

Jewish Women's Archive



***Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution:
Exploring Identities, Accomplishments, and
Challenges***

Materials for Part 3

Excerpted from the Jewish Women's Archive's
online exhibit at

<http://jwa.org/feminism>

Shifra Bronznick

Looking over this program for the annual Women's Festival at Queens College in New York that I helped to plan in the early 1970s brought back the rush of exhilaration that I experienced during that time, as a member of the Women's Collective. Feminism was exploding, illuminating my life with new ideas.

Feminism gave women the power to change the world, and the world was changing for women. We ranged across an extraordinary terrain – from politics to culture to family life – and there was no territory that our feminist imaginations and visions could not discover, recover, or transform.

Jewish feminism was more complicated for me. I loved Network's first National Conference of Jewish Women at the McAlpin Hotel in 1973, and I dedicated myself to moving these issues forward in the Jewish world. But Jewish feminism always seemed more laborious and more constricting. And yet, at the same time, my commitment to Jewish feminism was a powerful calling that kept me returning again and again to my communal roots.

I lived in two parallel universes. As a feminist I expanded my consciousness. As a counterculture Jewish activist and Jewish feminist, I explored within, to discover my identity as a Jewish woman. My feminism went wide; my Jewish feminism went deep. Sometimes these roles have been in conflict. Sometimes they have converged.

Thirty years later, I continue to exist in these parallel worlds – emotionally, politically, and intellectually. Often I feel confident that feminism has *truly* changed the world – remaking the family, reshaping the relationships between men and women, expanding our notions of leadership, challenging the assumption that status derives from wealth and work, and opening every single field to women's influence. Other times, I feel the weariness that comes from seeing the dirt under our fingernails as we labor to make some small plants grow in a garden that seems so far from Eden, where our huge efforts seem so disproportionate to our modest outcomes.

Still committed and still questioning: when will our women's work become the work of the world?

Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution

Exploring Identities, Accomplishments, and Challenges: PART 3

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As president of Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community, Shifra Bronznick led the charge in demanding more women leaders of major Jewish organizations. Shifra Bronznick had an early start in Jewish community organizing, co-founding a group that brought together Jewish students from public and day schools when she was still a high school student. She went on to establish a women's center on campus when she was a student at Queens College. In 1997, she helped prepare a report on women's leadership in Jewish organizations—only two out of the forty organizations surveyed had women CEOs. A further report for the Trust for Jewish Philanthropy led to her launch of AWP to create more possibilities for women leaders in the Jewish community. Bronznick has also consulted to organizations ranging from American Jewish World Service to the American Indian College Fund to the National Council of Churches. She served as leadership strategist to the White House Project, designing the National Women's Leadership Summits. For her work as a coalition-builder, Bronznick has repeatedly been chosen by the Jewish Daily Forward for their annual list of 50 most influential Jews.

To learn more about Shifra, go to her page in the *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* exhibit: <http://jwa.org/feminism/bronznick-shifra>.