

**Mya Byrne** is a poet, award-winning performing songwriter, and activist. A proud trans woman, she established her solo folk-Americana career in 2012 after years of performing with roots-rock band, the Ramblers, opening for acts such as Levon Helm. Mya's been featured on many great festival and club stages across the country. Her first solo record hit #31 on the roots charts, and the follow-up, *As I Am*, is out now. Recently chosen as an Emerging Artist at the legendary Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, her music and poetry have also been featured in such media as SingOut!, The Advocate, Village Voice, New York Magazine, MSNBC, and CBS/Radio.com, with public speaking at institutions including SUNY and the UU.

*From MyaByrne.com*

“What’s been amazing about my transition is the line between thought and action, or just the emotional aspect of music...it’s becoming easier to tap into every little bit of myself and output music. I realized what I had been searching for all my life was me.”

– *Mya Byrne*

**Angela Buchdahl** made history as the first Asian-American rabbi and cantor...her skill with congregants has fueled her rise to senior rabbi at a prestigious Manhattan synagogue. The child of a Korean mother and Jewish American father, Buchdahl was raised Jewish, but her religious identity was challenged by other Jewish teens on her first trip to Israel. To silence such challenges, she reaffirmed her faith through an Orthodox conversion at age 21...becoming a cantor in 1999 and a rabbi in 2001. Her first post was at the Westchester Reform Temple, but in 2006 she became senior cantor at Central Synagogue in Manhattan. Over the next seven years, the synagogue's Friday night attendance doubled and their post-Bar-Mitzvah retention tripled. In 2013 the synagogue named her their first female senior rabbi. Buchdahl has taught for the Wexner Foundation and is a board member of the Jewish Multiracial Network.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Judaism used to be a closed, fixed canon that was hard to access. Now, when it feels like everything is open source and open access, I still think the Jewish community hasn't come to that new paradigm. In all the other areas of people's lives they have the tools, but in their Jewish life they feel they don't, so they feel inadequate.”

– *Angela Buchdahl*

**Rebecca Touro Lopez** successfully petitioned the Rhode Island State Legislature to preserve the Touro Synagogue of Newport, one of the first cases of the government preserving an unoccupied historic building. Lopez's father served as cantor of the Newport Synagogue (the oldest synagogue in North America), but after the Revolutionary War, there were no Jews left in Newport, and the building fell into disrepair. The Touro family wandered throughout Lopez's childhood, but maintained ties to Newport. Lopez's brother made a \$10,000 bequest to preserve the synagogue, but the money languished in the bank, unused, and if the attached cemetery continued to deteriorate, the synagogue grounds would revert to their original owner and could be demolished. But in 1824, Lopez persuaded the court to give the funds to a local agent who could repair and maintain the synagogue. The beautiful Touro Synagogue was restored, became a National Historic Site, and later sparked a lively argument in verse between Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Emma Lazarus about the Jewish experience in America.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“... if my prayer is finally rejected and both places are to be abandoned and forsaken to save a just recompense to an agent indispensably necessary to have a constant eye on them, they inevitably must go to ruin...”

– *Rebecca Touro Lopez*

**Yavilah McCoy** is the founder of Ayecha, a nonprofit Jewish organization that provided Jewish diversity education and advocacy for Jews of color in the United States. Raised in an Orthodox family, McCoy studied at Yeshiva University High School and Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has taught Judaic Studies, Hebrew, and English Literature in elementary and secondary schools. In directing Ayecha from 2000–2008, she worked with rabbis, synagogues, schools, federations and multiple agencies to increase awareness of Jewish diversity and expand inclusion for Jews of color. As an anti-racism activist, she has provided training and consulting to numerous social justice agencies both within and outside of the Jewish community. In 2008 she became director of the New England Curriculum Initiative, a non-profit educational consultancy that services 600 prep schools across the nation with religious diversity resources. In 2009 McCoy co-wrote and performed *The Colors of Water*, a Jewish gospel musical describing the matriarchal journey of four generations of her African-American Jewish family. In 2014 she established Dimensions Educational Consulting, through which she continues to support organizations in expanding their relationships across race, religion, identity and culture.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“The voices and experiences of Jews of Color must be brought to the center of our movement if we are ever to get a glimpse of the power, relevance, and significance of what it has meant to embrace and understand Jewish identity on American soil.”

– *Yavilah McCoy*

As a politician, **Ruth Messinger** served her community, but in leading American Jewish World Service, she has found ways for her community to help repair the world. Messinger worked as a teacher, college administrator, and social worker before winning a seat on the New York City Council in 1977, winning reelection several times by large majorities. She became Manhattan borough president in 1990, using her influence to support gay rights, affordable housing, public school funding, and other vital issues. In 1997, she ran for mayor of New York (the first time a woman candidate secured the Democratic nomination for the post), but lost to incumbent Rudy Giuliani. The following year, she became the executive director of AJWS, which funds both development projects and emergency relief worldwide. AJWS is known not just for working to eliminate poverty and disease, but also for its support of the rights of women, homosexuals, and transgender people. Honored by the *Huffington Post*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and the *Forward* as one of the world's most influential Jews, Messinger served on President Obama's Task Force on Global Poverty and the State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Listening is a prerequisite for action.  
Listening is a principle for living Jewishly in a globalized world.”

– *Ruth Messinger*

**Dorothy Parker** commented on the art and events of her times with her brilliant turns of phrase and acid wit. Forced by her Christian stepmother to attend Catholic school, where she was made to feel an outsider, Parker perfected her biting sense of humor and quit school altogether at age fourteen. In 1918, she briefly became a staff writer for *Vanity Fair*, replacing P.G. Wodehouse as drama critic. Together with other noted literary and theatrical figures, she formed the Algonquin Hotel “Round Table” and the group became famous for their bon mots and commentary, Parker most of all. In 1926, strapped for funds, Parker published her first collection of dark, funny poems, *Enough Rope*, which became an instant bestseller. She went on to write several more volumes of poetry and short stories, as well as several plays, including the original script of *A Star is Born*. In 1958, she also began writing vivid literary criticism, much of which was published in the *New Yorker* under the title “Constant Reader.” Despite her cynical views, Parker was deeply committed to activism, from working against Franco to organizing Hollywood screenwriters, and was arrested and blacklisted for her views at various times.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“The first thing I do in the morning is  
brush my teeth and sharpen my tongue.”

– *Dorothy Parker*

As the founder of *Radical Doula*, **Miriam Zoila Perez** created a network for birthing coaches to support people of all genders, races, and economic backgrounds through pregnancy, birth, miscarriage, and abortion. Perez earned a BA in anthropology from Swarthmore in 2006 and began blogging for *Feministing* that year, becoming an editor for the blog in 2008. In 2007 she founded *Radical Doula*, a blog and networking platform offering emotional assistance with a wider range of pregnancy outcomes than those covered by traditional doulas. Through *Radical Doula*, Perez highlights doulas who specialize in sensitivity and awareness for parents who identify across the gender spectrum, as well as those of different sexual orientations and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Perez continued her advocacy with a 2012 TEDx Talk called “Transforming Empathy” and the publication of her first book, a primer called *The Radical Doula Guide*. An LGBTQ activist, she became the gender columnist for *Colorlines*, a blog on racial issues, in 2014.

*From the Jewish Women’s Archive – www.jwa.org*

“History has shown that people are incredibly resilient, and while we can’t eradicate racism or the stress that results from it overnight, we might just be able to create environments that provide a buffer to what people of color experience on a daily basis.”

– *Miriam Zoila Perez*

**Adrienne Cecile Rich** used her poetry as a means to reclaim the voices of the silenced, drawing from her own experience as a woman and lesbian. Rich met early acclaim with her first two collections of poems, *A Change of World* in 1951, which W.H. Auden selected for the Yale Series of Younger Poets, and *The Diamond Cutters* in 1955. Rich’s growing interest in the civil rights movement led her to examine the oppression of women in her 1963 collection, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law*, for which she accepted the National Book Award on behalf of all women, donating the prize money to charity. She began writing further on feminism and lesbianism, as well as on political issues. With her partner, Michelle Cliff, she coedited a lesbian feminist journal called *Sinister Wisdom* from 1980–1984. She also taught at a variety of universities, including Swarthmore, Columbia, and Brandeis, and served as chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. She has won many literary awards, including a MacArthur Fellowship, but famously refused the National Medal of Arts in 1997 because she felt her art was “incompatible with the cynical politics of this administration.”

*From the Jewish Women’s Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brains and instincts; hence, grappling with hard work.”

– *Adrienne Rich*

**Sandy Eisenberg Sasso** was the first woman rabbi ordained by the Reconstructionist movement, which was one of many firsts in her career. Sasso married fellow rabbinical student Dennis Sasso before graduating from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia in 1974, making her the first Reconstructionist woman rabbi and half of the first rabbinic couple. In 1976 she became the first rabbi to become a mother after the birth of her first child, David. Sasso served as rabbi of the Manhattan Reconstructionist Congregation before she and her husband became the joint leaders of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis in 1977. She retired from the congregation in 2013...Sasso has written a number of Jewish children's books...[and] resources for parents and a book on midrash...She also works with her cohort of fellow first women rabbis from the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements, speaking about their experiences.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Sometimes we are so stuck in a past that we cannot change,  
or so afraid of a future over which we have limited control, that we don't  
really appreciate the present—the very moment before us.”

– *Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso*

Although she made her Broadway debut with *Indecent* in 2016, playwright **Paula Vogel** has long been hailed for her unflinching exploration of taboo topics, from the AIDS crisis to child abuse. She debuted her first play, *Swan Song of Sir Henry*, in 1974 and went on to produce new plays every few years. In 1992 she won an Obie award for *The Baltimore Waltz*, which focused on the AIDS crisis, and followed this success with a Pulitzer prize in 1997 for *How I Learned to Drive*, a play about child abuse. In 2017 she was nominated for a Tony award for *Indecent*, which investigated the censorship of Sholem Asch's 1923 play *God of Vengeance* for its treatment of religion and lesbian romance. Since the 1980s, Vogel has run playwriting “boot camps,” challenging participants to create plays in 48 hours. She headed the graduate playwriting program at Brown University until 2008, when she became chair of the playwriting department at Yale School of Drama, where she still teaches as of 2017. She earned her PhD from Cornell in 2016. Among her many honors, she was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 2013 and won the 2017 Obie Award for Lifetime Achievement.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Art is the writer not having control,  
but the subject having control of the writer.”

– *Paula Vogel*

**Edie Windsor** struck a historic blow for gay rights in 2013 when the Supreme Court ruled in her favor in *United States v. Windsor*, granting same sex couples recognition by the federal government. Windsor graduated from Temple University in 1950 and earned a master's degree in mathematics from NYU in 1957. She worked for IBM for 16 years, achieving the rank of Senior Systems Programmer, and was later honored by the National Computing Conference in 1987 as a pioneer in operating systems. In 1975 she took early retirement to focus on LGBT activism, volunteering for the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the LGBT Community Center, and Services & Advocacy for LGBT Elders (SAGE), among many others. She began her relationship with psychologist Thea Spyer in 1965 and tended Spyer after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1977. The couple registered for a domestic partnership in New York City in 1993, the first day it was available, and married in Canada in 2007. However, after Spyer's death in 2009, the IRS refused to recognize the marriage and insisted Windsor pay estate taxes as a beneficiary of Spyer's will as though she were not a widow. However, in 2013 the Supreme Court ruled that the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), by not recognizing her marriage, had violated Windsor's Fifth Amendment rights to both liberty and property and was therefore unconstitutional.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“The next generation is so far advanced over us. I love that a lot of younger people now come out that would never have come out in the old days. Of course, they are born into a community already. They just have to discover it, whereas we were still building it.”

– *Edie Windsor*

**Abby Stein** is a Jewish educator, speaker, and trans activist. She was born and raised in a Chasidic family of rabbinic descent; she is the 10th generation of the Baal Shem Tov - Founder of the Chasidic movement. In that world Abby attended Yeshiva, completing a rabbinical degree in 2011. In 2012, she left the Chasidic world to explore different world views. In 2015 Abby came out as a [transgender woman]. She is the first woman – and openly transgender woman – to have been ordained by an Orthodox institution.\* Since coming out, she has been doing work towards her goal to raise awareness and support people going through a similar experience. Her story has been covered in the New York Times, New York Post, New York Magazine, Jewish Daily Forward, Daily Mail, NBC, and more, as well as live appearances on Fox News, CNN, HuffPost Live, ShowTime and more. In 2016 Abby was named by The Jewish Week as one of the 36 Under 36 young Jews who are affecting change in the world. She is a third year student at Columbia University, studying women's and gender studies, and political science.

*From IMDb – www.imdb.com; \*added from Wikipedia*

“The most effective path to resistance is when the persecuted, in whichever way it is, gather to fight back, together.”

– *Abby Stein*

When **Nadine Gordimer's** depictions of apartheid earned her the Nobel Prize for Literature, she used her fame to fund HIV prevention and treatment in her native South Africa. Gordimer's mother took her out of school at age eleven, claiming Nadine had heart problems, and Gordimer dealt with her isolation by escaping into books. She published her first short story in the Johannesburg *Sunday Express* at age thirteen. After a year at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1945, she began exploring the black townships around Johannesburg, which led her to both black literature and the fight for equality. She became active in the African National Congress and wrote about the impact of apartheid in her fiction, beginning with her first short story collection, *Face to Face*, in 1949. Despite her own government censoring several of her novels for many years, she became the first South African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. When apartheid ended in 1994, Gordimer turned her attention to the AIDS crisis, and in 2003 she brought together numerous literary stars to create an anthology, *Telling Tales*, to raise money for prevention and treatment programs. The book was published by the UN a year later, on World AIDS Day.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“I have failed at many things,  
but I have never been afraid.”

– *Nadine Gordimer*

Through performance art pieces like *Kate Bornstein Is a Queer and Pleasant Danger* and *The Opposite Sex is Neither*, **Kate Bornstein** questions society's understanding of gender as a binary. Bornstein earned a degree in theater from Brown University in 1969, worked as an actor, and became involved with the Church of Scientology, eventually rising to become a high-ranking lieutenant in Sea Org, the church's naval force. After twelve years, ze left the organization when ze began struggling more publicly with gender issues, and as a result of the split was forced to cut off contact with hir daughter, still a church member. Ze transitioned from Albert to Kate and began using hir writing and performance art as a way to question gender while working as an activist for LGBTQ rights. In 1994 ze published her first book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. As of 2015 has published seven books, including *Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws* in 2006 and hir memoir, *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*, in 2012.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“I have this idea that every time we discover that the names we're being called are somehow keeping us less than free, we need to come up with new names for ourselves, and that the names we give ourselves must no longer reflect a fear of being labeled outsiders, must no longer bind us to a system that would rather see us dead.”

– *Kate Bornstein*

**Barbara Boxer** earned a reputation as a powerful voice for liberal causes by leading the charge on issues like sexual harassment, the Iraq War, and marriage equality. Boxer majored in economics and put her husband through law school by working as a stockbroker before the Vietnam War and the 1968 assassinations convinced her to turn her energy to forming grassroots organizations for peace, education, and women's rights. Elected to Congress in 1982, Boxer focused on feminist issues such as abortion. In 1991, Boxer led a group of seven female Representatives to demand the all-white, all-male Senate committee reopen Clarence Thomas's confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court to consider Anita Hill's testimony of sexual harassment. Boxer was elected to the Senate herself the following year, taking strong stances for gun control and environmental issues, as well as being one of only fourteen senators to vote against the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act and arguing against the 2002 invasion of Iraq. She serves on the Senate committees for science and technology, the environment, foreign relations, and ethics, among others.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“Even if I have to stand alone, I will not be afraid to stand alone.  
I'm going to fight for you. I'm going to fight for what's right.  
I'm going to fight to hold people accountable.”

– *Barbara Boxer*

**Hilde Bruch's** seminal work on eating disorders contributed significantly to understanding and treatment of the diseases in the 1970s. Bruch earned her doctorate at the University of Freiburg in 1929, but emigrated in 1933 to escape rising German anti-Semitism. Settling in New York, she began groundbreaking work on obesity in children in 1937 before shifting her focus to psychiatry, teaching at Columbia University before accepting a position at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX in 1964, where she continued to teach throughout her career. Her 1973 book, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa, and the Person Within*, is considered a definitive work on the subject. Despite suffering from Parkinson's disease, she continued her therapeutic practice until her eightieth birthday.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“When you are so unhappy you don't know  
how to accomplish anything, then to have control  
over your body becomes an extreme accomplishment.”

– *Hilde Bruch*



**Judith Butler** is an American philosopher and gender theorist whose work has influenced political philosophy, ethics and the fields of third-wave feminist, queer and literary theory. Butler transformed philosophy's understanding of gender and queer studies with her theory that gender is not an inherent quality, it is a repeated performance based on social codes. Since 1993, she has taught at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is now Maxine Elliot Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Program of Critical Theory. She is also the Hannah Arendt Chair at the European Graduate School. Butler is best known for her books *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), in which she challenges conventional notions of gender and develops her theory of gender performativity. This theory has had a major influence on feminist and queer scholarship. Butler has actively supported lesbian and gay rights movements and has spoken out on many contemporary political issues. Beyond her groundbreaking work in critical theory, she has chaired the board of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, served as an executive member of Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, and been involved with Occupy Wall Street.

*From Wikipedia and the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“Whether or not we continue to enforce a universal conception of human rights at moments of outrage and incomprehension, precisely when we think that others have taken themselves out of the human community as we know it, is a test of our very humanity.”

– *Judith Butler*

**Jaclyn Friedman** voiced new possibilities for sex-positive feminism and a rejection of rape culture as editor of *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape*. A victim of sexual assault in college, Friedman began teaching self-defense and speaking out about victim blaming, slut shaming, and other aspects of culture that perpetuate rape. Her 2009 book *Yes Means Yes* was eleventh on *Ms. Magazine's* Top 100 Feminist Nonfiction of All Time list. As founder and executive director of Women, Action, and the Media (WAM!), Friedman led a successful campaign to make Facebook classify incitements of violence against women as hate speech and remove them from the site. WAM!, which has local chapters throughout the US and Canada, runs grassroots campaigns and annual conferences to promote women's equal representation in the media. Friedman's second book, *What You Really Really Want*, offered young women possibilities for exploring their sexuality while remaining conscious of their safety. On her weekly podcast, *F\*cking While Feminist*, she interviews public figures, activists, and commentators on feminism and sexuality. In 2017 she published *Unscrewed*, in which she discusses "fauxpowerment," the concept that women are taught that they have sexual power without having actual power over their lives.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“One of the best ways to free yourself to what you want is to feel secure in your ability to say no to what you don't.”

– *Jaclyn Friedman*

After her impassioned plea that black lives matter ignited the internet, **Alicia Garza** helped lead the movement that has transformed the modern struggle for civil rights. Born Alicia Schwartz, Garza studied anthropology at UC San Diego and was an early activist for causes including LGBT rights, civil rights, and fair housing. Garza became executive director of POWER, a San Francisco-based labor group, in 2009. In 2013, after George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin, Garza reacted to how little black lives were valued by American society by posting her now-famous quote, which quickly went viral on social media. Together with two friends, she co-founded Black Lives Matter, which gained traction the following year when they organized powerful events across America to protest the police killing of Michael Brown. As part of that campaign, Garza stopped a BART train to represent the time Brown's body was left in the street. She continues to work with Black Lives Matter while serving as special projects director for the Oakland office of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and as a board member of the School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL).

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“I don't know how to wrap my head around what's happening with Black Lives Matter right now, but what I can say is that I'm so in awe of how bold and brave people have been...They are in it. I'm really honored to be a part of this moment.

This is a moment I have dreamed of my whole life. Growing up, I...was told that...it wasn't possible to have black liberation in our lifetime. So I'm just grateful to be alive in this moment where more and more people are saying: we believe it can happen and we're gonna to fight for it.”

– *Alicia Garza*

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg** brought landmark cases for gender and racial equality before the Supreme Court, transforming the American legal landscape even before her historic appointment as the second-ever female Supreme Court justice. Ginsburg first enrolled at Harvard Law before transferring to Columbia Law School, making Law Review at both schools. She tied for first in her class at Columbia but struggled to find work after graduation because of her gender. Ginsburg began teaching law at Rutgers and then at Columbia, becoming the first woman to earn tenure at Columbia, and simultaneously served as the first director of the ACLU's Women's Rights Project. As the project's chief litigator, Ginsburg argued vital cases for women's equality before the Supreme Court, choosing to bring cases in a strategic order to advance women's rights and selecting cases that showed gender discrimination could also harm men, such as a case where a widower was denied his wife's Social Security benefits, which he needed to raise their infant son. In 1993, President Clinton appointed Ginsburg to the Supreme Court, where she has had an immeasurable impact on gender and racial equality in America.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“Fight for the things that you care about,  
but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”

– *Ruth Bader Ginsberg*

**Nan Goldin** has used her photography to honor both the courage and the gritty reality of subjects ranging from drag queens to new parents. Goldin began her love affair with photography at age fifteen, heavily influenced by Warhol, Fellini, and other avant-garde artists. She focused on gay and transgender subjects, particularly drag queens, whom she showed in an unusually positive light. She held her first solo show in Boston in 1973. She moved to New York in 1979, both reveling in the freedom of post-Stonewall gay and lesbian culture and becoming addicted to drugs, all while capturing the Bowery's various subcultures of drugs, music, art, and queer culture for her watershed 1986 series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* and her later series *I'll Be Your Mirror* (1996). Over the years, she also began exploring other subjects with her unique perspective, from babies to skylines. While she usually shows her photographs in a slideshow format (beginning with a 1979 show at a nightclub), in 2006 she began incorporating film, music, and voiceover in *Chasing a Ghost*. She has been honored with retrospectives at the Whitney in 1996 and the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 2001, and was awarded the French Legion of Honor in 2006.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“My work has been about making a record of my life that no one can revise. I photograph myself in times of trouble or change in order to find the ground to stand on in the change... You get displaced, and then taking self-portraits becomes a way of hanging on to yourself.”

– Nan Goldin

Poet and scholar **Joy Ladin** is the first openly transgender employee of an Orthodox institution, Yeshiva University's Stern College. Ladin studied poetry at Sarah Lawrence College, graduating in 1982, and went on to earn an MFA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1995 and a PhD from Princeton University in 2000. Her poetry collections *Alternatives to History* (2003) and *The Book of Anna* (2006) earned her early tenure from Stern College, but in 2007, when she came out as a trans woman and changed her name from Jay to Joy, she was asked to take a leave of absence. In 2008, undeterred by controversy, she returned to Stern College, where she holds the Gottesman Chair in English. As of 2016 she has published seven collections of poetry, most recently *Impersonation* (2015). She has also published numerous essays on gender and religion, as well as a memoir: *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders*, which was a finalist for the 2012 National Jewish Book Award. Among her other honors, she has been both a Fulbright scholar and a Fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – www.jwa.org*

“I may be making this up retrospectively, but it seems to me that rhyme was — the way I felt that there was a fundamental female identity within me that rhymed with that of other born girls and women, that when I created a rhyme between dissimilar words, I was revealing something like that hidden essence. I was making it ring true.”

– Joy Ladin

**Emma Lazarus's** famous poem "The New Colossus" helped the Statue of Liberty greet millions, but still reflected her experience of the mixed welcome that minorities faced in America. She was respected as a masterful poet at a time when few women writers were taken seriously and corresponded with such literary greats as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Browning, and Henry James. But despite her acclaim, Lazarus still faced anti-Semitism and witnessed growing tensions towards Jews in America and abroad, spurring her to call for a Jewish homeland decades before the word "Zionist" even existed. While she was widely published in her lifetime and mourned by activists like Henrietta Szold, Lazarus's family's decision after her death to censor her Jewish essays and poems left her work in relative obscurity for decades. Despite this, she continues to influence artists and activists through projects ranging from a federation of activist women's clubs named in her honor to a modern dance performance inspired by her poetry.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

"Until we are all free,  
we are none of us free. "

– *Emma Lazarus*

As a Sephardic Jew from Argentina, **Rita Arditti's** experience as "a minority within a minority" drove her to document another invisible group: the grandmothers of the disappeared children. Arditti began her career as a biologist, researching genetics at Brandeis and Harvard, and founding two activist groups, Science for the People and the Women's Community Cancer Project. But after agreeing to translate for a Boston tour of the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Arditti was drawn to their cause and began to document their work. Her book *Searching for Life: The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* raised international awareness of the risks these women took to recover their grandchildren who had disappeared during Argentina's brutal dictatorship. The book was used to support the grandmothers' nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

"Persistence is the key to anything.  
It doesn't matter if you are young or old or super intelligent.  
Once you are convinced to the core of the importance  
of something you just keep doing it.  
It's such an empowering feeling."

– *Rita Arditti*

**Meredith Monk's** avant-garde, mixed-media creations blend music, dance, film, and live performance to explore the collision of past and present, from the Black Plague to the AIDS crisis and from the medieval ghetto to Ellis Island. Monk studied music and dance at Sarah Lawrence College and began composing and choreographing professionally soon after graduating in 1964. In 1968 she created the House Foundation for the Arts, where she created and directed interdisciplinary works, such as 1969's *Juice*, which began with 85 performers on the spiral ramp of the Guggenheim Museum and ended with filmed sequences shown in Monk's apartment. Later works, like her vision of Joan of Arc called *Vessel*, also involved both mixed disciplines and changes in location. Her filmed works, such as 1981's *Ellis Island* and 1989's *Book of Days*, show an interplay between biblical and medieval events and modern ones. Her musical compositions range from a 1991 opera, *Atlas*, to music for *The Big Lebowski* in 1998, to 2004's symphonic *Stringsongs* for the Kronos Quartet. Her boundary-pushing art has earned her two Guggenheim fellowships, a MacArthur grant, three Obie awards, the Dance Magazine award, and many other honors.

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“That inner voice has both gentleness and clarity.  
So to get to authenticity, you really keep going down to the bone,  
to the honesty, and the inevitability of something.”

– *Meredith Monk*

A formidable leader of the women's movement, **Bella Abzug** fought to pass the Equal Rights Amendment and other vital legislation for the rights of women. Early in her career, Abzug earned distinction as one of the few attorneys willing to stand up to the House Un-American Activities Committee. During her three terms in Congress, she advocated for groundbreaking bills including the Equal Rights Amendment and crucial support of Title IX. In 1977, she presided over the historic first National Women's Conference in Houston. Towards the end of her career, she focused on global issues of women's rights and human rights, ensuring that those issues were continually addressed by the United Nations. “In a perfectly just republic,” wrote John Kenneth Galbraith in 1984, “Bella Abzug would be president.”

*From the Jewish Women's Archive – [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)*

“I spend all day figuring out how to beat the machine  
and knock the crap out of the political power structure.”

– *Bella Abzug*

**Rebecca Walker** is an American writer, feminist, and activist. Walker's writing, teaching, and speeches focus on race, gender, politics, power, and culture. In her activism work, she helped co-found the Third Wave Fund that morphed into the Third Wave Foundation, an organization that supports young women of color, queer, intersex, and trans individuals have the tools and resources they need to be leaders in their communities through activism and philanthropy. She was born Rebecca Leventhal in 1969 in Jackson, Mississippi, the daughter of Alice Walker, an African-American writer, whose work includes *The Color Purple*; and Mel Leventhal, a Jewish American and a civil rights lawyer. When she was 15, Walker changed her surname from Leventhal to Walker, her mother's surname. Walker identifies as black, white, and Jewish, which is also the title of her memoir, published in 2001.

*From Wikipedia*

“...when it comes down to it, that’s what life is all about: showing up for the people you love, again and again, until you can’t show up anymore.”

– *Rebecca Walker*