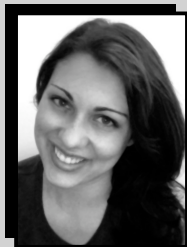


MEET RECENT BRONFMAN FELLOWS WHO ATTENDED PUBLIC SCHOOL

Bronfman Fellows come from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds. Get to know three recent Bronfman Fellow who attended Public Schools: **Naomi Sharp** from Chicago, **Elliot Mamet** from Denver and **Anya Tudisco** from Seattle. Find out why they applied to BYFI, how the program challenged them and why they would encourage public school students to apply.



Naomi Sharp '08
*Sophomore at
Columbia University*

Naomi Sharp (BYFI '08), is a sophomore at Columbia University and attended Walter Payton College Prep in Chicago. She spent a gap year in NYC working in an under-resourced middle school with City Year, an AmeriCorps' program. The daughter of a Lithuanian Jewish mother and a father raised in a Southern Baptist family, Naomi describes her upbringing as "culturally Jewish." Naomi is a prospective English major with a concentration in French. She plays and serves as Community Service Chair on the Columbia women's rugby team.

Why did you apply for the Bronfman Fellowships?

My school counselor sent an email to my grade. I almost didn't apply because I thought it was too religious. Ultimately, I decided to apply because I love travel and I wanted an adventure. It seemed new and different—I had never spent time focusing on religion with peers and I was intrigued by the prospect of spending a whole summer doing just that.

How did the program challenge you and your views?

It broadened my perspective. I had never known someone who wore a kippah (skullcap) before, so it was challenging to encounter people whose Judaism and Jewish identity felt so much more prominent; sometimes I felt like they had more of a claim on Judaism. But in the end, it was humanizing to live with and become friends with religious people even if some of our beliefs were fundamentally different. I saw that we could discuss—and disagree about—Judaism and God and intermarriage but still maintain a sense of humor and our friendship.

Who would you encourage to apply to the Fellowship?

Anyone who is Jewish and willing to examine their own beliefs! BYFI is truly pluralistic—if you count yourself as Jewish, you belong there. There are no limits because of how observant or unobservant you are; you represent a population and it's important BYFI is representative.

As a public school student, what was it like to participate on a Jewish summer program?

As a public school student, I came from a racially, economically, and religiously diverse environment so I was used to having discussions with people whose opinions were different from mine. However, religion took a backseat in most of our day-to-day lives. Bronfman was the first time I spent a significant amount of time examining my religion with other people.

Elliot Mamet (BYFI '10), from Denver, CO, is a sophomore political science major at Colorado College. At Colorado College, Elliot serves as constitutional vice president of student government and as a residential advisor in Loomis Hall. Elliot was awarded the Boettcher Foundation Scholarship and was the 2011 NFL National Champion in Congressional Debate. Elliot spent the previous summer as a Public Interest Fellow with the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado. Elliot is an alumnus of Denver East High School.

Why did you decide to apply for the Bronfman Fellowships?

I applied on a whim, at the suggestion of a mentor. The ideal of going to Israel was not a familiar concept to me. My only hesitation about applying stemmed from an apprehension about the program's politics — I was unconvinced that it truly wasn't trying to push an agenda on Israel. But I quickly learned that BYFI is about interaction and learning.

How did the program challenge you and your views?

The program, and in particular the other Fellows, showed me I could connect to Israel in a nontraditional way and I came away feeling that progressive and Zionist values don't have to be in conflict. This is not simply a resume booster or free trip to Israel—it is a deep and personal connection with Israel and amazing individuals that will push you in very profound ways.

Who would you encourage to apply to the Fellowship?

I would encourage students to apply who think they may not fit the "mold." I worried that I was too liberal for the program but BYFI really does want to bring a totally diverse group of intellectually curious individuals together.

As a public school student, what was it like to participate in a Jewish summer program?

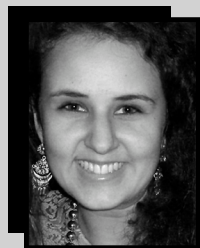
Academically, BYFI increased my self-confidence in group discussions, my knowledge of current events, and my ability to analyze a texts. Overall, though, it provided me with a community completely outside of my public school that could support me and that I felt comfortable in.

What was your favorite aspect of the trip?

The connections with the other fellows, amitim (Israeli fellows), staff and faculty. The friendships and relationships I formed were deeper than I could have ever imagined, and it's amazing to have friends in so many cities.



Elliot Mamet '10
*Sophomore at
Colorado College*



Anya Tudisco '11
*Senior in High School
at Roosevelt High*

Anya Tudisco (BYFI '11), Anya Tudisco graduated from Roosevelt High School in Seattle and is currently a freshman at Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA. The product of an intermarriage, Anya served as the president of the youth group and taught at her Reform congregation in Seattle. She toured Europe with her high school jazz band and worked at a Jewish day camp in the summer of 2012. At Whitman, she serves as a senator on student government, plays saxophone in the jazz ensemble, tutors a 4th grader, and enjoys Jazzercise immensely.

Why did you decide to apply for the Bronfman Fellowships?

I wanted to see how open-minded of a person I really was. I've always thought of myself as receptive and understanding but this was going to be a test since I don't experience much political diversity at home. This was my first trip to Israel and I wanted to see the country through the eyes of a diverse group, representing lots of perspectives. I didn't go this summer to change my faith or practice, but I realized that I couldn't be a true Jewish leader or representative of the Jewish people without ever having ventured beyond the "bubble" of my home community.

Who would you encourage to apply to the Fellowship?

This is not for everyone. This is not for people are unwilling to talk or whose goal is to convert others to their political and religious beliefs or who are looking for a vacation. You have to be willing to read, write, think and talk. But I would encourage anyone to apply who is willing to have their beliefs challenged in exchange for an inordinate amount of learning about Judaism, Israel, America, the world, history, people, and yourself.

As a public school student, what was it like to participate in a Jewish summer program?

It was shocking. This summer was the first time that I had ever spent so much time listening. I was in awe of all the incredibly wise thoughts and questions that my peers on the program offered. As a public school student from a highly secular community, I sometimes brought to attention an issue or opinion that comes from outside of the Jewish community. Being in Israel with a group of kids and adults dedicated to Judaism is wonderful but also...very Jewish. Bronfmanim are Jewish leaders but also just leaders in general and I felt it important to bring my experience with the secular world into the conversation.

What was your favorite aspect of the trip?

The Fellows: the most cohesive, curious, intelligent, and fun group of kids who are now my lifelong friends and also my teachers, having taught me how rewarding it is to be open-minded.