worldwide Islam as a force in international affairs. As Jews, the stakes are even higher. Israel exists in the heart of the Muslim world. The bottom line is that American Jewish religious leaders ought to make it their business to learn and to teach about Islam."

Seventh-grade students at Saligman Middle School in suburban Philadelphia, one of the schools in the Perelman Jewish Day School system, will attend an assembly and then individual classes taught by the Muslim and RRC students. Sessions also will be taught to fourth- and fifth-grade students at the Foundation for Islamic Education in Villanova, PA.

Fuchs-Kreimer says she is especially excited about the service-learning component. Integrating academic material with community service is a growing phenomenon throughout American education, from elementary school to graduate school.

"Our students have pushed us in this area," Fuchs-Kreimer explains. "Service learning fits the expressed goals of many RRC students. They often arrive in rabbinical school with a passion for making the world a better place, for engaging in social change that benefits the society in which they live. They want to do *tikkun olam* work in the community, even while pursuing their studies here. Service learning offers the possibility of integration."



Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer

Student Helps Advance Anti-Torture Amendment

by Lauren Handel

Second-year student Jarah Greenfield found herself last summer in the middle of a hot-button debate on government-sanctioned torture, a controversy that pitted the Bush administration against members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. Ultimately the advocates for an anti-torture policy prevailed.

The journey took Greenfield from Martha's Vineyard, MA, where she worked as a summer rabbinic intern for Rabbi for Human Rights-North America (RHR-NA) to Washington, DC, where she and colleagues met with Sen. John McCain, the Arizona Republican who spearheaded the effort in Congress to stop American torture of foreign detainees.

"In the international landscape, the use of torture marks the U.S. as a country that disregards the rule of law," she says. "That's why this work is so important to me. The whole issue of torture is as much about the human dignity of the victim as it is about who we are and what we're doing in the world."

RHR-NA is a multid denominational, national rabbinic organization devoted to education and advocacy for human rights. Greenfield was on the committee that established RHR-NA's initial campaign, "Honor the Image of God: Stop Torture Now." She helped create and publish educational materials that would become the foundation of the campaign, as well as the document *A Rabbinic Resource on Jewish Values and the Issue of Torture*, which was distributed to thousands of rabbis across the United States and in Israel. The document was designed as a resource to help rabbis address with their communities the issues of Jewish values and torture. Greenfield also helped strategize and lay out a plan for a national campaign.

RHR-NA began its multifaceted campaign last January to oppose the use of torture in American-controlled prisons and facilities. As a first step, RHR-NA signed a public letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee expressing grave



RRC student Jarah Greenfield (fourth from left) and members of RHR-NA delegation, including RRC graduate Rabbi Brian Walt (left), with Sen. John McCain in Washington, DC.

concerns about attorney general nominee Alberto Gonzales, who advised the president that he could legally annul the Geneva Conventions and authorize the use of torture. RHR-NA believes this interpretation led to the abuses at Guantanamo, at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and possibly at other secret locations.

The letter was followed by a visit last summer to McCain, during which Greenfield and other members of RHR-NA offered their support for a McCain amendment to the 2006 Defense Appropriations Act that would force all U.S. agencies to comply with the Geneva Conventions against the use of torture. In October, the Senate voted 90-9 in favor of the McCain amendment. Later, the president threatened to veto the measure unless the CIA was exempted from the provision. In mid-December, after the House passed a resolution supporting the amendment, the White House relented and agreed to McCain's conditions.

From the President

Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz

Introducing RRC *Connections*



Welcome to *Connections*, a new publication of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. *Connections* is designed to tell the stories of RRC—what we do; the ideas we create; and how we help people live lives of meaning, purpose and value. In this spring-semester issue we offer this snapshot of RRC and of the unique Jewish leaders we are training.

Two stories describe how we are continuing to push for academic excellence. Read about Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, Ph.D., who is breaking new ground as she co-teaches an innovative course on Islam with University of Pennsylvania colleague Adnan Zulfiqar. And read about David Brodsky, Ph.D., our new assistant professor of rabbinics and director of rabbinic texts.

Another story shows how we marry spirituality with caring for others. In this story, the efforts of one student, Jarah Greenfield, are described. Jarah was central to a national rabbinical effort to prevent the torture of U.S. detainees.

You will find a story about a fifth-year student, Lauren Grabelle Herrmann, who decided that her West Philadelphia neighborhood needed a synagogue. So she created one.

Another story describes the thinking behind RRC's new look—our new logo, color palette and typography. You also will read about the award we received for one of the products, our college catalogue, that used the new design.

We have two new additions to the increasingly diverse board that

directs our efforts at the College: Joseph N. Cohen and Karen Kolodny. They come to the board from both ends of the continent and represent new skills and vision that will help make our work ever more fruitful.

Finally, read about our continuing efforts to cultivate financial support for RRC. Robert Horowitz, vice president for institutional advancement, explains an issue related to collegiate fundraising. In this issue, he describes how endowments and endowed scholarships help an institution.

Enjoy our inaugural issue, and please let me know what you think of it by contacting me at dehrenkrantz@rrc.edu.

On the Development Front

Robert F. Horowitz, Ph.D.

Endowments Bring Stability and Predictability

Colleges and universities often use fundraising terms like “endowments” and “endowed scholarships” as if they were part of our ordinary vocabulary. In most cases they are not.

Some explanation is in order. Endowments are vital to the financial well-being of any institution, and RRC is no exception. An endowment helps create financial stability, allowing the College to be less dependent on unpredictable sources of revenue such as giving to the annual fund, tuition or foundation grants. An endowment at RRC is a designated account that is invested to provide income to fund the donor's wishes. Only the income from the endowed fund is used, while the principal is preserved.

The minimum gift to establish an endowment at RRC is \$10,000. The gift can be paid out over a period of years. A formal agreement between the College and the donor is established, specifying the fund's name, objectives and specific provisions for distribution of

income. Donors can create an endowment in their own name, in memory or honor of someone, in the name of a business or in the name of an organization. There is no better way to ensure the continuation of educational excellence at RRC than through an endowed gift.

Endowments can be funded with current cash gifts, appreciated assets (such as stock), charitable bequests or through a number of charitable trust options. Donors can specify how the endowment income will be used to benefit the College, as long as the request fits within the College's mission. For example, the income can be directed to a particular department or program, to maintain or purchase necessary equipment, to faculty development or to establish endowed academic chairs.

Of particular importance at this time is the establishment of endowed scholarships. Endowed scholarships are crucial to recruiting and attracting the best students to attend RRC. The minimum gift to establish an endowed scholarship

is \$100,000. Scholarships are the key to ensuring that admission to RRC is open to the finest students. The College must have endowed scholarships to be competitive for outstanding rabbinical students. Donors of scholarships can help define award criteria that meet their goals and the objectives of the College. Scholarships may be awarded based on academic merit, financial need, community service or a combination of criteria.

Several such scholarships exist at the College. For example, through the generosity of Aaron and Marjorie Ziegelman, the College's Admissions Committee awards a full-tuition scholarship to two incoming meritorious students who have demonstrated academic and professional promise. If the students remain in good academic standing, the scholarship is renewable annually for five years.

Mark Nussbaum and his family established an endowed scholarship to honor his grandmother Anna Weber Gross on the occasion of her 100th birthday. The funds gener-



ated from the Gross Scholarship are being used for general scholarship aid.

We extend our thanks to the donors who have established these and other endowed scholarships, and encourage potential donors to think about setting up such funds.

For further information send an e-mail to rhhorowitz@rrc.edu.

Robert Horowitz is vice president of institutional advancement.

Cohen and Kolodny Join RRC Board

RRC recently welcomed Joseph N. Cohen and Karen Kolodny to its board of directors, marking the latest additions to a governing body that continues to expand in geographical and professional diversity.

Kolodny, a native Canadian, has been involved in the Reconstructionist movement since 1970, when her family joined the Reconstructionist Synagogue of Montreal, now Dorshei Emet. She was the first youth member of that synagogue's board of directors. Kolodny currently is the director of the Milstein/Rosenthal Center for Media & Technology at the 92nd Street Y, the largest JCC in the country, where she also is director of legal affairs.

Kolodny is a lawyer licensed to practice in Quebec, Ontario, and New York. She has a bachelor of civil law and a bachelor of common laws from McGill University and a master of law from the University of Cambridge (Queens' College). Kolodny has worked previously in Canada, Belgium and the Czech Republic. She and her husband and daughters are members of West End Synagogue, where Kolodny has served as a member of the board of trustees and president of the board.

Cohen, a California resident and a graduate of both Yale and Oxford, has held senior positions at leading investment banking firms, including N.M. Rothschild & Sons Ltd., Salomon Brothers, Lehman Brothers, Orion Royal Bank Ltd. and Samuel Montagu Inc., where he served as managing director. For the past 20 years, he has been active in the entertainment and media industries, financing motion pictures, television and other media throughout the world.

Cohen also is an active producer of motion pictures and advises a number of leading independent film companies. He has served as president and chief operating officer of Largo Entertainment and as co-chair of InterMedia/Film Equities. He currently is president of American Entertainment Investors Inc., and managing director of Abel's Hill Capital Corp. He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and has been an adjunct professor since 1992 in the Peter Stark Producing Program at the University of Southern California Graduate School of Cinema/Television. He has spoken widely and published many articles on entertainment and media financing. Cohen is a member of Congregation Kehillat Israel in Pacific Palisades, CA.

Over the last several years, RRC has made several additions to the board with the intention of broadening the range of experience of its members. They include Steve Barnett, a business executive and lawyer from Chicago; Howard Blitman, an engineer and construction company executive from Scarsdale, NY; and Annabel Lindy, a property manager and real estate investor from Philadelphia.

RRC Student Helps Establish New Synagogue in Philadelphia

by Eileen Fisher

One warm day in November, as diners in a Center City Philadelphia coffee house sat with faces raised to the sun, Lauren Grabelle Herrmann described successes that seemed unseasonable for a 29-year-old. She had just finished leading High Holiday services at Kol Tzedek, the new Reconstructionist synagogue she has started in West Philadelphia.

"The High Holidays really were spectacular," says Grabelle Herrmann, a student in her last year at RRC. "They displayed who we are: traditional and contemporary, relevant, participatory. All the things that I think are important in a synagogue."

Kol Tzedek, whose services and Torah school meet at the Calvary Center at 48th Street and Baltimore Avenue, grew, in part, from a West Philadelphia *havurah* composed of Grabelle Herrmann and friends. But that group attracted a specific segment of people: They were young, single, and knew how to *daven*. Grabelle Herrmann sensed there was an unmet need for Jewish practice among others in the neighborhood.

"So I started calling and meeting people. I decided to put myself out there" as the future rabbi of a synagogue, she says. Kol Tzedek quickly came to life. A party for Hanukkah 2004 attracted about 100 people. Grabelle Herrmann and her collaborators built a board of directors, filed the appropriate papers and wrote bylaws. By fall 2005, the synagogue was serving 33 families.

The proposition of starting her own synagogue was daunting. But, she says, the practical rabbinics



Lauren Grabelle Herrmann lights a menorah at Kol Tzedek's Hanukkah party.

coursework, internships and faculty advice she has received at RRC have helped enormously.

She had said from the beginning that she wanted Kol Tzedek to be affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement. And on the High Holidays, she was able to show what that could mean.

"I got to draw the distinction of being Reconstructionist. In introducing the *aliyot*, I offered two versions of the blessings. I explained why the Reconstructionist wording was different from what they might be used to, that we don't believe in "chosenness." People say what I am doing is visionary. But actually it is right within the framework of the Reconstructionist movement."

David Brodsky Appointed to RRC Faculty

RRC welcomes the addition of David Brodsky, Ph.D., as its newest full-time faculty member. Brodsky serves as an assistant professor and director of rabbinic texts at the College and teaches courses on Talmud, Midrash and other aspects of rabbinic literature and civilization.

Prior to joining the faculty at the College, Brodsky was the Perlow Lecturer in Classical Judaism in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Pittsburgh from fall of 2003 through spring of 2005. He also taught courses at New York University, the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Academy for Jewish Religion.

"David is a gifted teacher who is able to work with both newcomers to rabbinic literature and highly advanced students," says Vice President of Academic Affairs Tamar Kamionkowski, Ph.D.

"He has a keen interest in pedagogy and the process of learning. He has quickly earned the respect of members of the faculty for his integrity, his passion and his intellect."

Brodsky received a bachelor of arts in classics from Wesleyan University and a master of arts and Ph.D. from New York University in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies.

Brodsky's doctoral dissertation was entitled "A Bride Without a Blessing: A Study in the Content and Redaction of Massekhet Kallah and Its Gemara." A revised version of his dissertation is due out in 2006 as part of the *Jewish Studies in Ancient Texts* series published by Mohr Siebeck.

He is currently beginning his next research project, on the relationship between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds through a close reading of parallel material in each text.

Brodsky has lectured at conferences including the Association for Jewish Studies and the World Congress of Jewish Studies in the United States, Israel and Europe.



RRC Completes Identity Campaign, Sports New Look

You may have noticed that RRC is sporting a new logo and our publications are using new colors and typography. The new look is the result of a comprehensive identity campaign launched by the College.

“We believe the identity campaign, the first professionally supported effort of its kind in the College’s history, will help establish us as the kind of institution we know we are—forward-looking, with our roots firmly planted in the past,” says RRC President Dan Ehrenkrantz.

The new identity includes a logo for the college and a related family of logos for its three academic centers and library, cleaner typography and a new palette of seven bold colors. The identity has been applied to all internal and external publications, including letterhead and signage.

In addition, the identity is being applied to RRC’s Web site, which is being overhauled to accomplish smoother functionality, more intuitive navigability and expanded content. The revamped site is scheduled for an unveiling in the spring.

The identity campaign began in 2003, when RRC commissioned a study from Steege-Thomson, a well-known Philadelphia communications firm. The purpose of the study was to determine how the College can better reach its audiences and support its development work.

Steege-Thomson conducted dozens of interviews with faculty, administrators, staff, members of the board of directors and others. In 2004, the firm issued a final report, recommending a broad set of strategies for the College. One of the recommended strategies was to develop a new logo and identity.

RRC’s logo had never been professionally designed. In fact, the logo in use before 2004 was an amalgam of several different designs—some sketched by a president and friends of the College—dating back to the 1960s. The iterative result was confusing visually and, in the words of the communications firm, “complex and problematic.”

To execute the new identity, RRC engaged the services of mStoner, a nationally known communications firm that works primarily with colleges and universities, and its graphic designer, studio-e in Concord, MA.

“The Reconstructionist movement is young and progressive, and forward-looking, but the movement also seeks to honor Judaism’s 4,000-year-old history,” Ehrenkrantz says. “Our biggest challenge, therefore, was to create an image that was both cutting-edge and traditional. We observed that Jewish institutions historically used variations on the same symbols—a menorah, a flame, a Jewish star, scrolls or the tablets—to connote their ‘Jewishness.’ And we knew from the outset that we wanted a fresher look.”

The College looked at a number of abstract representations of Jewish concepts. After winnowing the designs down to a handful, RRC conducted its own focus groups with internal audiences. One design eventually emerged as a winner.

For the mark, the College used a rendering of a detail of palm fronds hovering over the initials of the college. “Palm fronds have special significance in Judaism, suggesting fertility, growth and connection to the land and history of Israel,” Ehrenkrantz says.

“In our testing of the mark, some also identified the palm fronds as rays of the sun or wings. We felt that both were positive associations. For colors, we decided to use purple and gold. We believed this combination suited our goal of communicating strength. We’re excited by the result. We believe the new identity positions us well for the future.”

Elements of RRC’s New Identity

RRC’s new identity includes the design of four new logos—one for the College and three for its academic centers.



Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

בית המדרש לרבנים ליהדות מתחדשת



Kolot קולות

CENTER FOR JEWISH WOMEN’S & GENDER STUDIES



Center for Jewish Ethics



Hiddur הידור

THE CENTER FOR AGING AND JUDAISM

RRC Catalogue Wins CASE Award

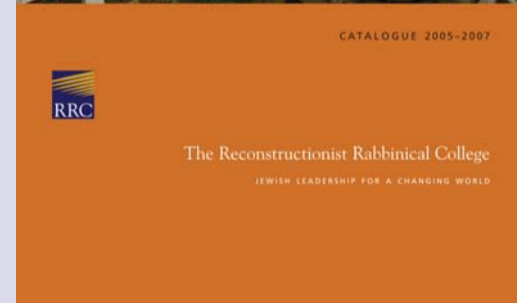
The Council for Advancement and Support for Education (CASE), a national organization of higher education marketing and development professionals, has given a bronze award to RRC for its college catalogue.

The 2005 catalogue was the first publication printed by the College to use the new identity. It is also the first RRC publication to receive recognition from a national organization.

“CASE’s award was especially gratifying to us because we labored so hard

to create a new look for the College,” says RRC President Dan Ehrenkrantz. “It confirmed for us that we are headed in the right direction.”

CASE will present the award at its District II annual conference in Pittsburgh on Feb. 6. A copy of the catalogue can be downloaded from the Admissions section of the Web site at www.rrc.edu.



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