Education Panel – Women Trailblazers

- **Elinor Ostrom (1933-2012)**

An American political economist who was born to a Jewish father and Protestant mother. After earning her PhD from UCLA, she moved to Indiana, where she taught political science, developed theories regarding citizen-government interactions in the context of the distribution of common-pool resources, and was involved in institutional arrangements pertaining to ecological problems and the encounter between human needs and ecological systems. In 2009, she was the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences.

- **Judith Butler (b. 1956)**

An American philosopher, gender theorist, and prominent researcher in the field of queer theory and radical feminism. A professor of rhetoric and comparative literature and a trailblazing activist in the LGBTQ community. Butler created a revolution by maintaining that gender is a set of repetitive acts affected by cultural identity and language, and that the man/woman binary is neither natural nor necessary, but rather relies on social conventions. Some of Butler's important works include *Gender Trouble* and *Critically Queer*. Butler has had a significant impact on postmodern culture and art, continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, filmmaking, and performance art. Butler is known as a radical thinker and as a sharp critic of Israel and its politics.

- **Susan Bordo (b. 1947)**

A professor of gender and women's studies at the University of Kentucky in the United States, Bordo has made a major contribution to feminist research and gender studies by pointing out the connection between culture and body perception. From her perspective, modern female disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, are "complex crystallizations of culture". In her book *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), she exposed the devastating effects of popular culture on obsessive dieting, physical training and cosmetic surgery. Her fields of expertise include racism and the body, masculinity and the male body, sexual harassment and beauty and evolutionary theory.

- **Henriette Dahan Kalev (b. 1947)**

A lecturer in political science, and key figure in the gender and feminist discourse in Israel. Dahan Kalev, who was born in Morocco, came to Israel as a young child and, together with her family, was placed in a transit camp for new immigrants. Her research studies, which deal with the relationships between gender and politics, have contributed to formulating and understanding the Mizrahi feminist current in Israel. She established the gender studies program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and is one of the founders of the Sister and Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow movements. She is also a research fellow in political science

and international relations at Oxford University. Dahan Kalev is the former chair of B'Tselem-The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Her seminal article “You're So Pretty—You Don't Look Moroccan” is studied in Israel and around the world as part of postcolonial studies. Her other research interests include political philosophy, democratic regimes, feminist theories and globalization.

- **Hila Levy (b. 1986)**

A pilot born in Puerto Rico. In 2007, at the age of 21, she was awarded a Rhodes scholarship for postgraduate studies at Oxford University. She is the first Puerto Rican Rhodes Scholar.

- **Susan Sontag (1933-2004)**

A New York-born philosopher, essayist, journalist, author, filmmaker, playwright, and social activist. She is considered one of the most influential critics of her generation and was singled out as an intellectual giant as early as the age of 31 after her landmark essay *Notes on "Camp"* was published, in which she challenged the distinction between high and low culture. She also wrote about photography, the documentation of military conflicts, culture, AIDS and illness. Her important works include *On Photography*, *Regarding the Pain of Others* and *Illness as Metaphor*. Sontag was an open bisexual who spoke candidly about her sexual orientation as part of her social activism. Her grave in the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris has become a place of pilgrimage.

- **Rosalyn Sussman Yalow (1921-2011)**

A US-born physicist who received her bachelor's degree from Hunter College for women. During the Second World War, she was asked to be a teaching assistant at the University of Illinois, where she was the only woman among the 400 students in the College of Engineering. Yalow earned her PhD in nuclear physics in 1945, after which she taught physics and also worked at the Bronx Veterans Administration Hospital in New York. Together with Dr. Solomon Berson, she developed a unique method for detecting antibodies and other biological substances, which was also used to measure insulin levels. However, Yalow chose not to patent her discoveries. In 1977, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

- **Naomi Chazan (b. 1946)**

An academic and politician, a left-wing human rights activist, former Knesset member, political science professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Harvard University, and one of the founders of the Israel Women's Network. A Jerusalem native, she has served as head of the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, as vice president of the International Association of Political Science, head of the School of Government and Society at the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, and president of the New Israel Fund. As a member of Knesset representing the Meretz party, Chazan introduced bills dealing with the status of

women and consumer protection. She has written books and articles on comparative politics, Africa, Israel-Arab relations, and the status of women.

- **Ada Yonath (b. 1939)**

A Jerusalem-born biochemist who moved to Tel Aviv in 1953, where she attended Tichon Hadash High School. She studied biochemistry and physics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received her PhD (*magna cum laude*) from the Weizmann Institute of Science. Her research interests have focused on the structure of crystals and proteins, with a specialization in the structure and function of ribosomes. For that work she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2009. Yonath is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the European Academy of Sciences and Art.

- **Nechama Leibowitz (1905-1997)**

A Bible scholar born in Latvia. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, she and her family moved to Berlin, where she studied and taught Hebrew and Bible. In 1930, she earned her PhD from the University of Marburg, after which she moved to Jerusalem. She was a Bible commentator on the radio broadcasts of the Voice of Israel and also taught and lectured on the Bible at various universities in the country. She was awarded the Israel Prize in Education in 1956.

- **Rita Levi-Montalcini (1909-2012)**

Born in Turin, Italy, she was the first woman to head the National Academy of Sciences of Italy and was a champion of science education for women worldwide. She began studying medicine in 1930, graduating *summa cum laude*. She opened a laboratory in her home, where she did research on the growth of nerve cells. During World War II, Levi-Montalcini fled from the Nazis and moved to Florence. After the war, she immigrated to the United States and began working in a laboratory at Washington University in St. Louis, where she discovered the nerve growth factor. In 1962, she helped establish the Institute of Cell Biology in Rome and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1986.

- **Hélène Cixous (b. 1937)**

An Algerian-born French feminist philosopher, researcher, and novelist. She studied English literature at the Sorbonne, earned her PhD in 1968, and became a professor a year later. Cixous founded the Women's Studies Center at the University of Paris and has published many works on women and their status, in addition to several literary monographs. She was awarded honorary degrees from a number of universities as well as the prestigious Médicis Prize. Her article "The Laugh of the Medusa" is considered a seminal work in gender research.

- **Gertrud Elion (1918-1999)**

A US-born biochemist who developed many drugs and researched drug-design mechanisms. Due to gender discrimination, she did not receive financial aid for her graduate studies and was forced to abandon her plan to be a research scientist because no university would offer her a grant. Her later research led to the development of antiviral drugs that are used to treat AIDS patients. The pioneering methods employed by Elion were cited when she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1988.

- **Rosalind Franklin 1920-1958**

A British-born chemist and physicist who made an important contribution to the discovery of the structure of DNA. While studying for her PhD, she researched coal structure and X-ray crystallography. After accepting a position at Kings College London, she used X-ray crystallography to study the structural properties of DNA. Following a number of failed experiments and theories that were refuted, she managed to create a model of DNA double helix. However, the researchers James Watson and Francis Crick received all the credit for the discovery, which relied, among other things, on the data obtained by Franklin, and her contribution was downplayed.

- **Betty Friedan (1921-2006)**

A feminist and political activist who was born in Illinois, US. She was a founder of the National Organization for Women in the United States and was active in Marxist and Jewish circles. She wrote for and edited the campus newspaper at Smith College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, completing her studies *summa cum laude* in 1942. Friedan published books dealing with the status of women and how they are prevented from realizing their potential and desires. She was a co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus and spearheaded the Women's Strike for Equality, which evolved into a major rally on the streets of New York.

- **Naomi Klein (b. 1970)**

A Canadian author and critic whose research interests focus on the media, culture, and economic policy. Her book *No Logo* became a manifesto of the anti-globalization movement, earning her international acclaim. In the book, Klein criticizes brand-oriented consumer culture and blames the large corporations for exploiting workers in poor countries. In her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Klein criticizes governments for harnessing national disasters to push through neoliberal policies that aggravate economic disparities and adversely affect the majority of the population.

- **Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)**

A US-born author, poet, playwright and art collector and an icon of modernism in literature and art. She moved to Paris at the age of 29, where she established a literary and artistic salon in her home, whose guests included Ernest Hemmingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Ezra Pound, and Sherwood Anderson. Stein coined the term the 'Lost Generation' to describe a group of writers who were members of the post-World War I generation. She published numerous books dealing with homosexual relationships and was a trailblazer in asserting that gender is a social construct.

- **Vicki Shiran (1947-2004)**

A criminologist, sociologist, poet, film director and political activist who dedicated her life to the feminist struggle, the Mizrahi struggle, and the quest for peace. She was a co-founder of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow and Sister movements. Born in Cairo, Shiran came to Israel with her family at the age of four. The family lived in poverty in the Hatikva neighborhood in Tel Aviv and she was forced to quit school to help support them. Shiran later became a senior lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Beit Berl College, where she established the women's and gender studies program. She advocated for equal representation of diverse population groups in the media, including women. Her research dealt with political corruption and the discrimination of Mizrahi politicians.

- **Alice Shalvi (b. 1926)**

A German-born educator and feminist, recipient of the Israel Prize, and co-founder of the Israel Women's Network. At the age of seven, after the Nazis rose to power in Germany, she and her family emigrated to Britain. She studied English literature at Cambridge University and social work at the London School of Economics. She moved to Israel in 1949. She earned a PhD in English literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and established the English Department at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. In 1975, Shalvi was appointed principal of the Pelech religious high school for girls in Jerusalem, a position she held for 15 years. She has also actively advocated for the separation of religion and state.