

## FROM THE EDITORS

*Kol ha olam kulo gesher tzar me'od,  
v'haikar lo l'fakhed k'lal*

*The whole world is a narrow bridge,  
the main thing is to be unafraid.*  
Reb Nachman of Bratslav

Two manuscripts came in to us quoting these words. Was it the title of the journal which inspired thoughts of this song (we weren't thinking of this song when we chose the name) or is the image of a narrow bridge so apt to the position of Jews and feminists today that it has simultaneously appeared in many minds? And yet the bridges in the minds of our editors were visions of strength, more like the Williamsburg or Golden Gate than the swaying rope of Reb Nachman's *gesher*. . .

Welcome to the first issue of **BRIDGES: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends**. Our journal emerges from the United States during an extended wave of political conservatism, a decline in standard of living and quality of life, and erosion of civil liberties, especially for people of color and women. It is also a time when, for complex reasons which we hope to explore, many Jews are involved in a difficult search for deeper understandings of the meaning and future of Jewish identity.

The founding editors of **BRIDGES** met through our activism in New Jewish Agenda. The nature of the organization, with chapters in fifty North American cities, allowed us to envision a project national in scope, yet rooted in local communities. We come from both coasts and the Midwest; we range in age from 25 to 60. We differ in our religious practice and commitment to Jewish secularism, though we are all deeply concerned with meaningful Jewish life.

Featured in this issue are three solicited retrospective essays which chronicle aspects of Jewish feminism over the last decade. Alisa Solomon, a drama critic for the *Village Voice*, addresses Jewish feminist organizing around

Middle East peace issues; historian Faith Rogow explores Jewish lesbian-feminist development; and JEB, a longtime documenter of Jewish, lesbian, and feminist activism contributes a photo-essay. Future issues will feature other retrospectives including one on Jewish feminist liturgy and ritual. We solicited several historical pieces in an effort to represent the many strands of Jewish feminist activity; we hope **BRIDGES** will help create connections among women living in different parts of the country and involved in different aspects of Jewish feminism.

At **BRIDGES** we see literary and creative work as essential to our politics. We will regularly reserve nearly half of our pages for visual art, poetry, fiction and song; essays and other writing will make up the remainder. We believe this first issue of **BRIDGES** achieves an extraordinary integration of culture and political activism, exemplified in "Some Pieces of Jewish Left," the opening story by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz which utilizes the freedom of fiction to convey a realistic picture (there are no answers, just lots of questions) of Jewish women activists. We are particularly proud that much of the poetry and song in this issue came unsolicited from women who have not yet been widely published.

**BRIDGES** is proud to join the ranks of the many publications, past and present, which articulate alternative visions of re-evaluating and re-building the structures of society. We feel our unique contribution comes from our firm footing in the feminist, lesbian, Jewish, and progressive worlds, and our format, which permits publication of in-depth pieces that cannot be published elsewhere because of their length. In her review of *Nice Jewish Girls*, *The Tribe of Dina* and *Twice Blessed* Joan Nestle gives a brief overview of the history of lesbian-feminist publishing. **BRIDGES** itself has grown out of this publishing matrix, yet our specifically Jewish focus commits us to pushing the boundaries of that milieu, as our radical feminist approach expands the definitions of what it means to be Jewish.

We also see ourselves as a specifically Jewish voice in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial women's movement. In so doing, we place ourselves alongside those feminists and

progressives who take seriously the impact of racism in the United States and abroad, not only on people of color but on entire societies. For Jews, located as we are in the tension filled spaces in the economy and society, racism has had still unexplored destabilizing effects. We hope to extend, through essays, dialogues and reports of activist work, the understanding of racism's continuing, inexorable presence and how it saps and undermines us all.

It is essential to our vision that diversity of experience be made vivid in these pages. **BRIDGES** will acknowledge that Jewish feminists come from all regions of the country, from the full range of Jewish backgrounds. We hope to challenge assumptions and stereotypes by publishing writers and artists from the Midwest and the South, from working class and non-European cultures. We believe that a truer sense of Jewish identity will take shape when the specifics of our Jewish lives, including our separations from Jewish culture, are named and acknowledged. Feminist transformation is enabled when each woman's reality is brought to light; **BRIDGES** is a forum for such interaction among Jewish feminists.

Bridges are connectors, spans between deeply rooted foundations, bridges allow communication and transactions. And, as the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake showed us, bridges can be among our most vulnerable structures. That vulnerability, and that strength, are needed between Jews living in cultures around the world, between us and Jews of past generations, between American Jews and people of color, among the movements for social transformation and among feminists whose foundations have been built independently of each other. **BRIDGES** reaches out to all communities engaged in the enduring labor of love, and desire for a livable society, which is called political struggle.

—Ruth Atkin, Elly Bulkin, Rita Falbel, Clare Kinberg, Ruth Kraut, Adrienne Rich, Laurie White