

MEET THE 2017-18 RUSKAY FELLOWS: SHAPERS OF THE FUTURE

The Jewish community relies on knowledgeable and dedicated professionals to provide vision, set priorities, and take the lead in making strategic decisions for our future. These Ruskay Institute Fellows are rising to the challenge.



RENA ALLEN

Director of Developmental Learning and Special Education, Central Synagogue

Rena Allen is a special education consultant. She spends most of her time at Central Synagogue, serving as the director of developmental learning and special education. She is passionate about making Jewish education accessible to all learners, and structuring environments that contribute to student success. Rena earned a B.A. in psychology from Binghamton University and an MS.Ed. in special education from Bank Street College. Rena's career has taken her from classroom teaching to early intervention, and has landed her in her current work — focusing on teacher training and program development in synagogues across Manhattan. Rena lives in Washington Heights with her husband, Noah, and daughter, Livya.



ALEXANDER BEBESHKO

Grants Manager, UJA-Federation of NY

Alex Bebeshko is the UJA-Federation of New York grants manager in the Impact and Performance Assessment Department. As the grants manager, Alex coordinates the UJA-Federation grants management process, acting as a liaison and a convener between UJA-Federation grantees, program, and accounting staff. Alex was born in Odessa, Ukraine. In 2000, he and his grandmother immigrated to the United States and settled in South Brooklyn. Alex attended Fordham University, where he earned a B.A. in international political economy. In May 2014, he earned an M.P.A. in nonprofit management from the NYU Wagner School of Public Service.



ANDREW BELINFANTE

Director of Public Programs, Mechon Hadar

Andrew Belinfante is the director of public programs at Mechon Hadar. He is a longtime member of the Ramah community, having been a camper and staff member at Ramah California and the year-round program coordinator at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. Andrew participated in United Synagogue's Nativ College Leadership Program and graduated from California State University, Northridge with a degree in English. He has worked in Jewish education for nine years, including in Religious schools in Los Angeles and as the associate director of a Hebrew school in Tribeca. He holds a master's degree in education from Bank Street College in Manhattan.



RACHAEL BRILL

Associate Director of Camping, Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)

Rachael Brill is the associate director of camping at the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), where she previously served as a senior program manager in the youth division as well as a human resources associate. Prior to coming to the URJ, Rachael was the U.S. manager of recruitment and community outreach at the Nesiya Institute, a six-week Jewish teen summer program in Israel. Rachael grew up in Massachusetts and received her B.A. in political science from Tufts University. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is a competitive sailor, avid bicyclist, novice rock climber, and dog lover.



JENNA CITRON

Assistant Director, Queens College Hillel

Originally from New Jersey, Jenna has lived all over the United States, including Florida, Texas, Georgia, and New York. Jenna graduated from Florida State University with a B.S. in political science. Jenna received a Master's of Public Administration and Policy focusing on nonprofit management and strategic leadership. After two years as the Jewish student life coordinator at Hillel at FSU, Jenna became director of Jewish student life at Queens College Hillel and was promoted to assistant director in 2016. Jenna is a dedicated volunteer on the Limmud NY Steering Committee and is excited to serve as the 2018 conference chair. Jenna loves Florida State football, cooking, Walt Disney World, and her cat, Albus.



NINA FAYNBERG

Family Programs Director, COJECO (Council of Jewish Émigré Community Organizations)

Born and raised in Moscow, Russia, Nina Faynberg is very involved in the Jewish community. As an active leader, she developed and facilitated various projects centering on Jewish tradition for children, teenagers, and families. Most summers she worked in camps, creating programs, training staff, and making campers' experiences unforgettable and enjoyable. Nina organized trips to the Baltic countries for young adults and teenagers. Nina moved to the United States two years ago and works for COJECO as the family programs director.



SHIRA FELBERBAUM

Jewish Community Services Social Work Supervisor, The Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCs)

Shira Felberbaum, LMSW, M.S., is a social work supervisor at the Jewish Board. For five years, she has supported synagogues, interfacing with staff, lay leaders, and families to consult, facilitate groups, deliver workshops, counsel, and provide referrals on transitions. Previously, Shira spent 10+ years in financial services at MetLife as an internal consultant engaged in program management, where she led interdisciplinary teams on strategic initiatives. Shira has graduate degrees from New York University in social work (gerontology) and human resource management (change management, leadership development, and organizational effectiveness), and an Emory University undergraduate degree in psychology. She and her husband live in Manhattan with their newborn daughter.



TSIVIA FINMAN

Director of Operations and Planning, Footsteps

Tsivia Finman is the director of operations and planning at Footsteps, an organization that helps those in the process of leaving ultra-Orthodox communities in their quest to lead self-determined lives. Tsivia's professional background includes public policy, strategic planning, organizational management, and evaluation, and an M.P.A. from Wayne State University in Detroit. Prior to joining Footsteps, Tsivia was the manager of academic planning at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Tsivia lives in Brooklyn and enjoys talking politics, listening to live music, and thinking creatively about the notion of community.



JOSHUA FRIED

Executive Assistant to the President and CEO, American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

Joshua Fried is executive assistant to Robert Bank, president and CEO of American Jewish World Service (AJWS). He grew up in Oklahoma and is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, with degrees in French and public relations. Before joining AJWS in 2013, he worked as the program director of a Hillel in Los Angeles and was previously a personal shopper for J.Crew. He enjoys working for social change and informed philanthropy in an organization that is aligned with his personal beliefs. When not at work, you can find him on a Citi Bike, traveling, cooking, and exploring New York.



LINDSAY GANCI

Director of Youth Engagement, The Community Synagogue

Lindsay Ganci has served as director of youth engagement at the Community Synagogue since 2010. She received her undergraduate degree from Muhlenberg College and her master's degree in education from Columbia University's Teachers College. Lindsay earned a certificate in Jewish education from HUC-JIR, and was the recipient of the Jewish Education Project's Young Pioneers Award in 2015. Lindsay lives in Port Washington, New York, with her husband, Alec, their one-year-old daughter, Ruby Madeline, and their puppy, Latke.



ERICA GOLDMAN

Director of Program and Operations, JPRO Network

Erica Goldman earned a B.A. in linguistics and cognitive science from Brandeis University and worked in software development. A summer at Camp Alonim in Los Angeles as the director of dance was the beginning of her new career teaching Israeli dancing internationally. Erica joined the Global Jewish Education department at New Community Jewish High School and coordinated exchange programs with Tel Aviv schools. On the faculty of the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Cornerstone Fellowship, she launched Ma'agal to improve Israeli dance education at schools and camps. A Wexner Fellow and Davidson Scholar, Erica earned an M.B.A. and an M.A. in Jewish professional leadership from the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University. As director of program and operations at JPRO Network, she supports professionals in the North American Jewish nonprofit community.



SHAUN GOLDSTONE

Director, Strategic Partnerships, American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

Shaun Goldstone, based in JDC's global headquarters in New York, is responsible for fostering philanthropic partnerships to support JDC's humanitarian and Jewish community-building work around the world. Shaun has been involved in a wide range of volunteer service through the Global Jewish Service Corps and the Ralph I. Goldman Fellowship in International Service. He served in Ethiopia with JDC's renowned medical director, Dr. Rick Hodes; in Haiti on post-earthquake relief work; and in St. Petersburg, Shanghai, and Tallinn, strengthening emerging Jewish communities. A former resident of Sydney, San Diego, and Ra'anana, Shaun received a B.Sc. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, with a degree in molecular, cellular and developmental biology. He resides in Brooklyn with his wife.



ERICA GREENBLATT

Director of Major Gifts, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

Erica Greenblatt has worked for ADL since 2014, first as associate director of development for the New York Region and now as director of community engagement. She runs the Real Estate Division and leads fundraising and development efforts in Westchester and on Long Island. Erica earned an M.P.A. in nonprofit management from the NYU Wagner School of Public Service. She previously worked for March of the Living, after starting her career in fashion. Originally from Englewood, New Jersey, Erica now resides in Manhattan. In her free time she enjoys dance classes, karaoke, and traveling to exciting destinations. She is committed to ADL's dual-mission and thrilled to work for an organization that fights hate in all forms.



EVAN HOCHBERG

Senior Restitution Policy Specialist, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference)

Evan Hochberg is senior restitution policy specialist at the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. In this capacity, he also serves as director of international affairs for the World Jewish Restitution Organization, working to secure restitution of Holocaust-era Jewish property. Evan commenced his career at the Anti-Defamation League. He also served as a law clerk at the Maryland Court of Appeals and South African Constitutional Court, as well as a litigation associate at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP. He was senior counsel in the New York City Law Department, where he advised the Mayor's Office and city agencies and drafted legislation on a variety of issues. Evan is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School.



SAMUEL KONIG

Director of Development, Major Gifts, Hillel International

Sam Konig was born in Vienna to Jewish-Polish parents, who were expelled from Poland with their families in 1969, and sought refuge in Copenhagen, where Sam grew up. He completed his secondary schooling in the United Kingdom. Sam attended McGill University, and then moved to Ottawa, where he completed his M.A. Sam moved to Baltimore, where he was the executive director of Towson University Hillel. He currently works for Hillel International as the director of development, major gifts. Sam is a UJA board observer of Hazon and a board member at the JCC of Washington Heights-Inwood.



ELISABETH KOSTIN

Director of Agency Assessment, UJA-Federation of NY

Elisabeth Kostin is the director of agency assessment at UJA-Federation of New York. She assesses organizations to inform priorities and decision-making. Elisabeth's background also includes strategy development, forging funding partnerships, and grant making. Elisabeth earned an M.P.A. in public administration and an M.A. in Judaic studies from New York University, as well as a B.S. in finance from Syracuse University. Elisabeth enjoys traveling, exploring nature and the outdoors, and spending time with family and friends. She lives on the Upper West Side with her husband.



LINDSEY NEWMAN

New York Regional Director, Be'chol Lashon

Lindsey Newman is the New York regional director of Be'chol Lashon, an organization that advocates for the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the Jewish community. Before joining Be'chol Lashon, Lindsey worked in the field of women's rights advocacy through her time at Sanctuary for Families and Itach Maaki: Women Lawyers for Social Justice. Lindsey received her B.S. in industrial and labor relations from Cornell University. Born in NYC, Lindsey enjoys exploring her native city and experiencing new cultures around the world.



ADINA POUPKO

Program Officer, The Natan Fund

Adina Poupko is program officer at the Natan Fund, overseeing all grants, including Jewish Identity in North America, Jewish Peoplehood, and grants in Israel. Before the Natan Fund, Adina was director of recruitment at Masa Israel Journey, responsible for national recruitment strategies and partnerships. Previously, Adina was associate director of student life at Yeshiva University for three years, creating leadership development programs for students. Adina was born in Montreal and raised in both Montreal and Cincinnati. After receiving a B.A. in political science from Yeshiva University, she received an M.A. in nonprofit management and public policy from NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and a certificate in experiential Jewish education from Yeshiva University.



DEB SCHER

Volunteer & Community Engagement Manager, Manny Cantor Center

Deb Scher has over ten years of experience creating and implementing volunteer programs, building lasting partnerships, and fostering community relationships at nonprofit organizations. As volunteer & community engagement manager at the Manny Cantor Center of the Educational Alliance, she currently leads More Hands, More Hearts, a certified Service Enterprise Initiative, which aims to engage volunteers in strategic, mission-aligned opportunities, while building a stronger, more connected community. Deb earned her bachelor's degree in communication and culture from Indiana University. Deb lives in Astoria, Queens, and enjoys trying new restaurants, hosting and playing trivia, and listening to podcasts.



BECKY SKOFF

Director of Program Administration, 14th Street Y

Becky Skoff is the director of program administration at the 14th Street Y. Since 2009, Becky has worked to build the Arts, Ideas and Jewish Culture department at the 14th Street Y from the ground up, including launching theater, dance, teen camps, and Jewish life programs. She is a graduate of the master's program in arts administration at Boston University, and has an undergraduate degree from the University of Florida. She has worked for numerous performing arts organizations throughout the United States. Becky lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, with her husband, Judah, and her son, Benzi.



HANNA SORKIN SCHLAGER

Senior Writer and Gift Officer, UJA-Federation of NY

Hanna Sorkin Schlager is a senior writer and gift officer in the Capital Gifts & Special Initiatives department of UJA-Federation of New York. Born in the former Soviet Union, Hanna immigrated to the United States in 1992. Hanna grew up in Kansas, studied in Israel for a year after high school, and moved to New York to complete her undergraduate studies at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women. Today, Hanna lives in Queens with her husband, Shamshy, and their two children, Adella and Azi. In her free time, Hanna enjoys traveling hosting events for family, friends, and community members; exercising; and matchmaking.



JENNIFER VEGH

Director of Youth and Family Engagement, Beth El Synagogue Center

As director of youth and family engagement at Beth El Synagogue Center, Jen Vegh is changing the way youth and families connect with synagogue life and Jewish learning, developing creative learning and social opportunities, and holding space for deep and meaningful relationships. Jen received a master's degree in Jewish education from the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminar (JTS). She holds two undergraduate degrees in Jewish music and sociology from List College — the joint program between JTS and Columbia University. Jen lives in New Rochelle with her husband, Jeff, and their two children.



RABBI EZRA WEINBERG

Jewish Program Director, YM&YWA of Washington Heights & Inwood

Rabbi Ezra Weinberg is a wearer of many hats. He's a community builder, camp professional, teacher of multi-faith education, and innovator of Jewish ritual. Ezra lives and works in Washington Heights with his wife and two children, and is looking to transform the YM&YWA of Washington Heights and Inwood where he works as the Jewish program director. His mutual interests in Israel and conflict resolution led him to act as a facilitator and convener for Resetting the Table. Ordained through the Reconstructionist movement, Ezra is at home in a variety of Jewish settings, from traditional to secular. The highlight of his year is Hazon's Sukkahfest holiday retreat, nicknamed "All Streams, One Source," where he serves as a retreat and ritual leader.



SARIT WISHNEVSKI

Associate Director of New York, OneTable

Sarit Wishnevski is associate director of New York at OneTable. She has a master's in public administration with a focus in nonprofit management from the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Prior to joining the OneTable team, she worked for DOROT, Be Social Change, Oberlin College Hillel, CAJE, and sat on the Presentense Steering Committee in NYC. Sarit is also a chef, food blogger, and the founder of the League of Extraordinary Women.

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UJA-Federation of New York cares for Jews everywhere and New Yorkers of all backgrounds,
responds to crises close to home and far away, and shapes our Jewish future.

