



*Supporting Isolated, Emerging & Returning  
Jewish Communities around the Globe*

### **Harriet Bograd**

Harriet Bograd, a civil rights activist, nonprofit pioneer, and president of Kulanu since 2008, died on September 17, 2022 at a hospital in New York City.

A self-described "professional volunteer," Mrs. Bograd was most known for her work in Kulanu, a nonprofit organization supporting emerging, isolated, and returning Jewish communities worldwide. Starting as a volunteer, she quickly became treasurer in 2004 and then president in 2008. Under Mrs. Bograd's leadership, Kulanu expanded its presence to include growing Jewish communities in 33 countries, including Uganda, Nicaragua, Ghana, India, Brazil, Italy, Pakistan and Indonesia.

Mrs. Bograd was also known for her impact on the wider nonprofit field. As a consultant to nonprofit leaders and regulators in the 1990s, Mrs. Bograd was a champion for greater nonprofit financial accountability. A keen early adopter of internet technology, she pushed for all 990 forms, in which nonprofits submit their donor and spending information, to be freely available online. Through her advocacy and by founding a major nonprofit listserv, Mrs. Bograd was able to make her vision into an industry standard, all while the internet was in its early stages.

In 1983, Mrs. Bograd helped found the Abraham Joshua Heschel School, a pluralistic and experimental day school that has since become a fixture of the New York Jewish world. According to her husband Ken, Mrs. Bograd made it her mission to bring other parents on board when the school was still an idea, inviting every single prospective family over for dinner at her Manhattan apartment. She would go on to serve it in various leadership positions for ten years.

In 1997, Mrs. Bograd was diagnosed with cancer, and given only a few months to live. With luck and persistence, she managed to survive, and decided to spend the rest of her life working only on things she loved. From the date of the announcement in 1997 until her death in 2022, Mrs. Bograd kept a [blog](#) detailing her struggle to live and to live well.

In 2001, Mrs. Bograd learned about Kulanu, an organization that sought to support and publicize the existence of non-mainstream Jewish communities. She saw in Kulanu a means to forge a Jewish community that celebrates diversity, and a means to continue her civil rights work through advocacy and support for Jews of color. Kulanu, Mrs. Bograd believed, would serve invisible and excluded Jews, and expand the mainstream Jewish community's sense of what Jews are "supposed to look like."

She volunteered with the Jewish community of Ghana, helping them open a bank account and challah-cover store, which would become a primary income source for the community. She was quickly made a board member, and began to work in the Abayudaya community of Uganda, where she became known as "Mama Harriet." In Uganda, Mrs. Bograd helped establish the Hadassah Primary School, as well as raise funds for a school for deaf children. Mrs. Bograd would become treasurer and then president of the organization in 2008. Her tenure was marked by expansion of Kulanu's partner communities and donors, transformational agricultural and development projects in impoverished Jewish communities. In line with her vision for the nonprofit industry, Mrs. Bograd built Kulanu's organizational structure, financial accountability, and internet presence. She also championed internet use and education in Kulanu's partner communities as a means to escape poverty, acquire Jewish education, and connect with the mainstream Jewish world.

Mrs. Bograd was born in 1943 and grew up in a close-knit family in Patterson, New Jersey. She attended Bryn Mawr College at the age of 16 and Yale Law School at 20, one of only 11 women in her class. Acting on deep-felt Torah and social-justice values, and personal experiences of inequality and discrimination as a woman, Mrs. Bograd became active in the civil rights movement. However, her status as a single woman in her 30s (until her marriage with Ken Klein in 1977) and her political activity made her a pariah in her relatively conservative Jewish community. Feeling unseen, she rarely went to synagogue for ten years, and held Passover Seders and Chanukah celebrations with a diverse group of mostly non-Jewish friends and civil rights comrades.

Mrs. Bograd 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 beloved grandchildren Uriel and Raziel.

"Mama Harriet's" family was much wider, however, covering everyone she worked with in her years of social justice and in Kulanu. She was known to host any Kulanu affiliate or guest in her Manhattan apartment without question, occasionally for years at a time. Her warm, caring, curious nature made everyone she met feel like close family. She, in turn, would often stress the human joy and nachas she would experience through her work, such as the time she experienced a group wedding of five Jewish families in Uganda. In a recent interview on the subject, Mrs. Bograd opined, "it's like we find relatives all over the world. We're in a time when people are lonely from COVID-19. I'm never alone, because I just have a sense of this whole network, of being in a worldwide caring community." Donations to Kulanu in Harriet's memory to help carry out Kulanu's work with Jewish communities around the world can be made at <https://kulanu.org/donate>.

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