

# **ADVANCING WOMEN PROFESSIONALS AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

## **Program Report 2009-2010**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The mission of AWP, founded in 2001, is to advance the leadership of women professionals within Jewish organizations, promote new models of shared leadership, and advocate for work-life policies that allow women *and* men to pursue meaningful careers and lead personal lives infused with Jewish values around family, education, culture, and spirituality.

AWP acts as a catalyst for change. Women predominate as professionals in Jewish organizations – 75% -- yet men occupy most of the top positions. While many Jewish organizations support the idea of women’s advancement and acknowledge the need for improved workplaces, AWP is the only organization that pursues gender equity *on the systemic level*. Our methodology translates the research and initiatives on gender equity and women’s advancement from other arenas – the corporate sector, academia, and the professions – and customizes them to the Jewish communal context.

Over the past ten years, AWP’s work has earned national recognition, broad media coverage, praise from distinguished communal leaders, and varied awards, including Slingshot, a publication created by young philanthropists to identify the most innovative organizations in Jewish life. In 2009, Slingshot selected AWP for the fifth consecutive year, citing us as ***“one of the most comprehensive approaches to systemic change in the Jewish world.”***

AWP makes the link between essential Jewish values and actual communal behaviors – from executive search and leadership development to the gender gap in pay and work-life policy. Our goal is to create conditions that allow women and men to share leadership, on behalf of a healthy, vibrant Jewish community.

### **AWP – RESEARCH, PROGRAMS and PUBLICATIONS, 2009-2010**

AWP’s recent campaigns, convenings, pilot projects and publications underscore our belief that everyone can be part of making change, no matter where you sit in the organizational hierarchy.

**Better Work, Better Life Campaign** – AWP seeks to enlist 100 Jewish organizations to improve parental leave and flexibility policies by the end of 2010. The Campaign is anchored by our 2009 report on work-life policies in nearly 230 Jewish organizations – *Better Work, Better Life: Practices and Policies in Jewish Organizations* – which was covered by JTA, *ejewishphilanthropy*, and *Haaretz*, in addition to a front-page story in *The Forward*.

Over the past year, the Campaign has served as a lever for discussion throughout the Jewish community about how work is structured and performance measured, alongside work-life policies that disproportionately affect women professionals. We believe that the Jewish community has the opportunity to lead the nonprofit sector by making paid parental leave and workplace flexibility the norms of healthy, mission-driven organizations.

*The Forward* has devoted two major editorials to these issues, citing AWP's influence. Our own staff team has published op-eds in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* and blog posts in *The Forward*.

As of September 2010, more than 30 organizations have enlisted in the Campaign, from the Joshua Venture Group and the American Joint Distribution Committee to UJA-Federation-New York and the Foundation for Jewish Camp. These organizations benefit from AWP resources – consultations with work-life experts, conference calls, mechanisms for peer support, and multiple resources on our website. The Campaign also is yielding new tools adapted for specific organizations. For example, AWP and Hillel partnered to create a new coaching initiative, addressing work-life challenges for high-level professionals in the campus system. The wisdom gleaned from this project has been collected in a new publication – *Work-Life Balance: A Smart Work Practices Guide* – now being distributed to all Hillel professionals.

As the Better Work Better Life Campaign moves steadily toward the goal of 100 organizations, AWP has become the central address for Jewish organizations that want to create smarter, healthier workplaces.

**AWP Convenings** engage the Jewish community in public discourse around gender issues and broader concerns about shared leadership. Past convenings include *Impact and Influence*, co-hosted with Ma'yan for women volunteer leaders, and the *Conference for Change*, co-hosted with the Center for Leadership Initiatives and sponsored by the Schusterman and Berrie Foundations, in which participants developed strategies for increasing diversity and inclusivity in the Jewish community.

Our most recent gathering, in May 2010, *Leadership Strategies That Work: A Learning Opportunity for Women Professionals*, brought together 85 high-level funding professionals and organizational leaders in the Bay Area Jewish community. More than thirty-five organizations were represented, including philanthropic foundations, federations, JCCs, synagogues, day schools, social justice organizations, cultural groups and newer “UpStarter” organizations.

Sponsored by the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, the day-long event offered substantive discussion, meaningful networking activities, and intensive skill-building around negotiation and thought leadership.

*“We heard from great women... So many voices and so much wisdom.”*

*“It was amazing to sit in a circle of incredible women and have the opportunity to connect informally.”*

*“Thank you for bringing this group together. I feel empowered!”*

The day began with a “public conversation” among women funding professionals and organizational CEOs about best practices that contribute to women’s leadership, as well as specific challenges related to credibility, visibility and the complexity of navigating work-life commitments. Following the morning program, participants learned new skills in the **The Op-Ed Project** with Founder/Director Catherine Orenstein and **Negotiation Strategies for Women** with Shifra Bronznick and Didi Goldenhar of the AWP team.

**The Op-Ed Project** engaged participants in intensive training in thought leadership. Founded by Catherine Orenstein, the Op-Ed Project has a proven record of success, training women experts in all fields to write for the op-ed pages of major newspapers, online media, and other public fora.

*“The statistics were illuminating – about how few women submit op-eds and the potential power if we do.”*

*“I learned about the responsibility of expertise – that women have to claim their knowledge to benefit the public.”*

*“The most important idea is that women need to make their voices heard.”*

**Negotiation Strategies for Women** presented current research about the gender lens in negotiation and trained participants in “4<sup>th</sup> frame negotiation,” a research-based strategy for fortifying one’s professional status and resources on

behalf of a more effective organization. The AWP team facilitated hands-on learning using customized curricula and scenarios, adapted from our extensive interviews with women professionals in Jewish organizations.

*“I appreciated the research about how much more men negotiate and the long-term costs of accepting less.”*

*“We seem to be better at negotiating for others and less for ourselves. This is definitely true for me and I had not realized it until today!”*

*“Instead of seeing negotiation as a trip to the dentist, like most women do, I learned to see negotiation as a sport.”*

The Bay Area Initiative drew upon local conditions to develop the context for substantive conversation and learning opportunities, and to lay the groundwork for a dynamic network of Jewish women professionals.

**Pilot Projects** – AWP seeks collaborations that leverage our resources and expertise to create sustained change. Our pilot projects yield case studies, best-practice guides, training modules and convenings, thus achieving a multiplier effect beyond the initial partnership.

As part of our ongoing partnership with Hillel, AWP launched a new coaching initiative in 2009-2010 to address the specific work-life challenges of Hillel professionals. Beyond the individual learning and improved work-life balance reported by the participants, this initiative yielded a toolbox of successful work-life strategies, gathered in a new publication, *Work-Life Balance: A Smart Work Practices Guide*, now is being distributed to all Hillel Professionals.

Other AWP pilot projects have engaged the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to improve search processes for rabbis; work-life initiatives with the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services, and long-term projects with the Jewish Federations of North America to promote gender equity and women’s leadership in the Federation system.

**Men as Allies** – AWP is engaging influential male professionals and volunteers – more than 25 at last count – in a community conversation about new models for shared leadership. Their first commitment is a pledge not to appear on public panels without women. The results are encouraging. Our male allies report that their refusal to appear in certain public venues has led to more women being included at the local and national levels. Our goal is to showcase female professionals, scholars and lay leaders, achieve measurable improvements in

gender representation, and alter the predominantly male narrative about Jewish wisdom.

***AWP Action Learning Teams*** – AWP is developing cohorts of change agents who will advance gender equity and shared leadership within their own Jewish organizations. Rabbi Joanna Samuels, AWP’s Director of Strategic Initiatives, convened the first three cohorts in 2009-2010 – including Wexner alumnae, assistant rabbis, and women professionals at Jewish social justice organizations.

Action Learning Teams are based in New York City, with each participant-cohort meeting four times over 18 months. Between each meeting, Action Learning Team members consult with each other and report frequently to AWP on their progress. The participants are designing their own experiments for change, drawing upon our book, ***Leveling the Playing Field*** and supplemented by leadership training and peer mentoring.

Since launching this initiative in late 2009, we are seeing impressive results. Individual participants have advocated for improved parental leave, negotiated successfully for promotions and salary increases, and assembled internal task forces to educate co-workers about gender issues. Participants also have published op-eds, accepted speaking engagements and joined decision-making tables, all of which increased their visibility and potential for impact.

Participants report that the Action Learning Team provides them with an unusual synergy of expert guidance and peer support:

*Thank you for an inspiring and thought-provoking day with treasured colleagues. I am more energized to do my work, even after only one meeting of our group.*  
(Assistant Rabbi)

*It has been so helpful to have partners as I strategize, to be more visible in my field. My “small group” members have become great mentors and cheerleaders for me – and two of us are drafting an editorial based on ideas we discussed.*  
(Social Justice Professional)

*One of the most helpful tips for my salary negotiation was raising the issue of how different parts of jobs are valued in my workplace. It is amazing how good learning this skill and even slowly seeing results feels.*  
(Wexner Alumna)

AWP Action Learning Teams build upon current research about social change – that peer learning and mutual accountability increase potential for sustained impact. AWP’s role is to facilitate each cohort, by creating frameworks for the participants to support each other and to contribute the skills they need for their individual and systemic change efforts. These cohorts are widening the circle of activists and strengthening AWP’s potential for long-term impact.

**AWP Research Reports and Publications** include the 2009 report, *Better Work, Better Life: Practices and Policies in Jewish Organizations*. Earlier action-research projects have resulted in *Creating Gender Equity and Organizational Effectiveness in the Jewish Federation System: A Research-and-Action Project* (2004), the widely-disseminated report on gender bias in the federation system, and *Cultivating the Talent*, (2006), which reported on interviews with 140 women professionals in 47 North American federations, reflecting on their career aspirations and professional development needs.

**Leveling the Playing Field**, AWP's how-to guide for creating gender equity, combines cutting-edge leadership theory with practical strategies and tools, customized to the Jewish community. Co-authored by Shifra Bronznick and Didi Goldenhar of AWP and Marty Linsky of Cambridge Leadership Associates and Harvard's Kennedy School, the book received media coverage and positive reviews throughout the Jewish and secular media, including *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *JTA*, *the Jerusalem Post*, *Ha'aretz* and *jewcy.com*. AWP has brought the book's ideas to more than 7,000 communal professionals, volunteer leaders, Jewish studies professors and students, including the Jewish Funders Network, the Wexner Fellowship Institute and Alumni Institutes, RAVSAK, the Muehlstein Institute, the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Tulane University, the American Jewish Studies Association, the Rabbinical Assembly, and HUC-JIR.

**AWP's website** is a valuable resource for gender equity and work-life issues. Our **database** of 2,500 allies receives regular updates on activities and "actions" around women's leadership, directly from us and through Facebook.

**Future Initiatives** – AWP is committed to strengthening and extending our research and advocacy, with women and men deployed at every level of their organizations. We continue to work on behalf of women rabbis in the Conservative and Reform Movements, as well as Orthodox women who seek to lead in religious life.

Through AWP's advocacy and education initiatives over its past nine years, Jewish organizations made modest progress in recognizing the persistence of gender bias. In this next phase, AWP's increased institutional capacity and new programs are engaging new constituencies in purposeful, effective action – to advance women professionals and build shared leadership in Jewish life.