

Sacred Sinai

Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 3:00 pm

JEWS BY CHOICE

Moderator: Laura Smith

Presenters: Sharrone Blanck, Ignacio Montoya,
and Jane Townley

Presenter Bios

Sharrone Blanck and her family lived in Reno for 17 years before moving to Humboldt County 7 years ago. In Reno, the Blanck family was active in Temple Sinai – husband Jeff was Temple Board President; now-grown sons, Noah and Max, both became *Bar Mitzvah*, and Sharrone was Director of the Religious School. After working in early childhood intervention, Sharrone became the first Equity and Inclusion Learning Specialist for the Humboldt County Office of Education. Since 2018, she has been President of the Eureka NAACP; she is co-facilitator of educators on implicit bias and dimensions of racism, founding member of B-Black/Building Black Community, and community support for the All-Humboldt Black Student Union.

Ignacio Montoya was born and raised in a small border town in Southern New Mexico. After graduating from Harvard with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Ignacio became a teacher; he later obtained a master's degree in education and then a PhD in linguistics. Ignacio came to the University of Nevada, Reno in 2017 as an assistant professor in the English Department, where he teaches classes in linguistics, conducts research on language reclamation, and works with local tribal communities supporting their efforts to maintain and strengthen their languages.

In 2010 he converted to Judaism through B'nai Jeshurun in New York City. He is a member of Temple Sinai, Reno, where he learned to chant Torah for his adult Bar

Mitzvah service, sang in the choir, and joined the Jewish Practice Committee. He was the Secretary of Sinai's Board of Trustees from 2019-2021.

Laura Smith began her official Jewish journey in Madison, WI in 2016 and has been a member of Temple Sinai since moving to Reno in 2018. She grew up in an unaffiliated, "none" household, though now 4 of its 5 members have joined and are actively involved in various communities. She currently teaches middle school here in town, serves on Temple Sinai's Executive Board, and works with my husband, Aaron, to raise their sweet, opinionated boy.

Jane Townley is a Native Nevadan and long-time member of Temple Sinai. She has served on the Board of Trustees as Treasurer, participated in numerous social action activities and was a founding member of the Lox Smiths (Men's Club breakfast crew). Jane is a full-time grandma to Mackay, mother to Dan and Sarah and wife of Jeffrey Gingold.

Session Resources

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-dos-and-donts-of-talking-to-converts/>

The Do's and Don'ts of Talking to Converts

Tips from a Jew by choice who's heard it all.

<https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/1.5159353>

'Jews by Choice' Are Members of the Tribe Too

<https://lilith.org/2016/06/why-i-hate-the-phrase-jew-by-choice/>

Why I Hate the Phrase "Jew by Choice"

Amelia Dornbush

<https://www.heyalma.com/as-jewish-converts-we-need-you-to-read-this/>

As Jewish Converts, We Need You to Read This

By Alma Staff, September 3, 2019