



Shayna Golkow



Shayna's interest in civic engagement began in high school when she reestablished her school's largest community service club, East in Action. The club organized annual legislative breakfasts that raised awareness for important community causes, like Alzheimer's disease, mental health, and child abuse, among school officials, legislators, and students. At Penn, Shayna continued her involvement in social action as she took an interest in the Philadelphia public schools and joined Community Schools Student Partnerships as a freshman. The relationships and interactions Shayna had with the students she mentored inspired her to start a program called Atid during her sophomore year, which pairs Penn students with West Philadelphia High School students for one-on-one mentoring focused on learning about colleges, studying for the SATs, setting goals, and mapping out their futures. In addition to Atid, Shayna is active in other areas of campus life as a leader at Penn Hillel, a tour guide for the Undergraduate Admissions Office, and as a certified Communication Within the Curriculum public speaking advisor. A Religious Studies major and Psychology minor, Shayna will be following her passion for Judaism next year as she heads to New York City to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary's Rabbinical School. When she is ordained as a rabbi in five or six years, Shayna hopes to use the knowledge and tools she has learned from the Civic Scholars program to enhance curriculums of social justice and civic engagement in Jewish schools, camps, and other educational settings.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

“Status and Role of Orthodox Jewish and Muslim Women in America: An Inside Perspective”

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In a world that is becoming increasingly sensitive to human rights, people are often appalled to hear that American women, who are legally free to do anything and everything men can do, allow themselves to be restricted by a power some deem higher than the law – religion. This study analyzes fourteen personal, one-on-one interviews with seven Orthodox Jewish women and seven Orthodox Muslim women, and seeks to answer the following main questions: What is an Orthodox Jewish or Muslim woman’s role, status, and quality of life? Why do these women follow rules with regard to dress, modesty, relationships, role, career, and other restrictions and obligations? How do they feel about outsiders’ perceptions of their “oppression”? How would they respond to common stereotypes about women in communities like theirs? All fourteen women were extremely content with their lives, had freely chosen these lifestyles, and felt that their behaviors and practices were serving God. They all recognized the fact that outsiders are judgmental of the restrictions they place on themselves, particularly regarding modesty, and each woman expressed why modesty was a deeply personal choice that brought her closer to her religion and to God. Within their families and communities, all of the women said they felt respected, appreciated, and valued.