

MEET THE 2021 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.



ARIELLA YEDWAB ALLMAYER

OneTable, Associate Director, Strategic Projects and Executive Office

Ariella is the associate director of strategic projects and executive office at OneTable. Prior to joining OneTable, Ariella was the manager of leadership and programming at Michigan Hillel and program operations manager at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. She is currently getting her M.A. in Jewish professional studies from Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership. Ariella is originally from Michigan and received her B.A. in organizational studies from the University of Michigan where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa. She currently lives in Brooklyn with her husband and loves hiking, travel, and baking challah.



SASHA BLOCH

Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Associate Director of Leadership

As associate director of leadership, Sasha manages meetings, events, and international travel for ADL's Board of Directors and leadership groups, as well as ADL ACT, the NextGen leadership group. Prior to joining ADL, she served as the regional director of Seaboard Region USY. She began her career as a middle school teacher of ESL and social studies and holds a B.A. in international studies and an M.A. in teaching from American University. Sasha is an active volunteer with Jewish Women International's Young Women's Impact Network and Alpha Epsilon Phi Sorority and enjoys cooking, traveling, reading, and spending time with her nieces and nephew.



Yael Brenner

Hillel at Baruch, Assistant Director

Yael is the assistant director of Hillel at Baruch college, which includes City, John Jay, Pace, SVA, Fordham, FIT, and New School, serving 4,500 Jewish college students across Manhattan. Previously, Yael was an engagement associate and director of Jewish life & engagement, working toward Hillel's expansion from serving one campus to eight. Yael grew up in Young Judaea, a Zionist peer-led youth movement, attending its summer camps and Israel gap-year program. Yael received her B.A. in Judaic studies from Binghamton University and master's in public administration from Baruch College. She lives on the Upper West Side with her husband.



Marissa Cinnamon

UJA-Federation of New York, Chief of Staff in CEO Office

Marissa is chief of staff in the office of the CEO at UJA-Federation of New York. She previously held roles in HR and fundraising before supporting the operations, communications, and initiatives of the CEO's office. A problem solver and collaborator, Marissa enjoys working with colleagues across the organization and beyond to address challenges and opportunities and communicate effectively. She graduated with a B.A. from NYU in dramatic literature with minors in Judaic studies and communications and enjoys reading (particularly with a latte in hand at a quiet coffee shop) and spending time in nearby Central Park.



Esther Dubow

Schechter School of Long Island, Director of Jewish Programming, Teacher

Esther is a fifth-generation New York Jew with an extensive family and deep ties to the community. She grew up in Brooklyn and Woodmere before heading to the University of Maryland and the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem for her bachelor's and master's degrees. Esther works at the Schechter School of Long Island where she teaches Jewish studies (including a cooking class on regional Jewish cuisine!), coordinates special programming, and oversees curriculum. She recently moved to Forest Hills with her fiancé, Matt. They are getting married in the spring.



Naomi Fabes

Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester, Director of Education

Naomi is director of education at Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester in Rye, New York. Hailing from the Lone Star State, she earned her B.S. in early childhood and elementary education at the University of Texas at Austin and an M.A. in Jewish education from The Jewish Theological Seminary. After serving as a classroom teacher for several years, Naomi joined the team at Central Synagogue where she redesigned the religious school's K-2nd grade curriculum, played an integral role in the development and expansion of the Family Engagement Department, and founded Camp Central, the synagogue's early-childhood summer camp.



Andrea Fleishaker

UJA-Federation of New York, Planning Director, Jewish Life

Andrea Fleishaker is planning director of the Jewish Life Department at UJA-Federation of New York. Passionate about Jewish life and all it has to offer, Andrea is responsible for overseeing the department's New York- and globally based grantmaking portfolios. Previously, Andrea was an educator working in both Jewish and secular settings. Andrea holds a bachelor's degree in education from Boston University, and two master's degrees, one in literacy education from the University of Pennsylvania and the other in Jewish education from the Davidson Graduate School of Education at JTS. Andrea lives in New York City with her husband and son.



JONAH GEFFEN

Hunter Hillel, Campus Rabbi and Senior Jewish Educator

Rabbi Jonah Geffen is the campus rabbi and senior Jewish educator at Hunter Hillel. Jonah has taught, led, and organized across the Jewish communal landscape at such places as Yeshivat Hadar, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Kivunim, and Pardes. Jonah has a B.A. from Indiana University, an M.S. in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University, and an M.A. in Jewish studies and rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary. His writing has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *Haaretz*, JTA, and *The Jerusalem Post*, among others. Jonah lives in Harlem with his beloved, and their two roller-derby playing daughters.



AMANDA GREENAWALT

B'nai Jeshurun, Advancement Director

Amanda Greenawalt joined B'nai Jeshurun on the Upper West Side in 2018 as its first advancement director. With a portfolio including development and membership, she weaves her experience in marketing and member-support into projects while maintaining a holistic approach to synagogue stewardship as her primary focus. Amanda holds multiple degrees from SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology in advertising and marketing communications and is a graduate of the Hebrew Union College's Certificate in Jewish Education. She previously held positions in event planning, advertising, and marketing. She is a Long Island native and lives with her husband, son, and rescue dog Olive.



MELANIE HALPERN

92nd Street Y, Director, Membership and Digital Giving

Melanie is director of membership and digital giving at 92Y, where she oversees all donor communications and solicitations for membership level donors. Prior to joining 92Y, Melanie worked at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research as their membership manager. Melanie graduated from Binghamton University with a B.A. in English language and literature and a minor in Judaic studies. In her free time, Melanie enjoys fitness classes and long walks along the East River in Long Island City, where she lives with her fiancé and their puppy.



ARIELLE JACOBS

UJA-Federation New York, Assistant Director, Operations and Grant Management

Arielle is the assistant director of operations and grants management at UJA-Federation of New York, where she helps shape the systems and processes that enable grantmaking at UJA. Prior to UJA, Arielle oversaw operations at ARZA and Women of Reform Judaism, and previously worked in human resources and IT project management in the banking industry. Arielle has a B.A. in philosophy and Judaic studies from Tufts University, and an M.B.A. in leadership and management from Boston College. Arielle lives in Brooklyn and enjoys yoga, knitting, and live music.



MAXIE KALISH

Union for Reform Judaism, Analyst

Maxie Kalish (she/her/hers) is the analyst for the URJ Benchmarking and Assessment project. She has been with the Union for Reform Judaism for eight years, working in various positions. Helping synagogues make data-driven decisions through benchmarking and assessment over the last four years has been her favorite role. Maxie is a resident alumna of Moishe House Murray Hill, where she spent three years planning events for Jewish twenty-somethings in the NYC area. Maxie has a Master of Science in professional communications, and a B.A. in theater arts, both from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Maxie currently lives in Manhattan with her husband, Rafael.



JOSH KANTER

Reboot, Director of Partnerships and Marketing

Josh Kanter is responsible for maximizing the impact of Reboot projects. Josh brings a wealth of experience in the Jewish community having worked previously with UJA-Federation of New York, American Jewish World Service, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, and Bend the Arc. Josh is a past co-chair of JPRO New York. Originally from Detroit, he holds an MSW in Jewish Communal Leadership from the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Josh recently moved to West Orange, New Jersey, with his wife and two adorable young children.



MEYER LANIADO

Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, Associate Rabbi

Rabbi Meyer Laniado joined KJ as the first Sephardic rabbi to actively grow the KJ Sephardic community through new outreach initiatives and engaging programming. His vision, energy, and dedication have helped him be attuned consistently to the needs of the moment, developing programs, events, and opportunities for engagement. He received rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva University – RIETS and the Sephardic Bet Din of Queens. He holds a B.S. in management from Yeshiva University – Sy Syms School of Business and has a master’s in Talmudic studies from Yeshiva University – Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.



DINA MUSKIN GOLDBERG

Sharsheret, Senior Development Associate

Dina is the senior development associate at Sharsheret where she oversees corporate giving, primarily from the pharmaceutical industry; the production of Sharsheret’s galas; and direct mail campaigns. Prior to joining Sharsheret, Dina was the development associate at the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance New York. Dina is also a synagogue Rebbetzin, a Nishmat-certified Kallah teacher, and a board member of Yesh Tikva. She was also named one of The Jewish Week’s “36 Under 36.” In her spare time, Dina enjoys honing her craft as an amateur cake artist. Dina lives in Englewood, New Jersey, with her husband and children.



JAYA NAHMIYAS

UJA-Federation of New York, Associate Director, Wall Street & Financial Services Division

Jaya Nahmiyas (pronounced “Chaya”) is associate director of the Wall Street & Financial Services Division of UJA’s Financial Resources Department. Previously she was part of UJA’s Philanthropic Leadership Group and Capital Gifts and Special Initiatives teams. Prior to UJA, Jaya worked at Morgan Stanley and Credit Suisse. Jaya received a B.S. in foreign service from Georgetown University. Originally from Colombia, Jaya grew up in Houston, Texas (where her name was pronounced “Hi-ya”) and currently lives in Manhattan. She and her husband have a son and daughter in college and a daughter in middle school.



LISA ROSENKRANTZ

Sid Jacobson JCC, Chief of Staff/Director of Membership

Lisa is the director of membership and the chief of staff at Sid Jacobson JCC in Roslyn, New York. Lisa oversees the customer service experience at the JCC, manages the day-to-day operations of the membership department, and works closely with the executive team on board relationships and other initiatives. Lisa has held many roles at the JCC, beginning as a teacher in the Early Childhood Department. Lisa lives in Bellmore with her three children and her husband, Jim.



ARIELLE SOKOLOFF

JDC Entwine, Deputy Director of Engagement

As the deputy director of engagement at JDC Entwine, Arielle engages young adults in transformative global immersive experiences and manages Entwine's national partnerships. Her passion for sustainable community development began as a volunteer in Nepal with Tevel b'Tzedek and continued as a JDC Global Jewish Service Corps Fellow at the Agahozo Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda. Arielle holds a B.A. in political science from Binghamton University and a Certificate in Jewish Leadership from the Spertus Institute. She is based in New York City but can more often be found adventuring around the world.



ALEX WILLICK

Avodah, Manager of Strategic Partnerships, New York/Northeast

Alex Willick serves as Avodah's manager of strategic partnerships for the New York and northeast region, where he works to expand and inspire Avodah's community of philanthropic partners. Alex attended the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City where he received an M.A. in experiential education from the Davidson School. He received his B.A. from Colgate University, studying music and philosophy. In his spare time, Alex enjoys performing live music, playing pick-up sports, and going on long hikes. He shares a loving home with his family in New Jersey.

The Ruskay Institute is supported by a special fund created by the friends and colleagues of John Ruskay upon his retirement after 15 years as CEO of UJA-Federation of New York. This unique program is a tribute to his visionary leadership and commitment to professional development.