

Kulanu, Inc.

Supporting Isolated and Emerging Jewish Communities

Harriet Bograd, President and Treasurer
165 West End Ave, 3R New York, NY 10023
212-877-8082

harriet@kulanu.org www.kulanu.org www.kulanuboutique.com



Proposal for Suriname Jewish Community Birthright Trip to Israel

Purpose of the project: To support the participation of 16 youngsters and one leader from the Suriname Jewish community in a Birthright trip to Israel. Suriname, the smallest country in South America, is home to the oldest surviving Jewish community in the Americas.

The project will help the young people of Suriname, isolated for generations, to reconnect with their Jewish roots and ensure Jewish continuity. The trip, envisioned for many years and finally a reality, will have a profound impact on the lives of those young people.

Organization's mission: Kulanu ("All of Us" in Hebrew), founded in 1994, is a non-profit organization which supports isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the world, many of whom have long been disconnected from the worldwide Jewish community.

Kulanu connects with these dispersed groups and individuals through networking. We raise awareness and support for emerging communities through education, research, and publications about their histories and traditions. Our connections help all of us enrich our Jewish lives.

Need for the project: The Suriname Jewish community, the oldest existing Jewish community in the Americas, has long been isolated from world Judaism due to its geographic location and its language (Dutch). The community had no permanent rabbi or Jewish educator for over 40 years and was disintegrating, as the young people were drifting away from Judaism.

With help from Kulanu, there has been a recent rebirth of interest in Jewish identity and practice. In 2008, a Kulanu volunteer spent six weeks in the community, initiating a Hebrew teaching program for children ages 6-12. Since then, Jacob Steinberg, a Kulanu board member and our coordinator for Suriname, has raised funds for a variety of projects such as fencing the historic cemetery, renovating the 150-year old mikvah, renovating the old rabbi's house, developing a Suriname Jewish community web site, and buying mezuzot for homes and community buildings. In 2010, Kulanu helped pay for matzot and kosher wine sent from New York for the community's Passover seder.

Description of the Project:

Representatives of the community and Kulanu have spent five years advocating for their young people to join a trip with Birthright Israel. Such a trip would help the youngsters to reconnect with their Jewish roots, strengthen the Jewish identity and leadership skills of the participants, and ensure Jewish continuity in this unique and isolated Jewish community.

After 40 years of having no rabbi in the community, Los Angeles-based Rabbi Haim Beliak recently spent three months as a volunteer rabbi in Suriname. Rabbi Beliak conducted weekly 2-3 hour sessions with a group of 30 young people, teaching them Jewish history, and preparing them for this hoped-for trip to Israel.

Last month we were delighted to learn that Birthright Israel has agreed to include 16 young people and one leader from Suriname in a special Birthright program conducted in Dutch, with all expenses paid. The only requirement is that the community must arrange transportation for the participants to and from Miami, paying for airfare, visa fees, and other related expenses.

Who will be served: The Suriname Jewish community, which consists of about 35 families, are descendants of Portuguese Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity in 1496. After living in Portugal under the Inquisition for over 100 years, they moved to Holland and established the Dutch Jewish community around 1600. Because they were not able to own land and there were no other economic opportunities for them in Holland, they next moved to Suriname. Starting in the 1630's, they settled in the Jewish Savannah, a village in the Amazon basin jungle of Suriname and became farmers.

Most community members are now teachers or government employees residing in the capital Paramaribo. The average salary is \$400 per month. The community is trying to raise some of the money needed for the trip to Israel, such as passports and transportation to airports. However, the expense of flying to Miami and back and applying for U.S. visas is beyond the ability of the community to pay.

The 16 young people, ages 18-26, who will participate in this Birthright Israel trip are the future leaders of this community. Kulanu is determined to help with funding this important source of preservation, reinvigoration, and potential in a community that had almost lost its historic connection to Judaism.

For more information:

www.suriname-jewish-community.com

www.kulanu.org/

Budget:

Item	Rate	Quantity	Total
Airline Tickets (Paramaribo – Miami – Paramaribo)	\$763	17	\$12,971
US Visa Application Fee	\$131	17	\$2,227
Transportation Suriname - Minivans	\$100	6	\$600
Health Insurance	\$42	17	\$714
Accommodations, meals, and local transportation in Miami	In-kind contributions expected		
Total			\$16,512
Community grass-roots fundraising			\$4,012
Challenge grant from Good People Fund			\$2,000
Amount Requested			\$10,500



Subject: Suriname Birthright Israel Candidate Bios

From: Harriet Bograd <

Date: Mon, 17 May 2010



My name is Daniel Bueno de Mesquita. I'm 21 years old. I'm born and living in Suriname. My parents are Paul Bueno de Mesquita and Alexandra Bueno de Mesquita - Da Costa. My hobbies are hunting, fishing, swimming and soccer. Let me start telling about myself. I'm kind of a simple guy, trying to find out what I really want in my life. I'm not in school this year, but planning to catch up in October. I'm still on high school level though. Right now I spend my time working with my dad on our land, which we have in family possession. The job is to prospect the jungle for base core material. It can often be a pretty tough job, especially when it's the rainy season. Both families that I descend from came to Suriname at the end of the 17th century. I want to learn much more about Judaism. I just started to have lessons with Rabbi Haim Beliak who left a few weeks ago and now I study with Mr. Jules Donk the president of the community.

I'm very excited about the Birth right trip to Israel ; I can't wait to see Israel. I'm hoping the trip will become an unforgettable experience.

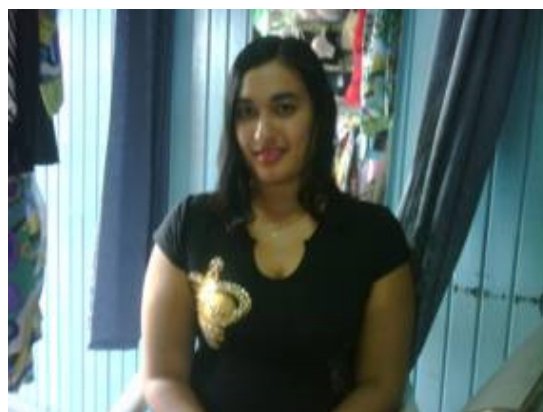


My name is Shimona Arrias. My mother her name is Jane Arrias-Kopinsky and my father's name is Charles Arrias. I was born at the St. Vincentius hospital in Paramaribo, Suriname on the 29th of October 1983. I have a younger brother and a younger sister, Derrick and Elvira.

At age 3 I went to school for the first time, the Kangaroo kindergarten. Then I went to the 'O.S. Welgelegen 2 School', a primary school. Then I went to high school, the Wim Bosch Verschuur School. After finishing college I studied physical therapy for two years, but did not finished it. In 2003 I went to the Netherlands and studied audiology. In 2008 I graduated as an audiologist and returned to Suriname. Since October 2008 I'm working as an audiologist at a hearing centre in Paramaribo. I inform people or patients about ear protectors, hearing loss and hearing aids. I do a lot of different hearing tests and if necessary I also do the hearing aid fittings for patients with hearing loss.

My hobbies are reading, aerobics and cooking.

The Arrias family is one of the oldest Jewish families in Suriname. They were part of the third group of Jews who arrived in Suriname via Cayenne (today's French Guyana) at around 1665 after escaping the Portuguese inquisition in Recife (Northern Brazil). The group was led by Joseph Nunez de Fonseca, known as David Nassi.



My name is Renate Soraya Bechan.

I am 23 years old and I live in Surinam.

By day I run my own shop and by night I attend the university. I am studying mathematics.

My hobbies are: playing basketball, pool, volleyball and mostly having fun.

I am a pretty down to earth kind of girl and I like to help people.

My family from my mothers side is Jewish and from my fathers side is Muslim.

Most of the family lives in Holland.

I have 2 elder brothers, 1 sister and 1 little brother.

The 2 elder ones also live in Holland. So it's just me, my mother, my sister and my little brother. My father has already past (7 years).

I recently got more interested in learning about Judaism, because I want to know about my culture and where I came from. The reason I am interested is also that when I have children I can learn them about my ancestors and where we came from. Also I want to learn about Judaism itself, the way we as Jews live and what Jews went through in the past.



My name is Rogan van Leeuwaarde and was born on the 2nd of august 1989. I am currently a student at IBW, where I am studying international tourism. This year is actually my first year and am hoping to graduate in 2013. Last year I was a student at the Anton de Kom university of Suriname. There I was studying business management, but I switch because I wanted to interact more in the tourism branch. I am very interested in my new study. My hobby's are more the relaxing type of things to do. I like to go out with friends, but love to go to the jungle. There I can get away from the noise and head aches of the city life. Lately I haven't gone that much because I work part time at the Torarica Group of Hotels. There I work as a reservations agent and was just recently asked to work fulltime. I am very happy about this because I pay for my own school education. The job it self is a new experience and it can help me with my branch of study.

I was born in a family with two religions. My father is Catholic and my mother Jewish. I was raised in a way that I could choose my own path of life. So as you can see I have chosen my Jewish heritage. This birth right trip is a good way for me to learn more about my Jewish heritage. By going to Israel I would like to learn more about the Jewish life and would really like to come in contact with other Jewish friends and Families.

My name is Amanda Laret I am 21 years old.

I was born in Suriname and lived there for most of my life. I have completed high school in Suriname. Since there is no dentistry faculty in the small University of Suriname, I am now studying dentistry at the University of Amsterdam in Holland. I am currently in my second year, and have four to graduate. Upon graduation, I plan to return and work as a dentist in Suriname.

My family lived in Suriname since the 17th century. We are decedents of one of the oldest and most distinguished Jewish Sephardic, the Abarbanel family. After living for over 100 years under the Spanish and Portuguese inquisition, the family moved to Amsterdam in around the year 1600 and from there through to Suriname.

Since we didn't have a permanent Rabbi in our community for over 40 years, only in December 2009, my grandparents had their Jewish wedding when Rabbi Haim Beliak from the USA came to serve our community for three months.

When I was 15 years old, the President of our community, Jules Donk, gave me and my cousins Hebrew lessons and I loved it. Unfortunately I have forgotten most of what I have learned because it has been such a long time ago since I have read Ivriet.

A few months ago I asked Jacob Steinberg, a Kulanu Board member, about taking Hebrew classes, because I really want to learn to read and speak the language again. Next year, with the help of Rabbi Beliak, I will try to get into the Brandeis summer program in Los Angeles, to get to know more about the Jewish culture and language.

I think the birthright trip to Israel will be a great and special experience for me and the other youngsters of our community. As a small (less than 150 people) and isolated Jewish community, the opportunity to see Israel, meet and connect with Jewish people from all over the world, learn and experience real Jewish life, is something I really looking forward to.

I think that the birth right trip will be the start of a big positive change in the Neve Shalom Suriname Jewish Community. It will change the way a lot of Neve Shalom Community members will think about being Jewish.



My name is Velasco George Aalstein born in Paramaribo Suriname on the 6th of June 1985. I'm am a rap artist and music is also my work. My hobbies are fishing, history, and music. My artist name is Laco and you can find me under the same name on You Tube.

My mother is Joan Duym and my father is Emilio Aalstein, I have one sister Sara Jael Aalstein. We are decedents of Mozes Abarbanel who came to Suriname in 1741. We have a family tree that we could trace back to the 15th century in Spain.

I am a member of the Jewish community of Suriname. My mother has always been very serious about our faith, just like her parents and our family.

That's why we were brought up going to the synagogue as much as we could and we participate in everything from the holidays to all other things in our community.

We are small communities where tradition and belief is something we need to hold on to. That's why we try to do as much as we can. All of us have learned from every source we have about our history, the history of Judaism. I've always been interested in going to Israel and see the places I have read about, to be in the same place or stand on the same ground my ancestors once stood. To see how the people there live and how strongly their belief is. To learn more about the country and all of its history.

I think this is a good opportunity for the young people to connect more to their roots and I will participate 100 percent to make this a reality. It would be a great experience and a memory for a lifetime.