



Religious Action Center
of Reform Judaism

2003-2004 Year in
Review 5764

"For more than 40 years, the Religious Action Center has been the vehicle that transforms our sacred Jewish values into distinctive and tangible accomplishments of social justice."

— Rabbi Janet Ross Marder, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)

what
people
are saying
about
the RAC...

"Over the years, I have had the privilege to work with the RAC on so many issues, and we are all bound by a single goal — a nation that is just and fair for all people."

— House Democratic Leader
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

"For decades the men and women of the Religious Action Center have been tireless advocates for social justice. I am proud to have the RAC as a partner in the fight for civil rights, economic justice, and international peace."

— Senator Barbara Boxer
(D-CA)

"The Religious Action Center continues to educate and mobilize the interfaith community to counter hate, violence, and religious bigotry, while promoting diversity, respect, and civility."

— Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy, President, Interfaith Alliance

"The Religious Action Center is an invaluable resource and ally to NFTY in the work that we do and the issues about which we teach."

— Mira Lyon, North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) Social Action Vice President

"The Religious Action Center is an example of vigorous advocacy for justice combined with sophisticated training for the next generation of activists."

— Rev. Barry Lynn, Executive Director, Americans United for Separation of Church and State

"The NAACP and the Religious Action Center have a long established friendship and history of standing beside each other in the fight for civil and human rights. I have tremendous respect and appreciation for the leadership that Rabbi David Saperstein provides in bridging and strengthening the relationships between the African American community and the Jewish American community in our common quest for first class citizenship in this country."

— Hillary O. Shelton, Director, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Washington Bureau

"The Religious Action Center's Machon Kaplan program inspired me to become more involved in social activism, not just community service. It changed the way I perceived politics, religion, and social justice, and opened my eyes to many more opportunities that I can incorporate into my life."

— Ivy Hest, 2004 Machon Kaplan participant and student at Brandeis University

"The Religious Action Center articulates a powerful voice of conscience: to our nation's leaders, for my congregation, and all of Reform Jews, and with the people of varied faiths who serve as our partners in coalitions of decency and justice."

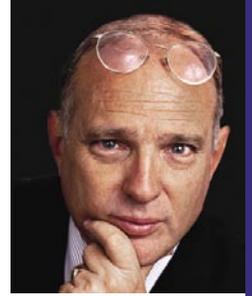
— Rabbi David Stern, Senior Rabbi,
Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, TX

"The Religious Action Center's dedication to bridging the gap between America's youth and Washington politics is apparent when the L'Taken Seminar participants come to my Capitol office. The students always bring with them a renewed sense of enthusiasm and interest in the political process."

— Representative Christopher Shays (R-CT)

"The RAC knows how to excite the best in the nation's spirit and has always been on the front lines of the important issues such as civil liberties, social progress, and religious freedom."

— Senator Edward M. Kennedy, (D-MA)



A Message from Rabbi David Saperstein

This report reflects the RAC's many and varied activities of the past year, but I wish you could have shared with me the palpable excitement I felt one particular Monday morning this past June in our beautiful Arthur and Sara Jo Kobacker Building!

In the Robert Sillins Library, I spoke with 15 regional social action vice presidents from the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) who were beginning three days of intensive Washington-based study of human exploitation and slavery issues before continuing their summer together at NFTY's Leadership Center at the Union for Reform Judaism's Kutz Camp in New York.

After meeting the NFTY vice presidents, I went down to our Kivie and Emily Kaplan Conference Center, where 27 college students were in the first class of their six-week *Machon* Kaplan summer program. They studied three mornings each week with outstanding local scholars and spent the balance of their days in internships we arranged with our social justice coalition partners; they prepared meals and delivered them to homeless individuals on Washington's streets; and they earned six college credits. It wasn't all work: one night they attended a Baltimore Orioles game, they spent Independence Day on our National Mall, and they played a lot of Ultimate Frisbee!

In one morning: two simultaneous programs offering young people of different ages the opportunity to learn about and engage together in hands-on *tikkun olam*.

Throughout the year, nearly 2,000 students participate in similarly intensive learning experiences. Most attend one of our six *L'Taken* teen seminars, which bring groups to Washington from across the country.

The year's final *L'Taken* coincided with the March for Women's Lives on April 25. The Reform Movement sponsored a Havdalah Service at the Jefferson Memorial the evening before the March, and among the 1,000 who attended were our *L'Taken* students. Looking at the beautifully lit monument through their young and excited eyes, I saw anew how precious are the freedoms that Thomas Jefferson held dear. The next morning, 600 people came to a RAC breakfast to listen to eight members of the House and Senate who joined us before we left as an enthusiastic group in our highly visible gold t-shirts for the March.

These are just a few "snapshots" from my year at the RAC. Through these and other programs, the RAC fosters the next generation of involved, socially committed Jewish leaders. I personally think this is our most important activity.

Here are a few more snapshots:

In September, I joined a handful of Senators and Representatives and half a dozen public interest advocates at a remarkable ceremony in the Oval Office as President Bush signed into law the Prison Rape Reduction Act. I was proud of the leading role we played in passing this legislation, which provides funding for rape prevention programs in federal, state, and local prisons and requires the Department of Justice to carefully monitor the situation and collect accurate statistics on prison rape.

At the Biennial meeting of the Union for Reform Judaism, I watched with great pride as Bob Heller, the chair of our Commission on Social Action, became the chair of the Union; his successor as chair of the Commission, Jane Wishner, was one of our very first Eisendrath Legislative Assistants, in 1975-76. Both these leaders of our Movement are products of our Movement, deeply committed to their own synagogues and Reform Jewish life in their communities, and deeply committed to the pursuit of social justice as a pillar of Reform Judaism.

On December 1, World AIDS Day, I spoke at an interfaith press conference to mark this important day. This year we organized an "open letter" on the global AIDS pandemic from the leaders of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Movements.

In April, I testified before the Federal Election Commission against houses of worship becoming directly involved in political campaigns, opposing or endorsing candidates for office, and maintaining their tax-exempt status. As Jewish Americans and members of a religious minority, we must protect our religious liberty through such effective prohibitions on the establishment of religion.

This summer, we worked fast and furiously to draft a letter — and get it signed by more than 1,500 clergy of various faiths — that opposed the Federal Marriage Amendment, an effort to define marriage only as a union between a man and a woman.

In the last few months, too much of our time has been spent on urgent legislative issues. Every time we beat back one challenge to our fundamental rights, or to economic and social justice, another seems to flare up. How we deal with these critical issues, however, will shape America's future.

Your continuing support for the RAC enables us to keep all these irons in the fire. I hope you will enjoy reading this report, looking at more snapshots of our year, and seeing how hard we work for you. — *Rabbi David Saperstein, Director*



Mark Pelavin, RAC Associate Director, at a press conference on Capitol Hill concerning repealing sections of the USA Patriot Act



Rabbi David Saperstein at a Capitol Hill press conference supporting public education and opposing federal vouchers for District of Columbia students

a year in pictures



Participants in RAC's 2004 *Machon Kaplan* program, a summer internship and study program for college students, in front of the RAC sporting their "Kivie Kaplan Way" T-shirts



Rabbi David Saperstein speaking against genocide in Sudan at a demonstration in Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House



RAC's *L'Taken Seminar*, a weekend program for high school students: participants from North Shore Congregation Israel of Glencoe, IL, with Representative Mark Kirk (R-IL) after their lobby visit with him



Rabbi Michael Namath, RAC's Program Director, at URI's Kutz Camp, speaking with participants in the social action major



Rabbi David Saperstein being taken into custody after his arrest for protesting at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, DC

March for Women's Lives

More than 1,300 of the nation's leading women's, civil rights, health, and faith organizations mobilized for the March for Women's Lives on Sunday, April 25, 2004. An estimated 1,150,000 individuals, including thousands of Reform Jews, descended on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to give an urgent wake-up call to government leaders and the nation that women's lives are at risk, demanding that all women worldwide have equal access to critical women's health services, birth control (including emergency contraception), and safe abortions.

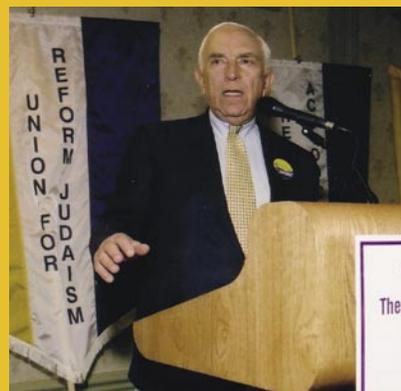
The Reform Jewish Movement hosted a weekend of pre-March events, which were organized by the RAC. The Saturday night before, 1,000 people — including 300 students in Washington for one of the RAC's *L'Taken* Seminars — joined us for a moving Havdalah Service at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. After the Havdalah service, the Women of Reform Judaism hosted a reception on Capitol Hill for their members, with Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) addressing the group. Immediately before the March, the Reform Jewish Movement sponsored a breakfast that more than 600 individuals attended; it featured speeches by House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Jon Corzine (D-NJ), and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Representatives Schakowsky, Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jane Harman (D-CA), and Linda Sanchez (D-CA), and Comedy Central's Judy Gold.



Havdalah service at the Jefferson Memorial



Rabbi Sue Ann Wasserman of the Union for Reform Judaism addressing the March



Senator Frank Lautenberg speaking at the Reform Movement's pre-march breakfast



Jane Wishner, (left) Chair of the Commission on Social Action, with Representatives Tammy Baldwin and Jan Schakowsky

RAC supporters sustain our work

The RAC's loyal and generous supporters help us sustain the essential social justice work in which we are engaged, day in and day out. Our contributors understand the biblical imperative to pursue justice and know that turning religious belief into action requires significant financial support.

The RAC historically has been a grassroots organization, both in mobilizing the social justice efforts of thousands of rabbis, synagogues, social action committees, and community activists, and also in generating support for our work. We must raise approximately one-third of our annual budget, and we depend on many hundreds of individual donors and foundations to help us meet our programming needs.

We are grateful to those who demonstrate their commitment to the RAC's creative initiatives and social justice agenda by contributing to our annual *Tzedek* Society Campaign and the RAC's 40th Anniversary Capital Campaign. These members of the *Tzedek* Society Honor Circle have pledged or contributed \$10,000 or more to the RAC's *Tzedek* Society Campaign as of June 30, 2004.

Amcha for Tsedakah	Stuart & Martha Bindeman
The Jacob & Hilda Blaustein Foundation	Barbara Bluhm-Kaul
Temple B'nai Shalom of Fairfax Station, Virginia, Rabbi's Discretionary Fund	James & Debbra Brown
The Samuel Bronfman Foundation	Ronald & Joan Cohen
The Nathan Cummings Foundation	Rabbi Joshua Davidson
The David Geffen Fund	Isabel P. Dunst
The Gus and Barbara Kuhn Fund	Richard & Lois England
The Lear Family Foundation	Edith Everett
The Lincy Foundation	Gerald & Louise Franks
Metzger-Price Fund	Burton & Sandra Freeman
Righteous Persons Foundation	Dr. Gilbert & Carolyn Gavlin
The Robert Sillins Family Foundation	Betty Golomb
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Albert Arent	Harry & Joan Helft
Richard Ben-Veniste & Donna Marie Grell	Martin & Judith Hertz
	Rabbi Elliot & Susan Holin
	Jay Jacobs
	Rabbi Richard Jacobs & Susan Freedman
	Emily Kaplan

Donor Spotlight: Judith and Martin Hertz



Tzedek Society Honor Circle Members Judith and Martin Hertz aren't just joiners; they get involved to make things happen!

The Hertzses have been active in the Reform Jewish Movement for more than 40 years, tracing their commitment to the closely knit communities in which they grew up: Judith comes from New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Martin's family lived in Brooklyn, where the Jewish community resembled a small town.

When they married, they too lived in Brooklyn and became active in Union Temple because, Judith says, "that's what I grew up thinking you were supposed to do: join a synagogue and get involved!" They took involvement seriously: Judith was president of the Sisterhood, and Martin, the Brotherhood.

A move to Manhattan for Martin's law practice also meant transferring their membership to Central Synagogue, where Martin became a trustee and then president of Central's Brotherhood; Judith was the founding chairperson of Central's Social Action Committee.

Judith's involvement with the Union for Reform Judaism (when it was still the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) began when Jane Evans asked her to make a list of ten books Reform Jews should read. Judith joined the Union's Commission on Education in 1976 and then the Board of Trustees in 1979. Martin joined the Board in 1988.

From 1989-93, while she was president of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (now Women of Reform Judaism) and represented that organization on the Commission on Social Action (CSA), Judith focused on domestic issues and interreligious affairs, still prime interests. In recent years, she has represented the Union at the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in Buenos Aires and the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Cordoba, Spain, which focused on child soldiers.

Over the years, "any debate or discussion that the Union was involved in," Judith says, "continued at home, most often on social issues." To move from debate to action, she rejoined the CSA with Martin in 2001.

For many years, the strength of the RAC has been a priority for the Hertzses. "We are very fortunate," Martin says, "we've always felt very fortunate, and we've always been very committed to helping others by sharing with our community." They also give generously to the Union's Israel programs and the World Union for Progressive Judaism as well as the Jewish Braille Institute. "It's so important," says Martin, "to support all the rich varieties of Jewish communities everywhere."

Judith and Martin Hertz made their first financial commitment to the RAC in the mid-1980s, when they joined the *Tzedek* Society. This past spring, they doubled their commitment to the RAC's 40th Anniversary Capital Campaign, a tremendous vote of confidence in the RAC's future.

The respect is mutual. Says Jane Wishner, CSA chair: "Judy and Marty Hertz are extraordinary leaders. Each provides a unique combination of passion, dedication, intellect, and good common sense to our work; on a personal level, they are warm and embracing. When they speak, I always know I will learn something from them."

Leah Karpen	Sol & Pearl Schechter
Rabbi Peter & Sheila Kasdan	Dr. Edward & Barbara Scolnick
Harriet Keyserling	Rabbi Barton & Jane Shallat
James & Sue Klau	Nathan Shapiro
Arthur & Sara Jo Kobacker	Rabbi Richard & Lynn Shapiro
Dorothy Kodimer	Stanley & Betty Sheinbaum
Peter & Dr. Judith Lansing Kovler	Dr. Richard & Rhona Shugarman
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Michael B. Rukin	
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RAC Staff 5764

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Mark J. Pelavin, Associate Director

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Eisendrath Summer Legislative Rabbinic Assistants

Laurie Eichenbaum ■ Brian Stoller

Interns

Shiri Ahronovich ■ Ben Friedman ■ Julia Friedman ■ Yael Kahalnik ■ Elana Klein ■ Alissa Kramer ■ Alexis Larkin ■ Tara Novack ■ Margaret O'Connor ■ Jordyn Trockman ■ Rachel Victor ■ Ariel Warner

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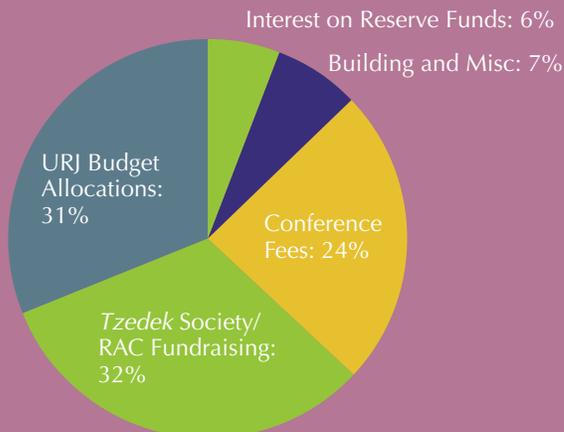
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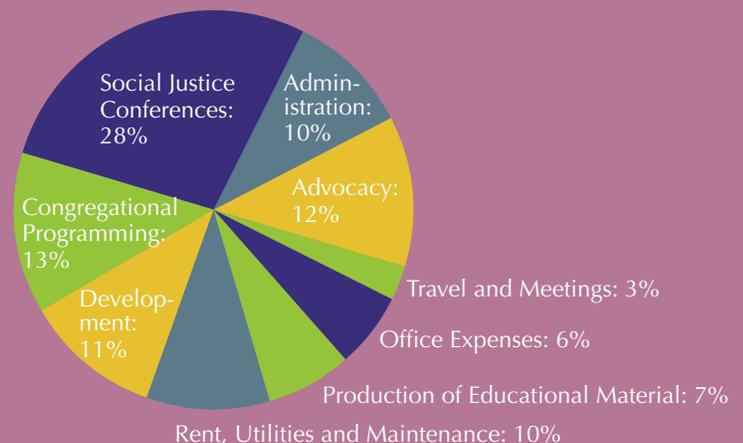
RAC budget summary 5764

In presenting these charts, we have aimed to give a meaningful picture of the RAC's budget. This is more challenging than it might seem at first glance. Take, for example, salaries and benefits: We have divided the salaries for the Legislative Assistants equally among Advocacy, Congregational Programming and Social Justice Conferences. Similarly, we have divided the salaries of the Director and Associate Director in a manner proportional to the amount of time they spend on different areas of our work.

Income for Year 5764 (\$2,229,000)



Expenses for Year 5764 (\$2,229,000)



About the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) functions under the auspices of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, a joint instrumentality of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism with its affiliates: American Conference of Cantors, American Reform Zionists Association, Canadian Association of Reform Zionists, Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism, National Association of Temple Administrators, National Association of Temple Educators, North American Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, North American Federation of Temple Youth, Program Directors of Reform Judaism, and Women of Reform Judaism. The RAC represents the combined constituencies of these organizations, currently including 1,800 rabbis, more than 900 congregations, and 1.5 million Reform Jews.



Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

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