



## **Federation's Jewish Community Relations Council: An Update**

September 30, 2020

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was carving out new legal territory in equal rights for women (and men) during a time many of us remember well. The immense coverage of her death, her life, and her career sent me back to my young adulthood, a time when I was finishing college, and planning a future including a career and marriage.

Her pioneering work with the ACLU, and later work as a judge and a Supreme Court Justice, substantially changed our opportunities, our careers, and our very lives on a day-to-day basis. As I was graduating from LSU, I noticed that the male graduates were all excited about automatically receiving credit cards in the mail from companies without even having a credit check. None of my female friends could get credit cards, even with good credit. Later, when I married, only my husband's income counted towards qualifying for the mortgage to the home we wanted to buy. I was a woman, and my income didn't count.

In her fight for change, Justice Ginsburg's strong will was coupled with a sense of humor and love of the arts and her family. Her absence leaves a hole in the hearts of many, which will only grow as we face the challenges to her life's work now and in the future. Her strong sense of justice is shared by many of us in the Jewish community; we are proud because she was the first Jewish woman honored by lying in state in the US Capitol, and in fact, she was the first Jewish person to be so honored.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is an inspiration to me as we pursue the work of the Federation's [Jewish Community Relations Council](#) (JCRC), which I chair. During our first two years, we got our feet wet by meeting with local government officials and community leaders; working with coalitions; convening a Security Summit in the wake of the Pittsburgh and Poway synagogue tragedies; testifying before the Board of Education and the County Executive; serving on HCPSS committees related to curriculum and diversity, equity and inclusion; and meeting with local HCPSS leaders and

the Superintendent. We also advocated in Annapolis as a partner in Maryland Jewish Advocacy Day.

During this “pandemic summer,” the 14 members of the JCRC, including representatives from every Howard County congregation and other community leaders, decided to plan our focus for the next two years. We met with 46 social justice advocates from our Jewish community to tell us what issues were the most serious and important to them. We found that people were most concerned about anti-Semitism; racism in Howard County; and the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our local school system.

Over recent weeks, we have formed Teams to address each of the three topic areas, recruited members for each Team, and started investigating the lay of the land. We’ll continue conversations by seeking out individuals and groups that are already active in these issues. Our hope is to identify situations where we can take action to support others, form coalitions, and develop new approaches to continue the work toward justice in our community. For more information, contact me at [betsysingermarcus@gmail.com](mailto:betsysingermarcus@gmail.com).

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