

**IUPUI**

**UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives  
Indianapolis

**Oral History Project**  
**on**  
**Men and Women in Philanthropy**

**Interviewee:**  
**Ruth Messinger**

**Interviewer:**  
**Andrea K. Pactor**

**Date of interview:**  
**May 20, 2008**

**Ruth Messinger**  
**Oral History Interview**  
**May 20, 2008**

AP: Okay, today is Tuesday, May the 20<sup>th</sup> and I'm sitting in the University Library with Ruth Messinger, the President and Executive Director of the American Jewish World Service, for an oral interview for the philanthropic studies archives. This is Andrea Pactor speaking. It's a beautiful day here in Indianapolis.

Alright, good morning Ruth, how are you today?

RM: Very well, Andrea, thank you.

AP: Well good. What I would like to do for the first part of our talk today is to run through a little bit of your personal experiences and then to focus specifically on your work with AJWS.

RM: Okay.

AP: So I'll kind of keep an eye on the clock and we'll go from there.

You have a very interesting background and I would like you to give a brief synopsis of it, particularly talking about that transition between politics and the time that you joined us in philanthropy.

RM: Alright, well I guess it would be best to say that I've never believed that you just have one profession that you pursue. So I had a lot of different jobs. I have a degree in social work. I did a lot of early community organizing and worked for a community school that was set up by

parents, and that is relevant because a great deal of what I did with that organization was to help it raise its first money. So I've been doing fundraising all along.

As I got interested in issues in my community and saw the obvious need for some changes, I began to look more and more at the people who were making the decisions that affected the community's life. I think at that moment I developed an interest in politics so when the opportunity came along to actually run for local office, I seized it. It takes a while to get elected, so I ran a couple of times.

When I held office I became, perhaps, that much more focused on issues of funds and funding. First of all you're going to have to raise a lot of money as a candidate which is not easy because it's not tax exempt, and people aren't sure whether they want to invest in you. But I also got very interested in how government at various levels budgets its money, how little money is available, how difficult it is for community groups that are actually making change to access public dollars, and how hard it is for them to raise philanthropic dollars. So I'd say that that interest was always there.

When I was ready to leave government, which was because I'd served for 20 years, and because I chose, I didn't need to do this, but I chose to run for mayor, knowing that it was an unlikely campaign running against a popular incumbent. So I had most of the year and half of that campaign to be thinking about what I would do next. Based on my background and interests, I just assumed that I would run a not-for-profit organization so I knew that from that point of view, I would be raising money. What only became clear when the American Jewish World Service presented itself as a job opportunity is that I would not only be raising money but dispersing

money, because we are a public foundation, so we raise now – we used to be much smaller - but now we raise \$32 million dollars a year and we spend a little over half of that in grants to existing organizations, in addition to the other programs that we run.

So, I've become a philanthropist, although it's a philanthropist of other people's money which is different than an individual philanthropist. We take great care to reassure our donors that their money will be well spent and then to give it out carefully and thoughtfully. So that's a key component of the job, although I want to say that I am probably a little more focused on the broader substantive issues: what is this organization, what are the challenges in global international development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How can I – I guess this next one is related to fundraising – how can I educate in my target community which is the Jewish community in North America the importance of doing global work? It is an educational challenge but it's obviously also a fundraising challenge.

AP: Tell us a little bit about your academic work. Just for the record.

RM: I attended Radcliffe College, which was the women's college of Harvard University, which unfortunately doesn't exist anymore. I mean the University exists but Radcliffe doesn't exist as an undergraduate college. But it was basically a Harvard education. That's my B.A. I majored in political science not because I had any notion that I was going to end up going into government but because it was a really good liberal arts major.

And I then went to social work school, which was intentional except that when I enrolled in social work school, I thought I wanted to be was a case worker, and by the time I finished social

work school I knew that was exactly what I did not want to be. I had fortunately learned something about community organizing and something about administration and management and so I was able to take the skills that I picked up in graduate school and apply them in very different arenas in my life.

AP: That's very good.

Through your life experiences, you've probably had a couple of role models. Would you amplify on one or two of them - people who influenced you in some way, shape or form?

RM: Sure. My most significant role model was my mother for several reasons. My mother went very far in higher education for her age cohort – she graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1936 and did all the work except a doctorate for an advanced degree in philosophy. She was a student at the New School for Social Research which is now called the New School University in New York. At the time that she went there it was known, I don't know what its official name was, but it was known as the university in exile because it was the teaching site for all of the distinguished academics who fled Nazi Germany.

AP: Oh I didn't know that...

RM: So it was quite a dramatic story. She studied with a major philosopher named Paul Weiss who has written literally I think about eighty books. Then through a variety of events, she got a job at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America which is the center for training conservative

rabbis. She was their public relations, radio and television specialist before that was really a field.

AP: Certainly not a field for women.

RM: Right. It really wasn't a field. She was like figuring it out. How do you work with, in her case it was religion editors, how do you get the story out? She's the person who for many years wrote the annual full page ads that the Seminary publishes at the time of the annual High Holidays in the Jewish community that chose to raise provocative ethical issues for the community. So she did all of that. I got to see her as a model of a working mom when most moms weren't working unless they had to. I got to see her as somebody passionately interested in everything from good grammar to explaining the activist role to Jews, the Jewish commitment to social justice, and she was a master of using time. Never was known to do fewer than two things at the same time, and I'm afraid I inherited that and built upon it in a way that occasionally is aggravating to other people. But I learned it from her.

AP: It's only because they can't do it themselves.

RM: Oh, maybe. So I learned it from her and I would say that she was the primary role model. Her father, my maternal grandfather, was a serious scholar who loved teaching his grandchildren. So it was sort of a constant, I don't know what the comparison is but we were always being asked questions, tested as to what we knew, given and shown how to find out additional information. It was a great way, for me at least, to grow up. Both my grandfather and my grandmother and both my parents were activists in supporting Jewish organizations with their

philanthropy to some extent and with their time to a great extent. So that was another modeling opportunity and then I would just say that fortunately later on in my life I was able to work with and learn from some distinguished people in politics and also in one instance, which was very important, I had a boss for about six years who actually taught me that it's good for serious people to have a sense of humor.

AP: I bet your mother and your grandfather had a sense of humor as well.

RM: Some!

AP: Were there any particular characteristics other than the ones that you've mentioned that you rely on today that you learned from your mother and your grandfather, particularly in terms of philanthropy?

RM: Well, that's really interesting. Yes, in the sense that it was a constant focus of discussion because they were so involved. They did lay work for many Jewish organizations serving on boards, major agencies like the Jewish Childcare Association, and the Lakewood Home for Unwed Mothers. My father was literally on the board of the Jewish Home & Hospital in New York for close to 60 years.

AP: Wow.

He was often the treasurer of that board. He was a CPA. But anyway so all of that led to discussions about raising money, giving money, who the big philanthropists were, how people gave money, how people should be giving more money, etc.

I would say though, because I feel very strongly about this, but it struck me really only in the last 15 or 20 years of my life as a fundraiser that I don't think my family talked enough and I don't think most families talk at all about their commitment to give charity. So people, even people who are charitable givers, do it with their checkbooks late at night in consultation with each other. They don't say to their kids nearly often enough, here's what we're doing, here's what we're choosing to sacrifice, to give some money to a cause and here's why. We'd like you to be involved in thinking about what you'd like to do. So in the last 20 years I've become very conscious both about talking to audiences about their own philanthropy and about modeling with our grandchildren the importance of giving away money.

AP: And of course the Talmud teaches that even the poorest of poor should give tzedakah.

RM: Right.

AP: So...so what I hear is that your parents and your grandparents, those generations, focused most of their conversation about philanthropy, tzedakah, and board service within the Jewish community. Is that an accurate statement?

RM: Yes, although I think they probably did have other charitable causes but most of the talk was focused on Jewish giving. And again they did not, they were not, and they surely did not see



themselves as big givers, and I think one of the challenges in many communities of philanthropy, both those people who are raising the funds and those people who are structured to encourage philanthropy, there is much too much of a division between all the really big funders and then these other guys. And these other guys who are regularly asked for money and very often are giving away a higher percentage of their annual budget and pushing themselves to be able to donate, I believe do not get sufficiently appreciated and therefore don't think highly enough of themselves and their own philanthropy and by the way as a consequence – this is not directly about my family – but as a consequence often don't give strategically because they think that what they do with their annual who knows what - \$10,000 – dividing it up between and among charities – well who cares? Well everybody should care and they should care most of all about whether or not they're giving to issues that they care about the most; whether or not they really vetted the organizations that they are giving to.

So I think that there is a constant need for education of all people about the notion, actually the word philanthropy, because if you ask the average person on the street or the student body of IU where you have a distinguished Center of Philanthropy, I think they would tell you that Bill Gates is a philanthropist but that they're not a philanthropist. But of course they are a philanthropist. If they give away money or time, that's philanthropy. The challenge is how to help people think about this as a common and shared activity that everyone ought to approach strategically.

AP: Given that you grew up in an environment that talked about philanthropy in a variety of ways and that you've shared a little bit about the fact of this disparity, what's your personal definition of philanthropy?

RM: I don't know if I could give it to you in one sentence because I don't ever do it that way, but I am attracted to the notion that the root of the word philanthropy, philanthropy implies love of human beings, concern for the other. I put a great deal of emphasis on the correct translation of the Jewish word tzedakah. For reasons that are incredibly irritating to me tzedakah is regularly defined in the Jewish community up and down the line including by "learned" people who know better, as charity, whereas the root of tzedakah is the word tzedek which means justice.

There is a huge and I think a most powerful distinction which is really what American Jewish World Service represents between giving people some money because you know what they need and maybe they can get it, or giving them goods which is even worse because you know what they need, and helping create a more just world. It may be the same money to the same organization and it may not be, but it ought to be thought about as trying to increase justice, economic equality, social equality, fairness in the world.

And so some of my personal giving – like everybody – some of my personal giving is simply on whim but a great deal of it – the majority of it is more thoughtful and strategic – is this a cause I want to support? Am I an appropriate person to be supporting this cause given my values? Am I helping to move the world toward justice? Of course from my point of view, with my background, that's a reason to give a certain amount of money to candidates which is not officially philanthropy because it's not tax deductible, but for me it certainly is philanthropy. Taking my otherwise disposable income that I could dispose of for myself or my family and giving it to someone who is running for office because I think that either, because sometimes I'm really pretty clear they are not going to win, but I think that they deserve to have the money to

run a race and raise the issues or even better because I think that with enough funding they have a chance of winning and they are people who I believe will create a more just city, state, nation, world.

AP: You've talked a little bit about the concept of tzedakah, which is core to Jewish values. Tell us a little bit about how your religion informs your work.

RM: It's good that we started by talking about some family background because I was imbued in all of this without paying a lot of attention to it. The version of Judaism with which I was raised wasn't nearly so focused on which denomination and how many times you went to synagogue and exactly which rituals you observe. It was focused on living as a Jew which meant caring about other people, giving something back, and working towards justice. And the ads of my mother's that I referred to - she did the first ever full-page ad talking about why is environment a Jewish issue - she did the first ever ad that said there is domestic violence in the Jewish community. So all of these issues - I just grew up with all of that. My religion informed who I am and created me as a person concerned about social justice and doing for the other. And by the way, this is all interesting because my sister, I have one sibling, would be the first to tell you that most of the religion stuff didn't take with her. She wasn't going to go to Hebrew School, she wasn't going to stay in synagogue, but she's a pediatrician. She's been a pediatrician for 35 years and, clearly out of the same instinct that molded her, is the way in which she shaped her practice and conducts her practice that is entirely about taking care of the other.

AP: In Judaism we have the concept of tzedakah which you have defined as justice coming from the root of tzedek. We also have the value of tikkun olam. Can you amplify on that just a little bit?

RM: Sure. Although you know this has now become a controversial issue. Today in modern Judaism there is a common reference to the term tikkun olam, which means to heal or repair the world. And, we in American Jewish World Service take that very seriously. We make the point of saying the world is not only your own little world or your own Jewish community or just the Jewish world, it's the world. Each of us has different circles of obligation and those circles of obligation of course start with yourself and your family, but for our community as a whole they should include worrying about the people in the world who are today's worst victims of poverty, oppression, disease, and hunger. When I said there is some controversy about this, the popularity of this term tikkun olam, which I think is incredibly important to make popular, is criticized by some scholars in the Jewish community; it comes out of a phrase in a few prayers where they would argue that it simply means that we're asking God to do God's part to help make the world whole. And so there is some controversy around the way in which it is being used or popularized as an idea that directs people to pay attention to the universes in which they function, but I'm very much in favor of the popular definition, and I take very seriously from the prayer in which is most commonly found, the notion that in Judaism when you are asking God to do something, you're always supposed to recognize that you as an individual are God's partner and therefore if there is work to be done, you have to do some of the work yourself.

AP: You set the stage very beautifully in the personal journey aspect of our interview today about why you were so suited to become the President of the American Jewish World Service. It

really resonates within you and it was probably just meant to be – it was *besheret* (it was meant to be) – we would say. So we're going to spend the next few minutes talking a little bit more about this organization American Jewish World Service. I understand that it has four major components: grant making, volunteer service, advocacy, and education. The organization was founded, I think, in 1985. Did it start with this comprehensive approach? And if not, how were they added?

RM: The organization started with the notion that Jews already were concerned about the state of the world and that many of the large international relief organizations, some of which had their own Christian faith base, that were doing good work in the world attracted Jewish donors, Jewish supporters, Jewish board members, Jewish staff, but no place was this work being done by Jews as Jews. And so that was the impetus of the founder, to create a Jewish organization that would go out into the world and raise money in the Jewish community, go out and provide help and support elsewhere and do it in the name of the Jewish community. Pretty early on they began to hone the notion of giving grants to smaller grassroots organizations where you didn't have to go through layers of government, where you could find a group that was doing good work, where you could monitor that work carefully. But for sure the focus of the organization for its first decade was on grant making, much more than on any of the other programmatic areas that we now consider to work hand in glove with each other.

The service component was added earliest. There was first a decision to occasionally send skilled professionals whose professional capacity and ability would in a sense enhance the benefit of the grant. We would give people a grant to increase education about disease prevention in their community and then we would also send them a public health expert who

could help them analyze what are the most severe health problems in this community; what are the most important messages to give out; how might we do this in a way that is most constructive. So our early Volunteer Corps was particularly organized around increasing the leverage of the grant by giving the grantee organization professional help that they wanted. We never send volunteers unless a group says they would like a volunteer because, going back to our notion of how you make change in the world, we think that people in their own communities have a very clear vision of how to improve and what they want to do first, and we try to support those efforts.

Then we started growing the volunteer corps, which sends professionals, now about 100 people a year. This commitment to giving service comes from my background even though I did not do the Peace Corps because I already had two little children. Still, my whole experience of going someplace very different; of being of service, of giving not only money but as a board member or volunteer – that was all part of my personal philanthropy. So, as I educated and raised my children, based on my experience, I argued that going someplace very different from the community you know and learning about another culture was really valuable.

Similarly, at AJWS we started arranging service programs for high school seniors and college students and students recently out of college – defining them as not having a professional skill to share, but having some muscles and some interest, and being able to do physical labor but also to do that to get a sense of themselves as effective agents in the world. The notion is that you don't have to have money to be able to do philanthropy or to care for others.

And so we developed a very substantial service program for young adults in the Jewish community, taking now about 400 people for everything from one week to eight-month trips,

surrounding that with a Jewish education which talks about what Jewish text has to say about this work. What, for example, does Jewish text have to say about giving? The notion that you raised before that even the poor should give. The idea that there are a lot of different ways to give. And then we developed a serious education department to provide curriculum materials for service volunteers, to train group leaders to how to talk about what the Torah says about forgiving debts and connect it up to the experience of a country in Africa waiting for debt forgiveness in order to have enough money to spend on the healthcare of its own children.

So we have really good curriculum materials that were initially designed and are regularly evaluated and redesigned for the participants on our service trips. But that curriculum has become of interest to people running congregations, day schools, supplementary schools, so our education department is continuing to provide different kinds of learning and study materials around this broad theme of the role of Jews as global citizens.

And then, in a similar fashion, increasingly over the last eight years, but particularly over the last three years, we have developed an advocacy component to our work. We have grown from a \$2 million into a \$30 million dollar organization in the last decade and we give away a lot of money. But we don't give away money on the scale or on the size that the governments of the world do. And if the governments of the world, or let's just stay with our own government, gave more non-military foreign aid and targeted it better and provided some support for grassroots activities at the level where social change is really made, then many of the problems our grantees deal with would be alleviated. The push for most of our advocacy areas actually comes from our grantees on the ground. They will ask us why there isn't more money, for example, to make antiretroviral drugs available in a world where 8,000 people a day die of AIDS. And then, when

we look with them at the money that is coming out of the US government for that purpose, we will both see that it is not only not adequate in size but also frequently misdirected. It is not evidence-based; it has much more to do with ideology and it doesn't really tackle the problems the way they need to be tackled. So that means we have to have an advocacy department and lobby on these issues and, I want to add this – this is important to me - that we need to teach all of our donors and particularly, those students with whom we work in our service programs that, if you really believe in tzedakah, if you really believe you are trying to move towards justice, then not only is charity not enough but hands-on service is not enough without also having an advocacy component. So we now have these four programmatic areas, and we spend lots of time trying to be sure they work well in collaboration and in synergy with each other.

AP: Are there any other Jewish organizations that have the same mission?

RM: No. That's an easy question.

AP: Okay.

RM: There are a great many Jewish organizations, sometimes described as being an “alphabet soup” of organizations. I love some better than others. But virtually all have as their primary or their primary and secondary concern – the needs of Jews, the needs of Jews in a particular community in the United States, the needs of Jews in Israel, the future of the state of Israel. There is one large Jewish organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which pays attention to the needs of Jews in communities around the world where they may be poor and/or victims of anti-Semitism or oppression. But we are the only Jewish organization that



is created to and works on the needs of poor people (not Jewish) in the world not only at the time of a natural disaster but on an ongoing basis. There are some other Jewish organizations now, I am delighted to say, that are working on the issue of Jewish service, that are putting young Jews into service situations whether in Israel, in the Jewish Diaspora elsewhere or in communities in America, whether it is young people going to rebuild homes in Louisiana and Mississippi or working on an Indian reservation, but all of these Jewish service programs should be encouraged. From my point of view they come under the broadest notion of philanthropy because they involve people giving to help meet the needs of others at the same time as they are benefiting themselves.

AP: How does AJWS collaborate with Jewish and non-Jewish international religious humanitarian organizations?

RM: Basically our motto is 'we work with anybody.' We are very interested in spreading information in the American Jewish community about the importance of doing this global work. So we'll look for a congregation or a federation that is raising money after a cyclone in Burma and ask them to consider making their donation through us. That is because what we will be able to do with it in most instances is often better – and I say this immodestly – than giving it blindly to a large international relief organization. At the very least, if it's given to us it will then be given on the ground in the name of the Jewish community. Also donors are appropriately leery sometimes of giving to very large organizations that have high overhead and where they don't know what is going to happen with their money on the ground. We tell people the way in which we spend your money is not going to change the future of El Salvador. But we can guarantee you that it will go to those farmers in this community who are suffering from that particular

mudslide you read about or who are on their own creating new economic empowerment opportunities for their citizenry. So, in the 36 countries where we work, although we don't endorse the type of philanthropy that says this congregation gets to adopt that village, this person gets to help those four children, we can tell people here's the kind of work we're doing around the issue of women's empowerment, here's the kind of work we're doing around agricultural improvement and here are places where we are doing it. A donor can definitely ask to have his/her donation allocated to HIV/AIDS or to microfinance.

We partner with all of the non-Jewish, very often also faith based institutions that are working after a disaster, or in country, or with a particular project that is a grantee of ours. There is very high collaboration. Everybody knows there's more than enough work. And the Jewish community does collaborate now very nicely in response to world disasters. It is structured so that after a tsunami or a cyclone we can get groups together quickly so if we raise money for the tsunami or for the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan, we will collaborate and talk with each other about how the dollars are going to be spent.

AP: Does the American Jewish World Service collaborate with any Muslim organizations?

RM: Yes, easily and comfortably. There are not yet many national organizations based in America that are worldwide Muslim relief organizations. It's a community that I think is moving toward having those structures and does have some such structures in other parts of the world. Where we most likely collaborate with Muslim partners is on the ground where our grantee is not a Muslim organization, but the people in the community are Muslims. So by us being a Jewish

organization helping a Muslim population, we're doing an unusual form of interfaith work and each learning from the other.

AP: Alright, that's wonderful. How often does the question arise about why an organization with the word Jewish in it reaches out to all people?

RM: It comes up pretty often. Since it is the essence of what we do, we talk about it often in our presentations. We talk about the Jewish sources that say, and sometimes the Jewish text is very explicit, do this for Jews and for non-Jews. We talk about it and we pick out interesting parts of the Torah and the Talmud commentary and take people, anybody who's interested but particularly the students that work with us, through a set of arguments to understand what Judaism has to say about this.

From a more practical point of view, it's a question I get asked probably in 80 percent of the audiences after I speak, and it's usually from somebody who's genuinely interested and wants to be a little bit provocative and it's like sort of like let me get this clear, you're a Jewish organization but everybody you help is not Jewish? In a meeting here yesterday, somebody who was part of the group that invited me to speak started his first question to me by saying, "do you do any work outside of Israel?" Well, we don't even work in Israel. So it's a hard concept for people to get, but it's the essence of what we do. It's something that I really love to respond to and talk to people about. It's still a Jewish organization. It's structured along basic Jewish values. It's raising its money primarily, obviously not exclusively, but primarily in and from the Jewish community, and it's got a key goal of educating about global responsibility in the Jewish

community. And we think that it's extraordinarily Jewish to be helping the people who are today in greatest need, even though they are not Jews, and to be building those connections.

AP: So you mention that AJWS does not work in Israel? Is that a thought about decision, what's the...

RM: Well, first of all there are hundreds and hundreds of Jewish organizations that work in Israel. Some work very specifically to support the Israeli government. Some work to raise options for peace in the Middle East. Some work on challenges of co-existence between Israel and Palestine, between Jews and Arabs in Israel. It's like you don't need us to go do work that other people are doing. And in addition, informally we've described our target as being the one-third of the nations in the world that the UN identifies as the poorest. Israel is, by that standard, and probably by almost any standard, a developed world country.

AP: You talk a little bit about the volunteer component particularly focusing on the high school and college age youth but your volunteer program really expands through adults as well. Volontourism is expanding all over the globe. Are there some neat characteristics you think for AJWS that you would be able to share?

RM: Yes, we don't do much tourism. We do more volunteerism. I think voluntourism is a lovely concept, but as I look at some of these programs, I guess to be critical, I would say that that's sort of to let you take a vacation and feel good. And so you do a little bit of going and cleaning up some beach, there is no real contact with the people on the ground, it's just a little throw away add on to what you are doing as a vacationer. That's great for vacations. It's good to have a

little bit of good works connected to your vacation, but that's not what we're talking about. So, there are many programs like ours, but just not many in the Jewish community. We're intensely focused on what it means to be of service to other people, what it means to be sure you are not assuming you have all the answers for them, you are not doing for them instead of doing with them, you are not telling them what to do as opposed to learning from them and sharing with them. So as much as possible, our student volunteers are deliberately going and working alongside villagers. The villagers have to deal with the notion that we actually have women doing work. But our students have to deal rather dramatically at every trip, even the one week trips, there's like a second or third day where the students say - they can do this faster than we can, so what are we doing here? And that's a great learning opportunity – like guess what – you at the University of Indiana are not highly skilled at digging holes and putting in fertilizer. What a big surprise. But nevertheless there is a value because you're helping from a time saver point of view. There's a value because you're there learning, and there's a huge value because the people in these communities who've never been outside of their own communities are incredibly moved by the notion that there is a group of people who want to come in and help them.

AP: How do you keep connected with the alumni of all of these trips?

RM: Well I would say initially that is certainly something we didn't think about. We thought – okay, we'll add them to our lists. Hopefully they'll want to stay connected to our work, they'll be good advertisements for our programs, and maybe they'll become donors. Fortunately, as we have grown our service work, we started first to think about this much more consciously, and of course the web allows us to do this – to set up list serves and to try to engage our alumni in knowing what else is going on in the world. And then about two years ago, two of the

foundations that are interested in this expanding field of Jewish service, came to us and said we will fund you to work with the alumni because our interest is being sure that whatever happens on these trips sticks to the greatest extent possible. And so that's been very, very rewarding. We are now, we have an alumni effort, and we're doing it in conjunction with another Jewish service program for young adults – one that places people in cities in this country to work in anti-poverty agencies. They're smaller than we are but their program is a yearlong program, so it's a good mix and match. And in the four cities where we mutually have the highest concentration of alumni, we're basically going to those alums and asking them what they want to do. Same principle that AJWS uses in the developing world, we're saying to these 20 something's, 30 something's, well what would excite you to do in San Francisco or in New York that would be connected to the experiences you had with us that would continue to make you an activist in and with the broad field of social justice and an activist in and with the Jewish community. And they're designing the programs. And that's both enjoyable and I think is going to be a growing piece of the success of our operation.

AP: You have been the AJWS leader since 1996.

RM: 1998.

AP: 1998, I suspect the time has gone very quickly. What changes have you seen in the organization?

RM: Oh, it's just been staggering. I mean I knew when I got there, well actually I shouldn't say that, when I first got there I thought this is an organization that is either going to collapse or it's

going to build itself up because it's just ridiculously small. So I increasingly hoped that we could sort of grow it and, as you and I have discussed before, add on some other aspects of programmatic work. But the actual experience over the last 10 years has been like chasing a tiger. I mean this organization has grown so fast that the real internal challenge is to be sure that the staff and the board continue to have the structures that allow us to do our work, grow our work, think about our work, and remain flexible and committed to excellence.

AP: Can you think of one or two accomplishments or challenges that really stand out in the last 10 years?

RM: Well, I probably suggested this before but for me really growing the service programs and thinking about them and having them become huge. The message is always be careful what you wish for. The bad news, the good news and the bad news is now that there are a lot of activists in the Jewish community in America that have now decided that service is the magic bullet, and they want to know can I put tens of thousands of people to work. And the answer is no. We're trying to explain to them that it's not the magic bullet, it's a magic bullet, and we are not going to do it for everybody, but we are going to contribute our expertise, what we've learned, what we have as curriculum, what we do about training group leaders.

So I would say that in many ways that is the most exciting piece of the work because it's a piece of some personal great interest to me and it's growing and expanding and taking new shape all the time. I'm also very pleased with the fact that we are in the process of developing a thoughtful advocacy arm that will represent us in Congress, that will make us increasingly visible in the American Jewish community. And by the way, I would say that although we're

just beginning to explore the parameters of this, Jews as a community in America have a huge number of interests and concerns, all kinds of different commitments - from education to civil and human rights, to programs of tolerance to compassionate care for the elderly or needy children or whatever. And I say all of that to say that by and large – despite that fact – the members of Congress in the United States, particularly the non-Jewish members of Congress, think of the Jewish community as only concerned about issues in the Middle East. And so we're going to be a real trailblazer, not alone, because there are other such entities that are bringing other messages to Congress, but we're going to be the first Jewish organization saying we're really concerned about AIDS funding for Africa. And it's like a triple take on the part of a staff member in the congressional office. Now wait, you're a Jewish organization and that's what you're here lobbying about? I think it's all for the good in terms of how we're perceived and basically in terms of the likelihood of our being able to be effective on some of these advocacy issues.

AP: Well, even in these few minutes, you have demonstrated you are a person with indomitable spirit and indefatigable energy. How do you keep it up? How do you keep up the momentum?

RM: Actually, you know, I get asked that question all the time. I really want to say that I think a whole piece of it is a combination of physiological and characterological. It's the trait, you know, do you see the glass half empty or do you see it half full. I've always been energetic and determined. I do a lot at any given moment. I care a lot about a lot of things. I sustained myself a lot in politics, which is not an attractive field sometimes, by really thinking that if I was going to devote this much time and energy to the challenge of being an elected official which was time that was always in some tension with my responsibilities to my family, that I'd better do it well,



that I better do it with some notion of hope and increasing the capacities for change because otherwise what do you tell your kids you're there working on 20 hours a day. So I really credit my children for helping me keep a sense of focus, an ethical center, and an optimistic perspective on the world. I would say in addition I am an extraordinarily lucky person. I have a phenomenal family that has been very, very supportive and most of our family has been mostly free of some of the serious problems that beset other people. I have one family member who has a chronic disease, and I am really acutely aware of how much energy that zaps from somebody who wants to be doing a great job in the world. So, I am who I am.

END OF Audio File 1

START OF Audio File 2

The one thing I was going to add to where we were before is that one of the sources of energy for my current work is actually seeing these projects on the ground. Because you know, these are people who have no resources and no sophistication in fund raising or organizational development, but they're making change every day and so that makes it easy to keep up one's spirits.

AP: Do you go on each of the study missions?

RM: Yes. Since I'm the one who does the most public speaking for the organization, the more I see the more I have to describe about what we're doing on the ground. And the participants of the study tours are either current or future donors, and it's a great way to spend time with them.

AP: Well, speaking about having time on the ground, you've spent a fair amount of time in and around Darfur and in Sudan, and AJWS has taken a real leadership role in the effort to stop the crisis in Darfur. You've spoken around the country. What are some of the joys and frustrations of that effort?

RM: Well, again I want to clarify, that since we're largely an international development organization on the ground and we do do some relief work, usually after natural disasters, Darfur is a unique piece of our work. Here was this crisis which we suddenly became aware of in 2004, and it was a genocide which has unbelievable power and resonance in the Jewish community, and nobody knew anything about it because our newspapers had chosen not to cover it. So over a few months in 2004 we made a set of organizational decisions that we had to respond to a genocide, that we had to provide humanitarian aid and relief to ongoing victims of that genocide. But we could only provide that relief if we could raise money and we could only raise the money if we became a source of information about Darfur as well as encouraging the American media to cover it better. And a parallel decision was that you can't raise money for the victims of an ongoing genocide without organizing to stop the genocide. So our Darfur work is a combination of our relief based grantmaking work which is only some of our grantmaking work, and our advocacy and education work.

So, we've been doing all of those things since the summer of 2004. We've raised over \$5.5 million dollars, much of which has gone for humanitarian aid and relief on the ground, everything from clean water to medical supplies to the creation of a backup structure so that there could be a maternity facility in a field hospital in Chad to the provision of rape counselors in the camps who will help women deal with the trauma they've experienced. All of that work

has been accompanied by non-stop efforts to educate more broadly, to support the Save Darfur Coalition which is a large interfaith effort, to support student activists who have been promoters and effective movers of a divestment movement that will increase economic pressure on Sudan. So it's been a story of its own in terms of education, advocacy, and aid. We're very proud of the central role that we've played in the Jewish community and very proud equally of the response from that community. But I would say it's also been challenging and affirming to work on this issue in a much broader interfaith context. So I guess the joy – that's too strong a word - but there is a satisfaction with the advocacy efforts that we and others have developed and with the extent to which we forced some people in government and in the media to keep looking at Darfur and to keep making statements on Darfur and to keep taking positions on Darfur and then the unbelievable frustration of knowing that this is a genocide that just entered its sixth year and that nothing, I mean everything that we've done has been important but none of it has been sufficient actually to stop the ongoing violence.

AP: Do you anticipate that AJWS will continue to advocate on behalf of the people in Darfur?

RM: Oh yes. In fact our vision, which I can't promise you will be realized, but our vision would be that not only would we continue to advocate, put pressure to get the multi-lateral United Nations force actually admitted into the country, and see the violence stop. But then it is the nature of our work that we be there after that, after a large number of other people have left, because the people in the camps for displaced persons and the refugee camps – 2.5 million - when you interview them, which is something I've been privileged to do, they mostly want the violence to stop so they can go home. And if they're really going to go home there's going to have to be a large humanitarian aid effort to make that possible.

AP: Well, we wish you a lot of help in that effort. We're going to talk a little bit about fundraising...a little bit more mundane than Darfur I think.

Okay.

You have alluded to various aspects of fundraising for AJWS and other experiences that you've had, so we'll spend a little time talking about that. You mentioned earlier that AJWS does most of its fundraising within the Jewish community. Is that a deliberate strategy?

RM: Well, that's the community from which we spring and so it's not, I don't want to say, let me put it affirmatively. We like everybody's money, but as a fundraising organization that has a larger and larger budget to raise every year, it's pretty logical that we would target our efforts to the community that we're most set up to reach. There are lots of ways for non-Jews to support change in the developing world. My personal critique is that unfortunately too many people including Jews, give to organizations that are more about relief than development or to organizations that are a little too heavily influenced by the government grant they get and where and how the government wants them to work. But those are small criticisms. We're very proud of our grassroots effort, but we know other organizations in the secular community that do grassroots social change work. So the target from which we want to build our organization is predominantly the Jewish community, Jewish individuals, Jewish individuals in so-called mixed marriages, and Jewish organizations, but I know for sure that some of our donors are not Jewish. They found us because they wanted to travel with us and then they loved what they saw on the ground. They found us because they really understand and appreciate and respect the grassroots partnering nature of our funding. And so they choose to be affiliated with us including one very generous donor who is not Jewish but is a member of our board.

AP: How do you incorporate the education piece within your fundraising, particularly within the Jewish community?

RM: Well, you know I think that varies tremendously from approach to approach. If you read our materials, if you're on our e-mail list, we do a fair amount of education, that is the material and information is there. We talk not only about what we do but how we see these communities. We try to tell stories about some of the work on the ground and we certainly quote Torah and Talmud and text. I don't know to what extent that's a successful education device as in I don't know how much of that sticks and how much is just people who say AJWS, oh I give to them periodically, so I'll send money. So it's not a formal study course, but if you're asking is the understanding we have of the Jewish responsibility to work in the non-Jewish world and to assume global responsibility, is that reflected in our fundraising materials and presentations. Yes, and it is certainly reflected in the public speaking that I do.

AP: What percentage of time do you think you spend on fundraising?

RM: You know what, I think that's an appropriate question given where I am and given your structure, but I actually think it's a frivolous question for the heads of not-for-profit organizations. Actually, everything you do is about fundraising. By the way I'm including lots of things you do when you're not officially "working." So you're meeting people, you're talking to people, you're talking about your work, you're trying to get people to think more broadly about the universe of not-for-profit, non-governmental work that needs public support. I mean I'm sure that some of the conversations that I have with people about our work influences them

to go home and write a check to somebody else doing similar work; the appeal that has been sitting on their desk and they haven't written the check yet. That's fine. And I think running a really good organization, which I made reference to before, to ensure that we remain committed to flexibility and to quality work is essential to our fundraising. I spend a lot of time trying to be, and I don't think it's easy, a good manager of a growing organization and that is indirectly or directly related to fundraising.

AP: You talked a little earlier about this concept of giving strategically...

RM: Uh huh.

AP: And as in the general community many Jewish philanthropists are narrowing their focus to issues about which they care the most deeply. So if a philanthropist has not yet demonstrated interest in alleviating poverty or supporting economic development, education, and social justice in the global south, how might you engage them in the work of AJWS?

Well, you know, I have the privilege of talking to philanthropists, but since I think everyone is a philanthropist, I am going to say larger donors, from time to time. The good news is that if they're willing to see me it's usually because they've already got some interest in what we do so I'm not actually starting from ground zero. But occasionally I look for meetings with people or am talking with people who are only seeing me as a favor to me or someone else, and so you're right that they've not thought about this. And a lot of what I do there, in addition to some explaining to them what we do and how we do it is what I think any good fundraiser does and that is look for pieces of their areas of interest that connect up to the work we do. The most

common one of those is I very often talk to people from relatively small, often non-staffed or just one person staffed family foundations. And they may have set up their foundation inside their federation or outside but they may have set up their foundation for a perfectly good cause which is to protect children from abuse and neglect in their own community. And when I talk to people with a mission like that I very commonly say that I think that what they're doing is really important but I would like them to know how small a percentage of American philanthropic dollars go outside the border of the United States and ask them to consider over time with their family members, with their staff person, with their board whether they could imagine maintaining their focal interest, in this case it would be on the abuse and neglect of children, but giving to us to do that work globally. And I always tell them that they should be doing 10 percent of their giving globally hoping that I'll get some gift.

AP: And has it worked?

RM: Occasionally, yes. Speaking specifically about a foundation that I won't name but the orientation of the parents, for a reason that nobody could ever figure out, was just to respond to global disasters. So they never explained why to us, but they were a great resource because after every disaster that made the newspapers we would get \$5,000 or \$10,000 for that program. And they got elderly and one of them died. Their daughter took over the foundation and with great legitimacy she didn't see this as a very productive use of her family dollars because relief is relief and it's over after the day you write the check. You probably saved some lives but there's certainly nothing ongoing or strategic about it, and her interest was actually in issues of adoption, foster care, abuse and neglect of children.

And so she was the example I was talking about and I now get a \$10,000 or \$20,000 year check from her even though her focus for most of her giving is where she lives. I don't know what percentage it is of her philanthropy but it is clearly significant. And, by the way, she does something that we actually let people do if they are giving us generous sums of money, she actually looks through our docket and she says here are the kinds of programs that you are helping that I would like to support.

AP: Very good. You talked a little bit earlier about raising a lot of money for politics in your political career and I would like to explore a little bit about the difference in fundraising in politics as against fundraising for AJWS.

RM: I highlighted that question on your list of questions because, once I took this position at AJWS, we started doing more and more fundraising. We did this because we're a growing organization and are trying to turn one time donors into long term donors and relief donors into development donors. People would then question why I spent so much time fundraising, and I would say look, I spent 20 years in politics basically raising money for myself that wasn't tax deductible. This is much easier. I can tell people actual stories of where their money is going to make a real difference on the ground, not to buy more media for my campaign. There are lots of skills to fundraising. But, it's satisfying to me to be spending time now, as by the way I did in the earliest part of my career, fundraising for an organization, for a community, for people in need instead of raising money because politics costs so much which is somewhat obscene.

AP: Do you have a vision in terms of growing this budget to meet these incredible demands that you see around the world – how the AJWS budget would be able to grow to meet them?



RM: Well, let me explain. When I had been at AJWS for five years, which was in 2003, when our budget had gone from about \$2 million to I think \$5 million dollars, my board asked me to do some projections for our growth. And I wrote a memo which I keep in my top drawer to remind me how stupid I am, that said that by 2008 we might be able to become a \$10 million dollar organization. Since we're now a \$30 million dollar organization, I want to say that my credentials are not worth very much. But yes, we're trying to think with the board about being sure we maintain a stable base so that we don't ever have to undo anything we're doing but can envision some pace of continued growth. Now, we're talking in mid-2008 and this is going to be a difficult year for philanthropy because of the state of the economy so we're very unlikely to have anything like the kind of growth we've had in the last few years. That's a sober reminder that you have to be careful about all this, but I would say, without having numerical or year targets, we do think that we can create a larger organization and right now that organization would essentially continue to do grantmaking, service, education, and advocacy. We're not looking to add new programmatic divisions. Our grant making is becoming more and more sophisticated, more regional; we're encouraging exchanges between and among grantees and if I had to make a guess I would say that five years from now we'd have more grassroots projects but in fewer countries. We'd have a more sophisticated evaluation system.

AP: Very good, thank you. I would like to move now to a little bit more general topic of women, politics, philanthropy, and leadership. Having worked with the Women's Philanthropy Institute I have a keen interest personally in these gender kinds of issues. So we'll work with these just a little bit. Do you believe that men and women lead differently?

RM: Oh yes.

AP: Can you give us some examples?

RM: I think women are much more – these are obviously generalizations – but more consultative, more inclusive in their leadership and management styles, not always as strong as they need to be in making definitive decisions and laying down the law, but much more likely to build a team that really works together and has a shared sense of mission and whose members are supportive of each other.

AP: Well what you said pretty much describes how others see your style particularly in terms of being inclusive and consultative. How would you describe your leadership style?

RM: I'm a little sloppy around the edges, but I am really engaged with people. We were talking before about percentages of time spent on philanthropy - I refuse to be the person who is only outside of the office raising the money and basically has no connection with the projects or the staff and turns that over to someone else. Somebody might advise that strategy for an organization of our size or in our moment of growth but it wouldn't be me. I love knowing all of my staff. I love knowing what staff is doing. I quite literally and figuratively - and occasionally at the annoyance of the people who work with me - maintain an open door. There are some articles about this that are very positive but there are also some critical articles. There are some great descriptions that I have seen in the books about leadership and management. There are people who actually develop their own strategies in an organization for regularly popping into doors like mine while I'm talking to someone else because they know that it's my style to stop,

take a minute, hear what they want to know, and give them a quick answer. So that's not great, that's a challenge for the people who are working under that style, but I really love being in touch with what's on the minds of individual staff. I like problem solving. I work very hard. I don't know if this is gender based, because I can think of some men who do this and some who don't. But I'm really interested in hiring people who are better than I am at something or another and trying to learn from them, although that doesn't always make for the smoothest management.

AP: Did your leadership and management style change from the time you were in politics to the time now at AJWS?

RM: No, not at all. That's why I said this is characterological for me, as is my general energy and optimism, but I also think that some of it is gender based. Organizing community, organizing on issues, I did campaigning exactly like this, and I certainly did during my time in elected office.

AP: How much of it do you think is a reflection of your academic experiences and social work?

RM: I actually think it's the other way around. I think I was interested in social work because it was a profession that emphasized all of these aspects of human behavior. Then I decided, to my own surprise, that casework wasn't for me because it's very one on one and you are not in the middle of the world, you're not looking at all of the different ways to make change. You're depending on one person to essentially being able to change themselves and trying to make that happen, and that's work that was too individually focused and too targeted and, I'm sorry to say this, much too boring for me and I couldn't do it.

AP: In both of your experiences in politics and the non-profit world, NGOs, have you found any barriers or obstacles because of gender issues?

RM: Oh sure. I think well I think the good news is we're making some progress on this in the world, and I think that there are a great many women who are affirmatively looking for ways to move up in different professional or social sectors, despite some of these obstacles. So I don't want to suggest for a minute, that I feel beaten down by this. But in the Jewish community it's appallingly uncommon for women to be running organizations. The Jewish community, and the nonprofit Jewish community, is now behind the professions of law, medicine, and business regarding the speed with which women rise to the top. I'm running a prominent Jewish organization largely because I made a lateral move in from another career and then grew the organization. It's harder, I mean look, the federated system is one major way in which Jews organize to raise money and provide services in their communities. The 19 large city federations have never had a single women executive. That's sort of appalling, isn't it? And it's particularly appalling because in those federations there are large numbers of young and not so young women who come to work there, who rise up certain levels, and there are by the way, a lot of lay activists in the federation system, where the lay community, the non-paid community is probably more active than any place else and from time to time members of that lay community in different cities move into paid positions but they don't usually move to the top. And that's bad agency politics.

My biggest concern in politics is just the numbers. Not enough women are encouraged to run for office - it is statistically - this used to be true when I was in government, I don't know if its

statistically still true, but I would bet it is – harder for women to raise money to run for office than for men, not because people don't want to see you move forward but because there are traps in their brain so they write smaller checks to women who come to solicit them than men. I have lots of experiences where I would go and talk to a couple and because I was a woman running for office the man would say to his wife after I left, why don't you write the check and then the wife would write a much smaller check than that man usually writes to male candidates so there is a constant process of education to keep striking away at these barriers. And, look, there are lots of explanations for what I'm about say, and it's not the definitive issue, but in all political positions in the United States right now women hold 14 or 15 percent of the positions and in Rwanda women are 49 percent of the legislature.

AP: When you talked about the barriers Jewish women have to become leaders in the major federations, do you think that accounts for the ongoing strength and vitality of women's organizations in the Jewish community like National Council of Jewish Women or Hadassah?

RM: Yes.

AP: I mean these parallel leadership structures?

RM: Yes. There are those structures which got set up as a place and a way for women to be, and they have grown. They are fierce and powerful organizations in the Jewish community, but that's partly because that's a place where a good woman can keep rising and rising, and those organizations are headed by women.

AP: Poverty and issues of equality disproportionately affect women around the world. Does the fact that you're a woman advocate for these issues make a difference?

RM: I actually don't know that although I want to say that the vast majority of my AJWS staff including the grant staff are women. I actually joke pretty often in the office that I'll give a bonus for people who find men to come work for us. I think there are fewer men who want or are attracted to the complexities of this work. Not-for-profit work doesn't pay as well as some other work, and in our case it's like going out to change the world. I know for example that on our service programs, despite the fact that we're taking young people to the far end of the earth to live in difficult circumstances, to be challenged by doing physical labor, many more of our volunteers are girls than boys. They rise to the occasion, and I'm delighted to say their parents let them go, or their parents are excited that that's what they want to do. There's something weird that happens to the men in these communities around college which is that somehow they're getting explicit or implicit messages that the time for fun is over and that they better buckle down, do this, do that, do a summer internship that will lead to another summer internship that will lead to admission to business school that will....I think it's too bad for the community.

We're going to start losing some of our best resources unless we think a little bit more seriously about this, but that wasn't the question you asked. It was that, yes a huge amount of inequity in the world, in this country and even more so in the developing world falls on the backs of women, on the backs of women and children. Most of our grassroots organizational efforts are actually started and organized by women usually because there is no pay involved at all at the beginning, and they're the ones who are determined to make change in the community. By the way, partly because men are socialized in so many parts of the world that they have to be the responsible

figure and they are in a community with no employment opportunities and no funding and they're supposed to be responsible for their family, and "keep your wife in control," men probably walk around with a much higher degree of depression.

I've never gone out to measure this, but I've actually been in communities where you see women running around. They've ended up with all of the tasks. They're responsible for the children. They're responsible for getting water which is a, you know, a 20 percent of the day activity, and the men are sitting doing nothing. Maybe they think that's their prerogative, but I also think they're depressed.

So, does it specifically help to be a woman advocating on behalf of these women? I don't think that is necessary true. It does help tremendously to have these women, when we can arrange that, come to this country to describe what they are doing and to advocate on their own behalf. But we have some projects that are run by men and those men do a pretty good job also.

AP: Another topic of great interest in the philanthropic community in this decade is this generational difference among donors, among young people working in the office, and you have talked about this a little bit. I'd like to amplify and have you share a little bit about the Young Leadership program at AJWS for people in their 20's and 40's. What kind of an effort is this to reach the next generation of donors? Whether you see a sea change in donor attitudes in the next generation? Whether people at this age go on your study tours?

RM: This is a piece of our work that we're really just beginning. So I hope we'll see and do all of those things over the next decade. We do this great job with selecting the young people to be

part of our service programs and, as you elicited before, we do a growing job of working with them as alumni to figure out what they're interested in – how do they want to work on issues and problems. We're just beginning to think about all the ways in which we could bring not just alumni but young adults in Jewish communities around the country more into the sphere of our work. And we're just doing a little bit more to also target those people in any Jewish community who are for sure, and there is a lot being written about this, going to be the next inheritors of major wealth, what are they going to do with that. So I would say from our point of view this is still early in its development. We have begun to talk to a few federations around the country including here, about the possibility of doing, of what you just asked about, a kind of a study tour for young leaders.

I think it could be very powerful to let them see places where comparatively such a small amount of money makes such a big difference. Especially if you're from a family of wealth or are going to inherit some wealth or have made some money yourself and you are looking at taking your first steps into philanthropy, it is a little daunting in a sense to discover what make a big donor in the minds of most not-for-profit organizations here. So you sit down and you struggle and you decide based on two incomes in a family that you can actually afford to give \$20,000 away and you decide that you would like to do that to just two charities and then, I know this because I've talked to some of these people who are donors of ours that the two causes that you really care about are organizations that of course care about their work but to them a \$10,000 donation means nothing and they treat you like nothing. I've talked to people who fund us not just because their dollars would go so much further on the ground, but because they were appreciated for it. I talked to a woman who is a member of our board who when she inherited her parent's foundation greatly increased the gift to us and cut her gift to a prominent organization which



shall remain nameless. She cut that gift from \$50 to \$25 or maybe \$35. I called her in a minute and a half to thank her and to arrange to meet with her. She never got called by the organization whose gift was cut in half. The organization had to know she was taking over the foundation but they never called her. What does that say to her - if you did not care about losing the first \$25, why should I give you the second \$25?

We are just building a young leadership program, talking around the country to see what to do, see what two or three things what motivate and inspire them. I think there is a growing interest in the rest of the world and in the broad capacity for social change, and I think we have a role to play in the Jewish community with this next generation, and to some extent, with their parents to say what we say all the time and what you've asked about, which is Jewish giving does not mean giving only to Jews. And I think we'll get a lot of those young people. So that's the positive thing I want to say.

The negative thing I want to say is that in this next generation in the philanthropic community, there is, for my druthers, too much talking about what is called social venture philanthropy and too many people who think that if they have money to give away, then they should be able to tell the receiving organization exactly what to do with that money and how to do it. That's hard enough if you're, you know, the Indianapolis Center for Children and Youth. You know, the business person in Indianapolis has seen a youth group first hand, watched it grow for four years, contributed to it, and now wants to make a big gift, but wants to have a seat on the board, wants to suggest that her money should be given specifically to this area of the program, that still can very often come to be treading on the toes of the professionals. But at least it makes some sense to me. What makes very little sense to me is, and there are organizations like this, that are

raising money for projects in the developing world which they're designing here, which they're encouraging their donors to help them design. Oh, this will be great if we just take this to the Gambia and set this up and you know what, they actually would tell you, if they were being honest, that some of those efforts have failed. And as saddening as it is when an effort of theirs fails, they simply go back to the same drawing board. Oh, we should design the program a little differently or we should try it in a different country or we should –instead of saying hell, maybe we should ask the people who live there what they really need, which is what we do.

AP: So we've talked a little bit about multiple generations and fundraising, what about within your office? You have a fairly large staff. Do you have several generations working at AJWS and how does that affect the organizational structure?

RM: Oh I think my staff doesn't always like it when I do this, but every once in a while with several staff members or I'm talking to a donor out of the office with one or two staff members, and I say my entire staff is under 12. The young people who work for me know what I mean but I think they don't love it, so I should say it a little less. But they work very hard and very well. This actually goes back to the question you were asking me a long time ago about how I worked in politics. I love interns. I love college students. I love having a place that will give jobs to people right after college. I hate the notion - I really am not very nice about this - I'm not even nice about this with my own staff – I hate the notion which I think is unfortunately significantly, but not totally true, that you have to go to graduate school to get a job. I understand why you go to medical school and law school. I understand even a little bit why you go to business school or, getting closest to our area, getting a graduate degree in public policy, but I just know that not all of these young people should need to go to school to start moving up in the not for profit

world because there are few places that do really good teaching about not for profit management. Well there are some graduate schools that are now engaging in this, but, you know what - you can learn it on the job. And so if I had my total perfect world I would have inherited an organization that was as small as AJWS, brought people in early in their careers, and figured out, I don't know what the answer is, but figured out the magic rate of growth that would just allow me to take somebody who would work for three years or four years and then put him or her in charge of two other entry level people.

So that's not the case. We haven't grown like that, we've grown like lunacy, so two or three times in the last decade we've clearly moved in a bunch of more mature people with more job experience. So the answer to your question is, yes, we have people of several different generations. We thrive on having a bunch of young people. I feel wonderful about what they learn in our office to the extent to which they are given respect for their work. I feel a little badly that they feel a little bit as if every once in a while someone new was coming in to supervise them, that they can't move up quite as quickly as they might like. And I really regret that some of them decide that that means that they have to leave and go to graduate school. I'm not sure that that's really going to enrich their capacity to do the great work that they're doing. But I love having a multi-generational office, and I like the enthusiasm with which people approach their work and I want to say in the area of your work particularly, I hope I'm not insulting the entire Center, but I think people learn development work better on the job than in any training program.

AP: Particularly if they're taught by somebody who knows what he or she is doing. So given the fact that you think that people learn a lot of this on the job, what advice might you give to younger women today entering either politics or philanthropy?

RM: You know, going back to the very first question you asked me, don't assume you're going to be doing the same thing for the rest of your life. Too many of your parents are still giving you that message – like pick a profession. What's that mean? I mean, and with all due respect, even if this is from parents who picked a profession, so let's imagine that a young woman who's 24 and her parents are 48 or 50. First of all they picked a profession, second of all half of them are miserable with what they do. Some are not miserable but they're not happy and they're not happy about the notion that now because they're 50 they're actually going to be doing it for another 20 years. Many of them are therefore looking at early retirement. No criticism if that's what they want to do. But some of them I know are looking at early retirement only specifically because they don't want to do the same thing for the next 20 years. If they had thought 15 years ago about looking for a second job or a different job, they might be leading a very different life. So I urge young people, and especially young women, not to imagine this is what they'll be doing over the long haul. We try harder than any not-for-profit organization of our size that I know of, to invest in really good personnel policies, and we're trying to invest in on-site, ongoing professional development opportunities. We certainly already refer people every time there's a leadership training program or a seminar in fundraising or in advancing the Jewish community. We try to nominate and pay for somebody to take part in those programs whenever they can meet the criteria. I'd like to see us do even more of this. We're trying very hard to be a role model for professional development and flexible personnel policies. I'm happy to say that while I was in Indianapolis somebody who shall remain nameless who works for a Jewish organization here publicly thanked us for having such good personnel policies that she was able to hit her organization over the head to be more flexible in response to her pregnancy. So that made me feel very good.

With politics it is a little more complicated. I just urge people to work in campaigns, to look at the difference between elected office and government staff positions. They're both hugely rewarding but they're different. People who know they want to be an elected official and there are, I'm happy to say, such young people, I really really urge them to think about it as a long trajectory. They're not going to win the race for city council when they're 24 so they really ought to figure whether this is what they're going to do and how they're going to learn more. They do have the particular challenge, people who know they want to run for elected office, of having to figure out where they want to live. Which is really hard - it's hard in general to figure out where you want to live, and it's harder, you know, for this generation when there are all these opportunities open to them and it's a generation with many great stories of people who move from community to community. But if you know you want to run for elected office, then either you have to go get a job where you grew up, which has a great advantage because you might have a family name that people know and you certainly know a lot of people, or you have to decide where to move to and figure out you might be staying here for 10 to 15 years in order to develop a position in the community and make an effort to get elected to office which may or may not be successful. So when I talk to young people who know they want to be in office they find that a staggering thought that they never had before. But in philanthropy I couldn't be clearer. I tell people on our development staff, this is the most useful skill you could possibly get for whatever you're going to do going on in the world as a lay person or as staff person. So learn it well.

END OF Audio File 2

### START OF Audio File 3

AP: Okay, we're going to spend the last 15 minutes talking a little bit in broad brush strokes about the past, the present, and the future.

RM: Yeah, right.

AP: I know it's that keyword of legacy. You'll work it out. So, you've been at AJWS 10 years. We've talked a little bit about the wonderful things that you've done. Is there anything else that you wanted to share that really excites you about the time that you've spent at this organization?

RM: Well, I think the only thing I would add is that I've learned to get myself an executive coach and listen to outside wisdom. I'm trying to constantly learn about management issues and challenges and I guess I'm most proud of the fact that I could list for you a whole set of problems that we're still dealing with. I know we have a lot of work to do to grow. The one issue I mentioned for the record is: we're still trying to figure out who should be on our board. What is the role of a national board? How do the staff and board, particularly in an organization that grows this fast, stay in the best kind of communication and properly divide up the decision making? And that goes to a broader question, which I have some interest in but very little time to pay attention to, and that is what is actually the role for the board of a not-for-profit organization? I have to pay attention to it at AJWS but I think it's a field that's ripe for additional investigation, writing, and role modeling.

AP: Very good.

Given the fact that the nonprofit world is looking at succession planning a lot right now, what kind of vision would you have for the next generation of leaders at AJWS? How do you think they ought to spend their time?

RM: Well, I think that's a good question because what I've tried to describe to you is a tension between managing well, growing, and staying true to mission. Dealing with growth and being sure that the resources are there so that the balance back and forth between management and fundraising threatens at times to be overwhelming. AJWS is an organization that will have to keep thinking about how it divides up those responsibilities first between paid staff and board, and second of all, and more importantly perhaps among its paid staff, who does what, how do people keep communicating, **how** do we prevent people from ending up in silos where they're only doing their own work and nobody talks to anybody else and people trip over each other and they get angry and the organization looks stupid. We're at the point now where it's not impossible, unfortunately, for three people in the organization to have some reason to call some external person – the same external person – without communicating with each other. Now, you know, you can't be perfect about this but occasionally you call somebody and they say –I'll give you an example. I got a lovely e-mail yesterday from a colleague who runs another organization in Boston. She knew I was coming to Boston. She had been notified. She sent me a note to say she was so sorry that she couldn't come to hear me speak. But she expressed hope that we might continue to collaborate actively with each other, organizationally. And then she said that she was so happy to be able to write an introductory letter for AJWS to such and such a foundation. Whereby I fired off an e-mail to my staff saying how can somebody be writing an introductory letter for AJWS to a foundation whose president is someone I've known for 40 years. So it can

happen. But it's like how do we keep talking? What do we need to do to keep checking with each other so we don't get in the silo, so we're not working inefficiently? That's a general concern about the growth of the organization.

I've told my board that I have a perhaps slightly different view of succession planning than they do. I'm the one that boards love to have. The board's notion is that when an organization's grown to a certain size like ours, and when it's president is "so old" like me, that I should be able to tell them who in the organization, which person, in which position, is my heir apparent? I've told them that from my point of view, that's nonsense. First of all I don't intend to retire so they're going to have to throw me out at some point. Second of all, and more importantly, succession planning ought to be thought about differently. What they need to be asking themselves is do I have the kind of structure and do I devolve responsibility and do I devolve enough decision making down, so that people can make decisions on their own and that will sustain the organization. And I told them that they use this expression too much, but the common expression in discussions with my board is, what happens if I get hit by a bus. That's the notion, what if all of a sudden I'm not there, and what I've told them is that I'm constantly challenging myself, they should be challenging me too, to see if we have a management structure with competent people who are used to making decisions and used to working with each other who can sustain the organization over a period of time. And, this is what they don't quite get, but the fact is that with their help, we have created an organization that a thousand people will want to run, so they just to have a structure that is going to keep moving forward and they get to hire a \$100,000 head hunter and run a national search, and they'll get their pick of candidates and they should be happy with that.



AP: If you could think of a relatively young staff person in your office who's been there maybe three years or so, what do you think that staff person would say are your greatest qualities as a role model?

RM: Well actually I think that that's a very uncomfortable question because I think what they would say, I'm quite ambivalent about this, I think they would tell you that they love some of the things that you picked out. I'm energetic, I'm optimistic; I act in ways that I clearly intend for them to learn how to act in terms of inclusion, in terms of consultation. I think, and I said this before that they would also tell you that my interest in being inclusive and consultative is sometimes confusing and doesn't lead to clarity about what they should be doing or who is going to make the final decision, and I plead guilty on that score. But I actually think that the biggest reason that it is hard to answer that question is that there are many really competent people in the next generation of potential leaders. This is in all sectors and in all faiths, but I see it in my organization who have no intention of ever working at the pace that I work, and I think that makes them anxious, and I think it should make them anxious because I don't know what the answer is. There are people in my organization who I think have the potential to keep moving up in the organization, and I understand, and I think it's wonderful from an intellectual point of view, that they are really determined not to have their jobs overrun their lives and they want to be sure that they get flex time for having a baby or raising a child and we have great family leave policies.

But I'm not talking about those policies. I'm talking about on an ongoing basis they want to be sure that their life allows them to do a really competent job and to pursue lots of other personal activities and not to feel as if they need to be alert to the job every minute. And I think for those

people that I'm not a good role model. There are discussions among my staff or on my board about the bizarreness of getting e-mails that I write at 3 in the morning and I'm very happy with what I do, but I don't think it's a great role model for most of the world, and I'm not quite sure what will happen when more of those people with more of that mindset come into positions of power, not just in this organization but in other organizations. I think this is a real question, and I see this with lots of young people.

I just convinced my daughter who is a professional in the not-for-profit world to change jobs. I convinced her to do that because she was working too hard, with two children, with much too much of the responsibility for her not-for-profit on her head, with her spouse feeling all of the strains, and she said to me, "You wouldn't do this. You wouldn't leave this job." And I said you know, that might be true, but I actually try to gain a little wisdom in my advanced age and you should leave this job at this point. And she did, and she's happy, I think, with her new job. She got a great new job because she has this incredible reputation in her city for how effective she is and how hard she works. But I think this is a real question and I don't know the answer.

AP: You have made a tremendous difference in the life of AJWS and in the grantees that you work with in all these countries around the world. Do you have a sense of what it will take to eradicate poverty and inequity in our world?

RM: I don't know how we get there, so the quick answer is no, but certainly philosophically I, we at AJWS and I myself, believe that it will take a lot more investment in the people we think are most capable of making the decisions and making change. In addition, however, it will take huge additional resources and changes in national and international public policy. The real

challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that this is the first time in the life of the world that we can say that the resources are there. They're just not being shared, they're not being used in the right way, and they're subject to all kinds of other considerations. So I think the most significant challenge for the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is knowing that they could, in a thoughtful fashion, change and improve the lives of two and half billion people who are in poverty or of, what's now the common phrase, the bottom billion of people, who are the poorest in the world. But it will take radical changes in user resources, in the kinds of investments that people are willing to make and how they're willing to make them. And the problem for the world is that if more of these changes aren't made more quickly, we're actually going to be living – not me, but my grandchildren – in a world that does not have six billion people but has nine billion people. And if we allow that growth to occur without doing more to solve these problems, it will become harder and harder to solve them.

AP: Very good. Well thank you ever so much.....