

MEET THE 2023 – 2024 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 Fellows are rising to the challenge.



JOY ALLEN

Director of Engagement and Programming, Temple Beth-El in Great Neck

Joy is the director of engagement & programming at Temple Beth-El in Great Neck, New York. Joy has been part of the Temple Beth-El team, working in various roles, since 2014. During the past few years, she has spent a significant portion of her time interacting with temple families while focusing on synagogue-wide programming, social-action initiatives, teen engagement, and Kulanu school students. Joy is completing a Master of Science in organizational leadership and innovation at the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, part of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. She previously earned a certificate in human resources fundamentals from Baruch College and a Bachelor of Arts in media studies from Queens College. Joy loves to cook, hang out at the local park, and try out different coffee shops! Joy lives on Long Island with her husband, puppy, and three daughters.



SYDNEY ALTFIELD

Executive Director, Teach NYS

Sydney is the executive director of Teach NYS. A project of the Orthodox Union, Teach NYS works to secure equitable state and local government funding and resources for nonpublic schools to ensure the accessibility of a safe, quality, and affordable Jewish education for all. She oversees the organization's lobbying efforts, grassroots organizing, coalition building, and strategic growth. Sydney also serves in a volunteer role as director of Jewish partnerships for Alpha Epsilon Phi Sorority. Sydney received her bachelor's degree from the University of Central Florida (Go Knights!). Originally from Miami, Florida, Sydney resides on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.



MARYAM CHISHTI

Co-Executive Director, The LUNAR Collective

Maryam is the co-executive director of The LUNAR Collective, the first and only organization for Asian American Jews. She is a graduate of the Jews of Color Initiative's Leadership Fellowship and a founder of Moishe House Lower Manhattan. Maryam has worked at the Anti-Defamation League, the office of Senator Schumer, and numerous political campaigns. She enjoys writing, performing improv with her troupe Hard Maybes, and being with family and friends.



ABIGAIL FREEMAN

Community Outreach Coordinator for Jewish Community Services, The Jewish Board

Abigail serves as the community outreach coordinator for Jewish Community Services (JCS) at The Jewish Board. In this role, she cultivates and maintains relationships with Jewish communal institutions throughout New York City. Her primary focus is on creating meaningful partnerships that address the evolving mental health needs within the Jewish community, enabling JCS to provide tailored services. Previously, Abigail worked as executive director of a synagogue, staff accountant at Deloitte, and program director of a Jewish summer camp in Canada. She holds a degree in industrial relations from McGill University and currently resides on the Upper West Side.



JESSICA FRUITHANDLER

Judaic Studies Teacher, Upper School, Schechter School of Long Island

Jessica has been a member of the upper school Judaic studies faculty of Schechter School of Long Island since 2019. She participated in Ayeka's Becoming a Soulful Educator Program and served as a mentor teacher for the Pardes Day School Educators Program. Previously she taught at The Rabbi Jacob Pressman Academy of Temple Beth Am and the Ilan Ramon Day School in the Los Angeles area. Jessica holds an M.A. in Jewish day school education from The William Davidson Graduate School of Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary and a B.A. in psychology from Barnard College. Jessica lives on the north shore of Long Island with her husband and three children and enjoys cooking and gardening.



JODIE GOLDBERG

Program Officer, The Covenant Foundation

Jodie is a program officer at The Covenant Foundation. Previously, Jodie served as an education consultant at The Jewish Education Project, where she created local and national initiatives to support teen engagement professionals and oversaw the national strategy for the organization's educator networks. Jodie is an education consultant for UJA-Federation of New York's Shapiro Family Fellowship and has served on the faculty for multiple initiatives of Foundation for Jewish Camp. Jodie holds dual master's degrees in Jewish education and Hebrew Bible from The Jewish Theological Seminary.



Yael HAMMERMAN

Associate Rabbi, Ansche Chesed

As the associate rabbi of Ansche Chesed in New York City, Yael loves creating dynamic Jewish learning experiences for community members of all ages. She joined the synagogue team after ordination from The Jewish Theological Seminary, where she also earned an M.A. in Jewish education. Yael grew up in New Jersey and studied at Barnard College, where she graduated with a B.A. in sociology. She enjoys puzzles, audio books, and exploring New York City, where she lives with her husband and three children.



Yael Kornfeld

Campus Social Worker, Hunter Hillel

Yael is the campus social worker at Hunter Hillel. In this capacity, Yael has been able to support students in various ways, including 1:1 meetings, wellness programs, grocery supplements, and more. Yael received her M.S.W. from the Silberman School of Social Work in 2010 and holds a B.A. in Jewish studies from Rutgers University. After graduating Rutgers, Yael participated in Avodah, The Jewish Service Corps. Yael worked as a social worker supporting older adults at DOROT for ten years. Yael is passionate about lemon-loving, letter-writing, and messy cooking. Yael's greatest sidekicks are her three children.



Maris Krauss

Expansion and College Program Manager, JQY

Maris is the expansion and college program manager at JQY, where she manages interorganizational relationships, volunteer engagement, and JQY's college program, JQYU. She has worked in membership and operations at several Jewish nonprofits and synagogues and led initiatives to increase LGBTQ+ inclusion in Jewish lifecycle rituals. Maris was an Avodah Justice Fellow and a JDC Entwine community representative. She holds a B.A. in psychology from Ithaca College and enjoys traveling, baking, and poetry.



Meyer Laniado

Associate Rabbi, Kehilath Jeshurun

Rabbi Meyer Laniado joined Kehilath Jeshurun (KJ) as its first Sephardic rabbi dedicated to growing KJ's Sephardic community through outreach initiatives and new programming. His vision and dedication help him identify needs, develop new programs, and create 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.



Jordana Green Laurent

Assistant Director, Entertainment, Tech & Lifestyle Division, UJA-Federation of New York

Jordana is assistant director of the Entertainment, Tech & Lifestyle Division at UJA-Federation. She has been at UJA for more than five years, overseeing various entertainment-related verticals and working with donors in the marketing, tech & VC, and publishing industries. Raised in New York, she earned a B.A. in history and education and received her M.A. in public history, both from Northeastern University. She lives in Stamford with her husband and dog and enjoys trying new restaurants and planning trips around the globe.



Amira Mintz-Morgenthau

Amira Mintz-Morgenthau Community Mobilizer, Volunteerism & UJA Brooklyn UJA-Federation of New York

Before joining UJA, Amira was associate director of North American engagement at Pardes, where she managed engagement with potential candidates for Pardes's immersive programs in Jerusalem; facilitated recruitment and marketing strategy; and organized events and programs for the Pardes community in North America and Jerusalem. Amira, a New York City native, lives in Brooklyn and enjoys improv theater, rock climbing, and, very aspirationally, foraging.



ELIANA POSNER

Senior Program Officer, The Claims Conference

Eliana is a senior program officer in the Allocations Department at the Claims Conference. Her grantees are located around the world, from Florida to Switzerland to Australia. Eliana was born in Syracuse, New York, and raised in Brooklyn. Previously, Eliana worked at Columbia University's Department of Psychology as a grant administrator and at The Women's Foundation of Colorado as their social work/public policy fellow. Eliana earned her master's degree at Denver University's School of Social Work with a special concentration in nonprofit management and public policy. As an undergraduate at SUNY Oneonta, she majored in anthropology and women and gender studies.



EM RIVELES

Director of Wellness, Queens College Hillel

Em is the inaugural director of wellness at Queens College Hillel, where she has developed robust student-led programming that centers wellness as a pillar of Jewish communal work. In this role, Em has worked with community partners including Met Council and Commonpoint Queens to develop a kosher pantry program that addresses food insecurity for college students. Prior to joining the staff of Queens College Hillel, Em worked as an assistant clinical director at a community-based healthcare facility for people living with HIV/AIDS. Em holds a master's degree in clinical social work from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. She lives in the beautiful, diverse borough of Queens and enjoys spending time in nature.



HADLEY ROLF

Chief Advancement Officer, Luria Academy of Brooklyn

Hadley joined Luria Academy of Brooklyn as the chief advancement officer in Fall 2022. In this role, Hadley oversees admissions, communications, community engagement, and development. She has over a decade of experience working in development at schools and synagogues, having worked most recently as the director of development at Park Avenue Synagogue. Hadley began her career at Central Synagogue and worked at Riverdale Country School and St. Anne's Episcopal School in Denver. Originally from Kansas, Hadley graduated from Wake Forest University, and now lives in Brooklyn with her husband and six-year-old daughter.



ALLISON SALZMAN

Membership Manager, Temple Emanu-El of the City of New York

Allison is membership manager at the historic synagogue, Temple Emanu-El of the City of New York. Since joining the staff in 2019, Allison has worked in both the lifelong learning and membership departments. As membership manager, Allison oversees a wide array of activities, from general membership to high holy day tickets. Allison's colleagues value her collaborative spirit and can-do attitude. Allison holds a bachelor's degree in history from Ithaca College and currently resides on the Upper East Side. When she is not at Emanu-El, you can find Allison cheering on the NY Rangers or listening to Beyonce and Taylor Swift.



SHLOMO SATT

Alumni Engagement Program Manager, itrek

Shlomo (he, him) is the alumni engagement program manager for itrek, where he engages with many of itrek's alumni from around the globe. Recently, Shlomo joined the advisory board for Shtetl: a new Haredi journalism initiative. He also has significant experience with LGBTQ+ causes and nonprofits. In 2021, Shlomo graduated summa cum laude from Bellevue University with a master's in public administration. Shlomo is an active member of the Upper West Side Jewish community and enjoys hosting game nights and Shabbat meals with his partner Mattan. His dog Jax likes getting involved too!



RUBEN SHIMONOV

National Director of Sephardi House and Young Leadership The American Sephardi Federation

Ruben is an educator, community builder, and social entrepreneur, passionate about Jewish diversity. He is the national director of Sephardi House and young leadership at the American Sephardi Federation. He is also the founding executive director of the Sephardic Mizrahi Q Network. He previously served as director of community engagement & education at Queens College Hillel and director of educational experiences and programming for the Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee. As a visual artist, Ruben combines Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian calligraphy to build Muslim-Jewish interfaith bridges. Ruben has been listed among *The New York Jewish Week's* "36 Under 36" leaders and changemakers. He has lectured around the world on the histories and cultures of Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.



MICHAELA SLUTSKY

Northeast Regional Director, Repair the World

Michaela is the northeast regional director at Repair the World, providing service opportunities for Jewish young adults. Previously, Michaela spearheaded diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at The Jewish Education Project; co-founded RUACH: Emotional and Spiritual Support; and supported the launch of The NYU Applied Research Collective in American Jewry. Michaela began her career as the program director of teen and young adult services at Marks JCH of Bensonhurst, where she created Jewish education opportunities for hundreds of Russian-speaking Jewish teens and young adults, stemming from her own background as a first-generation New Yorker whose family emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Michaela holds an M.P.A. in nonprofit management and an M.A. in Hebrew and Judaic studies from NYU and a B.S. in business economics from Pace University. She was a Wexner Graduate Fellow and Davidson Scholar, a UJA graduate fellow, and a fellow in the Brandeis Jewish Leadership Incubator.



JILL GOLDSTEIN SMITH

Senior Program Manager, Foundation for Jewish Camp

Jill (she/her) is senior program manager at Foundation for Jewish Camp. She oversees the Yedid Nefesh initiative and community care work (mental health, inclusion, diversity, belonging), supports the Cornerstone Fellowship and develops Jewish educational resources, facilitates professional development, and designs cohort programs. Prior to joining FJC in 2015, Jill worked in television news. Originally from Florida, her love of Jewish community began at URJ Camp Coleman where she was a camper, counselor, and educator. She moved north to pursue her bachelor's at NYU, and recently completed a master's in educational leadership at The Jewish Theological Seminary's Davidson School. She is planting roots in western Queens with her partner and kiddo.



SHANA WERTHEIMER

Manager, Strategic Planning and Grants, Caring Department UJA-Federation of New York

Shana oversees a diverse portfolio of poverty-fighting initiatives focused on safety net services, emergency cash assistance, food insecurity, and workforce development. She also helps spearhead UJA's centennial effort, Upward NY: A Jewish Response to Poverty, to open one-stop social service centers in Queens and Brooklyn and transform food pantries throughout UJA's network to a digital system. These digital pantries enable people to get the food they want and need in a dignified and efficient manner. Shana is an alumna of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Columbia University, and NYU Stern School of Business. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and son.



MOLLY ZAENTZ

Planning Director, Network Department, UJA-Federation of New York

Molly started her career at UJA in the women's philanthropy campaign and earned an M.P.A. in nonprofit management from NYU's Wagner School. Molly has managed philanthropic initiatives in workforce development, urban renewal, and domestic social justice for foundations including Weinberg and Nathan Cummings. In her current role as planning director in UJA's Network Department, Molly's work is focused on ensuring UJA's closest organizational partners are poised to remain at the forefront of the nonprofit sector and equipped to address the evolving needs of New York's Jewish community. She is an alumna of Trinity College and enjoys serving as president of Trinity Hillel's board.



EMILY ZUSSMAN

Director of People and Culture, OneTable

Emily is director of people and culture at OneTable. She received her Master of Social Work and certificate in Jewish communal leadership from the University of Michigan. While pursuing her degree, Emily completed her field placement at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit in the NEXTGen Detroit department. Emily's most formative Jewish experiences stem from her time spent as a camper, counselor, and supervisor at Tamarack Camps in Michigan. She is passionate about building teams and professionals that, in turn, build strong Jewish communities. Emily lives in Brooklyn with her girlfriend where she enjoys baking challah, making trips to the farmers market, and spending full days in Fort Greene Park.

The Ruskay Institute is supported by a special fund created by the friends and colleagues of John Ruskay on 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.