

HAFTR Heritage

Issue: #15

October, 2013

MAZEL TOV!

ENGAGEMENTS

Daniel Bondarsky (HAFTR HS '05) on his engagement to Shiran Zion

Alan Goldschmidt (HAFTR HS '03) and Zehava Levkovich (HAFTR HS '05) on their engagement

Michael Fulop (HAFTR HS '04) on his engagement to Sarah Melnick

Erica Bodner (HAFTR HS '02) on her engagement to Elliot Safer

Desiree Sedgh (HAFTR HS '02) on her engagement to Eldad Dror

Lev Mishiev (HAFTR HS '05) on his engagement to Danielle Nicolas

Tali Grosser (HAFTR HS '07) on her engagement to Nafi Orlofsky

Tani Hochsztein (HAFTR HS '04) on her engagement to Ben Gordon

WEDDINGS

Robert Kessler (HAFTR HS '03) on his marriage to Courtney Downing

Ari Rosner (HAFTR HS '06) on his marriage to

Welcome back to **HAFTR HERITAGE!**

This is the 15th edition of our newsletter geared toward YOU, our HILI, HILLEL and HAFTR alumni! We wish all of our HAFTR graduates a happy and healthy New Year.

It has been very exciting to hear all of your feedback! We also want to thank you for sending us your updated contact information. This has allowed us to build a stronger alumni database. Please continue to do so. We really appreciate it.

Enjoy this issue and stay connected!

Have a wonderful summer!

Melodie Scharf, Chairperson, HAFTR Alumni Relations and Co-Editor of HAFTR Heritage

Rise (Davidoff) Kaufmann, Hillel Elem. '73, Hillel High School '76, Vice Chair, HAFTR Alumni Relations

Leslie (Reis) Gang, HAFTR Elem. '99, HAFTR High School, '03, Director of Admissions & Communications, Co-Editor of HAFTR Heritage



HAFTR ALUMNI FEATURE

Paula Finkelstein Eiselt
HAFTR High School Class of 2003

**WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE
HAFTR?**
2003

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT WHILE
ATTENDING SCHOOL?**
Literature, writing and history.

Rachel Stein

BIRTHS

Sara Steinberg Rubin (HAFTR HS '01) and her husband Barry on the birth of a daughter

Limor Gul Zahav (HAFTR HS '02) and her husband Haviv on the birth of a son

Adam Small (HAFTR HS '00) and his wife Tova on the birth of a daughter

Lee Bienstock (HAFTR HS '01) and his wife Sara on the birth of a daughter

Kevin Weiler (HAFTR HS '96) and his wife Stacy on the birth of a daughter

Karen Bertram Orenstein (HAFTR HS '02) and her husband Moshe on the birth of a son

Shara Nachman Netkin (HAFTR HS '98) and her husband Dovid on the birth of a son

Seth Zahner (HAFTR HS '03) and his wife Ariella on the birth of a son

If you'd like to include your simcha in the next edition of HAFTR Heritage, send an e-mail to haftr@alumni@haftr.org

Become a Class Ambassador!

Class of 1975 (Hillel)
[Jonathan Alter](#)

WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE YOU INVOLVED IN? DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY SPORTS?

Extra curricular activities at Haftr included founding The Film Club, serving as backstage manager for a production, Model UN and the Inklings publication. The only sport I participated in was intramural hockey freshman year. I was goalie.

WHAT SCHOOL(S) DID YOU ATTEND AFTER GRADUATING FROM HAFTR?

I attended Midreshet Lindenbaum (Brovendars) followed by NYU's Tisch School of the Arts' Film and Television and Cinema Studies programs.

TELL US ABOUT WHAR YOU ARE DOING TODAY.

I am currently directing/producing two feature-length documentaries: The first titled *Following Boruch*, observes my Chasidic uncle for three years during a crucial turning point in his recovery from mental illness and addiction. With 200 hours of footage in hand, the film is in Post-production and is actively seeking completion funding. Award-winning veteran filmmaker Marco Williams (*The Undocumented; Banished; Two Towns of Jaspar*) is Executive Producing *Following Boruch*, and is also my mentor.

The second film is an untitled project about Chasidic women in Borough Park who are forming the first all-female EMS corps in their community. This film recently went into production. Seasoned producer Heidi Reinberg (*Shelter Dogs; Garbage Dreams*) is my producing partner on the project.

In addition to filmmaking, I am Director of Programming at The Edit Center located in DUMBO, Brooklyn. My primary focus is overseeing The Edit Center/IFP Media Center partnership and programming classes to be held in the Media Center, which launches in October.

DO YOU FEEL THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO USE YOUR SKILLS AS A TOOL TO CREATE FILMS THAT EDUCATE THE POPULATION?

Film, especially documentaries, has a unique capacity to unite viewers in a way that no other medium can. Viewers are exposed to new perspectives and people they may otherwise never know. My overall goal as a filmmaker is to convey

Class of 1976 (Hillel)
[Rise Davidoff Kaufmann](#)

Class of 1977 (Hillel)
[Suzanne Berkowitz Guvitch](#)

Class of 1978 (Hillel)
[Karen Schiffman Baker](#)
[Alyssa Davidoff Sterba](#)

Class of 1983
[Felicia Feder Bernstein](#)

Class of 1984
[Abeza Steinhorn Lauer](#)

Class of 1985
[Simona Vogel Lumerman](#)

Class of 1986
[Estee Berman Stein](#)
Carolyn
[WallachRosenberg](#)

Class of 1987
[Royce Feld Maron](#)
[Michelle Golub Shari](#)
[Haim Kaufman](#)

Class of 1988
[Stephen Wallach](#)
[Jennifer Wiessen Zwiebel](#)

Class of 1989
Wendy
[AusternOttensoper](#)
[Nicole Beck Spivak](#)

Class of 1991
[Steven Ackerman](#)

Class of 1993
[Elise Dorkin Sharon](#)

Class of 1994
[Ari Zoldan](#)

Class of 1995
[Chani Schwartz Herman](#)

Class of 2000
[Tamar Ausubel Scharf](#)

Class of 2001
[Ariella Schulman](#)
Weitzman
[Craig Weitzman](#)

Class of 2002
[Jamie Rohde Scharaga](#)

thought-provoking entertaining stories that will take my audience to a new world. However, I am strong believer that an artist should first master what she "knows," or has access to, before exploring an entirely new culture or idea. For that reason, I chose my uncle as the subject for my first film and then stepped outside my immediate family to document the plight of Chasidic women in Brooklyn. Its a real process for me; Making these films have provided me with a better understanding of where I come from and I hope their remarkable stories will be eye-opening for the both the Jewish and secular community.

Following Boruch will educate diverse audiences about mental illness and addiction, helping to de-stigmatize individuals suffering from these diseases in both the Jewish and secular world. In addition to mental health, the film also opens the door into the insular Chasidic community - a culture rarely portrayed in the media from an authentic and personal perspective.

My second film takes that goal even a step further by shattering stereotypes of Chasidic women - a group that has absolutely no presence in mainstream media - through exploring an image of empowered devout women completely unknown to the "outside world". As an Orthodox Jewish filmmaker, I feel it is my *tafkid* to express the humanity of my community to the rest of the world through compelling, and honest, stories. Both films are intended for public broadcast on PBS or HBO, as well as inclusion in major Jewish and secular film festivals.

DOES BEING AN ORTHODOX JEW AFFECT YOUR CAREER?

Being an Orthodox Jew affects my career in that it gives me a perspective entirely unique to the film community, which can either be refreshing or curious to people. I often have a lot of explaining to do about the way I dress or kashrus or shabbos. But, these conversations can be really enriching and I love the cultural exchange. Once people get to know me and we form a relationship, being Orthodox can actually become an asset - its something different. The more I embrace and stand by my beliefs, the more I am admired. My mentor, Marco Williams, took me under his wing because he was so enamored with my culture and the balance in my life.

On a logistical level, an observant life-style does present a challenge in the film world. Collaboration is the core of

[Sondra Scharf](#)

Class of 2003
[Leslie Reis Gang](#)

Class of 2004
[Allison Rohde Rahmani](#)

Class of 2005
[Hannah Steinblatt Topiel](#)
[Esther Dubow](#)

Class of 2009
[Jennifer Lauer](#)
[Jessica Shapiro](#)

Class of 2010
[Alana Warbit](#)

Class of 2011
-volunteers needed

Class of 2012
-volunteers needed

Class of 2013
-volunteers needed

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filmmaking so when I can't get together or participate in film events on Saturdays or go out to dinner etc it could be isolating. One of the reasons why I chose to concentrate on documentary filmmaking, rather than fiction filmmaking, is because the filming process is more flexible and less rigid; fiction filmmaking is a lot more structured and set culture is a whole other animal. At the start of a career in film, it would be very difficult to keep kosher and shabbos on set for an extended period of time - I'm talking weeks and months. Unless, of course, the film was produced within the Jewish community or privately funded. That is the honest truth. However, I have not written off fiction films - I love screenwriting and directing actors - and hope that when I become more established I can make fiction set-life work with familial obligations and religious observance.

WHAT IS THE MOST INSPIRING PROJECT YOU HAVE BEEN A PART OF?

It's a tie between the two films I am currently working on. Witnessing my uncle's transformative recovery at the age of 50 has been so life affirming. I saw the lesson of "it's never too late" physically come to life. Similarly, the pride and resilience of the group of Chasidic women in Borough Park working to better their community has been equally inspiring and humbling.

WHAT IS THE MOST EXCITING PART OF YOUR CAREER?

Exploring and uncovering intriguing characters or stories through film. The creative flow and energy rush on set is unparalleled to any 9-5 job.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

At the moment, being a female filmmaker within the Orthodox community while also exploring stories in that same community is very challenging. As a woman, I am not taken as seriously as a man is in this line of work. From my experience, I have to work twice as hard as man in my position to convince members of the community that my filmmaking is a career and not a cute hobby I pursue after my kids are in bed. The community still has a long way to go in embracing and actively supporting a frum woman's ability, and choice, to balance an ambitious career and family life.

Funding. Funding. Funding. Raising money for films is very difficult and discouraging. The way the system is set up is that in order to even be considered for a film grant to support

production, you need to go into production to shoot and edit a chunk of the film first. It's a catch 22. Furthermore, the grants have become increasingly competitive (Supposedly, receiving a film grant from the major industry organizations is statistically more challenging than getting into Harvard) and, if you are lucky enough (I say luck, because its all subjective) to receive the grant it takes 6 months to kick in (by that point you may have missed crucial events in your story). Creating a supportive network of private funders and crowdfunding is usually the most effective way of getting the first money in. The situation is not impossible, but it's very difficult. As a director, I have to wear many hats - I need the skills to shoot, edit, produce and, of course, direct to navigate the system.

Family-work balance is an ongoing effort, like it is for many working parents in any field of work.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED TO BE INVOLVED IN FILM AND DIRECTING?

My passion for film was ignited in 10th grade after watching Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream*. Then interning at his production company for the following two summers sealed the deal.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My husband David is an incredibly supportive partner/co-director in life. He is an Austrian native. We have been blessed with two amazing boys, Avinoam, 4, and Yoel (aka Yoli), 2. We live in Kew Gardens Hills.

DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS THAT YOU MADE WHILE YOU WERE A STUDENT AT HAFTR?

Yes, many of them are still my closest friends today.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOUR PEERS?

Please be on the lookout for the launch of a *Following Boruch* Kickstarter campaign later this month! For updates visit www.followingboruch.com and 'like' out Facebook page.

I am looking to bring on an experienced producer from WITHIN the community for one of my projects. I can be reached at paula.eiselt@gmail.com.

HAFTR FACULTY FEATURE

Monica Brandwein

HAFTR High School Class of 2004



WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE HAFTR?

I graduated HAFTR High School in 2004

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL?

All of the art classes - ceramics, computer graphics, art.

WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE YOU INVOLVED IN? DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY SPORTS?

I was on the HAFTR Soccer Team my senior year.

WHAT SCHOOL(S) DID YOU ATTEND AFTER GRADUATING FROM HAFTR?

After High School, I went to FIT for Fashion Merchandising and received a BS in Visual Art Management. I then continued to Bank Street College of Education where I received a MSED in Museum Education: Childhood.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT HAFTR?

Right now I teach Kindergarten at HAFTR Lower School.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER AT HAFTR?

I love to give back to the institution I went to as a child. Watching my students grow and transform throughout the year is rewarding as well.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU SEE YOUR STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED THAT YOU WISH YOU HAD THE CHANGE TO PARTICIPATE IN WHILE BEING A STUDENT?

I love all of the extra programs/museum trips my students have and are exposed to. They are very important to the well rounded

curriculum and extend what it being taught in the classroom into the real world.

HOW HAS HAFTR CHANGED SINCE YOU'VE BEEN A STUDENT?

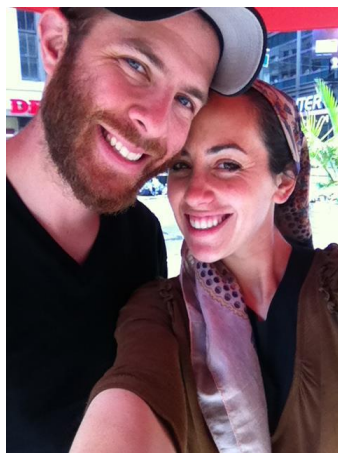
It has changed a lot but at the same time feels so similar. I feel comfortable and at home knowing the building inside and out. It is nice to see the changes and enhancements but I enjoy being able to walk around and think about how some parts of the building have never changed. Its also nice to be able to have a different relationship with my teachers who are still working in the school and are now my mentors.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

I love visiting museums. Before working at HAFTR I worked at the Museum of Jewish Heritage for 4 1/2 years. During that period I educated children about the Holocaust. I have a passion for teaching in both the museum setting as well as the classroom setting. I enjoyed bringing what I see in museums into my classroom teaching.

DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ANY OF YOUR HAFTR CLASSMATES?

Some of them, yes. It's also amazing to see how many classmates of mine are working in the school.



HAFTR ALUMNI COUPLE

Pamela (Haft) & Yoni Frenkel

HAFTR High School Class of 2003

WHICH YEARS DID YOU ATTEND HAFTR?

Both of us attended HAFTR High School From 2000-2003

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL?

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU BECOME A COUPLE?

Yoni: I asked my Rabbi to set us up. I knew she wouldn't date me unless I had someone important call her.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW HE/SHE WAS THE ONE?

Yoni: A year before dating when she was dating my friend, I thought if she didn't marry him, then I would be the one.

Pamela: I think I knew Yoni was the one on our first date.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HAFTR MEMORY TOGETHER?

Yoni: We didn't have a memory together because she thought I was crazy in high School.

IF YOU COULD HAVE LUNCH WITH ONE TEACHER TODAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Pamela: I'd have lunch with Mr. Kalter. He was really interesting and I loved his class.

WHAT ITEM WAS ALWAYS IN YOUR LOCKER/BACKPACK?

Yoni: I don't remember, but I bet Pamela always had a muffin.

Pamela: Blistex- I probably wanted a muffin but didn't always have one.

IF YOUR FRIENDS COULD DESCRIBE YOU IN ONE WORD WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Yoni: Outgoing

Pamela: Friendly

WHAT IS A MEMORABLE CLASSROOM MOMENT?

Yoni: No doubt it was 9B2 getting locked in our classroom with Rabbi Lichtman, who can forget Mosh in the corner, DJ throwing the map out the window and Justin locking us in.

Pamela: I have a vague memory in Rabbi Lichtman's class. It was Tu B'Shvat and there was fried fruit flying everywhere.

WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL ONCE YOU GRADUATED?

Yoni: Reshit Yerushalayim, Touro College, Shor Yoshuv, Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

Pamela: I did Excelsior for my BA and Touro for a Masters in Special Education.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR LIVES TODAY?

Yoni: I am a social Worker for NSLIJ Far Rockaway Treatment Center (outpatient substance abuse), St. John's Boy's Home (Substance abuse counselor), Catapult Learning-counseling in Siach Yitzchok

We have 2 Boys ages 5 and 3 (Elisha and Dov Ber (Dovi))
1 Girl less than a year old (mirel (Miri))

Pamela was a teacher for 6 years then she started her own shaitel consignment business called "Rewrapped Wigs" which she has been doing for three years.

DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS THAT YOU MADE WHILE YOU WERE A STUDENT AT HAFTR?

HAFTR ALUMNI DAY 2013

We are looking to continue our Alumni Day tradition by inviting our graduates back to the High School to discuss the unique paths you've taken since graduation.

We are looking for alumni to sit on a panel and answer any questions that our current students may have. We know that many of you are working in very unusual and extraordinary fields, and we'd love to hear from you.

We are also looking for alumni who are attending/have attended colleges and universities that are not always represented at HAFTR High School College Night.

The date for this event is Monday, December 23rd

from 8:30AM-12:00PM.

If you are interested in joining us or have further questions, please send an email to legang@haftr.org.

HAFTR Heritage is all about you!

Tell us about your latest news and update your personal information so we can keep you posted about your classmates and their journey since graduating from HAFTR. You can do this by friending us on Facebook or by emailing us at haftralumni@haftr.org.

Send us your recommendations of people you know whom we might want to profile for Alumni Features, Alumni Teachers and Alumni Couples, along with other interesting alumni story suggestions.