



Israel
Religious
Action
Center



Israel Movement for Reform
and Progressive Judaism
התנועה הרפורמית והתנועה מתקדמת בישראל

Gender Equality in Action

Advancing

Gender Equality on Buses

In 1997, a Bnei Brak bus line began segregating men and women, with women entering and sitting in the rear and men entering and sitting up front. These “Mehadrin” bus lines only grew in popularity, so in 2001, IRAC began monitoring and responding to episodes of gender segregation on buses. IRAC has heard countless stories of women who were verbally harassed and physically threatened for sitting near ultra-Orthodox men or not dressing modestly enough. In many cases, the bus driver either ignored the situation or sided with the ultra-Orthodox men. In 2009, IRAC contacted the Ministry of Transportation. In the ministry’s response, they claimed that the gender segregation on buses was a “voluntary arrangement.” This response was unacceptable, so we took the issue to court.

In January 2011, the Supreme Court ruled that gender segregation on buses violates the dignity of women and is therefore illegal, in response to IRAC’s petition on behalf of Naomi Regan. Since this precedent was set, IRAC has represented many women who have experienced this injustice and humiliation while simply trying to utilize a service that is meant to be open equally to the entire Israeli public, including young, brave Ariella Marsden who was only 15 but wanted to fight, and in turn won maximum compensation from Egged.

IRAC’s Freedom Riders, volunteers who bravely disrupt gender segregation on buses, supplemented IRAC’s many legal battles in demonstrating to Israeli society that gender segregation and discrimination will not be tolerated.

IRAC continues to monitor gender segregation and exclusion on buses and other modes of public transportation and takes legal action as new incidents arise.

