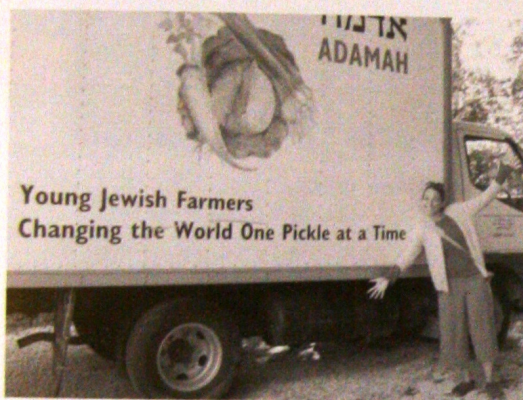**Ruth Messinger** (l.), president and CEO of American Jewish World Service, presented the commencement address this year at the Jewish Theological Seminary, urging graduates to "step outside their comfort zones" and think globally in their Jewish pursuits. Also honored with a degree this year was **Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella** (r.), the first Jewish and female justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

In a powerful speech recently at Toronto's York University, Abella said "This is the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

And we just finished recognizing—I don't think 'celebrating' is quite appropriate—some of the most iconic global anniversaries in the modern era: the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention, and of the last of the Nuremberg Trials. As we walk towards our future, we need to remember what momentous global objec-tives we had in mind then.... Unless we pay attention to intolerance, the world's fastest growth industry, we risk losing the civiliz-ing sinews that flexed the world's muscles after World War II."

Young Jewish Farmers Changing the World One Pickle at a Time

Garden-Variety Judaism

Risa Strauss is program director of Toronto's Kavanah Garden, a Jewish, organic sub/urban community teaching garden. Located just outside the city, it offers hands-on experience using Jewish ecological and agricultural wisdom. Strauss is also involved in an emerging Jewish C.S.A. (community-sponsored agriculture) project (hence the pickles). For more information on the Kavanah Garden, check out *www.torathateva.org*.

Ethiopian Women's Empowerment

Thirty-two-year-old **Efrat Mekonan** has never fit into an predict-able picture or story; that's part of why she is so determined to help other Ethiopian-Israelis who are struggling. Born in an isolated Jewish community in the Gondar region of Ethiopia, she lost both her parents before she turned eight, and at nine, walked for six months, her one-year-old niece on her back. After reaching a Suda-nese transit camp she was airlifted to Israel and eventually settled in Beit Shemesh, a suburb of Jerusalem.

As new immigrants, Ethiopian-Israelis have often felt they face discrimination and lack adequate representation to address their concerns and needs. In 2005, Mekonan participated in a Communi-ty Empowerment program, funded by the Ethiopian National Proj-ect, the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the United Jewish Endowment Fund. Twenty-four participants learned how municipal leadership works and how to take action to ameliorate conditions for other Ethiopians in Beit Shemesh.

The vast divide between native Israelis and Ethiopian immigrants, convinced Mekonan that change is necessary. She decided to run in the municipal elections held last November. Unfortunately, the school where she teaches forbids teachers from entering a political race, so

Mekonan withdrew before the election, but she is determined to take advantage of any opportunity to act and advocate for those in need.

Another natural leader, 27-year-old **Pnina-Falego Gaday**, has used the Israeli university Hillel circuit as an outlet to "awaken interest among Ethiopian students" in their heritage and culture. Trekking to Sudan in 1984's Operation Moses to fulfill her mother's dream, Pnina is now living that dream, finding a place in Israeli society and excelling there. In 2007 she was appointed Hillel director at Tel Aviv University, a fitting choice after Pnina spearheaded many successful initiatives at Hebrew University Hillel, like Ethiopian Night and Guzo-Journey, "a year-long series of workshops and enrichment programs for Ethiopian-Israeli young people on campus."

These programs encourage Ethiopian students to connect more deeply to their roots, while also rigorously pursuing their studies. Pnina does acknowledge distinct differences for Ethiopian-Israelis, even in the sort of Judaism they practice, but she also doesn't see this difference as a barrier. She has found a role in the Israeli com-munity, and aims to give the same sense of inclusion and unique-ness to other young Ethiopians.

ELIZABETH LONDON