

ReJoint: The Gene Ribakoff Alumni Leadership Experience in Israel, 2019

PARTICIPANT BIOS



Hilary Brandenburg | New York, NY | hilary.brandenburg@gmail.com

Hilary Brandenburg currently resides in New York and is a Senior Consultant at APCO Worldwide. Hilary first traveled with JDC Entwine in 2011 on a trip to Ukraine, and served as a JDC Jewish Service Corp Fellow in Haiti in 2013. She most recently traveled with JDC to Cuba in 2017, and has participated in local Entwine events in New York City, Washington, DC, and San Francisco.

Hilary's professional career has focused on financial inclusion, economic development, and community engagement, across the private and public sectors. In her current role, Hilary advises corporate, start-up, and financial services clients on strategic communications, corporate social responsibility, and organizational development. Previously, she worked at BlackRock, helping to develop and implement the company's inclusion and diversity strategy. Earlier in her career, Hilary worked on economic policy for the U.S. federal government, at the U.S. Treasury Department and the White House. As a JDC Jewish Service Corp fellow, she worked at PRODEV, a Haitian non-profit in Port-au-Prince focused on local education. Hilary has also worked as a freelance consultant in New York, DC, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Israel. She sits on the board of directors for Emma's Torch, a New York based non-profit and social enterprise, focused on empowering refugees through culinary education. Hilary holds a Bachelor of Arts from New York University and was raised in Washington, DC.



Laura Dannels | Atlanta, GA | laurapdannels@gmail.com

Based in Atlanta, Laura Dannels is the Vice President & Chief Learning Officer (CLO) for Georgia's largest healthcare system, WellStar. As CLO, Laura serves as a strategic business partner, an executive ally of core business strategies and transformation programs, and as an enterprise change agent to enhance the positioning of WellStar within the industry. Laura's leadership background is connected to well-recognized establishments, including her most recent assignment as Director of Learning & Leadership Development

at Kaiser Permanente. At Kaiser, she was responsible for driving knowledge programs that reached over 230,000 employees and physicians.

Laura is completing a Ph.D. in Global Leadership and Change, with a dissertation focused on transforming the employee experience. She received her Master of Business Administration from the University of Houston. Additionally, she holds several certifications and has received executive education in areas such as: executive coaching, strategy and innovation, human centered design/thinking, global competency modeling, increasing innovation potential, training/coaching, leading organizational change, and 360 assessments. Laura has a passion for helping communities thrive and has participated in non-profit work across the globe and throughout her travels across 35+ countries. She participated in JDC's Inside Jewish India Trip in 2015 and co-chaired the Eugene Ribakoff Fellowship in Global Leadership and Philanthropy in Israel in 2016.



Ian Davis | Austin, TX | texdavis@gmail.com

Ian is a third-year student at Emory University School of Law and currently studying abroad for the semester in Dublin. Before law school, Ian spent two years as an Entwine Global Jewish Service Corps Fellow. From 2015-2016, Ian lived in Riga, Latvia. There, he worked with every conceivable age group in the local Jewish community, from teaching English and Hebrew to Jewish kindergarteners and advising the teen youth group, to assisting JDC's efforts in distributing humanitarian aid to Holocaust survivors.

For round two, Ian lived in Tel Aviv, where he worked with JDC Israel's at-risk youth division (Ashalim). Ian helped facilitate several Ashalim programs in high schools and youth centers in Bat Yam. Following graduation, Ian will start his career as an associate at McGinnis Lochridge LLP in Austin, Texas.



Kimmy Duenas | Venice, CA | kimberly.duenas@gmail.com

Kimberly Dueñas is a California native with a global spirit. A Jewish educator for the last decade, her passion for experiential education and social justice have brought her to summer camps and classrooms around the world. After completing her undergraduate degree from American Jewish University, she volunteered as an educator at the Jewish Community Center in Mumbai, India as a JDC Entwine Jewish Service Corps fellow from 2013-2015. While living in India she also pursued her interest in Yoga and wellness by

completing a teacher training from The Yoga Institute in Mumbai. Upon her return to Los Angeles, she brought her love of community and global Jewish knowledge to Brawerman Elementary School of Wilshire Boulevard Temple as the Judaic Studies Specialist where she taught for 3 years. Hearing the call to dive deeper into her Yoga practice and mindfulness coaching, she has transitioned to working in the wellness sphere full time.

Today, Kimberly is the Outreach Manager for Open Parachute Schools, a Mental Health program for teenagers and she is also the Community Coordinator for Modo Yoga LA in

Venice. Driven by the Jewish imperative to 'repair the world', Kimberly continues her involvement with JDC in LA as an Entwine Community Representative this year. She has also traveled with Entwine to Argentina, Chile, and Cuba as a Trip Chair.



Jonathan Gass | New York, NY | jonathan.gass@gmail.com

Jonathan Gass is the Founder & CEO of Nomad Financial, a full-service growth finance strategy and operations firm for early- to mid-stage companies, providing tailored interim CFO, accounting, tax, and advisory services. He also spends time as an investor and advisor working with both early-stage, venture-backed startups as well as established digital / tech businesses, including Capital New York (acquired by Politico) and Drama Fever (acquired by Softbank). He founded Candid, a speaker series and community focused on exploring authentic stories impacting the startup community. He previously spent five years at IAC (NASDAQ: IACI) in a variety of strategic, transactional and operational roles, most recently serving as the head of Finance & Business Development at Vimeo, and prior to that was a consultant at Bain & Co. Jonathan graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BSBA in Finance, International Business, and Managerial Economics & Strategy from Washington University in St. Louis. Jonathan was a participant on JDC Entwine's Inside India in partnership with REALITY in 2018.



Beto Guzman Abundes | Vantaa, Finland | beto.guzman.abundes@gmail.com

Beto Guzman, studied International Studies and Intercultural Studies in Communication. He was raised in Mexico and has been living in Finland since 2009 working with Universities and Startups. Beto is active in his Jewish community and has been a Moishe House Without Walls Host for the past year, where he organizes programming and events through the MHWOW platform. He has also been involved with JDC Junction for two years in Helsinki and now works as the Activity and Event Coordinator at the JCC there. Beto has participated on JDC Entwine's Global Co:lab in Greece, as well as the JDC Junction Multipliers program. Most recently, he traveled with JDC Entwine to Morocco, which inspired him to work in Jewish Programming full time. In fact, he applied for his current job in the Jewish community while in Casablanca with JDC!



Deborah Herman | Los Angeles, CA | deborahkherman@gmail.com

Deborah currently works as a project manager at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, assisting medical faculty with research grants and facilitating large collaborative efforts and events. Prior to her time at UCLA, Deborah worked in the nonprofit sector in foundation relations as a grant writer. She graduated from the University of Southern California in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication (including a semester in London), and a master's degree in Communication Management in 2011. Deborah

participates in the Los Angeles chapter of Jewish Women International's monthly book club and serves on the Jewish Family Service Young Leaders Executive Committee. Deborah is an avid reader and writer and enjoys cooking, visiting museums and exploring new cultures through travel. In addition to her involvement in local JDC Entwine events, Deborah joined the Inside Jewish Morocco trip in June 2019.



Yakov Kronrod | Cambridge, MA | yakovkronrod@gmail.com

Yakov Kronrod came to America as a refugee from the Soviet Union with the help of the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) in 1989. He earned his B.S. in Mathematics (WPI, 2001) and PhD in Linguistics (UMD, 2014). In between, he co-founded EPOCA, Inc (Ex-Prisoner and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement), while working as a software engineer and public school educator in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

At UMD, he oversaw community outreach efforts and co-led efforts to gain collective bargaining rights for graduate students and adjunct professors. After completing his post-doc at the Infant Language Development Lab at UPenn, Yakov moved to California to pursue a career in Human Language Technologies at Amazon. While in California, Yakov co-led the Peninsula Poetry Circle, leading the publication of their anthology: "Theme". In 2018 he returned to Massachusetts to lead the science innovation team for Alexa Data Services. While at Amazon, Yakov heard about JDC Entwine from his colleague, Julia Meyer, and joined the Entwine Rwanda trip in Spring of 2019. It was a completely transformative experience, and reignited his passion for outreach, development, and global Jewish responsibility. In August of 2019, Yakov joined Spotify as a senior Machine Learning Engineering Manager to build out their Voice assistant NLU (Natural Language Understanding) team. Outside of work, Yakov serves on the advisory board of Open City, recently co-founded The Art Authority, a community arts center in Philadelphia, and is co-founder of Scarf Real Food, LLC, a healthy food distribution dual-purpose organization in Rhode Island. And in his spare time (yeah right), Yakov loves being in nature, writing poetry, playing(ish) guitar, and traveling (and traveling, and traveling).



Benjamin Mateev | Berlin, Germany |
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Benjamin was most recently a product leader at Microsoft, following the acquisition of Wunderlist in 2015. At Wunderlist he was an engineering lead, responsible for scaling the award-winning to do list app to over 30 million users. With over a decade of experience in building digital products from a technical, business and design perspective and leading teams, he is also mentoring and coaching young entrepreneurs in how to build successful products and create great teams to do so. Prior to Wunderlist Benjamin worked in various engineering and product leadership roles and started his own company, building digital solutions with world renowned design agencies. He is passionate about education and life-long learning and about creating purpose-driven and impactful companies and products. Benjamin started the community, “Defining the next Decade” that is focusing on impact related topics through workshops and discussions. It is in several cities and is expanding through a content publishing platform and a think tank. He is also a fellow at the social impact leadership program Startingbloc, an alumni with the Schusterman organization’s Reality program and a recent member of the Sandbox community. He is mentoring young professionals at TechStars Berlin, MIT’s Solve and has given workshops at Junction events in Europe after attending JDCs Inside India program in partnership with REALITY.



Matthew Nouriel | West Hollywood, CA |
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Matthew Nouriel was born in London, England to Iranian/Jewish Immigrant parents. In his teenage years he moved to Los Angeles, California where he resides to this day. Matthew has worked in Film and Theater, as a standup comedian, and is now making a name for himself as The Worlds First Persian Drag Superstar, HRH The Empress! When not pursuing his creative ventures, most recently, Matthew worked as an Events producer at YouTube Space LA. Matthew is a JDC Entwine Alumni having attended Both LGBTQ+ trips that have been offered. These experiences were both eye opening and profound for him, so much so that he was invited to speak of his experiences at JDC’s Plenary in December 2018. Matthew works closely with JQ International, a Los Angeles based Jewish Queer Organization, publicly speaking on his experiences growing up Jewish, Iranian, and Queer, and is a member of their Persian Pride Fellowship which works to raise awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people within the Iranian Community.



Clara Scheinmann | Boston, MA | clara@masschallenge.org

Clara Scheinmann leads External Affairs for MassChallenge, a global startup accelerator that has had transformative impact on the global innovation ecosystem over the last ten years. She has served in several key roles at the organization including Israel Program Manager and Chief of Staff to the Founder and former CEO of MassChallenge where she worked on strategic initiatives including launching a fundraising campaign to support sustainability, scalability and expansion. Clara's current focus is on deepening the organization's strategic engagement with key stakeholders and institutions and building relationships across the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Prior to joining MassChallenge, Clara served as the Social-Secretary to Israel's Ambassadors to the United States, Ron Dermer and Michael Oren, in Washington D.C.

Clara is a Boston native and cares deeply about the local and global Jewish communities. She advises CJP's Strategic Israel Engagement work to expand reach to young adults and just completed the Dewey Stone Kadimah Leadership Development Program in June 2019. She joined CJP's Project Inspire trip to India in December 2018 which partnered with JDC Entwine and was fascinated about the breadth and depth of JDC's work.



Aubrey Shanks | Seattle, WA | shanks.aubrey@gmail.com

Aubrey Shanks was raised in Seattle, graduated from the University of Washington, and still calls the Pacific Northwest her home. Aubrey first became involved with JDC Entwine in May of 2018 when she attended a Seattle based insider trip to Mumbai, India. Since then, she has also chaired a trip to Tbilisi, Georgia. Because of her love of JDC and passion for building community, she is now a Seattle community representative. Her focus has been on engaging Entwine alumni and keeping them connected to the work of JDC through gatherings of all kinds, with her favorite being Shabbat dinners. Aubrey also devotes time to ADL where she spent the last year as a member of the Glass Leadership Institute, learning how to carry out the missions of ADL to fight hate and bigotry within her community. Aubrey is a preschool teacher and works part time as a real estate agent for Redfin. In her free time, she enjoys camping, attending the performing arts, and buying more books than she has time to read.



Aliza Sokolow | Santa Monica, CA | alizajsok@gmail.com

Aliza J. Sokolow is a food stylist & photographer based in Los Angeles and NYC. She worked as a stylist on Emmy winning and nominated Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution. Her work has been featured extensively in commercials for top brands, in the consumer product goods market and across publications in the USA. Her images are displayed at restaurants from coast to coast. She completed food styling for her first book past summer Evan Funke's

American Sfoglino: A Master Class in Handmade Pasta which will be published by Chronicle Books in 2019. Her passion is traveling the globe as much as possible, children's health and photographing the fruits and vegetables that she finds. Aliza was a participant on JDC Entwine's Inside India and Ethiopia in partnership with REALITY.



Erin Zaikis | New York, NY | ezaikis@gmail.com

Erin is the founder of Sundara, an organization that recycles hotel soap and has operated across India, Uganda and Myanmar. Sundara hires widows, victims of domestic violence and single mothers, employing them at a fair wage and training them to become community hygiene ambassadors. Sundara has distributed a million bars of soap to date, reaching over 100,000 children each month and working with partners like Hilton, Hyatt and Marriott. Prior to Sundara, Erin was the CEO of IsraAID US, where she fundraised for and managed a \$10 million aid program focused on disaster relief projects and led humanitarian aid missions to Nepal, Kenya (Kakuma refugee camp), Lesbos, Greece and Houston, Texas. She lives in NYC and spends her free time walking in Central Park with her dog, looking for the best Thai restaurants and blogging about Asian desserts. Erin participated in Inside Israel in 2018.