



WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

GUIDE FOR SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY

Women of Reform Judaism provides this advocacy and programming guide to help our sisterhoods implement our most recent resolutions and policy statements, those adopted since May 2006. They include:

1. *Global Warming*, 46th Assembly, 2007
2. *Human Rights and the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp*, 46th Assembly, 2007
3. *Drug Policy*, 46th Assembly, 2007
4. *Statement on Iran*, Executive Committee, 2007
5. *Israel's Sixtieth Anniversary and ARZA's Thirtieth Anniversary*, Executive Committee, 2007
6. *Divestment Policy to End Genocide in Darfur*, Board of Directors, 2007
7. *Minimum Wage*, Executive Committee, 2007
8. *Needs of Men and Women in the United States and Canadian Armed Forces*, Board Of Directors, 2006

1. GLOBAL WARMING, 46TH ASSEMBLY, 2007

This is the way of the righteous..., who,,, rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: that nothing,,, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible,,, prevent any destruction that they can.

(Sefer Ha-Hinukh #529, www.coejl.org/~coejlor/learnje_tashchit.php)

The *Global Warming* resolution calls on sisterhoods to take steps to: provide information about climate change; make their synagogues and homes as "green" as possible; urge government officials to support the benchmarks for reducing carbon emissions set out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; fund research into alternative fuels; and implement conservation efforts.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- Set up a program for your sisterhood and congregation. Include scientists working on global warming at your local university who concur with the WRJ global warming resolution, environmentalists, and your congregational rabbi.
- For ideas on holding a Jewish-based environmental event, check the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, COEJL, website that provides a speakers list and programming guide, www.coejl.org/~coejlor/speakers/general.php. Scroll down to access the speakers list, either by name or state. The list includes Canadian speakers.
- The organization Hazon develops programming on the Jewish food movement, the ramifications of food choices for us, our families, and the world around us. To learn about Hazon's food-related programming, go to www.hazon.org and click on "food."

- Another excellent source for background information and speakers is the Sierra Club: www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming. Click on “select a place,” then your state – one or more field offices will be identified. Call the local field offices for information about speakers.
- Develop a sisterhood project to “green” your temple and homes. Join COEJL’s [Light Among the Nations](http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/gstoc.php) Climate Change Campaign as an easy way to take action on global warming. This involves purchasing energy efficient CFL light bulbs to sell at any programs you hold, in the Judaica Shop, or at community events. Urge your congregational leadership to participate in the COEJL Greening Synagogues program, see www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/gstoc.php for information.
- Take action as urged by WRJ and other like-minded organizations.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE GUANTANAMO BAY DETENTION CAMP, 46th ASSEMBLY, 2007

Justice, Justice shall you pursue. (Deut. 16:20) If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when? (Hillel)

In *Human Rights and the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp*, Women of Reform Judaism resolved to urge its United States sisterhoods to advocate reinstating the right of *Habeas Corpus*; closing the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp and moving prisoners to U.S. facilities; observing the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on Torture when interrogating prisoners; and using U.S. criminal courts or military courts convened under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for prosecuting those suspected of crimes.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

This resolution calls for WRJ advocacy. Nonetheless, background on the issue is an essential basis for advocacy.

- Plan an informational program. Share our resolution with and invite your rabbi to discuss the issue in terms of the values of our tradition. As additional speakers, you can seek attorneys or advocates who share our perspective from human rights organizations such as the Center for Constitutional Rights, <http://www.ccrjustice.org>, and the ACLU (go to <http://www.aclu.org/affiliates/index.html> to find your local affiliate). The American Bar Association, (ABA), is calling for fair trials at Guantanamo. If you want to invite speakers through the local bar association, please first find out if they support the ABA position.
- Please respond quickly to the alerts you receive from WRJ and participate in the action recommended on the websites mentioned above.

3. DRUG POLICY, 46TH ASSEMBLY, 2007

. . . keeping the body healthy and whole is the way of God, , , therefore a person must distance himself from things that destroy the body, and accustom himself to things which heal the body. (*Maimonides, Mishneh Torah*). Drug abuse is therefore forbidden, but we are advised to learn to heal the body, not to punish it for things that already destroy it. (Religious Action Center, Substance Abuse and Jewish Values, http://rac.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=1763&pge_prg_id=8121&pge_id=2921)

Drug Policy urges sisterhood members to call for a redefinition of drug policy from a criminal justice to a medical and social paradigm and to advocate medical and social solutions, including; funding research and providing drug rehabilitation and mental health programs, as well as providing education and counseling to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and the abuse of legal drugs.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- Circulate information about the issue either through your electronic or print newsletters. The three following articles on the Drug Policy Alliance website can provide important background for you and your members:
 - What's Wrong With the Drug War?
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/drugwar/>
 - Harm Reduction: A Public Health Strategy
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/tlcdruck.cfm>
 - Treatment vs. Incarceration
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/reducingharm/treatmentvsi/>
- Hold a panel program on viewing drug use and abuse as medical and social problems. Invite your rabbi, speakers from local rehabilitation programs as well as representatives of your local ACLU, <http://www.aclu.org/drugpolicy/harm/index.html>. The mission of the group, Law Enforcement Against Drug Prohibition, LEAP, includes talking to people about policy reform, <http://www.leap.cc/cms/index.php>. To arrange for a LEAP speaker, contact the Operations Manager, Mike Smithson, at speakers@leap.cc or (315) 243-5844.
- Advocate addressing drug use and abuse as public health concerns.
- Respond with action as urged by WRJ alerts.
- As you explore the Drug Policy Alliance, ACLU and LEAP websites you will see various action alerts on this issue. These will usually call for electronic action – an easy way to take the WRJ stand on the issue.
- Canadian sisterhoods can become informed and take action regularly with just a click of the mouse. Dr. Susan Boyd, an associate professor at Simon Fraser University, in partnership with the Beyond Prohibition Coalition, sends a weekly letter to the Prime Minister critical of mandatory minimum sentences for growing marijuana, reduced funding for harm reduction and increased funding for police enforcement. You can access this website at <http://www.educatingharper.com/>.

4. STATEMENT ON IRAN, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2007

Seek peace and pursue it... Psalms 34:15

WRJ's Statement on Iran (2007) called on its U.S. and Canadian affiliates to:

- Educate their members about the issues;
- Alert their elected officials of their deep concern; and

- Support targeted divestment and other economic actions to cut off funds that Iran is using to develop nuclear power.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- For a “tool kit” to help your sisterhoods take action on this statement, go to the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism’s website <http://rac.org>. Scroll to: “Take RACtion” (on the right side of the home page) and click on “Iran: Targeted Investment.”
- Watch for and respond to WRJ alerts.

5. ISRAEL’S SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND ARZA’S THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2007

So long as still within the inmost heart a Jewish spirit sings, so long as the eye looks eastward, gazing towards Zion, our hope is not lost -- that hope of two millennia, to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem. (Hatikvah, Tr. Gates of Prayer, 1975)

In this celebratory statement on Israel’s Sixtieth Anniversary and ARZA’s Thirtieth Anniversary, Women of Reform Judaism called on its sisterhoods to

- Reaffirm commitment, as Reform Jews, to Israel’s security and welfare and to ongoing efforts to make her a more just, pluralistic, and democratic state;
- Participate in programs of Israel engagement to help all rejoice in, reflect upon, and renew our mutual commitment to Israel and the Jewish people; and
- Encourage their members to voice their support for, and love of Israel by joining ARZA, the Israel arm and voice of the Reform Movement in the United States, or ARZA Canada, its counterpart in Canada.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- The ARZA website <http://arza.org> provides background and action recommendations to enable your sisterhood to put this statement into action.

6. STATEMENT ON DIVESTMENT POLICY TO END GENOCIDE IN DARFUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2007

You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor (Leviticus, 19:16).

Based on our tradition of valuing the sanctity of life, and our people’s experience of genocide, WRJ urged personal, congregational, academic, and governmental targeted divestment policies and to continue advocating diplomatic and political efforts to end the genocide.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- For information on divestment the go to the Save Darfur coalition website <http://www.savedarfur.org>. Scroll down to click on the “Divest For Darfur” button.

- Save Darfur, a broad-based coalition of which WRJ is one of the original members, includes full information for program planning as well as opportunities for advocacy action.
- The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism website provides extensive material on the ongoing genocide in Darfur and on ways to seek an end to the tragedy, including divestment. For background information, go to <http://rac.org/advocacy/issues/issuesudan/sudangen/> and for targeted divestment, go to <http://rac.org/advocacy/issues/issuesudan/sudangen/divest/>.
- WRJ will continue to send information about opportunities for continuing, programming, humanitarian aid for the Darfuri people, and for diplomatic efforts to end the genocide. Please take action as suggested.

7. STATEMENT ON MINIMUM WAGE, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2007

WRJ urged the Senate to pass legislation to increase the minimum wage, without amendments that would provide tax cuts for business or jeopardize worker protections, and urged President Bush to sign the minimum wage legislation. A few weeks following adoption of this statement, a minimum wage bill, which had already been passed by the House of Representatives, was adopted by the Senate and signed by the President.

8. NEEDS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADIAN ARMED FORCES, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, May 2006

All Jews are responsible for one another. Babylonian Talmud, *Sh'vuot* 39a

In the *Needs of Men and Women in the United States and Canadian Armed Forces* resolution WRJ called on its members to participate in important advocacy efforts regarding: proper training and equipment; pension benefits, death gratuity and life insurance benefits; compliance with congressional orders and military regulations regarding recruitment, screening and treatment of military personnel with mental illness; and adequate funding and health services for all servicemen, servicewomen and veterans. WRJ also urged sisterhoods to alert their members and their congregations and communities to the shortage of Jewish chaplains in the US Armed Forces and to the special needs of Jewish military personnel at home and abroad.

RECOMMENDED SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING AND ACTION

- Invite military personnel from local bases to your congregations for the High Holiday services, congregational seders, and other worship services through the year.
- Write letters and send packages particularly before Jewish holidays. For information, contact the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council at www.jcca.org/jwb/index.html or 212-786-5119. Another good source for information about what to send and to whom, are the WRJ listservs; several WRJ leaders keep ongoing information about distribution points

for Jewish servicemen and women. You could also contact the Department on Programming and Advocacy for their names and e-mail addresses.

**WRJ ADVOCACY PUBLICATIONS:
YOUR TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY**

Starred* items are also available through the WRJ website,
<http://WomenofReformJudaism.org>.

- *In Pursuit of Justice: Resolutions and Policy Statements*, includes all WRJ resolutions and statements adopted since 1915
- Resolutions and policy statements adopted since 2000,
* <http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming/resolutions-statements>
- *To Do Justly: Creating a Critical Issues Task Force*, a how-to resource, published in 1999, a few copies are still available.
- About Advocacy at WRJ,* <http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming>
- *WRJ Critical Issues Action*, an ongoing list of WRJ advocacy, distributed at WRJ meetings and events,
* <http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming/critical-issues-action>
- *Current Issues: The Voice of WRJ*, a pocket guide to current critical issues in terms of recent WRJ resolutions
- *To The Point*, WRJ's critical issues e-mail action alerts, updates, reports, and programming recommendations,*
<http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming/whats-new-at-wrj/advocacy-alerts>
- *OR AMI "Light Of My People" Award for Excellence in Sisterhood Programming*, brief descriptions of outstanding sisterhood programs that are fine models for replication,
* <http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming/or-ami-awards>