

Clearly there wasn't so much that separated us after all.

I also befriended a teen named Brosback, who carried a great burden on his shoulders. As the eldest of three siblings, he served as the designated caregiver in his family. He shared with me that Ghana has overwhelming problems: three percent of the population of Ghana has AIDS, many with no access to treatment; forty-five percent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day; and Ghana still struggles to find a democratic path in its 50th year of independence. And yet, Brosback was hopeful for the future. One of the most spiritual moments of this trip was watching Brosback's church choir perform. The traditional melodies, the incredible enthusiasm – the music formed a truly inspirational *sukkah* of peace.

On the last day of our travels we visited a Liberian displaced persons camp. Ghana plays host to 42,000 Liberian refugees who have found themselves homeless while neighboring Liberia encounters ongoing internal strife. With open sewers and minimal clean water access, the camp is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Encountering such sorrow and pain directly, I couldn't help but wonder what it must have been like for many of our relatives who spent time in displaced persons camps in Europe after the Holocaust. While it was a different time and a different land, this Ghanain story was also my story. Just as my family has found blessing, so too must I consider these and other disadvantaged citizens of the world.

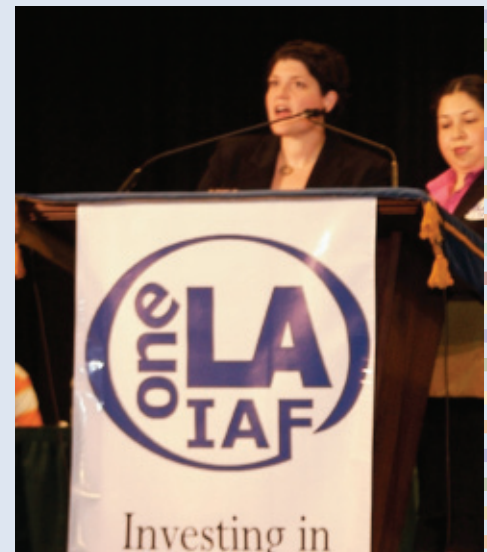
This trip made me acutely aware of my responsibilities as a Jew and as a world citizen. It served as an awakening to the power of human connection. Each one of us, working together, can make a difference. The people of Ghana were among the kindest and most welcoming people that I have ever met. As we prepared for our departure, I was taught one more Ewe phrase: *mau neira* – may God bless you. I now hold in my prayers my new friends in Ghana. Moses, Brosback, and to all those in need: *mau neira*. Together, may we find a path to stand hand in hand, healing the world, spreading and sharing blessings for all. ■

Rabbi Daniel Mikelberg is Assistant Rabbi of Temple Shalom, Vancouver, British Columbia

A number of students come to HUC-JIR with family legacies to uphold. Among them, **Rachel Joseph, L'12**, **Aaron Miller, C'11**, and **Joseph Skloot, N'10**, describe how they are putting their own stamp on their respective rabbinical dynasties.

A third-generation rabbi-to-be and Schusterman Fellow (see page 15) in Cincinnati, **Aaron Miller** has traced his Reform rabbinical ancestry at HUC-JIR. "I did not know my Grandpa Judea as 'Rabbi Miller' until very recently," he explained. "Last year, for my grandmother's birthday present, I researched my grandfather's files at the American Jewish Archives and put together a scrapbook on his life as a rabbi. As I searched through countless sermons, newspaper articles, and letters, it became clear that Grandpa Judea's rabbinical interests extended far beyond his congregation."

Miller learned that his grandfather was an advocate for Soviet Jewry, ardent supporter of the State of Israel, traveled to the South twice during the 1960s to advocate for integration and voter registration, and was involved in



Rachel Joseph, L '12

The family cause of human rights and interfaith relations is a source of inspiration for Miller's vision for his own rabbinate. "My dad has established close relationships with his Christian 'clergy buddies' with whom he has traveled all over the world – Bosnia, Croatia,

ADDING A LINK TO

countless other causes. "I remember growing up that my family would not eat California grapes but never knew why, until I read in his archives how appalled Grandpa was by the unjust treatment of California grape workers. Grandpa dedicated himself to social justice, both in the United States and all over the world."

Miller has a multi-generational perspective on the rabbinate. "I grew up observing and experiencing the life of a congregational rabbi first hand, and it was the congregational rabbinate – that intimate involvement within a contained Jewish community – that drew me toward becoming a rabbi. My dad, Rabbi Jonathan Miller, has loved serving as rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, AL, and I expect to find the pulpit rabbinate equally rewarding."

Having a rabbi as a father offers many benefits. He notes that "over the years, my dad has become my best rabbinical sounding-board. Whether I am writing a difficult sermon or experiencing some challenge at my student pulpit, I know that he is only a phone call away."

and Southeast Asia – to study the effects of intolerance and strategies for resolution," he says. "This has led to a growing sense of love and respect between the clergy of Birmingham across religious and denominational affiliations, and more importantly, between the congregants of their synagogues and churches."

For Tisch Fellow (see page 16) **Rachel Joseph**, a third-year rabbinical student in Los Angeles, "one of the role models who influenced my decision to become a Jewish professional is a person who serves many roles in my life: that of my rabbi, my teacher, and most importantly, my father, Rabbi Sam Joseph" (see page 60).

Seeking to find a way to bring a Jewish voice into a non-Jewish world, the political arena became an important outlet for Joseph. She began to volunteer at the Food Bank/Free Store of Cincinnati, OH, which was located a block away from her elementary school, and subsequently became engaged in her first political campaign to secure funding for that organization.

Although she knew she wanted to attend rabbinical school after graduating from college, she sought to first “experience being a Jewish adult living my Judaism in the real world, without the safety net of my family.” This led her to Washington, D.C., where she was selected to be an Eisendrath Legislative Assistant for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC). Next, she accepted a legislative position with Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In this capacity, she spent seven years fighting for religious liberty and protecting the religious diversity of this nation.

“While I loved my work in Washington, D.C. and strongly believe it is imperative to lobby for a just government, I knew that political activism was only a part of my Judaism,” she recalls. On Capitol Hill I was working on policies that affected real people’s lives, but I was removed from those actual people. By becoming a rabbi, I can be a true agent for change by building and improving my community.”

Belarus (see page 32) during her Year-In-Israel, she says, “I am learning how to lead my future congregation through both education and action. Inspired by my dad’s example and teaching, I have found my own path to this career. I look forward to leading others toward a rich and full Jewish life.”

Joseph Skloot’s journey to the rabbinate was inspired by his grandfather, Rabbi Samuel Volkman, a 13th-generation Jewish spiritual leader who was ordained at HUC in Cincinnati in 1934. Skloot says his grandfather “wasn’t a rabbi, he was *the* rabbi. But, more than that, he represented a notion of scholarship, which was immensely important to me. He was simply the smartest person that I knew, and his bookshelves were three volumes deep. And that was what it meant to be a rabbi: To be learned – and to be deeply engaged in community life.”

A fifth-year rabbinical student and Tisch Fellow (see page 16) at HUC-JIR/NY, Skloot is passionate about combining his rabbinate with an academic career. He is a



Joseph Skloot, N '10

torate in Early Modern and Modern Jewish History at Columbia University, under the guidance of Dr. Elisheva Carlebach.

THE FAMILY LEGACY

Jean Bloch Rosensaft
Elizabeth McNamara Mueller



Aaron Miller, C '11

Whether as a Wexner Fellow, which enables her to build community across denominational lines, or as the co-coordinator of the *Pesach* Project in the renascent Jewish communities of Russia, Ukraine, and

Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History graduate of Princeton, where he was a leader of the Princeton Center for Jewish Life, his thesis was a biography of Joseph Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, and a critical analysis of the *Hertz Pentateuch*. “I went through his archive at the University of Southampton in England and spent a year reading everything that Hertz wrote. Hertz’s commentary, which is read by Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, was the book that united American Jewry and English-speaking world Jewry.”

For Skloot, Hertz represented “the struggle of many intellectuals of his historical period who were searching for the balance between being both a Jew and a citizen of the modern world.” He seeks to continue to study that struggle in his graduate work, which will explore “the formative texts of rabbinic Judaism and how those texts have some claim on our lives today.” This Fall he will simultaneously fulfill his last year of rabbinical education and begin his studies toward a doc-

He credits HUC-JIR for imbuing intellectual study with heart. “HUC-JIR has been about heart and heritage, about nurturing my spirituality, love of prayer and Jewish music, and interest in counseling and engaging with people.” As he follows in the footsteps of his grandfather, and of his mentor Rabbi David Ellenson, who studied religion at the doctoral level at Columbia while completing his rabbinical studies at HUC-JIR, Skloot says “I know that my rabbinate will be enriched by my scholarship, and my scholarship will be enriched by my rabbinate.”

He points to the intellectual curiosity of his eleventh- and twelfth-grade students at Congregation Kol Ami in White Plains, NY, and their highly educated, professional parents, and concludes: “Jews are really smart people. They don’t want to be talked down to. As a rabbi and keeper of the tradition, I hope to give them a Judaism that is intellectually demanding.” ■