

Opposition Fails to Unseat SOY Establishment

By David Rubinstein

Current SOY (Student Organization of Yeshiva) Vice President Shua Brick defeated challenger Itamar “ET” Lustiger on May 5 in what many are saying was a particularly divisive SOY presidential election.

Mr. Lustiger, who considered a run for the SOY vice presidency last year, said that he decided to enter the race this year after he was approached by “a solid amount of people who were unhappy, who felt that while SOY was trying to reach out to other parts of the Yeshiva, it may have neglected the people who just wanted a little bit of Thursday night cholent and who wanted a bit of a different kind of Shabbos programming.” In short, ET first gained supporters among the caucus of students who “wanted more of a Yeshiva feel, the Yeshiva feel they were used to in Israel.”

Many of ET’s core supporters felt alienated by the inclusive policies of SOY President Tuvy Miller, many of which were implemented in initiatives introduced by Mr. Brick.

“There’s an important difference between inclusiveness and making sure everyone is welcome,” Mr. Lustiger stated.

Feeling excluded by policies of inclusiveness

One ET voter, who was vocal on Twitter in support of Mr. Lustiger, explained that he was against SOY’s inclusiveness. “The platform for SOY was to include everyone,” the Stone Beit Midrash Program student said, “but by including everyone, you spread resources thin and marginalize people who use the Beis Midrash.”

SEE SOY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



This year's Syms Dinner celebrated student achievement in the business school.
Read more on page 5.

It is Time to End the Secrecy: My Mental Health

By Etan Neiman

It’s time for the truth. It’s time to stop hiding. This is my story.

Everybody knows someone

Bang, bang, bang. The knocking is getting angrier and quickly. I am ten years old, lying in bed at night, home alone, and scared to death. Plan A of ignoring the pounding at my front door is not progressing well; time for Plan B. I stagger to the door and inquire as to who might be on the other side. Shooting back immediately, “It’s the police; open the door now!” Option 1: open the door and pray for real policemen; Option 2: call 911. Option 2 sounds more appealing. I offer back, “One minute,” and sprint for the telephone. Inspired by background music of fists full out pummeling the door, I fumble around and manage to get the numbers 9-1-1 onto the phone. The call button is clicked and after exchanging pleasantries of “9-1-1, what’s your emergency,” I report that armed men are at my door, demanding it be opened in the name of the police. “Tell me your address.” I blurt it at her. “Yes, the police are at your door.”

Almost in perfect synchronization, my door goes silent. I undo the bolts and am greeted by uniformed men who seem to be focusing all the energy which moments earlier went into banging my door down towards a guilty smile. “Didn’t mean to scare you son; are your parents at home by any chance?” I hadn’t seen them since yesterday. “Well, if you do hear from them, please pass along my phone number. Have a pleasant night now.”

Deep breaths, deep breaths. Returning to my ritual of trying to will myself to sleep won’t be an option at this point. I’ll have to wait for my parents to come home. When they do arrive, I report the night’s events and the process begins of determining how such a misunderstanding could have occurred. After some investigating, it is determined that a very devoted thief stole my father’s license plates and attached them to a separately stolen car in a series of events which led to the police paying a visit the wrong house. Case closed.

That, however, is hardly where my story ends. Tomorrow, ten year old me will repeat the cycle of waking up, fixing breakfast, catching carpool to school, eating the lunch I prepared, ignoring my homework, and then finding some food for dinner. I’ll probably play some video games until I trudge over to bed. One might ask, “Where were your parents and siblings?” The answer begins when I was just past my tenth birthday and my well-meaning parents tapped into their entrepreneurial spirit and opened their own business. Though it was not in any way their intention for the business to become consuming, making it go required them to devote hours deep into the night. While I do not blame anybody nor harbor any ill will, with three older brothers for the most part all out of the house, I had a lot of time to myself.

Fast-forward eleven years. It’s July of 2014. I am now closing in on the age of twenty-one and this little episode with the police is a small blip on a large radar. This radar is filled with

SEE HEALTH, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The EDITORIAL

Newspapers: Vehicles of Conversations and Great Writing

By Yechiel Schwab

With the end of the school year seemingly behind us, I can't help but look back on these past ten months, and, more specifically, the triumphs and struggles of this paper. Reflecting on the work done by the many editors and writers of this newspaper, I feel a great deal of pride in the incredible job we did, and a tinge of guilt and regret about the stories we didn't write or could have written better. While watching the film *Spotlight* last month though, I began reflecting on a larger scale, not about the specifics of the articles we published, but about the roles of newspapers and writing in general.

Spotlight, this year's Oscar-winning film about reporters uncovering a sexual abuse cover-up in the Boston Catholic Church system, thrillingly follows the reporters' investigation and touchingly displays the struggles of the victims. But the movie largely ignores the writing and editing of these articles, presumably because an abuse investigation is far more interesting than hours spent agonizing about word choice and sentence structure. Personally, though, as boring and unglorious as it may seem, I enjoy this writing and editing process immensely, and I think it embodies the most fundamental job of a newspaper.

Though many people associate the goals of a newspaper with producing investigative pieces like those displayed in *Spotlight*, pieces which cause actable change in society and governmental policy, this sentiment unfairly ignores the majority of newspaper articles. Most articles don't aspire to cause change, but simply serve to provide information. Long-form articles, interviews, discussions about art, even editorials and most news pieces, usually serve to convey truth and information to the reader. While effecting policy change is great, newspapers' true noble cause lies in their use of language not to convince politicians, but to inform the public and guide conversation.

This goal applies to almost every article printed in our newspaper this year. Our News pieces about events or changes on campuses, Features articles about more complex campus issues or art, and Business columns about the Syms School and business world aimed to inform the student body. With our Opinions section, though some argue that directly speaking with those in power would more effectively enact change on certain issues and avoid controversy, this logic obfuscates the role of our paper. Our primary aim is not to change reality, but

rather to elevate the student body's understanding of reality and its complexities.

In this role, a newspaper's most important asset isn't its investigative reporters, but its writers and editors. Great writing and the proper use of language transform an article from a collection of words and facts to a piece of art which expands the horizons of its readers. This type of writing enlightens us about the surrounding world and can shape our experiences within it. A well-written profile of a public figure, for example, displays more than simply facts about his or her personality. It creates a sense of the individual's emotions, habits, and character, and by so doing allows us to expand our empathy and see the world through the lens of someone else's experience. Similarly, an article about a natural disaster easily relates the occurrence of such an event, its scope, and its location. In the hands of a talented writer though, it can also convey the destruction and terror of this disaster, the emotions of those it damaged, and much more.

At its core, this is the goal of language: to convey from one person to another some thought, understanding, or fundamental sense of being. The more we converse with one another and share these thoughts and words, the more we expand our compassion and our understanding of the people around us. In doing so, we understand ourselves.

This power and ability of language, though, requires its proper articulate use. Poor and lazy writing or speaking cannot convey these great fundamental truths. And with language and speech playing such an important role in how we comprehend ourselves and others, we must fight to preserve its power. That is what our newspaper strove to do this year: to elevate and inform the public conversation. And it's what we must all do in our day-to-day lives. Reading great writing strengthens our powers of communication while simultaneously teaching us about ourselves and our

world. We must seek out this special power of language wherever it can be found: in friends, news sources, literature, and our leaders. Conversely, we must stifle the voices who try to destroy this conversation and lower our understanding. Those who preach uninformed and simplistic speech devalue the irreplaceable human capacity for language and self-expression. We must combat them by elevating our dialogue and discourse, relentlessly pursuing truth, and tirelessly searching to understand the wonderful complexity of our world and its inhabitants.

"READING GREAT WRITING STRENGTHENS OUR POWERS OF COMMUNICATION WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY TEACHING US ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR WORLD."

The Wisdom of the Elders, or Goodbye to All That

By Yadin Teitz

A distinct sense of sadness pervades me as I write these words, as I reflect on the fact that this will most likely be the last article I contribute to this newspaper. Actually, this past week was filled with last times and endings for me. My last class with a certain professor, unfortunately. My last class of a certain core, very, very fortunately. My last caf card dollar, a bit premature, honestly. My last attempt at using YU printing (no comment). The list goes on and on. Endings are tough, especially when the past has been so wonderful and kind to me, while the future brings dreaded change and uncertainty. Endings are tough, especially when the future is unclear, and the past reaches out and beckons with its comfortable, warm hands.

Graduating brings with it a whole host of emotions. Writing an article about it brings a whole slew of others.

What is to be my legacy? What am I to leave upon this institution where I have spent three of the most formative years of my life? What are my hopes for the future for myself? What are my hopes for Yeshiva University? What do I regret? What would I have done differently, and what advice would I give myself as a young, inexperienced freshman? Is it presumptuous of me to write an article? What do I have to say that is unique or worthwhile, anyway?

As I think about the tumultuous period of my arrival at YU after ardently and arrogantly refusing to apply here, I think of YU as my saving grace. It still is, in a certain regard. I can't walk in to the Office of Admissions without reflecting upon how gracious and welcoming they were to a student who was lost and looking for a new begin-

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 81 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 a commitment to journalistic excellence.



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1 Blooming Trees

Those two or so flowering weeks in April were pinkalicious. Why couldn't they last just a little longer?

2 Student Elections

A marvelous ploy to avoid buying breakfast one day a year. Thanks, guys!

3 New Lights in Glueck

Big fan of these new incandescents on high. The only downside is that I've been having trouble achieving quality REM during my Morning Seder nap.

4 Umbrella Bags in Furst

How many times have you feared walking around Furst Hall with an unsheathed wet umbrella only to be relieved by the soothing sight of an ample supply of plastic umbrella bags? These certainly deserve a place on the list of Things That Are Useful.

5 Donald Trump

Love him or hate him, this presumptive GOP nominee's win in Indiana was huuuuuge.

6 One-on-one citation sessions

Haven't gone yet, but love that Linda Miles keeps advertising. Can't wait! (Miles, Linda. "YU Libraries' Citation Cafés." 3 May 2016. E-mail.)

7 Yom Ha'atzmaut During Reading Week

It will be nice to already have off...wait actually we lose a day of vacation...but it will be more relaxing to not be in the middle of a school week....wait but actually the end of reading week is really stressful...oh forget it I don't know if this is up or down.

7 UP 7 DOWN

1 Glueck/Library Gate

Rumors are circulating that this gate was closed for a few days because of a missing key. That's just sad, man. The Scope's explanation is way better #Gategate.

2 Course Evaluation Reminders

Enough already, I get it! I'll fill out these darn evaluations, just please stop sending me emails every other day.

3 MTA Turret

Somewhat confused about the new paint job. Or is it a green tarp? Also, wasn't it originally copper, not this newer brighter shade?? My theory is that it's being prepared as the next wormhole for the Chitauri. You heard it here first.

4 Make X Great Again

For those aspiring comedians among us, here's a PSA: these Trump jokes have been made way too many times. They are no longer funny.

5 Posting Random Things on YU Marketplace

This 3000+ member group is supposed to be a forum for selling textbooks and stuff, not ranting about the administration or making shidduchim.

6 Carly Fiorina

Well that was short lived. But even during her brief stint as running (or, some have suggested, limping) mate for an eliminated candidate, Carly managed to elicit a surprising number of cringes, perhaps most notably by singing a creepy song about Ted Cruz's kids and falling off of a stage during a rally.

7 Belfer Hall's Height

Ever hear that cool fact about how Belfer is the tallest building in The City because of Washington Heights' elevation? So I did some research and crunched the numbers. Know what I found? It's not even close! Whoever came up with that rumor is, I think, maybe compensating for something. The roof of our DuLoc Castle lookalike is over 1000 feet lower than the Empire State Building's spire. Sorry to burst your bubble, folks.

From the President's Desk: A Year in Reflection

By Josh Teller

Crazy how fast time goes by. It feels like only yesterday I was running around campus trying to hustle my way to as many votes possible to win the position of Syms President. Now a year later, looking at the current candidates running for the position for the next academic year, it is nice to reflect on the extremely busy, yet rewarding year I had being Syms Student Council President.

When I was elected, I was extremely eager and delighted to hold such an important and influential position, although at the time I was not prepared for the amount of work or responsibilities that was expected of me in this role. It is humbling to look back at the year and to see all that Syms as a whole has accomplished. This year, the club heads went above and beyond planning numerous site visits, lectures and panels. We have been fortunate enough to meet and hear from established professionals and partake in site visits to places such as Park South Hotel, Mr. Broadway, Grant-Thorton, Ernst & Young, and The New World Trade Center. These site visits helped offer motivation for entering the workforce as an Orthodox Jew, and highlight that being an Orthodox Jew in the workplace is relevant and possible. What is so special about Syms is that the school really teaches us how to excel in the business world while getting a great understanding of the potential issues and circumstances you might run into once you leave Yeshiva University.

The Syms Student Council, together with the Deans and faculty, have worked hard to achieve our goal of offering students the unique opportunity to learn outside of the classroom and begin preparing for their careers after they graduate. To maximize as many opportunities as possible, we utilize our various clubs lead by the student body. We have over 15 different types of clubs that specialize in targeting the different interests and needs of the Syms student body. These clubs cover an array of topics such as the Accounting Society and the Marketing Club to TAMID and the Business Leadership Club. The clubs run events to educate the students on things that may not be covered in the classroom and include professionals who speak about various topics and present networking opportunities for the students. These events allow our students to broaden their interests, and experience what their work may look like in the future.

Working alongside Alexa Ratner, Syms Student Council President on the Beren Campus, we were able to complete many of our goals of changing certain aspects of the Syms community throughout the year. Whether it was bringing in new clubs that would be more beneficial to the diverse student body, or encouraging more site visits and networking opportunities, the many hours we spent throughout the year have definitely paid off.

Being that the Syms Dinner is always the highlight of the year, Alexa and I wanted to make this year's Dinner on April 14th something special and memorable. Thanks to all the students, parents, and faculty for their support and encouragement, this year's dinner was the largest in history with over 300 participants. From the location to the caterer, as well as the order of the evening, we completely revamped the traditional Dinner. We started planning for the dinner back in August and after numerous meetings, email exchanges, and phone calls it was magnificent to watch how everything played out.

Looking down the road, I see Syms heading in an extremely positive direction. Enrollment is larger than ever and the amount of students landing jobs in Big 4 Accounting firms, Bulge Bracket Banks, Real Estate and Marketing firms is unbelievable, and the success students are having here is only going to grow. As stated above, all of these amazing accomplishments are largely due to the amazing work of the student body. There are so many useful events on campus that are run by the students for the students. The Syms community is something everyone should be proud of.

To the next President of Syms: enjoy every minute of it. There are going to be things that frustrate you and make you upset, but remember that you are in a position that you should not take for granted. You are in a position that enables you to make a strong impact on a Business School and a large student body. You are going to be working hard and vigorously all year, but once it is all over you are going to look back at all that you have achieved and be extremely proud. Leave your mark.

One of the reasons I decided to run for President was because I felt that my first two years at Yeshiva University flew by, and I did not feel that I made any impact on the school. I felt an urge to make a difference at YU. I felt that I wanted to walk out these doors after I graduate and tell myself that I left a mark on YU and that I was a contributor to this great institution. At times the role is extremely frustrating. Working with numerous people with different personalities and ideas is not always the easiest. But being in this position has taught me so much about responsibility and leadership. This role has helped shape me as a leader and has given me the practical skills that I will be able to take with me into the workplace. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity I was given, and am grateful for the relationships that I have built over my time at Yeshiva University.

SOY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

“Lack of programing for guys who consider themselves yeshiva bochurim first and students second [made this group feel] marginalized.” The ET supporter suggested that “instead of including everyone, SOY should have made things more appealing.”

The SBMP student, who wished to remain anonymous, explained that the difference in policy was that ET planned to “present already successful programs to everyone instead of transforming the whole institution and alienating those that use yeshiva most.”

Interestingly, another ET supporter said he voted for the outsider candidate specifically because of his inclusive platform: “I was supporting ET because he had a vision for inclusion,” said Avi Sebbag, a junior studying marketing. “[He had a] vision that would wipe away the stigma that YP looks down on everyone. It’s a very untrue sentiment and I would really like to see it end.”

This polarity even among ET’s supporters may come from the fact that Mr. Lustiger never presented a platform of concrete initiatives he would introduce. (He did, however, express serious disapproval of the coeducational Shabbat programming, which he said lacked the support of the Roshei Yeshiva and caused discomfort to “people who consistently stay in for Shabbos and partake of meals in the Caf.”)

“There’s just a general focus on making sure that whatever programs we were running would be working,” Mr. Lustiger explained. He envisioned a climate in which “the shabbos afternoon activities, like the forums and games, which seem to be very popular,” continue running, along with programming that caters to the more yeshivish crowd that feels they were neglected by the Miller-Brick administration.

Mr. Miller’s inclusive policies manifested in both tone and programming. In his first address to the student body, the Har Etzion graduate encouraged the student body to bond over common passion for Torah. “Let’s find more opportunities to learn together as a community. Even if it’s a little uncomfortable at first. Let’s look at our eternal Torah from someone else’s perspective. In a serious, thoughtful way. Let’s work together to intensify our relationships so that our community becomes a holier, more profound place in which we can live and grow together.”

Shabbat on the Wilf Campus also became a subject of contention. Yeshiva “In” Shabbos weekends were rebranded as “Community” Shabbats. Mr. Brick commented that “Shabbatot at YU are generally geared towards the more yeshivish community,” and that he sought to cater to “students who simply want a Jewish community feel.”

On social media, some supporters likened ET’s candidacy to that of presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. Mr. Lustiger was seen as an “outsider” who would challenge the “SOY Establishment,” by which ET supporters felt they had been ignored. Twitter accounts belonging to ET supporters as well as the official account of ET’s campaign, retweeted posts containing the hashtag #MakeSOYGreatAgain. The Twitter account of a hockey team composed mostly of alumni of Shaalavim and Kerem BeYavneh, two demographics associated with ET’s support base, “officially endorsed” ET’s candidacy and another supporter tweeted at Mr. Trump’s campaign account to do the same.

It’s not just about how Yeshiva should be here; it’s about what Yeshiva you attended in Israel

In addition to policy, however, demographics may have been just as strong, if not a stronger, driving force behind Mr. Lustiger’s candidacy. Informal polling among alumni of different Hesder Yeshivot indicated that ET enjoyed widespread support from graduates of Shaalavim and Kerem BeYavneh, while graduates of Har Etzion and HaKotel tended to favor Mr. Brick, a graduate of Hakotel.

According to Mr. Lustiger, ET’s supporters encouraged him to run because they see him as “one of the ‘guys,’ one of the chevre.” He explained that this is due to the fact that he is “a classic Shaalavim guy.”

ET said that during his short vice presidential cam-

paign last year, he sought to “represent the demographic that isn’t necessarily so much represented in SOY, which is the people who have the more ‘right wing’ religious worldview.”

ET reports that for him, the race “wasn’t only about that.” Rather, in addition to representing the “more [religiously] right-wing” students of Yeshiva, he wanted to reach out “beyond the people who only know the Glueck Beis Midrash” and “get them included in all the programming we already have and to try to make them feel comfortable as well.”

Disavowing Divisive Rhetoric

In campus rhetoric and on social media, supporters of both candidates resorted to particularly vitriolic speech. The candidates presented a united front to attempt to combat this issue, simultaneously sharing posts on their facebook timelines urging supporters to keep the debates and conversation positive.

“I DON’T THINK IT’S JUST STAM A FEELING AND JUST STAM A LOUD BUNCH THAT WAS JUST TRYING TO ‘GET GUSH OUT OF SOY,’ HE SAID. “IT REPRESENTS THAT THEY FEEL THAT A LOT OF THE PROGRAMMING THAT SOY DOES GOES AGAINST WHAT MAKES THEM FEEL COMFORTABLE.”
- FORMER SOY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ET LUSTIGER



ET supporters circulated the hashtag #GetGushOutOfSOY, which could refer to SOY President Tuvy Miller, former SOY President Jacob Bernstein, and Vice President-Elect Dovid Simpser, all of whom attended “Gush,” the nickname for Yeshivat Har Etzion. The hashtag may also refer to President-Elect Shua Brick, whom many associate with the stereotypically left-leaning yeshiva, even though he never attended Gush himself.

ET unequivocally condemned the negative speech. “The rhetoric my supporters were using was unkind and it was wrong. The hashtags they were using - it was immature and unkind,” ET stated. He also lamented a

Facebook post from the other side that took apart his words from the debate as “egregious and unnecessary.” ET said that “this type of rhetoric fritters the gap” between people of different morning programs. “Just the rhetoric from both sides - it really disturbs me; it was really terrible.”

Mr. Lustiger emphasized that there are no hard feelings between himself and his opponent.

Explaining the loss on election day

Despite the clamor around Mr. Lustiger’s campaign, the SOY outsider failed to garner the required support to unseat Mr. Brick, who used all the advantages of incumbency at his disposal.

Yair Strachman, a Yeshiva College junior who has been involved in multiple political campaigns, thought ET’s defeat was significant given the recent history of SOY elections. “For the last two years, a Har Etzion alumnus was elected president,” he noted. “Unlike last year, students who felt unrepresented presented a coordinated and unified effort. The new coalition fielded an impressive and popular candidate.”

Mr. Strachman theorized that ET lost because although the SOY president must be a student in the largest morning program, which is consistently the right-leaning MYP, he is elected by students of all morning programs, many of which lean more to the left. Mr. Strachman surmised that Mr. Lustiger may have captured the MYP vote but lost the election due to lagging popularity in the other programs.

Reflecting on the outcome of the SOY election, Mr. Strachman remarked that “though many people like to talk about how YU is ever trending more right wing, this election proves the opposite - at least among the student body.”

Many observers, including Mr. Strachman, also noted Brick’s advantage as an incumbent. The president-elect disseminated ystuds several times a week, each of which increased his name recognition and highlighted the programming he had created. When asked why they voted for Mr. Brick, many voters in fact cited his list of accomplishments as vice president. ET did not have the occasion to disseminate ystuds at the same rate as Shua.

Levi Herman, a senior studying management who voted on Thursday, said that “If your name isn’t around YU and you’re not an all-around guy you stand no chance” of winning an election. “It’s a mix between a popularity contest and the job you’ll do,” he said.

Looking beyond the elections

Mr. Lustiger thought the future of SOY is “hopefully headed in the right direction,” provided that everyone feels represented. “I don’t think it’s just stam a feeling and just stam a loud bunch that was just trying to ‘get Gush out of SOY,’ he said. “It represents that they feel that a lot of the programming that SOY does goes against what makes them feel comfortable.”

Resentment lingers among some frustrated supporters of ET’s candidacy. Mr. Brick, however, announced the initiation of the Bais Medrash Committee, which will be devoted to improving “current programming as well as starting new programs surrounding our Bais Medrash experience.”

The SOY vice president appointed MYP Vice President-elect Yehuda Avner as committee chair and Mr. Lustiger and Yaakov Ian Hawk as senior committee members. Mr. Hawk, a Shaalavim alumnus, lost the SOY vice presidential race to Har Etzion graduate Dovid Simpser. Mr. Lustiger said that he joined the committee because “Shua graciously offered and I’d love to help the yeshiva out in whatever way I can.”

As Mr. Brick assumes office and continues implementing the inclusiveness platform, initiatives like the Bais Medrash Committee will be critical in ensuring that the “more Bais Medrash-centered students,” as Mr. Brick referred to them, feel included in SOY programming as well.

The president-elect said he felt hurt that his opponents saw him as neglecting the interest of the students who spend more time in the Beit Midrash, “especially since I consider myself part of that constituency.”

Mr. Brick was confident that the introduction of the Bais Medrash Committee sends “a clear message that ET, Yaakov [Ian Hawk], and I all want to work together to strengthen the programming of the Yeshiva.”

Student Council Establishment Candidates Dominate Wilf Campus Presidential Elections, Electoral Process Met with Criticism

By Avi Strauss with David Rubinstein

Undergraduate voters elected next year's student council representatives on Thursday, May 5, in what is seen as a vote of confidence in the establishment candidates.

Shua Brick was elected president of Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY), Jacob Herenstein as president of Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), and Tzvi Levitin as president of Yeshiva College Student Union (YCSA). All three presidents-elect serve as vice presidents of their respective councils this year. No incumbent ran in the Sy Syms Student Council men's presidential race which was won by Akiva Koppel.

Two other student council candidates elect will be returning in the Fall, bringing their experience with them. Both Aryeh Minsky and Efraim Benscher served this past year as the Junior and Sophomore Class representatives respectively and will be contributing to councils in more senior positions in the coming year. Minsky will be serving as YSU Vice President of Classes while Benscher will be serving as the new SYMS secretary/treasurer.

However, many other races saw fresh faces win their right to serve on student Council. Incoming SOY Vice Presidents Dovid Simpson, Yehuda Avner (MYP), Joseph Aronoff (SBMP), Aryeh Laufer (IBC) and Noah Markovitch (JSS) will all be bringing fresh perspectives to the council governing the Yeshiva aspects of student life. This may be particularly important given the contentious nature of this year's election and the campus discussions about inclusion and unity across the different morning

programs.

Simpson shed light on how the election process and election this year will shape his year on the council next year: "If there is anything elections have shown me most it is that our Yeshiva is very divided, whether by hashkafot or values, and that needs to change. It's not just about actions, and it's not just about words, but it definitely is about the feeling that people get while being here. I'm here to make sure that everyone feels that they are an integral part of our community."

Vice President of IBC-elect Aryeh Laufer said that he's "happy to get to work improving the program for everyone" and stressed that "true change comes from the grassroots. Anything we accomplish will come with the help and support of fellow students who join in the effort to create a diverse educational program and a more unified community."

On YSU, Herenstein and Minsky will be joined Raffi Wiesen, elected to be YSU Vice President of Clubs.

YCSA may have had the most peculiar election. For the second year in a row, the YCSA Vice President position was uncontested, resulting in lone candidate Joey Jubas winning the position. The position of YCSA Secretary/Treasurer started election day without any candidates, leading to a write-in battle to fill the position. In order for a write-in candidate to win, per the election rules, he must garner at least 20 students to vote in person in the Office of Student Life, and the highest number of votes, should multiple candidates pass the 20-vote threshold. Ultimately, Marty Spiewak was elected.

YCSA President-elect Levitin expressed his hope for

next year: "I'm so excited to work hard next year to make sure YC students have a voice in their education, and I can't wait to work with the fantastic presidents of the other councils to make YU a place where every student feels they belong."

In addition to Koppel and Benscher, Binyamin Zirman was elected to the SYMS council as Vice President. Koppel said he is "very much looking forward to strengthening the ties between the YC and Syms administration." as president next year.

Despite the hope that new governments can portend, many were unhappy with the electoral process. Calls for more transparency, especially in the election results, were heard from several standpoints.

Yaakov Sultan, a senior majoring in political science, expressed deep frustration with the fact that ballot tallies are not announced. "For people like myself, who plan on going into politics and running a campaign, not releasing results is detrimental to my career," he said. Mr. Sultan ran unsuccessfully for president of YCSA last year.

Breaking from the hubbub about the form of the elections, Yakov Ellenbogen, a junior in Yeshiva College, said that he doesn't think anything will change. "I voted," he said. "I think that people should care about student government, but in practice, I didn't notice any substantive changes between last year and this year, and I don't expect to next year."

All in all, with the elections settled, the future council members will be gearing up for next year where they hope to bring the plans and proposals of their candidacies to fruition.

Syms Dinner a Triumph of Student Achievement

By Darren May

The Syms dinner is an event that has been on the annual YU calendar for a number of years. In many ways it is one of those events that on the face of it are quite drab. Everyone has been to award dinners, everyone has heard the same formulaic speeches, everyone has heard the same labored thank you routines. Despite this, there are some notable reasons that the Syms dinner this year was an outstanding event, an event that highlights the ingenuity and resourcefulness of two of YU's finest students, and an even that should be celebrated by the YU community.

In the YU News article "Sy Syms Celebrates Year of Achievement", you will find this drab play-by-play characterization of what the night was. Who spoke when, who won what, etc. What they fail to address is that the entire event was planned solely by two YU seniors, Josh Teller and Alexa Ratner. Josh and Alexa are the respective Syms student presidents on the Wilf and Beren campuses. With virtually no help from the institution they represent, they managed to plan an event that is about as complex as a wedding.

"Alexa and I started planning the Syms dinner all the way in August," said Josh Teller. "The point of the dinner is twofold: one is an academics awards dinner, to highlight student achievements. The other point of the night is that it is simply a nice way to end the year. I took on this responsibility with my co-president Alexa because I wanted to make my mark on the institution that gave so much to me. I think that the first couple years of my time in YU just flew by. I wanted to do something in my last year that would leave a lasting impression and impact on the YU student body, and in light of the overwhelmingly positive response I received from all the attendees, I think I managed to do just that."

Moishi Eisenmann expressed just such sentiments about the night. He is a graduating senior

and he received the Dean's Award for Scholastic Achievement in Management. He said, "It was a fantastic night with a great atmosphere. It was amazing to see all the wonderful seniors that YU has, and it's easy to see that they are the future of the Jewish business world."

**"I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING
IN MY LAST YEAR THAT WOULD
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- SYMS PRESIDENT JOSH TELLER**



Syms Student Council Presidents Josh Teller and Alexa Ratner

Kudos to the Sy Syms [Student] Council for organizing this event. And of course I was beyond honored to receive my Dean's award."

"When Alexa and I sat down in August to plan this

event," Joshua said, "we knew that we wanted it to be radically different than in years past. The first thing we decided was that we needed to revamp the event. In years past students found the event really boring. The old events went something like this, speeches, buffet, more speeches. We set out to change that. So we changed the venue to the Prince George Ballroom, we changed the caterer, we made it a sit-down dinner, a more classy gala-like event. We then made the awards during the dinner, which was a totally different format. It was a big risk because there was no format to go off, but the feedback was totally positive. We did everything: caterer, ballroom, centerpieces, stage, light and sound, tickets, all was done by Alexa and myself -- especially Alexa, she's really a fantastic co-

president. There were definitely times I was just fed up with the whole thing and wanted to throw in the towel, but despite all the challenges we managed to make the event a great success."

Another notable part of the night was the acceptance speech made by Jacob Meir. He spoke about how difficult it was growing up with dyslexia. He then went on to say that his parents always believed and supported him, and how this has allowed him to excel in school and life in general.

It is remarkable how the events that happen behind the scenes are often the ones that deserve the most recognition. The Syms dinner was no different. The tireless work of Josh and Alexa made the Syms dinner an event that was truly special for many students, parents, and faculty in YU, and the broader YU community. But beyond that, it really highlights how capable and resourceful YU students are. Two students with no background in event

planning were able to plan an event for about 330 people that had many moving parts and many different facets. These are the type of stories that the YU community is so proud of.

A Review of the Changes: Core Curriculum 2.0

By Judah Stiefel

If you accidentally missed the rather important email regarding new, student-friendly updates to the Core curriculum due to a conditioned reflex to immediately delete Y-Studs, you're not alone. The two changes to the Core add a refreshing air of flexibility to YU's students. The two updates are as follows:

First: students may continue to fulfill the EXQM requirement either by taking a section of EXQM or by taking two terms of college mathematics/statistics beyond pre-calculus in addition to one year of college science. AP credit may be used to fulfill the mathematics/statistics component but may not count toward the science component.

This rule increases students' options, allowing students to take a math or science they may have been interested in but for which they had no time in their schedule. It also means that if students do not relate to the classes offered within EXQM, they have other options.

Second: So that students can build on interests that they've developed in the Core, students are encouraged to consider interdisciplinary minors as an optional element of the YC degree. Students will be allowed to double-count up to two Core courses toward the fulfillment of both their Core graduation requirement and the requirement for an approved

interdisciplinary minor. Students can be in touch with Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Joanne Jacobson if they have an idea for an interdisciplinary minor that they'd like to develop.

This update encourages students to branch out and explore a diversity of subjects and fields for which they had interest but were discouraged from due to a lack of room in their schedules. Some departments may also choose to allow the double-counting of Core courses toward their own minors. Students may get in touch with specific departments if they have questions about departmental minors.

Dean Jacobson explains that the new YC Core was the first major change to general education

requirements made in over twenty years. The creators of the new Core planned on revisiting it a few years later for adjustments. According to Dean Jacobson, the motive behind the changes is to "[incorporate] the Core more organically into students' overall educational experience—and thus [allow] students to follow up on new interests developed in the Core." The administration also hoped to "allow departments to benefit from the innovative spirit of the Core."

There were also a few technical changes made such as running two sections of NAWO for two groups of students; those taking advanced sciences and those who are not. EXQM courses have been expanded as well to include the social sciences.

According to Dean Jacobson, the faculty will be announcing in the fall a new "writing-intensive" requirement. It can be fulfilled by designated courses and is replacing First Year Seminar. The course was impossible to staff due to budget cuts. The course, said Dean Jacobson, "[will] provide an alternative way for students to develop the crucial writing skills in different disciplines that are central to a college education." It's certainly worth it for every student to at the very least consider how he can take advantage of these new changes to the Core curriculum.

"THIS UPDATE ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO BRANCH OUT AND EXPLORE A DIVERSITY OF SUBJECTS AND FIELDS FOR WHICH THEY HAD INTEREST BUT WERE DISCOURAGED DUE TO A LACK OF ROOM IN THEIR SCHEDULES."

Stomping Out the Stigma of Mental Illness

By Elliot Heller

Over 200 people packed Weissberg Commons on Tuesday night, May 4, as the Active Minds club held its sixth annual Stomp out the Stigma event, to raise awareness of mental illness and to promote healthy discussion of the serious, yet often socially taboo, issue.

After being carefully selected by Active Minds' student liaisons and the counseling center, four YU undergraduates shared their powerful stories of struggle with mental illnesses ranging from eating disorders, to post traumatic stress, to generalized and social anxiety and clinical depression. While the first two speakers declined to use the microphone, their messages were heard loud and clear. Few dry eyes remained by the end of the evening.

Although the speakers revealed their identities at the event, the event was conducted under the premise that their identities would remain anonymous to anyone who did not attend the event to hear their stories.

The students' speeches were preceded by a moving speech from Mrs. Ruth Roth of Teaneck, who lost her 21-year old son to suicide in 2013. Roth reflected on the progress that had been achieved in attitudes towards mental illness since her childhood. Raised in Brooklyn as the daughter of Polish immigrants, Roth said that in those days, while taking medication was common, mental illness itself was scarcely acknowledged, let alone discussed. While taking medication was common, it was viewed as short term quick fix

("if you were a bissel nervous, you took a little Valium,") rather than as an encouraged avenue of treatment for a long term disorder. "Forty years ago, I would have said 'I don't know anyone with mental illness, I don't know anything about mental illness.' Looking back on that now I think, 'How ridiculous is that?'"

In telling her son's story, Roth described how she and her husband came to the decision to tell friends and family the truth about how their son had died, and the incredible amount of support they received from the community once they did. While it was too late for her son, she urged the audience to take action and not shy away from seeking help at the first signs of mental illness, because "destigmatizing mental illness will save lives."

Two of the speakers mentioned that the social stigma against discussing mental illness had been a major obstacle for them in seeking help. "One night my roommate asked me 'have you ever thought about taking medication?'" one speaker shared. "All I could think was 'oh no, she said the 'M word.'" It was only after they took a step back and asked themselves what they would do if their mental illness were a physical one, such as diabetes, that they were able to confidently seek help. The results? "I gave up my dream of becoming an academic, which I realized wasn't even my dream, and decided to go after my real dream of writing and publishing." Another proudly declared: "I am 163 days clean, and I am 100% in love with life."

To close the program, Martin Galla, LCSW, of the counseling center, spoke briefly, reminding students of the services and availability of the counseling centers on both campuses.

Said Gabriel Elyaszadeh, co-president of YU Active Minds: "Our goal [was] to destigmatize mental illness with this event

by showing students that mental illness is not something that separates people. People who have mental illnesses, whatever they may be, aren't 'abnormal.' They are capable, well-rounded, normal people, who succeed in school and in different facets of their lives wherever they go."

"OUR GOAL [WAS] TO DESTIGMATIZE MENTAL ILLNESS WITH THIS EVENT BY SHOWING STUDENTS THAT MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT SEPARATES PEOPLE."
- GABRIEL ELYASZADEH



Two Senior Biology Professors to Retire after Illustrious Careers at Yeshiva

By David Rubinstein with Avi Strauss and Judah Steifel

Senior faculty members Drs. Carl Feit and Barry Potvin will be leaving the biology department after this spring as they retire. Together, they have taught at Yeshiva for more than a combined 60 years.

Dr. Feit, 70, is Assistant Professor of Biology and holds the Dr. Joseph and Rachel Ades Chair in Health Sciences, and first came to Yeshiva College as an undergraduate, from where he received his B.A. in 1967. After receiving his Ph.D. from, and doing postdoctoral research at, Rutgers University, Dr. Feit was a research scientist at the Laboratory of Immunodiagnosis of the Sloane-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research.

Dr. Feit returned to Yeshiva in 1985 as associate professor of biology, a position he has held since. Two years later, he was named the chair of the department of health sciences.

In his 31 years as faculty of Yeshiva College, Dr. Feit had a transformative impact on the department of health sciences. He oversaw the construction of the biology labs in Belfer Hall, which were previously all in the basement of Furst Hall. He also created the "Principles" curriculum. In addition, Dr. Feit was an active student advisor.

Cancer has been the principal focus of Dr. Feit's research throughout his career. Most recently, he has been investigating monoclonal antibodies as well as human tumor antigens. His doctoral dissertation, which he presented in 1973, is titled, "Immunogenicity of Ribosomes from *Histoplasma capsulatum*." His curriculum vitae lists over 80 publications of which he is either author,

coauthor, or editor.

An ordained rabbi, Dr. Feit has also published on the interface of science and religion. He was one of the founders of the International Society for Science and Religion and currently serves on its executive committee. In addition to the scientific publications in which he is involved, he serves on the editorial board of Theology and Science.

Dr. Frederic Sugarman, Yeshiva College Associate Dean, called Dr. Feit his "closest friend at Yeshiva College." Dean Sugarman said that Dr. Feit "mentored me and taught me the meaning of Torah U'Madda. Words fail me in trying to describe him."

Hillel Ziegler, a pre-dental junior majoring in biology, shared that, "Dr. Feit was always able to present the material in an interesting and engaging way. He was dedicated to connecting with his students and loved to see them succeed. He really was an amazing professor and he will definitely be missed." Mr. Ziegler took Principles of Biology II and Cell Structure and Function taught by Dr. Feit.

Dr. Potvin, who is Professor of Biology, is retiring after 36 years at Yeshiva University, including Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, and Albert Einstein School of Medicine. He cited as impetus for his retirement his "desire to return to New England and have time to travel and pursue other interests and hobbies."

The retiring professor recalled two of his fondest memories from his time at YU: receiving the letter awarding him tenure from then-president Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, and the lengthy ovation his students recently gave him after his last lecture at Yeshiva.

Dr. Potvin studied biology as an undergraduate at Brandeis University and received his Ph.D. in genetics from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Between 1973 and 1980, he was a post-doctoral fellow, research associate and instructor in the Department of Human Genetics and Development at Columbia Medical School.

At Yeshiva, Dr. Potvin taught numerous lecture and lab courses in subjects including genetics, epidemiology, biochemistry, and microbiology. He designed the public health minor and taught its classes. Since 1987, he was Visiting Professor of Cell Biology at Einstein, where he did most of his research.

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Potvin was the pre-health advisor for both Yeshiva and Stern Colleges from 1984 to 1989 and again at Yeshiva College from 2004 to 2007.

"Teaching and advising here has given my life both purpose and meaning over 36 years," Dr. Potvin reflected. "I feel a real sense of deep sadness at leaving YU even

though I hope I have made positive contributions to the lives and future careers of many wonderful, talented, and highly motivated young [students]."

As a parting word for past, present, and future students, Dr. Potvin urged that they never lose their "sense of wonder and love for learning." Additionally, quoting Star Trek, he reminded students that "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few – or of the one."

Dean Sugarman called Dr. Potvin "the consummate gentleman and professor." Dean Sugarman reported that Dr. Potvin "showed deep concern for his students and colleagues and never said no to any request I made of him. He is another dear friend."

Dr. Josefa Steinhauer, Assistant Professor of Biology, said that it was "wonderful" working with Dr. Feit and Dr. Potvin. "I feel very lucky to have been recruited and mentored by them," she remarked. "They are both extremely committed to the department, the younger faculty, and the students here at YU. It's hard to overstate the contributions both have made to our department."

Yeshiva College has already begun the process of filling the newly vacated roles. Recently, Dr. Somdeb Mitra was hired as Adjunct Professor in Biology. Dean Sugarman reported that Dr. Mitra, currently a postdoctoral research scientist at Columbia "has successfully taught courses at YU" and is "a promising young biologist."

"Drs. Feit and Potvin leave big shoes to fill," Professor Steinhauer said. "But, we in biology promise to continue their legacy by delivering a top-notch education and by supporting our hundreds of majors."

Dean Sugarman noted that finding two "new professors of excellence" to replace the retiring faculty "is not easy." He is confident, however, that "it will be done using both Professors Feit and Potvin as our role models."



Spanish Minors Attempt to Rectify Issues with Fall 2016 Spring Offerings

By David Mehl

The class schedule for the Fall 2016 semester, released online on April 12, triggered an outcry among students in the Spanish department. Students were disappointed to find that the number of Spanish courses offered had been cut from five the previous semester to three. More concerning, students noticed that no courses in Advanced Spanish were being offered, even though it is a requirement for the Spanish minor that many of them are pursuing. Additionally, Intermediate Spanish I, another minor requirement and an option in the CUOT (Cultures Over Time) core category, was being given once instead of twice, and only at a time which conflicted with many students' YP shiur.

Together with their teacher, Graciela Bazet de Broitman, students brought their concerns to the dean's office. After some discussion, the Advanced Spanish class was reinstated, with an informal vote during an Intermediate Spanish II class determining the timeslot in which it would be offered. Intermediate Spanish I was also rescheduled, but problems still

remain for many students. Eleven of these students signed on to a letter to Dean Karen Bacon written by Joey Jubas, who wrote of the troubles caused to him and his fellow signers by the downsizing of the Spanish department. "At the current time period of 3:00 p.m., I am unable to continue in this program, putting my core curriculum at YU as well as the potential of my minor at risk. Being a Pre-Engineering major requires me to take many math and science courses, many of which must be taken in order, and only offered once a semester." The letter also expresses worries that this semester's downsizing will only be the beginning: "We are all concerned about the future of our program," he added.

The decrease in Spanish course offerings is the result of Yeshiva's need to continue cutting costs as it continues recovering from years of fiscal mismanagement. With the Spanish program attracting fewer students than in previous years, it was a natural target for reductions.

Students extolled the value of the Spanish curriculum and expressed their disappointment that it was being downsized. "In other classes, you learn information

that it's hard to see how it could be applicable in everyday life. Knowledge of Spanish is a tangible skill set that allows you to interact with new people in new ways, especially here in Washington Heights," said Ely Kaplan. Jesse Silverman, one of the signatories to the letter, added "As a pre-med student, having Spanish under my belt is a huge plus. In America, there's a significant chance that knowing Spanish will be very helpful for communicating with my future patients." The changes could put a dent in those hopes.

Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, who helped the students press their case, agreed, but lamented the students' inconvenience as the inevitable troubles a small university faces due to its ability to offer only a limited number of classes. Yeshiva is trying to spark interest in learning Spanish with the upcoming summer honors trip to Mexico, he said, because the administration recognizes that Spanish is growing in importance for many professions.

As this story goes to press, students are still working with the dean's office to try work out a solution.

What You Don't Know About the Homeless

By Kochava London

Living in New York, it is almost impossible to walk down the street without passing by a homeless person. This isn't surprising, since one in every 147 New Yorkers is currently homeless. In a given year in the United States, over 3.5 million people are likely to experience homelessness. Despite the prevalence, there are many misconceptions about the causes of homelessness, as well as a general lack of knowledge about this widespread societal issue.

One of the most common misconceptions about homelessness is that all homeless people are mentally ill or addicted to drugs or alcohol. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), only about 46% of homeless people struggle with mental health issues and/or substance abuse. Interestingly, research shows that the primary cause of homelessness is actually lack of affordable housing.

There is a significant affordability gap between

wages and the cost of renting an apartment. In order to afford a small, one-bedroom apartment in the United States today, an individual needs to earn a minimum of \$19.35 an hour, which is about two and a half times more than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25. This means that someone being paid minimum wage would have to work 85 hours a week just to afford a one-bedroom apartment (National Low Income Housing Coalition).

Poverty, of course, is inextricably linked to homelessness. The poverty rate today is about 15%, and two of the major causes are unemployment and inadequate welfare programs. Many people cannot afford to pay for food, healthcare, and housing, which forces them to make a choice about which to give up. Entire families can become homeless if they are hit with an unexpected financial loss from a sudden death, car accident, job loss, or expensive medical bills.

A lesser known cause of homelessness is the aging population. Studies show that adults between the

ages of 50 and 64 account for a large proportion of the homeless population. These adults are not old enough to qualify for Medicare or social security benefits, yet many struggle with geriatric difficulties like dementia, vision loss, and limited mobility. Elderly adults over the age of 64 do receive social security benefits, but many find that this money is not nearly enough to cover daily living expenses as well as rent.

War veterans make up 11% of the homeless population today. Over 90% are male, and more than half struggle with a physical or mental disability. Veterans are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness because they are more likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a physical disability that makes it harder for them to secure a job. Many veterans find it extremely challenging to transition back into civilian life after returning from their service. Others find that the

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HEALTH, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

anxiety, depression, and many unpleasant memories. I have spent the greater portion of my life trying to understand why. Why do I constantly have unnatural feelings of anxiousness and sadness? Why haven't I been able to think clearly for so much of my life?

The first major obstacle to getting answers and getting healthier was overcome three months ago when I figured out what I have been sick with all this time. Some overdue googling got somewhere - Generalized Anxiety Disorder. That's where it started, at least. A period of self-discovery and therapy then led me to the next couple of terms - Social Anxiety Disorder and Depression Disorder.

At long last, the symptoms which had tormented me for most of my life now had an explanation. I now had a reason why I feel unnaturally scared and depressed when I should not. I did not have to wonder anymore why the numbness, tight muscles, or throbbing of the heart and forehead. It all of a sudden made sense why I often pray not to bump into people or assume the world does not want to see me. There was some sort of explanation for why sometimes I can think clearly and sometimes, for several days at a time, I cannot think in my usual way. Words will be hard to piece together, I will mumble, seem detached and upset. When this happens, I will sit by helplessly desperately trying to piece together sentences in the way I could just the other day. Symptoms of my Social Anxiety Disorder, when these "mental shutdowns," as I refer to them, began around the time I was twelve, they persisted nearly all of the time. Gradually, I inwardly worked on reducing the "shutdowns" to the point where I was experiencing them approximately half of the days of the week by the time I was about twenty.

Figuring out why was great, one of the greatest days of my life. Finding that cure which has eluded me for so long would change everything.

The next major obstacle to getting healthier was to figure out what to do about what I just decided: enough is enough. Though I had just recently figured out the diagnosis, I had known something was up with my head for a long time and told nobody. I thought I could fix this on my own. It's my head darn it; I will cure it! Well, it hadn't worked. I only get one chance at a childhood and I had wasted it fooling myself. The time had come to do something so outrageous that I swore I would only ever do it as an extreme last resort; the time had come to tell someone the truth.

Today is July 18th, 2014. The day is Friday and Shabbat is closing in fast. If I want to act, I'll need to do it soon. I'll need to act soon not because of the electronics shutdown mandated by Shabbat, but because I am starting to feel that feeling I have felt hundreds of times before. The anxiety and depression have been too strong for too long. I have once again fought valiantly, but the worst of the Social Anxiety Disorder will be arriving shortly. Soon, my head will partially shut down, and I

will not be able to think clearly, let alone communicate at my normal level. There is no telling when I will have full access to my head back. Yeah, if I'm going to tell someone the truth, it's going to be now.

On goes the computer and up comes Facebook chat. I carefully click on the friend who I decided long ago is the only person who just might understand what I'm sure nobody else will. Better type it quickly before I come to my senses. Wait, this is ludicrous; what am I doing?

A different Etan seizes control of the computer. This Etan has had enough. This Etan will not let the last eleven years of his life define the next eleven. Into the chat box it goes, "Is it OK if I weird you out for a second?" "Sure," comes the instantaneous response. We chat for a bit and agree to meet in person soon to discuss further. Thanks to this friend's urging, about



one month later I will walk into YU's Counseling Center and begin the slow road towards recovery. It will take some time for the therapy to become effective and to get to the right medication. It won't be easy to make the necessary changes to my life approach, but it will slowly happen.

As I sit here putting my story on paper, the only word which can properly describe the past two years is relief. Thanks to a combination of medication, counseling and focused changes to my life approach, I have gotten exponentially healthier. My brain chemistry has at long

last started to be corrected. The anxiety and depression are (very) slowly softening and the mental shutdowns have gotten better. While sometimes I win the battle and sometimes my illnesses do, there is no doubt that I am beginning to win the war. I assure you, there is no greater relief.

There is, however, one glaring problem which I cannot ignore. I am too small of a speck on too large of a radar of mental illness. People across the world are suffering, mostly in silence. There is a consensus negative view in society about people with mental illnesses; call it a stigma if you want to. It seems like every time a newscaster reports a major shooting, for example, the next two words out of his or her mouth are "mental illness". This is a grossly misleading narrative.

All of this stigma has expectedly led to a wave of silence. Many who have a mental illness live in silence. Many who have the means to educate the world on what it really means to have a mental illness remain silent. Then there is the worst form of silence: so many out there who have a mental illness do not even realize they have one. This is due to the overall lack of mental health education. I would know; this is exactly how I spent many of my first years with a mental illness, not even realizing that anything was even wrong with my head.

There is a blatant hole in the theory that having a mental illness somehow changes a person. If one wants to say something is wrong with a mental sickness, then just to be consistent, one would have to say something is wrong with somebody who is sick with cancer, diabetes, Crohn's disease or any type of ailment. It's actually pretty straightforward. Just how having something like chronic migraines does not define the person or change the very essence of what he or she is, similarly having a mental illness is not a person-defining ailment. Sure, like any sickness, mental illnesses require treatment and other relevant measures, but they in no way change the person.

This absurd stigma is not an inconsequential issue which can be swept under the rug until it is convenient. The lack of mental health education kills. It is numbing to think how many suicides could have been prevented if there was less silence and more people embracing treatment.

If just one positive could come from my years of living silently in sickness, it is for anybody reading this that has a mental illness or thinks that they may have a mental illness not to repeat my mistakes. I beg you to be open and seek treatment. Please. We need to educate the world about the truth of mental illnesses, that they do not fundamentally change the person affected in any way. It is our calling to let people with mental illnesses everywhere know that they are not alone. It is bad enough that we're sick; why should we or anybody feel as though they must keep this from their friends or even their family?

Together, we can be the generation which finally educates the world about mental health. Together, and only together, we can erase the stigma surrounding mental illness and change countless lives.

Hall Haunting: A Student's Reflections

By Yitzchak Fried

There is a curious way in which, despite being surrounded by the same people every day, one fails to see them. My fellow students are so many heads, smiling and waving and passing without a word. This one I recognize: we were in an economics class together. He seemed friendly. He smiles at me for a moment, and then his eyes pass vaguely from my face to the corridor over my shoulder. I remember, I think, that he is studying finance. I am not studying finance. He has other things on his mind than I do: stocks and companies and interviews. In his spare time, he practices giving a firm handshake and maintaining strong eye contact.

I think I know why these fellow students of mine seem so distant. It's because we are all in our own little worlds, here. For many of us, they are quite busy worlds, career oriented and time-pressured. I pass a group of students talking, all premed. Premed students are identifiable by a special, stressed buoyancy. There's a smile that's the hallmark of a successful premed. It reads, more or less, "I-work-damn-hard-and-I'm-smart-but-don't-worry-I'm-still-a-good-guy". That's for the ones who get by. The struggling premed is a different beast. He smiles weakly, a gentle terror about his eyes.

There is an appeal for mercy there and a prayer for the end. As a group, the premeds are dispersed among the departments of the hard sciences. Their friends are our physicists, chemists and biologists – fellow devotees of Newton, Mendeleev and Pascal. Around 3:00, they stream out from Glueck, Morg and the Rubin cafeteria. These separate currents of bodies converge, around the Amsterdam crosswalk, to form a new tributary, which diverges from the main bustle and heads off toward Belfer. I watch my group chat; they talk of research and labs and MCATS. From what I can tell, they know little about stocks.

Everyone is busy with something that I know nothing about. That's good training for life. What's that saying: "Everyone who you meet carries a burden you know nothing about"? Well. Here, it's true in the most basic sense. I pass a sociology student who is giving two presentations this week. I can't remember the last time I gave a presentation. He carries a stack of notes. His mind is on his slides. Looking further down the hall, I see three mathematics students arguing over the latest test in linear algebra. To an outsider, their conversation sounds like gibberish. "Will you be taking mathematical statistics this spring? I hear it's awful, but you do well." "No, I'll take elliptic PDE. No one understands a word, but Chen is dependable."

While they talk, an eddy forms in the space before the elevators, as students branch off the current that now heads out the main entrance of Glueck and toward Furst Hall. The doors open, and the students stop fidgeting and enter. In elevators, different departments meet for squashed encounters like two-minute culture clashes. "I like your shirt," one guy grins to another over a sea of pressed heads. "Thanks," the shirt-wearer replies. His tee has Maxwell's equations printed on it. The students who divide the two stare dully. There is an exchange going on that has nothing to do with them, a joke that they cannot, and frankly have no desire to, understand. A bell dings, and the doors open again. Students pour out, students pour in.

At some point during freshman orientation, someone said that YU is not one college, but a collection of colleges. A strange thing to say, but accurate, in a way. Not only because of the diversity

of majors, but because of the different shades of Jewish culture that exist here, each with drastically different social norms. Social circles intersect, it seems, only at the fringes. But every now and then, one stumbles into the center of a new perimeter, like a traveler chancing upon a sunlit valley. I am invited to a Friday night Shabbos meal; I know no one. I look at the smiling faces around me and realize: these people do this all the time. Drinks

"IF ONLY THERE WAS A GREEN LAWN WHERE STUDENTS COULD PLOP DOWN, RELAX AND WATCH EACH OTHER. JUST TO HAVE THEM ALL IN AN UNCURATED SPACE AT THE SAME TIME WOULD BE SOMETHING REALLY INTERESTING. OUR CAMPUS COMMON AREAS ARE ALL TOO SMALL, TOO INAMICABLY TONED, OR TOO SEGMENTED TO SPAWN REAL COMMUNITY."



and conversation flow; laughter abounds. They talk of dates, and how girls are easier to find in the summer. Their bodies are beautiful and carefully maintained: stylish beards, smooth arms and necks. Their rites of male beauty fascinate me; I listen as they share professional tips. "Have another drink," the host urges. I am an outsider, but they welcome me with masculine camaraderie. I accept the drink with a smile.

The separateness of our social circles may have something to do with our shared spaces. That is, YU doesn't have very many. If only there was a green lawn where students could plop down, relax and watch each other. Just to have them all in an uncurated space at the same time would be something really interesting. Our campus common areas are all too small, too inamicably toned, or too segmented to spawn real community. The tables on 185th street: too few. Heights lounge: a collection of individual couch-cubicles. These are rest stops, places to step into when you step out of the stream of inter-class traffic. Students are travelers, here. We smile at each other with genuine fellow-feeling, but it is only to wish each other a good trip.

The library – there's a place where students can meet and talk. I look around at the clusters of students: groups of friends studying, talking, laughing. There are girls here. That's exciting. No one I know, though. Somehow, though, the environment is hardly casual. If you watch the faces in the library (the ones here for the people, not the books), you'll

find that they're searching for something. Look at that girl over there, the blond one, her face carefully made up. See how she looks up every time someone passes by? Perhaps she's waiting for a stranger to say hello. Did she put on makeup before coming uptown? Hm. The culture between the sexes is weird, here, something that may have to do with our ideology of separation. Girls who come uptown wear makeup. Do they think they're being appraised? Do the guys sitting in the library think that they're being appraised? Hm. I do my work. I imagine what it's like to travel uptown and to wear makeup.

The closest thing we have to a lawn, within reasonable distance, doesn't belong to us. I'm talking, of course, about Fort Tryon Park. We share the park with other Washington-Heightsians of all stripes and colors: the Jews of Breuers, African-Americans and Dominican-Americans, young professionals and their children, black robed monks. Fort Tryon is the public space we lack, but it doesn't create a campus community. If anything, it draws our circle wider. It brings us into contact with people who are as different from us as can possibly be. It does this, in fact, for the Dominicans and the black robed monks as well; from all walks of life, people come to Fort Tryon to smell the flowers. This is part of the appeal, I think, that the park

has for us YU kids. I think we try to balance our parochialism with a far reaching cosmopolitanism. In the process, however, we avoid genuine community. A warm identification with the world avoids concrete ties to anyone. To be fair, this attitude is characteristic of New York City. We are a city of cloistered people in cramped quarters. Our subways are filled with hijabs and crosses sitting side by side, actors and businessmen who rub shoulders in packed cars.

The city and the park, then, can teach us something about our halls. Theoretically, college unites us by our pursuit of knowledge. That's some idealistic fluff. But, if not knowledge, we are certainly united here by something. We are people in transition, shuttling from the world of adolescence to the world at large. We are all working for something. We are all working, in fact, for the same thing. What that thing is, I guess, is some mixture of financial security, self-realization and a place in the world. In college, because in transition, we first become aware of our need for salvation. And with childhood behind us, we realize that our redemption is in our own hands. That pursuit unites me with those heads passing in the halls and, indeed, with the people in the park.

I was once walking in Fort Tryon Park on a grey, autumn afternoon. It was a windy day, and as I stood on a precipice overlooking the highway, some fallen leaves detached themselves from the mountain side. They swirled and spiraled upward, whipped by the wind, rising above the cars below like a pillar of frankincense. The people driving to the GW bridge were each coming from somewhere different and heading somewhere different. But from where I stood, the highway traffic moved and flowed like the Hudson River beside it. It was as if those cars had some continuity of identity, were something other than a thousand atomized humans who didn't even know each-others' names. They were joined, unbeknownst to themselves, in a common project, for whose sake the wind and the mountain made offering before the open sky. It was a soothing thought. I'll take it with me the next time that I walk our halls.

The Religious Necessity to Watch An Exodus Movie

By Yaacov Bronstein

Certain representations of the Exodus story in popular media have become, for many, indispensably associated with the seasonal Passover experience. For these adherers, the notion of forgoing an annual screening of Prince of Egypt or the Rugrats Passover episode would constitute an unthinkable abrogation of personal tradition. Alongside the inherited family Seder plate, sentimental melodies, and immutable holiday destinations, the Exodus movie has obtained its place on the mantelpiece of household custom, to be reverently disturbed once a year along with all the others.

The notion of viewing a dramatic rendering of the Exodus harbors much inherent religious benefit. The classically trotted obligation on the Seder night is to see oneself as though one had actually exited Egypt. This emphasis on the experiential is a tall order, necessitating not just a simple cognitive reiteration but a sensitive immersion. To expect to see yourself leaving Egypt is to mandate a personal, vivid visualization and imaginative engagement with the Exodus story. Unfortunately, for many modern readers, the biblical text, even when read continuously as an epic story, uninterrupted by the divisions of the parsha or unencumbered by commentaries, fails to convey the dramatic gravity and immersive magnitude typically achieved by, say, the Lord of the Rings movies. Though the actual story of the Exodus leaves little to be desired even relative to the plot of Lord of the Rings, the literary style of the Bible is notoriously frugal with its words, and descriptively skeletal when compared to contemporary literature, making it difficult to access and appreciate. Oftentimes the most timeless and compelling aspects of the Exodus story, the colossal heroism, triumph of liberation, and relatable human drama, are tragically lost on the modern reader detached across a dramatic lacuna stretching three millennia into the past, or, regarding a parallel issue, on the religious individual who has studied these stories into a dulled and rote oblivion. A film adaptation of the story, if done well, has the potential to revitalize and concretize the Exodus within the imagination, immersing the viewer in the story in a manner otherwise unattainable. The events become not just words on a page, but a real and vivid drama.



It has been my personal tradition for some years to view the film The Ten Commandments at a time close to the holiday. The movie stretches almost four hours long, utilizing an epic scope and grand theatrical style befitting the Exodus story. The script is quite loyal to its source, and makes a conscious effort to harness the biblical voice, frequently lifting verses directly from the text, allowing them, for many religious viewers, to be heard genuinely spoken for the first time. As a serious and loyal portrayal of the story, I feel that it reinvigorates in me the awe one should feel for the Exodus, much as the holiday itself should do, and provides the proper framework for my own visualization.

For example, while I have known since pre-school that God split the sea to allow safe passage for the Jewish nation, I failed to appreciate the sheer scale and power of that moment until I saw it brought to life in this film. The drama of the scene lies in its uncertainty, but as

As a pillar of fire descends to bar Pharaoh's encroaching army and dark clouds convene to storm over the sea, Moses' deep voice trumpets over the nation:

"After this day, you shall see his chariots no more! The Lord of Hosts will do battle for us! Behold His mighty hand!"

As he raises his arms over the waters the seas swell and recoil into massive shimmering walls, emerging as a towering canyon of water stretching into the distance. The nation slowly passes through, glancing warily upwards at the wavering heights. Suddenly, the fire dissipates, and hundreds of golden chariots give chase with leveled spears, eagerly anticipating an easy massacre. The Hebrew stragglers, having spotted the encroaching chariots, reach the safety of the opposite bank before the towers of water collapse, crushing the golden army under the weight of the sea. A divine light shines down through the clouds onto the liberated people, and Moses says,

"Thou didst blow with Thy winds, and the sea covered them. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

Many more personal examples could be cited along similar lines, as the film frequently articulates aspects of the story which had never occurred to me despite years of study. The grief Moses feels while wandering towards Midian in Egyptian exile, the conflicts of an identity divided between Egyptian prince and Hebrew Prophet, the stubbornness of Pharaoh, the horrors and hopelessness of slavery, and on and on, are all brought into sharp and understandable human relief.

Scripture charges the liberated nation, in what practically becomes a refrain, to use the memory of enslavement to hold themselves to a higher moral standard.

"And a stranger shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:20)

Throughout Scripture the propagation of the Exodus story becomes an act concurrent with the perpetuation of these ideals. Annually reliving the Exodus reminds us of our charge, but a lesson which hinges on a story requires a compelling storyteller. For the modern religious individual, the Exodus movie has the dramatic potential to be that storyteller, to revitalize the text in a powerful and poignant way, and imbue a crucial humanity into the most important story ever told.

HOMELESS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

skills they gained in the military do not transfer to the typical workplace.

Another major cause of homelessness is family conflict. Many children become homeless when their parents get divorced. Others leave on their own after enduring years of abuse. Teenagers are often kicked out of their homes when they come out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Domestic violence also plays a role, as many women must face the difficult choice of remaining in an abusive relationship or living on the streets.

Many people do not realize that being homeless is not always a life sentence. There are actually three types of homelessness: chronic, transitional, and episodic. The chronically homeless are usually older individuals who struggle with a disability or drug or alcohol addiction. They spend most of their lives in shelters, but they represent only a small proportion of the homeless population. People who are transitionally homeless make up a larger percentage. They are usually younger and have suffered an unexpected catastrophe or financial crisis which requires them to spend

a short time in a shelter before finding a permanent residence. The third type of homelessness is episodic. These people transition in and out of homelessness, are typically young and unemployed, and struggle with substance abuse or mental health issues.

People often wonder why many homeless people choose to live on the streets instead of going to shelters. Despite the name, living in a homeless shelter is not the refuge that we think it is. Physical and sexual violence are extremely common in



shelters, in addition to theft, which deters many people from spending the night. In addition, homeless people who frequent shelters are at greater risk of contracting communicable diseases like tuberculosis or pneumonia. Shelters are usually overcrowded, and there can be over 100 beds in one room. David Pirtle, a homeless man from Washington, was interviewed on NPR about his experience in shelters. He said, "I never found out what a body louse was until I got into the shelter. You know, I had my shoes stolen, just like people said you get your shoes stolen."

Being homeless is not a choice. It is typically the result of unfortunate circumstances that could happen to any one of us. This idea is disturbing, as it reminds us of the fragile nature of our social position. When we see someone sitting on the sidewalk asking for money, most of us walk by quickly and avoid making eye contact, as if merely acknowledging their presence is too much for us. We turn away so as not to be reminded that in a moment, we could lose everything: our health, our family, our income, and even our home.

A Note on Organic Interactions

By Michael Shavolian

Every time I go, I promise I will never go again. But this time is different. I tell a friend the same thing. I tell him we will only go for dinner. That way, we won't feel like we have bought into the 25-hour Awkward Seminar whereby nametags seem apropos, where desperation reads, "I came down 150 blocks to meet girls this Shabbat". So my friend asks me: why does it

"MANY MALE STUDENTS ARE SIMPLY TOO INTIMIDATED TO ATTEND AN EVENT WHICH SO IMPLICITLY ADVERTISES THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX."

matter that we simply feel this way? Feelings are often shallow. There is much to be gained!

He might be correct. Indeed, if I could master my emotions; jettison any thoughts of the ridiculousness of staying at a nearby hotel in order to spend a whole Shabbat at Stern; down a few shots of vodka beforehand; and avoid any memories of the look in my colleagues' eyes during Friday night davening the last time I went, I could, in theory, be fine. Time and again, events like the Shabbatons at Stern deceptively appear to be great opportunities, and it seems to me that food quality and programming aren't exactly the problem.

The functioning factor I have in mind is the organic nature (or absence thereof) of such events. Interactions with the opposite sex should feel natural, like the type of "healthy snacks" your mom likes to buy. Ideally, they shouldn't feel forced or planned months in advance. One shouldn't feel mandated to

meet someone. With this in mind, a BBQ on fake grass on a partly cloudy day in early May can hardly be called "natural". Neither can a girls to guys ratio of 10:1 on Shabbat afternoon be described as organic, no matter how mistakenly coveted such fantasy circumstances might be on other college campuses. These conditions breed awkwardness, discomfort and impediments to natural expression on part of both parties.

Needless to say, some students aren't just uncomfortable in inorganic settings; they are downright anxious. With the shuttling in of busses of girls on Yom Haatzmaut, some endure more pointless anxiety than that stemming from the final exams that follow. Last year, I wrestled one anxious friend out of his room but was ultimately unsuccessful in convincing him to attend the barbeque. He has since transferred out of YU because, as he put it, there was not enough interaction with the opposite sex. The irony is deafening, but the point is clear: many male students are simply too intimidated to attend an event which so implicitly advertises the opportunity to meet

members of the opposite sex. My colleagues on the Stern campus might be able to confirm whether the reverse is veritable. Of course, this opportunity is not spelled out in words. It is not marketed in y-studs. It may even be hardly spoken about among students. But it's pretty clear.

What might be the alternative, you might ask? Career panels, volunteer trips and Medical Ethics roundtables facilitate far more 'real' interactions than Stern Shabbatons. These venues provide the opportunity for members of the opposite sex to interact in a pressure-free environment where the primary goal is not to meet someone new but to learn about careers in real estate, to educate public school students or to discuss the latest controversies in medical ethics. I have met far more people at these events than at the less organic events, and I find it funny that you often find things where you least expect them. Your car keys, your summer internship, your bashert.



"The Heights Are Alive With The Sound Of Sexism"

By Anonymous

As a leading Modern Orthodox institution, Yeshiva University largely sets the tone for how Modern Orthodoxy is reflected in the world. For both Jews and non-Jews, each statement and every act committed by YU is under intense scrutiny and is often taken as reflective of the stance of the entire Jewish people. So when the model for the Jewish nation displays unfairness towards women and apathy for the arts, it's concerning.

It's easy to write certain things off with classic college excuses like, "budget cuts," or "a lack of interest," but at a certain point we need to take a step back and see the truth. Yeshiva University is suppressing the Stern College Dramatics Society, while Yeshiva College Dramatics Society is given far more opportunities to thrive.

I know that seems like harsh language, but anything more gentle wouldn't do the issue justice. Let's start with the basics here and get you up to date.

As people, we all have passions. As college students, passions are a luxury that not everyone has the time for. It's a sad reality that if you want to keep your GPA up, you can't do everything you want. That being said, it is incredible that Yeshiva College makes it plausible for students to have room for theatre by giving everyone who takes part in the productions one or two credits (per semester). The college not only gives people who are passionate about theatre a way of participating in performing arts without having to worry about losing precious credits, but also attracts other students looking for additional credits, thus getting a large number of people involved in production from all parts of the college.

Unfortunately, while Stern College is a part of the same organization, the same courtesy is not extended to the women. Instead of being given the promise of school credit, Stern Ladies involved in theatre are given the promise of long hours, hard work, and a total lack of appreciation. While males can get credit by merely ushering for seven performances, women can have rehearsal for four hours every night of the week for two months with nothing to show for it except blood, sweat, tears, and a hit to their other classes.

Fortunately, there are still women willing to be involved because of their burning passion for theatre. One student who only joined SCDS in her senior year

"I REALLY DON'T EXPECT THE GUYS AND GIRLS TO HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYTHING, BUT I THINK THE CLEAR, BLATANT INEQUALITY IN THIS IS JUST RIDICULOUS."

and wished to remain anonymous said that if getting credit for her participation with SCDS were an option, it wouldn't have taken her this long to get involved. Another student, who also requested anonymity, explained that the large time commitment with the play often hinders her schoolwork. "It's a huge commitment and [being involved in SDCS] holds me back." Both girls agreed that if credits were involved, they wouldn't be having the same conversation. One of the students went on to say, "I really don't expect

the guys and girls to have equal opportunity for everything, but the inequality here is just ridiculous. If both students are putting in the same amount of effort for the same outcome, then it's clear that they should be treated the same way and should be given the same opportunity to gain something from it. The current system is encouraging girls to not be a part of something."

In addition to one side getting credit while the other doesn't, another big advantage YCDS has over Stern Dramatics is the simple fact that they have a space to be working in. Once upon a time, there were two theatres owned by YU- one on the Wilf Campus, and one on the Beren Campus. It was a beautiful time when both groups had access to small, but professional, theatres. In fact, both theatres were donated by the same person, an individual who valued the arts and wanted students on both campuses to have equal opportunity to follow their passions. Unfortunately, after Yeshiva University found itself strapped for cash, the higher-ups decided that the best solution was to sell one of the theatres.

Now yes, obviously real estate in Midtown is far pricier than in the Heights, yet there were numerous inquiries about women using the theatre in the Heights which were rejected. In the meantime, the women were stuck working in Koch Auditorium, or at Norman Thomas High School. Neither options were very satisfying. In Koch, the very same Koch that holds biology lectures and Shabbat meals alike, there is no access to lighting other than existing ceiling units and the construction floodlights that facilities kindly brought in. The brown carpet absorbs all sound and hinders dancing, and the lack of a stage makes an

SEE SCDS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Why You Should Care About an English Soccer Team's Championship

By Joey Chesir

Last week, English soccer team Leicester City became the champions of England's Barclays Premier League, a prestigious league in England and one of the best soccer leagues in the world. Leicester, a team that was promoted to the league just last year, managed to beat out some of the wealthiest and most powerful clubs in the world, including Manchester United, Chelsea, Manchester City, and Arsenal. These clubs are not only almost always the strongest competitors in club soccer, but are also among the wealthiest sports franchises in the world, often paying ridiculous fees to import the best players from all over the world. Leicester City managed to unseat these clubs with a highly limited budget and talent pool, using many players that had been with the club since its days in the lower levels of English soccer. Many are calling Leicester's championship one of the greatest sporting accomplishments of our time, but the effects of Leicester's victory are even more important than winning silverware. Leicester's victory has changed the outlook on international athletics, making financial capabilities less important and introducing parity to one of the world's most wealth-dominated sports.

Much more so than in American sports, the most successful teams in world football are generally the richest. For example, Real Madrid CF, one of the best teams in Spain, was recently rated by Forbes as the most valuable sports franchise in the world, possessing a fortune of over \$3 billion. Madrid has utilized their wealth by implementing a strategy called Los Galacticos, where they spend unprecedented amounts of money on some of the world's greatest and most expensive players, including British superstars Gareth Bale and David Beckham, Portuguese legend Cristiano Ronaldo, and French icon Zinedine Zidane. Real Madrid, and its Spanish archival FC Barcelona, each spend even more money on players than the highest paying American franchise, the New York Yankees. Their wealth has translated into ten European championships in their history, the most of any team in Europe. In recent years, many other European football teams have adopted similar strategies of rampant spending in order to achieve success. This has led to world football being divided into "Big Clubs", who are able to hand out lucrative contracts in the hopes of landing the world's most talented players, and smaller teams, who fight to stay competitive in the world's top leagues. Before this season, the past 20 English champions had been a "Big Club", including Arsenal, Manchester United, Manchester City, or Chelsea, all of whom have paid expensive transfer fees for

players.

Leicester City was first promoted to the top flight of English football last year, as part of the promotion-relegation system of international soccer, where the top teams in a league move up to a higher division, while the bottom

"LEICESTER CITY'S VICTORY HAS OVERTHROWN THE FINANCIAL CULTURE OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTS, AND INTRODUCED COMPETITIVENESS TO A SPORT THAT HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN DOMINATED BY THE FEW TEAMS THAT COULD OUTSPEND THE REST."



teams are pushed down to the lower divisions. Leicester City managed to beat out some of the richest organizations in sports for a domestic title, in only their second season of play in their division. To put this achievement into American sports terms, Leicester's championship is a rough equivalent to an NBA expansion team winning a title in their second year in the league, against a historically dominant team like the Los Angeles Lakers, who possess superstars like Kobe Bryant and Pau Gasol on their roster. Simply put,

this just doesn't happen. Leicester has shaken the sports world, and proven that you don't need a hefty paycheck in order to achieve athletic success.

Even in American sports, money has often been one of the most important factors in a team's success. In sports like basketball, where each individual player's impact can be the difference between winning and losing, teams will shell out unbelievable amounts of capital in order to secure the best players. Many of Basketball's greatest modern players, including LeBron James, Chris Paul, and Kevin Durant, are paid upwards of \$20 million a year by their respective teams. In soccer, teams will pay even more for individual players, partly because of the wealth of their respective owners. Some of Leicester's competitors, including Chelsea, Manchester City, and Manchester United, each had annual payrolls of over 190 million English Pounds in 2016. Meanwhile, Leicester City paid a combined 48 million Pounds for the services of their players this season, which is around a quarter of the respective payrolls of their rivals in England, and managed to defeat all of them. Leicester's victory has introduced parity into English soccer, where even cash-strapped teams can now be championship contenders. As Leicester has shown, it doesn't take money to have success in the world's top sports leagues. Many of Leicester's players and staff, including striker Jamie Vardy, midfielder Danny Drinkwater and manager Claudio Ranieri had been castoffs from other clubs, and had been deemed incapable of performing at the highest level of soccer. Their triumph has proven that the best formula for athletic success is a careful eye for talent, including the acquisition of capable players who may even be seen as rejects by other clubs. This strategy is similar to Billy Beane's "Moneyball" policy in baseball, which he used to create a winning team under a limited budget. Any team in any sport can become a winner by finding diamonds in the rough, who other teams undervalue and fail to acknowledge or pursue. By mimicking Leicester's strategies, less-than-wealthy sports franchises can overthrow the financial Goliaths in their leagues, and can introduce parity to their respective sports.

Leicester City's victory has overthrown the financial culture of international sports, and introduced competitiveness to a sport that has traditionally been dominated by the few teams that could outspend the rest. Leicester City has changed how teams view themselves, and allowed smaller teams to become more ambitious, even against wealthy and powerful opposition. It will be interesting to see if other "small teams" can copy Leicester and unseat the perpetual champions in the future, and continue to change how sports teams are assembled.

SCDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

SCDS production feel like a skit being performed for friends, despite the caliber of the performance.

At Norman Thomas, there are multiple restrictions placed on how SCDS is allowed to use the space. Stern students aren't allowed to enter the space until a certain late time, and they are kicked out at the strike of 10:45 (really 11:00, but the staff gets antsy), which makes 8:00 PM performances difficult because the entire set and all of the props also need to be removed after each night for lack of storage.

Thankfully, SCDS was able to smartly find ways to put on fantastic productions in both of these places, despite the pitfalls. But that doesn't make the circumstances any less ridiculous. It isn't only female students who see the imbalance. As one unnamed Yeshiva College student said, "I'm consistently blown away with how good SCDS productions are, despite the lack of a real theater. If (SCDS) got even remotely equal treatment to YCDS, they would be unstoppable."

Seeking unstopability, SCDS and other concerned parties continued to ask the administration about gaining access to the Schottenstein Theatre. However, despite multiple requests and meetings with administrators, including one as recently as the Fall 2015 semester, this dream has not yet come to fruition.

Further complicating SCDS's dramatic aspirations are their budgetary constraints. SCDS is funded and run by the Office of Student Life and is given a similar budget to any other club on campus, even though they have far more costs than other clubs, including

purchasing rights to scripts and buying materials for sets and costumes. On top of finances, being run by the OSL also means that every single decision needs to be run through the office, a process which, as efficient as the office is, inevitably takes a while and slows down the production.

YCDS, on the other hand, is run directly through the Dean's Office, as opposed to the OSL. Because of that, they are given a lot more leeway when it comes to decision-making. It is also widely acknowledged that, even if their semesterly plays have been reduced to annual performances, YCDS enjoys a much larger budget than SCDS for their productions. Such a disparity hurts SCDS tremendously.



Unfortunately, the discrimination that Yeshiva University perpetuates for the Dramatics Society speaks to a larger issue. A senior at Stern involved in SCDS said that she believes the inequality minimizes the number of women looking to get involved in the arts past college. Young women come into Stern with a passion, and leave believing that their unfair treatment at YU is consistent with the values of the Jewish community at large. These women learn to leave their passions behind with their innocent freshman dreams, never to be looked at again.

Yeshiva University, with all of its influence, is creating a reality where women cannot participate in the arts, at least not in the same capacity as men. Many students attend YU specifically so that they can practice and embrace Judaism, while simultaneously pursuing a full college experience and their passions. By suffocating SCDS and its women, our school is suffocating the artistic passions of young women in the Modern Orthodox community. Yeshiva University is thus subliminally sending a message that the Jewish community doesn't care to foster the talents and skills their women have to offer. This is not the world I want to live in and this is not the beautiful religion I am a part of, so why are we allowing YU to make it so?

**Names have not been included in this article due to the sensitivity of the subject.*

Let's Define Our Terms: Are We Really Yeshivish?

By Ariel Reiner

I don't seek in this article to argue whether one should or shouldn't be pro yeshiva-style events. I seek to define terms. Only once we define our terms can we decide what we are and aren't for. Over the past month or so, time and time again, YP students in YU who generally are more into a

"yeshiva style atmosphere" have been defined as "yeshivish." No doubt, some students in YU are yeshivish. However the conversations which led to these descriptions don't reflect yeshivish tendencies per se, and there are inaccurate sociological breakdowns being conducted by those who seem to have miscategorized a large portion of YU. I want to take you through the instances in which this occurred and explain the underlying issue here.

To be clear, the point I set out to make isn't that being labeled yeshivish is a bad thing. The yeshivish community in America has thrived and grown over the past century, and in my opinion is to be respected tremendously. However, people should decide for themselves whether or not they are part of a certain community whether they be in YU, Lakewood or elsewhere.

What really triggered this article was a conversation that took place before a class I am in, a few weeks ago. A few students were discussing the YU play which ran in April. I mentioned to someone that there was a question asked about the play at Richard Joel's town hall that week. The question happened to be about why the university was shifting next year from two plays a year to one, but that isn't what is important to this discussion. Before I could mention what the question was a student turned to me and said, "was it some yeshivish kid asking why actors in the play don't wear kippahs?"

That question threw me off a bit. I had two responses. Firstly, no that was not the question. Second, had someone asked that question, I truly fail to see why that would make him yeshivish. Again, my point here isn't to assess whether students should be wearing kippahs during an official university event, that is for another time. The thought that arose in my head at the time was if that concern indicates that someone is part of the "yeshivish" community then what is the expected response to such an instance by a halacha following, Modern Orthodox individual?

In early February, the YU Commentator ran an article titled, "Shabbat on Campus?" which raised some issues with the atmosphere in YU on Shabbos. The article correctly noted that some students don't feel connected to the yeshiva-style programming which takes place on Shabbos. I am not here to object to that fact. What I do find problematic is how those who the Shabbos schedule is supposedly catered towards, are described. The article quotes a member of SOY (Student Organization of Yeshiva) as saying, "shabbatot at YU are generally geared towards the more 'yeshivish' community which is often unappealing for students who simply want a 'Jewish community feel' on campus." The article then continues "The SOY board on Wilf has been working to create programming that is geared towards both demographics at YU. For starters, shabbatot will now be called 'community Shabbos' as opposed to an 'in-Shabbos', which has a very yeshivish connotation."

There are a couple of ironies in this statement. First, the traditional YU scheduling on Shabbos is not yeshivish. A schedule that consists of a tisch, parsha shiur and sicha at shaleshudes are traditional to all yeshivos, from Yeshivish to Modern. Second, the term "in-Shabbos" is hardly a "very yeshivish connotation" or a yeshivish phrase at all for that matter. In fact, the very Israeli yeshivos which the proponents of the "community shabbos" come from refer to shabbos in Yeshiva as an in-Shabbos. To reiterate, I am not

weighing the issue of whether Shabbos at YU should be called "community Shabbos" or "in-Shabbos" (although I hardly feel this strongly contributes to the issues students have), but rather am taking issue with the characterization of both the schedule and the term "in-Shabbos" as "yeshivish." They simply aren't.

At a student council debate prior to the recent elections at YU, one of the candidates running for a position in SOY suggested having separate Shabbos meals appealing to different interests of students. Once again, I do not wish to assess to the value of such an idea and whether it would enhance the

"PEOPLE SHOULD DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE PART OF A CERTAIN COMMUNITY WHETHER THEY BE IN YU, LAKEWOOD OR ELSEWHERE."

Shabbos community atmosphere at YU. What I take issue with is the way the meals were described. The candidate suggested having a more "yeshivish" meal with singing and divrei torah for those interested. If you're following my thought pattern, it may not be necessary to continue the line of reasoning here, but I will anyways. I wonder, if a meal that consists of singing and divrei torah is "yeshivish" what does a Modern Orthodox meal look like? I understand everything is relative and in relation to the other meal this divrei torah filled meal would be more yeshivish. But that is really only true if the other meal more properly represents Modern Orthodoxy and I question whether that would be true. It should be thought provoking if this sounds uncomfortable: "there will be a more Modern Orthodox meal with singing and divrei torah for those interested." At the least, both of the meal options represent a correct model of a Modern Orthodox shabbos meal.

Also at this debate (who knew these debates could be so exciting?) a candidate for a position on SOY took issue with the fact that some in YU don't know who personalities like Rav Mayer Twersky are. It seemed pretty harmless but apparently that too was a microaggression of sorts. A student in YU posted a comment on Facebook taking issue with the statement saying perhaps people don't want to know who Rav Twersky or be involved in the yeshiva. As an aside, this is an absurd comment considering Rav Twersky is one of the friendliest people, not just rebbeim, people, in YU and there is no reason for people not to want to know him. He admits that it is superficial to have this desire but still wishes it be respected. Regardless, later on the author of this comment writes, "and by the way, don't call this the IBC crowd. It only adds division, and it is patently false – there are a tremendous amount of YP students who also want different environments and non-yeshivish religious events."

Here is the problem with that comment. The author is irate that people are placed in a general box of "IBC" if they have one persuasion, perhaps rightfully so, and then goes on to refer to the religious events being advocated by this candidate as "yeshivish." In other words, if you want such religious events you have now been placed into the "yeshivish" box. So much for not adding division and being patently false.

I am not trying to solve YU's problems. I am trying to address the step before that. We need to define our terms. While I will not attempt here to give an exact definition of "yeshivish," since I believe there is both overlap and differences between the YU and yeshivish community, none of the instances above indicate an incongruence with Modern Orthodox Judaism. Referring to beis medrash students as "yeshivish" is a way to distance them from what YU is known to be, the flagship Modern Orthodox Yeshiva. It is, whether conscious or not, a way to remove these students from the mainstream and place them on the fringes of YU, an unjustifiable alienation of a certain group. This is the very concern reformers have regarding how other groups are treated in YU. We can work to bridge gaps and outlooks in the YU community but only if both sides are taken into account when doing so.



School Sucks

By Shuey Mirkin

School sucks. That's the message that Dr. Yung Tae Kim, physicist, educator, and skateboarder, has for his students and for all of us. You really want to learn something? Stay far, far away from a lecture hall and start thinking about chemistry more like skaters think about learning a new trick.

Growing up, Tae was a bit of an anomaly, and had trouble finding his place. He was quite talented at math, and did well in school. But his skateboard and offbeat attitude didn't sit well with the brainiacs. And the skate crew didn't really know what to do with a guy who got straight A's. Fortunately, Tae found a mentor in an extraordinary high school calculus teacher of this—Dean Goldgar. Goldgar took Tae under his wing, and even worked with him outside of class to allow him to study more advanced math subjects. And in college, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Tae took a physics class with another outstanding educator—Dr. Kurt Wiesenfeld—that led Tae to major in physics and pursue a career in teaching. But after a few years, Tae had grown disillusioned. The more time he spent at the university, the more he began to realize that, for so many students, our colleges and universities are just not the halls of learning that they claim to be.

Walk into most lecture halls today, and what do you see? The specific details may change, but it really stays the same. Teacher at the front of the room, usually with some PowerPoint slides on the board. Students, lined up in rows, most of them with laptops open to pretty much anything but the lecture material. One tab of Facebook, one ESPN, one shopping, one news. One hand flies over the trackpad, while the other answers some Whatsapps. The teacher drones on, more or less oblivious to the input, or lack thereof, of the class in front of them. Grades, that all-knowing, all-powerful number, are usually decided by tallying up the results of 2 or 3 exams, and tacking on a bit of a curve if that PowerPoint/Facebook interplay didn't quite get the material across in the optimal way. If you're real lucky, a chunk of the grade will be a class presentation, lab work, or some other easy A. If you're real real lucky, you have a friend's lab reports and old tests from the year before. The lion's share, however, is dedicated to that god of modern learning--the final. Cram the week before, stay up all night the night before, and spit back your knowledge to me on this one day, in these two hours, and then forget everything you learned. This then, is learning. This is what we pay tens of thousands of dollars a year for, and what we insist is at the forefront of a successful society. It's no wonder that Dr. Tae, after several years of teaching at Northwestern University, finally had had enough. The traditional lecture and test format, he felt, was the worst thing that had ever happened to science and learning: "The professor at the podium [makes] no attempt to engage the students who are right in front of him. The most disturbing thing [however] is what the students are doing. They're falling asleep, checking Facebook or email, or, paradoxically, registering for next term's classes, right in the middle of the class they're completely tuning out." Is this learning? Is this what we think about when we think about college? About the humanizing, dignifying effect that education should have on us and on society?

This was not a structure that Tae thought that he, or anybody, could thrive in. And he did what he could to change it: Tae insisted that he would not run his classes in that way, and he would not allow his classroom to be a place where an all-knowing professor doled out nuggets of information to hungry, helpless students. He set up his classroom like a workshop—he would break his students up into small groups, and give them difficult physics problems to piece through on their own. While they did this, Tae would circulate around the room, providing subtle guidance and assistance. This allowed him to do an incredible thing; a thing that somehow, so many "teachers" are unable to do—it allowed him to provide real-time feedback, and actually know where his students were in terms of their thinking about and grasp of the material. He wasn't interested in tests or grades. He was interested in teaching, and in making sure that his students were actually going through a process of learning. The regulations of the university, of course,

required him to give tests and grades, but he was not doing so in a vacuum. He did not hand out exam papers to a roomful of anxious students, having no idea which ones were going to pass and which ones were not. What struck Tae the most about traditional education was how educators decided beforehand exactly how long it would take students to learn their subject. Test in two weeks, they say, and you will know it by then. In skating, and in acquiring almost any other skill or piece of knowledge, the only person that can dictate your pace of learning is you. Imagine if, when I was learning to snowboard, I knew I only had one week to learn how to turn. It sounds ridiculous, but that's exactly what our school expects us to do. Tae wanted to change this model, but he was

"THE WAY THAT WE TEACH MATH AND SCIENCE, AND REALLY THE WAY THAT WE TEACH MOST SUBJECTS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, IS JUST NOT THE WAY THAT WE WERE MEANT TO LEARN."



fighting a steep uphill battle against long-entrenched norms and regulations, and he finally realized that he couldn't stay in academia. For his last lecture, he left his students at Northwestern with an impassioned plea to not forget what it means to truly learn, and to never forget that math, science, and learning in general is supposed to make you feel alive and excited—not falling asleep over your laptop, fretting away with worry that you missed some minute detail of lecture that would be worth 30 points on the exam. Learning, he told them, should be like skateboarding: If you want it, and if you want it to mean something to you, then you're going to have to break your teeth on it, and you're going to have to put in the work. Today, Tae lives in Seattle, and serves on the advisory board of the Puget Sound Community School. The school does not follow a traditional grading system. Instead, their mission is, as Tae puts it: "to help students discover what they're passionate about, and then help them do something with that passion."

Dr. Tae, among his many projects, has been working for years on a series of lessons on the physics of skateboarding. It's exactly like it sounds—he takes abstract physics concepts and calculations, and teaches students how they apply to the very real art of skateboarding. But for Tae, this project is more than just a fun diversion. For him, this represents what education is truly all about, and it represents what we need to do, as he puts it, to "build a new culture of teaching and learning." The way that we

teach math and science, and really the way that we teach most subjects in colleges and universities, is just not the way that we were meant to learn, and we are stifling a young generation of potential students of science. Biology and chemistry and calculus are not meant to remain on the pages of a textbook. They are the means by which we understand our world, and they only reach their true potential and fullness when we see them at work in the real world. But more than just corrupting the essence of science, this form of education corrupts the purity of what the process of learning should be. The intricate give and take between teacher and student, the thrill of discovery that comes from truly engaging with a new subject—that is lost in the doldrums of the lecture hall.

Paulo Freire, the groundbreaking, radical Brazilian educator and innovator, and recipient of the 1986 UNESCO Education for Peace Prize, discusses two vastly different types of education in his landmark book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. One, he dubs the "banking" model. In this way of teaching, the teacher—the all-knowing, all-powerful teacher—hands over knowledge to his or her students, like one putting checks in a bank. And just like the teller at the bank, the students are not expected to play a role in this transaction other than receiving the check: "Education thus becomes an act of depositing," Freire writes, "in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat." I don't know if Tae ever read Freire, but he might as well have: "Sadly, what most students do in most science classes is nothing like science, but is instead focused on absorbing knowledge handed down by authority..." And this, says Freire, is a form of oppression. The professor, standing at the front of the room and lecturing to a roomful of students who are expected to hang on his or her every word, is in some ways acting as an oppressor. This process is not malicious, and is usually not deliberate. But this is not how we achieve what Freire calls "education as the practice of freedom." This is not how the liberating, empowering, humanizing effects of education are realized. It sounds clichéd to say that not all students fit a particular mold, and not all students learn and assimilate information in the same way and at the same rate. But while it is foolish to take every cliché as axiomatic, it is equally as foolish to not recognize the grains of truth inherent in every cliché. "Now, I know you all have a different learning curve," I've heard some professors say. However, this appears to be mere lip service, because all students are still taught in the same way, and required to learn the information in the exact same amount of time, and penalized in the form of bad grades if they fail to do well on a test given in a specific format. This is the kind of learning that Freire spent his life fighting against, and this is the kind of learning that made Tae run in the opposite direction from academia. Freire cautions that: "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves." This kind of education is a weighty responsibility for an educator, and it is infinitely easier to abdicate this responsibility. But for our sake, and the sake of future generations of scientists, engineers, academics, we must fight to keep this vision of learning alive.

I realize that this is not an easy process. I know that we're not going to abolish grades and tests overnight, and I'm not even saying that we necessarily should. In many ways, college is the way that it is for very valid reasons, and I don't think we need to be looking to tear that down. At the same time, however, we don't need to settle for the status quo. We don't have to let our education be taken out of our hands. Too many bright young minds are leaving math and science because they get discouraged and dissuaded, and because they have trouble making it in the existing frameworks that our universities are providing. Freire once remarked that "reading is not walking on the words; it's grasping the soul of them." Let's not settle for mediocrity, and let's not settle for an education that leaves students powerless and disengaged. Let's take our education back, and reclaim the excitement and passion that small child knows accompanies learning new things.

A Student's Gripes On The Arts in YU

By Gavriel Guttman

In choosing a college, I set my sights on YU, a place where I was destined to be Orthodox yet appreciative of secular studies. While my high school was not a place of literary excellence and development, I was sure YU would be. A year and a half into college, the time had come for me to throw all caution into the wind and venture into the abyss of predicted failure as an English major. I knew almost immediately that English was the track for me. I finally learned to appreciate Shakespeare, and how to write plays of my own. I began to write in my free time, something I had not done for a long time, and I was having a great time doing it. It was then time to take a swing at something I had always, sometimes secretly, dreamed of: drama.

As you might know at this point, I got the role of Paul Union in the YCDS Spring 2016 production of I'll be Right Here by Etai Schucatowitz. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. It was around the time of opening night that we heard there wouldn't be a YCDS production next semester. It

"DON'T WE VALUE THE ARTS AND WANT TO BE PART OF CREATING MEANINGFUL THINGS?"

wasn't a shock to me, as there were rumors circulating for weeks, but it was definitely heartbreaking. The reason, we heard, was due to budget cuts. This was very hard to come to terms with. A large part of my newly found niche, and the academic program that I am most proud to be part of was just cut in half. A production in the spring was still planned but all hopes of producing another hit next semester, all the new things we were planning to do, were extinguished just like that.

Everyone in YCDS was upset. Ari Marder, a junior majoring in psychology said, "The play is a unique opportunity for students to find their voice and express themselves in a way they maybe never had before. Budget cuts are always going to be difficult, but it's unfortunate that in doing so the school has limited a medium for camaraderie and growth that can be hard to find elsewhere." Marder was the lead in the Fall 2014 production of A Few Good Men and has been an active member since. Matis Axel, also a senior and star of I'll be Right Here responded to questions with, "I'm disappointed. I understand that there are factors which students aren't aware of, but the theatre department of a university should be able to put together a production each semester. If there's the willingness and energy to create something, the department shouldn't have to choose. I can't speak for other departments at YU, but YCDS mobilizes a huge amount of energy every semester to put together each production. It's something the University should be encouraging."

Student who are not members of YCDS are upset as well. Yaakov Bronstein, a junior majoring in English, was shocked to hear about the changes and said, "As YCDS constitutes one of the college's few remaining sites of serious artistic effort, and the only theatrical operation, cutting the upcoming semester's production denotes a qualitative and misguided loss to culture on campus." Yaakov is one of the students who has appreciation for the arts and wants to see its presence on campus. If anything, many feel that YU is already lacking in this area, so why are they cutting away the little that we have?

Even the students who are not particularly interested in acting have tremendous opportunities in YCDS. In fact, a majority of the over sixty members this past semester were working in non-theatre oriented tasks. Whether it be people with interests in business, marketing, sales, advertising and public relations, architecture and construction, sound engineering, lighting, or graphic design, students had the

opportunity to learn, create and add to their resumes. YCDS provides valuable internal experience to students of all majors and interests.

Professor David Belavsky, head of Yeshiva's Fine Art Department, passionately maintains that the administration of Yeshiva College has not wavered at all in its commitment to providing a stellar liberal arts education. The college fully recognizes that all the sub-departments of the liberal arts department, which includes art, music, and theatre, are necessary parts of the curriculum. What I found especially enlightening was that, according to Belavsky, although budget issues are a reality, the administration's real concern is the lack of student interest in the arts. Despite skyrocketing sales numbers for their most recent production, YCDS plays have not been doing well in terms of show attendance and have not had a satisfactory amount of students volunteer to take up key roles both on the board and in production. The music department can only be as big as the amount of students that register for its courses, and the same goes for art. Belavsky explained that Yeshiva College would be offering a course in acting, something which had been done in years long past, and is now being offered in place of the play for the fall. The plan would then be to take the students of this fall's class and have them act in the spring's play, hopefully producing an equally, if not more, stellar production. The administration wants to revitalize student interest in the play, and at the same time offer a medium of acting to those who have always showed interest. Similar actions have been taken in regards to the Music and Art departments, with class cross-listed with English, History, and other more mainstream courses, being offered in the coming semesters, hoping to garner more interest for artistically focused.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts' 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 71 percent of adults consumed a form of art via electronic media. In that same year, 37 percent of adults attended a performing arts event. Such research is consistent with my own experiences at YCDS. Audience members of most of the six performance of I'll be Right Here saw a theatre that had most seats filled, with a crowd that was enthusiastic and attentive. YCDS itself this past semester was huge, with sixty students from YU and Stern, two alumni volunteers, and one volunteer who's never been affiliated with the university at all. These numbers don't indicate a YCDS struggling for members; they show more participation in YCDS than in any other elective.

Bothered by this contradiction between the administration's concerns and the actual numbers, I scheduled a meeting with Joanne Jacobson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of English. Dean Jacobson listened intently to my questions and managed to clarify things a great deal. She explained that the core issue the administration sees in YCDS is not completely a matter of numbers, rather it is which jobs students are choosing to fill. Granted, YCDS boasts a solid group of actors and some really dedicated crew members but there are some key jobs that are still not being filled. This semester, Yosef Frenkel, technical director, and Molly Pocrass, YCDS's lighting engineer are both graduating and there are no replacements lined up. Even larger of an issue is that for the past two semesters, YU had to hire an alum, Moshe Wigder, to take on the roles in YCDS which students did not fill. This included stage manager, producer, sound producer, and more. The administration sees that these roles could not be filled by students as a sign that people are just not interested and devoted enough to keep YCDS going. YCDS needs continued quantity and quality in the students who are receiving credit for the course.

I love YCDS and being part of it has been truly grand, but YCDS's disintegration would mean more than a few disgruntled students. Don't we value the arts and want to be part of creating meaningful things? I think we should, and participation in things like YCDS would be indicative that others do as well. We have an acapella group, a jazz ensemble, a rock ensemble, and various papers and journals published throughout the year, but that's it; nothing compared

to other universities. Why can't we do more?

The administration, as per my discussion with Dean Jacobson, is willing and ready to provide creative opportunities, the students merely need show that they're interested. In fact, YC has begun a new program in which students could create their own minors, combining different class of relatable content. This means that if someone wanted, they could minor in theatre, as long as they get approved by the Dean's Office. Students constantly complain that there is not enough academic credit offered from the university to participate in things like theatre, and they may be right. But Dean Jacobson maintains that if students were to step forward with proposals to minor in theatre, and more people would take on bigger roles in YCDS, then the administration would be willing to consider providing more opportunities in the arts. When I came to YU, I came expecting people to be passionate for knowledge, not just law and medicine, but for the arts, expression too. I believe that people are, they're just not taking the steps they can and should to take advantage of these opportunities.

The saddest thing about this whole thing is that I know that there are students interested in the arts. Walk through the dorms at night and observe how many students spend their down time watching film and television shows on their laptops. Listen to students talk in the caf about their weekend trips to museums and concerts and their detailed critiques on it all. People dream of being an actors and being able to get their feelings out for others to see and experience, for fame. But these same people are either scared to step up and try new things or perhaps they tell themselves that it doesn't fit within ideologies, religious or not. There even people from YCDS who have moved on in "the biz". Sophomore Jack Turell can be seen in a new movie, starring Michael Shannon, called Wolves, and alum Moshe Wigder in Porte Ouverte at the Dust Film and Animation Festival in NYC. It is sad that this is happening in YU, where these studies are supposed to be part of what we love and covet. It is up to us students to make the changes that are needed, so the administration can respond in the like. I beg my peers to consider joining YCDS in any capacity, to take Lin Snider's class, "The Art of the Actor", and to broaden their horizons, with the goals of building a YU community that is proud of its versatility in education and broad artistic expression.



ELDERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

ning. (On the other hand, the Office of the Registrar took some getting used to). Here was a place where I could fit right in, where people understood me. Here I was amongst family, and here, I could be who I wanted to be.

I think about my very first day of class that afternoon, where I was so unprepared that I didn't even have a notebook or a pen. I think about my classmates who helped me out, and about my professors who were willing to sit down with me in their offices to catch me up and help me with my schoolwork. I think about the deans and the guidance counselors who suggested classes for me and assisted me in selecting a major and a focus that would be stimulating and fulfilling. I think about the friends who introduced themselves, who offered me advice and suggestions, who invited me and pestered me and entertained me and, perhaps subconsciously, made me into a YU guy that day.

I think about going to davening the following morning, and looking around the room in awe of the young men and women who are serious and committed to their Judaism and to their worship of G-d. I think about going to shiur and appreciating the dedication that students here have made to studying Jewish texts and to the continuation of Jewish tradition. Later, I think about having off for Chagim, and about being able to finish class early enough on Fridays so as to not worry about being late for Shabbat. I think about having kosher food at events and about being surrounded by people who come from similar backgrounds as me and can appreciate and embrace all sides of my identity and character. I think about not having to explain myself, about not having to fit in and be someone who I'm not.

I think back also to how much I've changed since then. How I've tried to become a better person, one who is less shallow and more genuine. I think about the self-confidence that this school has given me, about the education I've received and about the wisdom I've gained from my peers and my professors. I think about the values and ideals that have been instilled in me, about the strong convictions that I've developed and about the opinions I've honed and sharpened. I think about the wealth of experiences I've had and about the opportunities I've been involved in, including this newspaper. I think about how extraordinarily proud I am to have spent three years of my life in such an incredible institution. I think about how grateful I am to my fellow students and to my rabbis, professors, and administrators for making this institution what it is.

I think about how about how many times I've used the word 'I' in this article, and about the number of sentences I've started with "I think". I think about the new students who have arrived on campus as part of the post-Pesach program, and about the new ones who will start in the fall. I think about the students who've just finished their first year here, and are wondering about next year. I think that it's high time that I turn to you, dear students.

As mentioned, graduation is a time of reflection, a time of quiet contemplation and looking back. It is, fundamentally, a time of thinking about how we've grown and developed, and about how

fortunate we are to have had the experiences that we had. Graduation is about imparting our own advice, after receiving advice from our predecessors in previous years. So, to current students, here's what I've got: You have the fortune of studying in the best university in the entire world. I say this not in jest, nor in a patronizing manner. Believe it, and appreciate it. You can, and will, make friends for life here. Unbelievable things will happen to you, both in the good sense and in the bad. You'll read a book or an article and be transfixed, your mind will be blown and you'll spend a few hours wondering what else you thought you knew but so clearly didn't. You'll sit in classes that will be transformative and enlighten-

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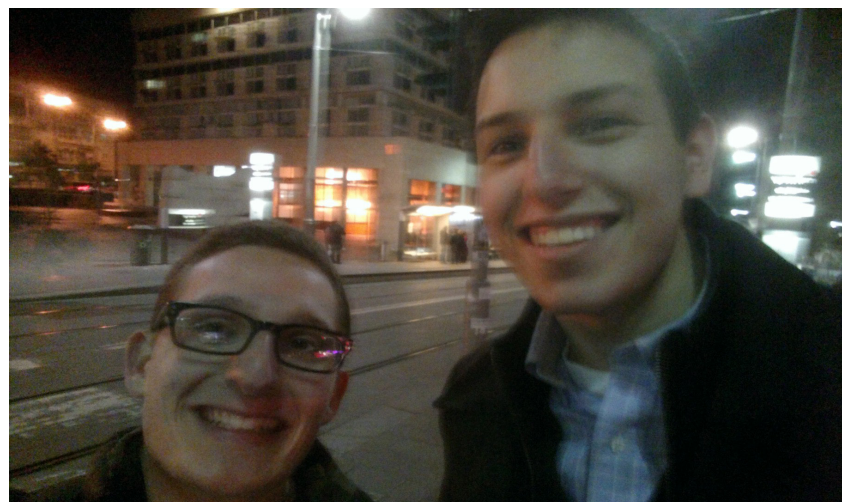
ing, and in ones that will be super boring or where the workload is so tough that you'll be convinced that you'll have no time for anything else. You'll get that rush from finishing a paper three minutes before it's due. (This is not a good idea. This is really not a good idea). You'll hear from world-renowned speakers and Jewish leaders, from influential graduates and mostly well-intentioned politicians. You'll probably network with important contacts in your field, and make friends with your job competition. You'll get wonderful advice from some people, and terrible advice from others. You'll probably end up eating four slices of pizza in one sitting, and stuffing yourself at a barbecue an hour after a Carlos and Gabby's lunch. (Again, not a good idea).

The day will come when the bureaucracy will get to you, when you will be assured by

someone that you are completely right but that there is nothing to be done. The day will come when you say that you hate YU, and that you wish you could be 'anywhere but here'. You'll go visit friends in other colleges and come back depressed, wondering why our campus is anchored by the lovely Amsterdam Avenue. You'll wonder why we have so few classes, and why our facilities are so much worse than every-one else's. Don't sweat it.

Ask yourself what you should be doing now. Make a schedule, and stick to it. Don't keep going for the easy A's, and don't post on Facebook that you are looking only for easy A's. You're here for an education, not for a grade. Don't show up late to class. Don't ask questions in class or be argumentative purely to hear the sound of your voice. People will hate you for it. But do fight to the ground for something you believe in. Don't do all of your reading assignments. If you have time for that and for everything else, you're clearly not involved enough on campus. Do get involved in more extracurriculars than you should humanly be able to handle. Offer to help out whenever you can. Talk to people in elevators, and don't avoid making eye contact. Say hello to people you're in class with, and remember their names for next semester. Don't underestimate the value of hanging out with friends, and of relaxing and chilling. Do underestimate the value of watching three seasons of House of Cards in a week. Oh, and don't write articles that have no substance. Whoops.

Some of this advice can apply to life as well, if you're graduating. If you are, well...congrats. You finally made it. And can you give me some help?



Hold that Plane!! It's About Time to Start Getting a Fair Flight!

By Benjamin Zirman

Summer vacation is coming and for all the YU students who will be flying somewhere, I want to tell you a little secret: The Israeli startup FairFly is about to change the game of booking flights! There is currently a huge problem within the tourism industry of soaring prices for a plane ticket. A second problem is the wide range of prices that exist for the same tier of seats on a flight. Just from striking up a conversation with the person sitting next to you on a flight, you might realize that had you booked the flight two hours later, you could've saved 200 dollars! Even if you check a million travel sites or try to pull the classic "book on a Tuesday, fly on a Sunday" move, you have no guarantee that the price of the flight won't drop. Some will tell you that the best deals on airline tickets are at the last minute where you can snatch up that last empty seat at a bargain price. Others believe that booking as early as possible is the ideal move, preferably 45 days in advance. The bitter truth is that there is no one best way to book flights. All these strategies are based on myths and FairFly has just busted those myths. The good news is that Fairfly has developed an app that will help you deal with all your plane ticket booking problems.

FairFly's goal is to increase airfare transparency. It was founded to solve the problem of volatility in ticket prices and bridge the information gap between airline and customer. It strives to make sure that customers get the fairest price for their flight. Whether travellers are flying economy, business, or first class, FairFly unlocks what is potentially hundreds of dollars worth of savings on airfare. The best part about it is that it's a win-win-win situation! FairFly has a strong business, the customer gains from price drops, and the airlines are selling tickets.

FairFly was established in December 2013 by four entrepreneurs: Gili Lichtman, Ami Goldenberg, Aviel Siman-Tov, and Uri Levine. Lichtman, Goldenberg, and Siman-Tov, young graduates of the successful Zell Entrepreneurship Program at IDC Herzliya, teamed up with Waze co-founder and serial investor Uri Levine to develop the app and he helped them raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in seed funding. Before FairFly, CEO Aviel Siman-Tov was on his way to becoming a lawyer but came to understand that his real passion was for entrepreneurship; he aspired to build something that would make a major positive impact on the world. In addition to his legal background, Siman Tov has over 7 years of experience as a Company Commander in the IDF, helping him specialize in building strong teams and empowering each individual with tailored mentorship. CTO Ami Goldenberg has experience developing software from the age of 10 and has a real passion and love for it. He also has experience serving in the Israeli army, as he served in the most elite intelligence unit in the IDF. This is far from his first successful app as he became an Android Developer at Moblin before FairFly and single-handedly built over 15 apps that have been released on the Google Play store, with over 500,000 downloads to date. The last co-founder, Gili Lichtman, serves as the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) of the company. The app was launched in January 2015 and completed its second round of funding the previous summer.

It all started when the four co-founders were enjoying coffee and chatting about travel experiences. Levine was on a business trip to Orlando and became frustrated when he realized he had overpaid for a hotel room. He brought the idea up at this coffee meeting with his students, who then decided there was a bigger issue with plane tickets. Following this, Levine led the first angel round of funding. Levine is quite the seasoned entrepreneur himself. He is the founder of Waze and FeeX, in addition to being a chairman and angel investor of Zeek, Engie, and Dreamzon. But that's not all, as he's also an investor and director for Moovit, Mishor, and Pixtr. Levine is now the chairman of the company and mentors other entrepreneurs

that "address real problems in the space of drivers/transportation, money thrown to the garbage and inefficiencies in large markets," as quoted from LinkedIn. Levine has played a critical role in building what appears to be another great app, and he's not the only one who thinks so.

In August 2015, FairFly signed a deal with Blumberg Capital, bringing the company's total of money raised to \$2 million. Siman-Tov said to Globes, Israel's Business Arena, "The financing round was designed to enhance the development of the product and expand the company's overseas business. The company also plans to enter other tourism niches at a later stage." Alon Lifshitz, an Israeli partner at Blumberg Capital, was brought onto the Board of Directors of FairFly. Lifshitz was quoted in Globes saying, "FairFly is

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entering the tourism market, where it's changing the rules. Up until now, we've gotten used to a process with price comparisons until the decision to buy is taken. FairFly has changed our thinking, and has shown that the buying process does not end--even after we buy the ticket, the price can still be reduced. We feel very connected to this way of thinking and the fact that this is a big market, to which we are confident that FairFly is providing a suitable solution. We're glad to be a part of the company's development and success."

So how does FairFly work? CEO Aviel Siman-Tov explains that the first step is to download the app, available on both iOS and Android phones, and buy a ticket online through any of the many existing platforms. The next step is for the user to forward the e-ticket he or she receives to trips@fairfly.com. From this moment until flight time, the company's proprietary algorithms get to work in real time. The program monitors the international airfare databases, and searches for a cheaper fare, after factoring in the ticket's cancellation fee. The system then alerts the user if it finds the higher of two options. Either the ticket costs at least 5% less than the original ticket, after fees, or saves \$50. The company takes only 9% of total savings, meaning you only pay if you save. In the future, it plans to extend its service to hotel bookings and vacation car rentals. The company stresses it will only cancel the original ticket after the cheaper priced ticket has been purchased. The only hiccup could be if the ticket was purchased through a travel agency. The customer will be issued the refund for the initial ticket a few weeks afterward in accordance with the specific policies of that airline. The purchase of the new ticket or the cancellation of the old ticket can be carried out through the FairFly system or independently by the individual customer. Maybe the best part is that the notifications sent to users aren't just based on price alone, but include other, better deals such as more convenient takeoff and landing times, shorter flight times, better quality airlines, and more attractive airports. By automating the whole process of heavy research required to track price drops and look for better deals, FairFly completely eliminates the traveler's risk of overpaying.

The impact of this groundbreaking technology has tremendous potential especially considering the numbers of flights company's book for business

trips. Worldwide, 445 million business trips rack up a \$251B yearly price tag, with \$111B spent on domestic travel and \$31B on international business trips. These travel expenses have been divided by the Global Business Travel Association into 5 categories of estimates. Transportation takes the largest portion at 22%, followed right behind by Meals at 21%. Flights took 17% while hotels are around 13% and the rest falls to Miscellaneous. FairFly's potential savings are quite enormous for the average consumer but they are even larger for Fortune 500 companies that have thousands of flights each year. There are millions of dollars of cash to be saved by simply downloading the app, with no extra work required. The three young founders conducted an in-depth study of the matter. To research their market, they tracked the fares of 34 indirect business class flights from Tel Aviv to San Francisco. The price went down for 19 of the 34 flights in this sample group. But we aren't talking small numbers here; over just a few hours the price dropped by \$1,000. Based on the data they collected, the founders claim that they can save a business class traveler \$822, and an economy class traveler \$180. It's just like finding money in your pocket!

Although the company holds many advantages it still has a few problems. One example is that FairFly's service becomes useless when it comes to flights on low-cost airlines since it's nearly impossible to cancel a ticket on these airlines. Additionally, the service does not work on hotel and flight combination packages. Another issue, which really only pertains to frequent fliers, is that the recommendations for cheaper tickets do not yet have the technology to take frequent flier points into account. These valuable points, depending on the airline, can earn free tickets or at least discounts to reward frequent flyers. The company said that these features are being developed and will be incorporated into the system in future app updates. Once it continues to advance and fix some of these problems, it will be an even better app.

To me, FairFly is already a homerun idea and should make both the customers and the company a lot of money. I'm not the only person who thinks so as they recently finished in first place at a TLV Startup challenge and have secured an impressive round of funding from Blumberg Capital. These are promising young Israeli entrepreneurs who have teamed up with an expert in their industry, Levine, and a successful venture capital firm that has money and is well connected. And in terms of their product, any time you can offer a person savings without them having to do work, common instinct is to believe that there has to be a catch. FairFly seems to be an exception to this rule and there is really no downside to downloading the app and saving money. I know I'm about to fly a little more knowing my plane tickets will be so much cheaper.



FAIRFLY

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Syms Students Stripped of Accounting Credits Needed For C.P.A.

By Etan Neiman

On April 15, many Sy Syms students and alumni opened their email accounts to a jolt of shock. Dean Moses Pava informed those who took certain accounting electives needed to fulfill the C.P.A. educational requirements that those courses had failed to meet the standards of New York's branch of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA). Specifically, NASBA ruled that "Decision Models", ACC 2160 (taught by Sriram Subramanian in the fall of 2015) and "Mergers: History & Practice", ACC 2401 (taught by Ahron Rosenfeld in the spring of 2015) did not include sufficient accounting content to count towards the required "33 semester hours in accounting" to obtain the C.P.A. license. This comes as a blow to the Sy Syms administration, which had cross-listed these courses with IDS 2160 and FIN 2401 respectively in the hopes of increasing their scarce selection of accounting electives.

In his email to the students affected, Dean Pava maintained that "while the Sy Syms School of Business faculty continues to believe these courses are correctly listed as accounting courses, given the course content, for the purposes of New York State these courses do not meet the requirements for the 33 credit hours in accounting." Naturally, students greeted this news with dismay, as they never imagined the Sy Syms ACC designation would be brought into question and essentially overruled by New York State's NASBA. The Commentator has to this point been able to independently verify at least five current or former students who have lost their eligibility to receive the C.P.A. license in New York as a result of having these accounting credits stripped from their record and turned

into generic business credits for C.P.A. purposes.

As a remedy for this clear blunder, Dean Pava offered students three options in order to retake the lost credit hours in accounting, all at no additional cost to the students. Option one is to take an online "Special Topics in Accounting" course during this summer. Option two is to take an M.S. in Accounting night course during this

"STUDENTS NEVER IMAGINED THE SY SYMS ACC DESIGNATION WOULD BE BROUGHT INTO QUESTION AND ESSENTIALLY OVERRULED BY NEW YORK STATE'S NASBA."

summer at the Cardozo campus. Option three is to take an M.S. in Accounting night course this fall at the Beren campus. These remedies, however, do not make up for the lost time that will have to be devoted to reacquiring these accounting credits. Particularly, for those alumni who have already entered demanding accounting firms, it is nearly unthinkable to them that they will have to return to school.

For a bit of background, accounting students across the United States typically have two options in order to complete the educational requirements needed to obtain the C.P.A. license. The first method is to complete an accounting program which is registered by the state's

Department of Education as "licensure qualifying". Syms students who opt for this first route often choose to either complete the one year M.S. in Accounting at Syms or the one year M.S. in Taxation at Baruch College. The second method to obtain the educational requirements is to accumulate 150 undergraduate credit hours. However, this comes with a catch. At least 33 of those credit hours must be in accounting, while at least another 36 must consist of general business electives. A usual Sy Syms B.S. in Accounting consists of nine required accounting courses for a total of 27 accounting credit hours. For students who do not wish to pay for the Syms or Baruch Master's programs or for whatever reason opt for the 150 undergraduate credit hour route, they need to accumulate six more accounting credit hours. To obtain those additional accounting credits, many students took the "Decision Models" and "Mergers: History & Practice" courses (three credits each). Those C.P.A. aspirants who took these courses labeled as ACC 2160 and ACC 2401 respectively could have never dreamed that upon submission for approval, NASBA would deem these courses insufficiently accounting-based to be considered as part of the 33 necessary accounting credits.



Re-evaluating Real Estate: The Million Dollar Misconception

By Evan Axelrod

All business students have aspirations for their business lives. While some may want to own their own companies, most will be able to become part owners in companies through mediums such as the stock market. Similarly, for commercial real estate, anybody with a few hundred dollars of savings can become an investor. How, one may ask? Through a concept known as Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), which allow an interested investor to share in the profits of commercial real estate businesses.

In 1960, the REIT Act was signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The logic behind this legislation was the same reasoning behind the encouragement of stock ownership: to enable the average citizen to share in the success of America's corporations. In the case of a Real Estate Investment Trust, investors share in the benefits of the income earned from the real estate owned by the REIT without having to put up the massive amounts of capital usually required to buy real estate. Just like regular companies, REITs can be publicly or privately owned. Publicly traded REITs are stocks which can be bought or sold. Since their inception, REITs have grown in investor popularity, expanding throughout global financial markets worldwide. The growth of REITs can be seen in the increase in market capitalization, or the total value of shares outstanding of these public real estate companies. The industry has grown in size from a total market cap of almost \$90 billion in 1996 to about \$940 billion at the end of 2015.

How does investing in REITs compare to investing in a typical stock? When one invests in a stock, he or she is investing for the potential appreciation of the stock price and/or for the receiving of dividends from the retained earnings of the company. REITs offer the same advantages of potential share appreciation but can also be seen as a form of a fixed income security (e.g. a bond). To this end, REITs give away a percentage of their profits each year or quarter to investors. For instance, a company such as Coca-Cola offers a \$1.40 dividend per share to every stockholder. Similarly, the owner of the nearby Roosevelt Field Mall, Simon Property Group, offers a far higher dividend of \$6.40 per share. In general, REITs usually offer higher

dividend rates than most standard companies. The average REIT yield (rate of return for the investor) is currently 4.4% versus 2.2% for the S&P 500 index (a basket of the 500 largest U.S. companies). These high dividend rates are similar to higher yields on certain corporate bonds.

There is a fundamental reason as to why REITs have higher dividend rates. In order to legally qualify as a REIT, the company must return at least 90% of its income to shareholders. Additionally, 75% of the REIT's income must come from rent, gains on a sale of real estate, or interest. Providing the company invests and operates properties profitably, investing in REITs can provide a safe and steady income along with the potential for appreciation of the value of the shares.

Simon Property Group was previously mentioned. Along with being the largest REIT, Simon is categorized as a retail REIT. This means the company receives its revenue through rental income from its retail tenants, which occupy shopping malls and shopping outlet centers. The types of commercial property REITs encompass covers a wide variation of sectors. From Timber REITs, to Casino REITs, to Office REITs, such as the Empire State Building (which is owned by Empire State Realty Trust), they all fit under the umbrella of the REIT asset class. In fact, there are about 19 subclasses for U.S. REITs.

One might be wondering if this is a practical sector to invest ones savings in. Firstly, similar to stocks, REITs have been known to act as a hedge (or protection) for inflation. In the last 18 of 20 years, REIT dividends have outpaced the rate of inflation. Secondly, REITs have the advantages of providing a high income like a bond, while also offering a share price which can rise with the success of the economy and the business, again similar to a stock. This dual advantage can help with the diversification of one's investments. In other words, in a given year if certain factors cause stocks and bonds to perform poorly while Equity REITs perform well, an investor who had diversified his savings and allocated a percentage of his money into REITs would have higher returns than an investor who had exclusively invested in stocks and bonds. The advantages of diversification along with the historical low correlation of REITs to other asset classes provide a great reason to consider REITs as part of one's investment portfolio. The

famous adage of "don't put all your eggs into one basket" certainly rings true in this instance.

Real Estate has long been a staple investment for many of the world's rich and powerful. One needs to look no further than the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, to witness how he built a fortune through real estate. Owners of real estate often enjoy the tangibility of real estate. Unlike shares of Apple, owning a hotel or office building is an investment one can touch and feel. Also, having a historical performance that is superior to the broader stock market adds to this cultural allure. The obvious roadblock is that buying an office building or hotel isn't as easy as logging on to an E*Trade account and purchasing a share of a given company. For those interested in the Real Estate or Finance industry, REITs offer a great place to start to learn about how commercial real estate is operated and valued. And for those with some extra savings, REITs provide the opportunity for individual investors to capture the returns on all types of commercial real estate, once only restricted to high net worth investors. Who knows? With enough successful REITs investments, maybe one day you will be able to fully own your own skyscraper.



The Executive Series

An Interview with Dr. Gur Roschwalb

By Michael Shavolian

About The Executive Series:

Through 'The Executive Series', The Commentator provides its readership with access to the thoughts and experiences of highly accomplished individuals in the business world. The column has a conversational style and expresses the unique story of each business leader, including their motivations, struggles, successes and failures. 'The Executive Series' also serves as a forum for a broader conversation about leadership in business and in life.

About Dr. Gur Roshwalb (adapted from Bloomberg and CrunchBase)

Dr. Roshwalb currently serves Chief Executive Officer of Akari Therapeutics, a position he has held since 2013. Prior to his current role, Dr. Gur Roshwalb was a Vice President at Venrock, where he was an investment professional on the healthcare team investing in both private and public companies. Prior to this he was a vice president and equity analyst at Piper Jaffray, publishing research on specialty pharmaceutical companies. Prior to Piper, Dr. Roshwalb was in private practice in New York following residency training in internal medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center, where he served as Chief Resident. Dr. Roshwalb obtained his medical degree from Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, his MBA from the NYU Stern School of Business and a B.A. from Columbia University.

This interview was conducted by Michael Shavolian.

Michael Shavolian: Tell me about your first leadership role.

Gur Roshwalb: I would identify my first leadership role probably in residency. I graduated Albert Einstein in the class of 1994 and then I went into Internal Medicine. In your first year as an intern you learn how to practice as a physician but at the end of that year you are expected to transition over to being a resident where you have to lead the other interns who are taking care of patients and that was my first leadership role.

MS: What did you take from it throughout your career?

GR: When you start out as an intern you have a resident [in charge of you]; and you are learning to be a doctor. You'll see, for example, that a patient has an abnormal temperature and you will go to the resident and say: "Mr. So and So has a fever". But when you are the resident you have to come up with what to do. So in the beginning of your internship it's: "I don't know what to do". You're learning. You're afraid to make comments or make decisions. But by the end of the year you are a resident and you have to make those decisions. It is a transition from identifying a problem to creating a solution that's an important evolution for anybody practicing to be a physician. The lesson I learned was: to not only state the problem but to also offer a possible solution. Meaning to say: "Mr. So and So has a fever, this is what I think the problem is, this is what I would like to do about it and get your agreement". And that was probably the first real lesson: transitioning to being a leader is making sure that you can get your team members to not just come to you with problems but to think deeply about the underlying issues and bring you solutions.

MS: How did you first become interested in the pharmaceutical world?

GR: From a very young age I was programmed to become a physician. It was either: lawyer, doctor, Indian chief...and the last one was out.

When I left residency I went into private practice. One of the things I was very interested in then, in 1998, was electronic medical records. I was trying to get the medical group to use EMR and they came back to me and said "It is a nice idea but there is no return on investment for us," assuming, for example, \$25,000 per physician per year for a license of some product. At that time I decided "Great. If it's going to cost too much, I will go write my own", which I did. That got me into the world of business.

At that point I had decided I was going to transition

out of medicine and I had to decide where to transition. I had a lot of computer skills and medical skills but no other skills. My wife at the time decided to get an MBA, I liked what she was learning and found it exciting, and so I got an MBA as I recognized I needed something to help me make the transition. I needed a company that would take someone without business skills and train them because they want to leverage their medical skills. The most common of those places are management consulting and Wall Street. I ended up getting a job as an equity analyst at a bank called Piper Jaffray.



MS: You were on the traditional medical path: medical school to internist to resident and then private practice, but then in 2004 you made the switch to become a biotechnology equity analyst. What motivated you to make this switch?

GR: I was unfulfilled. Learning medicine was very exciting and challenging. But the actual practice as a general practitioner, diagnosing and treating diabetes, hypertension and colds was not exciting to me. You definitely help individual people, without a doubt. But it often becomes just a scramble. At that time the average intern at his peak, in around 2000, was making \$180,000 a year, maybe \$200,000 if you are lucky. If that was the case how was I going to raise a family and send them to private Jewish day school? That was an issue. So if you combine the fact that I didn't feel I was making enough money together with the fact that I was clearly not intellectually fulfilled, I realized I had to make a change. And I recognized that when I started to write my own electronic medical record program. Here I was, I had the time to explore data basing, spend hours playing on the computer writing code, and being excited by that because it was intellectually stimulating.

MS: What was the hardest part of this transition?

GR: When I was working in law, I would rue Sunday evenings thinking about going into the office on Monday and, in contrast to that, in venture capital, I work 24/6 and love every second of it. It's inspiring to meet with young entrepreneurs who aspire to build the next Google, the next Facebook, the next Twitter. I have the opportunity to meet with between 3000-5000 companies a year and invest in around 10-15 of them. Working with entrepreneurs and investing in their companies is truly a privilege and I pinch myself every day.

MS: What intangible skills do you think are most critical to success in the business world today?

GR: Communication. I don't just mean to sell what you need to sell but also to listen what others have to say, to understand motivations and where other people are trying to get to and to translate back to other people where you're trying to go.

MS: How do you compare the management of a medical practice to that of a pharmaceutical company?

GR: It is a difficult question to answer because there are many different models of medical practice. A large

medical practice of hundreds of doctors is still like running a company. But a small practice of 3-5 people is much different.

MS: Why do you think many doctors are unsatisfied today?

GR: The major reason why most medical doctors are unsatisfied is because they don't know how to run a business. Mostly they think of running a business as: "I see patients, I collect bills, and I move on". That gives you very little understanding of what a business actually is: where are the patients coming from, what are the demographics, how do you get them, who are your higher paying patients, what are your costs? At the end of the day it is about profit not about revenue. A lot of physicians don't recognize all these factors that go into running a business and do a really horrible job and feel dissatisfied. And they don't realize that they have something at hand which they need to run like a business.

They complain about all these things that are actual business model problems. But they focus the issues externally on the insurance companies, for example, without realizing that the problem is in their business model. They train you how to take care of a patient at medical school, they train you to do that really well, but they teach you nothing about running a business. So when faced with actual business problems, you don't know how to handle them, or you don't handle them, or you handle them poorly, or you are like a headless chicken: you have one approach on Monday and a different approach on Tuesday. This leads to frustration for not treating something like it is.

MS: What was the toughest moment of your career?

GR: I once made a mistake in treating a patient--it happens. In business there is a concept of root causes where one understands why something doesn't go right--this is very important. I learned a lesson there which is don't be afraid to ask for help. It is okay to double check things. Even if you are the chief resident and you think you know, go ahead and ask, make sure you know, especially when it comes to somebody's life.

MS: What do you look for when hiring?

GR: I will first tell you what I don't like: people who tell me "It's not my job". I don't just want somebody who knows how to do their specific job. I never want to hear from somebody it's not my job. We all staple--I staple, I file, I do stuff--and I am the head of the company.

I look for people who have flexible minds and who act as part of the team who say: "I am going to get this done, and if I don't know how to do it, I am going to figure out how to do it, and if I need help, I will ask for help." Needless to say, for certain positions some experiences and skill sets are prerequisites. I want somebody who will be open and flexible, willing to learn and up to the challenge.

MS: What factors do you consider to be a must-have for any company worth joining?

GR: You want a place where you're happy going to work.

And of course, a company that follows the laws--you want to make sure that you feel what is going on there is honest. In a situation where you're not sure the company is on the up and up, don't stay there. Because even though you may do nothing wrong, you might be tarred with the reputation of that company. For example, Galleon, a hedge fund collapsed after one of its leaders went to jail. An analyst I know who had worked at Galleon had a very hard time getting another job--the employees were tainted because of their association with Galleon. Make sure what is going on there is honest.

MS: What do you do on an 'average' day?

GR: I talk to investors, I comment on protocols, I review drug design, I meet with members of the management team, we do regulatory stuff-- and a lot of phone calls. But there is no average day. Everyday is a lot of fun here-- it is exciting. Circling to my earlier comment regarding where should you work? Work where you're happy.

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