



Supporting Isolated, Emerging, and Returning Jewish Communities around the Globe

KULANU

"All of Us"



Photo by Leise Jones Photography, 2020.

Harriet Bograd

Apr. 6, 1943 — Sept. 17, 2022

**May her memory
be a blessing**

Zichrona livracha

זכרונה לברכה

Contents

How "Mama Harriet" Changed the World	2	Kulanu Notes	16
Jewish Weddings Around the World	6	Sephardic Ancestry Certification	18
Condolences from Around the World	10	Upcoming Kulanu Events	20
"Harriet Believed in <i>All of Us</i> "	12		

How “Mama Harriet” Changed the World

By Judi Kloper with Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin

Harriet Bograd, a civil rights activist, nonprofit pioneer, and president of Kulanu since 2008, died on September 17, 2022, due to complications following surgery. She was 79.

Harriet lived Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s words, “Above all, remember that you must build your life as if it were a work of art.” Harriet was a *tzadikah*, a righteous woman committed to justice, inclusion, and pluralism.

For twenty years, Harriet served Kulanu, a nonprofit organization supporting emerging, isolated, and returning Jewish communities worldwide, first as its treasurer and then for the past 14 years as its president. Under her leadership, Kulanu expanded its presence to include communities in 33 countries. From Uganda to Nicaragua, Ghana to India, Brazil to Italy, Pakistan to Indonesia, and numerous other countries, she forged new ways to connect isolated Jews with Kulanu and the greater Jewish world.

Harriet grew up in Paterson, New Jersey in a close-knit extended family, where almost everyone on her street was a cousin, aunt, or uncle. While her own mother and the women



Harriet and her daughter, Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin. Photo by Leise Jones Photography, 2020.

of her generation were encouraged to stay home with children, Harriet witnessed their leadership of the wider Paterson community, where they championed immigrant rights, diversity, and women’s rights.

Harriet left for college at Bryn Mawr at age 16 and entered Yale Law School at age 20, one of only 11 women in her class. Having seen her own family’s commitment to equality, and experiencing differential treatment as a woman at Yale Law School, Harriet felt called to join the civil rights movement, working for equal rights and opportunities for African Americans. To that end, during law school, she organized graduate students to teach at historically Black colleges and universities. After graduating, she worked with Dixwell Legal Rights Association in a groundbreaking initiative to train community leaders as legal advocates.

In the 1970s, Harriet became involved in creating integrated systems of care that served communities by bringing directly affected people’s voices into leadership. She helped found the Children’s Circle to serve both as a daycare and community center, and served on the board and staff of the Teacher Center in New Haven, Connecticut, empowering teachers and parents to work together to improve local public schools. She also worked with a group called the Drug Dependency Institute to help cities and communities bring leaders together across disciplines to approach addiction as a public health crisis and a crisis of poverty, not as a crime.

“My mom believed in people and that they could do so much more than others thought possible for them if only they were given the resources and encouragement they needed to succeed,” Harriet’s daughter Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin shared.

Though Harriet was proud of her civil rights work, her rabbi preached against the civil rights movement, and her status as a single woman in her late 20s-early 30s placed her outside of the mainstream Jewish community. Feeling unseen, Harriet rarely went to synagogue for ten years, and held seders and Chanukah celebrations with

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her diverse group of mostly non-Jewish friends and civil rights comrades.

Harriet met her beloved husband Ken and got married in 1977. They knew they wanted to have children, and decided they wanted to pass on to their children an inclusive and justice-oriented Judaism that they had longed for but not found as young adults. It was this vision for inclusive and justice-oriented Judaism that also later guided her work for Kulanu.

When Harriet gave birth to Margie, she and her friends began meetings in living rooms and playgrounds dreaming of the kind of community and school they hoped to pass on to their children. Once the idea of the Abraham Joshua Heschel School was born, Harriet made it her personal mission to recruit students to this new community, inviting every single prospective family over for dinner. As Ken recalls, Harriet would give her pitch to the parents while Ken and Margie played with the children. With Harriet's help, Heschel became a model Jewish day school, committed to justice, creative expression, and pluralism.

In 1985, two years after Heschel opened its doors, Sarah was born and the family quickly fell

in love with its newest member. After staying home to raise Sarah and Margie, Harriet worked for 10 years as a leader in the field of non-profit management and accountability. Then, in 1997, Harriet was diagnosed with cancer and given only a few months to live. Through courage, perseverance, and a lot of luck, Harriet survived but emerged with a clear sense that she only wanted to spend time on work that she loved.

That beloved work emerged in 2001 when Harriet learned about Kulanu. Harriet first became involved with Kulanu when her daughter Margie served as a Kulanu volunteer in Ghana in 2001 and Harriet and Ken came to visit. During that trip, Harriet helped the community open a bank account, met with many community leaders, and worked with Margie to help the community set up a Kente-cloth challah-cover business. Upon returning home, Harriet passionately sold the first batch of challah covers in no time and quickly asked for more to be made. Soon, the challah covers became one of the Ghanaian Jewish community's primary income sources, and the Kulanu board invited this expert saleswoman to join the board.

In addition to staying connected with Ghana, Harriet became more involved with Kulanu as she built a relationship with the Abayudaya



Harriet and her family, 2022. Back row, left to right: Harriet, daughter Sarah Klein, son-in-law Jeremy Klein Ronkin, Ken. Front row, left to right: Grandchildren Uriel and Razel Klein Ronkin and daughter Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin.



Harriet in Uganda, 2012.

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community in Uganda, where she first became known as “Mama Harriet.” She was instrumental in establishing the Hadassah Primary School there, and many other projects. “Mama Harriet, your acts of loving kindness will cast a bright light on your journey to meet the righteous matriarchs and patriarchs,” wrote Rabbi Gershom Sizomu of Uganda. Harriet was also instrumental in making sure that the deaf children of the Jewish community had access to education as well, and that continues to this day.

Once elected as Kulanu president, Harriet worked with Jewish community leaders around the world. In Zimbabwe, she helped to establish development projects to mitigate the damage of drought and heat caused by climate change. Zimbabwe community leader and Kulanu board member Modreck Maeresera shared, “Harriet was one of the most humane human beings I have ever met: kind, patient, tolerant, and fair. She touched lives across the world in communities that worked with Kulanu and even those that didn’t. She was a merchant of hope and the world Jewish community is more vibrant and diverse because of her work with Kulanu. She was a saint if I ever met one.”

Harriet’s family asserts that, even though Harriet was incredibly selfless in her efforts, her work with Kulanu was also deeply and personally meaningful. After having felt like an outsider

in the Jewish community herself as a young adult, Harriet felt passionate about creating a Jewish community that saw everyone’s gifts and celebrated them. Further, after



Harriet in her early days as president of Kulanu. Photo by Enid Bloch.

having worked as a civil rights activist, Harriet believed Kulanu’s work of honoring Jewish communities of color around the world was an extension of her work for racial justice, educating and inspiring the mainstream Jewish community to expand its sense of what Jews are “supposed to look like.”

As Barbara Vinick, a long-time Kulanu board member and friend of Harriet, shared, “Harriet’s great capacity to form relationships, her kindness, and the diversity of her extraordinary talents helped her to amass a huge network of friends, supporters, expert consultants, and Jewish leaders around the world, all of whom furthered Kulanu’s projects with partner communities. And she was able to keep track of them all!”

Harriet worked closely over many years with her successor Bonita Nathan Sussman, who became Kulanu’s vice president and worked with Harriet on developing a strong infrastructure for Kulanu and expanding Kulanu’s global reach. Harriet was also a pioneer in the movement for “nonprofit cyber-accountability” by advocating,



Yoash Mayende, Harriet, and Rachman Nachman, Israel Parade in New York City, June 2015. Yoash (from Uganda) was on his way to his second summer at Camp Eisenberg in New York and Rachman (also from Uganda) was on his way to Brandeis Collegiate Initiative in California.

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with other nonprofit leaders, to make the IRS Form 990 (which all nonprofits must file with the federal government) available on the internet. This project made it easier for nonprofits such as Kulanu to report their earnings and be transparent.

In 2018, Kulanu welcomed Molly Levine as communications director, and in 2021, Kulanu named Molly its deputy director. Harriet worked closely with Molly and with Kulanu's development and program manager, Jo Ann Friedman, right up until the week she died. Even when her body was failing her, Harriet expressed deep joy that Kulanu was thriving and that the board and staff were so well-prepared to carry Kulanu's mission forward.

Genie Milgrom, coordinator of Kulanu's work with Anusim (descendants of Jews forced to convert during the Spanish Inquisition), wrote, "I was always impressed with Harriet's ability to shift gears and understand the cultural needs of so many communities around the world, and especially the Bnei Anusim which I oversee. She impacted my view on emerging communities and gave me my start. She was bigger than life and will be missed."



Harriet and Athalia Nalongo at the Abayudaya Music and Dance Festival in Uganda, January 2012.

Donations to Kulanu in Harriet's memory to help carry out Kulanu's work with Jewish communities around the world can be made at kulanu.org/donate.

The words of Kulanu's founder, Jack Zeller, speak clearly about who Harriet was. "Harriet worked tirelessly on behalf of invisible/excluded Jews. Exclusion was based on many aspects, the most frequent of which was *who knows?* (i.e., who knows if they're really Jewish?). Harriet identified, dignified, and uplifted the *who knows?* It is for us, the living, to continue Harriet's work, making her memory a blessing. Harriet's skills were abundant and ever-available. She was one of a kind. Even into her dying days she never ceased Kulanu's work. Because of Harriet, more ordinary people and important Jewish institutions now know, care, educate and support the *who knows?* She made us all better Jews."

"Harriet was a mentor to so many. The staff, volunteers, and Kulanu's partner community leaders and members all went to her for guidance and support. She was always so willing to help others . . . she improved their lives," Molly Levine reflected. Given the hundreds of tributes to Harriet that Kulanu received by email, at her memorial service, and from the 200 attendees on the Kulanu memorial on Zoom, it is clear that the impact Harriet had on Jewish people around the globe is substantial.

Harriet is survived by Ken Klein, her loving husband of 45 years, daughters Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin and Sarah Klein, son-in-law Jeremy Ronkin, and her cherished grandchildren Uriel and Raziel.

Harriet's memory will be a blessing as Kulanu continues its work inspiring, educating, and connecting with Jewish communities worldwide. ✱

Jewish Weddings Around the World

By Barbara Vinick

*Barbara Vinick is a sociologist who has conducted research at Boston University and Brandeis University and serves on the Kulanu board as its secretary. Her previous book with Shulamit Reinharz, *Today I am a Woman: Stories of Bat Mitzvah Around the World*, was published by Indiana University Press.*

How does Jewish marriage vary in diverse communities around the world? Are particular features always present? For the last several years, I have collected stories written by Jewish brides, as well as their close male and female relatives, friends, and clergy. They are from 84 countries — a rich array of narratives that give details of lives and ceremonies from a few generations ago to today. The collection will be presented in an anthology co-authored with my colleague Shulamit Reinharz, tentatively titled *One Hundred Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World*, to be published by Indiana University Press in 2023. For this article, I have chosen to summarize highlights of several stories from countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, where Kulanu's partner communities reside.



Primrose grinding millet using the mortar and pestle given when she wed in the groom's village in July 2016 in Bedza, Zimbabwe. Photo courtesy of Modreck Maeresera.

Jewish weddings and surrounding cultures

The *chuppah* (wedding canopy) and breaking a glass at the end of the ceremony are almost universal elements of Jewish weddings around the globe. Other rituals, especially those preceding the marriage, are little-known, often reflecting traditions and customs of the surrounding cultures.

In the **Abayudaya community of Uganda**, Jewish wedding ceremonies include familiar features of mikveh, chuppah, wine, rings, ketubah, and glass breaking. The story by Rachel Namudosi Keki describes some less familiar pre-wedding traditions that have been retained in their cultural heritage by a community that has deeply embraced Judaism for more than one hundred years. Her story details the *kwanjula* (“to introduce” in Luganda, the local language) ceremony. After his written request to the bride’s parents has been approved by the elders, the husband-to-be brings gifts to the bride’s family, including traditional garments, a rooster for the elder brother, and *omutwalo*, a dowry for the bride’s father, which includes items such as sugar, salt, and meat. A pot of locally brewed beer is shared by the two families as a sign of their unity, followed by setting a date for the wedding. But before the eating, drinking, and dancing, according to Rachel, “both families have a spokesperson, knowledgeable in old norms and traditions, who indulge in a battle of words, spirited questions and answers that make *kwanjula* memorable and unique.”

Among the **Igbo of Nigeria**, traditionally orchestrated betrothal rituals unite the couple as wife and husband some months or years before the wedding. Coming across her photo in a college yearbook, author and lawyer Remy Ilona determinedly met Irene Malizu and obtained her and her family’s approval for the match. After delegating an *onye mbe* (middle-man) to relay

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information between the families, a date was set and the ceremony began with distribution of kola nuts under a palm-frond canopy. After prayers, Remy shared how he and Irene drank from a cup of palm wine and “the marriage had begun.” Following a confidential bride price given to Remy’s father-in-law and more prayers for the couple’s welfare, the partying began with much eating, drinking, and spirited jesting. The wedding took place two years later at Irene’s family compound.

Noreen Daniel and her husband Romiel, rabbi of the **Indian Jewish Congregation** of the USA, are from prominent **Bene Israel** families, one of three major divisions of Indian Jews. Today they number about 5,000 in India, mainly in the area of Mumbai. Noreen’s story is replete with descriptions of time-honored ceremonies that



Noreen and Romiel married at Mogen David Synagogue in Mumbai, India, 1965. Photo courtesy of Romiel Daniel.

preceded her arranged marriage to her cousin Romiel in 1965. One of these was the henna ceremony, held on the Saturday before the wedding. (Variations of the henna ceremony are still performed widely by Jews from communities throughout North Africa and South Asia.) The rituals began with application of turmeric paste to Noreen’s hands, face, and legs by the women of the family — “They had fun, I did not!” — followed by washing in her home’s mikveh and dressing in a new sari and much jewelry. After prayers and a dinner, a platter of fruit and flowers surrounding a *melida* (a dish of rice and dried fruits) was distributed to the guests to invoke the blessing of Elijah the Prophet. A wreath of flowers was tied around her head, and Noreen’s aunt applied henna to her left index finger from a tray with rice, flowers, and jaggery (dark brown sugar made from the sap of palm trees) carried in by five young women. Her aunt fed pieces of jaggery to Noreen and her brother and threw grains of rice over Noreen’s head and shoulders as an appeal for plenty of food in her new home. To ward off evil spirits, the guests waved money over her head and put it on the tray. It was later given to charity.

Modreck Maeresera, leader of his **Lemba Jewish community in Zimbabwe**, wrote about the meeting and marriage of his cousin Tapiwa and his bride Primrose, a match “assisted” by the families. After preparations for a wedding feast that included the slaughter of two cows and several sheep, Primrose arrived in Tapiwa’s village accompanied by her aunts, her long-time instructors on Lemba culture. After Primrose was given traditional gifts of a winnowing basket and broom, they were led to a special hut where she accepted another gift — a clay pot. Before eating, drinking, and celebrating, the unveiling ceremony sealed the marriage. After a traditional unveiling gift given by the groom and his family — a mortar and pestle — Tapiwa lifted Primrose’s veil, which was torn in half, with one piece given to Tapiwa’s uncle and the other half to one of Primrose’s aunts.

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Weddings after conversions

Several stories in the collection describe Jewish weddings of couples who were married previously in ceremonies that were locally sanctioned, but were not conducted according to Jewish law. In isolated, emerging, and returning communities, newly converted couples, most of whom practiced Judaism for years, have taken advantage of the presence of rabbis of the *beit din* (rabbinical court) to wed in joyful Jewish ceremonies.

In 2016 I had the honor of attending the wedding of a dozen couples in **Madagascar** after conversion of more than a hundred people by a multi-national delegation of rabbis organized by Kulanu, culminating years of Jewish learning by the community. Preceded by an adorable procession of singing children, the couples participated in traditional Sephardic

rituals conducted by the rabbis under makeshift chuppahs in a hotel in the capital. All the brides were beautifully dressed in white, and one of them, Ahava, summarized the occasion: “My husband and I thank Hashem for this ability to marry again and to be able to pray as Jews.”

Kulanu vice-president Bonita Sussman and her husband Rabbi Gerald Sussman organized a *beit din* for conversion, the first ever in **Nicaragua**, followed by three weddings in 2012. “So we had our second marriage ceremony in the presence of not one, but three rabbis!” wrote Veronica Preiss, one of the brides who had married her



Ahava and Eli of Madagascar wed under the chuppah in 2016. Photo by Barbara Vinick.



In Italy in 2014, Rabbi Barbara recites the family unity blessing as the mothers bind the hands of the couple with a gold cord. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Barbara Aiello.

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husband Kurt in a civil ceremony three years before. The Sussmans returned to Nicaragua for more conversions in 2014 and 2017 with a beit din of rabbis who then officiated at twenty-two weddings.

Jacob Steinberg wrote about his friends Betsy and Leendert Duijm, members of the small struggling Jewish community of **Suriname**, who married Jewishly fifty years after their civil union. The parents of six, grandparents of fourteen, and great-grandparents of five took the opportunity when in 2009 Rabbi Chaim Beliak from California, USA came to teach religious classes and conduct services — the first time in many decades that a rabbi had resided in the community for more than a few days. The wedding was celebrated under a chuppah in their backyard, witnessed by more than a hundred guests.

In 2014, Yehuda Kimani, a leader of the small **Kasuku Jewish** community in the highlands of **Kenya**, made the journey to Uganda with

his parents and nine siblings. There, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu of the well-established Abayudaya community converted the family and three others, after which he married Yehuda's parents, Rut and Yosef, a founder of the Kenyan community. "It was a great and blessed day for my parents . . . the first Jewish wedding of the Kasuku community . . . Everyone was full of happiness."

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, the only woman rabbi in **Italy**, serves Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, The Eternal Light of the South, the first active synagogue in Calabria in 500 years. She describes wedding customs of Italian *anusim* (people with long-hidden Jewish roots), including the *coperta*, a beautifully crocheted heirloom bedspread held over the heads of the wedding couple by four family members. Rabbi Barbara wrote, "Brides and grooms often tie a small sack of earth to each of the front poles of the chuppah, earth from their respective family homes, or from the villages where they or their ancestors were

born. This *anusim* tradition celebrates the earth which nurtures their Jewish roots that, regardless of difficulty, never die." At the end of the wedding ceremony, their mothers bind the hands of the couple with a gold cord, signifying family unity.

This is only a small sampling of the inspirational, informational, and eye-opening stories we collected. We extend our grateful thanks to authors who graciously shared a wealth of personal recollections, necessarily much abridged here. *



Rut and Yoseph from Kenya stand under the chuppah in Uganda with Rabbi Gerson Sizomu in 2015. Photo provided by Yehuda Kimani.

Condolences from Around the World



Harriet Bograd touched so many lives. This is just a small sampling of the outpouring of love we received in emails and during the Kulanu online memorial service. We wish we could have printed them all; some of these have been edited for brevity. Each condolence and memory is evidence of the impact of Harriet's leadership, commitment, and compassion. Magnolia images are included here because they were Harriet's favorite tree. Leaving stones at a grave is an ancient Jewish tradition.

We are thankful for Mama Harriet's efforts and the helping hand she extended to the Nangolo community. I wish Harriet was alive to see how she has changed the lives of the Jewish people of Nangolo. *Jacob Mulabi, Uganda*

I was involved with the Masorti Olami movement and determined to strengthen the connection between the Abayudaya and Israel. Harriet was always eager to talk with me and I always came away from our conversations clearer and with a new perspective. I respected her insistence on transparency, which was the main requirement for anyone receiving funds from Kulanu. Her qualities of love, dedication, passion, and commitment will always stand out in my mind when I think about her. *Judy Gray, Kibbutz Hannaton, Israel*

We do not have enough words to explain the kindness, love, and great care Harriet has always rendered to us! We loved you so much, Mama Harriet. We shall always love you for your legacy, support, and beautiful memories you have

left with us. May Harriet's memories be a blessing. *Koki of Hadassah Primary School in Uganda*

We have heard with deep sorrow the death of our grandma, Momma, mentor, and support of the Jewish women of Uganda and the whole Abayudaya community. We cannot forget her for the tremendous work she has been doing. We shall always miss you, Momma Harriet. *Simcha Katalima and Abayudaya Women Association, Uganda*

Please accept my condolences and remember that even though Harriet was not here as long as she should have been, Harriet Bograd influenced and changed a lot of lives. *Belayneh Tazebku, Director of Brit Olam Beta Israel community synagogue in Kechene, Ethiopia*

Harriet was a close friend and role model. For more than 20 years we shared family milestones and experiences, including a memorable stay in Uganda. I miss her deeply. *Barbara Vinick, Kulanu Board Member*

As the president of Kulanu, Harriet did a great job for emerging communities throughout the world. On a personal level, Kulanu enabled me to form friendships with people around the globe. Harriet's achievements as Kulanu president remain a living testimony of the greatness

of her soul. *Cornet Alexandre Zouko, Côte d'Ivoire*

We have learned so much from Harriet Bograd. Our community, Mishkan Mé'ir, will never forget everything she has done for us and for all the Jewish communities around the world. She will be fondly remembered and greatly missed. *Touv'iah Méir of Madagascar*

We can't stop crying knowing how much she has been with us, supported us, and given us the hope that Judaism will survive in Nigeria and all over Africa. We will always have her in our minds and in our daily prayers. Mama Harriet has taught me a lot to share, support, and encourage Jewish children around Nigeria. Mama Harriet, the Jews of Nigeria will never forget you. *Moshe Hezekiah, leader of Abuja Jewish Community of Nigeria, Tikvat Yisrael Synagogue*

Harriet Bograd was a precious woman. She is the one who believed in me, and trusted and supported my work for redemption for Pakistan. Please accept our deepest condolences from my family and from the Noahide community in Pakistan. We will never forget her. *Mrs. Farah Sajid, Pakistan*

On several occasions when we spoke about the challenges of our little B'nei Anusim congregation here in Italy, Harriet's encouragement and down-to-earth problem-solving ability offered us hope and encouragement. She often

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Condolences, continued from previous page

reminded me that “nothing happens in the comfort zone,” and that challenges make us grow. Thanks to Harriet we have been able to grow. *Rabbi Barbara Aiello of Italy, Kulanu board member*

The irony of losing two queens on the same day. Harriet was our queen. Harriet’s entire life was a clarion call for inclusion and the celebration of diversity. Mama Harriet, as she was known in Africa, was an unassuming woman with GLOBAL impact. She created Jewish generations. *David Breakstone of Israel, Kulanu board member*

Harriet brought light where there was no light. We shall never forget Harriet, a great *tzadikah* of our time. *Amir Yehudah Kahalani, Tanzania*

I knew Harriet through West End Synagogue. Once you met Harriet you never forgot her. She truly welcomed the stranger, speaking to any new person that entered our doors, as well as reaching out to people that she knew or suspected were dealing with challenges in their life. I miss her presence, her intelligence, her love, and her beautiful clothing that she wore from the communities she worked with. She had a life well lived and will be missed in so many ways. *Michele Becker*

Harriet was a great friend, mentor, and inspiration. I am so grateful to have been blessed to learn from her. She has been such a great support in my journey as a Jew and has supported the community in Zimbabwe. Words cannot begin to express my gratitude. Harriet was an amazing woman, and words cannot fully capture the

impression she left in my life. *Simcha Chaya from Zimbabwe, now living in Israel*

Who could compare to you, Harriet? Fiercely, persistently intelligent in responding to injustice, swift and forceful at the forefront of hope with your bold answers and unyielding compassion. You’ve left us knowing so much remains unfinished and that, despite the enormity of the task, there is so much more each of us can do. With love, and in sorrow, grateful that your life revealed so much to us all. *Rabbi Larry Pinsker, Baltimore*

Sending so much gratitude on behalf of Adat Israel Guatemala who loved and appreciated Harriet and her belief in our congregation, in our community, and in our authenticity. Her trust in me and Adat Israel led to us having student-rabbis come to Guatemala, making a film about Adat Israel, bringing our president to her first WUPJ conference, and helping our first Guatemalan rabbinical student, Rebecca Orantes. Harriet was kind and generous and always had a listening ear for whatever struggles we had along with whatever “crazy” idea or vision for Adat Israel I had. *Rabbi Elyse Goldstein*

I had the great fortune of meeting with Harriet prior to setting out on my current project. She connected me with Jewish communities throughout Africa and has inspired me to continue working on various development projects abroad. Her knowledge, encouragement, and kindness will never be forgotten. Thank you, Harriet,

for all you have done for global Jewry and to make the world a more friendly, connected place. *Adin Becker of Oregon, currently in Africa*

My first memory of Harriet is my job interview for Kulanu in 2020. While I don’t remember the specifics of the interview, I do remember her words providing a confidence and happiness I never felt before. Her resilience, kindness, and care transferred to everyone around her. *Keshi Taryan-Kigel, New York*

Harriett was an exceptional person and a leader. On behalf of the Suriname Jewish community, we are grateful for all the support she has given the community over the years and to the Kulanu board and staff. *Jacob Steinberg*

Harriet was the very essence of love, of compassion, of duty, a human being of unique qualities. She was always in a hurry to do the most good. She understood people. She cared about people. Each of us is literally a tribute to her enormous capacity to love. *Serge Etele, Cameroon*

This will be a challenging transition. When it’s hard, please remember why we do this. As we continue forward, I know we will all find ourselves asking WWHD?: What Would Harriet Do? *Laura Wetzler **



“Harriet Believed in *All of Us*”

By Ken Klein

My wife Harriet Bograd was one of life’s great enthusiasts — she loved and was passionate about many things. She loved me, she loved our two daughters Margie and Sarah, she loved our son-in-law Jeremy and our two grandchildren Uriel and Razel, she loved her parents, her siblings, and our large extended family of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. She loved our Jewish community at West End Synagogue in Manhattan. And for over two decades, Harriet loved being a part of and eventually the president of Kulanu.

We first became involved with Kulanu in the summer of 2001. Margie had just graduated from college, and after spending one summer each in India and South America, she was looking for a way to volunteer in Africa. That’s when we first learned about Kulanu from our dear friend, the late Rabbi Moshe Cotel — then on Kulanu’s board — about a little Jewish community in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana. So, off Margie went to this little regional center in the Western North Region of Ghana, a half-day’s bus journey from the capital of Accra, and several hours from Kumasi, the nearest city. At this point, Harriet’s and my memory diverges from Margie’s about what happened next.



Harriet and Ken visiting the community farm in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, 2004.

I remember Margie feeling that she would certainly be lonely and that a visit from Mom and Dad would certainly be appreciated. Margie remembers telling us that we’d be welcome if we felt like visiting. In any case, Harriet and I soon found ourselves sleeping on a bed in this little rural village. (It wasn’t until

later that we learned that our hosts had given us their own bed so we would be more comfortable while they themselves were sleeping on the floor.)

In many ways, our visit was the beginning of Harriet’s love affair with Kulanu. While I played with the children — demonstrating juggling, and balancing branches on my nose — and Margie taught Hebrew songs and stories, Harriet was a whirlwind. She met separately with the women and men to discuss economic development, organized a women’s group, opened a community bank account, and helped write by-laws and a certificate of incorporation for the community’s governance. Coming from the USA, ensuring the presence of women in decision-making may not have seemed very radical. But, at least in those days, the women in the community were not used to making their voices heard in the presence of men. Of course, with the conspicuous exception of Harriet, Yale Law School in the mid-1960s wasn’t very different. (And Margie, Harriet, and I performing “Stand by Me” at the local evangelical Christian college’s talent show is a story for another time.)

Before we left, Harriet and I visited a local outdoor market and Harriet was carried away



Ken and Harriet with their grandchildren, Razel and Uriel. Photo by Leise Jones Photography, 2020.

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by the richness of the colors and patterns of the African fabrics on display. Being Harriet, she got the idea that local artisans could turn the fabrics into gorgeous challah covers saying “Shabbat” in Hebrew. She realized that simultaneously we could economically benefit this little known Jewish community, publicize their existence to the rest of the global Jewish world, and enable people to purchase beautiful and meaningful gifts — and that’s exactly what happened.

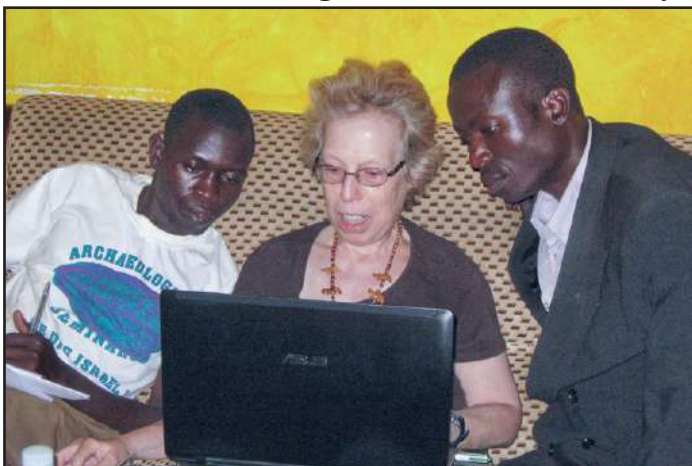
In the years that followed, Margie’s interests turned more to social justice issues within the USA, but Harriet was hooked. It wasn’t long before the study in our apartment became Kulanu’s permanent office (as it still is today). Harriet was thrilled to discover that the skills she developed (or, arguably, was born with) over a lifetime of working with nonprofits could be used to help “isolated, returning, and emerging” Jewish groups all over the world.

I know that many concerns inevitably arise when wealthier, mainly white, more entrenched communities interact with other cultures. Not to minimize those issues, but for the most part these potential problems never affected Harriet’s relations with Kulanu communities. And I think the reason was because Harriet deeply felt that each new group was bringing something of great value to Judaism. For her, Kulanu meant communities enriching each other; it was always

a two-way street. She loved that the harmonies she first heard in a synagogue in Nabogoya Hill, Uganda are now heard weekly at our synagogue on the west side of Manhattan (even if not sung as beautifully).

Harriet loved the people she worked with at Kulanu. She continually relied on their wisdom, experience, and dedication to the Jewish people. At first, several of Harriet’s predecessors served as mentors and later became her partners in steering Kulanu’s ongoing mission. I’m afraid that if I single out people here I’ll leave somebody out, but of the “old guard” I have to name Jack Zeller, Aron and Karen Primack, Bonita Sussman, Barbara Vinick, and Sandy Leeder, z”l. I remember the many times each of them conferred with Harriet at some unholy hour in the middle of the night, strategizing about some latest Kulanu problem, commiserating when some project had stalled, or kvelling over some latest triumph. All of them and their families became lifelong friends, and the same is also true of the many Kulanu board members and volunteers that Harriet worked with through the years.

Harriet loved to solve problems. While my juggling skills never got beyond three balls at a time, Harriet could figuratively keep an almost unlimited number of balls in the air at once. While I was often asking, “Are we talking



Harriet sharing her computer and program skills in Namutumba, Uganda, 2011.



Kulanu Board of Directors Retreat, September 2009. Front row: Karen Primack and Jack Zeller, Kulanu founders. Back (left to right) Jacob Steinberg, Aron Primack (founder), Harriet, Judy Manelis, Barbara Vinick, Andria Spindel.

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now about Nigeria, Zimbabwe, or Uganda?” Harriet was simultaneously juggling in her head the problems facing multiple Kulanu communities. This involved the interplay of who needed what, what resources did the community already have, who had the skills to help, who within the community could be counted on to provide leadership, and what material and human help could Kulanu provide. On top of this, Harriet had to manage fragile egos (both domestic and foreign), different cultural norms (apparently, humans aren’t genetically disposed to double-entry bookkeeping), and legal and moral responsibility to Kulanu’s donors. Yikes! But to Harriet these weren’t a bunch of insurmountable obstacles. They were problems to be worked out. So she consulted all the players, she respectfully listened to everyone, assumed everybody was acting with goodwill, sought additional expertise when she needed it — and almost invariably she came up with an imperfect solution that more or less worked. “Getting things to work” gave Harriet great pleasure and she was incredibly good at it.

Harriet loved the communities Kulanu works with. She loved the enthusiasm and eagerness with which they embraced Judaism. She loved the jubilant way they sang traditional prayers, the dancing on holidays, the sight of little children reading Hebrew. Harriet got to be present for several conversion ceremonies where the

already-married, newly Jewish partners then got to have Jewish weddings. These were certainly Kulanu highpoints for her which she loved replaying in her mind.

I think it’s fair to say that the Abayudaya community in Uganda (now spread out over seven villages) had a special place in Harriet’s heart. Harriet visited Uganda five times — three times with me — and was always treated as halfway between royalty and a long-lost cousin. She absolutely loved being “Mama Harriet.” Among other things, Kulanu helped start nonsectarian schools for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim children and continues to provide education for deaf Abayudaya children, helped start a fair-trade coffee co-op for regional growers, and has helped fund water and agricultural projects. We also watched with awe as Gershom Sizomu grew from an inspiring rabbinical student to an inspiring rabbi and teacher, not just for the Abayudaya, but for much of East Africa as well. (As far as I can tell, Rabbi Gershom was already inspiring when he was discovered by Jeff Summit of Tufts University while praying in a synagogue in Nairobi, Kenya in the mid-1990s.)

One of the other gifts that Kulanu brought to our family is Shoshana Nambi and her daughter Emunah. Harriet first met Shoshana in 2005 in Uganda when Shoshana was an unbelievably



At the Manhattan Jewish Community Center with Rabbi Gershom Sizomu of Uganda (standing, third from left), 2009.



Harriet, Ken, and Margie meet with community leaders in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, 2004.

continued on next page

poised teenager and already a leader of the upcoming younger generation of Abayudaya. All these years later, Shoshana is now in her penultimate (next to last) year at Hebrew Union College on her way to becoming a Reform rabbi. So, for the fourth year now, Shoshana and 13-year-old Emunah have been living with us in the part of our apartment formerly occupied by Margie and Sarah. What a blessing this has been! All of us had dinner together almost every night, and every Friday evening, after Harriet and I recited by phone the traditional blessing of our own daughters before Shabbat, we got to bless Shoshana, and she got to bless Emunah. (At the moment, Emunah is roughly as tall as me, but our heights seem to be moving in different directions.) And now, in the last month, our household has been joined by Sarah Nabagala, Shoshana's best friend from childhood who is in the United States studying for a Master's degree in Jewish education at Hebrew Union College. I know how much Harriet loved Shoshana and Emunah, and that she hoped Sarah would decide to join us. So, every day I have a reminder — as if I needed one — of how much Kulanu has enriched my life.

Harriet loved developing new leaders. She loved encouraging people to explore new possibilities for their communities, to imagine themselves accomplishing more than they thought



Harriet convenes a meeting, perhaps setting up a spreadsheet on the laptop, with the women of Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, 2004.

possible. She knew why a person was special, often before they did. And when folks got stuck, Harriet was always there with advice, guidance, and empathy.

About four years ago, David Tobis (a wonderful friend to Kulanu and particularly to the Igbo Jewish community in Nigeria) suggested to Harriet that it was time for her to consider a transition plan for the hopefully distant time when she would no longer be able to lead Kulanu. Harriet knew that David was right and systematically began to delegate the dozens of things she used to take care of by herself. She wrote numerous manuals teaching Kulanu staff and volunteers how things were to be done.

Sadly, the time for transition came much too soon. But remarkably, over the past summer that Harriet spent in the hospital, Kulanu not only survived, it flourished. Everyone pitched in, but the largest share of the credit goes to Molly Levine and Jo Ann Friedman. Harriet was so proud of them and so grateful for the love they brought to this work! Even while her health was declining, Harriet had a great sense of peace, knowing that the organization she was so devoted to was in good hands and would only go from strength to strength.

For my part, it's still hard for me to believe that Harriet is gone. I know I feel blessed for our more than 45 years of married life together. And as I go through my day, I'm constantly seeing things that I intend to share with her, and in many ways I carry her with me and we talk all about it.

I think that one of the things that made Harriet such an extraordinary leader for Kulanu was that she really believed in *all of us*: in our power to work together, to learn from each other, for ordinary people to be astonishing, and for the love we have for each other to make our world a better place. I know that Kulanu will carry Harriet's spirit forward. *

Kulanu Notes

New Roles At Kulanu

As we continue our mission in Harriet's memory, Kulanu's governance committee met and made recommendations to fill the Kulanu board offices. Bonita Nathan Sussman (pictured with Harriet) now holds the role of president with Rabbi Barbara Aiello as vice president. The titles and areas of specialization of the management team were also updated. Molly Levine now serves as the executive director and Jo Ann Friedman as the director of operations.

In remembering Harriet and the legacy she has left, President Boni Sussman shared these words at Harriet's funeral:

Harriet was a non-conformist, a mitzvah girl with a gigantic heart and a life filled with acts of loving-kindness. She was an educated Jew, an original, and a great connector. She was a "wild woman," to use an old phrase, and knew no limitations. Harriet, early on before anyone knew about computers, was building them with used parts to get to Uganda. She was thrifty in that way and in many other ways too.

Harriet and I spent hours and hours planning Kulanu development, directions, and projects, discussing controversies, and figuring out details mixed in with personal life stories. We had our differences in many ways in outlooks, yet we still would periodically tell each other, "I love you."

Rabbi Heschel taught: There are three ways to mourn. The first is to cry. The second is to grow silent. The third is to transform sorrow into song. Harriet taught me how to dance with my fingers even in my wheelchair. She is dancing with the angels.



Photo by Chaya Weinstein

Sukkot Celebrations In Pakistan



Two communities in Pakistan (Karachi and Lahore) celebrated Sukkot with the help of a Kulanu mini-grant. The funding allowed for the festival celebrations in both cities. The community leader, Yuosaf, shared, "It's not just money for us, but the love of Kulanu for us. You have given us courage."

Rosh Hashanah Funding

This year Kulanu sent mini-grant funding to six partner communities to assist with Rosh Hashanah celebrations. The communities in Cameroon, El Salvador (pictured), India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Uganda were able to host community gatherings for the Jewish New Year, thanks to this support.



continued on next page

Notes: continued from previous page

Online Programming

Kulanu held a special holiday Zoom featuring two artists from Kulanu partner communities: author Shoshana Nambi from Uganda and singer David Baliaba from Cameroon. Shoshana read an excerpt from her book, *The Very Best Sukkah: A Story from Uganda*. David sang and shared about his music during the hour-long event. This (along with audience questions) can be viewed online at kulanu.org/recorded-sessions.



New Kulanu Video



Our new 7.5 minute video, which was released in the spring, has close to 500 views on YouTube. The overview video shares the mission of Kulanu and the impact the organization is making in partner communities around the world. You can watch the video on YouTube here: bit.ly/KulanuVideo.

The Bezda Gelfand Project

The Bezda Gelfand project in Zimbabwe, which started in July this year, is an expansion of the 1-hectare irrigated plot in the Bedza community, a rural area south of the capital of Harare. The initial one-hectare drip-irrigated agricultural plot was installed with Kulanu funding. The Bedza Gelfand project is an expansion of that project, bringing the total from 1 hectare to 5 hectares. This new project involves 3 components: the building of a giant 519,000 liter tank, the drilling of 3 boreholes with solar pumping equipment, and the installation of hose reel overhead irrigation. A chicken house will also be built. This project was facilitated by Mark Gelfand and Kulanu; it is designed to make food crop production a year-round endeavor and will bring food security to both the Bedza community and the Harare Lemba Synagogue community, as well as make it possible for the Harare Lemba Synagogue to get much-needed revenue for its operations. *



First-ever Certificate of Sephardic Ancestry

Edited by Judi Kloper, from a 9/18/2022 Jerusalem Post article by Zvika Klein

For the first time ever, the tens of millions of descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities, whose ancestors were forcibly converted from the 14th Century onwards, can apply for and receive a Certificate of Sephardic Ancestry. Recent academic and genetic research has demonstrated that as many as 200 million people, largely in Latin and North America and in Europe, have “significant Jewish ancestry” dating back to the time of the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal.

The historic initiative was launched by the American Sephardic Federation’s Institute of Jewish Experience, *Reconectar* (an organization dedicated to helping the descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities reconnect with the Jewish people), and Genie Milgrom. Genie is an award-winning author, researcher, and genealogist who was able to fully document her unbroken maternal lineage 22 generations going back as far as 1405 to pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal. She is also a former board member of Kulanu and Kulanu’s Anusim coordinator.



Founders of the Sephardic Ancestry Certification program, 2022: Genie Milgrom, (left); Ashley Perry (center); and Drora Arussy (right). Photo by Avrom Arie.

Genie is leading work to digitize Inquisition records that provide an unprecedented amount of genealogical information for those who seek to discover their possible Jewish roots. This and a vast array of other information on the certification website will help the descendants — otherwise known as Anusim, Marranos, Conversos, or Crypto-Jews — discover their heritage.

“The Certificate of Sephardic Ancestry is historic for so many around the world, especially in Latin and North America, who yearn to connect with their past and until now have had no way to accomplish this,” Milgrom said. “The certification, in connection with my collection of genealogy tools specifically for those with Crypto-Jewish and Sephardic lineages, will be on the website and will allow them to search for their own past and empower them in the process.”

The process for certification begins with filling out a relatively short questionnaire about a person’s background, clues about their Jewish heritage (such as customs, family trees, or items with a Jewish connection), and their reasons for believing they have Sephardic ancestry. This information will then be assessed by a team of experts and researchers who will determine if the applicant has enough information to be awarded the certificate. While the certificate will have no legal status, it is something that a growing number of those with Jewish ancestry have suggested would be an enormous sense of pride and identity for them.

“One’s identity is based on their past, present, and what one wants for the future. With the Certificate of Sephardic Ancestry, we are helping verify their past to create a stronger sense of self and identity,” said Dr. Drora Arussy, Senior Director of the ASF’s Institute of Jewish Experience. “At the Institute for Jewish Experience, our goal is to educate the world about the rich heritage, culture, and spirit of the Sephardic people. Together with Reconectar and Genie Milgrom, we hope to help people find their Sephardic roots and learn more about their heritage.”

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Ancestry: continued from previous page

Ashley Perry (Perez) is president of Reconectar, a former senior Israeli government advisor, and director of the Knesset Caucus for the Reconnection with the Descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Communities. He says, "We have witnessed in recent years, amongst those whose Jewish ancestors were forcibly converted [to Catholicism], an unprecedented interest in reconnecting with their heritage and learning more about their past. This is a paradigm-shaping moment in Jewish history because, for the first time, tens of millions of those whose ancestors were forcibly disconnected from the Jewish people have the tools to seek some type of reconnection. The certificate we are offering is a way to connect formally with their Jewish heritage and reconnect with their people."

Anyone can access and use the Genie Milgrom or American Sephardic Federation websites at no cost: www.geniemilgrom.com as well as <https://instituteofjewishexperience.org>. Genie's database includes more than a decade's worth of data on the genealogies of the Sefaradi families. For more information or questions, Genie can be contacted at hatu72@yahoo.com. *



Example of typical certificate issued after reviewing criteria verifying a Sephardic background. Photo courtesy Genie Milgrom.

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Kulanu ("All of Us") is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices which works with isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities around the globe, supporting them through networking, education, economic development projects, volunteer assignments, research, and publicity.

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Magazine Editor Judi Kloper

Editorial Team Barbara Vinick, Molly Levine,
Keshi Taryan-Kigel, Lisa Yagoda

Layout and Photography Editor Lisa Yagoda



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Upcoming Kulanu Events

Sub-Saharan African Jewish Conference



In December 2022, Kulanu is bringing 50 men and women — Jewish leaders from 10 African partner communities — together for the first time. This will provide an opportunity to meet each other, spend Shabbat together, study Torah together, share resources, and problem solve. Renowned Jewish scholars will teach hands-on classes in Tahara (preparing a body for burial) as well as Shechita (kosher slaughter). There will be classes in philosophy, history, Jewish music, and discussions about Jewish communities around the world. We will be consecrating land for the building of a mikvah and a new synagogue. Tefillin will be distributed and the community will celebrate the gift of a Torah.

It is sure to be a transformative experience for all.

Kulanu is raising funds to pay for attendees' travel to Côte d'Ivoire and other expenses.

Please join us by helping to sponsor the conference: bit.ly/DonateSAJC

Save the Date:

March 12, 2023 in New York City!

Kulanu will be partnering with the ASF Institute of Jewish Experience for a spring conference in NYC. Keep an eye on our website for more information.



We are always adding more events, both in-person and virtual. If you'd like to be notified, use our online contact form to get added to our mailing list:

kulanu.org/contact