

I have never used my Linked in platform for any political or religious uses and primarily focused on sharing professional information or important life and wellbeing moments.

As a proud Orthodox Jew from Monsey, NY, I have been watching the outpouring of responses to the release of the #Netflix #myunorthodoxlife and felt compelled to post on this topic.

While many reflections have come from people who do not know Julia/Talia/Leibov/Hendler/Haart, I personally know all members of the Leibov and Hendler families for decades back to the 1980's.

After Julia move from Texas to Monsey, our friendship started. While we were not classmates (class of 1988 vs. 1989) at Bais Yaakov of Monsey, we spent many fun times together, in high school, dancing in the school production, studying and hanging out with friends. We had a fantastic education in both Judaic and secular studies. Julia's mother was my math teacher and a brilliant woman educated in the Soviet Union. With that foundation, it allowed me to major in Actuarial Science and become a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries. We both married young and had families; I chose to balance work and family while Julia chose to be a stay at home mom for her amazing 4 children.

We shared countless family adventures, including tennis, biking, skiing, paintball, fireworks, and lots of holidays including Purim with great costume parties, Pesach with extended family meals, Shavuus making personal pizzas, Thanksgiving with home cooked turkeys and more.

When Julia decided to take on a new shoe business after Batsheva's wedding, we were so excited to see her pursuing a life dream to build a fashion business. It was a big shock to all of us when Julia transitioned to a new world and disappeared for 4 years in a full-time traveling role. But, as Julia left the community and started to determine a new path, we never exchanged a negative word.

With the release of the Netflix minis series My Unorthodox life, Julia's Monsey friends were eager to hear Julia's story of her journey and learn more. We were shocked as we read interview after interview with publications including the NY Times, NY Post and Forbes with "taking a stand against fundamentalism" and describing a fictitious transition from a life with "no radio, television, newspapers, magazines, or bars".

As we watched the Netflix series waiting for some meaningful explanation to emerge, all we saw was anger, lies, sad, controlling interchanges, and profanities not consistent with the class and intelligence of the family we know and love. Julia has a great story to tell of a mom returning to the workforce and achieving professional goals but instead became a victim to media pressure to sensationalize and bash Orthodoxy instead of focusing on the honest, real and complex issues of emotional wellbeing and relationship challenges.

While we recognize Julia and any individual's right to personal lifestyle choice and religious observance, the series and campaigns go way beyond a personal story to a hateful and false attack against those who make the active choice to live an Orthodox observant lifestyle in Monsey NY and beyond.

In the age of "fake news" and propaganda, so top four things to set the record straight:

- Monsey, NY is not a fundamentalist community and certainly not the segment of the Orthodox community Julia came from. We have a diverse range of observant from Chassidic to Modern Orthodox.

- 2 out of my four children and the Hendler's four children (Batsheva's and Shlomo) were classmates in schools together. With the dual curriculum they studied, the Orthodox children from Monsey and beyond are at no deficit to any others. In fact, all of 4 of our children have completed master's degrees, two CPA's and my son will be attending Yale law school in the fall. Batsheva's and Shlomo's friends are all highly educated and productive and the Monsey Orthodox community and their schools all supported that.
- There are many financially strong independent women who are Orthodox who you had exposure to in Monsey (starting with yours truly) who feel quite great about what we accomplish on a variety of fronts. As you may know or see from my linked in profile, I am a partner at Ernst & Young, run marathons, have an amazing family and love our community in Monsey.
- Life is not perfect and no community or religion or practice is without challenge. Shame on Netflix for continuing to attack Orthodox Jews in show after show and using situations driven by emotional wellbeing and relationship pain points as the basis for these stories.

In one episode on the boat, Julia referenced "Tashlich" and the concept in Judaism of casting away the bad elements of our lives into the sea. One of the amazing concepts of Judaism is that no matter what difficulties we have in life, or mistakes we have made there is always the opportunity to reset and start fresh with the upcoming New Year cycle. We all have challenges, make mistakes but as long as there is life and a new day, we are the masters of our own destiny.

We hope that Julia, Batsheva, Shlomo, Miriam, Netflix, and the broader media will pay attention to the wonderful campaigns being started by proud religious women to highlight #myorthodoxlife, #thisisorthodox, #realfromwomen and beyond to reset the narrative and share the truth and more balanced perspectives on these topics.

My wish to the Haarts and Hendlers is that they find peace and happiness in the new year. And a personal wish to Batsheva, Ben, Shlomo, and Miraim as adults is that you each at a stage where you should be shaping your own narrative in the world that is reflective of all of the many talents of who you are and not orchestrated or reading something scripted by others.

On Monday, my company is opening new offices at One MW and look forward to seeing Julia in the neighborhood and grabbing a coffee with @juliahaart or @robertbrotherton in the Hudson Yard neighborhood. Would love the opportunity in particular to meet Robert who was a clear talent in the show and to share balanced perspective on the Orthodox community and Monsey NY outside of his brief experiences in Evergreen.