



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
היברו יוניון קולג' – מכון למדעי היהדות

**Alysa Stanton - First African-American Woman Ordained a Rabbi
in Jewish History at HUC-JIR's Ordination Ceremonies in Cincinnati**



Alysa Stanton, the first African-American woman to be ordained a rabbi in Jewish history, was ordained by Rabbi David Ellenson, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), on Saturday, June 6th at 9 am at Cincinnati's landmark Plum Street Temple. She was among 14 new rabbis (10 women, 4 men) who were ordained in Cincinnati and one of the 43 rabbinical graduates of the Class of 2009 (30 women, 13 men) at HUC-JIR's ordination convocations at its stateside campuses in New York, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati during this 134th academic year.

Rabbi Ellenson said, "Alysa Stanton's history-making journey reflects her profound commitment to Jewish learning and leadership. She brings to her rabbinate an infinite capacity for human understanding and pastoral care, as well as a passionate commitment to building a sacred, inclusive community. She and her classmates of the Class of 2009 emerge from the College-Institute imbued with leadership skills, steeped in knowledge, strengthened by a commitment to service, and dedicated to bringing hope and healing to our troubled world. As they touch the lives of others through their sacred work as rabbis, cantors, educators, communal professionals, scholars, and pastoral care-givers throughout North America and around the world, they will be a source of inspiration and guidance."

Alysa Stanton said, "I am honored to be a visual presence of the 'new face' of Judaism in an era for deepening our faith in humanity and strengthening our faith as Jews. My goals as a rabbi are to break down barriers, build bridges, and provide hope. I look forward to being the spiritual leader of an inclusive sacred community that welcomes and engages all."

According to the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, at least 20% of American Jews (300,000-400,000) are racially and ethnically diverse by birth and by the portals of conversion and adoption. Approximately 20,000-30,000 marriages between Jews and African-Americans grew out of the civil rights movement. This diversity, reflecting the variety and richness of Jewish heritage, is embraced by the Reform Movement of Judaism, with its commitment to inclusivity.

Alysa Stanton entered HUC-JIR's rabbinical program in 2002 after a career as a licensed psychotherapist in trauma and grief. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Stanton and her family moved to Lakewood, Colorado at the age of eleven. She comes from a Pentecostal Christian home, but started her own spiritual quest at the age of nine. She converted to Judaism over twenty years ago during her college years, driving 144 miles each week to study with a Conservative rabbi in an Orthodox synagogue. This focused determination culminated with a traditional conversion in 1987. She completed her first year at HUC-JIR's campus in Jerusalem, followed by studies at HUC-JIR's Cincinnati campus.

As a student rabbi, she preached, taught, and applied Jewish tradition to lifecycle rituals and contemporary issues, and promoted interfaith and intracultural dialogue in Reform congregations and communities throughout the United States, including Piqua and Portsmouth, Ohio; Columbus, Indiana; Dothan, Alabama; Petoskey, Michigan; Williamson, West Virginia; and Grand Forks, North Dakota. Her rabbinical training included Clinical Pastoral Education at Christ Hospital in Cincinnati. She joined Crossroads Hospice in Blue Ash, Ohio, where she served as its Jewish Chaplain, and her rabbinical thesis provided a biographical overview of Rabbi Edgar Magnin, one of the leading Reform rabbis of Southern California.

Prior to HUC-JIR, Stanton studied social psychology, neuro-psychology, and interpersonal relationships at Lancaster University in England (1983-84), received the B.S. in Psychology (1988) and M.Ed. in Counseling and Multiculturalism (1992) from Colorado State University, and Professional Counselor Licensure (1998). She will receive the M.A. in Hebrew Letters from HUC-JIR on June 7th at Graduation Ceremonies.

On August 1, 2009, she will become the rabbi of Congregation Bayt Shalom in Greenville, North Carolina – a Conservative congregation of 53 families that recently became dually affiliated with the Reform movement. She is the proud mother of an adopted 14-year old daughter, Shana.

Photo Caption: Rabbi David Ellenson, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, ordaining Rabbi Alysa Stanton, the first African-American woman rabbi in Jewish history, at Ordination Ceremonies on June 6, 2009 at Plum Street Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio. Rabbi Stanton studied for the rabbinate at the seminary for the Reform Movement in Judaism and will be serving Congregation Bayt Shalom in Greenville, NC. **[Photo credit: Janine Spang]**

Founded in 1875, **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion** is the nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR educates men and women for service to American and world Jewry as rabbis, cantors, educators, and communal service professionals, and offers graduate and post-graduate programs to scholars of all faiths. With centers of learning in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York, HUC-JIR's scholarly resources comprise renowned library and museum collections, the American Jewish Archives, biblical archaeology excavations, research institutes and centers, and academic publications. HUC-JIR invites the community to an array of cultural and educational programs which illuminate Jewish history, identity, and contemporary creativity and which foster interfaith and multiethnic understanding. www.huc.edu

