



Photo courtesy of Ronn David Torossian

# RONN DAVID TOROSSIAN

## the essence of a man

by Aliza Davidovit

The fit, young man was walking on the treadmill at the posh New York Reebok Sports Club when his eye caught a CNN news report covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unable to contain his anger at the skewed pro-Palestinian coverage, Ronn Torossian, a typical native New Yorker, began talking back to the TV grumbling against the inconsistencies and falsehoods of the report. Many a Jew has screamed or thrown a sock at the tube while watching CNN's coverage of the historic conflict. Few, however, as did Torossian, find the love of his life while doing it. In fact, it is precisely because Ronn Torossian steps off the treadmill of apathy to do something about such things that today he finds himself living a dream come true.

Ronn David Torossian, at age 29, is the founder, president & CEO of 5W Public Relations, one of the fastest growing PR firms in New York. He started his company on the roof of a Manhattan building with nothing more than himself, a fax machine and a phone. Today his company occupies two floors in a prestigious office building off Times Square.

The accelerated growth and success of his company and his winning team are but a reflection of the man himself. He is filled with exuberance, infinite energy and creativity; he strives for excellence and accepts nothing less; he takes no tally of efforts but rather of results.

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Torossian is basically a whiz kid on fire and he has thus attracted some really hot accounts. In just 14 months his clientele includes Sean Puffy Combs' Bad Boy Entertainment, the Christian Coalition of America, the Israeli Government, LA Gear, Marriott Hotels, Greater Talent Network, BuyHipHop.com, Lebanese-American Council For Democracy, United States Beverage and Tzell Travel, a \$550 million dollar travel agency, to name but a very few. The diversity of his accounts also says a lot about Torossian, who feels just as comfortable whispering advice into the ears of Israeli prime ministers as he does playing basketball with Puff Daddy.

Torossian actually met the Bad Boy group on a basketball court, where he took on the African-American Bad Boys with the same fervor he does everything else. The tough Jewish boy from the Bronx showed them that “white men can jump.” He earned their respect and it was not too long after that their business bounced his way, too. So much for stereotypes! In fact when Torossian was very young, he had his own stereotypes about Jews that had driven him away from all things Jewish. But at age 13 he had a life-changing experience that profoundly altered his point of view. “I always thought Jewish kids weren't so cool or into sports or athletics,” he says. “All I ever wanted to do was play basketball and date girls.” For

many years he wanted to be a professional basketball player. “I didn't give a damn about being Jewish or Israel,” he reflects. “If people would talk about Zionism I'd just want to know if it had a hoop on it.”

Torossian's mom, however, who was born in Poland in a DP camp, was the daughter of survivors, and



Torossian meeting with Israel's Ehud Olmert.

was not ready to let her son “dunk” his heritage. With an offensive maneuver of her own, she forced Ronn, at age 13, to join Betar, the Zionist youth movement. There he found other Jewish kids who liked sports, who were cool and who were nothing like what he expected. But at Betar he found much more than Jewish sportsmanship. “Once I joined, I learned what it really means to be a Jew,” he says proudly. “I learned how beautiful the State of Israel is and how important it is to stand up for the things we believe in.”

The philosophy of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the founder of the Betar youth movement, profoundly

affected Torossian. His attachment to Betar didn't simply end after that transforming six-week summer program. Torossian continued to be actively involved with the movement for ten years and went on to become its national president from 1994 to 1996. He still continues to provide them with financial support. Today Jabotinsky's picture hangs in Torossian's office. He has read all of Jabotinsky's writings and says that his philosophies continue to guide all of his financial and personal decisions.

“Ze'ev Jabotinsky didn't just write about what is the essence of a Jew,” Torossian says. “He wrote what is the essence of a man. Jabotinsky said that if someone pushes you a little, you push them back twice as hard,” Torossian says. “If someone tries to cut my hand, I'm going to cut their throat.”

Torossian basically feels that what you give in life is what you get back and says that he always tries to treat people fairly and with respect, a sentiment his staff will echo. His Betar background also defined his view of Judaism. “Judaism and Zionism, for me, encompass being strong, being tough and being proud,” he says.

So Torossian took that brave philosophy to the campus of SUNY Albany where he completed his undergraduate degree. There, too, he became an activist and head of a Jewish student organization. In an effort to invigorate the apa-

Photo courtesy of Ronn David Torossian

“I wanted to make big changes because I felt that the Jewish establishment is out of touch with the Jewish community’s needs.”

thetic Jewish student body, he brought in weekly Jewish speakers from all over the country as well as from Israel. He organized youth activities, rallies, sit-ins, showed films, and tried to fundraise. He had gone from the young man who wanted to be a pro ball player to dynamic advocate of the Jewish people who wanted to be the prime minister of Israel. “I wanted to do things to affect Jewish life,” he says. “I wanted to make big changes because I felt that the Jewish establishment is out of touch with the Jewish community’s needs.”

After graduating, Torossian whose own father was born in Jerusalem, moved to Israel to complete a master’s degree. But being an impatient person his whole life, he says that he couldn’t stand sitting in a classroom learning about history while history was playing itself out on the streets of the Jewish State. So he forsook theory for reality, quit his MBA program and started an organization, Yerushalyim Shelanu (Our Jerusalem). He started it with two others who believed that secular Jews, and not only the Orthodox, had a responsibility and obligation toward Israel and the Jewish people.

One of the many publicized stunts Torossian and his cohorts pulled was to drive bulldozers up to Har Homa in protest of then-Prime Minister Netanyahu’s declarations that Israel wasn’t going to build there. Immediately, the arrival of the bulldozers grabbed the media’s attention. The action was con-

demned by the UN, by the Israeli government, and by President Clinton. But Torossian got what he wanted, the attention. That night, by satellite, Ronn Torossian, age 22, appeared with Peter Jennings on ABC News to counter Clinton’s criticism of Israelis building on Har Homa. It was then that Torossian’s



Torossian meeting with Senator Hillary Clinton.

knack for sound bites and making the headlines was born. He knew the media would pick up on his slogan, “Can whites live in Harlem?” He led viewers to the natural conclusion that certainly if whites can live in Harlem, Jews can live in East Jerusalem, which is predominantly occupied by Arabs.

Wherever and whenever Torossian and his organization perceived there was an injustice they would vocally protest. The young, savvy Zionist quickly learned the difference between making noise and making headlines. He soon began giving interviews three or four times a week. He was constantly in the

news. He was quick on his feet and quick with his tongue. He began helping members of the Knesset with press releases and op-ed pieces and soon realized that what he was actually doing was PR—and he was great at it!

Torossian has since traveled the world putting forth Israel’s strongest case and her best face. He has sat on all-night vigils and stood outside of consulates for hours and days making sure his cause was heard. But Torossian was not one to be standing on the outside for too long.

After a year and half in Israel, the self-discovered PR man brought his talent back to America. In 1998, he applied for a job at GS Schwartz, a prestigious PR firm, though he didn’t really have any PR credentials. All he could show them was a scrapbook of his being quoted on every network and in major newspapers.

They didn’t know what to do with him. But this PR guru was certainly able to sell himself and they gave him a job as an account executive with a starting salary of \$35,000. Within 18 months he was promoted five times and his salary almost tripled. When he quit, he bore the title of Associate Vice President.

His next job was as Vice President/Group Director at The MWW Group, a \$40 million company. There he built up its New York office from just himself and a secretary to 75 employees and nearly \$10 million in billings. He worked there for three years, on several huge accounts such as the Hard Rock

Photo courtesy of Shahar Azran

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Café, Fox News Channel, Yankelovich Partners and many others. It was at MWW where Torossian says he really learned how to turn PR into a business and make money from it.

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All the time Torossian worked for others, he kept posted on his bulletin board the words 5W. Nobody knew what they meant but him. It was the constant reminder that one day he was going to run his own PR firm and he’d call it 5WPR which stands for who, what, where, when and why, the winning formula for a successful public relations campaign. After generating so much success for someone else, he finally decided to leave the empire he built and venture out on his own.

He remembers those challenging first days, which were not too long ago. Early every morning he’d ride up to his tiny office on the roof of a Manhattan building and promise himself he wouldn’t leave until midnight. In a miraculously short time he has transformed 5W PR into a force to be reckoned with.

“My mother is a big inspiration in my life,” Torossian says. He watched how she continued to persevere through difficult times as a single mother raising both him and his sister, Karin. “She taught me to never give in and never give up. She taught me the power of persistence.”

Today, a very busy Torossian walks around with two cell phones. 5WPR basically helps clients create a better image for themselves, generates publicity and gets them into the press, orchestrates crisis management, devises marketing strategies and makes them more money. He is very confident that in five years from now he will be one of the top ten firms in the country with six offices across the United States and one in Israel.

5W Public Relations today services a wide variety of clientele, from entertainment and fashion lines to hedge funds and hotels, corporate and lifestyle to consumer products. Their clientele is far-ranging, from small entrepreneurial companies to Fortune 500 companies, and Torossian says the versatility is a real rush. “I love the business of PR and the excitement of helping our clients to build their brands,” Torossian says with enthusiasm. “Whether it’s a great story in *The New York Times*, or a picture in a fashion trade magazine about our client’s newest shirts, we love what we do and believe with all our hearts that we are the best, smartest and most aggressive firm at doing a great job with public relations.”

He says the problem with other PR firms is that they are run by old, nonaggressive men in suspenders or dumb pretty girls who know little about the bottom line. “If done right,” Torossian explains, “PR is the

most cost-efficient way to sell your product.” With his quick-paced gift of the gab, Torossian could probably sell anything.

*Lifestyles* even put the fast thinker on the spot and asked for an instant PR plan to “sell” Israel and Zionism to today’s apathetic adolescents. With the agility of a gunslinger, he shot right back: Firstly, recruit goodlooking Israelis to be poster children; secondly, don’t be afraid to hold unconventional programs that no one else would dare do, for instance a “Kiss the hottest Israeli girl contest.” Make it fun! Thirdly, don’t let Jewish money dictate leadership, but rather, find people who can inspire youth.

Perhaps because Torossian has always used his way with words to inspire Jews and defend the Jewish people, those very words have come back to bless him. While Torossian screamed at the TV at the Reebok sports club, a young, beautiful woman laughed at his outburst. That’s all he needed to make his move. Today the two are married. “If anyone would have told me that by 29 I’d already be married and running my own company, I would have been amazed,” he says. “But I feel like I’m living a dream come true.” When asked if he is ever afraid with so much on his plate, Torossian answers, “A little, but a Jew can never be controlled by fear!” [lifestyles](#)