

KOLOT NASHIM: WOMEN'S VOICES
WRITTEN BY PACIFIC SOUTHWEST BRANCH

This script was written for the 2004 Women's League Biennial Convention to augment the exhibit Beauty, Brains & Brawn: The New World Balabuste celebrating the lives of 31 Jewish women who contributed wisdom and creativity, their voices, to the world. The script includes these women, however, you may choose other Jewish women or select a few from each group in this script. An excellent prop is the Beauty, Brains & Brawn: The New World Balabuste poster series created by Women's League. (Sets of posters are available from the Women's League office).

[One or more narrators may read the script.]

Tonight as we welcome and honor the women of the outgoing and incoming Board of ____, we also celebrate the lives of Jewish women whom we recognize for their wisdom, strength, courage, and creativity. Although the diversity of their lives took them on different journeys, they share a heritage and a tradition. As both Jews and women, they often overcame great difficulties while following their dreams and some rose to incredible heights of achievement and influence.

They were and are women who excelled in commerce, finance, sports, philanthropy, science, law, and education; some were authors, others entertainers. Their individual voices were heard around the world and they, together with our women here tonight, have made, and continue to make a difference! They are an integral part of *Kolot Nashim*, Women's Voices from the past and present.

Among some of these women's voices are our past presidents whom we are honored to have here with us this evening. As your name is called, please rise and remain standing.

(Call names of past presidents in attendance)

Your voices through the years have provided our foundation, encouraged us, and continue to help us to maintain our high standards, and we thank you. You may be seated.

DISCHARGE OF OUTGOING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We ask the outgoing Board of Directors, for the years ____ to please stand.

As you conclude your service on our Board of Directors and take pride in the work you have accomplished, we present the following women who excelled in the field of sports using their energy and athletic talents. Like you, their passion and their voices were heard through their accomplishments. They had the strength and desire to participate and compete for something meaningful in their lives.

BOBBIE ROSENFELD was an Olympic gold medallist from Canada at the 1928 International Olympic Games in Amsterdam. She helped to topple traditional barriers against women participating in sports, by first being an all around athlete, then later a coach and sportswriter.

SENDA BERENSON born in Vilna in 1868, was known as the "Mother of Women's Basket Ball." She was the author and developer of the first basketball guide for women, which stressed socialization and cooperation rather than just competition.

THELMA "TIBY" EISEN played in the All American Girls Professional Baseball League of the 1940s and '50s, when women filled the roles of professional male ball players during World War II.

These female professional baseball players were memorialized in the movie "A League of Their Own."

You, as Board members, have demonstrated a desire to participate in leadership positions with your talent, time and energy. We are grateful and say *todab rabbah*. We discharge you from office with the knowledge that we may continue to count on your expertise. Please be seated.

DISCHARGE OF TABLE OFFICERS

Will the following outgoing Officers please come forward:

- (Name) Treasurer
- (Name) Financial Secretary
- (Name) Recording Secretary

The women we highlight next came from upper-class backgrounds. They could have spent their time and money in self-indulgence, but instead, raised their voices and chose to work in areas that gave meaning and purpose to the larger community.

ARLENE SCHINITZER a philanthropist born in 1929 in Salem, Oregon, is the region's most renowned patron of the arts. She is one of the founders of the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at the University of Oregon, and The Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation which provides assistance to those whose needs are not met by other charitable agencies.

REBECCA GRATZ, born in 1781, was the foremost American Jewish woman of her day, and one of the earliest known Jewish women activists. She organized the first Jewish Sunday school, worked to create charitable and educational institutions and helped found the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Philadelphia Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum.

These women, through their devotion to their communities, answered the voices of those who cried out in need. You have answered the call of our Sisterhood with your financial and historical portfolios. You have maintained scrupulous records and have contributed to fiscal and policy decisions of our organization.

You exemplify high standards of trust, confidence and integrity. We applaud the dedication and the extraordinary efforts you have made and it is with deep appreciation and admiration that we discharge you from your respective offices. Please be seated.

DISCHARGE OF OUTGOING VICE PRESIDENTS

We call upon the outgoing vice presidents to come forward: (Names and titles)

The following women have been engaged in the fields of medicine and health. Their voices contributed in ways that would vastly improve the quality of our lives.

JESSIE MARMORSTON, born in 1903, was a physician, scientist, professor of medicine and author. Her research into the connection between hormone secretion and cancer contributed to the discovery of the link between stress and disease.

BESSIE LOUISE MOSES founded the Bureau of Contraceptive Advice in 1927, the first birth control clinic in Baltimore, Maryland. She instructed doctors in contraceptive strategies and was a lecturer in women's educational institutions throughout the country.

ROSALYN YALOW became the first American born woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1977 for the development of a technique to measure insulin in the blood of diabetics. She continues to be a beacon for young women who aspire to the highest levels of achievement in science. Dr. Yalow was honored by Women's League's with the Mathilde Schechter Award in 1978.

These three women held highly regarded positions in medicine and developed techniques that helped to make a difference in our world.

As vice-presidents you have helped to make a difference in our Sisterhood and beyond. You were always ready to act with enthusiasm and expertise. We acknowledge with much appreciation your commitment, wisdom and determination. You are an inspiration to those who follow. We express our gratitude for your work, time and effort, and we discharge you from your vice-presidencies. *Today rabbah.* Please be seated.

DISCHARGE OF PRESIDENT

And now, (President), please come forward. As we prepare to discharge you from the office of president, we highlight the following three women:

ROSA SONNENSCHNEIN, born in Austria in 1847, was the founder and editor of *The American Jewess*, the first English language magazine for Jewish women in North America. An ardent Zionist, she was one of the 21 women attendees at the First and Second Zionist Congresses.

RUTH BADER GINSBURG was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the United States Supreme Court in 1993. The first Jewish justice since 1969, she is known for scholarly and balanced opinions and is an especially ardent advocate for gender-related issues.

LILLIAN RIFKIN BLUMENFELD, the daughter of Russian immigrants, was born in 1897 and raised in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. She was a progressive educator with a boundless love and commitment to her students. She believed that the classroom was not only the place to access knowledge, but also a laboratory for daily living.

With their voices, these women have been innovators in their chosen fields. Their determination, perseverance and democratic style of leadership, have paved the way for us all.

(Name of President), you can be described as an innovator. You have done more than lead. You continue to inspire and motivate our women to take on new challenges, while always being invested in their successes. What a superb leader and wonderful role model you are for all of us! As president of our Sisterhood, you have (list her accomplishments and other personal reflections)

We discharge you with deep appreciation and know that you will continue to be a blessing to our Sisterhood and to Women's League. *Y'ishar kohabekb.*

INCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are proud to say that we "stand on the shoulders of the ones who came before us," as we now ask the Incoming Board of Directors to please rise:

As you begin your term of office on the Board of Directors for ____ we are proud to showcase women who used their voices in the field of entertainment.

PAULINE BERMAN, born on the eve of the 20th century, demonstrated great talent and energy as an institutional organizer. She was the first woman in the nation to host her own radio program in Orlando, Florida, and became renowned for speaking out against hate, bigotry and prejudice.

SOPHIE TUCKER was considered radical for an Orthodox woman at the turn of the twentieth century. Having been dubbed the "Red Hot Mama" of the Ziegfeld Follies, she became a beloved stage star on two continents and referred to herself as a "gutsy model of ahead-of-her-time feminism."

THEDA BARA was born Theodosia Goodman in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1890, and became famous for her portrayal of sexy, beautiful, predatory women. She was alluring, unusual, and referred to as “the vamp.” She was the first fabricated screen star.

GILDA RADNER, born in Detroit in 1946, is best known for her comedic abilities especially on Saturday Night Live, delighting audiences with her sharp and witty repertoire. Diagnosed with terminal ovarian cancer, Gilda dedicated the rest of her too-brief life to helping other cancer patients and their families.

DORA WASSERMAN was born in 1919 in Chernikhov, Ukraine. Known as the *grande dame* of the Yiddish Theater in Canada, she preserved and gave voice to strengthening Yiddish culture.

We are aware that it is the duty of the Board of Directors to lead, believing that a great leader is not necessarily the one in the spotlight, but often the one leading the applause. Women are intrinsic to their own times. This is your time! We look forward to the next few years as you raise your voices and build bridges to the future of our Sisterhood, and Women’s League for Conservative Judaism. It is our pleasure to officially install you and wish you *mazal tov*. Please be seated.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

We continue with the installation of table officers. Please come forward: (Names and Offices)

Although the following six women lived in different times and places, they represent some of the best, most creative and brightest in the business and financial world.

CARRIE MARCUS NEIMAN, merchant and fashion authority, established Neiman Marcus Department Stores in 1907. Her high standard of service and uncompromising demand for quality became a signature of the company.

IDA COHEN ROSENTHAL, a Russian immigrant who came to the United States penniless, founded the Maidenform Bra Company in 1928. As a result of her success she established and funded the Ida William Rosenthal Fellowship in Judaica and Hebraica at New York University.

JENNIE GROSSINGER who was born in Austria in 1892, turned a run-down Catskill Mountain farm into an American institution. Always involved in charitable causes, she raised millions of dollars in war bonds during World War II.

SHIRLEY POLYKOFF was born in Brooklyn in 1908 and believed that women could be whatever they wanted to be, including blonde. She set the world afire with her famous slogan for Clairol, “Does she or doesn’t she?”

ESTEE LAUDER was born Josephine Esther Mentzer to immigrant parents in 1910. She transformed beauty into big business by cultivating classy sales methods and giving away samples, to create a cosmetic empire.

RUTH MOSKO HANDLER, co-founder of Mattel, Inc., was known as “Barbie’s Mom.” Introduced in 1959, Barbie has become a \$2.6 billion business. In 1975, Ruth, a breast cancer survivor, gratefully and proudly established “Nearly Me,” a company that manufactures breast prostheses.

These women listened to their inner voices, excelling in their spheres of business. Leaving a legacy of success and achievement, each understood that leadership is not only position, but also action.

We know that each of you possesses the wisdom and perseverance of these women. Your tasks involve important financial and detailed record keeping. We know you will use your talents, skills and vigor to carry out the responsibilities of your respective offices and bring dedication to your new positions, enhanced by your optimism and organizational expertise.

It gives us great pleasure to install you as the (name the offices) of _____ Sisterhood for the term of _____ *Mazal tov!* Please be seated.

INSTALLATION OF VICE PRESIDENTS

We turn to our incoming Vice Presidents. As your name is called, please come forward: (Names and vice presidencies)

The following women were passionate about, and devoted to, the fields of education and religion where their voices were heard.

RAY FRANK was born in 1861, and although never ordained, was known as the Girl Rabbi of the West. One newspaper called her the “first woman since Deborah to preach in a synagogue.” Her tireless efforts and lifelong enthusiasm for Judaism opened the door for Jewish women’s long journey toward public religious leadership.

MATHILDE ROTH SCHECHTER was born in Germany in 1857. As the wife of Rabbi Solomon Schechter, she was the founder and organizer of National Women’s League of the United Synagogue of America, the original name of Women’s League for Conservative Judaism. A passionate advocate for Jewish education for all Jewish women, Mathilde Schechter, together with Henrietta Szold, was also a co-founder of Hadassah.

ANNE LAPIDUS LERNER was the first woman appointed to a high administrative rank in a Jewish educational institution of higher learning. Today she remains a distinguished member of the Jewish Theological Seminary faculty, author and lecturer.

The voices of these women were motivational forces in their respective fields of endeavor. They inspired, educated and earned the respect of men and women alike. Many times their aspirations were met with discouragement, but they moved forward with faith, devotion, commitment, and sincerity of purpose.

We are witness to your sincerity and know that each of you brings the qualifications of knowledge and understanding to the office of vice president. You have shown yourselves to be outstanding leaders.

We officially install you as vice-presidents of _____ Sisterhood aware that your leadership will bring our organization to even greater heights.

We wish you *hatzlahab*, success, and *simbah rabbah*, much joy. Please be seated.

INCOMING PRESIDENT

It is with joy that we invite (Name) to please come forward as we prepare to install you as our president for the next ____ years.

We take this opportunity to reflect upon three prominent women authors. Their voices will always be heard thanks to their books, plays and publications.

LILLIAN HELLMAN, born in 1905, was one of the major playwrights and authors of 20th century America. Never breaking with her steadfast determination and beliefs, particularly during the

infamous McCarthy hearings, her plays often reflected social justice themes that provoked controversy.

SADIE ROSE WEILERSTEIN was a leading author of Jewish children's books and short stories. *K'tonton*, the Jewish Tom Thumb, and the best known of her characters, first appeared in Outlook Magazine in 1930. She received the Yovel Award from Women's League.

JUDY BLUME started her climb to recognition as a best selling author of children's books, with 75 million copies translated into more than 20 languages. Her love of children led her to establish The Kids Fund, a charitable and educational foundation.

(Name), authors bring wisdom, inspiration, excitement, imagination and beauty to our lives, and that is what you continue to bring to our esteemed organization.

[Add a few personal things about the president, her leadership qualities, and accomplishments in Sisterhood.]

We have recognized Jewish women from the past and the present, who used their individual voices in their various journeys. The authors and writers to whom we referred, not only composed and created, but they were involved in the process of education.

Through your years of service to Sisterhood, you have used your voice to lead, teach and inspire. In your journey to this special day, you have done more than just believe, and work, you have helped to create a vital and dedicated Sisterhood, and we thank you for making a difference!

It is with great joy and pride that I officially install you as President of _____ Sisterhood for the years _____. May you go from strength to strength. *Mazal tov!*

[Present President's Pin and gavel or any other gifts]

President's remarks

CONCLUSION

We have heard about the different roads and endeavors women have chosen and we are proud of their accomplishments, fortitude and perseverance.

Each of you here is a positive force for our future. We know that through our individual voices, each one of us in Sisterhood makes a difference!

Jewish women choose different paths in life, but no matter the road, we take a little of each other everywhere!