

MURRAY ADELSTEIN

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Murray has a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Social Work. He has a wife of 40 years, Sandy, a son Zach, daughter Brittany, son-in-law Jessie, and two dogs, Bonnie and Clyde. Murray currently works for Kuraray, a global manufacturing organization. He serves as the Learning and Development Specialist for Kuraray America.

For over the past 50 years Murray has worked with Jewish children and youth, professionally and as a volunteer. His experience includes working at the JCC Dallas day camp as a Counselor, Unit Head and Assistant Director. He has served as a Religious School Teacher and Educational Director at Congregation Beth Israel in Austin. He was a NFTY Regional Advisor, and Unit Head at Greene Family Camp.

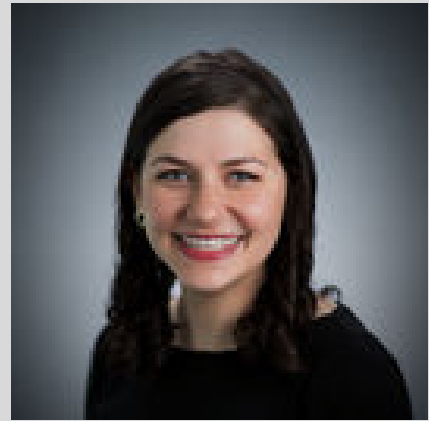
In Houston, he worked at the JCC for 8 years in rolls including Director of Children and Youth and Director of the Day Camp at the Gordan Campsite. He was a Religious School Teacher, and volunteer NFTY Advisor for 10 years at Congregation Beth El. He is currently starting his 10th year as a BBYO Advisor, for Douglas Loeb AZA. He has staffed two BBYO international conventions, substituted at Emery Middle and High School. Additional roles include leading 4 Birthright trips to Israel, and serving as Director of Education and Youth at Congregation Or Ami for 7 years.

Kehillah High

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER HOUSTON

KATELYN BLEIWEISS

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Katelyn Bleiweiss is a 4th generation native Houstonian, who is proud to be serving her community. She attended HSPVA and then went on to do Young Judea Year Course in Israel.

Upon her return, she attended the University of Texas at Austin and received a BA in Anthropology with a minor in Jewish Studies. After a few years in Austin, she returned to Houston to attend the University of Texas Health Science Center- School of Public Health, and earned her Masters of Public Health with a focus in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. As the need for suicide prevention was increasing, Katelyn was recruited into the new mental health programs department to serve as a mental health program coordinator.

She is now the first and only certified Sources of Strength instructor in Texas, and is very passionate about finding the positives in life. In her free time, she likes to hike, pet dogs, play music, and create crafts.

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MELISSA COHEN-NICKELS

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Originally from Libertyville, Ill., Cohen-Nickels earned her B.A. in history from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. She earned her Master's of Education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. Cohen-Nickels came to the Houston area to teach history in 2007. She taught for 10 years in Fort Bend ISD, serving as Social Studies Department chair for three years. Most recently, she taught history at The Emery/Weiner School. Today Cohen-Nickels is the curator of the Joan and Stanford South Texas Jewish Archives at Rice University. As the curator of STJA, she strives to collect, preserve, and educate others about the many stories of the South Texas Jewish community. On Sundays, Cohen-Nickels teaches at the religious school for Congregation Beth El in Missouri City. She loves history and travel and was selected as a Fulbright-Hays scholar to Greece and Turkey in 2011. She also has worked closely with the Houston World Affairs Council as a member of its Core Teacher Council, creating programming and curriculum.

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SHERYL ESKOWITZ

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Sheryl Eskowitz is the Education Director at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. She is a native Houstonian and has loved coming full circle to work at the synagogue she grew up in. After graduating with a degree in Elementary Education from The University of Texas at Austin, she attained her Master's Degree in Reading Education and her Mid-Management Certification. She began her career as an elementary school teacher in public school. She served as the Elementary School Principal at The Shlenker School for fourteen years and held a dual position of Acting Head of School/Elementary Principal for two of those years. She later became the Regional Director for Lonestar Region BBYO, where she worked for five years. In her spare time, she enjoys playing mah jongg and spending time with family and friends.

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RABBI GIDEON ESTES

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Gideon Estes is the Rabbi of Congregation Or Ami, a Conservative Synagogue in West Houston. Rabbi Estes was Ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 2010. He got his BA from UCLA in 2003 in Jewish Studies. He is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. He is very excited to be teaching at Kehillah High.

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CANTOR KENNETH FEIBUSH

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Cantor Kenneth Feibush (he/him) serves as Cantor of Congregation Beth Israel. He was ordained as Cantor at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, served congregations in Louisiana, Alaska, New York, and New Jersey, and led Passover seders in Belarus. He was a volunteer with the Memorial Scrolls Trust which allocates 1,564 Czech Torah scrolls that survived Nazi and Communist destruction. With a passion for history, language, travel, and culture, Cantor Feibush believes in finding the joy in a Jewish life while facing the challenges of the modern world. He is a graduate of Rutgers College where he served on the Rutgers Hillel board and produced a concert with YouTube star Miranda Sings with his a cappella singing group. While he does not drink coffee nor know how to ride a bike, Cantor Feibush is excited to connect with Kehillah High and connect individually with Houston Jewish High Schoolers.

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RABBI SARAH FORT

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Sarah Fort is an associate rabbi at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. She graduated from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, California in 2017, and holds a BA in Government and International Politics from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. A native of the DC area, Rabbi Fort spent years working in Jewish formal and informal education: youth group advisor, religious school instructor, Hillel president, and assistant preschool teacher. While in rabbinical school, Rabbi Fort was awarded the Jacob Pressman Award in Homiletics, interned at Shomrei Torah Synagogue, and had the opportunity to travel to Birobidzhan, Russia to serve as a camp rabbi at the JDC Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Camp. She loves binge-watching TV, cooking, and traveling the world with her son David.

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RABBI STEVEN GROSS

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Steve Gross serves as the Rabbi at Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism, he was ordained in 1996 by Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he also earned a Master of Hebrew Letters. He is deeply committed to the pursuit of peace and justice, nurturing a sense of collective responsibility within his community while promoting tolerance and understanding among diverse faith groups. Rabbi Gross views every religious endeavor as an opportunity to foster community and build a deeper relationship with God. An active participant in the Anti-Defamation League’s Coalition for Mutual Respect and a former board member (1997-2000), he was honored in 2019 for his leadership in multi-faith bridge building. He also serves on the board of Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, collaborating on initiatives to strengthen relationships among Houston’s faith communities.

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ADRIAN HEID

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Adrian Heid is an architect and entrepreneur lucky to call Houston home! Born in Colombia, he immigrated to South Florida with his family as a teenager. He graduated from Florida International University with a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture in 2009 and graduated with a Master of Architecture from Princeton University in 2012. After working for architecture firms in New York and Miami, Adrian founded his own architecture and design practice, Based Architects, in 2015 with residential and commercial projects across Texas, Louisiana, and Florida.

A descendant of Holocaust survivors on both sides, Adrian focuses much of his community work on combating antisemitism through Holocaust memory and education, serving on the Board of Advisors of Holocaust Museum Houston. He is currently spearheading 3GHTX, a Houston-based initiative supporting third-generation Holocaust descendants. In 2025, Adrian joined JFNA's National Young Leadership Cabinet and is looking forward to continuing to expand his leadership skills and community knowledge, locally and beyond.

Adrian, together with his partner Andrew Burnett, spends his free time caring for their two Basenjis, Max and Moritz.

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DANA KATZ

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Dana Yudovich Katz is an active volunteer in the Houston Jewish community. She earned her BS in Communication Sciences and Disorders from UT Austin and her master's in speech-language pathology at Northwestern University. She has substitute taught at The Shlenker School and currently substitutes at The Emery/Weiner School. Prior to becoming a full-time mother to her three children, Dana worked as a bilingual speech-language pathologist at TIRR and in Houston ISD schools. Currently, Dana serves as the co-president of the Parents Association at Emery, treasurer of Congregation Beth Yeshurun, and a member of the executive committee of the Houston Yiddish Vinkl. Dana is excited to introduce Yiddish to the students at Kehillah High. She grew up with a love of Yiddish, having heard it as a child in the home and further studying the language both in college and through YIVO. Dana enjoys traveling, photography, and above all, spending time with her family and friends.

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CAROL LAHANA

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Carol Lahana is a native Houstonian who grew up attending Congregation Brith Shalom. Carol was involved in USY and was on the original Kehillah High Leadership Team when Kehillah High started in 2015. She attended UT Dallas to obtain her BA and MS in Criminology. While there, she was very involved with Hillel, even serving as Jewish Life Coordinator for her last semester. During the week, Carol currently works for The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, helping adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Carol is very excited to be back at Kehillah High, this time as an instructor. She hopes to bring her experience as a Kehillah High alum to continue making Kehillah High amazing.

Kehillah High

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CANTOR MARK LEVINE

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Cantor Mark Levine grew up as part of a traditional Jewish family in New Jersey. He has earned a B.A in Psychology and an M.A./ordination as a Chazzan. He is currently working towards a doctorate of Jewish Studies. During his career, Cantor Levine has served synagogues as Chazan, Executive Director, and Education Director. He has also served as Judaics Teacher, Middle School Director and School Counselor for a Solomon Shechter Days School. Over the last 16 years, Cantor Levine has served Congregation Brith Shalom Education Director, Interim Executive Director and Cantor. After 15 years working at Camp Ramah, Nyack and having led two summer-long Dallas Teen Tours to Israel, Cantor Levine brings a wide range of administrative, clergy and educational experiences, both formal and informal, to Congregation Brith Shalom. and the Houston community. He is very proud to be one of the founders of the Kehillah High program here in Houston to have taught teens in the program every year since its inception.

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RABBI DAVID MENDELSON

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi David Mendelson serves as the Assistant Rabbi at Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston, Texas. Since joining the congregation in July 2025, he has focused on teaching, pastoral care, social action, and strengthening communal life. His work spans all ages, through adult learning, high school education, youth programming, family services, and young-professional engagement, helping individuals and families find meaningful ways to connect with Jewish tradition and community.

Before arriving in Houston, Rabbi Mendelson served as the Associate Rabbi and Community of Caring Director at Hamakom in Los Angeles, where he strengthened pastoral initiatives, expanded social action programming, and developed creative educational experiences. A graduate of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (Class of 2023), Rabbi Mendelson received the Yechiel Goldhaar Memorial Prize for Excellence in Hebrew Literature and the Henry Fisher Award for Outstanding Achievement in Jewish Studies.

Rabbi Mendelson grew up in Roswell, Georgia, he holds a B.A. in United States History from Kennesaw State University. He lives in Houston with his wife, Sara, and their dog, Gizmo, and is passionate about building inclusive communities, inspiring lifelong Jewish learning, and helping others find connection and purpose through Jewish life.

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RABBI STEVEN MORGEN

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Steven Morgen is an Associate Rabbi at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. He graduated from UCLA School of Law and practiced corporate and securities law in Los Angeles for over nine years. Rabbi Morgen was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1998. He has written action papers for United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism on "Courtesy and Civility" and on "Organ Donations" and wrote and edited the text for a CD ROM on Kashrut for the Conservative Movement. Rabbi Morgen coordinates Adult Education programs at Beth Yeshurun and runs the Conversion Program for those interested in joining the Jewish faith and people. He is married to Cantor Diane Dorf. Their son Daniel is a Kehillah High alum.

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RABBI SAMUEL RHEINS

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Rheins grew up in Denver, where both of his parents are Reform rabbis. He grew up in the Reform movement, attended Reform Jewish summer camp, and graduated from University of Colorado, Boulder, with a major in history and a minor in Jewish Studies in 2017. After college, he spent a year in Israel at Pardes Institute for Jewish Education before entering rabbinical school at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem and Cincinnati.

Rabbi Rheins enjoys being with people, preparing for his role as rabbi on the bimah, teaching Torah to all ages, engaging with children, and sharing his joy of Judaism.

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TAMARA RICHTER

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Tamara Richter has been involved in education for over 12 years, teaching and conducting research. Her interest in intercultural learning environments has led her to study in 6 countries: the USA, Mexico, Israel, Argentina, Copenhagen, and Spain, giving her a global perspective on education. Growing up in a "Jewish bubble" in Mexico City has instilled in her a deep sense of belonging to the international Jewish community. Tamara's quest for understanding her identity has motivated her to explore the intersection of Zionism, Nationalism, and Jewish identity through her academic research. Her passion for education began in high school with her involvement in Jewish non-formal education as a youth leader in Hanoar Hatzioni. She has never ceased to be amazed by the power of experiential learning. Besides her work in education, she is also a certified yoga teacher with over a decade of experience. Tamara believes in integrating yoga and meditation into her teaching, as she considers these practices instrumental in guiding her through life's challenges. Since relocating to Houston in 2022, she has fully embraced the city's offerings and looks forward to connecting with the local Jewish youth.

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LAUREN RUBENSTEIN

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Lauren Rubenstein is the Chief of Staff at the Trauma and Grief Center at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, where she supports local and national initiatives focused on trauma- and grief-informed care. With a background in public health, Lauren holds a Master of Public Health from UTHealth Science Center Houston and is a Certified Health Education Specialist.

Her academic and professional work has centered on maternal and child health, intergenerational trauma, and community health development. Her professional and academic pursuits are deeply connected to her personal history.

Lauren is the co-chair of 3GHTX, an affinity group through Holocaust Museum Houston. This group brings together third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors to create an outlet for Holocaust remembrance and education, focusing on the perspective of grandchildren and great-grandchildren of survivors. Lauren also serves on the Museum's board of advisors, as well as on the Board of Advisors for Alexander Jewish Family Service.

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RABBI ADRIENNE SCOTT

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Adrienne Scott is the Senior Associate Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati, she received her B.A. with Honors in Judaic Studies in 1998. Rabbi Scott served a one-year fellowship with the Hillel Foundation of Greater Houston, working as a Jewish Campus Service Fellow focusing on outreach programming for the undergraduate students at Rice University and the University of Houston. She received her ordination from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and served student pulpits in Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, and Florida. Additionally, she was very involved in both choral and orchestral groups. Rabbi Scott has been recognized as a Woman of Influence by the National Council of Jewish Women. Rabbi Scott is married to David Scott, RJE who serves as Congregation Beth Israel's Director of Lifelong learning and engagement. They are the parents of two young adults, Beryt and Ezra.

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DAVID SCOTT

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



David M. Scott, RJE is the Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement at Congregation Beth Israel. He has served the congregation full time since January 2014, after practicing law for thirteen years. In 2017, he graduated from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Executive Master's (EMA) Program with a Master of Arts Degree in Religious Education in 2017 and subsequently received his RJE certification in 2018. He also serves as a national Board Member of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE). David completed his undergraduate studies with a major in Government at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997 followed by a law degree at the University of Houston Law Center in 2001. David is also an alumnus in the Wexner Heritage Foundation class of 2006. David enjoys music, playing piano, performing magic, and is a licensed hypnotist. He also enjoys working with his wife, Rabbi Adrienne Scott, who is Associate Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel, and they have two children, Beryt and Ezra.

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JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER HOUSTON

MCKENZIE SIGLE

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



McKenzie currently serves as an Assistant Director at URJ Greene Family Camp focused on hiring and supporting the best counselors and staff members. Residing in Houston during the year and working with the Houston Jewish community, McKenzie feels fortunate to be able to create camp magic all year long! Prior to her current role at Greene, McKenzie was a student at the University of Kansas (Rock Chalk!) studying elementary education and Religious School Director at the Lawrence Jewish Community Congregation. During her free time, McKenzie enjoys yoga and exploring the best of Houston parks!

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DOLPH SIMON

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Dolph Simon has been teaching religious school for 15 years. He was recognized as one of the 2016 Irving L. Samuels Outstanding Teachers for Judaic Studies award recipients. When not teaching religious school, he works for a steel company where he trains personnel, manages sales representatives, develops large accounts and directs change management. Dolph is married and is the proud father of four children, three turtles, two dogs, and one snake. His hobbies include: golf, tennis and cooking.

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BARRIE SKALSKY

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Barrie Skalsky (she/her) is a dedicated community leader with experience in program development and education. As the Teen Program Supervisor at the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, she creates and leads social, leadership, and philanthropy programs for teens while managing large events like summer camps. Barrie has also taught Judaic Studies at Goldberg Montessori School and interned with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast in Learning and Development. She holds a Bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Houston. In her free time, she enjoys spending quality time with family and friends, working on her embroidery projects, and playing bocce.

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LISA STONE

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Lisa Stone is a native Texan and a Jewish educator since age 14, when she became a teaching assistant at Congregation Emanu El. Lisa graduated from Yale with a BA in “Literature and Society” and later a Masters in Public Health. Since returning to Houston, she served as Upper School Principal at Emanu El from 1992-2012. She now works for ADL, the Anti-Defamation League, which has been fighting prejudice and hate since 1913. She is very happily married to Scott Cantor, an enthusiastic karaoke singer, volunteer at Congregation Beth Israel and professor of medical decision making; together they have three wonderful adult children. In her spare time, Lisa really enjoys being in the mountains, yoga, exercise while reading science fantasy by women writers, and knitting while watching movies or traveling!

Kehillah High

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER HOUSTON

RABBI BRIAN STRAUSS

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



After serving for 18 years as one of Congregation Beth Yeshurun's associate rabbis, Rabbi Brian Strauss became the new senior rabbi on August 1, 2018. His number one goal as the senior rabbi is to bring the wisdom and richness of the Jewish tradition to your life. In our busy, modern day world, he strives to be there to help you make sense of your daily struggles -- To show you that Judaism has much to say to bring more meaning to your life. He is the author of the new book, "To Life, To Family, To Me: 6 Keys to a Good Family Life." Rabbi Strauss grew up in Dallas and was very active in BBYO serving as the president of the Dallas Council. He is a graduate of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles and the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu and president of the UT Hillel. He is still a huge Longhorn fan. Rabbi Strauss was selected as the winner in the men's spiritual leader category in Houston's city-wide "Gen Next" contest, which recognizes Jewish professionals in their twenties and thirties. He was also a member of the prestigious program Rabbis Without Borders, sponsored by the National Jewish Center for Learning & Leadership (CLAL). Rabbi Strauss is married to Lisa Shapiro Strauss, a practicing attorney and a previous fellow in the Wexner Heritage Program. They have three children.

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RABBI RANON TELLER

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Rabbi Ranon Teller is the Senior Rabbi at Congregation Brith Shalom in Bellaire, Texas, where he has served for the past 19 years. Rabbi Teller earned a master's degree in education from the Fingerhut School of Education where he received the Fingerhut School of Education Award for Outstanding Achievement. He earned his rabbinic ordination from Ziegler School of Rabbinic studies where he received with the Chancellor's Award for Academic Excellence.

Rabbi Teller serves as a guest lecturer at Rice University. He is a Past President of the Houston Rabbinical Association and co-author of the book Peaceful Bones. Rabbi Teller is a guitar player, a songwriter, and a juggler.

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DR. STEPHAN WEXLER

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Dr. Stephan Wexler is a native Houstonian and a life-long member of Congregation Beth Israel. He celebrated one of the last Bar Mitzvahs with Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel. After resigning from active Plastic Surgery practice due to medical issues, he went back to school and obtained a Master's Degree in Theatre, and MBA in Healthcare and a law degree. Among the many hats he wears, Dr. Wexler is the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Legal Officer for Arcos, Inc., a medical software company. He stays busy doing medical legal research for local law firms as well as Entertainment Law and Intellectual Property. Since Kehillah High's inception, Dr. Wexler has taught Jews in Hollywood, Jews in the Mafia and Jews in Comedy. He feels it is important that today's Jewish teenagers have an appreciation for the history of Jews in America and how they have affected the fabric of American society.

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ERICA WINSOR

KEHILLAH HIGH TEACHER



Erica was born and raised in Houston, Texas. She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 2010 with degrees in Psychology and Jewish Studies and graduated from South Texas College of Law Houston in 2013. Erica was an Assistant District Attorney in Harris County from 2013-2023. She tried over 25 misdemeanor and felony jury trials and spent 7 years of her prosecutorial career handling a specialized caseload of offenders with severe mental health diagnoses. Erica coauthored a textbook, Mental Health Law for Prosecutors, which was distributed to every prosecutor in the State. Erica was the chair of The Houston Jewish Federation's Young Adult Division from 2015-2016. She has been involved in Antidefamation League from an early age, first as a high school intern in the Southwest Regional Office, then as a college intern in the DC Counsel's office, as a participant in the Glass Leadership Institute, as an Associate Board member and chair, and now as a Southwest Regional Board member. Erica was married to her husband, Lawrence, one month before the COVID pandemic began, and her biggest accomplishments are her two children. Erica now serves as the Public Affairs Officer at the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

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