

From the Rabbi's Study... BCC's Legal June Brides and Brides, Grooms and Grooms

Rabbi Lisa Edwards



PHOTO: KENNA LOVE

A group of nine BCC couples and several supporters spent most of Tuesday, June 17 in line at West Hollywood Park making history as some of the first same-sex couples to obtain marriage licenses in California. I had the privilege of marrying seven couples that day! Each wedding was unique and each wedding included the wonderful phrase—"By the power vested in me by the Supreme Court and the State of California, I now pronounce you lawfully wedded spouses for life!"

The City of West Hollywood set up beautifully decorated wedding canopies, and we brought the BCC

cake and sparkling cider) and to witness the wedding of frequent BCC participants Bishop Ed Vazquez and Deacon Bill Koffinke. Ed and Bill have been together over 50 years, and can now finally make it legal. It was a wonderful party! Mazel tov to all the happy and now legally married couples! (Editor's Note: For a list of the couples, see page 14)

Following all that, I am speechless on the "gay after" as Jon Stewart called June 18th, 2008. But I managed to collect some marvelous words by others, so...

Remarks said/heard/read around the world on June 16th and 17th, 2008 – the first days California marriage licenses were issued to two men or two women after the California Supreme Court Ruling of May 15, 2008:

"For better, for worse, forever"

– BCC member Davi Cheng, in an interview with the Chinese WorldJournal.com June 17, 2008.

"People can judge, but God can bless...and does."

– Deacon Bill Koffinke in an interview on 89.3 KPCC-FM. Bill married his partner of 50 years, Bishop Ed Vazquez, on June 17 in a ceremony at BCC officiated by Rabbi Edwards and Cantorial Soloist Emerita Fran Chalin

"Robin had a dream and the dream is now reality and the reality is hope for everyone."

– Maureen Chernick, sister-in-law of Robin Tyler, one of the plaintiffs in the cases that came before the California Supreme Court [article in the Hollywood

Independent, June 19, 2008, p. 5]

"I respect the Court's decision and as Governor, I will uphold its ruling. Also, as I have said in the past, I will not support an amendment to the Constitution that would overturn this state Supreme Court ruling."

– Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, May 15, 2008 press release

An excerpt from the LA Times editorial on June 17, 2008, entitled "The Right to Love":

"Same-sex unions do not diminish the bonds of marriage, they uphold them. . . . But those who would look askance on those lawfully wedded couples do so without the state to reinforce their bigotry. Our courts, certainly our supreme courts, exist not to assess God's will but to enforce the precepts of our constitutions, including the insistence that all Americans – black or white, male or female, straight or gay – are entitled to equal protection and the due process of our laws."

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PHOTO: VICTORIA DELGADILLO

Leah and Tanya Sussman wed at West Hollywood Park, June 17, 2008

chuppah for people to marry beneath it. Cantorial Soloist Emerita Fran Chalin was there as well, singing and serving as clergy and witness for the couples.

About 60 BCC members, family, and friends gathered at BCC that evening for our wedding party (there was a DJ, Kenna Love took portraits, there was wedding



PHOTO: LARRY WATSON

Rabbi Edwards with Avram Chill and Wesley Joe at their wedding on June 20, 2008.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-ed-marriage17-2008jun17,0,6193795.story>

The opening paragraphs of Amy Klein's on line JewishJournal.com article "Gay rabbis getting married—and marrying":

"It's almost 9 a.m. on Tuesday, June 17, and the line at the West Hollywood Park snakes around itself, as some 400 people wait to obtain marriage licenses on this first official day that the State of California is issuing licenses to gay and lesbian couples (aside from one wedding on Monday).

"Some men wear tuxedos, some men wear suits, a few women are in white (a few women are in suits), but most of the couples are decked out in California casual on this momentous day. By far the most interesting - and photographed - group is situated in the middle of the line, holding up a white chuppah on bamboo poles and the banner of their synagogue: Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC).

"The first gay and lesbian synagogue, located on Pico Boulevard, has brought ten couples here to get marriage licenses. Some, like the Hales - Cara in a bridal outfit of an ivory lace top and trousers, and Heidi in a gray pinstripe suit and silver tie - have had Jewish weddings already. Others, like Davi and Bracha Cheng, were married before (in San Francisco four years ago, annulled by

the court two months later). Itay Siegel and Tony Gregory Smith had never been married at all - not out-of-town, out-of-state or Jewishly.

"For us, it's the right time and the right place,' they said. Another was the rabbi of BCC, Lisa Edwards, who was both obtaining her own license and marrying five couples in the park afterward. In the summer, she will perform more than 20 weddings - and have a civil ceremony with her partner, Tracy Moore."

To read the full text see Kenna Love's photo of Lisa and Tracy:

http://www.jewishjournal.com/religion/article/gay_rabbis_getting_married_and_marrying_20080617/

And one last, not nearly so cheerful nor so fair-minded, quotation:

"Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

— Entire and scary text of the so-called Limit on Marriage Amendment, also known as the California Marriage Protection Act, an initiative measure proposed for the 2008 California General Election ballot that, if passed, would amend the California State Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. Please see page 3 regarding BCC's efforts to defeat this amendment.

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G'VANIM

G'vanim "Hues (of the rainbow)" is the monthly newsletter of

BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM

6000 West Pico Blvd., L.A. CA 90035

Founded in 1972 as the world's first gay and lesbian synagogue, today BCC is an inclusive community of progressive lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and heterosexual Jews, our families, and friends. Everyone is welcome to attend weekly Friday evening services at 8:00 p.m.

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BCC in the Historic Wedding News

There was a very large media presence at West Hollywood Park on June 17, 2008, as legal same-sex marriage began in California, and BCC was featured prominently. BCC members and Rabbi Edwards were interviewed by The New York Times, CNN, KPCC, FOX 11, China Daily News, LA Times, Yahoo.com, and more. Below are some of the links we've found so far; if you know of others please send them to us. Cara Hanes and Heidi Hale were interviewed live for CNN.

1. New York Times.com, video includes some BCC people and look at photo 11 in the slideshow for Cara and Heidi, photo 8 has our colleague Reverend Neil Thomas of MCC-LA performing a marriage.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/us/18weddings.html?ex=1214452800&en=d3eb3b7037f0a9a4&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

2. FOX News 11, with a story including BCC Executive Director Felicia Park-Rogers and her new spouse, Rachel Timoner. Look in the side bar section and you'll see a section of little thumbnail photos. The first one is Felicia and Rachel. Click on it to play the story.

<http://www.myfoxla.com/myfox/pages/News/Detail?contentId=6777824&version=23&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=ISTY&pageId=3.11>

3. KPCC Radio, with an interview with frequent BCC participants Bishop Ed Vazquez and Bill Koffinke obtaining their marriage license at East LA Courthouse http://www.wscpr.org/news/stories/2008/06/17/18_ssm_east_la_061708.html

4. A fabulous profile of Rabbi Lisa & Tracy in this week's Jewish Journal http://www.jewishjournal.com/religion/article/gay_rabbis_getting_married_and_marrying_20080617/



Cara Hanes and Heidi Hale receiving their marriage license at West Hollywood Park, June 17, 2008.

PHOTO: VICTORIA DELGADILLO

KENNA LOVE

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BCC's Tzedakah Council agreed in June to commit \$1,000 of BCC's tzedakah collection toward "Jews for Marriage Equality," and the Council and I would like to encourage the entire congregation to donate to fight against the upcoming ballot proposition against gay marriage.

You may do so by contributing to BCC - Tzedakah Council and we will forward our communal gift on an ongoing basis throughout the campaign season. For more from the Tzedakah Council, please see page 13.

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BCC Brunch Honors Two BCC Mensches, BCC's 36th Anniversary and Marriage Ruling

Larry Nathenson

More than 220 BCC members, family and friends gathered on Sunday, May 18 at the Sofitel Hotel Los Angeles for the 2008 Humanitarian Awards Brunch honoring BCC members Steven Koltai and Dr. Allison Diamant for their many contributions to BCC and the larger community. Hosted by comedian Judy Carter with music by Chadwick, the brunch also kicked off the



PHOTO: AMELIA WEINMAN

Allison Diamant at the podium

Steven Koltai at the podium



PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: AMELIA WEINMAN

celebration of BCC's Double Chai (36th) anniversary and followed by three days the landmark California Supreme Court ruling affirming the right of same-sex couples to marry. This year's Brunch also broke all of BCC's fundraising records and exceeded all our goals, raising \$94,000 in ticket sales and donations plus an additional \$24,000 from the silent auction, for a total of \$118,000!

The event began with a reception and silent auction featuring more than 120 items (another record). There was

something for every interest and every price range, from original works of art from the Andrew Weiss Gallery to vacations in Mexico and Palm Springs, LA Sparks tickets, computer systems, tickets to theater and concerts, jewelry, professional services, and a walk-on part on HBO's hit show "Entourage." Thanks to all of the donors and donation solicitors and other volunteers who made this possible and especially to silent auction chair Ray Eelsing.

Following opening remarks by BCC President Brett Trueman, Rabbi Lisa Edwards led an invocation and motzi, and introduced Agnes Herman, wife of BCC's "founding rabbi" Erwin Herman, who passed away in February and for whom our Humanitarian Award is named. Mrs. Herman reaffirmed her husband's belief that his greatest accomplishment in his 58-year rabbinate was his assistance in the founding of BCC and its acceptance as the first GLBT congregation in the Reform Movement.

Brunch co-chairs Cecilia Quigley and Mark Farber thanked all the Brunch volunteers and introduced our host, Judy Carter. Comedian and magician, television star and author, founder of the comic school Comedy Workshop Productions and in demand as a corporate and college workshop leader, Judy has inspired thousands to deal with life's stresses through humor. She reminisced about growing up in Fairfax, a "tough Jewish hood" with "drive-by math tests." Referring to the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage, she remarked on how hard it is to get Californians to protest unless they'll lose weight.

Holding back tears as she spoke about her partner Eileen (who could not be present) and her other family members, Allison said with characteristic modesty

that she volunteers with BCC as a way of giving back for all she has received from it. Excerpts from Allison's remarks follow this article.

A brief interlude in the program brought us the music of Chadwick, accompanied by Chris Bratten on piano and David Olivas on sax. Chadwick is a cutting edge musician who wrote and co-produced his independent album "Addicted" in 2007, has collaborated with influential



PHOTOS: AMELIA WEINMAN

Chadwick



PHOTOS: AMELIA WEINMAN

Judy Carter

songwriters and film composers, and recorded the title track for the new documentary "Steve McQueen, an American Rebel." In honor of BCC's achievements, Chadwick performed "The Impossible Dream" from "Man of La Mancha" and other songs during the Brunch.

The Rabbi Erwin and Agnes Herman Humanitarian Award, first given in 1985, was presented to Steven Koltai by Olivia Sanchez Brown, a retired Los Angeles teacher and literacy coordinator who worked with Steven at Belmont High School. She recounted how Steven went beyond tutoring to become a mentor concerned with his students' life goals, not

Continued on Page 5

just literacy. An investor and entrepreneur who rose to a corporate vice presidency at Warner Brothers, Steven has focused his philanthropic endeavors on the issue of adult literacy in Los Angeles, serving as chair and board member of the Literacy Network of Greater Los Angeles since 2003. He has also advised and worked with numerous other organizations in the Jewish and GLBT communities.

Referring to Rabbi Edwards's eulogy for Rabbi Herman (printed in the last issue of G'vanim), Steven emphasized the importance of ordinary life as a goal and a right for those who are excluded from mainstream society. He cited being accepting of others as a key to being accepted, and inclusion in American society as the primary purpose of adult literacy campaigns in Los Angeles. Excerpts from Steven's remarks can also be found in this issue.



*Silent Auction Chair
Ray Eelsing*

presented flowers to many of those who helped make the Brunch the most successful ever. Many thanks are due to the incredibly industrious Brunch Committee, consisting of Cecilia Quigley and Mark Farber (co-chairs), Ray Eelsing, Donna Groman, Eleanor Herscher, Joanne Laipson, Kenna Love, Lauren Schlau, Herb Toplan, and Brett Trueman. For a

fabulous expanded commemorative tribute book with photos and historical articles from BCC's 36 years as the world's first LGBT synagogue, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Joanne Laipson, Hilary Lentini, and all those who contributed to its contents. Last but not least, thanks to Felicia Park-Rogers, office manager Victoria Delgadillo, and custodian Tim Goad for all their hard work on behalf of BCC, and to all the honorary chairs, table captains and sponsors, and other volunteers who helped make this year's Brunch a success.

brought a chuppah to the podium in honor of the recent California Supreme Court decision recognizing the right of same-sex couples to marry. Two of the chuppah poles were held by Steve Sass and Steve Hochstadt, who were legally married in Canada. Rabbi Edwards invited all BCC couples who aspire to marry legally in California to join them under the chuppah on this joyous occasion.

Executive Director Felicia Park-Rogers and BCC President Brett Trueman



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Excerpts from Allison Diamant's remarks at the BCC Humanitarian Awards Brunch, May 18, 2008.

...My first awareness of synagogue life was not gained by personal experience, but through the pages of Harry Kemelman's rabbi books - do you remember them? Rabbi David Small awakened behind schedule and stumbled over a dead body in "Friday the Rabbi Slept Late." In subsequent books from Saturday to Thursday he went hungry, stayed home, took off, saw red, got wet and walked out. It was through these books that I first experienced the challenges of synagogue life. ...

From my parents I learned about the importance of tzedakah, social action and challenging myself. As an eleven something we - Mom, Dad, Michael and I - departed LA's sunshine and New York style deli for the history of London and a different synagogue structure. No Bat Mitzvahs for girls, but a strong focus on study, prayer, and memorizing the liturgy. I also learned that if the Torah is dropped that everyone present must fast for forty days - I have remembered this lesson well when I have had the opportunity to hold and carry the Torah.

When we returned to LA in 1974 a tremendous event had taken place just a couple of years previously, something that I would not know about for quite a time. ... One Shabbat morning at one of the oldest Conservative shuls in the country I attended services where, for the first time, I saw a woman on the bimah and felt my perspective of Judaism undergo a radical paradigm shift. The lack of inclusion of women had characterized most of my prior experiences with organized, congregational Judaism, and I was more than ready to start searching for a Jewish community in which I would feel and that I was considered an equal and valued member.

Still a number of years later my first

service at BCC was Yom Kippur - almost 14 years ago. Lisa and Fran were on the bimah and I felt as if I had finally found a Jewish spiritual home. It took a couple of years including finishing residency, and starting graduate school and fellowship training to begin attending Shabbat services at the "storefront shul" on Pico Boulevard. I found coming to shul on Friday nights an important way to mark the beginning of Shabbat and to separate out time for my family, friends and even myself. My frequent rapid departure after services was often due to being paged, but also being shy. I subsequently became a member after High Holiday services in 1998.

... At BCC I started out by attending Torah study, something I had always wanted to have an opportunity to do. These evenings allowed me to pursue my interest in study and Jewish education as well as getting to know people at BCC. Studying Torah in conjunction with practicing medicine and participating in research focused on vulnerable populations gave me a renewed passion for my chosen path in the world.

At BCC I also found myself unexpectedly volunteering for various events and working with a number of committees, including helping out as a scribe for the visioning process that took place that year. Even though most of my prior volunteer experience had been secular, this involvement in synagogue life felt comfortable and fulfilling. Then, just as I was celebrating my first year of membership at BCC David Mill and David Cheng encouraged me to join the Board of Directors - what did I know about being on a synagogue Board? - only what I had read in fiction. ...

Four years ago I was fortunate to participate on a BCC trip to Germany

sponsored by Bridge to Understanding. This German organization had previously focused on attracting Jewish American students, educators and clergy to visit Germany, and to reconnect with



Allison shares a light moment with her nephew

their former roots. BCC was the first LGBT group to participate in this outreach effort and I am not sure that Germany has recovered. Certainly we all learned a great deal more about Germany pre-World War II, but I think most importantly we gained a better understanding of modern day Germany, and Judaism in Germany today. The rich Jewish culture of 19th and 20th century Germany is mainly housed in museums, surviving synagogues and cemeteries, although among immigrants there is a great desire to learn more about Judaism and how to incorporate the tenets of this ancient religion into modern life. This tie that we established will be strengthened when the first cantorial student trained since WW II joins us to lead High Holiday Services. ...

I cannot tell you exactly why I volunteer, but I know that my participation in BCC strengthens the ties that I feel to Judaism in the past, and the present and will continue to do so in the future. ...

Humanitarianism – Such an Important Idea

Steven Koltai

Excerpts from remarks delivered by Steven Koltai at the BCC Humanitarian Awards Brunch, May 18, 2008.

... We are here to celebrate Humanitarianism. Such an important idea. Rabbi Erwin Herman and his wife Agnes embody what it means to be a humanitarian, or, as I prefer to call it, a mensch. Sadly, Rabbi Herman passed away last month, but we are so honored to have his wife Agnes with us here today. Rabbi Lisa Edwards, one of my favorite teachers, gave a beautiful hesped or eulogy last month about Rabbi Herman. Her hesped was reprinted in this month's G'vanim. For those who didn't see it, I want to repeat just a few of her comments.

... Rabbi Edwards taught about the poet and essayist Irena Klepfisz who wrote a speech on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, where her father had died as a hero. It is a wonderful description of what being a "humanist" really means, and to me, especially rings true for gay people. "Ordinariness," wrote Klepfisz, "is the most precious thing we struggle for, what the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto fought for. Not noble causes or abstract

theories. But the right to go on living with a sense of purpose and a sense of self-worth: an ordinary life."

Ordinariness. How much those of us who have been "different" have longed for that. And of course, most people are different. We're Jews, or we're gay, or we're immigrants, or we're Black or we're Latino, or we're Asian or we lack something we think most other people have, like the ability to read and write. I really do think that the definition of a "humanist" is someone who understands how important being "ordinary" really is.

And how especially true this is for Gay people. All we want is to be ordinary. To be accepted, to be tolerated. BCC was the first public place I came right after I came out as a gay man seven years ago. By any measure, at age 47, I was a "late bloomer." I spent a large portion of my life in fear and shame. What BCC gave me – in its modest, humble way – was a sense of empowerment that few other experiences in my life have matched. I felt not only tolerated but celebrated. I love it that at BCC we repeat at most services that "intolerance will not be tolerated here." If only this simple principle could be applied across all humanity – think of what the world



Steven Koltai and Olivia Sanchez Brown

would be like!

Any difference can – and often is – the basis for intolerance and exclusion. The fact is, that one of the reasons I have been so passionate about the cause of literacy is that it is precisely about inclusion and empowerment. The ability to read and write is not only available to all, but in my mind, it is the universal key to unlocking all that is most beautiful and valuable in life. My children will tell you how tired they are of hearing me talk about reading and books all their lives. In fact, it is very much something that has been passed from generation to generation. It is probably one of the most important things I learned from my father who was the first person who modeled for me a passion for books. I'm sorry he's not here today but bet he would be proud that I keep reading!

Every one of us wants to be accepted. And being accepting is a key step to that. By your very presence here today – each and every one of you – you are celebrating acceptance, tolerance and thus in my view, humanitarianism. I am deeply grateful – and humbled – by your award today. Here's to life, L'Chaim! Thank you so much.



PHOTO: AMELIA WEINMAN

The BCC chuppah at the Brunch, May 18, 2008

Creating a *Kehillah Kedoshah*

Leah Zimmerman

What is it that transforms a group of people into a congregation, into a *kehillah*? And what makes a *kehillah* a *kehillah kedoshah* – a holy community? How can we become a *kehillah kedoshah*? We asked this question in our Ohr Chayim program and thought about what makes our community holy and special. I ask you the reader, what makes BCC feel like a community to you and does it feel holy?



In chapter 35 of Exodus, the last parsha of that book, it says that Moses “assembles” the people. The Hebrew word used in the Torah for assemble is *Vayakhel*. Literally this means that Moses created a *kehillah* – created a congregation. How did that happen? How did they become a *kehillah* and not just a group of people? Perhaps it is because at this moment of gathering God, through Moses, gave directions to the people of Israel on how

to build the Tabernacle, how to create the sacred space that would travel with them. Perhaps it is the sense of holy purpose for the gathering that transforms this grouping into a *kehillah kedoshah*.

A few lines into the portion God tells the people, “Take from among you gifts to the Eternal; everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring them.” (Exodus 35:5) Perhaps it is when everyone brings a gift from their heart to the community that we become a holy community.

On the Shabbat morning that we discussed being a *kehillah kedoshah*, Jamie Wynne, our Ohr Chayim teacher, led a discussion with the children. She asked them to brainstorm ways that they see community at BCC using three different focal points: their hearts, their eyes and their hands. Their answers included learning, praying and singing together, feeling welcomed, giving gifts and opening the door.

We then asked the students to reflect upon their list and to imagine what gift they would bring to our special community. What does your heart move you to give to our community to help us

be a holy community, a *kehillah kedoshah*? The students responded using their hands and modeling clay. They created shapes, arrangements and figures that represented their gifts to the community. Their creations and their words truly are a gift in themselves to our community.

We photographed the figures that our students created and made these photographs with their accompanying quotes into notecards. You can support our students’ learning, our efforts to make a holy community, and our Ohr Chayim program by purchasing a set of these cards. While purchasing means that it isn’t quite a free gift, I think you will find that our children’s thoughts, images and words helps us to focus our thoughts on creating our own *kehillah kedoshah* at BCC.

Editor’s Note: I saw some of the cards at Shavuot, and they are quite impressive. Please see the back cover of this issue for information on viewing and buying cards.

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20s and 30s Dinner with JQ International

Hey, all you people in your 20s and 30s—this one’s for you! On Friday, August 29, at 7:00 pm at BCC, there will be a Mediterranean buffet dinner co-sponsored with the recently incorporated social organization for Angeleno Jews in their 20s and 30s, JQ International. Meet, greet, and eat! And then stay for our fabulous Ruach Chayim Shabbat service coming back from its summer hiatus.

What A Time We Had!

Donna Groman, Women's Havurah Chair

The Women's Havurah was in full spring swing. On May 21 and May 22, many of us were wildly entertained by Sara Felder at the Skirball Cultural Center. Not only is Sara hysterical in a non-misogynist way (i.e. very funny), she is a talented juggler and lecturer. On May 31, we had 19 gamers at BCC playing everything from Mah Jongg and Scrabble to Trivial Pursuit and Apples to Apples. We laughed and laughed at Sylvia Weisenberg's lesbian charades game, even those who were not actually playing – just from hearing the goings-on. We also discovered that Stacy Hicks is a wannabe Ahavah with a theatrical laugh of her own.

June kicked off with the Walk for Darfur. Five of us journeyed deep into the West Valley, walking with hundreds of other synagogue goers in an awareness march sponsored by Jewish World Watch regarding the Darfur Genocide. Starving after our strenuous three mile jaunt, we experienced a four star

Canoga Park standout – Weiler's Deli. Other June events included a concert by Vox Femina, a women's professional basketball game – LA Sparks vs. Indiana at the Staples Center, and a "Sunday Live" concert at LACMA.

Get ready for our full calendar of summer events: July 13 – breakfast and shop at the Pacific Palisades Farmer's Market; July 27, Women's Havurah Tennis and Pool Party. Also in the works: August 3 Women's Havurah Beach day, August 24 Women's Havurah Bowling Bonanza, August 24, Women's Havurah sponsors the LA Jewish Symphony featuring Cantor Marcelo Gindlin at the Ford Amphitheatre.

Watch the weekly bulletin for further details. Or, for information on any of these events, or if you have a suggestion for an event, contact Women's Havurah chair Mrs. Donna Quigley Groman (married to the lovely Mrs. Cecilia Quigley Groman on May 26, 2008 in Vancouver, B.C., Canada).



Donna and Cecilia Quigley-Groman receive flowers at the BCC Brunch



*Women's Summer Croquet Party
Front row from left: Sylvia Weisenberg, Stacy Hicks, Cynthia Vandenberg, Ilene Cohen, Teresa Kline Rivera, Irene Nunez, Tamara Kline Rivera*

Back row: Eagle Desert Moon, Ahava Brooks, Diane Schatz, Beth Salamensky, Ellen Jaffee Gill, Donna Quigley Groman, Hanna Theile, Kenna Love, Cecilia Quigley Groman, Bonnie Kaplan, Sylvia Sukop

BCC HOSTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM

Have you ever worried that a friend was in trouble? Not sure if somebody has gone too far? Everybody fights, but when is enough enough? Or too much?

The Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy Project at the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center and Beth Chayim Chadashim are hosting a free forum on intimate partner violence in the LGBT community. Join us on July 22 at 7:00 pm to explore these and related questions and topics.

We will begin the evening with a screening of the film "My Girlfriend Did It," which examines the dynamics of same-sex abusive relationships, that will be followed a conversation around the film and how we acknowledge interpersonal violence within the LGBT community. Staff of DVLAP will facilitate the discussion and be on hand to answer questions, and offer information regarding their services. We hope you will join us!

BCC Goes Paperless

Felicia Park-Rogers

Well, not entirely. But, as a part of our ongoing efforts to reduce BCC's impact on the environment, as well as

to run the temple as economically and efficiently as possible, we are changing the way we communicate with our membership.

The vast majority of our members now use e-mail. In fact, there are only about a dozen BCC households that do not use e-mail to communicate. Effective immediately we are going to send as many of our communications by e-mail as we possibly can. This will include congregational meeting materials, nominations for the Board of Directors, letters of important business, and communications from the Rabbi, President, and Board of Directors. **All of these items will be sent to members with the subject line: "BCC Official Business".** This will help you distinguish between our publicity materials and announcements and the important business of running the temple.

Please make sure you always take the time to read these items. BCC's leadership strives to maintain frequent, transparent, and useful communications with the temple members. Dialogue and ongoing conversation is so important to helping BCC meet its collective goals and achieve its vision.

Beginning with the September/October issue, **G'vanim will also go paperless.** We will send you a PDF of each issue, as well as keep back issues on our website. Please keep

reading G'vanim! It will still be packed with all the important features, columns, and announcements that you expect!

Those of you who still rely on postal mail and do not use a computer, please don't worry! We know who you are and will continue to send all official business and G'vanim to your home!

+++++

We are also re-vamping our membership renewal process. This process has proved to be cumbersome and time-consuming for both members and temple staff. This year, rather than have an "opt-in" system, we will have an "opt-out" system. In other words, we will assume that you will be maintaining your membership with BCC **unless you tell us otherwise.** Each year only a handful of BCC members choose not to re-join, usually because they have moved away from the region. Therefore, we will spare you all the deadlines and desperate e-mails and phone calls asking you to renew before High Holy Days!

If you are currently a member, we will simply assume you are remaining a member. **If you choose to end your membership, for whatever reason, please send an e-mail or letter to me, or call me, by August 31, 2008. If I don't hear from you, beginning on September 1, 2008 your membership will continue automatically.** If you pay monthly by credit card, we will continue to charge you. If you pay by check, you will continue to receive periodic statements. Also, **please be in touch with me if your circumstances have changed and you find yourself needing to make adjustments to your pledge in the upcoming year.** We will strive to make it possible to change with the changing times.

All continuing members will automatically be eligible for tickets for Days of Awe, unless you have an outstanding balance. Outstanding balances (not including those with regular monthly payments) will need to be paid by August 31, 2008 in order to be eligible to receive member tickets for Days of Awe and to continue as a member. We would like to avoid taking care of this at our Days of Awe services. Instead, we would like to have all pledges paid in full by the end of August. If that won't be possible, the confidential dues committee will be able to have a confidential, respectful, solution-oriented conversation during August.

All members will continue to be welcome to purchase guest tickets, sponsor oneigs or flowers, place names in the Yizkor book, or reserve childcare. You will receive your customary Days of Awe packet with High Holy Days information and order forms this summer.

Questions or comments? Don't hesitate to be in touch! I welcome hearing from you!



Brunch co-chair Mark Farber receiving flowers from BCC President Brett Trueman

PHOTO: KEINIA LOVE

PHOTO: AMELIA WEINMAN



First German Cantorial Student to Lead BCC High Holy Day Services, and Fran will Lead the Choir

Allison Diamant

Over the past eight months since the departure of long-time BCC cantorial soloist Fran Chalin, our Transition Task Force has met regularly to develop a transition plan focusing on the musical needs of BCC and how those needs can and should be met. Two of the most important topics identified were High Holy Days and the choir. After much thought, research and discussion we implemented a search for a cantor for the High Holy Days. BCC was fortunate to have inspired more interest than we had anticipated and we received more than twenty applications for the position, from people around the country as well as from other countries. After much deliberation and review the Task Force invited five people for interviews, and having the opportunity to meet with and hear such talented individuals was quite inspiring. Due to the benefits of modern technology we were able to interview one of the applicants across multiple time zones and bodies of water, and to get to know him and understand that he would be an excellent match for BCC.

Juval Porat is the first cantorial student at the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin, and he will be completing his studies in the spring of 2009. Juval was born in Israel and moved to Germany with his family as a child. He returned to Israel during High School where he studied at the B'nai Akiva Yeshiva. In the late 1990s he returned to Berlin to study Architecture, and had the opportunity to serve as a service leader, teacher and counselor. In 2004 he decided to follow his passion and enrolled in the Jewish Studies Program at the Abraham Geiger College, focusing on cantorial studies. Since

beginning his training he has served as a cantor and teacher in many Jewish communities in Germany including co-designer and cantor of the service for the first rabbinic ordination in Germany since the Second World War which took place in 2006. That same year he also served as co-designer and cantor for Shabbat services at the German Union for Progressive Judaism in Berlin. Most recently in addition to continuing his cantorial studies he has been working in the Jewish communities of Erfurt, Hanover and Berlin. In addition to leading services and teaching Juval is a composer and has a strong passion for Jewish music.

Juval will be coming to Los Angeles and BCC in August to meet the congregation and lead a Shabbat service, as well as working with Rabbi Edwards and the choir. We look forward to welcoming Juval in August and to joining together for the High Holy Days beginning with Erev Rosh Hashanah in late September.

In addition to a cantorial search the Transition Task Force also

implemented a process to identify a choral director for the choir. It is with great excitement that we welcome Fran Chalin back to BCC to lead the choir for the High Holy Days. Fran and Juval



Juval Porat

have already been working together and both look forward to working with the choir for the upcoming High Holy Days.

The Transition Task Force will continue to meet regularly to formulate plans to meet BCC's ongoing and future musical needs.

Yearning and Learning for The Days of Awe

On Tuesday, August 26, Juval Porat, will lead our first preparation session for High Holidays from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Here is his description of it:

"The elements of awe and fear as well as softness juxtaposed against severity can be found subtly placed in our liturgy throughout the year. It is on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when these emotions are expressed most powerfully.

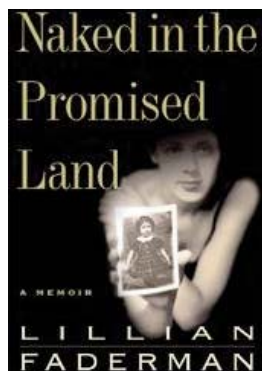
"In our session we'll examine and question these emotions within the context of some of the most meaningful parts of the High Holiday Liturgy. We'll also have a look at and a listen to contributions on the subject by the likes of Franz Kafka and Yair Rosenblum and will hopefully find our own idea of what these emotions can mean to us during the High Holidays."

Subsequent sessions will be on Tuesdays, September 9 and 23, led by Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Student Rabbi Joe Hample.

BCC Book Group

Larry Nathenson

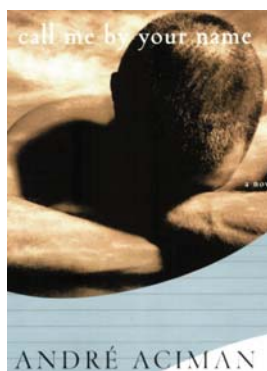
For over ten years, BCC members and friends have gathered in private homes for monthly potluck brunches and discussion of books selected by the group. Fiction and non-fiction, historical and contemporary, American and Israeli, the books read by the group include something for everyone's tastes and interests. Our next two book discussions are:



Sunday, July 27, at 10:00 a.m.

Naked in the Promised Land: A Memoir, by Lillian Faderman

A former student of BCC member Harriet Perl, and familiar to many of us as co-author of *Gay L.A.* with Stuart Timmons, Lillian Faderman now reveals her early life as the illegitimate child of a Jewish mother who immigrated from Latvia and was tormented by her inability to save her family from the Holocaust. All her dreams for the future were focused on Lillian's potential acting career, but Lillian had other ideas, exploring the still clandestine lesbian scene and a career in academia.



Sunday, August 24, at 10:00 a.m.

Call Me By Your Name, by André Aciman

A sort of Italian-Jewish "Brokeback Mountain," this novel tells the story of a summer romance between a teenager and a young visiting American scholar on the Italian Riviera..

BCC members and non-members alike are invited to attend. Because the discussions are held in members' homes, space is limited. Please RSVP to the BCC office early to guarantee your seat at the table, or contact Larry Nathenson at Larrynath@aol.com.

BCC Sponsors Two Films at Outfest

Join BCC at Outfest—the nation's preeminent queer film festival! We are proud to continue our annual tradition of being a community collaborator at the annual LGBT film festival. This year we are sponsoring the following films.

Sunday July 13, 8:00pm at Directors' Guild (DGA) 2 and Tuesday July 15, 7:30pm at Fairfax 2

US Premiere (Israel, 2007, 63 mins.) In Hebrew with English subtitles

Seeds of Summer, by Zirei Kayitz, an Israeli film documenting a budding same-sex relationship between two young Israeli Defense Forces soldiers-in-training. The film will be screened twice—don't miss it! Our co-collaborator for this film will be JQ International. For the first time, will organize a social outing in conjunction with the film. The gathering will also be co-sponsored with JQ International, Congregation Kol Ami, and the IJSO of HUC. Check out the e-bulletin or seat bulletin for all of the latest details!

Sunday July 13, 4:30 pm, at DGA 1

Young and Restless, a series of short films delving into the joys and tribulations of queer youth. This series includes a moving short film from Israel that follows a young woman as she struggles with her budding sexuality: **Her Own Way**, directed by Limor Ziv (in Hebrew with English subtitles). Mika feels that binds around her are getting tighter and tighter, preventing her from being true about her feelings for another girl. Our co-collaborator for this film will be LifeWorks, a queer youth mentoring program.

You can purchase tickets online (www.outfest.org) or pick up a festival guide at BCC.

Rabbi's Summer Queer Jewish Film Festival

Curated by Rabbi Edwards

Come into the cool for popcorn and a summer film series curated by Rabbi Edwards.

Free for members, non-members \$5 donation suggested.

Rabbi Edwards will start each program by explaining some of the historical significance and cultural impact of each film.

**Tuesday July 1, 7:00 pm and
Wednesday July 2, 3:00 pm
Documentary Double Feature**

(same on both dates)

Hollywood: An Empire of Their Own

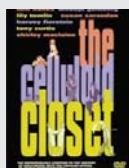
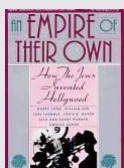
The 1998 Documentary based on film historian Neal Gabler's book, *An Empire of their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, and *The Celluloid Closet* (1996) based on the book by Vito Russo about Hollywood screen depictions of homosexuals and the attitudes behind them throughout the history of North American film.

**Tuesday July 15, 7:00 pm and
Wednesday July 16, 3:00 pm
Documentary Double Feature**

Finish watching *The Celluloid Closet* and watch *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984), the riveting, Oscar-winning documentary on the slain Jewish gay civil rights leader. We'll remember our past and plan for our future.

**Tuesday July 29, 7:00 pm and
Wednesday July 30, 3:00 pm**

The Boys in the Band (1970) – directed by William Friedkin, an early film about gay liberation era pre-AIDS gay life, including a stereotypical Jewish gay man.



Rabbi Edwards's winter film series will begin in November, with films to include *Double Indemnity*, *Yentl*, and *Kissing Jessica Stein*.

Tish'ah B'Av: Gloom and Doom Or Messiah's Birthday?

Rabbinic Intern Joe Hample

Please join us at 8 pm on Saturday, August 9, for a Tish'ah b'Av service and study session. The Tish'ah b'Av fast day commemorates the destruction of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Though usually seen as a day of mourning, Tish'ah b'Av also inaugurates the seven weeks of consolation. Come help us find the right balance of sorrow and hope.

PHOTO: BARRY WEINDELL



Thoughts About Tzedakah

*Robin Baltic, Chair
BCC Tzedakah Council*

The 20th cycle of the BCC community tzedakah coin drive concludes Friday October 24, 2008. Please bring your pushkes, whether full or not, to BCC by that date. The Tzedakah Council plans to allocate a portion of the funds to fight the November initiative to amend the California Constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

"Jewish law makes provision for gradations of giving, relative to the proportion of one's property or income that is donated to tzedakah—from a fifth to a tenth, but no less. There is a fixed minimum, set at a very modest sum. Everyone must give some minimal amount. Even the poor must contribute.

"So the law constructs a web of engagement in tzedakah in which all participate, however modestly. The main thing is that everyone gives. Thus the community becomes concrete and fully realized. It is, in fact, the mark that the residents of a given place regard themselves as a community, as responsible beyond themselves."

Excerpted from Tzedakah: Can Jewish Philanthropy Buy Jewish Survival? Jacob Neusner; UAHC press, 1997

Congregational Meeting, July 13, 2008, 3-5pm

Want to find out what's happening at BCC?

There is no better way to be a part of democracy in action than by attending the semi-annual congregational meeting! We need a quorum to approve the budget and vote on the nominees for the Board of Directors. The Rabbi, President of the Board of Directors, and the Executive Director will all give detailed reports of the ins and outs of BCC's busy religious, social, educational, and business happenings. We can't wait to see you there!

Latest news flash: To save resources, both environmental and financial, BCC will send congregational mailings, including the congregational meeting materials, by email. BCC congregants who do not have e-mail will continue to receive these important communiqués by postal mail. We will always put "BCC Official Business" in the subject line of the e-mail when we send you official communications. We are considering sending the newsletter by email in the New Year as well. Thoughts? We'd love to hear them! Please feel free to share your opinions on this, and any matter, with the Board of Directors, Clergy, and staff.

*Rabbi Lisa Edwards
with the Brunch awards,
May 18, 2008*



PHOTO: AMELIA WEINMAN

Mazel Tov

Please join the whole BCC community in wishing the following members a big "Mazel Tov" on their recent good news.

Donna (BCC Vice President) and Cecilia (Membership Chair) on their May 26 marriage in Vancouver, Canada. The happy couple will now go by **Donna & Cecilia Quigley Groman**.

BCC couples who married on the first day of legal same-sex marriage (June 17, 2008) at West Hollywood Park:

Tanya & Leah Sussman with baby Sonia in their arms

Cara & Heidi Hale-Hanes

Itay Siegel and Tony Gregory Smith

Felicia Park-Rogers & Rachel Timoner with sons Benjamin and Eitan

Bishop Ed Vasquez and Bill Koffinke, who were married at BCC on June 17, 2008, after 50 years together!

Avram Chill and Wesley Joe, on their wedding at BCC on June 20, 2008.

Elizabeth Savage and Roxy Bickerstaff, on their wedding on June 20, 2008.

Cate Whiting and Vanessa Eiseemann, with son Benjy, on their wedding on June 22, 2008.

Davi and Bracha Yael Cheng, on their wedding on June 22, 2008.

The following couples who also received marriage licenses with the BCC group on the first day, June 17th:

Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Tracy Moore

Ysied Gillette and Dalila Ferguson

Stan Notkin and Bruce Warner

Ed Casson and Steven May

Cantorial Soloist Emerita **Fran Chalin and Rob Phillips**, who are now legally married, having waited until everyone had the right to do so.

All other BCC couples who have been legally married in June in California, or are planning to marry this summer. We'll congratulate them in the September/October issue of G'vanim.

Kenna Love, who has completed a photographic project for the City of Rancho Mirage. Full-page ads appear in Los Angeles and Coast Magazines starting in April and running for 16 months. Gay and Lesbian life styles are depicted. Full coverage can be seen on "Relaxranchomirage.com." Kenna was also honored at a dinner on May 15 as photographer for the Rancho Mirage Tourism Marketing Department.

Barbara Kroll, on her retirement from Cal State University Northridge, where she has been a professor of linguistics since 1988. Barbara's teaching career began in 1967 and included four years at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in the early 1970s. She and her partner Ruth Spielman look forward to traveling and already have four trips planned in the next year!

Pam Postrel, on her new position as Senior Vice President of Creative Advertising for Universal Pictures.

Renee Lamkay, on being certified as a Senior Real Estate Specialist and on joining the ranks of REALTORS® who have earned the California Association of REALTORS® Graduate, GRI real estate designation, and SRES, Senior Real Estate Specialist designation. These designations are recognized by buyers, sellers, and other real estate industry members as professionals who have completed a series of courses and are trained to meet the special needs of maturing adults in real estate transactions.

Yael Maxwell, daughter of **Bruce Maxwell**, who graduated from Boston University on May 18, 2008 with a BS in Environmental Studies and a minor in Journalism. Yael will be moving to New York City in July.

Sam Maxwell, son of **Bruce Maxwell**, who graduated from Hart High School on June 4, 2008. Sam is on his way as a freshman at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Candice Levy and Diana Reiss on moving into their (almost) completed new home.

Lydia DeCygne-Katz, who will be entering Humboldt State College in the Fall and plans to be a Religion major.

Sylvia Sukop, who was the author of a feature article in the March 2008 issue of the arthouse publication Flaunt profiling fellow BCC member Vaughan Rachel chronicling her role in the avant-garde art movement in the 70's, including her marriage to artist, professor, and creator of the "happening," Allan Kaprow.

Please send your good news to the BCC office. We want to celebrate with you!

PHOTO: DAVI CHENG



Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Reverend Troy Perry at MCC LA, celebrating the Supreme Court ruling on May 15, 2008

PHOTO: VICTORIA DELGADILLO



Felicia Park-Rogers and Rachel Timoner receive their marriage license, June 17, 2008

PHOTO: VICTORIA DELGADILLO



Bracha Yael and Davi Cheng receive their marriage license, June 17, 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div> All events at BCC unless otherwise noted* </div>		1 7:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series Jews in Hollywood and Celluloid Closet 1	2 3:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series Jews in Hollywood and Celluloid Closet 1	3 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm No Torah Study	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY (BCC office closed) 6:30 pm Shabbat Services (note early time) Davi Cheng Bracha Yael Cheng	5
6 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 330 N. Fairfax	7 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	8	9 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	10 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	11 6:30 pm Telephone Service 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Rabbi Edwards Ethan Bair Drash by Kate Henningsen (embracing covenant)	12 11:00 am Project Caring Country Villa Wilshire 855 N. Fairfax
8:30 am Women's 13 Havurah shop/brunch Palisades Farmers Market 3:00 pm Congregational Meeting	14 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	15 7:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series Celluloid Closet 2, Times of Harvey Milk	16 3:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series Celluloid Closet 2, Times of Harvey Milk	17 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	18 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Rabbi Edwards Lydia Decygne-Katz Aufruf for Mindy Blum and Pam Postrel	19 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
20	21 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	22 7:00 pm LGBT Workshop Anti-Domestic Violence	23 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	24 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	25 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Rabbi Edwards Jeff Bernhardt	26
10:00 am 27 BCC Book Group <i>Naked in the Promised Land</i> (private home) 3:00 pm Women's Havurah Tennis & Pool Party (private home)	28 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	29 7:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series The Boys in the Band	30 3:00 pm Rabbi's Summer Movie Series The Boys in the Band	31 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards		

AUGUST 2008

TAMMUZ/AV 5768

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Rabbi Edwards' 14 th BCC Anniv. Miri Haruach New BCC Shabbat Ensemble	2
10:00 am Women's 3 Havurah Zuma Beach (see page 9) 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 330 N. Fairfax	4 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	5	6	7 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm No Torah Study	8 6:30 pm Telephone Service 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Elissa Barrett Zsa Zsa Gershick	9 11:00 am Project Caring Country Villa Wilshire 8:00 pm Tish'ah B'Av Service and Study Student Rabbi Joe Hample
10	11 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	12	13 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	14 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm No Torah Study	15 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Student Rabbi Joe Hample TBA Shabbat Nachamu	16 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
17	18 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	19	20	21 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	22 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Rabbi Edwards High Holiday Cantor Juval Porat	23
10:00 am 24 BCC Book Group <i>Call Me By Your Name</i> 5:00 pm Women's Havurah Bowling (Midtown lanes) 7:30 pm Women's Havurah L.A. Jewish Symphony	25 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal	26 7:00 pm High Holidays Preparation Class Juval Porat	27 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	28 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	29 7:00 pm 20s/30s Dinner (with JQ International) 8:00 pm Shabbat Services Ruach Chayim with Juval Porat Drash by Rabbi Edwards	30
31						

What do
you do
with
YOUR
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BEAUTIFUL AND ENDEARING GIFT CARDS

AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OUR SCHOOL

The children of BCC's religious school and family education program, Ohr Chayim, under the leadership of their teachers, have created lovely and touching greeting cards showcasing their art and Jewish learning in order to raise funds to help support their school. There is a display of the cards at the temple and on the BCC website. Please show your support for the learning of the next generation with your purchase! **Packets of eight unique cards are available for \$12** and you can purchase **three sets for \$30!** What a bargain (Have you bought a greeting card recently—they average \$4.00 each!). Thank you for supporting the children of BCC!



PHOTO: JUAN MEJIA

Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, and BCC member Davi Cheng at the Be'chol Lashon conference in San Francisco, May 2-5, 2008. On May 19, Rabbi Sizomu of Uganda became the first black rabbi from sub-Saharan Africa to be ordained by an American rabbinic seminary.

Be'chol Lashon (In Every Tongue) is a research and community building initiative of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, founded by Diane and Gary Tobin. Its purpose is to grow and strengthen the Jewish people through ethnic, cultural, and racial inclusiveness, to advocate for the diversity that has characterized the Jewish people throughout history, and to foster an expanding Jewish community that embraces its differences. For more information visit <http://www.bechollashon.org/> or the Institute for Jewish & Community Research.