

# RUTH W. MESSINGER

## Biography



Ruth W. Messinger is president of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), a faith-based international human rights organization that works to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease in the developing world. In addition to its grantmaking to over 400 grassroots projects around the world, AJWS works within the American Jewish community to promote global citizenship and social justice through activism, volunteer service and education. Ms. Messinger assumed this role in 1998 following a 20-year career in public service in New York City, where she served for 12 years on the New York City Council and eight as Manhattan borough president. She was the first woman to secure the Democratic Party's nomination for mayor in 1997. Ms. Messinger is continuing her lifelong pursuit of social justice at AJWS, helping people around the world improve the quality of their lives and their communities.

Considered a national leader in the movement to end the genocide in Sudan, Ms. Messinger was among leading anti-genocide, peace and human rights advocates called upon to advise President Obama and the new special envoy for Sudan, General J. Scott Gration, in March 2009. In recognition of her leadership, she has served on the Obama administration's Task Force on Global Poverty and Development. She is also involved in organizing faith-

based efforts to secure human rights around the world, and recently served as keynote speaker at the National Interfaith Conference on Millennium Development Goals in San Francisco.

Ms. Messinger has received honorary degrees and awards from The Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, Hebrew College and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and awards for her service from the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Women's Funding Network, Union for Reform Judaism and the American Jewish Committee. For eight years, she was among the Forward's "50 most influential Jews of the year."

Ms. Messinger lectures widely on diverse social and global justice issues, and has served as a visiting professor at Hunter College and Hebrew Union College. She is an active member of her congregation, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, and serves as a board member and past president of Surprise Lake Camp. She sits on the boards of several other nonprofit organizations, including the Jewish Foundation for Education of Women, Hazon and the Save Darfur Coalition.

Ms. Messinger graduated from Radcliffe College in 1962 and received a Master of Social Work from the University of Oklahoma in 1964. She began her professional career in public service in Oklahoma, running a child-welfare agency. Her husband, Andrew Lachman, directs an educational foundation in Connecticut, and she has three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.