

Today in the mail appears an interesting program from the Wallace Stegner Center of the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law: this coming Friday and Saturday, [the Center will host “Religion, Faith, and the Environment”](#) with lots of important guest speakers. Good on them.



What are we? Chopped liver?

But then when I looked at the program, something strange popped out at me. The initial panel of the program goes from 8:15 to 11:45 (with a break), and concerns “Ecological Protection, Environmental Degradation — Perspectives of Faith”. It comprises representatives of:

Christianity

Buddhism

Hinduism

Islam

Mormonism

Common Q & A

...and topped off by a Native American Blessing. Well, that’s just terrific, nicely ecumenical, and — *hey, wait a minute!* [Someone’s missing here!](#)

Conferences always have to make choices, and three and a half hours for one topic is a long time. But it’s a two-day conference: they’ve got time. And yes, Rabbi Jamie Korngold is on one of the other panels, but presumably we don’t want one person representing the entirety of a faith.

Of course, maybe you do. I suppose you could argue that if you are trying to do develop a political movement, other religions are more important than the original People of the Book. There aren’t many of us, after all, as revealed in an exchange I had with my wife (who is not Jewish) a couple of years ago. I mentioned that the Holocaust wiped out one-third of world Jewry. She quickly did the numbers.

She: Wait, so how many Jews are there worldwide?

Me: About 13 million.

She: (Pauses). That's not very many at all!

Me: No.

She: So how come everyone I know is Jewish?

And one could answer the question by saying, because: 1) you live in an urban area in the United States; and 2) you have spent a lot of time at universities. But of course the second answer makes it even stranger: lots of Jewish academics around, and the study of Jewish law has become something of a cottage industry in American law schools, especially since [Robert Cover's celebrated 1982 Harvard Law Review Foreword](#).

So it's still something of a mystery to me why the Stegner Center decided to keep Judaism's role in the discussion so muted. I don't think it's prejudice. It just seems strange: you have a religion conference at a law school, and the Jews are in the background. Who knew?