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The COMMENTATOR

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Birthing Pains: *An Einstein Agreement is Made*

By Abraham Gross

On February 3rd, Yeshiva University and Montefiore Health System, in a joint statement, announced an agreement on the terms of the deal between the two institutions that had been in negotiations since last July. The deal promised to grant Montefiore greater financial control over the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, a major cause of the University's annual deficit. Last December, it was confirmed by Moody's Investor Service that negotiations had broken down between the two parties, which threatened to plunge Yeshiva University into deepening financial straits. However, it now appears that, pending "final documentation and regulatory approval," the deal is set to continue as planned.

The weeks leading up to agreement were marked by uncertainty and unrest; in January, the faculty senate of Einstein issued a vote of no confidence directed at President Joel and Yeshiva University board amid much discussion of the responsibility of the administration in the future of the medical school. President Joel, in an exclusive interview with *The Commentator*, characterized the senate's actions as a reflection that "different parties have different realities," and that the boards of Einstein and YU "didn't need a resolution of the faculty to decide that there should be a deal"; in his view, "their actions were not a factor in this."

Of course, it was not only the faculty who seemed concerned. On the day the agreement was announced, hundreds of students rallied in support of the Einstein deal.

As President Joel noted, the university has had a long and proud history with both Einstein and Montefiore. Einstein and Montefiore have been in various contractual agreements for several decades, well before President Joel took office. He describes this latest agreement as "a natural synergy." In his words, "for Einstein as a medical school to be a research enterprise in the 21st century, it has to be in unity, given Einstein's quality, with a great medical



system, and Montefiore is a great medical system. So it's a natural synergy. It's where it needs to go."

This tightening of the bond between Montefiore and Einstein comes at a particularly troubling time in Yeshiva University's history. On the same day that the agreement was announced, new figures about Yeshiva University's

endowment pool were revealed. As reported in the annual survey by Commonfund and the National Association of College and University Business Officers, of 92 North American universities with endowments of over one billion dollars, Yeshiva University was the only one among them whose endowment has not increased but in fact has decreased by 8% in the last fiscal year. Expenses related to the maintenance of Einstein are reported to account for approximately two-thirds of the deficit, \$100 million of the total \$150 million of debt that YU faces. "Remember, those statements will not be reflective of tomorrow, they will be reflective of yesterday," President Joel warned, adding that "any statement made can be a diversion that just has you take two steps back...you'll get more from me then you'll get from anybody."

Adding to the difficulty of properly addressing unclear expenses is the lack of transparency as to what the deal will actually do. President Joel maintains that Yeshiva University will continue to hold a 49% share in the medical school's equity, as well as all of its real estate. However, Joel guarantees that the University will no longer take any financial responsibility over Einstein. For the foreseeable future, YU will remain the degree-granting institution; however, it is conceivable that Einstein may become its own degree granting institution. As to why Montefiore would agree to Yeshiva University seemingly maintaining all the benefits of Einstein while simultaneously accepting the hefty operating expenses of the school, President Joel only said that "it's not an arms-length adversarial relationship. I mean, sometimes there are difficult negotiations,

see **Einstein Agreement**, cont p. 4

NEWS BRIEFS

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

YU FINDS NEW GRADUATION VENUE

Soon after hosting Iggy Azalea on her Great Escape Tour and McDonald's annual Gospelfest, the Prudential Center will host an event that will be less musical but more inspiring: YU's 84th annual commencement exercises. The ceremony was originally slated for the Izod Center of East Rutherford, New Jersey, where YU has held graduation for many years, even after the Nets, the Devils, the Seton Hall Pirates, and the Storm (NJ's now extinct lacrosse team) had all vacated the arena. But the plan fell through when, on the afternoon of January 15th, the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority voted to shut down the arena by the end of the month and keep it closed for at least the next two

years. Arena officials cited financial losses as the main reason for the shutdown; had it remained open, the arena would have lost around \$8.5 million in 2015.

As soon as the shutdown was publicized, YU, along with thirteen other colleges and high schools, scrambled to find a new venue for its 2015 graduation. On February 11, President Joel announced that the ceremony will remain on its previously scheduled date, Sunday, May 17, but will now be held at Newark's Prudential Center. Nicknamed "The Rock," the Prudential Center is a \$375 million sports arena in Newark, NJ that seats around 18,000 and boasts 360-degree LED ribbons and an eight-sided HD Jumbotron. In a few short months, YU's graduating class of 2015 will display their caps and gowns and

YU's administration and professors will sport their signature silk robes and plush velvet hats on The Rock's twenty thousand square foot arena floor. President Joel had assured the worried soon-to-be graduates that "a great alternative" would "be secured in the next few weeks," and he did not disappoint.

SAR WINS 20TH ANNUAL WITTENBERG TOURNAMENT

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

In order to encourage imitation of the ways of our forefathers, YU hosted its 20th annual Henry Wittenberg invitational high school wrestling tournament beginning Friday, February 13. The tournament included many teams from the

New York area, and some from the more far-flung reaches of the United States. The legendary Henry Wittenberg, for whom the tournament is named, founded YU's wrestling team in 1955 and served as YU's first wrestling coach. He won Olympic gold and silver medals for wrestling, and, in 1977, he was inducted into the Wrestling Hall of Fame.

The festivities began when the out-of-town teams arrived on the afternoon of Thursday, February 12. The wrestlers weighed in on Friday morning, and prepared for the first round which began at 10:30. The teams spent Shabbos together at a hotel, where they were treated to delicious meals and participated in the third annual Wittenberg Trivia Tournament (known to be as competitive as the wrestling itself). After Friday night dinner, the wrestlers

heard from Marlon Shirley, a decorated Paralympic athlete dubbed the "world's fastest amputee," who has won medals in various competitions, including high jump, long jump, and 100m and 200m races, and received the ESPY award in 2003 for best disabled athlete.

The wrestling continued on Sunday and culminated with the championship final rounds at midday on Monday - the SAR Sting of Riverdale won the tournament, while MTA and TABC rounded out the top three. According to Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Vice President for University and Community Life, the tournament created a unique mix of tussling and Torah, allowing "young Jewish athletes to bond with each other in a Torah environment."

The EDITORIAL

Now What?

So, we've managed to get rid of Einstein, and with it two-thirds of our debt. Of an estimated \$150M annual deficit, we're now down to \$50M – Einstein supposedly accounted for \$100M. Which begs the question: how do we fill a \$50M hole? More specifically, how do we fill it with sustainable and increasing cash flows?

Arieh Levi
Editor-in-Chief

As always, it comes back to increasing revenues and decreasing costs. Let's start with the former.

In my conversations with President Joel, the President pointed to two specific revenue-raising initiatives: increased donations, and YU Global.

Obviously, fundraising is not a long-term plan. No university can survive on acts of generosity alone – no matter how generous. In 2006, YU received a \$100M gift from businessman Ronald Stanton. Of that \$100M, one must wonder how much is left, considering that \$250M of our valuable New York City real estate is currently collateralized against debt.

Nor is YU Global a real remedy. The grant-funded program hopes to cut costs by offering virtual “blended courses” across YU's campuses and raise revenues by granting online degrees to the East Asian market, a part of the globe that has long held a unique fascination with Judaism and its Jews (think Koreans studying Talmud). Whatever YU Global is – and I don't think the program's leadership has quite defined it yet – I cannot imagine that it is a sustainable solution. For one, it competes against much larger rivals, with deeper pockets, bigger faculties, and more robust online education platforms. Why get a degree from YU when you can get a degree from Harvard, MIT, or Princeton? Why use YU's fledgling platform when you can use Harvard's well-developed classroom forums? For another, what does it say about our brick-and-mortar education if YU's savior is an unproven internet startup? Ultimately, such an initiative tarnishes YU's reputation in the murky waters of global e-commerce.

More realistically, short-term revenue will have to be raised by involving YU's real estate holdings. As mentioned, approximately \$250M of it is currently collateralized against debt, out of a total of approximately \$1B if we include Einstein's \$500M Resnick campus. This means that we can't sell a large portion of our real estate. However, we could raise revenue in other ways, perhaps via leasing. Still, though, artfully managing our real estate is not a plan for sustainability.

Then there's the other side of the equation: cutting costs. Alvarez and Marsal (A&M), the consulting firm hired by YU to turn around the institution (for an estimated \$9M – \$12M over the course of 14 months), believes the solution lies in cuts. While A&M stresses that its focus is to maintain the continued excellence of the undergraduate and graduate programs, there is no doubt that the YU of the future will be heavily stripped down.

For students, cuts mean a number of major changes. Class sizes will be larger, and the small student-to-faculty ratio that traditionally served as one of YU's major draws will increase, detracting from an intimate educational experience. Departments will be cut and merged, with smaller morning and afternoon offerings. Student leaders can expect less money to plan events, of which there will be fewer in total.

For faculty, the situation looks worse. Teaching loads

will increase, allowing less time for research. While tenured and tenure-tracked faculty will stay on, large numbers of contract faculty will be replaced by adjuncts that cost a fraction of the price and can only add a fraction of the value. To illustrate, adjuncts typically make between \$3,500 and \$6,500 per course. The average adjunct, then, must teach 12 courses to receive an income of \$60,000. The average New York City-based adjunct will therefore be teaching hundreds of students spread across 12 courses at – for example – Fordham, City College, Manhattan College, Columbia, and YU. Cutting contract faculty for adjuncts can only mean a lower quality “fast food” education.

Further, using adjuncts might not prove as cost-efficient as hoped. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal highlighted the unionization of adjuncts at universities across the country, where adjuncts have increased from 43% of total US college instructors in 1975, to 70% in 2011. According to the article, the National Labor Relations Board

– the same board famously overruled by a 1980 Supreme Court ruling in *NLRB vs. Yeshiva* that allowed YU to deny its tenured faculty unionization – has pushed for more union action at private religious schools, among others. This means higher pay for potentially unionized adjuncts, reducing ultimate cost savings.

Granted, there seems to be no alternative at this late stage. We do have to cut costs, and personnel do make up a large percentage of our overall cost structure. However,

shouldn't our teaching staff be the last to go? Instead, shouldn't we be taking a harder look at our top-heavy administration?

In writing this article, I found myself returning to one question raised often in my conversations with faculty, administration, and students: what exactly is Yeshiva University? More precisely, are we a small liberal arts college, a vocational school with Sy Syms at the fore, or a yeshiva with some secular courses thrown into the mix? YU used to be the only real option for Modern Orthodox college students. It no longer is. Orthodox students looking for quality liberal arts or business educations can join strong Hillel communities at Columbia, Penn, or NYU. Less expensive yeshiva options exist at Landers and Queens College.

President Joel would say that our mission is to “ennoble and enable”, and President Emeritus Rabbi Norman Lamm might point to “Torah u-Maddah”. However, neither gives an ironclad reason to attend or support YU, given its high price tag and the number of viable alternatives.

A recent article in the Observer quoted one unnamed faculty member at a recent meeting suggesting that YU “stop trying to be all things to all people [and choose] between the Harvard and the Touro.” I would agree. Before YU Global, before sweeping cuts to our undergraduate education, let's figure out exactly who we are. Defining ourselves concretely will provide us a more accurate barometer by which to measure the difficult choices that lie ahead.

PRESIDENT JOEL WOULD SAY THAT OUR MISSION IS TO “ENABLE AND ENNOBLE”, AND PRESIDENT EMERITUS RABBI NORMAN LAMM MIGHT POINT TO “TORAH U-MADDAH”. HOWEVER, NEITHER GIVES AN IRONCLAD REASON TO ATTEND OR SUPPORT YU, GIVEN ITS HIGH PRICE TAG AND THE NUMBER OF VIABLE ALTERNATIVES.

The COMMENTATOR

Arieh Levi

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*

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*

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 78 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and commitment to journalistic excellence.



500 W 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
YUCommentator.org

1 SNL 40th Anniversary

Tina and Amy were there, JT and Fallon rapped, Andy Samberg and Adam Sandler sang about “breaking,” there were two Stefons, and most importantly, Tay-Tay got in on the fun too. Congrats on 40 great years, Lorne!

2 Rosh Chodesh Adar

Purim is in the air, and with it the preparation for shpiels, cynicism, and sarcastic jokes. Does that mean this column should report serious news for our next issue?

3 Chinese New Year

February 19th marks the beginning of the Year of the Sheep. All the glamor of a New Year’s celebration without a fast ten days later. May it be one of health, happiness, and success for you and yours.

4 Cake Wars

Fighting cancer while decorating beautiful cakes?! Doing good hasn’t been this easy since... last Cake Wars!

5 Foam Soap

Gives you the perfect amount of soap while still allowing for the satisfying feeling of pushing down the pump all the way (multiple times!). Keeping everyone hygienic and healthy during flu season is an obvious plus.

6 The Seforim Sale

YU’s annual Seforim Sale gives the opportunity for frum guys to meet frum girls in a super-frum setting. Come on, what could be better than bonding over a nice sefer while being surrounded on all sides by the helpful people in black? Plus, if you’re faculty you get 5% off* *On certain days. Taxes and fees not included. Price and participation may vary. *The Commentator is not being compensated in any material way for advertising The Seforim Sale. We may get a shidduch out of it, though.*

7 Belfer Secret Tunnel

Feel like James Bond as you stealthily saunter through the secret passageways underneath Yeshiva University. But be careful—you never know who or what will be lurking underneath Furst. Either way, it’s safer than forging your way through the frigid iciness above.



The Seforim Sale: Back for Another Successful Year

By Darren May

YU students are pretty impressive. Whether they’re starting businesses, winning contests, or just following the rigorous YU class schedule, students in YU never cease to excel. One largely overlooked project that YU students undertake every year is to put together a business that involves a team of about one hundred people. This business services over ten thousand customers a year, and has inventory from over 120 suppliers. You guessed it, I’m talking about the YU Seforim Sale.

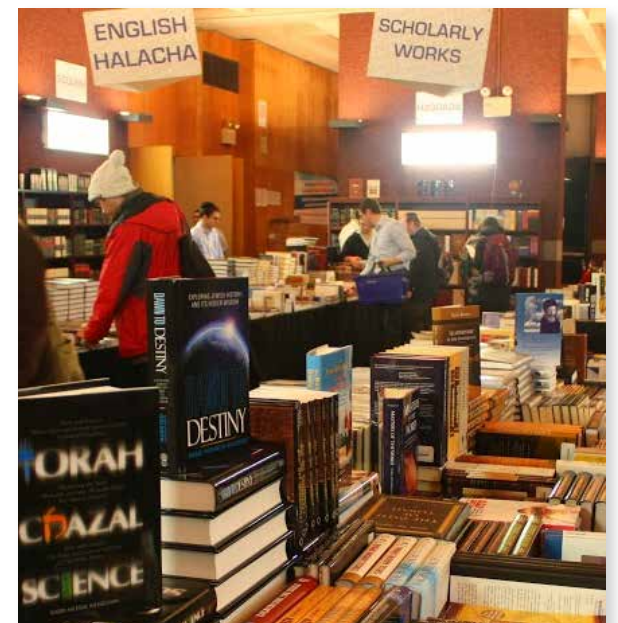
The Seforim Sale opened its doors to the public on the first of February, but behind the scenes YU students have been working on the sale for almost an entire year. The 7,892 volumes available for sale have been coming in since October. These volumes range from full sets of the Talmud, to giant books that says the word Jew 6 million times. From books on Jewish academia to volumes authored by Hasidic Rebbes, the Seforim Sale has it all.

When asked about the Seforim Sale, the CEO Shalom Zharnest said, “for a lot of us it is basically a full time job. We do it because it’s a lot of fun, and because it makes YU a better place.” This is a real testament to the commitment the YU student body has to spreading Jewish wisdom. The books that are displayed are chosen through a partnership that the Seforim Sale has with the RIETS staff. Books that are not up to the standards of the Yeshiva or the Seforim Sale are removed from the shelves. The remaining books are then put into their respective sections for customers to purchase.

“One of the most amazing things about the Seforim Sale is how it brings together Jews of all different backgrounds,” Zharnest said. “When one goes to the sale he will meet reform, conservative, modern, yeshivish, and even chasidish Jews coming together for the sake of learning Torah. There are very few other venues that bring American Jews together in the same way.”

Last year was an important year for the Seforim Sale, as it was the first year that the sale was profitable. This year the Seforim Sale team says that they plan to be even more profitable than last year. The team says that one of the main ways they have improved the profit-margin of the sale is by cutting down on expenses, and by making the sale more appealing to customers. This has been done through providing a very large range of books to choose from, and by redoing the sale’s website.

When one steps back and thinks that last year there were about 12,000 people who came to the Seforim Sale, and that there is a projected 15,000 people who will come this year, one really starts to see how amazing this achievement is. There are very few operations on campus that are run by the students, for the students. The Seforim Sale is one of those operations. It should be applauded as a venue where the ingenuity and tenacity of both the male and female factions of the YU student body shines through.



7 UP 7 DOWN

1 NBA ASG

Though watching Russell Westbrook and Stephen Curry play together should be amazing, I’ve seen better defense played at Yeshiva High School basketball games.

2 Cold

Things higher than the temperature in Fahrenheit this week: the price of a slice of pizza, days we got off from school for Juno, emails we get about boxes sitting outside of Chop Chop, and Oscar nominations for Nicolas Cage. Nicolas Cage! Once Nici Cage gets involved, it’s time to stay inside.

3 No Vaca for President’s Day

This day is a sacred holiday for Americans, about weird car sales that somehow relate to Abraham Lincoln. And it is near either Lincoln’s or Washington’s birthday, making it extremely uncomfortable to attend school on a day which we find so personally meaningful.

4 Week after Snow

Crossing the street is impossible, since there are mountains of ice/snow everywhere, and after a week all the snow has turned a gruesome dark black. At what point does it stop being snow, and just become a frozen pile of dirt?

5 Library Renovations

It’s been several weeks into the highly anticipated library renovations and I still don’t see escalators, ping pong tables, or soda fountain machines. Talk about budget cuts.

6 Budget Cuts

Let’s not talk about budget cuts.

7 Shuttle App

This has literally been down... for a while. But it will be worth the wait: Rumor has it the next app can do your taxes, tell time, and is equipped with YU-themed Trivia Crack. Still unclear whether you will be able to book a shuttle.



Einstein Agreement, cont. from p.1

but Montefiore and Einstein have grown together with Yeshiva University.”

Nor is it foreseeable that future negotiations will be without struggle. The agreement on ‘meta-factors,’ as President Joel describes the primary terms, still leaves many details to be sorted, including employment policies, contracts, procurement policies, human resource policies, and IT resources, to name a few. Additionally, President Joel also noted that there were still services which needed

to be rendered as well as paid for, a fiscal ambiguity Yeshiva University has grown accustomed to. Still, President Joel suggests that the deal between Montefiore and Einstein will likely be finalized no earlier than June.

The process is a long and difficult one, fraught with uncertainty in its past and future. It is, in this sense, an embodiment of the atmosphere surrounding Yeshiva University at this moment in history, and many are keenly observing the Einstein deal as a portent for the University as a whole. President Joel admitted “it’s not easy birthing...giving birth doesn’t come without pain.” With the

labors and near-miscarriages, one can’t help but wonder how much longer the institution must carry an uncertain pregnancy, and what pains it must undergo to deliver on its promises.

Bar Ilan/YU Science Summer Program Rumored to be Shutting Down

By Jeff Ohana

The Bar Ilan-Yeshiva University Summer Science Research Internship Program offers the opportunity to Yeshiva College and Stern College students to gain research experience in the advanced research laboratories of Bar Ilan’s Life Science, Exact Science, or Engineering Faculties. The accepted science major applicants have the chance to take part in the research with a science faculty member from Bar Ilan University.

Despite the huge success of the Summer 2014 program, it is unsure whether the program will be continued in Summer 2015. For the moment, all that is certain is that no applications are currently being accepted for Summer 2015; the application process should have been opened before February. The students of one unnamed physics professor at Yeshiva University echoed the professor’s prediction that the program would likely close. The head of the program, Dr. Ari Zivotofsky, was contacted by The Commentator, but he responded that there is no official decision yet regarding the program for Summer 2015.

Past Experience of YU Students on the Program

The BIU-YU Summer Science Research Internship had always been seen by the Yeshiva College and Stern College undergraduates as a great summer internship opportunity. In fact, from Summer 2011 to Summer 2014, the

program attracted dozens of YU students. Each summer was a huge success.

Chaim Metzger, a YC student, spent seven weeks doing research in Israel last summer. He appreciated being offered the chance to reside in Jerusalem in a YU dorm (the Bayit Vegan campus is opened for participants), where there is an active beit midrash. Even during

research mentor, Dr. Frydman, invited Metzger to spend Shabbat at his home, creating a nice relationship between them.

Possible Reasons for Ending the Program

The program seems to be a big success. For four summers now, YU students and the faculty

that the faculty members of Bar Ilan University involved in the program no longer have time to mentor research assistants during the summer. Faculty members often are required to monitor the work of their research assistants, teach them research procedures, and eventually write letters of recommendations for them.

All in all, the Bar Ilan/YU Science Summer Program may close its doors for this upcoming summer. If the program closes indefinitely, YU students will lose a unique opportunity to engage in summer research in Israel.

As some consolation, Yeshiva University offers other opportunities to its undergraduates to do research in the field of science. Yeshiva College faculty members often recruit specific students to take an active part in their research. In addition, YU organizes a similar summer undergraduate research program at Einstein, its affiliated medical school.



the summer, he had the chance to combine Torah and science. Also, he enjoyed doing research in physics with Dr. Aviad Frydman, a professor in physics at Bar Ilan. In addition to the serious research environment, some hours were scheduled for relaxation when the students could play ping-pong, make jokes, and share their research experiences. His

members of Bar Ilan have enjoyed working together. Each year, the program was flush with YU students. Nevertheless, it appears that the program will not reopen in summer 2015. YU’s finances are cited as a reason for the program’s discontinuation. Indeed, YU has to cover the housing, transportation, and food for students, for seven weeks. Some have posited

Library Renovations

By David Mehl

This past January, as most Yeshiva University students used the winter break to spend some time away from the campus, maintenance work began around the Mendel Gottesman Library Building in preparation for the first major renovations in the library’s 55-year history.

The construction project, which will resume after midterm examinations in April, is the result of a study conducted by the University over several months, which involved consulting with library staff, faculty, and students, as well as experts in the field of library construction and architecture in general. The study’s final report, completed in June 2012, pinpointed several areas in need of improvement. Only the Pollak Library has been targeted for the “massive overhaul”; no renovations are planned for the Mendel Gottesman Library of Hebraica/Judaica on the floors directly above.

The primary goal of the renovations will be to adjust the library’s focus, which Dean of Libraries Pearl S. Berger described as a response to changing times. “Modes of study and learning have changed significantly since [the library first opened],” she said. “Fifty or sixty years ago, the primary function of library buildings was to house collections. While library collections retain great significance, today’s university libraries are student-centered” - houses of study rather than just houses of books. To that end, the renovations will leave the

library with more tables and carrels for study, a new information commons area, and more than a dozen rooms available for group study.



Other issues will also be addressed. The irregular and often unsuitably dim lighting will be improved, to the great relief of sore-eyed students around the campus. Larger bathrooms will be installed for both men and women. The infamously difficult

to navigate stairwells will be restructured to make the entire library simpler to access. Digital infrastructure will also receive a necessary upgrade.

The library’s appearance is set to undergo an even more fundamental makeover. Much of the building’s drab brick exterior will be replaced with clear glass windows stretching from floor to ceiling, displaying to Amsterdam Avenue passers-by both the inside of the Pollak Library and the Nagel Commons area on the ground floor. Computer-generated architectural renderings of the planned construction show that portions of the low brick walls that line each of the library’s multiple tiers will also be replaced.

“The renovations will make the library appearance something that Yeshiva University students can be proud of,” said Etan Neiman, ‘16SB, Student Life Committee Liaison to Library Services. Though he allowed that some interference with studies would inevitably occur, Neiman pledged that the Student Life Committee would make it a priority to minimize any disruption of studies that the renovations may cause.

The renovations are the result of a donation by David and Ruth Gottesman. David Gottesman, a former chairman of the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees and a member of the Forbes Magazine list of America’s four hundred wealthiest people, is a grandson of Mendel Gottesman, for whom the library building is named. All renovations are scheduled to conclude within two years.

Fifteen Students in Haiti: A Break Well Spent

By Aaron Miller

Along with fourteen other disparate and diverse Yeshiva University students, I embarked on a journey to the Caribbean Islands on January 11, 2015 that would forever impact my life. We went on a mission to Haiti thinking we were going to impact the lives of Haitians in a meaningful way. However, it soon became clear that the trip was a profound internal, reflective experience to contemplate our own lives and how we play a role in the global picture. As much as we helped the community of Zoranje to plant trees, the experience implanted an indelible idea of the impact of a meaningful act.

The trip consisted of many different occasions to interact with different parts of Haiti that were profoundly affected by the earthquake. However, as our tour guide Jean Cyril Pressoir always stressed, the earthquake merely exacerbated already existing issues. With a lack of dependable infrastructure and poor governance, the future of the country lies in the hands of those who embody the dictum of Chazal, "It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either." Every person we met with, interestingly nearly all women, impressed our group with their ingenuity and perseverance despite lacking a proper partner in the government.

One such character was Loune Viand. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, amidst complete panic and disarray in the country, twenty-four children were abandoned in the general hospital in Port-au-Prince. Loune saw these children not as part of a saddening statistic but rather as individuals who needed a home and affection. Acting out of pure selflessness and idealism, Loune founded Zanmi Beni, a children's village providing every child with the "support necessary to reach his or her full potential in a safe, stable and loving environment."

After the initial awkwardness of trying to figure out how to communicate given the language barrier, we all found our niche with the children at Zanmi Beni, either playing ball or,

like myself, trying to conduct a conversation in the French that resided in the recesses of my brain. I had the privilege of speaking to a girl named Sheila about life there and the incredible love she felt from Loune and the staff. During the conversation, Sheila left me dumbfounded and profoundly changed. She said, "My mother is dead, my father is dead, mais je suis contente [I am happy]." Sheila's simple words spoke to the power of the in-

dividual. When everything from an external perspective looked so bleak and hopeless, an individual had the power to transform a life.

Another impactful experience in Haiti was volunteering in an elementary school in Zoranje called Ecole Nouvelle. The YU students split up into groups and led different activities with students in the school. The three groups created model volcanoes, constructing marshmallow bridges, and engaged

in creative dance. The school represents a unique approach to education in Haiti, serving as a model for other schools to emulate. The school rigorously trains their teachers and expects strict obedience from their pupils. As the students observed the simple chemical reaction between vinegar and baking soda, their excitement for education was palpable. In our debriefing sessions, it was a common refrain of the YU students to comment that we should learn about how incredibly lucky we are to have had such incredible, formative education.

Over a period of three days, we partnered with high school students to plant trees, to provide minimal shade in the community. After winning a national science competition, and with the help of the NGO Prodev, the students had everything they needed to plant the trees, except 15 American students plus staff to help them plant them. Although most of us had never wielded pickaxes before, we learned, and ultimately enjoyed the shared experience. The local Haitians frequently stopped by to observe the unusual sight of Americans performing manual labor and to laugh at our inadequacies. Although we left the site with two trees in the ground and over twenty holes primed for the trees, the group enjoyed meaningful cultural exchanges with the students and the community members. More than just planting trees, we planted seeds within ourselves that blossomed into a cross-cultural communication both meaningful and beneficial. There is more to learn beyond the walls of our *daled amot*.

Overall, the service mission raised important questions of how we relate to the rest of the world as Orthodox Jews. What is our role as global citizens? These powerful questions were made that much more tangible during the mission in Haiti. More than just answers, the trip showed me the incredible potential of an individual to make a difference.



**MORE THAN JUST PLANTING TREES,
WE PLANTED SEEDS OF REALIZATION WITHIN
OURSELVES, REINFORCING THE NOTION THAT
CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CAN BE
BOTH MEANINGFUL AND BENEFICIAL.
INDEED: THERE IS MORE TO LEARN BEYOND THE
WALLS OF OUR DALED AMOT.**

RecycleMania: Because it's Hard to Go Through Your Trash

By Oren Herschander

An exciting eight-week period for the sustainability universe, RecycleMania is a competition to promote waste reduction activities on campuses across the nation. In an attempt to motivate students to increase recycling efforts, YU's Office of Energy and Sustainability and the Eco Representatives, an environmental leadership program, have just kicked off this year's RecycleMania campaign.

Along with my fellow Eco Representatives, I sort through bags of recycling on both campuses, as the RecycleMania competition requires our team to report the amount of recycling produced each week, university-wide. While last year Yeshiva University did well in our divisional rankings, this year we hope to do even better!

Once a week, Eco Representatives grab their industrial scales and head over to various bag drop off locations on each campus with a mission to weigh the recycling totals for each week. Since the garbage bags and recycling bags are piled into adjacent piles, a certain amount of sifting around garbage bags is required to weigh the recycling. Despite the bitter cold, recycling bags filled with soda bottles, salad containers, and all rigid plastic, in addition to paper materials, are sorted, weighed, and tallied.

The beginning of this year's RecycleMania has so far yielded lower results than expected, jump-starting a wave of

sustainability and recycling awareness campaigns on campus. Look out for contests on the RecycleMania Facebook page, which award Starbucks and Amazon Gift cards to the most creative and liked pictures and videos related to recycling. Also, some fun tabling displays featuring interactive recycling activities will be popping up around Yeshiva University campuses.

A major issue facing Yeshiva University is that a lot of people are unaware as to what is or isn't recyclable in New York City, and in turn throw away many items that are actually recyclable. While there are easy-to-read charts and videos showing what is or is not recyclable, it is often easier to give tangible examples that a student might encounter on a day-to-day basis.

In terms of plastic recyclables, all hard, rigid plastic should be recycled - that's your salad containers (because of the cleaning process taking place at recycling facilities, they do not need to be 100% clean), sushi containers, forks, knives, and spoons. Plastic recycling can be placed in the marked blue bins, and while the coke bottle shaped containers feature lids which are only equipped to receive bottles, the bins can actually take salad containers, and all the other things mentioned above. It's as easy as simply lifting the lid and placing all larger items inside. Most universities have specific plastic bins, equipped for all types of plastics that are not just bottles, making recycling more of a natural and less awkward process; unfortunately, due to budgetary concerns and lack of interest, Yeshiva University

falls behind other universities, with the few bins set aside for plastic divided between the blue bottle bin containers and the free ones provided by the Coca-Cola Company.

All said and done, RecycleMania is an important time of year because it brings campus recycling issues to the forefront, which should spark a sense of general awareness beyond even those of sustainability and the future of our planet.

For me, recycling, beyond the environmental and financial benefits, raises an element of awareness that reminds me of my surroundings, and the stories of everything I use. Where did this salad container come from, where will it go once I toss it away, and who is the Eco Representative weighing it?

If you are interested in getting more involved in sustainability, and recycling efforts on campus please contact the Office of Energy and Sustainability at sustainability@yu.edu or visit us online at www.yu.edu/sustainability/



Je Suis Juif: Talk With Dr. Mesch Raises Questions Over Reactions to Tragedy

By Etai Shucatowitz

As part of an ongoing series on Violence and Social Justice, the Schneier Program for International Affairs and the Honors Program hosted a talk with Dr. Rachel Mesch entitled “Am I Charlie? French Universalism and the Jewish Question” about trying to understand the recent attacks in France. The discussion, while short and small, raised many important and controversial questions, most notably, what should our response to tragedy be?

It was a small and intimate event, filled with both faculty and students alike, all of whom came from varying backgrounds. The small setting created a personal atmosphere, featuring a perpetual pursuit of meaning, to make some sense of the absurd.

When tragedy strikes, theological questions, sociological questions, and political questions all arise. Everybody wants to just figure out the ever-evasive “why,” as if there must be some sense to be made of a seemingly senseless world. The Sunday following the attacks brought the largest public rally in France since World War II when an estimated 3.7 million people, including various world leaders, took to the streets to voice their displeasure and anger over the violence.

To answer this question, Dr. Mesch, an expert in French literature and culture, placed the tragedy in the context of French society and history, arguing that the attack comes from an issue with French universalism. “The narrative Dr. Mesch wove regarding France’s Jewish and Muslim ‘questions’ was nuanced,” said David Berger, one of the Schneier Program’s coordinators. “We are compelled by singular events to put things into binary categories, such as good vs. evil, and while certain individuals, groups, and beliefs may warrant these labels, they are not very helpful in addressing challenges and dangers.” Dr. Mesch argued that the attack represented the conflict that derives from the “freedom of religion and freedom from religion” that is so integral to French culture.

While placing the attack in a broader context, Dr. Mesch

touched upon the French desire to keep a homogenous “public sphere.” This would mean, she argued, that religious life, something that often affects every aspect of life, is encouraged to remain completely private. The difficulty maintaining this standard is what instigates much of the religious and secular tension throughout the country.



Dr. Rachel Mesch

“I think Professor Mesch offered an interesting historical perspective on the relationship France has with its minority communities, and suggested a new manner of approaching those relationships from an outsider’s view,” said Daniel Shlian (YC ‘17). “Tragedies give us the opportunity for reflection on their causes, if only to attempt to prevent their recurrences, and as events which provoke strong reactions, they should certainly inspire discourse about those responses. Obviously there should be space for raw emotional responses, but that doesn’t mean that tragedies shouldn’t be fodder for further discussion.”

This contextualization of the attack is a fascinating one that brings with it many questions. There always exists a tension in the analysis of tragedy. On the one hand, it’s important to make sense of what happened. On the other hand, this may result in losing sight of the fact that this was a tragic event. If one is able to rationally explain “tragedy,” then it might lose the extremity that the word tragedy brings with it.

When asked if this should be a concern, Dr. Mesch responded that “my goal was not to diminish the sense of tragedy or deny the evil that leads to such brutal murder and terrorism. Rather, I wanted to give a framework for understanding what exactly was being attacked through these acts.” The discussion that followed allowed people to understand that the attack on Charlie Hebdo was an attack on French universalism and freedom from religion. Dr. Mesch continued, “The framework that I offered was not a response to the tragedy as such, but rather a response to a certain kind reaction that assumes all anti-Semitism and all terrorism to be driven by the same forces and leading to the same result, affecting all cultures and societies in the same ways.”

In a broad context, this new analysis of French anti-Semitism, Dr. Mesch argued, allows us to better understand why France doesn’t want the Jews to leave. If all of the Jews left France, it would indicate a failing on the universalist foundation of French society. It would indicate that France is not a home to everybody.

It’s often difficult to understand why, and often the pursuit of an answer results only in more questions. As film critic David Denby wrote in his review of the film *Downfall*, a film which attempts to humanize Hitler, “We get the point: Hitler was not a supernatural being...But is this observation a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did?” Whether analyzing the how of tragedy relates to the broader question of understanding the why, is a large question that remains unanswered. But, at the very least, this ongoing series on violence and social justice provides much interesting food for thought.

Security on Campus: NYPD Presence and Appreciation

By Ben Kohane

Recent tragic events from around the world, from the brutal massacres in Paris last month to last Saturday night’s shooting in Copenhagen near a synagogue, have drawn much attention to the importance of security in the face of possible anti-Semitic violence. Here at Yeshiva University, recognition of this growing trend is more relevant than ever before. “Security concerns have been heightened as a result of [these] events,” explained a university-wide security advisory email, circulated just as the semester began. “While there have not been any specific threats to us,” the author of the email, Director of Security at YU Paul Murtha continued, “the Yeshiva University Security Department in coordination with the New York City Police Department has heightened its state of readiness.”

On campus, this state of readiness has been most visibly implemented by an increase in police presence on campus. Posted at the entrances to school buildings, dormitories, and at the corner of 185th Street and Amsterdam Avenue at both scheduled and intermittent times, police officers provide an extra layer of security awareness and crime deterrent. Additionally, the YU Alert system, which notifies all students, employees, and other members of the campus community of emergency circumstances on campus, has been utilized several times in the past couple of months. According to the YU Security website, the notification system, which sends out text messages, voice messages, and emails, is used to notify its subscribers of “situations [which] present a threat to community safety at any of our campuses, when there are major facility or campus closures, and timely warnings of criminal activity.”

It is important to realize that “the safety of our campuses isn’t driven solely by episodes or threats of violence,” as Paul Oestreicher, Director of Communications speaking for the Security Department, explained. “Safety and security are matters of paramount importance and are evaluated here on an ongoing basis.” Though Dr. Oestreicher was unable to delve into the details of YU’s security arrangements – in order to protect the integrity of these plans – he did assure that “a number of

behind-the-scenes changes have taken place in recent years and there will be some visible changes beyond the uniformed officers coming soon.”

Some students, like YC senior Arel Levkovich, “appreciate the increase in the presence of police officers on the Wilf Campus.” Despite the recent controversy over police behavior in the media, Levkovich continued, “I feel safer with them around – especially when we consider the many anti-Semitic attacks that have been occurring around the world lately. YU can easily be seen as a target.”



“I think that when we have to protect ourselves for who we are, that’s when you know that something is fundamentally wrong,” echoed Alan Verbitzky (YC ‘15). “However, I do think that YU is doing very well strategically, because most institutions wait for something to happen in order to increase security, instead of acting preemptively.”

Others, like YC senior Herschel Singer, say “that the increased presence has come as a bit of a surprise. I have never felt unsafe or threatened throughout my time living in the Heights.” While the officers have not actively contributed to security protocols, Singer admits that “perhaps their mere presence may be their impact.”

YU’s student government and Office of Student Life have certainly recognized the significance of the recent events from

around the world and the importance of the New York Police Department’s contributions to our campus security. YSU President Natan Szegedi and Stern’s TAC President Amanda Esraelian joined Vice President of University and Community Life Rabbi Kenneth Brander on a recent two-day solidarity mission to visit Paris, along with Jewish community leaders from all across America. In a radio interview with JM in the AM, Esraelian described that “it was extremely eye-opening to see... everything that Jews in France have to face on a day-to-day basis.”

These actions also carried over to campus itself. According to Hezzy Jesin, the Wilf Campus Director of Student Life, “the presidents had a discussion about recognizing the integral role the NYPD plays in creating a safe environment in which we can pursue our studies, practice our religion, and take part in a robust, Jewish campus life.” While a visit was made to the local precinct in midtown near the Beren campus, logistic issues prevented a similar visit to the local 34th precinct. Instead, an official Appreciation Effort initiative was launched. As Shai Berman, senior and YCSA president, explained, “We asked students to stop by and sign their name on a YU shirt, which we will have framed and given to our local NYPD precinct as a symbol of our appreciation for their constant efforts.” Indeed, after only three days of tabling in Rubin Lounge, the shirt was completely filled with signatures. “While this route may have been less personal,” Berger continued, “in the end, it might be more permanent and impactful. Hopefully, our gift will be displayed in the precinct and serve as a constant reminder of YU students’ gratitude for NYPD and their work in keeping us safe.”

While the news of shootings near Jewish supermarkets or synagogues is difficult to understand, it is simultaneously important to “live with the constant awareness that our safety, no matter where we may be, must not be taken for granted,” as Berman wrote in his email to the student body explaining the NYPD Appreciation Effort. Indeed, campus security looks to continue to be one of the most important and focal aspects of the university.

YU and the 2015 Limmud Conference

By Yaakov Sebrov

Yeshiva University students once again participated in the Limmud Conference, an international Jewish initiative meant to get Jews of all denominations to come together for a four-day learning event. The Limmud Conference started in England 30 years ago and averages about three thousand people annually. With that many attendees, it has impacted the lives of countless people across the UK. Building upon that success, Limmud expanded their operations internationally, and about 10 years ago, started in New York where they now get around 750 people every year.

At the Limmud Conference, Jews of all ages, “from infants to grandparents, of all denominations – Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, secular, post-denominational – and all political affiliations gather to celebrate the richness of Jewish life for an extended retreat filled with sessions, performances, meals, late night jam sessions and endless opportunities to learn about themselves and each other.” This is what makes it so attractive to Yeshiva University. In an interview with *The Commentator*, Rabbi Brander, the Vice President for University and Community Life explained that the people who support the service learning programs of the CJF are people who believe that there should be “experiential opportunities to the students’ Torah and academic experience.” What better way to experience Torah than getting together and learning with all different

types of Jews from all walks of life.

This year, significant changes were made as to how YU would participate in the Limmud Conference. In previous years, about seven or eight students would attend the conference. As with all student programs and initiatives run by the CJF, a private donor covered a big chunk of the cost for students to participate. This included half the cost of attending the conference and the transportation. Additionally, the donor sponsored an advisor. Last year, that advisor was Dr. Aaron Koller, Associate Dean of Yeshiva College. He told *The Commentator* that he functioned as a liaison of sorts and would meet

with YU students and discuss the different things they would do to help out with the conference. Furthermore, he helped arrange special sessions with different speakers who he thought would be most beneficial to YU students. This year, however, the donor decided to switch things around and instead chose to subsidize three students from RIETS as well as students from other Rabbinical schools. Rabbi Brander explained that the donor believed it would be beneficial to give future Rabbis of Yeshiva University the pluralistic experience, instead of just displaying Yeshiva University through the undergraduate oriented lens. Still, several undergraduate students attended this year’s conference and Dr. Koller was there on Sunday to assist them in what turned out to be an extraordinarily successful event.



Dr. Aaron Koller

Panel on Criminal Justice System and Minorities Presents Both a Problem and a Call to Action

By David Rubinstein

As tensions rise nationwide about police brutality and race, discussions of the criminal justice system and minorities were raised in a panel hosted by the YU Tzedek Society, Stern Social Justice Society, and Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program. The panel discussion came just one day after a grand jury indicted Police Officer Peter Liang for manslaughter. Liang shot and killed Akai Gurley in the stairwell of Brooklyn housing project last November.

The panel consisted of four distinguished experts. Cardozo Law School Professor Ekow Yankah, who specializes in legal philosophy, criminal theory and political theory, has written about relevant cases in publication such as *The New York Times* and *Huffington Post*. Michael Lyles, a fellow at Cardozo’s Center for Public Service Law, has served as an assistant district attorney in Manhattan. Sarah Lustbader, public defender in the Bronx, has written about these issues as well. Her articles on law enforcement and minorities have appeared in *The Week* and the *Washington Post*. RIETS’s Senior Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau presented the religious considerations of the matter.

Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, Dean of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program, opened the program, praising the student initiative that assembled the event. “The students showed leadership on the intellectual level by discussing what should be the conversation in a university setting about a controversial topic that is important.”

Yosie Friedman (YC ’17), President of the YU Tzedek Society and organizer of the event, made the perambulatory remarks and introduced the speakers: “In light of recent events, including the Ferguson decision, Eric Garner decision, and the murder of two NYPD police officers, this debate” about how to balance peace, security, and justice for each member of society has become “ever more heated.” Friedman assembled the panel in light of the recent tension.

Elliot Friedman, Yosie’s brother, moderated the panel. An honors graduate of Yeshiva College (’11) and RIETS (’13) and currently a student at Yale Law School, Elliot has represented disadvantaged clients and guest-lectured at Stern College on legal philosophy. “Being the voice of the disadvantaged in the

legal system is an embodiment of the Jewish values I learned at YU and RIETS,” the elder Friedman remarked. He aspires to become a public defender.

Maddie (Tavin) Zimilover (Stern ’15), Stern Social Justice Society President and co-organizer of the panel, concluded the event and summarized its lessons: “We brought the problems at hand to the forefront of awareness and we learned about ways in which we can deal with the issue.”



From left: panel members Ekow Yankah, Michael Lyles, Sarah Lustbader, and R. Yosef Blau

The panel filled Belfer Hall’s fourth floor lecture hall. “I came because I had felt so helpless at the time of the [Michael Brown and Eric Garner] murders,” said a Stern College sophomore. “I heard some great speakers tonight.”

The discussion began with a question addressed to the panel in general, each panelist offering his or her answer. The rounds that followed directed questions at one or two of the speakers.

The consensus seems to have been that law enforcement and the criminal justice system are inclined to be unfavorable towards minorities at best, and intrinsically racist and discriminatory at worst. Professor Yankah stressed that there is a problem in the way policing is done in this country, and this problem becomes manifest in incidents like the shootings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

“When you’re returning from the gym in a hoodie, it’s completely different from when you’re coming back from the office in a suit,” Yankah said, referring to police being more suspicious of African-Americans depending on their dress.

Mr. Lyles echoed this sentiment, drawing on his experience as a private defense attorney. He shared the story of a client who received a completely different offer from the prosecution when the prosecution learned that the defendant had a college degree. “When you use that mentality to decide who gets bail

and who gets arraignment,” you can see how race is a driving force in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

“We have to ask who the system was set up for,” Ms. Lustbader urged. Her conclusion: “it was designed for [people like] me, growing in white Manhattan.” Her description of the problem was more colorful, at one point sharing her reaction to racism she encountered from family members at a Thanksgiving meal: “I wanted to throw up.”

Mr. Lyles noted that one must keep in mind that police are also human beings. “They just want to go home at the end of the day, just like you and me.” How race plays into the police’s quest for self-preservation, however, is a “big question” that needs to be addressed. “We all have to be invested in asking these questions and holding police officers accountable when they make a mistake, but also understanding that they have a tough job.”

To some, the panel seemed one-sided. No representative of the police was present at the event. “We tried hard to bring a person directly involved with law enforcement but they all said that they rather not come,” Dr. Cwilich explained.

Political science major Uri Segelman (YC ’15) thought that the panel “was another police bashfest,” which failed to “mention in any serious way the split-second decisions police officers must make as well as the dangers they face.” Segelman lamented that “it is yet again unfortunate to see a panel discussing the police and minority communities yet failing to mention incredibly important and relevant statistics regarding black crime.”

Is there hope for a solution to the problem addressed by the panel? “Until this [problem] becomes a human issue,” Lyles is skeptical that there will be much progress. Ms. Lustbader suggested that equipping law enforcement with body cameras would be helpful. Rabbi Blau appealed to examples of “community policing” wherein laws are enforcement by community members whose interest is presumably the best interest of the community. Professor Yankah urged, “We need to start asking, how can we make an environment in which we care about those whom we police?”

About the turnout for the event, Mrs. Zimilover remarked, “This is a great way to see that YU students care about reaching beyond, into the community around us.”

YUPAC 2015: YU Inundates Washington with Student Lobbyists

By Noam Safier

On February 4th, the Yeshiva University Political Awareness Club, or YUPAC, descended on Washington D.C. to advocate for Israel. By 6:45 am, the busses of sleepy students pulled away from Amsterdam Ave. and 185th and headed south. Over 175 high school and college students, the largest pro-Israel student lobby group in the United States this year, took the four hour drive down to the nation's capital for a day of lobbying, sightseeing and new experiences. The trip was organized in conjunction with various student councils, the Office of Admissions, and the CJF.

Immediately upon reaching D.C., the students filed into the AIPAC official headquarters for inspiration and instruction from the pro-Israel professionals. Jonathan Kessler, Leadership Development Director at AIPAC, compared the large group of Orthodox lobbyists to the famous march on Washington by 500 Orthodox rabbis who unsuccessfully demanded US intervention in saving European Jewry from the Nazis in 1943. "Never again will we be strangers to power," he charged. Although the rabbis made an impressive demonstration outside of Capitol Hill, their lack of influence within the governmental bodies, he explained, is the reason they weren't heard.

Now, with the Jewish State facing the in-

creasing threat of a nuclear capable Iran, the students traversed Capitol Hill, meeting with Congresspeople and Senators, to make the case for sanctions against Iran. The agenda, specifically, was to push support for the Nu-

clear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015. The bill resolution of a deal on their nuclear program. For every month a deal is not reached with the rogue government, new and harsher sanctions would be imposed.

The students met with the offices of vari-

ous governmental officials including Senators Menendez (NJ), Blumenthal (CT) and Gillibrand (NY) as well as an array of members of the House of Representatives.

For Esti Hirt, a sophomore at Stern, the trip was beneficial to more than just the tiny democracy. "It's one thing to look at the news and see all that goes on in a world of politics that seems distant, but through going today to Capitol Hill we really felt a part of it." For many students this mission was a rare opportunity to get involved in the political process. Chanoch Aaminsky, a senior at MTA High School and first time lobbyist, felt it was part of his duty as an American Jew to be involved. "I think it's great that we are able to actually meet with government officials and show them that we are concerned with the issues," he explained. "It really made me feel like I have a say in the decisions made by the government."

The end of the day offered both groups of students a unique experience. High school students were sent to the Israeli Embassy where they were briefed on various activities within the office, while the college students paid homage to our nation's most well-known home, the White House. There they heard from Matt Nosanchuk, the official White House Jewish Liaison, on his office's involvement within the national Jewish community.

Co-president of YUPAC, Rebecca Saragossi, believes student involvement in the political process

is of utmost importance. It's important, she explained, "to give them the tools they need and show them they can make changes and be future leaders."



clear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015. The bill would set a deadline by which previously rescinded sanctions would be reinstated, under the recognition that Iran has delayed the

ous governmental officials including Senators Menendez (NJ), Blumenthal (CT) and Gillibrand (NY) as well as an array of members of the House of Representatives.

No Classes? No Problem!

By Doron Levine

"This will likely be one of the largest blizzards in the history of New York City," proclaimed New York Mayor Bill de Blasio. With Snowstorm Juno approaching and New York City's mayor issuing such apocalyptic warnings, YU's administration made a rare decision. At 2 p.m. on Monday afternoon, Jeffrey Rosengarten, YU's Vice President for Administrative Services, informed students that not only were classes cancelled for Monday afternoon, but "all Yeshiva University classes, events, programs, and offices" would be shut down on Tuesday, January 27. The university would be closed for an entire day.

The predictions were ominous. While the Weather Channel expected twelve to eighteen inches of snow, the National Weather Service predicted twenty to thirty inches in New York City. Winds of over seventy miles-per-hour, almost hurricane force, were expected in some areas of Long Island. "Mother Nature has decided once again to come visit us in an extreme way," said Governor Andrew Cuomo. New York City parks closed at 6pm., and all cars were ordered off the streets by 11pm.

Sensing unease in the student body, Sean Hirschhorn, the Director of University Housing and Residence Life, sent out an email on Monday night to answer all potential concerns. He specified which facilities would remain open and which would run on modified schedules. He urged students to prepare for the storm by fully charging their electronics and keeping a flashlight handy (or, alternatively, downloading a free flashlight app from the App Store), and he assured that students' basic needs would be provided for, encouraging nervous students to approach their resident advisors with any questions.

The decision to cancel classes is nothing to sneeze at. YU has a committee of high-level administration responsible for deciding whether to close school. The committee is headed by Josh Joseph, YU's senior vice president, and includes the Provost and the respective heads of Administrative Services,

University and Community Life, Security, Human Resources, and Communications and Public Affairs. As Snowstorm Juno approached, the committee closely monitored the weather, assessing the predicted severity of the storm. The committee also continually checked for municipal and state transportation alerts, and conducted on-the-ground assessments of the campus and its surrounding roads. Dr. Paul Oestreicher, who sits on the committee as YU's Executive Director of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs explained that "the decision to close the University has a single criterion: safety."

Despite the cataclysmic forecast of meteorological doom, the storm proved anticlimactic. New York was not exactly pummeled by one of the largest snowfalls in its history: only 9.8 inches of snow fell in Central Park. Peeved by the perceived overreaction by weathermen, politicians, and school administrators, some have questioned the committee's decision to cancel a day and a half of classes. But the committee has no regrets. Said Dr. Oestreicher, "The decision to close the university was the correct one. Predictions can be wrong but it's always right to err on the side of safety."

Though classes were officially cancelled for Monday afternoon and Tuesday, YU's professors devised various solutions for the loss of class time. On Monday, some teachers held class despite the snow. The more technologically savvy professors concocted creative approaches – Professor Gillian Steinberg conducted an engaging class discussion of George Herbert's poetry via email thread. Other professors simply cancelled class, and will be making up sessions during reading week.

Students had limited mobility due to the snow – walking was treacherous and shuttle service was cancelled. Most students battened down the hatches, hunkering down at YU where all their needs were provided for. The library was closed, but the Heights Lounge and Nagel Commons were open; students could be found in the lounge all day doing schoolwork, conversing, and watching movies. And students' spiritual needs were also

fulfilled – there was an 8:30 and 9:10 Shacharit minyan in every dorm building on Tuesday morning, and, though regular Judaic studies classes were cancelled, some ad hoc shiurim were organized.

Chilly students still need to eat food. Acutely aware of this, Dining Services remained open during the snow day. Anticipating treacherous road conditions on Tuesday morning, cafeteria workers stayed over on Monday night in open rooms on various floors of the Ruben dormitory. While other staff enjoyed a day of vacation, these essential personnel were hard at work, ensuring that students had what to eat.

Because cars were ordered off the streets after 11 p.m. on Monday night, the streets were eerily quiet. Inspired by this rare tranquility, some students ventured out into the snowy night for various wintry activities including snowball fights, football, and sledding on the hill between Wadsworth and Broadway. On Tuesday, a group of students embarked on a sledding expedition, attempting hills around Washington Heights including the intersection of Overlook Terrace and 187th, various slopes in Fort Tryon Park, and the stairs that lead up to Fort Washington. Said Aryeh Tiefenbrunn, a member of this adventurous bunch, "It was the most exhilarating experience I've ever had in the Heights, once I got over the absurdity of our use of empty pizza boxes as sleds."

Though it interfered with academics, the snowstorm increased camaraderie here at YU. For around twenty-four hours, the hustle and bustle of YU's urban campuses died down. Though embedded in the heart of a cosmopolitan metropolis, YU felt momentarily like a quiet village. In preparation for the storm, Mr. Hirschhorn advised students, "If you are feeling anxious, surround yourself with fellow students," and many heeded his advice. Thus January 27th, while less intellectually stimulating than a routine Tuesday, brought the YU community just a little bit closer.

A Tale of Two Cities

By Natan Szegedi

From February 7th - 10th, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) led a solidarity mission to Paris, France with the goal of understanding the issues facing the local Jewish community and finding ways in which we can help. Forty community leaders from 18 different cities across the US joined the trip, including Rabbi Kenneth Brander of Yeshiva University, Amanda Esraelian (President of Stern's Torah Activities Council) and myself (President of Yeshiva Student Union) were fortunate enough to participate in this mission and share our experiences with the student body.

There was something foreshadowing in the duplicity of the weather throughout our stay in Paris. It was both sunny and cold, or at times cloudy but pleasant. It would take until the end of the trip for me to realize that this duality will become the defining characteristic of the state of the French Jewry. As we learned more and more about different aspects of local Jewish life, I increasingly understood that the matters at hand are hardly black and white. Every topic of conversation revealed that even in cases where the situation seems straightforward, there is always some other less-obvious side of the coin too.

The raison d'être for the entire trip was, of course, the recent attack on the Hypercacher kosher supermarket that left four Jews killed during a hostage crisis. The attack hastened the recognition that anti-Semitism is on a new rise throughout Europe. Rising levels of anti-Semitism are increasingly felt on the entire continent. In France specifically, there was 101% rise in hate crime this past year, 50% of which was directed against Jews (while Jews make up about 1% of the country's population). Tali Ochayon, Chief Executive Deputy of the Protection Service of the Jewish Community[1] (SPCJ) explained that they have started training parents of over 12,000 children on basic security measures and asked them to take turns in patrolling the Jewish neighborhoods. While these are scary facts, I was even more shocked after having learned about the massive size of the French Jewish community.

There are an estimated 550,000 Jews living in France today. 30,000 children attend Jewish day-schools and there are over 600 Jewish institutions (schools, restaurants, cemeteries, shuls, JCC's) in Paris alone. France has the 3rd largest population of Jews, ranking after Israel and the United States only. The Jewish community dates back over a millennium, and was home of rabbinic giants like Rashi.

It appeared to me that our generation doesn't know the "concept" of living in a large, well-established community while at the same time still facing open anti-Semitism. We understand communities like the US and Israel, where Jews live in relative safety and do not have to be worried about being targets of hate. It was surreal to see a Jewish day-school of 1,200 students (one of the 30 different Jewish schools) all of whom are advised to take off their kippas when leaving school. Or a street full of kosher restaurants and judaica stores being

guarded by French soldiers (that is, members of the military, not even policemen) because of the very real threat of attacks. Intuition would tell us that with large numbers comes some sort of safety, and yet in France today this does not seem to be the case.

The French government will soon be publishing a "roadmap" of actions it intends to take in order to fight racism and anti-Semitism - as it was explained to us by Mr. Gilles Clavreul, a minister of the government. He assured us of the government's commitment to protecting its Jewish population, as exemplified by the presence of the military in front of synagogues, schools, and JCC's. He also admitted that eventually the Jewish community will have to rely on its own to protect itself as the soldiers cannot stay forever. Mr. Clavreul said that "they [the soldiers] will stay as long as their mission is necessary", but as to what that means and what will happen after that he would not disclose. I personally walked away from the meeting with a sense of disappointment, because between the promises of commitment and dedication, there were very few tangible facts and solutions mentioned.

MUCH OF OUR GENERATION IS UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CONCEPT OF LIVING IN A LARGE, WELL-ESTABLISHED JEWISH COMMUNITY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STILL FACING OPEN ANTI-SEMITISM. IT WAS SURREAL TO SEE A JEWISH DAY-SCHOOL OF 1,200 STUDENTS (ONE OF THE 30 DIFFERENT JEWISH SCHOOLS), ALL OF WHOM ARE ADVISED TO TAKE OFF THEIR KIPPAS WHEN LEAVING SCHOOL.

The second biggest issue we discussed was aliyah and Israel. Recent years have seen massive increases in the number of Jews leaving France especially to Israel but also to Canada and the US. In 2014, a record breaking 7,000 Jews made aliyah and this number is expected to grow to 10,000 in 2015. University (and high school) students we met with expressed that they don't see themselves living their lives in France. Their reasons included anti-Semitism, the desire to live in Israel, and family ties. "The terrorist attacks only boosted the trend of Jewish

emigration from France and it will have a long lasting impact on the local community" - according to Diego Orniq, JDC's (Joint Distribution Committee) Regional Director for Europe. He noted that "the 550,000 Jews will never leave the country en masse, it's mostly the affiliated and active members of the community who leave. This creates a vacuum in leadership, as the ones who are left here (in France) are less able to effectively protect and advocate for themselves."

Yossi Gal, the Israeli Ambassador to France expressed the same concern. He is worried for the people who will undoubtedly be left in France without leadership. He emphasized that the State of Israel sees itself as the defender of Jews anywhere in the world, and that his government is closely monitoring the recent events. The ambassador lauded the efforts of the French government and considers France a historic ally of Israel. A few years ago there were hopes for the return of the "golden age" of French-Israeli relations but recent events (especially the war in Gaza this summer) distanced the two countries from each other. Ambassador Gal noted, however, that while Israel receives condemnation about matters related to the Palestinian issue, France has been absolutely consistent in opposing Iranian nuclear armament. The French government has been very supportive of Israeli initiatives taken against Iran.

The trip to Paris left me with a lot of different feelings. On the one hand, France is experiencing an economic and a societal crisis. As we've seen too many times before, nothing attracts anti-Semitism more than economic issues facing the general population, and in this regard the situation in France is too typical of our 2,000-year-long diaspora. A massive Jewish population is living under fear, something I compared in my mind to the late 1930's of Europe. I imagine the Jews of Poland felt the same way as attacks on them increased over the years leading up to the darkest years of modern Jewish history. There is this tension in the air that things are not moving in the right direction and something must be done. The French soldiers who - for now - practically live in Jewish schools and shuls will undoubtedly leave eventually, and then the burden of protecting Jews all over France will have to fall on someone else. Who will make sure that all those who just want to daven with a minyan in Paris can feel safe doing so?

Of course, we have the State of Israel now, a country that welcomes any Jew who wants to return for any reason. The reality is, however, that there will be Jews left in France (and Europe) for many more decades to come and their struggles must not be ignored. History is known to repeat itself, and we must make sure we have learned from the past so that the Jewish people can prevail in the future.

[1] If some of you are imagining the SPCJ as something along the lines of the 'shomrim' we have in our neighborhoods, allow me to clarify that: the SPCJ deals with real, constant terror attempts against the local community. Just a few days before our arrival, outsiders tried to get into a Friday night dinner at the Victorie Synagogue (pretending to be Jewish) in order to scout for a possible future attack.



photo courtesy of the JFNA Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/jfederations>

YUNMUN Celebrates Its 25th Year

By Avi Strauss

From February 8-10th, high school students from across the world gathered in Stamford, Connecticut for Yeshiva University's annual Model United Nations conference. This year the conference celebrated its 25th year by hosting its largest gathering ever, over 450 students from across the United States and Canada and as far as Brazil and South Africa. The event was coordinated by the Admissions Office and run by undergraduate student leaders, namely Aaron Portman (YC '16), the Secretary-General, and Under-Secretary-Generals Hadassah Tirschwell (SCW '15), Dovi Nadel (YC '15) and Danielle Orenshein (SCW '16).

As is standard practice, the event was kicked off with a formal gathering and introduction. After a brief welcome by Matt Schwartz from the YU Admissions Office, Secretary General Portman addressed the assembly of students, staff and advisors. He shared the story of Iqbal Masih, a 12 year old revolutionary from Pakistan, who fled enslavement and became a very vocal advocate for child and worker's rights. His advocacy encouraged many others to flee like he did, but also earned the ire of the labor-business leaders as well. Ultimately, Iqbal was gunned down in what was believed to have been an assassination on part of the labor mafia. However, as Portman reminded the room, his speech was not for naught. Iqbal's bravery and advocacy—his powerful uses of his voice—were forces for change. At YUNMUN, the delegates would also have a chance to use their voice, and Portman encouraged them to speak passionately, to voice concern for the world's problems, both at the conference and afterwards, before

officially kicking off the event with the ceremonial gavel bang and declaration.

The event exhibited three days of rigorous debate, discussion and compromise. The students were tasked with representing the countries of the world, their economic and political stances, cultures and opinions. Assigned to various committees months in



advance, students led such committees as the Security Council, Middle East Summit, World Health Organization, International Criminal Court amongst others, and prepared the designated topics relevant to their committees.

The students, or "delegates", were expected to accurately represent their respective country's views, as many did. "I learnt a lot about my country, Argentina, but also about all

the other countries that were in my committee as well," said Ariana Gewurz, a sophomore from Maimonides Yeshiva High School in Boston.

YU students are charged with running each committee, ensuring that procedure and guidelines are followed. The chair people of each committee are also designated as the

judges and the delegates are judged on their speaking, leadership, reasoning and ability to negotiate and compromise. Committee sessions can be tense, with rival countries vying to have their demands met. Caucusing and working together become vital as the students learn to compromise and cooperate.

Reflecting on her sixth and final year at YUNMUN, Under-Secretary Tirschwell

remarked how happy she was to have had "the opportunity to be a part of an intellectual community and to share interests and passions with other students from around the country and the world."

Her sentiment was certainly shared by the student delegates. Isaac Wolfe, a senior at Akiva Hebrew Day School in Detroit, shared: "Even though it was my third year at YUNMUN, the experience still felt fresh and unique. It was amazing to befriend and collaborate with students from across the country and around the world as we delved into global issues."

YUNMUN concluded with a speech and Q & A session with President Joel, followed by the award ceremony. Each chair awarded two delegates "Honorable Mention" and a "Best Delegate" to the most impressive students in their committees. This was obviously a tall task given the vast pool of impressive delegates. The overall Best Delegation was awarded to S.A.R. Yeshiva High School in Riverdale, with second and third going to YULA and Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy in Maryland, respectively.

The students then gathered to say goodbye and head home. Acknowledging the tremendous amount he learned and gained over the course of YUNMUN, Wolfe enthused: "By the end of the weekend, I walked out of the convention center with three things: new friends, newfound knowledge, and a renewed perspective." Furthermore he expressed his newfound desire "to create positive change," a sentiment certainly shared by his peers, and one that echoed the message of YUNMUN that Portman had encouraged all the students to pursue.

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Yeshivas Bein HaSemesterim

By Joey Chesir

This winter vacation, many students chose to vacation in warm locales or visit Israel after completing a difficult finals season. Some students, however, chose to enroll in the Bein HaSemesterim (lit. between the semesters) program over the winter break, opting for Torah study instead of fun in the sun. The daily schedule of the program was reminiscent of a daily Israel-Yeshiva format, combining a morning seder, shiur, afternoon seder, and night seder into a daily schedule. The program also featured open gym hours during the nighttime. For over 70 students, this program was a welcome chance to immerse in religious study in between the difficult college semesters. Additionally, for a nominal fee, students were provided with free meals for the entire two week span. On top of the daily learning program, students were also taken on a trip to Yeshivat Torah V'Daat in Brooklyn, where they heard a

speech from a Rosh Yeshiva there.

Many students feel the need to visit the yeshivot in Israel where they spent a year or more learning Torah, but for the members of the Bein HaSemesterim program, religious growth could be found even in Washington Heights. Elisha Hagler, a sophomore, was adamant about the benefits of the program. "There was a lot of chill time, with a great group of guys," he said. "Plus, the food was much better than Shaalvim's!" Hagler was also confident with the effectiveness of the program's leadership, especially with Rabbi Elisha Bacon: "Rabbi Bacon ran everything. Rabbi Bacon is the man!"

While Yeshiva University does offer learning programs during the day, many students are overwhelmed by the stresses of YU's dual curriculum, and find it difficult to maintain levels of spirituality that were easier to preserve in Israel. Hagler, for one, felt that the program was a welcome chance to spend his entire vacation on religious matters. "Coming off my

first semester, it was definitely difficult to adjust to the dual curriculum, and it was nice to be able to learn full time again. I really appreciated the efforts put in by the Yeshiva to make Yeshivat Bein HaSemesterim a truly enjoyable experience".

Due to the popularity of this year's edition of Yeshivat Bein HaSemesterim, YU may look to offer a similar program for the next extended break, or to expand the program next year and offer even more attractive options for its students.



Liberty, Equality, and Obscenity

By Doron Levine

When jihadists opened fire in French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo's office in Paris, an ideological struggle culminated in murder. The events begged analysis, but the destruction of human life should almost always be followed by a moment of silence. Knee-jerk responses by pundits and bloggers attempting to explain the murder of civilians violated the sacred solemn silence that must follow brutality.

Now, however, as the dust begins to settle, some analysis is in order. We've screamed in outrage, we've marched in protest, we've posted, and we've tweeted. We have even gone so far as to identify ourselves with the victims of the crime, proclaiming "Je suis Charlie," I am Charlie.

Beyond horror at the attacks and sympathy for the victims, "je suis" describes a deeper connection between the victims and the speaker. Someone who "is Charlie" empathizes with the victims and identifies, both emotionally and ideologically, with the cause that they died defending. After all, this attack was rooted in an ideological struggle. It pitted the proponents of secularism and unrestrained freedom of expression against the defenders of a fundamentalist Islamic theocracy under repressive Sharia law. That is why this attack garnered so much media attention, aroused such a massive outpouring of sympathy and outrage, and inspired widespread activism.

During the days immediately before these jihadists wreaked havoc on an office in Paris, Islamic militant group Boko Haram carried out its own set of attacks in Northern Nigeria. Though reports are vague and many of the exact details are unsubstantiated, the long short of it is the following: Boko Haram fighters stormed into the town of Baga and its surrounding villages, opening fire on anything that moved. They gunned down residents who tried to flee, and burned down the homes of those who attempted to hide. Reports of the death toll range from "hundreds" to "over two thousand." Local authorities estimate that over thirty thousand people were displaced. These attacks, perhaps more accurately classifiable as a campaign of genocide, began on January 3rd and continued at least until the night before the Charlie Hebdo shooting. The response to this massacre, compared to the backlash against the Charlie Hebdo shooting, was underwhelming. Many fewer marches were organized in protest, many fewer articles were published in response, and the social media campaign quickly fizzled, with #iamcharlie quickly out-trending #iamnigerian.

Why the disproportionate response? Many answers have been offered, and perhaps one of the reasons is a particularistic outlook of ours that we would prefer not to confront. But surely a major reason why the Charlie Hebdo attack inspired such worldwide support was because of its ideological underpinnings. France is considered by many to be the birthplace of modern liberalism, of equality and fraternity, of secularism and religious freedom. While the ideological history might be debatable, surely many see France as a symbol of these basic modern values. Thus when Islamic fundamentalists targeted editors and cartoonists for exercising their freedom of religion and expression, the western world, which rests on these basic freedoms, identified with the victims on an emotional and ideological level. Built on Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité, the west collectively cried, "I am Charlie.

But perhaps this struggle between liberty and fundamentalism is not quite as polarized as it has been portrayed in the media. Maybe we can stake out a more nuanced position instead of pitching our tents on one side of the line or the other.

The senior staff members of Charlie Hebdo have been hailed as champions of free speech, but this is a misguided glorification of vulgarity. A government that gives its citizens the right to say anything whatsoever may be a tolerant government that values diversity of thought and the free exchange of ideas. But why should we celebrate people who then use this freedom to publish the most outrageous and offensive material imaginable? The right to say or believe anything neither absolves a person of the responsibility to seek

MANY HAVE DEFENDED CHARLIE HEBDO'S OUTRAGEOUS CARTOONS BY CLAIMING THAT THEY ARE EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY OFFENDERS. BUT THIS CLAIM OF EQUALITY IS JUST A FACADE. THEY WERE FAR FROM DEMOCRATIC IN THEIR RIDICULE – THEY DISPROPORTIONATELY TARGETED RELIGIOUS GROUPS.



the truth, nor frees him from the obligation to view the other with respect and dignity. As I see it, Charlie Hebdo is a test case of the cost of unrestricted free speech. Perhaps we can grit our teeth and tolerate the horrifying obscenities that Charlie Hebdo will continue to churn into the public sphere, but we will surely avert our eyes. We will simultaneously defend free speech and vomit when the basic dignity of religion is violated.

Charlie Hebdo has published cartoons of Mohammed in varying states of undress, and arranged in assorted pornographic poses. In support of a French law banning women from wearing burqas in public, Charlie Hebdo's cover design once included the headline "Yes to wearing the burqa..." with a picture of a nude woman saying "...on the inside!" Not content with desecrating Islam, Charlie Hebdo has published cartoons profaning Christianity as well. The magazine's cover once showed a circle of cardinals engaging

in sodomy, and another time depicted the father, the son, and the holy ghost doing the same. Nor were Jews exempt from Charlie's rabid anti-religiosity. The magazine ran a series called "One Commandment A Day: The Torah Illustrated by Charb" which lambasted Jews for rejecting their own religious values. One cartoon in this series depicts a man holding the side-lock of an ultra-orthodox Jewish man and saying, "You can shave your brain but you can't shave the blanket!"

Many have defended Charlie's outrageous cartoons by claiming that they are equal-opportunity offenders. As a writer for the Huffington Post put it, "they were democratic in their ridicule and satirisation." But this claim of equality is just a facade. They were far from democratic in their ridicule – they disproportionately targeted religious groups.

The people who produce Charlie Hebdo, like all people, hold some things sacred. As Oxford philosopher Brian Klug commented: "Will [the next] issue ridicule the scenes of mourning and solemn demonstrations on the grand boulevards of Paris, poking fun at people who raised pens skyward and lit candles in the dark?" Klug also considers what would happen to a person who showed up at a "je suis Charlie" rally with a fake gun and a sign that said "je suis Cherif" (the name of one of the shooters). He asks: "How would the crowd have reacted? Would they have seen this lone individual as a hero, standing up for liberty and freedom of speech?" Of course, these questions are rhetorical. Even for the "equal-opportunity offenders," the "champions of free speech," some things are too sacred to be satirized.

Laurent Leger, a Charlie Hebdo staff member, admitted that the magazine's approach is undemocratic when she explained that "we want to laugh at extremists, every extremist. They can be Muslim, Jewish, Catholic. Everyone can be religious, but extremist thoughts and acts we cannot accept." Unsurprisingly, her list of extremists who are ripe for ridicule only contains religious groups. And the characterization of "extremist" is itself evaluative. In casual conversation, people often resort to the terms "extremist" or "radical" in an attempt to prove that a certain person or group is incorrect. But these are just attempts to hide moral criticism behind terms that have strong negative connotations but no clear meaning. A person is only "extreme" or "radical" relative to a different worldview. People call an ideology extreme only when it is vastly different from their own. Instead of attacking a religion or sect on its merits and challenging its specific claims, they label it as "extremism" and call it a day. They forget that every ideology is comparatively extreme. Charlie Hebdo's mockery of what they consider to be extremism is irreverent and insulting, superficial and vacuous, and the newest incarnation of the ancient tendency of otherization.

Note the multiple layers of irony. The supposed fighters of extremism were exposed as extremists. Mourning for the symbols of French equality and fraternity came at the expense of mourning for the lives of two thousand Nigerians. Those who called for empathy and identification with the slain turned a blind eye to genocide. Many Jews tweeted "je suis Charlie" alongside "je suis Juif," simultaneously identifying with their own people and those who ridicule and profane traditional religion. And the equal-opportunity offenders made us recognize the dangers of free speech.

The Einstein-Montefiore Merger: *A Student's Perspective*

By Yair Sapirstein

I share in the relief and excitement of many of my fellow students at Einstein.

In the days leading up to the renewed Einstein-Montefiore merger, there was a palpable tension, as the students of Einstein planned to rally in support of the merger. My friends in the graduate division of Einstein were afraid that their programs would close, that research would be shut down, left and abandoned. My peers in the medical school worried that Einstein would decline to being only a medical school rather than an internationally acclaimed institution at the forefront of innovative research as well. I was nervous for the inevitable loss of the opportunities that Einstein affords - a lab with mentors and funding for biomedical research; scholarships for global health work around the world; and, of course, Einstein's tennis court and pool -- that make Einstein a marvelous, unique place for its students. Furthermore, a few mentors and staff with whom I worked closely had received memos that they may be dismissed. Students wished to know: Would Einstein survive as a leading institution? What is the best way for us to rectify this apparently dismal situation? Whom should we contact? And, finally, where should we demonstrate and rally in support of the merger?

With the Montefiore merger, I am no longer nervous for Einstein's financial situation. I am excited for the realization of the promises that Montefiore's president, Dr. Safyer makes: that Montefiore is "deeply committed to the education of Einstein medical students." Some students worry that as part of the "business" of Montefiore, Einstein will lose its focus on social needs of the community, both in its training of future physicians, and in actual community work that medical students do during training. This does not concern me, as Montefiore since its founding in 1884 has always had at its focus its current mission, "To heal, to teach, to discover and to advance the health of the communities we serve." Indeed, I feel relieved that new opportunities for deeper collaboration with Montefiore are opening for me as a current student, and at ease, assured that my alma mater de medicus will remain a highly respected school.

As Einstein merges with Montefiore, it separates from

Yeshiva University. One fellow Einstein medical student and YU alumnus remarked to me, "Thank God we are not like the Catholic Church, but rather we allow divorce." Yet, coupled with my joy that Einstein will continue to thrive as an institution, I feel a sadness as we part from Yeshiva University. I feel this sadness as a member of the Jewish community, of Yeshiva University, and of Einstein.

Many feel that Einstein, founded to counter the Jewish quotas at other medical schools, has already fulfilled its Jewish purpose. Yet, I feel that it has a greater purpose for the Jews of New York and America. Einstein has become a thriving Jewish community, with a beautiful on-campus synagogue on the main floor, regular programming, lectures and shiurim, a cafeteria that is exclusively kosher, classes never held on the Jewish holidays nor Shabbat, and a community heavily involved and invested in fostering its own growth and improvement. I pray that the Einstein Jewish community remains as strong and vibrant as it is today. And indeed, we were told by a student representative that an Einstein Senate meeting reassured that "Einstein will remain a school under Jewish auspices, including many existing elements of Einstein life such as Jewish holiday observances and the Kosher cafeteria." But the fact that this needs to even be stated comes as a shock for those of us living in the cocoon of Jewish life in Einstein.

With the current financial struggles, compounded by the strain of maintaining Einstein as it exists currently, Yeshiva University's choice to entrust Montefiore with Einstein rather than to cast overboard the financially valuable weights that were sinking both ships was surely not an easy choice. How can we, Yeshiva University, give up our medical school? Yet, it is a more than reasonable decision to preserve Einstein as a world renowned institution rather than keep it in a stripped down, bare-bones form. Nevertheless, as an alumnus of Yeshiva University, I feel the loss on the part of the university.

Furthermore, as a third year medical student at Einstein, I feel that we are losing our unique connection with Yeshiva University. Although President Richard Joel writes about "the continuation of the special relationship YU undergraduates have with Einstein," this relationship is no longer a natural outgrowth of a shared institution. It is the vestiges of what remains, and I sincerely hope that the relationship continues

strongly. I have been fortunate to be a part of some of these joint YU-Einstein programs, such as the New Frontiers Deans' Scholars Program for Academic Enrichment, TEACH, START, and others. They are opportunities for joint education, collaboration, networking and community work shared by Yeshiva University and Einstein students. It is my strong desire that these programs continue together in the same strong collaboratively weaved thread that continues to draw students to give to each other and their respective communities.

Einstein and Montefiore have long had a collaboration, playing a part even back in 1984, as per Dorothy Levenson's book on Montefiore. I am excited that with the merger, this collaboration continues, and that it is strengthened. I nevertheless feel a pang of loss, but have a resounding sense of hope that the Jewish vibrancy of Einstein and the strong collaboration among Yeshiva University and Einstein continue. I am a part of the Einstein ship. A previously sinking ship, but a strong, powerful, protected, internationally acclaimed ship. And now, I no longer have the fear of sinking.

However, this is just a feeling. The specifics of the merger are unknown to us students, and to the student leaders on the board. We know that "a legal document committing all parties to this agreement has been signed and is in force," and that "a final agreement is planned to be signed and in force by June 30." We know that Einstein plans to continue to be affiliated with YU, but do not know what this affiliation means. We know that Einstein plans to become its own degree-granting institution, partnered with Montefiore, but we don't know much more than that. It seems that even the main players in the partnership cannot say much of what the future will hold. We have a sense of security, a sense of hope, a feeling of safety, a feeling of opportunity, and still the excitement and nervousness of an uncertain but promising future.

Yair Saperstein is a third year medical student at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is studying for his cantorial degree at Yeshiva University's Belz School of Jewish Music and is the founder of the international organization START (STARTScience.org) and a cofounder of TEACH (projecTEACH.info).



Shedding Stigmas: A Vision for The Commentator

By Dani Weiss

Earlier this year, I attended a presentation given by an accounting journalist working for the *Wall Street Journal*. As a new member of *The Commentator's* staff, I attended the event with hopes of gaining some insights into my upcoming journalism career. Like a good journalist, I took copious notes of the subject matter, asked questions after the presentation, and dutifully recorded students' reactions to the event. As I milled about the crowd looking for a student to answer my questions, I eyed an old friend of mine whom I hadn't spoken to in some time. After making the obligatory small talk, I asked him if he would be willing to answer a few questions for an article that would appear in the upcoming issue of *The Commentator*. His response? A sneering, spit-in-the-face-type declaration that he would never have his name associated with *The Commentator*.

While I wish I could write off this experience as an isolated incident, it unfortunately represents a much larger trend in the university toward distrust of and, in some cases, outright animosity toward the newspaper. For many, *The Commentator* has come to be associated with misinformed or biased reporting aimed at damaging the reputation of the university; for others, its agenda is to disrespect our roshei yeshiva and the values associated with Orthodox Judaism. In either case, I would suggest that disassociation from *The Commentator* is a practice that is at best immature - and at worst destructive.

Since my arrival at YU, I've heard the sentiment from a number of people that *The Commentator* is filled with biased, one-sided discourse. The accusers will reference a plethora of articles to support their case: opinion pieces challenging views long held by Orthodox Jews, misleading polls that claimed to represent the student body, and specific articles attacking well-respected figures in YU are, for these people, clear examples of *The Commentator's* agenda to destroy YU's reputation and to incite people against the values of Orthodox Judaism.

The paper's past reputation notwithstanding, the pages of *The Commentator* this year bear an altogether different tone. Very few articles, if any, fit the stereotypes typically associated with *The Commentator*. Reporting on the state of the University's finances has been level-headed and balanced. In fact, a recent editorial from our editor-in-chief went into depth explaining his policy of focusing on realistic, rather than pessimistic, interpretations of the facts.

By way of opinion pieces, only a few articles have been published this year that might have broached the realm of controversy. But more important than avoiding controversy, all articles, without exception, have maintained a tone of respectful, civilized discourse. By maintaining dialogue in which multiple parties feel safe expressing their opinions, we have informally extended

who are bothered by particular articles choose not to respond for other reasons. After all, the process of formulating an opinion and committing it to writing is both difficult and stressful, even for the most experienced writers.

In my short tenure as an editor for *The Commentator*, I've encountered myriad excuses from people who choose not to write. Of course, YU students are

inscribe a way of thinking into stone; it represents a particular juncture in your personal journey. Submitting opinions that are less than perfect requires the writer to make himself vulnerable to feedback. Sometimes that feedback is constructive; other times it can be hurtful. But in all cases, the writer can grow from that feedback to build resilience and refine his opinions for the future.

Whether a particular student feels inclined not to write for any of the above reasons or for another reason entirely, I would urge him to reconsider. *The Commentator* takes on the personality of its contributing writers. Only with the collective input of the student body can we maintain a balanced, respectful conversation between the right and left, and everyone in between.

The mission statement printed inside the front cover of this issue states that *The Commentator* serves the role of representing the views of YU students to the larger Jewish community. Indeed, I've spoken with people far removed from the YU world who have formulated opinions of YU - both positive and negative - based on articles they've read in *The Commentator*. It is only fitting, therefore, that *The Commentator* should accurately represent the dialogue that reverberates throughout the halls of YU's various batei midrash, libraries, labs, and classrooms.

To close, I would like to challenge students taking the time to read and share this

article. *The Commentator* is only as full and dynamic as the quantity and diversity of students contributing. So, contribute. Put your thoughts in writing. Muster up the courage to make yourself vulnerable, and grow from the experience.

I look forward to the day when each issue will be thick with extra pages, and when those reading its articles will have access to the full array of multifaceted, nuanced conversations that grace these hallowed halls.



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an invitation to all students to share their views and experiences without the fear of ad hominem attacks appearing in the next issue.

Yet despite our best efforts, there remains one specific group that is conspicuously underrepresented in the pages of *The Commentator*. Members of the right-wing

busy juggling a dual curriculum and trying to find time for clubs, internships, homework, and night seder. But I'd like to take the time now to address two specific excuses that in my mind are the most prevalent, but also, the most invalid.

First, some people have the notion that no one cares what they have to say. To

IF STUDENTS WHO PROTEST THE CONTENTS OF AN ARTICLE REFUSE TO RESPOND, WHO WILL REPRESENT THEIR OPINIONS?

crowd (some might call them yeshivish) have seemingly chosen to disassociate from *The Commentator* as a form of silent protest, and as such have left their opinions unheard. By refusing interviews and declining to submit their opinions in writing, these people make one-sided discourse a self-fulfilling prophecy. If students who protest the contents of an article refuse to respond, who will represent their opinions?

But perhaps by branding the "right-wing" as having a collective desire to disassociate, I myself have ventured into the realm of prejudgment and stereotypes. It's very plausible that some

those people, I would respond that each opinion expressed in the newspaper can change someone's perspective. No individual's experience is the same as yours and therefore, only you can affect people in a particular way. Share your unique experiences with others to enrich their lives.

Second, many people will maintain that publishing writing is a pastime reserved for an elite group whose opinions lie safeguarded behind the impregnable fortress of perfection. This, too, is untrue. I have found that writing is more of a journey than a destination. Putting your thoughts into writing doesn't necessarily



Discrimination or Not: You Decide

By Eli Balsam

We often consider popular opinion to be an unsound identifier of discrimination. After all, the Constitution seeks to protect minorities from the whims of the majority by allowing federal courts to strike down any law that encroaches on equal rights. If we allow the majority to decide what constitutes discrimination, how do we protect vulnerable minorities from the majority's caprices? But if it were practically true that the majority's opinion matters not at all, there would be little value in social movements. Their concerns wouldn't help redefine the unvarying constitutional standards of discrimination.

Luckily, we can prove that popular opinion has historically affected the constitutional definition of discrimination because there is no rigid definition of discrimination. The persuasive power of social movements spurs a novel opinion shared by few to become a federal law accepted by all. This is the mechanism which helps redefine discrimination when needed. Your opinion matters, at least when in concert with the opinions of other citizens.

If it seems impossible for social movements to directly change popular opinion, they will often try to change laws which they deem discriminatory by appealing to the court system. This tactic ultimately helps change popular opinion as well, because we are likely to change our attitudes de facto after new laws designate them prejudiced or racist de jure. For example, the racism toward blacks nowadays is not nearly as bad or pervasive as the racism that was rampant right after the Civil War. This is partly because slavery's becoming illegal paved the way for blacks to be granted suffrage, which led to their being granted full citizenship rights and true equality, culminating in *Brown v. Board of Education*. After each progressive legal change our country's past bigotries appeared increasingly foreign.

But before each legal change, a certain critical mass of increased abhorrence towards racism was necessary for the reform to garner sufficient support. This exemplifies the codependence of society's attitudes and its laws, which is the first premise I want to establish. This reality is well known to social movements which often work on two fronts, the social front, and the legal front. Even a minor success on one front can lead to a sequence of interrelated successes. These movements try to awaken a sleeping society to an injustice which they think is being overlooked. They do so directly by appealing to society, and indirectly by appealing to the judicial system.

My next point may be somewhat controversial in the world of judicial philosophy. It involves the Equal Protections Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment which is the hinge on which many social movements have swung, and which has determined the success of social movements irrespective of federalist concerns. It states:

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The controversy arises over how to identify the denial of "the equal protection of the laws." May Congress pass a law that makes biological distinctions between men and women for medical insurance purposes? What about an employer who only grants maternity leave to women? These and other multifaceted questions often lead to debates between social progressives and social conservatives. By the way, courts have ruled that lawmakers may legislate with reasonable biological distinctions between the sexes, although their making distinctions based on societally-conceived gender roles is verboten. I believe this would be the common-sense answer of perhaps a majority of U.S. citizens. That the consensus of modern federal courts reflects the common-sense opinion will soon be important, but first let's discuss the definition of discrimination.

Professor Kermit Roosevelt of the University of Pennsylvania Law School believes that the correct methodology for deciding if something is constitutionally discriminatory lies in determining whether the

prevailing attitude of society considers it to be socially discriminatory. If few people think it's discriminatory, it will be very hard for a social movement to convince the federal courts that it is. But once society believes a law to be denying equal protections, the courts are likely to agree. This is not because the courts are pandering to popular opinion as the cynic might suggest. Rather, Professor Roosevelt believes, the allowance for societal change is embedded in the "forward-looking clauses" of the Constitution, as I will explain.

JUDGES ARE TRAINED AS LAWYERS, NOT AS MORAL PHILOSOPHERS. WHY SHOULD THEIR OPINION ON MORAL ISSUES CARRY MORE WEIGHT THAN THE PREVAILING OPINION OF SOCIETY? THE JOB OF THE COURTS IS TO ENSURE THAT A LOCAL, STATE, OR FEDERAL AUTHORITY DOESN'T IMPOSE LAWS WHICH THE MAJORITY OF AMERICA KNOWS TO BE DISCRIMINATORY, BUT IT IS BEYOND THEIR PURVIEW TO EXTEND THE DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION ON THEIR OWN.

Now, saying that a clause conforms to popular opinion seems to contradict Originalism, one of the major philosophies of jurisprudence, which says that the meaning of the Constitution does not change from its original (hence Originalism) meaning. This approach sounds more like Pragmatism or the philosophy of "the Living Constitution." Professor Roosevelt counters that even the Originalist interpretation of the Equal Protections Clause should lead us to conclude that the definition of discrimination is based on the zeitgeist. He argues that since the drafters of the Amendment left discrimination unexplained, it must be dependent on America's prevailing attitude. He dubs a clause which changes in connotation because it was designed to, "a forward-looking clause."

Roosevelt gives an illustrative example. Imagine a theoretical clause of the Constitution stating "all members of Congress must dress respectfully when on the Congressional floor." Would the Originalist jurist maintain that the modern-day Congressman needs to wear a wig, stockings, and a waistcoat, just because that would have been the original meaning of 'respectful' to the Framers? Our intuition says no. What is respectful in one era is clownish in another; a natural boundary between groups yesterday may seem overtly racist today. Roosevelt says of the clause in question: "It's a general ban on unreasonable discrimination, but judges look to current social attitudes to decide what is unreasonable." That violations of Equal Protections are determined by society does not contradict Originalism. Indeed, it was the original intent of the Framers for the clause to be interpreted and to later be reinterpreted.

If this is not the case, how was the "separate but equal" treatment of blacks, which lasted for nearly a century (from the amendment in 1868 until *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954), sanctioned by the very people who wrote the Equal Protections Clause? Either the Amendment was a farce to its drafters, or its meaning changed with time. I prefer the latter explanation. Roosevelt is correct that the Equal Protections Clause does not purport to lay down any objective standards as to what is discrimination; the definition of discrimination—in a word—evolves.

From a democratic standpoint as well, this method of

identifying discrimination makes sense. While judges have the responsibility to override democratic wishes that violate the rights of other citizens, here the question itself is whether those rights are being violated, and the answer isn't easily determined. I've heard Antonin Scalia himself explain that judges are trained as lawyers, not as moral philosophers. Why should their opinion on moral issues carry more weight than the prevailing opinion of society? The job of the courts is to ensure that a local, state, or federal authority doesn't impose laws which the majority of America knows to be discriminatory, but it is beyond their purview to extend the definition of discrimination on their own. Let us now leave the theoretical world and examine some American history.

Our nation has seen major social movements addressing discrimination of three types: race, sex, and sexual orientation. In 1896 the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that the separate-but-equal treatment of racial minorities was constitutional. No doubt this is one of the Court's most embarrassing decisions, but back then it seemed fair to most Americans. 58 years later, *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned that decision, rendering "separate but equal" unconstitutional. At the time, the decision was controversial, but this decision has since been championed as causing a sea-change in our country's attitude towards minorities. Today, virtually nobody with whom you could enjoy an intelligible conversation contests the correctness of the decision.

The battle for equality between the sexes in the courts starts in 1873 with *Bradwell v. Illinois*. The Supreme Court ruled that Illinois is allowed to (if you'll excuse the irresistible pun) bar women from becoming lawyers. 101 years later, in *Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur*, the Court overturned that opinion. Women could not be excluded from certain jobs because of perceived gender roles. As the laws changed, the notion of women not being capable became increasingly foreign to Americans born in an era where women were becoming progressively equal.

America is in the midst of a battle between social conservatives and social progressives over the legalization of gay marriage. It has been sensibly noted that the battle over gay marriage would not have been possible had sodomy not been first ruled constitutionally-protected in the 2003 case *Lawrence v. Texas*. This exemplifies our first premise, that a success in one area paves the way for the social movement to progress in further areas. However, seventeen years prior to *Lawrence*, the Supreme Court ruled in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that states could forbid sodomy. Seventeen years is not long when considering the time span it took for the other social movements to succeed, but the movement has still not achieved all of its goals. There is a split in the Federal Circuit Courts over whether same-sex marriage bans are constitutional, with 70% of Americans living in jurisdictions allowing same-sex marriage, and a majority of Americans supporting it. According to a joint dissent by Justices Scalia and Thomas, the Supreme Court's recent refusal to even temporarily uphold Alabama's ban on gay marriage, clearly indicates that it will rule in favor of nationwide gay marriage in June. What is propelling the gay-rights movement forward so unprecedentedly?

There are two theories I want to mention which are probably both true. The first is quite simple. Maybe we have learned from history how destructive discrimination can be. When people think about granting gays full rights to marry, many cannot help but compare their struggle to those of women and racial minorities. Making this comparison is so natural that the religious and social conservatives who want to forbid gay marriage need to distinguish between the movements in debates, lest they tacitly appear to be marginalizing women or racial minorities. And since I'm not trying to offer an opinion on the matter, I'll leave it to the reader to determine if their distinctions are convincing.

The swift progress of the gay-rights movement can therefore be attributed to our society reaching the maturity to reflect on its treatment of historically

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Discrimination or Not, cont. from p. 14

marginalized populations. Even if you think that the comparison between the social movements is unfounded, this theory works. Simply acknowledge that to a majority of Americans the comparison is well-founded, and it thus affects the majority's opinion on how to treat gays. You'll find that this theory perfectly fits the chronology and duration of the three movements we've been discussing.

Professor Roosevelt has a more complex explanation. He explains that prior to women being granted full rights, the prevailing attitude towards women wasn't hostile. With an attitude called by some "Romantic Paternalism", men treated women as *recherché* beings who shouldn't be exposed to the realities and troubles of real life. Men believed they were protecting women by excluding them from certain professions and their attendant risks. Roosevelt memorably remarks, "it wasn't that they weren't good enough, it was that they were too good." This attitude and the quasi-religious notions of the proper role of the woman, quixotic though they may have been, were not openly hostile, so they needed time to be purged from society's collective mind. It took strong women to show society that the *Dulcinea del Tobosos* of the world were fine before the *Don Quixotes* sallied forth to "protect" them.

The struggle for blacks' civil rights, however, was fighting against true hostility. Segregation and denying blacks the vote were based on overtly ugly attitudes.

Society needed only to be jostled from its slumber to recognize that its attitudes towards blacks were despicable. This was an advantage that the civil rights movement had over the women's rights movement in convincing society of its injustices, and this could be a partial explanation of why the civil rights movement was successful in fewer years than the women's rights movement was.

However, the women's rights movement enjoyed a different comparative advantage: discrimination against women struck men in their very homes. Men loved their mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives, so discrimination against them was deemed unacceptable quicker than it would have been had women lived isolated from men. In contrast, racial segregation and laws against intermarriage ensured that few whites married blacks or even became friends with them. Injustice always stings more when it affects people whom you know and love. Segregation was thus a formidable obstacle for the civil rights movement but it proved to be surmountable.

Just like racial discrimination, discrimination against gays is now considered by many as morally execrable and scientifically baseless. And just like discrimination against women did, discrimination against gays strikes society across every demographic. An ardently religious Catholic is as likely as a progressive liberal to have a gay child. An Orthodox rabbi cannot ward off homosexuality in his community simply by shelving the issue. Whatever our political and religious affiliations, we need to come

to terms with gays. It has become increasingly difficult to sanction laws that affect our relatives, friends, and neighbors, even for people who have ideological or religious reasons to be against gay marriage. Since the gay-rights movement enjoys both of the relative advantages of the two prior social movements, it has progressed comparatively quickly.

Everyone is curious whether gay marriage will become a nation-wide right. I have attempted to transform the question from an ideological question (people will predict that it will succeed simply because they want it to, and vice versa) to a question that could be answered by examining society, social movements, and judicial history. The operative question is whether the movement has sufficiently influenced the prevailing American opinion in favor of gay marriage. If it has, as polls increasingly indicate, I believe the Supreme Court will support it. If not, then the time may not be ripe for the Court to give the movement its stamp of approval. But even this setback would not portend the movement's ultimate failure; it would simply tell the movement's promoters that popular opinion doesn't yet consider it sufficiently discriminatory to deny same-sex couples the right to marry. They will bide their time and try again in a few years. As to the question of whether forbidding gay marriage is discrimination—in a very practical sense—you decide.

Why Your Opinion is So Very Important

By Benji Richter

Recently, an article was published in *The Commentator* encouraging the Yeshiva University student body and its faculty to promote an environment of support for all its members, no matter their predilections and predispositions. As an addendum to that article, I would like to add an additional observation about the school's environment that I feel still needs tremendous support—the freedom and courage on the part of students to formally express their personal opinions.

In my experience interacting with students throughout my years at YU, I was amazed by the plethora of personality types I encountered, and even more by the myriad of opinions. Perhaps the most significant feature of my overall learning experience was the array of perspectives I was exposed to from my fellow peers. The old adage that, for every two Jews there are three opinions, can be aptly said about the Yeshiva campus. This is readily apparent to anyone who has visited any of the *Batei Midrash*, cafeterias, lounges, academic courses, or hallways of Yeshiva's campus. I believe that we have fostered an environment in which individuals feel entitled to have opinions, and to share them with their contemporaries.

However, the student body seems fraught with a pervasive fear of expressing these opinions in a formalized and public mode. As an editor of *The Commentator*, I have encouraged students to publish their nuanced opinions in the school newspaper, but they frequently fall silent upon hearing the proposition. When prompted to represent an opinion on some sort of panel or debate, the conversation quickly reaches a screeching halt.

After much deliberation, I'm still not exactly sure why this occurs, and I will be the first to admit that I have fallen victim to the same paralysis that I have observed in others. Perhaps there is a fear of *lashon harah*, being judged, feeling judged, what the dissenters will say, espousing beliefs or claims that can never be taken back, or presenting observations and propositions that have no observable or immediate response or solution. I lay no claims to sociological expertise, but it seems that the student body is too often living in fear of their opinions rather than impassioned and empowered by them. And I fear that much is at stake because of this.

Without a formalized mode of conversation, there can be no formal, conducive, instructive, and dynamic feedback. Conversations remain stagnant, between two disgruntled parties, and in an unfinished state of development. The results are often frustration with the institution, a dull and cynical campus environment, and a disenchanting student body. Without an ear to listen deliberately and a voice to sing intently, there is no song, motion, or change.

I believe that a few things must be set in place to ensure an intellectually and religiously vibrant campus and an empowered student body. At the core of fostering a fluid and vibrant community is fostering a composition of individuals who are genuinely empowered by their opinions rather than simply entitled to them. What I mean is that their opinions should invigorate them to the point of sharing, in an

WITHOUT A FORMALIZED MODE OF CONVERSATION, THERE CAN BE NO FORMAL, CONDUCTIVE, INSTRUCTIVE, AND DYNAMIC FEEDBACK. WITHOUT AN EAR TO LISTEN DELIBERATELY AND A VOICE TO SING INTENTLY, THERE IS NO SONG, MOTION, OR CHANGE.



environment where they feel safe and encouraged to do so. Part of this process is having an infrastructure of faculty members that encourage students to express their opinions in an open manner, both through dialogue and writing.

On an institutional level, YU toes a very fine line between traditional Jewish learning and values on the one hand, and academic scholarship with an embracing attitude toward Western wisdom and values on the other. Because this dialectic is perceived to be so incredibly delicate, what potentially results is a very steadfast, one-sided, parochial approach to dealing with this balance, both in belief and in practice. In theory, this state of affairs should not necessarily be detrimental to fostering an intellectually vibrant and empowered student body, but in practice, considering the plurality of the student body, it is. The student body of Yeshiva University hails from diverse backgrounds, representing extremes and everything in between - though these terms are subjectively defined. Without an open-arms policy to dissenting opinions due to fear of what these opinions might cause, a stagnant intellectual environment ensues. Alas, the student body operates out of fear, rather than love. A limited approach to a complex synergy of religion and scholarship ends up stifling a diverse community rather than empowering it.

I encourage you, the students of Yeshiva University, to have the courage that I did not have when I was a student, and to publish that article you typed up, saved on your computer, and decided not to complete for whatever reason. Help create an environment in which individuals' opinions are important and needed, because an encouraged and opinionated community - regardless of its internal tensions - is ultimately an empowered, safe, and vibrant one.



Won't You Be My Neighbor?

By Avi Mendelson

Take a stroll down any given street in Washington Heights and you will observe two very distinct, culturally rich communal experiences. Most likely, you will find yourself immersed in the Dominican Republic community and culture. By the busier streets there are restaurants such as El Pollo Dorado and La Casa Del Mofongo, street vendors who have replaced the traditional hot dog with a Latin American dish, and store owners standing in front of their bodegas with piles of produce stacked on street corners. Passersby will haggle in Spanish with vendors standing behind tables with watches, jewelry, and various trinkets. Rows of clothing racks can be found intermittently and make sidewalk shopping a common activity. In the residential areas, there is a strong stoop culture. Friends and families will gather on the front steps of their apartments, and an excess of company will sit on chairs across from the steps, leaving room for walkers to shuffle in between. Locals can be seen playing dominoes, listening to Latin American music, smoking hookah, and enjoying the company of their neighbors.

Within this "little Dominican Republic" are two pockets of Jewish communities: Yeshiva University, and a neighborhood of young Jewish adults in "the other side of the Heights." Within Yeshiva University there is obviously a very strong sidewalk culture. The entire campus exists basically within three geographic points that make up dormitories, classes, and restaurants, and there is hardly a time when you can walk from one point to another without seeing a friend or fellow Jew. Students gathering at the crosswalk on their way to class may say hi to one another or get a brief update from a friend on how the day is going. In between classes they will congregate on a section of 185th street blocked off specifically for that purpose, between two school buildings. After class one might wait around before spotting a friend with whom to grab dinner. A stranger walking through this campus would see a mass of young, white, Jewish males dressed in slacks and button-down shirts. The number of skullcaps per capita would be notable, as would be flowing fringes and the occasional Rabbi crossing the street. On the other side of the Heights, the Jewish presence is certainly not as pronounced as that of the Dominicans during the week. On Saturdays, however, streams of Jews will be seen walking to synagogue, dressed in suits and dresses in honor of the Sabbath. Many wishes of a good Sabbath will inevitably be exchanged, to the point where it becomes less a sincere wish and more a curt acknowledgement. But the presence of so many young, fellow Jews makes the spirit of a day of rest much more tangible and real.

Even more notable than the presence of these two communities is that they seem to be unaware of each other. Despite the strong sense of community and culture that exists within both worlds, there is little communal interaction between them. Walking outside of the limits of Yeshiva University on the way to the subway feels like leaving one planet and entering another. There is no bridge, just a jump. Some may look at this reality and think nothing of it; Washington Heights is simply comprised of two communities that happen to live next to each other—there's no reason to expect any sense of integration. The fact that the two communities do not share a sense of general community is harmless, if not expected. But Jane Jacob's seminal book on urban planning, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, complicates this attitude of benign neglect and places it in a much more troubling light.

The third chapter of her work, entitled "The uses of sidewalks: contact," analyzes the communal function of sidewalks. Sidewalks, Jacobs argues, are much more than utilitarian. They are crucial to the overall atmosphere of a neighborhood in that they help foster community and create a sense of public trust. This sense of community and trust "is formed over time from many, many little public sidewalk contacts." [1] Jacobs illustrates why sidewalks are so crucial

to this natural development to public trust by discussing the quandary of privacy. On the one hand, people want meaningful interaction with the greater community. On the other hand, privacy is of the utmost importance to people, so it is seemingly impossible to have both. Enter sidewalks: "A good city street neighborhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people's determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes for differing degrees of contact, enjoyment or help from the people around. This balance is largely made up of small, sensitively managed details, practiced and accepted so casually that they are normally taken for granted" (59). The sidewalk is the venue by which these "sensitively managed details" are introduced to a city, allowing for crucial "casual" contacts.

EVEN MORE NOTABLE THAN THE PRESENCE OF THESE TWO COMMUNITIES IS THAT THEY SEEM TO BE UNAWARE OF EACH OTHER. DESPITE THE STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURE THAT EXISTS WITHIN BOTH WORLDS, THERE IS LITTLE COMMUNAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THEM. WALKING OUTSIDE OF THE LIMITS OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ON THE WAY TO THE SUBWAY FEELS LIKE LEAVING ONE PLANET AND ENTERING ANOTHER.



These contacts seem "utterly trivial but the sum is not trivial at all," the sum being "a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need" (56).

Given this insight into the social productivity of sidewalks, the communal distance between the Jews and Dominicans of Washington Heights becomes seriously troubling. If sidewalks are meant to foster communal cohesion, then how do we explain the stark divide between Jew and Hispanic? After all, there are plenty of these "little public sidewalk contacts," so why does it not result in a common public identity? Is there something fundamentally dysfunctional about the Washington Heights community, or are there more factors involved in creating community than a simple sidewalk?

Let's take a stroll through Washington Heights and try to get a better sense of the variables at play that may impede

communal cohesion. The most prominent variable is the language barrier. This could possibly be the crux of the entire issue. An inability to communicate makes it nearly impossible to reach out to one another. But that might not even be the issue. If we are talking about the small sidewalk interactions that supposedly make up a community, a *como estas* can easily be replaced with a friendly smile and be just as effective. The problem is not the inability to acknowledge the other, because we hardly interact like that with people within our own community. Rather, the inability to understand language is communally debilitating in that we cannot listen in on conversations. This is really what the sidewalk experience is all about. As Jacobs states, when we enter the sidewalk we are balancing public and private by unconsciously sharing ourselves with the public. If I am walking with my roommate and telling him my plans for the weekend, pieces of that conversation will be picked up along the way by passersby, who then get a better sense of a Jewish student's social life. Eavesdropping on conversations is a crucial aspect of the sidewalk experience because it gives us a quick sneak peek into someone's life. Unfortunately, this does not happen when walking in the Heights because of the language barrier.

Yet, there is more to sidewalk encounters than verbal communication and overheard conversations. If the entire purpose of a sidewalk experience is to get a better sense of the people in your community, this can be done without ever sharing a word. Finding common ground between two people can be accomplished through observation. One thing I noticed that struck me was a mother and son holding hands at a street corner, waiting to cross the street. I personally felt very touched by this image of mother and son, and I am sure any mother of any race, ethnicity, or background would instantly feel a strong connection with this mother. Experiences like this necessitate no active interaction. They function by demonstrating that the people in your neighborhood are inherently the same as you.

Observation is just as much a part of the sidewalk experience as communication. So while a language barrier may be a reason for a sidewalk interaction not being as meaningful or informative about one's neighbors as one would hope, it is no excuse for a lack in identifying with one's neighbors. Mere observation should foster a sense of common identity among neighbors who are all just trying to live peaceful lives and raise happy families. So the problem is not that we can't talk. The problem is that we don't look. And we don't look because we don't care to. Our ambivalence, or even express desire to ignore our neighbors, is the root of the problem. To assume that sidewalks have the ability to bring together two populations that are unwilling to do so is unreasonable. Sidewalks only work effectively for populations that want to mix and mingle and get to know their community. But we don't. Why?

Jewish communal leaders, when discussing the concept of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish identity, will use the buzzwords "shared fate" and "shared destiny." The sense that the individuals around you are connected to you, that you have a stake in each other, makes people into a people. I think the same idea can be applied to community building. When we feel that we have a shared destiny with our neighbors, even if that destiny is simply to live in harmony together for decades to come, then we wish to get to know the other and share feelings of mutual love and care.

It seems that this sense of a shared destiny is not felt between the Jews and the Dominicans of Washington Heights. Whether it be a function of socio-economic inequality, stark contrast in culture, or a difference in religion is not clear.

To be fair, I don't know if the Dominican community doesn't want to have anything to do with us. I just get the feeling that the Jewish community doesn't feel the need to branch out into the greater Dominican community. This apathy is no doubt projected to the other community and probably results in

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similar sentiments. How do we communicate this apathy? Whether consciously or not, the Jews of the Heights seem to put up walls between themselves and their Dominican neighbors. Kosher restaurants I can understand, but why replace the Washington Heights bodegas with our Israeli-reminiscent makolets? Why do we have our own barbershop? The experiences of buying a snack at a bodega and getting a Washington Heights haircut are both easy and accessible ways to have meaningful contact with our neighbors. We don't seem to want that.

More importantly, what type of message does it send when we have security booths surrounding the perimeter of our campus? —When we have barriers that say “Do Not Cross?” They are not exactly the most welcoming of decorations. I do not deny that security is important; I just wonder if we ever consider the rhetoric these things express to the greater community.

And those black YU emblazoned vans. Why are the windows tinted black as well? It seems that the people travelling in them wish to do so “under cover of night.” It's as if we wish to go unnoticed when we travel around the greater community. Maybe it gives us an excuse to not notice

them in return. The vans themselves are intimidating—is that their implicit purpose? I am sure people notice those vans picking Jews up from the A train to bring them back to YU so they don't have to make the trek alone. How does it feel to know people don't feel comfortable walking in your neighborhood? Jacobs in her book says that the cornerstone to building sidewalk trust is sidewalk safety. On the one hand, I understand that if people do not feel safe in a neighborhood, there is nothing to do about that. But we have to realize that that fear may be felt by our neighbors. And the one thing that likely destroys sidewalk trust more than fear is knowing that you are feared.

For the YU student specifically, maybe it has nothing to do with fear or a common sense of destiny, but everything to do with destination. In the few years that we spend in the Heights, I don't think we ever view it as a permanent home. First year students have just returned from Jerusalem of Gold and now have to deal with the reality of living in Washington Heights of Dog Doo. Their bodies are in the Heights but their souls are in Zion. And already people are planning on how to cut down their stay from four years to three to two and a half. Honors thesis? Forget that. In the meantime, we look for any excuse to escape to anywhere else in the city that is more clean and comfortable. And for the in-towners, the question of where their true community

lies is answered with another question: do they pack clothing for the week or the weekend? We're not grounded enough in our own community to even begin to think about the other community that surrounds us.

Are these messages sent consciously or not? If not, we must assess how we convey ourselves. If yes, we must ask ourselves why. Surely there is much to be gained from a shared sense of community with the people we live next to. Most importantly, we all need to ask ourselves: when we stroll down the sidewalk, are we walking past strangers or neighbors? Sidewalks, after all, are only as effective as the people who use them.

[1] Jane Jacobs. “The Uses of Sidewalks: Contact.” *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (Random House, 1961) 56.

The Bottom Line in Health: *The Protein Craze*

By Judah Schulman

Protein is essential for maintaining and building muscle. That being said, you do not need to gulp down a carton of raw eggs after your workout like Rocky Balboa to get the maximum benefit. For avid exercisers, and even for the average Joe or Jane who hits the gym once or twice a week, protein seems to sit high and mighty on a throne above other macronutrients such as fats and carbohydrates. Protein has been hyped up by the dietary supplement industry to the point where people believe that pumping this macronutrient into your body is necessary to fuel your body, like pumping gasoline into a car is necessary for it to run. While it is agreed that protein plays a crucial role in the recovery, development, and maintenance of lean muscle mass, the most effective combination of amount, type, and frequency of protein consumption following strength workouts is a hotly debated topic.

According to a recent study by British researchers, consuming twenty grams of protein after one's workout should do the trick. The study had forty-eight men ingest ten, twenty, and forty grams of protein immediately after a strength workout. The twenty gram and forty gram doses more effectively stimulated muscle protein synthesis (the process that helps promote the muscle repair and growth after exercise) in participants than the lower amounts. However, the forty gram dose didn't produce any added benefit. On an overall daily basis, the protein requirements for sedentary males and females are 0.8-1.0 grams per kilogram per day. For elite sports men and women who generally train five or more times per week, these levels are increased to 1.0-1.7 grams per kilogram per day, depending on their intensity, duration, gender, and experience. A range is given because the amount of protein needed to provide two grams of leucine, the universally agreed key player in muscle protein synthesis, varies in different foods. In addition to this, it is important to take into consideration one's exercise goals. For example, athletes who focus less on resistance exercise and more on aerobic activities require less protein (and generally more carbohydrates) than resistance athletes.

With these results in mind, it is important to remember that the findings of one study cannot be used to deduce a blanket rule or law. However, they can be used to contribute to an overall theory about how much protein someone really needs after a strength workout. So, if you want to use this twenty grams of protein as a target range for you post-workout meal, where should you turn? Ideally, choosing a meal that includes a type of protein

to make a delicious post-workout snack. Whey protein powders are also quick and easy sources of protein that can aid in speedy muscle recovery and reduced soreness. Having said that, non-dairy foods, such as chicken or fish, are still healthy choices for your post-workout meal. These foods will pack about twenty grams of protein in a portion about the size of a deck of cards.

You do not need to guzzle down a protein

protein eight times a day) or larger amounts less frequently (forty grams of protein twice a day).

To ensure optimal strength and muscle gains, you should spread out your protein intake across the day instead of just the typical protein-laden dinner. Protein's satiating characteristic will also help keep you satisfied between your larger meals and prevent unnecessary snacking. But do not drive yourself crazy trying to synchronize your meals to a clock. When it comes to improving general physical performance, like building lean muscle mass and losing fat mass, the most important factors in your mission are to include sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise four to five times a week. Equally important is to refuel your body after these workouts with a combination of proteins, unsaturated fats, and complex carbohydrates. Follow these simple guidelines and watch as you conquer your fitness goals!

A Note on the Author:
The Bottom Line in Health seeks to provide simple fitness and nutrition tips for the Yeshiva University community.

As a National Academy of Sports Medicine Certified Personal Trainer and Fitness and Nutrition Specialist, it is my goal to enhance the readers' understanding of how to maintain a healthy standard of living while improving performance in and out of school and supporting an overall sense of well-being.

Food	Amount	Protein (g)	Energy (kilojoules)	Energy (calories)
Milk powder (skim)	60g	22	880	210
Egg (whole)	3 eggs	19	890	212
Milk (skim)	600ml	22	900	214
Bread	9 slices	28	3000	716
Whey protein isolate	17g	16	290	69
Cheese (cottage)	140g	25	530	126
Cheese (red.-fat cheddar)	70g	22	770	184
Egg white	175g	20	350	84
Kidney beans (drained)	350g	23	1300	310
Lentils	380g	18	820	196
Rice (white, cooked)	6 cups	26	6000	1430
Yoghurt (skim, flav.)	400g	21	1290	308
Soy beverage	900ml	33	1600	381
Beef, poultry, seafood	120g	25	640	153
Yoghurt (skim, natural)	350g	20	780	186
Tofu	400g	48	1900	453
Almonds	130g	26	3200	763

called whey protein will best support muscle growth for those seeking improved athletic performance and health. Whey protein, known for its fast-digesting quality, travels quickly to help repair and rebuild your muscles. It also contains the amino acid leucine, which activates protein synthesis and initiates the muscle development process. Dairy products are a prime source of whey protein and usually contain ten percent leucine. Animal-based proteins, on the other hand, may have as little as five percent leucine. To include dairy products in your diet, try adding items such as low-fat yogurt or skim milk to a fruit smoothie

shake or gnaw on chicken immediately after your last exercise. Muscles can remain responsive to protein for over twenty-four hours, although the effect is higher immediately after exercise and decreases over time. But for the average active individual, eating protein after a workout will not matter if you do not meet other nutritional needs throughout the day. Interestingly enough, a recent study by Canadian researchers found that consuming twenty grams of protein every three hours—four times a day—was better at helping men build lean body mass than eating smaller amounts more often (ten grams of

Staff Spotlight: Professor Will Lee

By Yadin Teitz

Professor Will Lee has been a mainstay of Yeshiva College since 1983. Although his course offerings center around the English department, Professor Lee's influence can be felt in many different realms of the College, including the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program and the Writing Center. Professor Lee has had an instrumental role in the Academic Standards Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Middle States reaccreditation process. He has received the Senior Professor Award three times and is featured in Who's Who Among America's Teachers. Lee recently sat down with The Commentator's Yadin Teitz for a brief interview.

YT: There have been a number of pieces published in the last few years encouraging students to become English majors. Do you agree?

WL: Students should major in what they're good at and interested in. For verbal students interested in the humanities, that could well mean English, where they will develop their communicative and interpretive skills while learning about ways of thinking and feeling and inhabiting cultures that will vastly expand their range of understanding over time. I sometimes describe English as a "utility infielder" major because it prepares students so well for so many different careers. It remains to be seen, but I have a feeling that the skills students develop in the major will grow more valuable in future years because fewer people will master them. Most YU students, whether immediately after the BA or later, will eventually enter degree programs closely associated with their intended careers; that's the appropriate time for careerism.

YT: The English department has particularly felt the burden of YU's financial strains. In your opinion, are there any ways to reduce costs without hurting the department? Is YU destined to become a lower quality institution?

WL: Budget cuts are affecting all departments. Times like these occasionally open doors to specific educational improvements, but overall, educational compromises will continue to multiply until the university becomes financially sustainable. Most of the cuts that don't injure education have already been made. As faculty members, our job is to maintain our high quality and minimize the negative impact of changes on education. Longer term, YU simply must maintain its high quality to pursue its complex mission for as many students as possible. That will take a sequence of wise, solid decisions by faculty and administrators. Will we emerge stronger than ever five years from now? I hope so.

YT: How did you decide to become a professor of English?

WL: I had great undergraduate teachers at Dartmouth in English, math, physics, anthropology, and other subjects. I was grateful to them and identified with them, so my pursuit of a Ph.D. and a teaching career came naturally. I grew up quite poor, so one secret of my success was a sequence of scholarships that took me through Dartmouth, Oxford, and Yale without saddling me with weighty debts. As for the field, although I arguably had more talent in math, I loved literature more, and I decided that the world needed a professor of English more than it did a lawyer, engineer, or math professor - the main alternatives I considered.

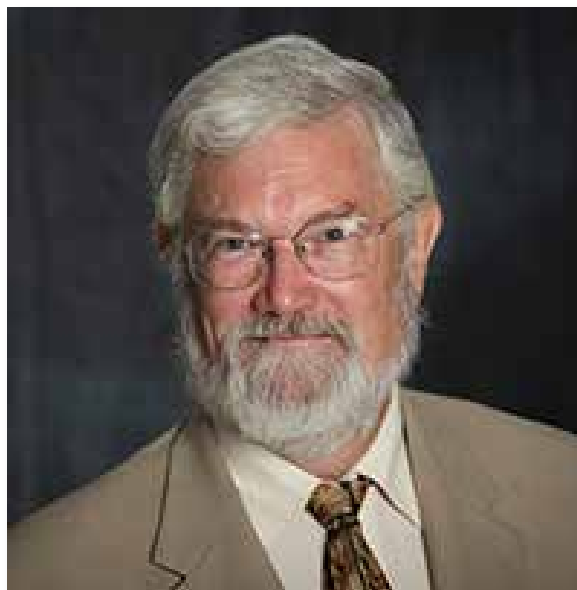
YT: You've been a professor at Yeshiva for over thirty years. How has the institution changed? How about the student body?

WL: YC has always had strong, admirable students, but the Honors Program has successfully raised the level of the college—not just for Honors Program students but for students in general, at least those who seek out the best courses and professors and the highest quality of education. YU is now more academically prestigious than when I came, thanks mostly to the talented professors whom we have hired. Recently we have lost some good faculty members, but we remain strong. I believe the proportion of talented students may have risen. At YC, the main educational news, all good, has been the implementation of a new curriculum based on core courses and stronger majors, the first major rethinking of education since the founding of the college.

YT: You were featured in a popular promotional video for YU in 1992 that was recently re-uneared. Could you tell us about that experience?

WL: I've participated in a number of promotional videos for YU, YC, and the Honors Program over the years. They asked questions. I answered. I don't know why they included the footage they did, and I don't know why they invited me in the first place. Maybe it's because I'm rightly seen as someone who believes in YU's mission and the kind of education we offer.

YT: As you know, YU's motto is Torah U'Madda. Do you find that your students' religious education influences their secular courses? Do Judaism and Jewish law affect what is taught in the English department?



Professor Will Lee

WL: Torah and Madda should be a two-way street, though Torah for most students will rightly remain far more fundamental. Interpretive, historical, and cultural skills should transfer to Torah studies, while sensitivity to texts, logical argumentation, and absorption of a complex set of traditions should transfer to secular studies. In English courses, professors should remain sensitive to halachic issues, but Jewish law should not determine what is and isn't taught in the English department. Otherwise, we will cease to be a university and should change our name to Yeshiva Yeshiva.

YT: I'd love to hear your thoughts on working in a Jewish environment. Has it influenced your own religious ideals?

WL: Working in a Jewish environment has influenced me in many ways. "People of the Book" come to class already having worked closely with a range of texts in different genres, on average, so in my field, I have a head start. I've found it interesting to find out a good deal about halacha, Jewish thought, and Jewish history partly for their own sake and partly to better understand where my students are coming from.

My own beliefs and values wouldn't meet some definitions of a religion. One summer during college, I read the scriptures and writings of all the major world religions, searching for the grounds of belief and meaning across cultures and across time. I concluded that thinking about relationships and conflicts between human beings, or at least co-religionists, proves remarkably consistent across religions despite obvious theological differences. The monotheistic religions tend to think about the divine in similar ways. More surprisingly, certain Upanishads feature similar concepts. I retain one conclusion I reached all those years ago: doing my best to improve myself including my own character, and to make positive contributions to the world, will keep me busy my whole life. Perhaps I should say it will have kept me busy my whole life. Theologically, I believe in a higher, spiritual level of existence. Morally, and to some extent politically, my beliefs parallel the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As an American, I believe that we have plenty of work to do to become the nation we could be at our best.

YT: What is your favorite part of teaching? Which course is your favorite to teach?

WL: I love the give and take of class discussion, especially when almost all the students have done almost all the reading. In particular, I love digging ever more expansively and deeply into the question at hand. I describe my main approach to teaching as the "guided Socratic" method. I have an agenda of issues but remain open to different ways the discussion of each issue could go. I hope that students feel more actively engaged than they would if I lectured. I do give mini-lectures to provide context and to set the stage for discussion, but my courses remain interactive for the most part. Even at this late date in my career, I continue to learn from students' insights and points of view.

I don't have one favorite course, but a menu of favorites, including Victorian Studies, Literary Theory, Advanced Expository Writing, Reading and Writing Poetry, and a good many more. Currently I'm enjoying developing core courses. Shakespeare and the Arts looks at a few Shakespeare plays and how painters and directors have later interpreted them. This term I'm teaching for the first time a course on cultural revolutions from the Romantics to the Avant-Garde.

YT: I know this is a hard question, but what is your favorite book/film/play?

WL: I can't pick a favorite book or play or film. George Eliot is probably my favorite novelist because of her combination of vivid characters, engagement with history and community, and willingness as narrator to engage with morality and other forms of wisdom. Shakespeare, shockingly, remains my favorite playwright on the basis of at least half his plays, with *The Tempest* and *King Lear* as particular sources of wonder. For poets, I have a long list, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Browning, Whitman, Tennyson, Stevens, Williams, Szyborska, and I'm leaving out so many more. It's even harder to narrow down films. Just yesterday I saw two great ones, *Still Alice* with Julianne Moore as a linguistics professor reduced by Alzheimer's, and *Mr. Turner* about one of my favorite Victorian painters, J.M.W. Turner. I would have trouble naming my top one hundred films ranging from the twenties until now. In general, I prefer artworks with a serious, complex human core. I don't much like light comedies or action-adventure films. I long for and seek out and often find artworks that will significantly influence my emotions and thoughts and remain in my memory. I enjoy sharing some of those experiences with students.

YT: How do you spend your time outside of school? What are your hobbies and interests?

WL: Most recently, beyond reading in preparation for my courses, I read Eliot's *Romola*, the debates swirling around the American Constitution, a volume of religious poetry, broadly defined, in the *Library of America* series, and a history behind the Brooklyn Bridge. I listen to music, mostly jazz and classical. I'm a historic preservationist especially interested in residential and vernacular architecture. I write local history about Englewood and Bergen County in New Jersey as well as about the early history of Yeshiva College. Based on archival research, I've written two articles about Bernard Revel and the founding of Yeshiva College, a fascinating chapter in YU history.

YT: What's the best advice you can give to students?

WL: Try to get the most you can from every experience, even if it doesn't look so promising. Aim for excellence in some if not most of what you do, even if it will take you years to achieve mastery. Take the best courses and professors you can find in a broad range of fields, challenging yourself to grow intellectually and personally. Make sure that internships and your career give you much more than they take from you. Don't settle for just about sort of good enough. Do your best to balance and integrate your personal, family, and work lives.

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His True Colors: The Matisse Cut-Outs Exhibit

By Moses Dyckman

On Friday, January 30th, our small group bundled up and headed out to the Museum of Modern Art. This group was made up of members of the Honors Program and students from Professor Joanne Jacobson's First Year Seminar, "Illness and Healing Narratives." When I first stepped into the Matisse Cut-Outs exhibit, I was taken aback by the rainbow of colors. There were paper cutouts of all sorts and types: dancing people, swaying fronds, and floating shapes. I smiled at a piece called Toboggan, in which a little brown sled was wedged in a paper snowdrift and its rider was thrown into the open air. A work called The Fall of Icarus also caught my attention, with a symbolic white figure on a field of black and scattered yellow explosions. However, the exhibit is best captured in a film that was playing, featuring an ailing man in a wheelchair slowly cutting pieces of red paper.

Henri Matisse was an accomplished French artist who was renowned for his colorful and intricate paintings such as *Dance* and *The Open Window*. However, in 1941, he was diagnosed with cancer. A risky surgery which followed confined him to a wheelchair. One would expect this to be a devastating blow to Matisse's art, for how can a sickly man who can't even stand up have the ability to paint? Shockingly enough, the exact opposite happened. Matisse's creativity blossomed throughout the fourteen years before his death, in a rebirth which he called "une seconde vie" - a second life.

Matisse funneled his creativity into a new form of art: paper cutouts. He would paste sheets of paper with many different hues of gouache, and then cut the papers into all sorts of intricate or simple shapes. In the Matisse exhibit, there was a photo of the wheelchair-bound Matisse, with a colorful explosion of paper shards scattered on the floor around him. The dissonance between the man's grey face and his colorful papers was beautiful. Once he cut out the shapes, he would pin and paste the various bits together to form a masterpiece. If the masterpiece he was creating was too large for him to manipulate, he would use a pointer to indicate to his assistant, Lydia Delectorskaya, the exact place he would like to put each and every pin.

Matisse claimed that "Only what I created after the illness constitutes my real self: free, liberated." When one has a

close encounter with death, it rids him of his false identities and earthly fetters. Every cutout of the exhibit was saturated with freedom. In his work *The Parakeet and the Mermaid*, Matisse didn't use realistic dull greys and browns. Instead, he used azure blues, coral pinks, and fiery oranges. In the same masterpiece, he didn't bother placing the fruit in a basket or in a tree. The pomegranates and seaweed fronds fly across

HENRI MATISSE WAS AN ACCOMPLISHED FRENCH ARTIST WHO WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS COLORFUL AND INTRICATE PAINTINGS. A RISKY SURGERY LATE IN HIS LIFE CONSIGNED HIM TO A WHEELCHAIR. ONE WOULD REASONABLY HAVE EXPECTED THIS TO HAVE BEEN A DEVASTATING BLOW TO MATISSE'S ART AND CAREER. SHOCKINGLY ENOUGH, THOUGH, THE OPPOSITE HAPPENED.

the generous white background, the essence of freedom itself. On a different wall, I found the *Creole Dancer*. Most artists would go through all the bother of making sure every limb was perfectly proportioned before calling it a finished product. Matisse instead had in mind the raw rhythm and motion of a dancer, emphasized by the dancer's explosion of feathers and flying limbs. Through illness and a new art style, Matisse was finally able to show his true colors.

As we moved through the MOMA exhibition, we suddenly found ourselves in a room entirely ringed in blue. When I looked closer, I saw that the rings of blue were made of many diaphanous shapes reminiscent of fish, sea-stars, and even people. This was Matisse's pool. The story goes that Matisse, who had been trapped in his house by his illness, asked his assistant if she could take him to see swimmers in a pool. Unfortunately, the sunlight was too painful to allow him even this simple pleasure. This could have been a perfectly reasonable moment for him to cry out in frustration. Instead, he simply said "I will make myself my own pool." Many blue cuttings later, Matisse had created a watery mesh of graceful figures. The cutouts were more than just a hobby for Matisse - it was his way of taking back what illness had stolen from him.

Below, two of the pieces from the MoMA's Matisse Exhibit: Creole Dancer (left), and The Swimming Pool



The State of Yeshiva University's Endowment

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen

The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) recently released its annual survey of university endowments. While the average endowment saw an increase of about 15% through the fiscal year of 2013, the value of Yeshiva University's endowment fell by \$90 million, or about 7.6%, to \$1.09 billion from about \$1.18 billion. YU was the only university with an endowment exceeding \$1 billion, and one of only 11 universities nationally to see a net decrease in endowment market value. Since President Joel took office in 2003, the endowment has increased about 20%, or approximately \$165 million. Matt Yaniv, Director of Public Relations for the University explained this most recent decline by saying that "a significant portion of the long term investment pool was transferred back into the university, as intended."

Regarding the current situation, Yaniv told *The Commentator* that "Yeshiva University's long-term investment pool realized double digit gains in fiscal year 2014 and its endowment remains strong," although he declined to specify the exact figure. Using data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, 15 schools qualify as part of the university's "peer group," a benchmark used by the Department of Education among other groups to track certain metrics. The average endowment performance of those universities, including NYU and Columbia, was 14.55%. Yaniv declined to say if the YU endowment

underperformed or outperformed that benchmark.

Yaniv went on to say that "the net decline in endowment assets reported in the National Association of College and University Business Officers survey is attributable to the transfer of funds out of the University's long-term investment pool." Regarding



management of the endowment, Yaniv said "YU continues to balance support of current needs while maintaining substantial resources for the future."

Where will these resources come from? According to information from the university's most recent financial statements, dated June

30, 2013, it seems likely that the university will have to seek sources of revenue other than the endowment. About 37% of YU's endowment is "temporarily restricted" and transitions to "unrestricted" after a specified amount of time. The lions' share of the endowment, about 59%, is classified as "permanently restricted," or only available with permission of the donor.

Therefore, YU can only use the interest from the restricted funds; not the principal. Only about 8% of the total endowment balance is classified as "unrestricted," or available to be withdrawn at any time. When asked how the university would respond if it encountered further financial troubles and if

the unrestricted portion of the endowment was not replenished, Yaniv declined to comment.

Yaniv also declined to discuss management fees associated with the endowment and the University's long-term investment pool. Given the university's lack of transparency, it is prudent to evaluate what may lie beneath the surface.

The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), the world's largest pension fund, is known to sway markets and represent current trends due to its size and influence. Relevant to this analysis, CalPERS announced last year that it would withdraw over \$4 billion from about 30 hedge funds. CalPERS cited the high cost and comparatively low return as the driving cause. CalPERS paid about \$135 million in fees last year for a 7.1% overall return. Indeed, the 2014 overall return of the hedge fund asset class was about 4%. The far less risky S&P 500 index returned a little less than 15%.

As reported over the summer by The Jewish Channel, Yeshiva University suffered from an over-reliance on hedge funds. Substantial portions of the university's long-term investments are "alternative investments," primarily hedge funds. If the university's hedge fund investments are anything like those of CalPERS, or the asset class as a whole, it may explain the endowment's underperformance. The university's spending on hedge fund management fees may also be part of the overall trend of bloat and reckless spending that has recently plagued the university.

Mula: Innovating Financial Management

By Adam Kramer

Mula, the brainchild of two YU sophomores, Eli Kraiem and Daniel Schwartz, is an app that seeks to revolutionize the way people manage, invest, and interact with their money. A graduate of Flatbush Yeshiva High School, Kraiem met the LA native Schwartz at Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi last year.

The idea for Mula came to Schwartz during a TAMID speech, in which the speaker talked about his investment news website. It occurred to Schwartz that the speaker was operating with the assumption that the people in the room would use his site for investment news since most of the students in the room actively invested their money.

Schwartz thought that besides for fooling around investing bar mitzvah money, most people in the room didn't actually invest. He posited that while myriad investment platforms and companies served the wealthy one percent of the population, the other 99% had no appropriate platform. By providing this large segment of the population with a tool to invest, Kraiem and Schwartz could provide a service that is severely lacking, and take advantage of a largely untapped market.

In the few months that Kraiem and Schwartz have been working on this project, they have brought on two significant co-workers to help bring their concept to fruition. Their Chief Financial Officer worked at Morgan Stanley in wealth management, and their Chief Technological Officer (CTO) is an industry veteran with 25 years of experience. When asked how two young entrepreneurs found such seasoned veterans, Kraiem responded that he and Schwartz got very lucky: They met the CTO through a family connection and met the CFO on a vacation in LA.

Kraiem explained that Mula has four main features. First, users upload pertinent financial information to Mula, which then creates different investment accounts and suggests ways to invest.

Mula's second feature is a budgeting platform that analyzes the user's purchases and suggests practical solutions to save money. When speaking with Schwartz, I asked him what Mula would say about my habit of making bi-weekly visits to Dunkin Donuts. He responded that I could save over \$450 per year by cutting out these visits and purchasing a coffee machine instead.

The third feature is something Kraiem and Schwartz call "Mula-ing." This feature encompasses the functionality of the popular app Venmo, namely sending money to your friends, while also adding in the concept of lending money to someone else. As part of this function, you can specify how much interest to charge for the privilege of borrowing your money.

Conversely, Mula also includes a feature to borrow money. Portfolio lending is usually available only for people who have wealth managers. But with Mula, if you have money in your retirement fund and need an iPhone, you can either take money from your retirement fund or use the retirement fund to leverage a loan that you can use for your phone.

In describing how Mula evolved from an idea into a platform with four significant financial features, Kraiem explained, "it branches out into a whole financial system. It allows for the user to have access to every single area of his financial life through one application."

Moving forward, the next step for Kraiem and Schwartz is to start fundraising (which they plan to do over the next six weeks), develop the prototype for their app, and form relationships in the industry. Most importantly, they need to determine the provider of the

trading platform for the investment feature of the app; without this, Mula loses much of its functionality. Looking into the future, Schwartz commented that if the market for Mula explodes, it's certainly something that they would capitalize on.

That being said, Schwartz remarked that he and Kraiem are well aware that their product could be the next Facebook, or one of the many startups that fail in infancy.

When asked how they balance their full day of YU classes with trying to get a business venture off the ground, Kraiem and Schwartz answered, "it's not balance - it's torture." They explained that they frequently work 15-18 hours per day, and often have to miss classes. In terms of the biggest challenge they've faced up to this point, Kraiem and Schwartz immediately pointed to the fact that they're

trying to establish a financial institution at 19. Schwartz added that because they're trying to aggregate the world of finance, there are so many different hills to climb in order to create everything.

Kraiem disputed the notion that building one's social and professional network is of utmost importance, instead commenting that "more important than building the network is deciding whether you're going to follow the traditional path, or go a different route. If you go your own route, things are radically different. Almost everyone has the capability to create their own institutions." Schwartz added, "If you're going to start your own institution, you have to start young." Referring back to the question about networking, Kraiem and Schwartz observed that if you don't have a good business plan, networking is useless. The critical element for young entrepreneurs is to find problems within reality, brainstorm solutions to those problems, and develop a viable plan to solve these problems. The final execution of the plan is the hardest part.

MULA, THE BRAINCHILD OF TWO YU SOPHOMORES, ELI KRAIEM AND DANIEL SCHWARTZ, IS AN APP THAT SEEKS TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY PEOPLE MANAGE, INVEST, AND INTERACT WITH THEIR MONEY.

YUIBS: An Exclusive Club on Campus?

By Eldar Ben-Zikry

Investment banking jobs are some of the hardest to land and among the most sought after by undergraduates heading into the business world. Students graduating from the top business schools in the country often choose this career path. One of the main reasons is obviously the pay: investment bankers are paid amongst the highest starting salaries compared with other bachelors degree holders. Unfortunately, life as an investment banker is not as fun as it sounds; there are a plethora of negatives that accompany the alluring six figure salary. First year investment banking analysts often work 100 hour weeks and regularly work through the night. Many refer to analysts as “overworked and underwhelmed,” as cancelling plans at the last second and missing friend’s weddings are the norm. Still, these minuses have not been enough to deter some of Yeshiva University’s brightest and most hardworking from seeking positions in the industry.

Yeshiva University has had great success getting students into some of the biggest names on Wall Street for many years, and due to an expanding network of alumni this number has only grown. Last year, a couple of graduating seniors decided to create a society on campus dedicated solely to assisting investment banking hopefuls. These types of societies have existed for many years at the best colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and the founders of Yeshiva University’s Investment Banking Society (YUIBS) felt that YU would benefit from creating something similar. Current junior and YU Investment Banking Society member Adi Pasternak (SSSB 16’) explained: “Our goal is to build, enlarge, and strengthen the network of successful Yeshiva University alumni on Wall Street. The idea is that in the near future, members who have advanced to senior positions on Wall Street will return to YU and enable current students to secure both summer and full time offers.”

YUIBS operates as an exclusive society and anyone who would like to join must submit a resume and go through a formal interview process that strikingly resembles those of actual investment banks. YUIBS member Josh Honig (SSSB 16’) explained: “We want YU to be a recognized and

respected name on Wall Street - we believe that if we can continue getting YU students into top firms, we will be able to get YU the recognition it deserves for having some of the brightest financial minds in the world.” So far the society has seen a tremendous amount of success - 75% of club members received a full-time or internship offer from an investment banking firm, most notably Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, and Barclays. Adi Pasternak explained that “over the past two years, YUIBS has seen 12 members land summer offers at many of



the top firms on Wall Street.” YUIBS has become so popular on campus that when recruiting for 5 to 6 slots for next year, they received approximately 30 resumes.

But while YUIBS’ exclusivity is giving it an edge on Wall Street, the society has found itself in hot water with the Sy Syms School of Business. Thus far, YUIBS has not been operating as an official club funded by the school. Leo Korman, the President of the Sy Syms School of Business Student Body told *The Commentator* that YUIBS has not been approved as an official club due to the fact that “they are in direct violation of the student constitution, as it explicitly states that no club shall be exclusive.” As such, the student council did not initially approve YUIBS sending ystuds and sstuds to the student body, as YUIBS was not considered a club. Furthermore, as many YU alumni will begin looking to YUIBS for potential recruits, students who are not in YUIBS may be shut out from being able

to take advantage of YU’s alumni network. Those opposed also believe that students interested in other areas of finance should be able to join the society, as the resources and network that would be available to YUIBS could prove beneficial to them as well.

When asked about the controversy, society members explained that they must be exclusive in order to achieve their goal of getting 100% of their members into top firms, as the recruiting process is highly competitive and rigorous. Many

firms have a GPA cutoff of 3.5 out of 4.0, and coming from a non-target school like YU, the students often must have much higher GPA’s. They claim that in today’s competitive environment, it is untenable to think that investment banks would recruit from YU’s general student body without the confidence (which they claim YUIBS affords) that the students possess the practical preparation and knowledge necessary to succeed in the workplace.

Questions about YUIBS remain. Has YUIBS directly helped students make it into top firms, or are the two uncorrelated? Does YUIBS hog valuable alumni networking opportunities and preclude other students from using the same contacts? Critics have pointed to nepotism within the club, a “fratty” club vibe, and a vetting process run by students - not professionals. “These are jobs we’re dealing with, not extracurricular positions,” one student told *The Commentator*.

Surely, the club does provide value in its group mentality. The current club presidents work hard to prepare members for the investment banking interview process. YUIBS plans to offer their members financial modeling lessons, technical interview courses, behavioral interview courses, mock interview nights, and site visits. They also plan to pair up members with mentors in the field, and already have YU alumni from Goldman Sachs, Nomura, Moelis, and many others on board.

However, as long as the club remains exclusive it will remain a point of contention among students, something that can only serve to split opinions of current and future YU alumni on Wall Street. Moving forward, the society awaits approval and eventually signs of success.

OUR GOAL IS TO BUILD, ENLARGE, AND STRENGTHEN THE NETWORK OF SUCCESSFUL YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ON WALL STREET. THE IDEA IS THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE, MEMBERS WHO HAVE ADVANCED TO SENIOR POSITIONS ON WALL STREET WILL RETURN TO YU AND ENABLE CURRENT STUDENTS TO SECURE BOTH SUMMER AND FULL TIME OFFERS.

- ADI PASTERNAK, SSSB '16

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