

**Matthew Abrams**

Denver, CO

*George Washington High School***Fast Facts**

- I am a Captain of Extemporaneous Speaking for my school's Speech and Debate team. The National Speech and Debate Association ranks me as the top competitor in Colorado, and I have had success at prominent national-level tournaments, including championing Stanford.
- I publish book reviews about international relations and politics to make information more accessible to people in the debate community who do not have coaching.
- I am the Co-Chair of the Denver Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission.

Hi everyone, my name is Matt Abrams, and I'm from Denver, Colorado. I was raised in a conservative Jewish household, attending Ramah camps and a conservative shul. However, I am not sure that the conservative ideology best represents my personal beliefs, and there are parts of all the denominations that I attempt to incorporate into my Jewish life. I love being Jewish and especially connect with the Jewish community, ethics, spiritualism, and, of course, food. Academically, I'm most interested in politics, history, psychology, and math. I am working on a research project to assess how Russia's invasion is impacting Jewish life in Ukraine. I love keeping up with current news and am a big podcast fan. Reading and journaling are important ways for me to relax and reflect, and I try to find time to do them daily. I am never happier than on the tennis court for my school team. Racket sports, in general, excite me, and I can be slightly (very) competitive when I play pickleball or ping pong with my friends and siblings. I can't wait for the Fellowship to start!

**Simon Alpren**

Seattle, WA

*UPrep***Fast Facts**

- I love Mah Jong. I play with my grandma and lead a program that brings high school students to play Mah Jong at Senior homes.
- I created an underground choir club that meets in hidden places on our high school campus.
- I am an aspiring bossa nova guitarist.

Hello! I'm Simon. I live in Seattle. I spend a lot of my free time playing or listening to music. I've played the cello since fourth grade, and I also play guitar. Right now, I am listening to a lot of bossa nova, but I also enjoy blues, Chinese pop, Persian music, and classical. Aside from music, I like to spend my time watching movies and YouTube videos, reading, lifting weights, and going for walks. My mom is Chinese, and my dad is Jewish. My grandma introduced me to a world of hours-long Mah Jong sessions, Lunar New Year celebrations, and lazy Susan Chinese dinners. Today, I primarily engage with Chinese culture at school, where I attend Mandarin class and lead an Asian affinity group. I became more curious about my Jewish heritage during my high school years. Last summer, I went to Israel for the first time. Traveling to historical sites and museums strengthened my desire to learn more about Jewish history and religion. I can't wait to learn more about all aspects of Judaism this summer!



Jeremy Arking

Baltimore, MD

Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School

Fast Facts

- I help cultivate and maintain two gardens: one on my school grounds and one at a church in Baltimore city.
- I am deeply curious about scientific research and have had the pleasure of working as an intern analyzing RNA-seq data and developing an algorithm for clustering groups of genes co-expressed across 53 human tissues.
- I once forgot to bring shoes to a model UN conference, and spent the whole conference rocking brightly colored, mismatched socks.

Hello! I am Jeremy Arking. I have lived in the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland my whole life. I come from a Sephardic family, and I would describe the nature of my religious observance as most closely aligned with Orthodoxy, although it's not a perfect descriptor. I attend Beth Tfiloh high school, where I am the head of the Environmental club and the Socratic Dialogue club. Socratic Dialogue club is very similar to a debate club, with the distinction that we focus on asking questions rather than making assertions. In addition, I am a member of my school's varsity golf and soccer teams as well as the incoming captain of both the Mock Trial and Model UN teams. In my free time, I often find myself either reading or listening to music. While I enjoy reading fantasy and science fiction (Brandon Sanderson and Neal Stephenson are two of my favorites), I have recently taken an interest in reading about statistical learning and computer science. The music I listen to— and often sing along loudly with — ranges from classic rock to Irish folk music. One of my favorite times to listen to music is while baking, a hobby I

picked up during Covid. Although I love everything about the process, my favorite part is getting to share the finished result with my friends. We'll often eat pie while having deep political discussions, playing excessively complicated board games, or singing zemirot over the shabbat table.



Abel Bellows

Brooklyn, NY

Stuyvesant High School

Fast Facts

- I am very interested in the way that traditions stay alive and affect our modern lives. I knit, play the fiddle, and study *Nusach* (Jewish musical tunes) to be part of these important oral traditions.
- I love to write and especially enjoy analytical writing.
- You will often find me engaged in debate over an obscure topic.

Hello! I have lived in Brooklyn all my life and attend Stuyvesant High School. I am part of many unique Jewish communities including Altshul, an independent Trad-Egal minyan; and CBE, a large Park Slope synagogue. I love to have serious intellectual discussions on Stuy's parliamentary debate team, play Irish tunes on the fiddle, knit (only with wool!), read, and program interesting projects. I have a younger brother who is currently in middle school. I am fascinated by how ancient traditions have to evolve in order to have impact our lives. This is an interest that manifests in my obsession with Jewish learning. Currently, I am studying Nusach with my cantor to learn more about our vibrant musical tradition. My fascination with ancient traditions also includes my interest in fiddle and knitting. Like Judaism, these crafts use oral traditions to move through time. At school, I love math and science: I have taken every science class I could. I also love to discuss stories in my English class and just finished reading *The Amazing*

Adventures of Kavalier & Clay. I am on the costumes crew of the Junior SING! production and as I write this, I am really hoping we will beat the Senior's musical. I have a strong sense of humor and I value a community that makes me laugh. It is especially meaningful to me to be in an environment where people are excited by learning and ideas. I am so excited to learn with everyone this summer!



Shirelle Ben-Shahar

Cresskill, NJ

Cresskill High School

Fast Facts

- I am the editor in chief of my school's newspaper.
- I am the founder and president of The Great Ideas Club in which members examine seminal works from different cultures—books, short stories, films, plays, essays, and poems. Then, guided by presentations and Socratic discussions, we explore a particular idea that is central to the work, such as justice, friendship, and kindness.
- I have been a dancer throughout middle school and high school, and my favorite styles right now are hip hop and contemporary.

Hey everyone! My name is Shirelle Ben-Shahar. I currently live in Cresskill, New Jersey, but I was born in Israel and lived in Brooklyn for a few years. I am a middle child, sandwiched between two brothers and I have two dogs named Fluffy and Shushu as well as a cat named Martha. I love to dance, read, spend time with my friends, and watch rom coms (especially *La La Land*). While I enjoy most subjects in school, my top three are chemistry, English, and history. Editing for the school newspaper is one of my favorite things to do; I love the focus that it requires, as well as learning from what others write while becoming

a better writer myself. Ever since I was young, I knew I wanted to become a teacher; I'm not too sure about the age group, but I definitely want to teach English and history. I strongly believe that a good teacher can make even the most mundane subject interesting. In the future, I also want to travel and learn about different cultures and places. I am a babysitter, and the bedtime story ritual is always the best part of the night. This ritual inspired me to start the Tiny Tomes Project, where I get to go to different kindergartens and read the kids classic stories adapted for their age. While my immediate family lives in the United States, my extended family lives in Israel and, like everyone else, I am hoping for peace and quiet in the region. I can't wait to begin our fellowship and am excited to get to know everyone this summer!



Alma Bielenberg

Washington D.C.

Sidwell Friends School

Alma Bielenberg is a junior at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. She comes

from an interfaith family and attends the reform synagogue Temple Micah, where she teaches Sunday school. Since freshman year, Alma has played on Sidwell's Varsity Soccer and Varsity Crew teams. Sophomore year, she served on Sidwell's Honor Committee and currently heads the school's Sustainable Fashion Club. Alma enjoys backpacking, painting, reading, concerts, and fashion. Her favorite subjects are English and math. Alma looks forward to meeting and learning from the other fellows and the Bronfman staff this summer.



Danielle Boodman

San Diego, CA

Canyon Crest Academy

Fast Facts

2024 Bronfman Fellow Introductions

- I've spent the past eight summers living my best life at Camp Ramah in California -- my home away from home.
- Having participated in the IAC Eitanim entrepreneurship program since middle school, I was selected to be the Young Mentor for Eitanim in San Diego this year. Every Sunday I mentor Israeli and Jewish youth, helping them become more innovative and analytical individuals motivated to solve some of the world's most pressing issues through social entrepreneurship.
- I co-founded Justice League -- a volunteer program at my synagogue that engages B'nai Mitzvah students in tikkun olam. Through Justice League, teens are afforded the opportunity to pinpoint their passion and organize volunteer initiatives in their area of interest. Next year, we will (hopefully) be expanding Justice League to other synagogues in the SoCal area!

Hi everyone! My name is Danielle Boodman. I am a 16-year-old reform Jew from sunny San Diego. At my high school, Canyon Crest Academy, I spend my weekdays caught up in a whirlwind of activities. Let's just say, I'd be in shambles without my trusty planner. Between pole vault practice, calculus homework (oy), Future Problem Solvers competitions, student government meetings, and volunteer activities, I love the unique adventure each day brings. That being said, no day of mine is complete without listening to NPR's Up First podcast on my drive to school and completing the NYT Connections with my dad before I go to bed (let's just say we take it way too seriously). On weekends, I love enjoying the sunshine, going thrifting, hanging out with friends, and baking while listening to

Sammy Rae & The Friends. Jewish spaces are where I feel most at home. Whether it's assisting with the Sunday morning cooking classes at my religious school, attending Jewish social justice retreats, or even just hanging out at BBYO events, the Jewish community has always held a special place in my heart. When it comes to expressing and connecting to Judaism, I lean on advocacy, open discourse, and hours of introspection (some call it overthinking, I call letting my mind wander). I am passionate about helping people find their voice when it comes to speaking out against injustice. I can't wait to get to know all of you this summer and delve into some of Life's Big Questions!



Leo Lewittes Eigen

New York, NY
Ramaz School

Fast Facts

- I am a writer, particularly of plays. My works have been produced in New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. One script is being turned into a short film by a production company in the Bay Area. At school, I am co-editor-in-chief of the literary magazine.
- I'm an avid NBA fan. Since ninth grade, I've been conducting an independent research project on the history of player empowerment. So far, I've presented at Queens University Belfast and three other academic conferences.
- I spent last summer in Israel and interned at an international law firm. I researched citizenship law and drank a prodigious amount of iced coffee (the Israeli version).

Hello! My name is Leo Eigen, and I am from New York City. Having been born in Boston gives me the right to root for the Celtics, but I am a New Yorker at heart, which means that I walk everywhere and am no longer impressed by tall buildings. I am currently a student fellow for the Manhattan Borough President. It's interesting to be exposed to the inner workings of city government and to see how, to some, the great metropolis is viewed as one giant problem needing to be solved. I go to the Ramaz School, a modern Orthodox day school. I'm active in many clubs, including model congress, college bowl, and the newspaper, and I am one of the editors-in-chief of both the literary magazine and the Jewish studies publication. I've always dreaded the question of which subject is my favorite because I have a genuine love of learning and leave each class looking forward to the next (well, most of the time). When reading Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* recently, I came across a line that I found particularly thought-provoking: "The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear." Is that the only reason we learn? I come from an observant Jewish home, and I've also had the opportunity to experience Judaism in other settings. I spent ten summers at Camp Ramah and traveled to Israel with NCSY last year. I was also a teen fellow for the Shalom Hartman Institute in tenth grade. The program challenged me to consider the relationship between Israeli and diaspora Jews, a topic that has taken on new relevance recently. I enjoy playing basketball and my favorite movies are *Oppenheimer* and *Jerry Maguire*.

**Mila Einspruch**

Oakland, CA

*Head Royce School***Fast Facts**

- I spent last summer in Hsinchu, Taiwan, studying in a Mandarin intensive sponsored by the State Department.
- I run a math mentorship program called Girls x Math. Our goal is to build math confidence in young girls, so we create fun curriculum and pair STEM-inclined high school girls with 3rd and 4th grade girls. My favorite part is seeing girls run up to their mentors with big smiles and hugs!
- I have loved building robots since I was little, and I now compete on my school's VEX team. We won the California State Championships last weekend, and are headed to the World Championships next month.

Hi! I'm Mila, and I'm from Oakland, California. I live with my parents and two younger sisters. I also have a large extended family and 8 younger cousins who live close by. Academically, I enjoy thinking microscopically, whether that be digging into a math problem or reading closely. One of my favorite experiences from eleventh grade (so far) has been reading Genesis and Exodus as literary texts in English class. It was fun to think about these familiar stories from new, secular angles—this time taking into account socio-political factors and other ancient Near-Eastern cultural influences. During my free periods, I help out in third grade math classes. I enjoy kids' crazy energy and wacky outlooks, and I love that teaching forces me to think more deeply about even the most basic concepts.

In 9th and 10th grade, I was a madricha at my temple's religious school, and this year, I am a full-time third grade teacher. I am also part of my temple's Teen Leadership Council, where we plan sleepovers, shabbat dinners and movie nights. While most of my Jewish experiences revolve around the Reform temple that I have been a part of since preschool, I am also the president of my school's Jewish Affinity Group, and am currently organizing an all-school afikomen hunt for Passover. In my free time, I love to read, go for long drives with my sisters while blasting music, hang out with my friends, and cook (I especially love combining these two and having friends over for elaborate homemade dinners). I am beyond excited to be a Bronfman Fellow, and I cannot wait to meet you all!

open to hearing other opinions).

Hi there! I'm Elana and I'm from Northern New Jersey. I commute to high school in New York City at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School. I find the contrast between my quiet suburban home and the vastness of the city to be very fulfilling. I spend my train rides eating egg sandwiches, finishing my history homework, or talking to the person sitting next to me. Heschel is a pluralistic Jewish day school and in the past three years I've spent there, it's informed much of my perspective and become a place of such joy for me. I come from a traditional conservative family and love my synagogue, Shomrei Emunah, in Montclair. I love people; my life is enriched by those around me and I find myself connected to almost everyone I meet. When not chatting away, I enjoy reading, working on my (2023 state champion winning!!!!!!) Mock Trial team, and playing for my not-so-successful basketball team. My family is the most important thing to me. I have an older sister and a younger brother who are my best friends. I spend much of my summers with my grandparents and love them all very much. When not with my grandparents, I've spent the past summers at Ramah in the Rockies and on international travels in Asia and Africa with my family. I have terrible music taste and I promise I won't know whatever song you're playing. As a kid who grew up without a TV, I'll also miss most of your pop-cultural references. I'm so excited to join the Bronfman community and feel so blessed to be going to Israel this summer.



Elana Farbiarz

Glen Ridge, NJ
Abraham Joshua Heschel School

Fast Facts

- I'm a redheaded, lefty, Sephardic girl who wears Tefillin. What are the chances?
- I spend my summers backpacking in the Rocky mountains with my Jewish summer camp. Every morning, after a breakfast of (get ready for it...) dehydrated vegetable, we say *Shacharit* (morning prayers) in the absolute middle of nowhere - miles from roads - and those are some of my most treasured religious moments.
- I love studying Talmud with my family on Shabbat afternoons and arguing in my Talmud class. My favorite *Masechet* (Tractate) is *Nazir* and my favorite Aramaic term is *Kal VaChomer* (literally meaning lenient and strict), (but I'm

Judah Goren

New York, NY
Ethical Culture Fieldston School

Fast Facts

- John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* is my favorite album.



- I volunteer with an organization called Street Soccer USA that provides free soccer spaces and sessions to underprivileged communities.
- I am a member of the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America).

Hello, my name is Judah. I'm a proud New Yorker and a junior at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in the Bronx. I grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan before moving to Harlem/Washington Heights. Both of my parents are teachers; my dad teaches high school English and my mom teaches poetry at NYU. I have two brothers (24 and 23) who I look up to and who influence my life and interests considerably. I love music, both playing and listening, particularly jazz and hip-hop (I'm listening to Duke Ellington's *Money Jungle* as I write this). I play piano and drums in my school's jazz bands and play soccer on the varsity team. I'm a big Arsenal fan, a London-based soccer team if you aren't familiar.

Politics are also important to me, and I have worked on the campaigns of several political candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Jamaal Bowman, and Cori Bush. Being Jewish has always been an important part of my life, although I would definitely not call my family religious. We loosely observe the high holy days and I attended the Havurah school run by Jerry Raik. My Jewish experience has been largely influenced by grandfather, who proudly claims to be a direct descendent of Rashi. To him, community, justice, and empathy are key Jewish values, and he uses them as a moral framework to live his life by, more so than specific Talmudic laws. This has influenced my own view of Judaism and its place in my life.



Shalvah Lazarus

Washington D.C.
Charles E Smith Jewish Day School

Fast Facts

- My favorite course is currently Ecology and Climate Science, and I hope to major in something similar in college and pursue a career in environmental science and policy.
- I am enamored with Israeli music. My daily routine includes several doses of the Idan Raichel Project, Jasmin Moallem and Ishay Ribo.
- I often describe baseball as my real religion -- I've played obsessively since Little League in third grade on various travel teams, with boys and on special all-girls teams. I'm a pitcher, and I throw a four-seam fastball, a two-seam fastball and a curveball.

Hi!! My name is Shalvah. I self-identify as an athlete, a scholar, and a clown. My favorite things include playing evening baseball games under the moon, looking at a view after a hike, and celebrating Shabbat with close friends and family. My Jewish observance has fluctuated over the years, but I have consistently gone to pluralistic Jewish day schools and summer camp. I find a lot of peace in prayer and excitement in singing in Jewish spaces. I am a people person, but I am also a places person, meaning I define myself by the places I love. The place I currently reside is Washington, D.C, with my parents, younger brother Omri, and our two bunnies, Goat and Cat. Among the countless places of natural glamour that I admire are the woods of New England, the mountains of Colorado and the rivers of Alaska. I also grew up visiting Jerusalem almost every summer, and hope to live out at least some of my life in that magical

city. As a places person, I feel a great degree of loyalty and responsibility for the health of my hometown, Earth. The nature of my environmentalism (no pun intended) is inherently spiritual, for part of the reason I find the natural order of life so compelling as opposed to an industrialized world is that I find solace in the idea that life is not totally in human control.

I'm a traditional egalitarian Jew, and throughout my life, I've attended pluralistic day schools: JCDS from K-8, and now Gann Academy. I've gone to Camp Ramah in New England since I was 10 years old, and going there each summer has been the highlight of my years. At camp and year-round, I enjoy having deep and philosophical conversations about feelings or really anything. I can't wait to meet y'all!



Matan Lerner
Lexington, MA
Gann Academy

Fast Facts

- I love running Cross-Country, both competitively and for my mental health.
- I also enjoy learning and discussing philosophy and history. A class I loved this past year was Challenge of Democracy, where we studied ancient Roman history and used it as a lens through which to view our current political moment.
- I founded and run my school's polling club, where we work to collect data and analyze trends in my high school.

Hi! My name is Matan and I was raised in the historic and bustling metropolis of Lexington, MA. I love playing recreational soccer and competitive frisbee in my free time. I also adore watching rom-coms, Netflix dating shows, and sitcoms. I like exploring nature and going on hikes. Additionally, I have an unhealthy obsession with discovering loads of new music, as well as creating a rampant amount of Spotify playlists. Along with listening to music, I play guitar in my school's jazz and rock bands. At school, I'm a very active member of my school's hot sauce club, despite a fear of spice.



Aliza Lesser
Washington D.C.
Charles E Smith Jewish Day School

Fast Facts

- My mom inspired me to start learning *Daf Yomi* (learning a page of the Babylonian Talmud a day), and at this point, I have done so for three years. Learning the daf has connected me to new teachers and peers, including one of my best friends.
- Last year, while living in Israel, I started a program called Jerusalemites (or Yerushalmiot/Mukdasyat) to bring together Israeli and Palestinian teen girls living parallel lives in adjacent neighborhoods of Jerusalem. We got together to talk about our lives, cultures, and traditions, and held carnivals for kids in our different neighborhoods for everyone to have fun and see that we can work together.
- At age 7, I decided that I wanted to be a vegetarian, both because I didn't like the taste of meat, and because I didn't like the idea of eating animals. Being vegetarian has taught me how to cook for myself, and I am always looking to grow my culinary skills. My favorite cuisine to cook is Indian food.

2024 Bronfman Fellow Introductions

Hey! My name is Aliza Lesser. I identify as a Modern Orthodox Jew and am a proud resident of Washington, D.C. I currently attend Charles E Smith JDS in the DC area. I have spent many summers at Camp Stone, and spent my most recent summer participating in the Drisha High School Summer Program and working at Ramah Nyack. My adventures continued with a brief stint in Israel in 10th grade, where I gained valuable knowledge on Israeli culture and Hebrew slang. In my free time, I enjoy learning Daf Yomi, cooking for myself and others, hanging out with friends, and playing basketball. I love being outside, especially in the early morning. At school, I participate in Junior States of America, Athletic Training club, Leukemia Lymphoma Society fundraising team and love to help out with my minyan. Outside of school, I volunteer with Imadi, a local organization that helps kids with complex pediatric diagnoses. I also teach Hebrew school, with enthusiastic kids who love to teach me all the things I don't know about technology. My favorite things to learn include Arabic, absurd Talmudic stories, and current events. I have 3 younger siblings and I identify as an archetypal oldest sister. I can't wait to explore new opportunities in Judaism and make new connections!

- I have been learning how to play Bridge for a while now. every time I show up at the Bridge Club, I bring the average age down by a few decades!

Hi! My name is Nava Litt. I go to the Bronx High School of Science, a public high school in the Bronx, New York and I live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I have two younger siblings and, to my dismay, zero cats. I have grown up attending Anshei Chesed, a conservative synagogue in my neighborhood. In recent years, I have become increasingly involved with Kehilat and Machon Hadar, non-denominationally affiliated communities which are both dedicated to serious learning and prayer within an egalitarian setting. This has strengthened my moral and religious commitment to egalitarianism. In addition, I am a teen fellow at the Hartman Institute, I attended The Heschel School and have gone to Camp Yavneh for most of my life. I think it's so interesting how all three of those communities have totally different interpretations of what it means to be pluralistic. It has been one of the privileges of my life to grow up in New York City. Currently on my NYC bucket list: sneak into the Morgan Library, get all dressed up and going downtown to watch a case in one of the fancy courthouses, and take a ride on the Gondola over the East River. Definitely come visit me, but if you do, we'll probably end up getting lost and hanging out on the subway for two hours!



Nava Litt

New York, NY
Bronx High School of Science

Fast Facts

- I play the offensive and defensive lines on my school's Varsity Flag Football team. It's supposed to be a "non-contact sport" but I do my best to beat everyone up anyway.
- I love performing Shakespeare and I compete in the English Speaking Union Shakespeare Competition - this year I was a New York City Semifinalist!



Mayan Moses

Palo Alto, CA
Kehillah Jewish High School

Fast Facts

- This past year I was one of two Jewish Life Commissioners at my school and, with the help of a small student committee, we planned a total of 1065 minutes of schoolwide Jewish

2024 Bronfman Fellow Introductions

programming for every major holiday and a weekly Shabbat assembly.

- I have spent over 350 hours in community service. Every Sunday morning for the past two years, I've volunteered at a local children's science museum and zoo. I clean animal enclosures, co-lead flamingo feedings, make toys for the parrots and puzzles for the raccoons and meerkats, and make sure the free-roaming animals are safe. My favorite animal there is our New Caledonian giant gecko (but don't tell the peacock!).
- I love making and listening to music: I play piano and I sang in a choir for three years, but my greatest musical accomplishment is that I have 9,244 liked songs on Spotify (and counting!). I'm always looking for music recommendations!

Hi, I'm Mayan! I was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, but I've lived in Palo Alto, California for 15 years. My parents are both Jewish, but I come from a multicultural household: my dad is a Bene Israel Indian Jew raised Orthodox in Mumbai and Israel, while my American Ashkenazi mom was raised almost completely secular. None of us like to label our Jewish identity, but we belong to a Conservative synagogue—where I help teach kids to read Torah and lead services—and I normally tell people that I'm Conservative because it's easier. I've attended Camp Ramah Galim for the past two years, and this past summer, I had a (very) late bat mitzvah. I attend Kehillah Jewish High School, where I'm a Student Government leader and a member of the parliamentary debate team; I also co-lead our Moot Beit Din team and I'm a Stanford recreational fencing dropout.

I'm very interested in history. I love identifying and analyzing patterns and trends that span hundreds of years and seeing how historical beliefs, practices, and events affect our lives today. In a similar vein, I'm fascinated by the human-made systems and social constructs that govern our lives: money, land ownership, and race, to name a few. I think a lot about how these systems came to be and how they may change or disappear. In my free time, I like reading (*The Book Thief* is one of my favorite books), roller skating, watching and analyzing movies, spending time with friends, drawing, playing New York Times word games, and devising unnecessary systems to organize my life. I speak English, Hebrew, and Spanish, and I'm trying to learn Russian. My favorite food is potatoes (they're so versatile!) and I'm also a bit of a Ferrero Rocher maniac. I'm so excited to meet all of you!



Mussia Poltorak

Bergenfield, NJ

The Frisch School

Fast Facts

- I am the rising editor-in-chief of my school newspaper, *The Paw Print*.

Self-expression is a value of mine and I am grateful for the platform to share my opinions and engage in thoughtful discussions with both teachers and peers.

- I am writing a paper on prevailing gender norms during the Cold War era. My research is focused on how gender impacted the legal case against the Rosenberg as well as the reception to *The Bell Jar*; I am then tracing how public opinion of Ethel Rosenberg, Sylvia Plath, and her novel have evolved over time.

2024 Bronfman Fellow Introductions

- I sequence and analyze genes in the Duckweed plant through the Waksman Student Scholars Program under the supervision of Rutgers University. I am excited to publish my protein sequence to the NCBI database later this year.

Hey! My name is Mussia Poltorak and I attend The Frisch School in Paramus NJ. I've lived in all the tri-states: I was born in Brooklyn, NY, moved to New Haven, CT, when I was 9, and then to Passaic, NJ, when I was 12 (I have since moved within NJ, I'm practically a nomad). I grew up attending Chabad schools until I switched to a Modern Orthodox one in seventh grade. I have gone to almost every chabad camp under the sun, including in Mexico and in Utah, and also attended a pluralistic hiking and camping camp on the Appalachian trail. I spent this past summer living with a host family in Indonesia. I loved learning Indonesian in an immersive environment and exploring a different culture and religion—in fact, a favorite activity in my host family was exploring similarities and contrasts between Judaism, Islam, and Javanese/Indonesian culture. I enjoy spending time outdoors, whether it be intense hikes or strolls with friends. I especially like when I chance upon Little Free Libraries while on walks—scoring good finds is the best feeling! I love to read most anything and am always in search of book recommendations. Some of my favorites include *East of Eden*, *Illegal Travelers: an Ethnography of Borders*, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *A Secret History*, *A Primate's Memoir*, *Just Mercy*, and *The Warmth of Other Suns*. Another favorite of mine is sushi; in fact, I wrote my high school application essay about my obsession with it. Cherry blossom rolls, containing salmon, tuna, and avocado, are the absolute best.



Mateo Robinson

Los Angeles, CA

Shalhevet

Fast Facts

- I religiously listen to three new albums every day.
- I can competently play ten or so instruments.
- I am a certified river raft guide.

Hi! My name is Mateo and I'm from Los Angeles. I attend a Modern-Orthodox High School called Shalhevet which sharply contrasts with the Reform Judaism my family practices at home. My weekly free time is usually filled with three fixations of mine: surfing, cooking, and making music. All three of these passions allow my mind to enter a flow state which has become the main form of meditation in my life. I'll usually go surf early in the mornings before school or work, returning slightly damp, just in time to make my first period or clock in. I've been working at restaurants since I turned fourteen, where I started as a prep cook at a poke restaurant before recently changing jobs to work at an oyster bar. These jobs have allowed me to develop a true interest of mine: talking with strangers. In this past year or so, I've gone out of my way to have impactful conversations with as many new people as possible. Through these dialogues, I've learned a lot about myself, my surroundings, and my role in society. I hope I can share snippets of these conversations with all of you and get some input into understanding the situation we all find ourselves in.



Talia Roselaar

Appleton, WI
Appleton North High School

Fast Facts

- I love everything related to language, from subtleties in English accents to sentence structure in Spanish to syntax and symbolism in poetry to word games in my living room.
- I've performed twelve different roles in *The Nutcracker* from a ginger baby to the sugar plum fairy; I currently spend an average of ten hours each week in a sweaty basement balancing on my big toe and a few layers of satin and canvas.
- I am the concertmaster of the Fox Valley Symphony Youth Orchestra and I'm currently enjoying working on Bach's Chaconne individually.

Hi! My name is Talia Roselaar, and I'm from Appleton, Wisconsin. Growing up between classic Wisconsin farmland and a music conservatory downtown, I've achieved a perfect balance of fried cheese curds and fine arts. I adore literally dancing my way through life and creating the soundtrack myself, and I've done both for as long as I can remember. My love for theater also weaved itself into my Bat Mitzvah; my D'var Torah was composed primarily of musical theater song parodies. For me, the arts build and cross bridges between not only two people, two groups, but between any idea and understanding. Poetry does this in a distinct way, taking the mundane words and objects that walk us through each day and molding them into the shapes of abstract emotions. I lead my school's annual poetry showcase in hopes of expanding this concept. The seven years I spent in my bilingual elementary school, however, introduced to me the power of language and the idea of bridges. That immersion was an intersection of ideas at a young age, especially in

the somewhat homogenous town that is Appleton. As the only practicing Jew in my school, I sometimes envy the lush community of curious Jews and engaging perspectives that runs through big cities. In another sense, the local synagogue is a place of nostalgia and comfort for me precisely because of its small size and the subsequent significance granted to each person within the community. I am always eager to bridge familiarity with a pool of new perspectives.



Shayna Rudoren

Montclair, NJ
Montclair High School

Fast Facts

- For the past four years I have done the "Inktober" art challenge, where I make a drawing for each of October's 31 days in response to a one-word prompt like: "scurry" or "booger."
- I am currently illustrating a book of haikus.
- When I was 10 I "reviewed" *The Emoji Movie* for The New York Times.

Hey! I'm Shayna Rudoren and I'm an artist who helps design sets and works backstage for my school's theater program. I have spent the past two summers in pre-college art programs in NYC and Baltimore, and I have also made a short film for my town's film festival. My school has 2000 kids, but I'm in a small learning community called the Civics and Government Institute, where we create and debate mock legislation. I'm also co-president of the Jewish Student Union, and last spring, I helped lead a walkout to protest budget cuts in my school district (we won!). My family moved to Montclair, NJ, when my twin brother and I were 8, after living in Jerusalem for 4 years. Sadly, I didn't learn much Hebrew while I was there, so I started Duolingo during the pandemic and have a 987-day (and counting) streak. I am

an active member of a Reform synagogue, where I work as a madricha, and therefore have spent FAR too much time with 6th graders, and the v'ahavta. I am possibly the biggest user of the colon-parentheses smiley face :), and I also have a 200+ photo-series of "Faces in Reality." I love making/eating soup, banana bread, and any type of noodles. Some of my favorite TV shows and movies are Parks and Recreation, Fleabag, and Yesterday. Most mornings on my walk to school I listen to "The Daily" podcast (on 2x speed) and I love to play all the New York Times Games (particularly Connections and Flashback).

**Samantha Ryba**

Brooklyn, NY
Yeshivah of Flatbush High School

Fast Facts

- I love to write. I've been on the staff of my schools newspaper since I was a freshman and I do a lot of creative writing on my own. I even published a short story that currently has been read 40,000 times.
- I pay weekly visits to my community's senior center where I sing songs for Shabbat with other students. My favorite part is how excited the seniors get when they hear us singing their favorite song.
- I have a passion for improving fashion sustainability. In my free time I like to develop different methods to extending the life of my clothing.

Hi everyone! My name is Samantha and I'm a student at the Yeshivah of Flatbush High School in Brooklyn, New York. During my free time I like to crochet, watch movies, or crochet while watching a movie! Some of my favorites are *Lucy*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Princess*

Diaries. I also love to explore new languages. Since my family is Lebanese, I've been surrounded by various languages my entire life, including Arabic, Hebrew, French, and Spanish. I find all of them to be truly fascinating. I also enjoy reading. My current fixation is on historical fiction, although I'm open to reading any genre. As for my family, I am the youngest of three girls and my older sisters are my absolute best friends. We do everything together, from sharing clothes to traveling. I would describe myself as a Modern-Orthodox Jew although, technically, I am a Sephardic Jew. But that's a conversation for a different time! I deeply value Shabbat, learning Judaic studies and giving back to my community. I'm super excited to be a Bronfman Fellow this year and I can't wait to meet everyone!

**Nathan Sheinbein**

Tucson, AZ
University High School

Fast Facts

- Neither of my parents have red hair, but my younger brother and I are both gingers!
- I am an avid mountain biker, and recently came in second place overall in a statewide race series here in Arizona.
- Last summer I traveled to Costa Rica, where I stayed with a host family for 3 weeks through a program called AMIGOS. Not only did I learn more Spanish, but I also met incredible people and immersed myself in a new culture. Pura Vida!

Hi! My name is Nathan Sheinbein, and I am from Tucson, Arizona. I am a junior at University High School, which is a public magnet school in midtown Tucson. UHS shares a campus with Rincon, another public high school, making it a small, competitive school in a large urban setting. My favorite class, of course, is lunch. My second favorite is Spanish! I enjoy challenging myself, learning new things, and listening to

Spanish music. Outside of school, I love to stay active! You can find me at the local JCC working out or playing tennis with my younger brother, Oliver. I like to joke that I am his personal chauffeur, since I drive him to school and tennis practice every day. I also love to mountain bike, and I often spend weekends riding with my friends on our local trails. My favorite person to ride with is my dad, even if he can't quite keep up like he used to ;) In the past couple of summers, we have traveled all across North America, riding at incredible destinations! My favorite place to visit is Whistler, British Columbia, because of its unique trails and friendly wildlife. Last summer, I counted over 10 bears hanging out on the mountain! I was raised in a non-observant home, and I have not had a bar mitzvah. However, I enjoy celebrating holidays with my extended family, and most of my Jewish education has come from these experiences. Tucson has a small, tight-knit Jewish community, and I love being a part of it! At home, I spend my time drinking tea with my mom and eating banana bread. I also love hanging out with my two dogs, Ruby and Aspen. I am looking forward to this experience and cannot wait to meet you all!



Batya Sperling-Milner
Bronx, NY
SAR High School

Fast Facts

- I love sports, including track, basketball, tandem biking, and blind soccer. I'm actually really good at blind soccer but it checks out because I'm blind.
- I love all types of art, especially watercolor painting, sketching, and knitting.
- I run a blind mentorship program in NYC that aims to build a warm community of visually impaired students in the city. I wanted to call it The Blind Leading the Blind, but that got shut down.

Hi! My name is Batya, and I live in Riverdale, New York and attend SAR High School. I am the type of person who agonizes over seemingly trivial dilemmas, like whether or not my dog has a consciousness and what to write in this bio. Some of my favorite things to do include learning Talmud with my mom, reading fiction, and having intense conversations, especially if they happen outdoors. Some other things that I do include Model UN, track, Torah tutoring, and babysitting. I spent the first twelve years of my life in Washington, D.C. and feel deeply rooted in that community as well as my New York one. I truly can't wait for the amazing experiences we will have together this summer!



William Steen-Koppell
Phoenix, AZ
Arcadia High School

Fast Facts

- I live a bicoastal life with my dad living in New Jersey and my mom living in Arizona.
- I am deeply involved in the social, education, and governance activities of my temple.
- I am a diehard baseball enthusiast

Hello!

My name is William Steen-Koppell and I am from Phoenix, Arizona. While I am originally from Connecticut, my heart now lies completely on the west coast. I love using the good weather to hike, mountain bike, play tennis with friends, and more for almost every season of the year. I especially love the year-round baseball culture of Arizona. I play on my high school team and hold season tickets for the Arizona Diamondbacks. However, my loyalty belongs to the New York Yankees as my family is from the Bronx.

Intellectually, I am drawn to history more than anything. I love discussing American history during debates that often extend after the bell

rings and into the halls. Evaluating the merits of opposing and similar perspectives while "respectfully disagreeing" is interesting, stimulating, and fun. Before discussing the ethics of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, however, I slowly digest the findings of Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz in math class. My much more mellow self thoroughly enjoys having "aha!" moments throughout math class while thinking "How on earth did they figure that out?!" I have one sister who is a sophomore in college and both of my parents are college professors.



Leila Stillman Utterback

Middlebury, VT
Middlebury Union High School

Fast Facts

- I'm on the board of the Jewish Youth Climate

Movement, and love all the ways Jewish Values and fighting the climate crisis intersect!

- I'm very interested in having meaningful conversations about our connection to Israel as American Jews, Coexistence and listening to everyone's story. I strive to create spaces where every voice is honored, and the validity of each person's story is upheld.
- I love spending time with kids and babysit twice a week. I am inspired by their unwavering energy and amazement with the world. They remind me to see everything through more wonder-filled eyes and meet the world with more excitement.

Hey! I'm Leila, I'm from Middlebury, Vermont. I love being in nature, hiking, biking, backpacking and skiing. I'm very passionate about climate justice, and our role as youth in fighting the climate crisis. I'm on the board of the Jewish Youth Climate Movement, and am interested in participating in many social justice movements. I spent my 10th grade year in Jerusalem with my

family, experiencing life in Israel. I went to protests against the Judicial Reform every week, and seeing a whole country come together for Democracy was incredibly moving and inspiring. I'm really interested in coexistence efforts. I truly believe that Zionism, and love for a Jewish homeland can go hand in hand with thoughtful criticism of Israel and the fight for a more democratic state. Strong Jewish community is super important to me. I live in a place where there aren't many Jews, and getting to experience the closeness and understanding of other Jews is a sacred feeling for me. I've spent my summer at Eden Village Camp for almost ten years, and it is truly my safe space. Abraham Joshua Heschel's concept of Radical Amazement is a rule I try to live by. I'm happiest spending time outside, playing guitar, baking, reading books and being with people I love.



Isaac Yukica

Thetford, VT
Thetford Academy

Fast Facts

- I do Shōrin-ryū, an Okinawan martial art. I am currently a first degree black

belt.

- I love racing for my school's alpine ski team and skiing slopestyle in my free time. Slopestyle refers to learning tricks on rails and jumps.
- Last semester, I worked under the supervision of a local director to create a fifteen-minute short movie.

Hi, my name is Isaac Yukica. I am from Thetford Vermont, where I live with my Reform Jewish mother, agnostic father, and two brothers. I am very close to my identical twin brother Oliver, who is currently a Hartman fellow. I've lived in a few different places like Maryland and Washington State, but I've spent most of my life here in Thetford. I love the outdoors and greatly enjoy being part of such a tight-knit rural area,



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but I look forward to learning in new contexts this summer and in the years to come. I am very passionate about athletics, primarily running, alpine skiing, and martial arts. Participating in sports with my friends is fun, keeps me in shape, and allows me to test my limits. In an academic setting, I prefer the humanities, especially English. Writing and literary discussion are two of my favorite things to do in the classroom. I also enjoy filmmaking and film study. I am currently enrolled in an introductory college film course and I plan to continue to learn about film throughout the remainder of my education. As an adult, I hope to work in the entertainment industry.