

## NUJLS Conference 2008: Workshops

### Session 1

Queer 101, Vanessa “Vinny” Prell

If you’ve ever wondered what all those letters after the GL in GLBTQQIA meant, this is the workshop for you! We will learn what “trans issues” are, who bisexuals fall in love with, and exactly what the difference between heterosexism and homophobia (after we’ve established what they mean!)

Constructing a GenderSAFE™ Campus, Adrian Shanker

Constructing a GenderSAFE™ Campus” is an issue-based organizing workshop that assists students in creating GenderSAFE™ campuses – meaning campuses that have a gender-identity inclusive non discrimination policies, gender neutral housing, and all-gender restroom options. Within the workshop, examples of successful campaigns at various campuses are used, and there is time left for discussion about the participant’s individual campus. Emphasis will be placed on responding to non-supportive criticisms of gender identity inclusion in policies. Additionally, I will tailor the workshop to a Jewish audience, and we can discuss gender inclusion within Jewish campus life as part of the final discussion.

Writing White Fire- Jewish Feminist Poets Read the Bible, Jill Hammer

This workshop will explore Jewish women's poetry on biblical themes from Eve to Miriam the prophet. We'll consider how this genre of poetry arises out of Jewish history, and discuss what kind of change a poem can make. Rabbi and author Jill Hammer will guide this session and will share some of her own midrashic work from Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women.

Body Modification and the Torah, Tristen Shay

This will be a facilitated discussion concerning Body Art or Body Modifications and biblical mandates in a modern world. I will provide several pertinent readings, participants will go over the reading, I will then guide discussion on how these readings pertain to us today.

Sexual Education, Aaron Krieger and the Gay Men’s Health Advocacy Project

Join the us for a session which provides valuable information about sexual health for *all* people. The ins and outs of safer sex, focusing on gay and lesbian sex, will be discussed as well as AIDS/HIV information, and other Sexually Transmitted Infections.

## Session 2

Acting with Conscience and Inspiring Change, Manuel Brian Simons

Change is a dialogue between the self and the world. Inner transformation can lead to social change. When we contribute to social change, we transform ourselves in the process. As LGBTQQI and Jewish people, we stand center stage in an era of political and social change pivotal to our civil rights and spiritual roles. How will we respond to the unfolding drama of change? Drama itself is a transformational art that can be harnessed as a tool to help overcome oppression and create positive change. Utilizing educational theatre techniques and structured drama-based activities, we will explore new ways to create change in ourselves and our world.

Coming Out Stories, D'ror Chankin-Gould

This workshop will offer an opportunity for participants to share their coming out stories and processes. In a safe, confidential environment we will share triumphs and challenges in coming out as Queer Jewish people.

Your Fabulously Gendered Jewish Self On the Move, Marla Brettschneider

This workshop is intended to provide a space for discussion of our Jewishly gendered lives and of the politics of being Jews beyond the gender binary. Does being Jewish matter (in what ways and to whom) to the reality, construction, and transformations of gender? Do genderqueer realities matter to Jewish communal life and ought they? What should genderqueer Jews in our diversity be thinking about and doing right now?

The Body Divine, Zvi Bellin

This workshop will explore the sacredness of the body in the Jewish thought tradition. We will begin by examining a few sources that expand on the idea of body as sanctuary and then move to an experiential practice of the Divine in the body. Drawing from the practices of Yoga and meditation, we will reach a deep level of body-spirit connection. No previous experience in Yoga or meditation is required, just an open mind and heart. *Please wear comfortable clothing.*

Leviticus 18:22 – Who’s lying with who and What’s a modern Jew to do?, Jay Golden

As Jews, we have enormous respect for traditional textual sources – the Bible and rabbinic literature have shaped Judaism as it is practiced today. However, our lives in 21<sup>st</sup> century America are very different from 18<sup>th</sup> century Poland, which is different from 6<sup>th</sup> century Babylonia, which is different from ancient Israel of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. *Cont.* While we look at the Bible as the source of our religious worldview, we need to recognize the importance of *context* in order to understand *content*. All texts are the product of their time, and all interpretations are products of *their* time. Our goals in this text study are threefold: A. To understand the historical context and meaning of Leviticus 18:22, a particularly problematic verse for 21<sup>st</sup> century liberal North American Jews and the LGBT population in general; B. To create our own interpretations of the verse that may speak to us more directly; C. To be able to recognize the distortions that have developed around the verse and be able to have an educated response to those on the Religious Right that say they are the ones that know what the Bible says.

### **Session 3**

Your Own Leadership Workshop: How to train clergy community leaders, Gabriel Blau

This session is usually given to clergy and other leaders of non-LGBT specific communities to help them find their own way as leaders on issues important to the LGBT community. In this modified version we'll learn how to be leaders by teaching others. This workshop is both for leaders and those that would like better leaders. We will cover the six core areas that we must demand our leaders know. You will leave equipped to speak to your parents' rabbi, your dean, your local politician that just doesn't know what we need from her/him as a leader.

Judaism and Disability, Rabbi Jennifer L. Gravitz

The workshop introduces the participants to the depth and breadth of the Jewish perspectives on disability. We will examine the traditional texts as we explore how the positive and negative mitzvot shape our views about “differently-abled” Jews. Lastly, we will challenge ourselves, within this context, to apply these concepts and values to our contemporary lives.

LGBT Jewish Activism On and Off Campus, Mindy Hirsch and Michael Weinberger

What are students to do after the NUJLS conference after they return to their respective campuses and places of residence? To be able to access a solid coalition of LGBT Jews, one must know the programs, people and tools best suited for North American LGBT Jewish students and grads. We will discuss the experiences working on college campus and in cities at large in terms of LGBT advocacy, activism and Jewish student programming. With these resources, participants will be asked to brainstorm how they envision future local LGBT Jewish communities in their respective regions.

What is Queer Jewish Liturgy?, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen and Cantor David Berger

Jewish liturgy and the siddur have been constantly evolving throughout the Jewish world from the days of the Talmud until today. Yet while many communities are now trying to be more inclusive of GLBT people, much of our liturgy still portrays a Jewish experience that is entirely hetero-normative and gender binary. Our challenge is to honor the evolving tradition of Jewish liturgy by making our siddur reflect and celebrate our GLBT lives, families, and communities. Congregation Beth Simchat Torah's new Friday night siddur has met that challenge through re-thinking and refashioning some of the most iconic elements of our siddur, and creating new liturgy to express the transitions and celebrations of our lives. Explore of some of these elements of CBST's siddur, and discuss how queer Jewish liturgy is continuing to evolve.

GLBT Folk, Orthodox Community, and Jewish Identity, Erez Harari, Zachary Mordechai Levovitz, Rabbi Alan Stadtmauer, Rabbi Steve Greenberg

A moderated panel of GLBT folks who grew up in the Orthodox community share their journeys, identities, and ideas for moving forward. As we embrace an ever changing world what are the stories that people have? What narratives are shared, which pieces are distinct? Where are we as a community and as individuals today, where do we hope to be?

## **Session 4**

### Being Gay in AEPi, the Jewish Fraternity, Andy Ratto

As an openly homosexual man, I hadn't considered rushing a fraternity when I got to Berkeley. This was until I met the guys in Alpha Epsilon Pi, a fraternity I ended up joining. A queer presence in fraternities has historically been sites of homophobia, misogyny, and intolerance. But as more queers join fraternities, there has been a significant impact on the Greek culture, as well as the queer community on college campuses. AEPi, the Jewish fraternity, has had a growing influence on Jewish life for college students. My experience in AEPi helped me to understand and develop my Jewish and gay identity in college and opened the eyes of my fraternity brothers. And as someone who is sometimes assumed to be non-Jewish or straight, I have been able to see people behaving during a time when they thought that no Jews or gays were present.

### Creating the Future of NUJLS, Vanessa Prell and Idit Klein

Do you care about NUJLS? Do you have ideas about what NUJLS should be doing? Do you want to be more involved with NUJLS? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, we want **you** to come to this workshop! We will be sharing ideas and turning them into a plan of action!

### Queer Jewish Family: Neal Hoffman, Andrew Ingall & Shirley Michaela Hoffman-Ingall

How do we create families of our own? Two couples tell the stories of the families they have created, the relationships they have cultivated, the children they've welcomed into their lives, and the Jewish thread that has been woven through the entire process. In a time when Queer parenting has become a viable choice more than ever before, come hear from those who are on the parenting journey.

### Remapping the Road from Sinai—Conversations Between Feminist and Transgender perspectives, Nehama Benmosche

Join us for this chance to read and discuss the letters between these two important members of the Jewish community: Feminist Judith Plaskow and Transgender-Identified Rabbi Elliot Kukla. Through the letters we will discuss some key issues including where is feminism now after the trans-revolution, what do we want the future of Judaism to look like from the perspective of gender, and what is the Judaism we hope for from the perspective of gender rights. All you need to bring is an open-mind.

Finding our Place: Images of Men, Women, and Fluidity in Jewish texts and film,  
Lynley Shimat and Justin Rosen

This interactive and text-based (all texts studied in English translation alongside Hebrew) session will explore gender-constructs in select biblical passages along with a clip of the 20th century Yiddish film, *The Dybbuk*. We will explore the different ways that women and men are depicted in the texts and movie, and use our analysis as a springboard for discussing how we as queer Jews fit into the mix. Do idealized images of the quintessential man and woman leave room for alternative gender- and sexual-expressions? Should gendered images be left intact; should they be discarded as exclusive; or can these images be re-appropriated and re-imagined to speak to our experiences as queer Jews in the 21st century? Furthermore, is there one queer, Jewish, or queer-Jewish experience--or are there multiple? These questions will be explored in light of the work of contemporary (Jewish) gender theorists in an open, intellectual atmosphere *without providing one answer*. People of all opinions and backgrounds are encouraged to attend, as our goal is to enrich our individual perspectives through collaborative learning in a diverse setting.

## **Session 5**

What does queer social justice look like?, Vered Meir and Danielle Feris

Where do queer and grassroots racial, economic, and gender justice movements intersect? Why do queer people care about social change? Where do we find meaningful community? The purpose of this workshop will be to discuss the roles that queer people have played and continue to play in grassroots social change movements. We will *cont.*

learn different methods of social change work from an anti-oppression framework, taking into account issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. We will both place ourselves in a larger movement and focus on specific Jewish communities in New York City working within this model. We will also focus, from our personal life experiences, on how building racial, economic, and gender justice movements are a vital part of building strong Jewish queer community.

GAY-ned in Translation, Amichai Lau-Lavie and Jake Goodman

Join Storahellers Amichai Lau-Lavie (founder, Artistic and Executive Director) and Jake Goodman (Program Director) for an engaging and interactive session that grapples with the Bible as a heteronormative text. How do we read a tradition? Which is, at best, homophobic—especially as LGBTQ Jews? Participants will be exposed to Storahelling's innovative technique of Torah translation which honors the original text but offers valid, alternative, and creative readings. Established in 1999, the Storahelling company of artists and educators inspire a fresh fusion of education and art, transforming scripture into contemporary conversations—deep inside tradition, way outside the box.

Kiddushin- Sacred Sex for GLBTQOI Jews?, Jennifer L. Gravitz

We know Judaism's core values center on marriage and children. As GLBT Jews, our right to marry and be parents remains in a religious and secular state of flux. The workshop introduces the participants to the concepts and values of *Kiddushin* --- regarding sex, marriage and family. Together, we will talk about the realities of our lives and loves as we develop a construct for GLBTQOI *Kiddushin* ---sacred sex relationships and family from a GLBTQOI perspective. Join us for an enlightening discussion.

Ordination Regardless of Orientation: Being Gay and Serving God, Aaron Weininger and Ian Chesir-Teran

In December 2006, the Conservative Movement endorsed several opinions on the status of homosexuality in Jewish law. One of the new opinions changed the status quo, and among other historic developments, allowed for the ordination of openly gay men and lesbians as Conservative rabbis and cantors. While much has changed on paper, there is more work to be done in the culture of Conservative institutions to welcome LGBT Jews. Come discuss some of the changes, what they mean now and what comes next, and speak with the first two openly gay rabbinical students admitted to the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Gay Israeli Pop Stars, Cantor David Berger

Ivry Lider, Korin Allal, Yehudah Poliker, Dana International...It seems like Israeli pop/rock stars have been coming out left and right! Come listen to some of the music, learn about some of the characters, and talk about what makes the Jewish nation so open for GLBT celebrity.