

The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University

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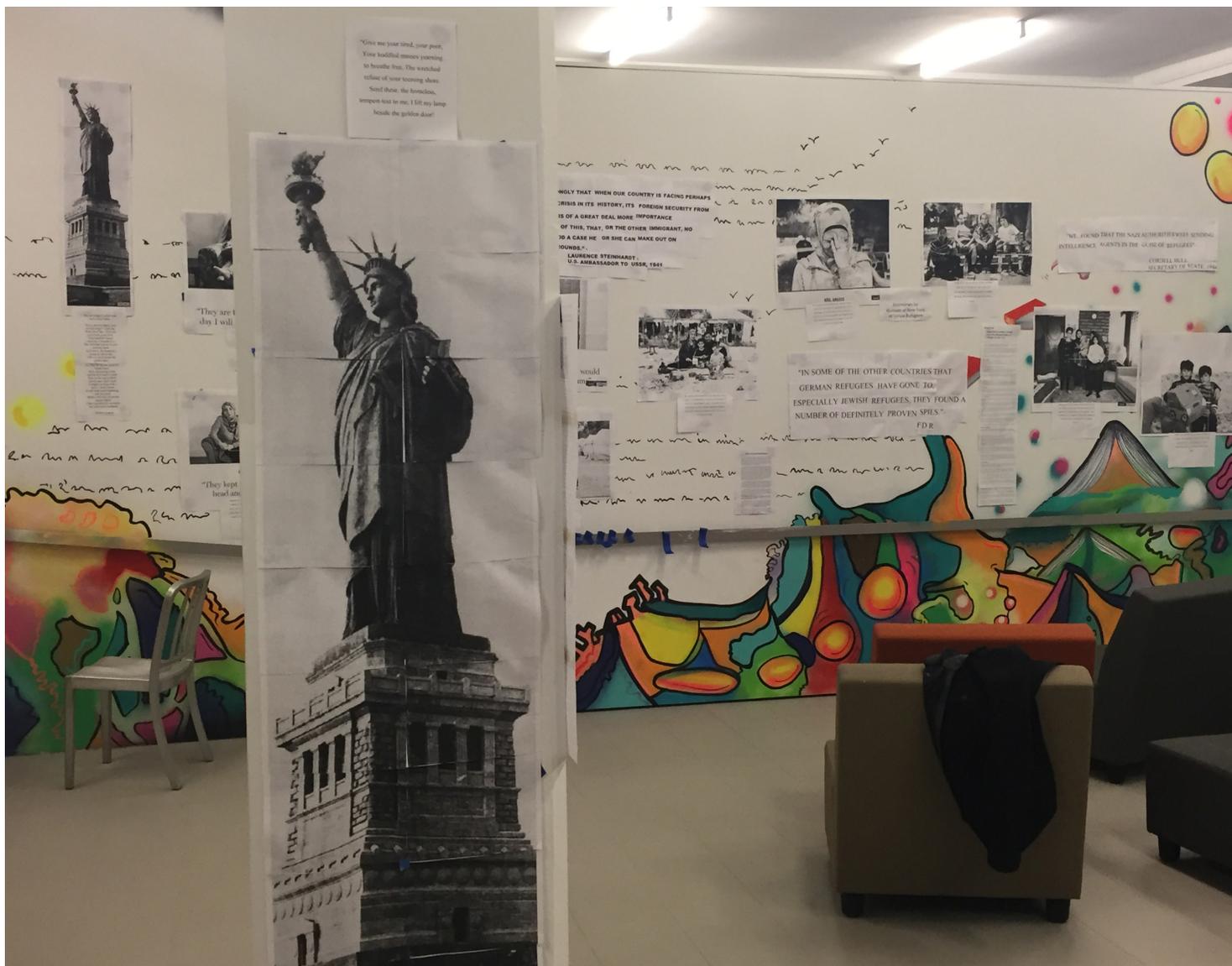
Wilf and Beren Students Launch Immigration Ban Awareness Campaign

By Tzvi Levitin

On Tuesday and Wednesday last week, groups of students on the Wilf and Beren campuses mounted awareness campaigns to protest the executive order temporarily banning refugees from entering the United States. At approximately 11:00 PM on Tuesday, Wilf campus students plastered the dividing wall in Nagel Commons with pictures of Syrian refugees, Humans of New York refugee stories, and quotes drawing comparisons between the rhetoric supporting the refugee ban and the rhetoric that surrounded the United States' hesitance to take in Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. The conspicuous wall in Nagel Commons features a mural painted by Connie Rose and lies directly in the center of student activity on campus, adjacent to the Glueck Center, the Heights Lounge, and the Gottesman Library.

The artistic piece juxtaposes large pictures of refugees with posters featuring the Statue of Liberty, emotional accounts of refugees, and articles outlining the moral bankruptcy of President Trump's executive order. One poster features a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt explaining why the United States would close its door to German refugees at a press conference in June of 1940: "In some of the other countries that German refugees have gone to, especially Jewish refugees, they found a number of definitely proven spies."

On Wednesday night, College Democrats created a similar display in the lobby of 245 Lexington, one of the two main



SEE BAN AWARENESS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Changes Coming to the Syms Administration

By Eitan Lipsky

Over the past six years, the Sy Syms School of Business has been one of the brightest facets of Yeshiva University. In that time span, the Syms student body has nearly doubled in size, the college has received prestigious accreditation, and it has established several masters-level programs in various areas of business, just to name a few highlights. All these accomplishments can be directly credited to the work of Syms' head administration, which has consisted of Dean Moses Pava and Associate Deans Michael Strauss and Avi Giloni.

Last week, it was announced that the school will be seeking new leadership, as Dr. Pava will be stepping down from his position as dean and rejoining the faculty as a full-time professor and researcher.

The history of this dynamic administrative trio is quite interesting. In late 2010, YU President Richard Joel was searching for a new administration to head the Sy Syms School of Business, in what he describes as "a pivotal time for the school." While the college had been successful until that point, it was looking to take a major step forward towards reaching the upper echelon of business schools in the country. One immediate goal of a new administration would be to achieve accreditation from

the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); a prestigious honor which would require the school to fit strict guidelines in terms of its mission, faculty, curriculum, and professional engagement. Another goal was to create an Honors program in Syms, an opportunity to attract first-rate students and to develop a fleet of entrepreneurial leaders. In many meetings with the faculty about these initiatives, President Joel found Dr. Pava, who at the time was a professor of accounting and held the Alvin Einbender Chair Professorial Chair in Business Ethics, to be particularly passionate about these ideas, and decided to offer him a position as Dean of the college.

Michael Strauss came to Syms as a professor of management in 2008 after a long and successful career in the business world as an executive in many large corporations. Once Dr. Pava, a career academic who had never actually worked in business, was hired as dean, the administration felt that Dr. Strauss, who possessed extensive field experience, would be an excellent partner who could balance out the administration.

Dr. Avi Giloni started his professorial career at Syms in 2000. He specializes in data science, statistics, and academic research. Dr. Giloni was brought on in 2011

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The EDITORIAL

Dialectical Dogmatism

By Doron Levine

Radical, extremist, fundamentalist. These are the insults of modern politics, reserved for ideas so despicably incorrect we don't even bother to explain why. And they are relative terms.

They are relative, and relative in a much more fundamental sense than other evaluative words such as "good" and "bad." Different people might have different opinions on whether a given action is good or bad. But surely there are actions, such as killing people for fun, that are objectively bad, not simply evil relative to some guy's subjective judgment.

Words like "radical" and "extremist," though, are fundamentally indexical: just like the word "here" derives its meaning from the geographic location where it's uttered and the word "now" derives its meaning from the temporal location where it's uttered, the word "radical" derives its meaning from the ideological location where it's uttered. Any belief might truly be radical according to one person and not radical according to another.

The superficial allure of these words lies in a vague sensation that ideologies exist on a continuum with some falling towards the middle and others clinging to the radical extremes. But this comforting metaphor crumbles under scrutiny: How do we measure distance along this continuum? Where do we locate the endpoints in order to then locate the middle? If there are infinitely many possible sets of beliefs, how exactly do we manage to find the center of an infinite line?

The term "fundamentalism" makes equally little sense; the idea that some beliefs are somehow, in an objectionable way, more fundamental than others, is problematized by the fact that those who label others fundamentalists tend to cling to their own beliefs as though they were no less fundamental than the beliefs they criticize.

Literal interpretation of the Quran is fundamentalist, but literal interpretation of John Locke is not? Unwavering devotion to a strict reading of the Bible is fundamentalist, but unwavering devotion to a strict reading of Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not? What exactly is the fundamental distinction here? There is none. A fundamentalist is someone who confidently adheres to an interpretation of a document that I disagree with. An extremist is someone who has taken the liberty of disagreeing with me too strongly.

If these terms are so trivial, then why do they so often creep into public discourse, masked as meaningful insults? Because compromise, open-mindedness, and seeing the other side are considered virtues. And harmonization, the simultaneous consideration of opposing concepts, is still formally fashionable. So despite their relativity, descriptors such as "radical" and "extremist" still carry negative weight, and can be used to successfully label political opponents as blindly dogmatic, too assertive, too focused on their own beliefs and unaccepting of opposing views. Of course, when I call someone an extremist I thereby reject his opposing view as much as he rejects mine, but this ironic implication is easily ignored.

YU's motto exemplifies this formal celebration of harmonization and compromise. The concept of Torah Umadda suggests, if not a tension, at least the conjunction or communion of two disparate things, the simultaneous consideration of various viewpoints and the acceptance of multiple legitimate approaches to finding truth. It points to two sources of knowledge that are at least superficially distinct, independent ways of seeing the world, and highlights the virtue of bringing these two elements into conversation with each other.

But how descriptive is Torah Umadda? How much does it actually tell us about the people and institutions that choose to associate with it? Not much at all. In practice, Torah Umadda is not a particularly descriptive term. The phrase is often used, along with its inspired concepts, to justify all sorts of independent movements. In the

larger Jewish community, and specifically within YU and its orbital media, social and otherwise, Torah Umadda and its derivative spirit inspire all sorts of "Torah plus" ideologies. Among these are Torah and social justice, Torah and environmentalism, Torah and feminism, Torah and anti-feminism, Torah and biblical criticism, Torah and traditional apologetics, Torah and liberalism, Torah and conservatism, Torah and making money, Torah and literature, Torah and kosher literature, Torah and science, Torah and pseudo-science, and Torah and sports.

Torah Umadda is a flexible concept, a customizable platform which people buy into and then personalize to suit their own interests. The "madda" half is a blank space which devotees may define at their convenience. It effectively translates as "Torah and Whatever Else You're Into."

Our flexible motto has the benefit of being at least superficially unifying. Any YU student not living in a windowless box knows that students here ascribe to all sorts of diverse views. But our equivocal motto allows these many types to unify under a common banner even while disagreeing fundamentally about what that banner means. Torah Umadda might be deeply ambiguous, but its ambiguity is its strength.

Though the phrase looks like a conjunction, the partnership of two separate concepts, rarely do those defining "madda" see the resulting "Torah-plus" worldview as dialectical or harmonized. Orthodox conservatives think conservative values stem directly from the Torah. Orthodox social justice advocates claim that Judaism properly understood values social justice, locating social

"TORAH UMADDA IS A FLEXIBLE CONCEPT, A CUSTOMIZABLE PLATFORM WHICH PEOPLE BUY INTO AND THEN PERSONALIZE TO SUIT THEIR OWN INTERESTS."

justice imperatives in biblical and rabbinic sources.

Perhaps then the phrase "Torah Umadda" is of misleading form. If madda, however we define it, really stems directly from Torah, then there are no two separate elements that are being conjoined. There is no dialectic, no conjunction of two disparate elements. The appearance of harmonization is belied by underlying dogmatism.

The turbulent political arena similarly suggests that harmonization and compromise is only formally fashionable. For the first time in a while, the Democratic Party has been presented the opportunity to cooperate with a political movement with which it fundamentally disagrees. And their overall response has been telling – when asked to accommodate a true ideological other, they threw compromise out the window. Until two and a half weeks ago, reaching across the aisle to work with the opposing party was a virtue. Now it is a grave sin.

I don't think this attitude is unique to Democrats. Generally speaking, we value compromise only when it's superficial, when the opposing side doesn't disagree with us too much. We'll compromise with a neocon, but not with a fascist, with a liberal but not with a socialist. We'll respectfully disagree with a Republican, but punch a white supremacist. The same holds for local Jewish politics – we'll compromise on religious matters with a left-leaning modern orthodox Jew, and maybe even (gulp) with an open orthodox Jew, but not with a Conservative or a Reform Jew.

Looks can be deceiving. When we peel back a layer of ostensible open-mindedness we often find extremism, radical dogmatism masked by the language of compromise.

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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.





1 Masa Backpack

Nothing screams that you're just back from Israel more than this fine piece of equipment (except maybe wearing your ID card around your neck like a n00b).

SUBMIT TO THE JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS!

2 YUJFA Submission Deadline

After three months of endless reminder ystuds, our salvation is here. Praise the Good Lord, the submission deadline for the YU Journal of Fine Arts has arrived!!



3 The Price of Tea in China

As of the time of publication, roughly 548 bitcoin per quart.



4 PHAROS

In honor of the seasonal Torah portions about the Exodus, YU has named its new printing system after the infamous Egyptian tyrant. Let my paper go!



5 Australian Open

Roger Federer and Serena Williams have shown that, even at 35, it is never too late to conquer your bitter rival, whether a strapping Spaniard or your older sister.



6 Bridges

To be crossed upon getting there.



7 Groundhog Day

Fitting for the current political climate, fierce debates erupted late last week between the conservative Punxsutawney Phil, who foretold six more weeks of winter, and the more progressive Staten Island Chuck and Shubenacadie Sam (of Nova Scotia) who, in a more optimistic tone, both liberally predicted an early spring. Will the bitterness never end??

7 UP 7 DOWN



1 Nor'easter

Weathermen and YU students flying back from Miami freak out, it rains a bit, before the joke of a storm proceeds to be forgotten about forever.



2 Offensive 7up/7down Bits

Offensive?! We'll never apologize for praising the best TV show of all time!



3 Cycling Panda

As of a few days ago, Canvas got rid of its cycling panda. Now downloading material is no longer exciting.



4 New Carpet Smell in the Glueck Beis

Nothing screams "I love Torah!" more than the smell of musty mildew in the morning.



5 RIP Marco

Wait a minute... If Marco is dead, then who is this imposter who's been selling me Nagel snacks?



6 Bathrooms in Corner of Heights Lounge

So we've finally figured out why these bathrooms have been locked for the past year, and it's not pretty. Over a dozen YU librarians have made the facilities into their own makeshift abodes.



7 Writer's Block

You know that thing when... you know, when, um... darn it, I can't even think of how to end this bit!

A Letter to YU Admissions

By Reuven Herzog

I would like to echo the sentiments of Alexander Chester in his letter to the previous issue of this newspaper; I too was very upset by YU Admissions' recent advertising campaign. The advertisement begins with three intimidating statements about other universities, then concludes by asserting, "Only one top-tier university has it all. Sacrifice Nothing. Achieve everything." While Mr. Chester responded to precise claims made in the first part of the ad, I would like to focus on the second part as well as the tone of the entire piece.

The claim made by the ad about YU itself is patently false, and its use to draw potential students to come here offends me as someone who already made that decision.

YU is expensive. Tuition is \$39,070 per year, before adding in many thousands more for housing, food, and other fees. Yes, the university grants a very significant amount of aid, but the bottom line is that even as I currently receive a very generous scholarship, it would still have been a lesser financial burden to attend my local state school. My parents are certainly not "sacrificing nothing" to send me here.

YU's student body is notoriously homogenous, with the vast majority of students coming from the same religious, ethnic, and socio-economic background. Were I to attend any other institution I would certainly meet hordes of people who come from backgrounds different than mine. My understanding of the human experience, my sensitivity to others, and my general appreciation for the varieties in life would be astronomically greater. Am I sacrificing nothing when I spend the part of my life most opportune for philosophizing, discourse, and reflection in the very bubble of my childhood?

Earlier this year, I realized that I wanted to focus my undergraduate education in Urban Studies. This was spurred by some of the readings and guest lectures in an architecture class I took last semester, as well as other readings I had done on my own. YU, however, does not offer an urban studies major, or minor, or any class devoted to the concept. The other idea I had was pursuing a career in the fields of Industrial Engineering or Operations Research. Though YU is strengthening its Computer Science department, it still does not provide anything approaching a degree in those fields. And aside from not preparing me for my career, I am not taking all of the classes that I would like to during my college career, simply because they are not offered. Do not tell me that I can achieve anything and then refuse to help me get there.

Why, then, did I choose to come to YU? I knew of these issues before I enrolled and I still made that decision, one I still contend was the right one. I attend YU because of what it does offer. Here I have the richest *limudei kodesh* offerings of any university, a staff orders of magnitude larger than anywhere else, and the structure to ensure that I expand my Torah knowledge at a consistent rate. YU gives me the greatest support for practicing my Orthodox Judaism comfortably, conveniently, and devotedly in its institutions and community. YU further offers me the greatest opportunity to think critically about my religion - which I contend is the most dominant element of my psyche - to reflect on it and decide how to tweak my beliefs and practice, and ready me for the rest of my life.

Looking back at this advertisement, its major offense is its removal of a measured decision in college enrollment. It is so obvious you should attend YU, the ad explains; there really is no reason not to. I spent many weeks debating where to spend four years of my life furthering my education and personal development. I invested great energy to weigh costs, benefits, and other neutral factors between various schools, and ultimately reached a conclusion. So did all of my peers in high school. YU Admissions' argument both offends the sensibilities of my numerous friends who made a carefully-weighed decision to attend school elsewhere and belittles my own confident decision to come here as merely embracing the default option.

But further, nothing in this advertisement says what YU is, what its strengths are, what it stands for and succeeds in doing. This ad signals YU has no mission, no *raison d'être*. No Torah U'Madda, no Modern Orthodoxy, no intellectualism in a comfortable religious environment, no *talmidei chachamim* on staff. Underneath the scare tactics and hyperbolic generalizations, this advertisement says Yeshiva University, my university, stands for nothing.

If the university sees itself as actually having positive attributes, having something to attract students rather than just catch those fleeing challenges elsewhere, why advertise falsely? But if the university does perceive itself in the way the advertisement blares, well, then that is far scarier than sports on Shabbat, exams on Yom Tov, or BDS on campus.

Nefesh B'Nefesh Opens New Offices on Both YU Campuses

By Eric Shalmon

There has been a close, long-standing relationship between Nefesh B'Nefesh and YU. In September 2016, NBN and YU joined forces, appointing a new Young Professionals Advisor on the Wilf Campus.

Recognizing the need for more face-to-face, personalized support for students and young professionals who are considering Aliyah, Nefesh B'Nefesh hired Ezra Kapetansky, a recent Sy Syms graduate for the position, who is on the path to making Aliyah himself. Recently, Nefesh B'Nefesh opened offices on both campuses to facilitate Aliyah planning. The new offices were created in response to the increase in Aliyah in the 18-25 age bracket, especially among YU alumni. In fact, YU boasts a high number of alumni making Aliyah – over 1200 since NBN's founding in 2002. The new offices are located in Furst Hall, Room 422 on the Wilf campus, in the Center for the Jewish Future and on the 5th floor of the 215 Lexington Avenue building, in the Beren Campus Career Center. Mr. Kapetansky is the only NBN advisor based solely in New York City.

"Throughout my years in YU, I held a passion to make Aliyah, a passion I saw among many of my peers," said Mr. Kapetansky. "I believe I can identify with the challenges that students face here in creating a strategy for Aliyah, as I myself have experienced them and can therefore assist in building their own successful plan."

Mr. Kapetansky, the Young Professionals Advisor, meets one-on-one with students and young professionals to begin designing their Aliyah process and works with the Nefesh B'Nefesh overseas programming team to organize events on college campuses and young communities. He provides counsel and resources to those planning Aliyah in the very near future as well as those who are looking for guidance to map out a long-term Aliyah plan.

Eitan Lipsky, a second-year student at YU, said

"although I feel it is premature in my college career to make Aliyah now, I do hope to make Aliyah later, and look forward to taking advantage of the guidance offered at the new Nefesh B'Nefesh offices."

Mr. Kapetansky said, "it's never too early to start a dialogue about Aliyah. My goal isn't to get everyone to make Aliyah. My goal is to get people thinking to themselves, 'Hey, at one point or another I've thought about the idea of living in Israel; let me do some research to see if Israel is a viable future for me.' We live in an age of Aliyah by choice, and in order to experience the choice, you have to understand the options."

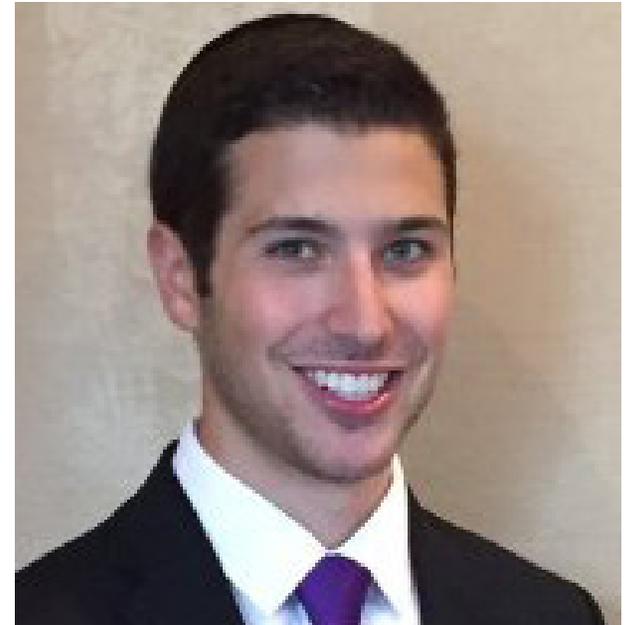
Mr. Kapetansky recently formed an online group forum on Facebook called "Aliyah Young Professionals Network" where Aliyah-minded individuals can connect and share information and ideas. There, he hosts a Facebook Live web series where Israeli-American young professionals across industries share their Aliyah stories and offer advice about entering their respective job markets.

Jacob Pesachov, a recent YU graduate who made Aliyah and is now studying medicine at the Technion University, regretted not having the opportunity of a Nefesh B'Nefesh office on campus. "Given that I spent my gap year in central Israel, like many other students at YU, it would have been greatly beneficial to learn about Oleh and Israeli life outside of the central hub." Mr. Pesachov continued: "there is a world of opportunities that exists outside central Israel, such as Haifa, where I now attend school, and I wish I could have known more about the social and religious environment in Haifa."

"Having an available office at YU would've supplied me with answers not just about educational or professional opportunities throughout Israel, but also religious and social aspects of Israeli life outside of the popular central hub," he said.

Yeshiva University already features a prominent Israel Club, which promotes Israel and educates

students about Israeli politics, culture, and social environment. The Israel Club has co-sponsored many events with Nefesh B'Nefesh and may now be able to work even closer with them. Tamar Shiller, a Stern College senior and a President of the Israel Club, said "The Nefesh B'Nefesh office only enhances what the Israel Club does on campus and helps us increase our impact on the greater YU community. I see Nefesh B'Nefesh as a true ally and I think that by working together we can make a long lasting impression here at YU."



Minimum Wage Raise Puts More in Student Employees' Pockets

By Ilan Atri

We have all been in that situation of where we wanting something to munch on or to quench our thirst, but when we stop by Nagel's Bagels we find ourselves disappointed to be greeted by that frustrating YU curtain, indicating that it is closed. Many of us have also wanted to try the new restaurant everyone is raving about but have found ourselves low on funds.

Starting in the spring semester of 2017, both of those problems have been solved. Subaba, the new sandwich bar on Amsterdam Avenue between 187th and 188th Street, is now on the Caf Card. Rumors had circulated last semester that Subaba would never make it onto the Caf Card because it is not technically on campus, but that was proven wrong, and all YU students are now invited to pay with their Omni

funds and enjoy the world-famous brisket sandwich. As Michael Kohan remarked, "Eating in the Caf gets boring sometimes, so I'm glad that the next time I feel like having a Caesar salad without having to pay cash for it, I can".

Another exciting and highly convenient change is the extension of the Nagel Bagel hours of operation. Prior to this semester, Nagel Bagel was open in the morning and most of the afternoon, but then remained closed until late at night, reopening only at 9 pm. Now that it opens earlier at 8 pm, students can rely on Nagel Bagel for dinner at a relatively normal hour. Kevin Bokor seemed particularly excited. He said, "it was always so frustrating when I would study in the library right after dinner and I wouldn't be able to grab a slice of pizza to munch on. With the new hours, I can grab a pre-dinner snack instead. This makes my life a whole lot easier".



Minimum Wage Raise Puts More in Student Employees' Pockets

By Shoshy Ciment

The rise in minimum wage in New York from \$9 to \$11 an hour is directly affecting student employees of Yeshiva University.

This wage increase, implemented by New York overnor, Andrew Cuomo, is part of a gradual plan for incremental increase in minimum wage in New York every year until 2021.

Student employees of Yeshiva University, specifically those who are not on a stipend type of payment plan, are reaping the benefits of the increased minimum wage. According to Sheri Young of Human Resources, the increase in pay was effective as of January 1, 2017, and student employees effectively saw a \$2-an-hour raise from their previous salary of \$9 an hour.

The wage raise affected many students at Yeshiva University. Student employees currently make up approximately 550 students, or 11 percent of the total student body. The major departments hiring students that were affected by the wage raise include Athletics, Dining Services and the Phonathon. Peer tutors, teaching assistants, and office workers were affected as well.

The general feeling among the affected student employees is one of pleasant surprise. Esti Kuperman, a sophomore student employee at Stern, remarked: "I am pleasantly surprised with the raise in pay that the student employees are being given. Working in Phonathon is not always easy so it is nice to have a little more to show for my hard work."

Following this trend toward higher wages in New York City, student employees can expect another \$2 raise next year.

For Winter Break, YU Students Head to Houston, TX for CJF Mission

By Eitan Lipsky

This winter break, the Center for the Jewish Future ran another installment of its Jewish Life Coast to Coast program, as it sent 10 students to spend a week of their vacation in Houston, Texas. The Coast to Coast program, which had last run a winter mission in the United States in 2014, is an experiential education mission which brings YU students to interact with a Jewish community outside of the tri-state area. The trip was led by Naomi Kohl, the Director of Student Life on Beren Campus, as well as Natan Bienstock, the Stanton Fellow for the OSL.

Houston is the fourth-largest city in the United States and it is also home to over 50,000 Jews. Of that number, about 2,000 identify as Orthodox Jews. The community has two major shuls, divided by a distance of about five miles. The students were invited to join the United Orthodox Synagogues (UOS), an orthodox shul under the leadership of Rabbi Barry Gelman. In addition, they were sent to the Robert M. Beren Academy, the local Orthodox school that houses students from nursery through high school, where they led Torah classes and discussions with the students.

In addition to teaching the adults and children of the community about Jewish values and experiences, the YU students were also able to learn from the community members about life in Houston. They heard about the terrible floods, which had ravaged the UOS community twice in the past 20 months, displacing many of the community members from their homes and destroying much of their possessions. They spoke to Amy Goldstein, one of the brave women who was able to keep calm enough during those hard times to make sure that the community members who needed help were assisted, and who fought through government red tape to get additional support for her community.

The students also heard from shul member Barry Tobias, an Orthodox Jew who works for the national space organization, NASA, about his life as a "Jewish rocket scientist." NASA headquarters are located in Houston, and the students also took a trip to the local NASA Space Center Museum. NASA wasn't the only local employment center that the students visited. They also spent time at the Baylor Medical Center, one of the country's top medical facilities where many of the community members work.

One point that the community members tried to impress upon the YU students about living in a smaller Jewish community was the ease with which one is able to get involved in a major way. The students heard from Elise Passy, Harry Brown, and Steven Plumb, who are involved in running the local mikvah, the chevra kadisha, and the Houston Kashruth Organization (Houston is home



YU student Natie Elkayim delivers a Torah class to high school students at Beren Academy

to seven kosher restaurants and several catering halls), respectively. Each of these people works a typical day job, but felt that it was their contribution to the community to step up and play a major role in the operation of regular Jewish life.

In addition to the unity of the Orthodox community, which could be seen from the stories of how everyone in the community helped each other during the floods, the students were also shown a display of unity outside this community as well. Rabbi Gelman invited several local Conservative and Reform Rabbis to join for a panel discussion where the students were free to ask any questions. The students were shocked to see this interdenominational discourse and to find out how these rabbis all respect each other and even come to each other with questions on occasion.

The next shocking presentation was when Rabbi Gelman brought in local Christian Pastor Becky Keenan to speak to the students. She spoke about her support for the Orthodox community, the close professional relationship with Rabbi Gelman, and her advocacy for Israel on behalf of the Jews. The students also learned first hand about the attitude of non-Jewish Houstonians towards Jews. On several occasions, random strangers approached one of the students and, seeing them dressed in Jewish garb, remarked about their beliefs that the

Jews are a blessed people. For some of the students who lived in cities where one sometimes feels uncomfortable being stared at by passersby for dressing differently, this was a very unique experience.

As part of the YU mission, the students also had an opportunity to meet with two members of YU's Board of Trustees who reside in Houston: Ira Mitzner and Michael Gamson, for a steak dinner. At the dinner, the students were asked to reflect upon their feelings about YU and reported certain areas in which they felt their experiences could be improved, Mr. Mintzer and Mr. Gamson were very receptive to the students' input.

The trip ended with a beautiful Shabbos spent with the UOS community, where the YU students led inspiring tefillot and gave additional Torah classes to the community. On Shabbos day, the students had lunch at the home of Drs. Jeff and Bella Morgan, who had sponsored this mission partially in recognition of their gratitude towards Yeshiva University.

The students that participated in this mission were touched by many different aspects of their experience. "What impressed me most was the Orthodox community's involvement in both inter-denominational and interfaith work," said Moshe Kurtz, a second-year psychology major who participated on the mission. "Where I live in New York the Orthodox community is sometimes in great need of just intra-denominational work alone. As a Rabbinical student my aspiration is to model the unity and virtues of the Houston community's religious leadership and pursue a framework of camaraderie and cooperation amongst all members of my future community." Second-year computer science major Miriam Liebling enjoyed the intimate time spent with the community on Shabbos. "After spending several days interacting with the students at Beren Academy, it was spending Shabbos at UOS that really showed me the achdus in the community" she said. "The same faces we met in school appeared in shul and it was incredible to see that the sense of community extended much further than the classroom".

Overall, the YU students came out of this trip with insight about living in a smaller Jewish community. They gained tremendously from this experience and agreed that they would have to at least visit Houston again sometime soon.



Students prepare to board their flights to Houston

From Politics to Paint Night, New Head of Government Relations Gets His Hands Dirty

By Elliot Heller

Six months ago, Phil Goldfeder sat in his Queens office, working with his colleagues in government on various projects relating to education and transportation, two of his prime areas of focus as the New York State Assemblyman for the 23rd District.

Today, as the new Assistant Vice President of

"IN SHORT, MR. GOLDFEDER AIMS TO CREATE PROGRAMS THAT BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN YU AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY, AND INVITE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO TAKE PART."

Government Relations, Mr. Goldfeder sits in his Washington Heights office, diligently reading y-studs ("religiously," he claimed), discussing event planning with students, and speaking with the same government contacts, but this time to invite them to join him at the next event on campus.

While some might consider his new job to be a considerable step down from his old one, Goldfeder is happy in his new role.

"As an assemblyman, you're required to spend half the year up in Albany and traveling a tremendous amount," he said. "An opportunity presented itself where I could work at Yeshiva University and give back, continue doing my public service, and continue to challenge myself with a job where I can really find a way to give back to society."

Occupying an office that has never been held at YU, Mr. Goldfeder is responsible for developing relationships between local, state, and federal

government agencies and the university, and monitoring legislation that could affect YU and its affiliates. He also coordinates the involvement of elected officials in YU functions and other community-related programming.

"My entire career I've spent time building bridges in various communities and for various elected officials," Mr. Goldfeder explained. "My job here at the university has essentially been the same thing - to find public-private partnerships, where the university could take advantage of city programs, state programs, federal programs for projects and things going on, while working together with, and hopefully benefitting, the city, state, and federal government."

One major project that Goldfeder has worked on is the Share Your Thanks campaign. In November, five students ran an initiative to have the YU community publicly share its gratitude towards local law enforcement. They invited the local police and fire stations, and held a public ceremony in Nagel Commons featuring, among other things, large cards to sign and donuts. Upon hearing of the event, Goldfeder immediately invited the students to meet with him, suggesting that they plan a similar event on the Beren campus, offering to use his position to expedite the process of coordinating with law enforcement representatives.

In short, Mr. Goldfeder aims to create programs that build bridges between YU and the surrounding community, and invite elected officials to take part. In one recent project, he worked with the athletics department to create an after-school open gym program for kids in the neighborhood. When he saw an article about the thirtieth anniversary of the writing center on campus, he thought a good way to commemorate it would be if the center on the Wilf campus offered a one-time college prep class for local high schoolers.

In addition to the more formal events, Goldfeder has also made it his business to get involved in some of the more lighthearted activities on campus. A few weeks ago, he invited a local representative to come to

Paint Night at Beren.

"Students, particularly at Yeshiva University, have a certain energy that elected officials and community leaders want to be around," he explained. "Sometimes we go to events because we're searching for votes and sometimes you go to events because you want to speak with passionate young leaders who want to be involved and want to get to understand what government is all about. My job is to build bridges with the elected officials so they can benefit from what we have to offer at Yeshiva University, but also for our students, to get to meet elected officials and ask them questions and talk - in a setting that is not formal. To me it's much more valuable."

"Whether its paint night or an event like Share Your Thanks, where the police and fire department come on campus, or it's a panel on women's empowerment or Israel advocacy, elected officials sometimes are looking to come in a substantive way, in a policy way, and sometimes just to have fun at paint night or movie night, or anything else that we do here that's exciting."

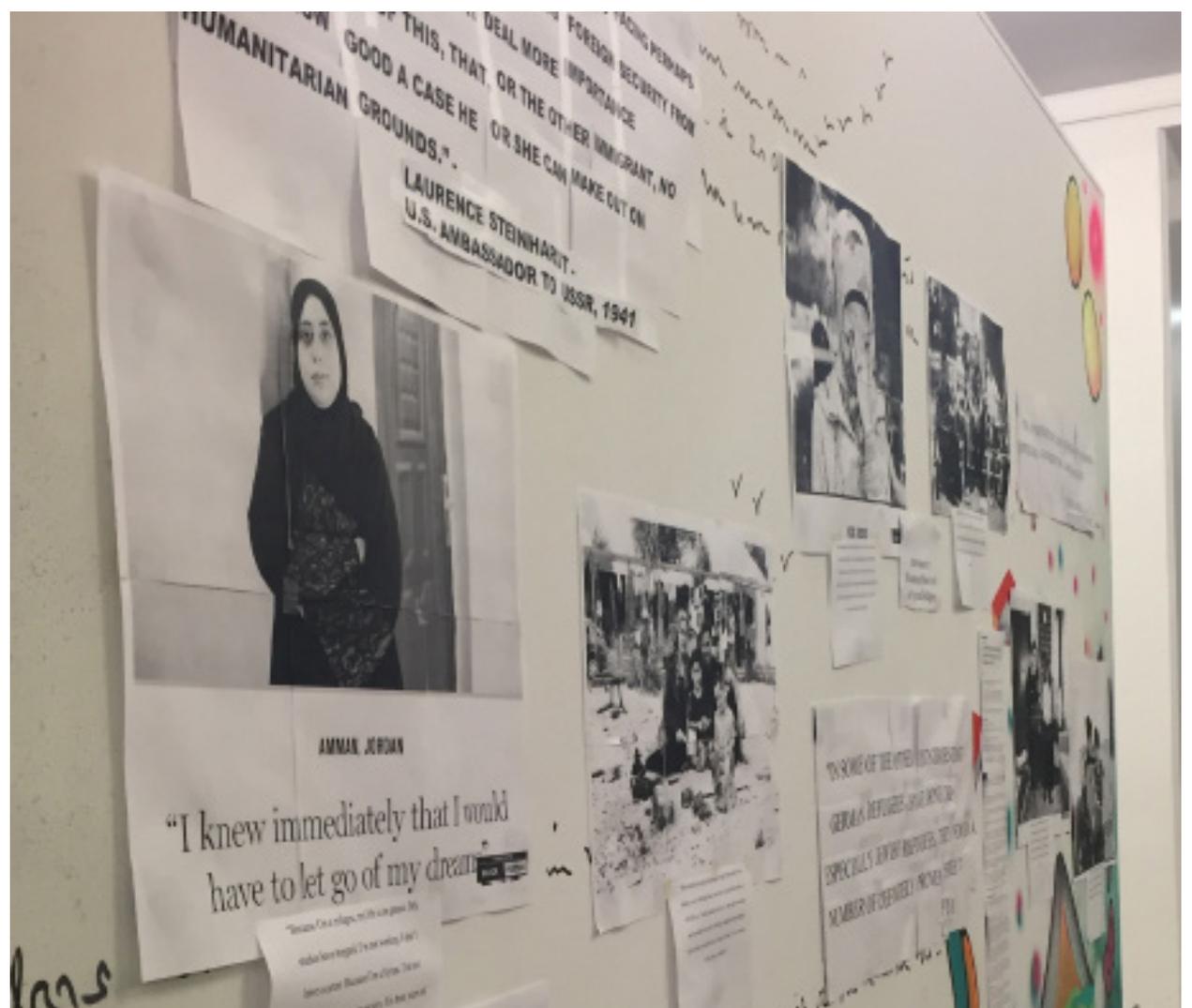


BAN AWARENESS, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

academic buildings on the Beren campus. In addition to replicating the Wilf campus display's parallelisms between the policies of the 1940s and those of Trump's, Beren students hung biblical passages about the importance of welcoming the ger (stranger), political cartoons, and the names of Holocaust victims who were denied entry into the United States.

Seemingly, the campaigns seek to present the YU community with a moral imperative to oppose the immigration ban regardless of their political affiliations. By comparing the current fear-fueled political climate to policies that prevented Jews from seeking refuge before and during World War II, the protesters aim to demonstrate the severity of President Trump's policies and their potential to lead to suffering and persecution down the line. "This isn't a political thing," claimed one protester on the Wilf campus, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, "It's a humanity thing." On the Wilf campus, students left sticky notes near the display to encourage students to write their thoughts and post them on the wall, thus becoming participants in the exhibit.

Another participant, requesting anonymity, said, "We were raised on this idea of Never Again. Never Again for whom? There are people out there facing persecution and terror, many of whom have nowhere left to turn. The countries being banned by Trump do not have any history of terror against the United States. Nationals of the seven countries covered by this ban have not killed a single American in an act of terror. So it's hard to believe this ban provides any significant amount of security in exchange for the xenophobia it promotes."





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Yeshivas Ben HaSemesterim

By Mike Hirt

Although Yeshivas Ben HaSemesterim's official dates went from January 15th to January 23rd, its excitement began months before and its impact will last for even longer. Yeshiva Ben HaSemesterim, better known as YBH, is a program for Yeshiva University male undergraduate students who devote their semester break to studying Judaic texts in the Beis Midrash on the Wilf Campus.

This year's program effectively began on November 9th when Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mayer Twersky, with the accompaniment of a YBH-sponsored lunch, spoke about the importance of spending vacation in a productive religious environment, such as YBH. Since that time, the program's momentum kept building, with over 50 students ultimately signing up. Avrumi Schonbrun, a current junior who has participated in YBH for the past two years described the excitement: "as finals came around, what kept me pushing and staying upbeat was the memory of last year's Ben Hasesemesterim and the great experience I had there."

Almost all credit for the success of YBH goes to Rabbis Etan Schnall and Yosef Kalinsky, who coordinated nearly all the programming, shiurim, gym hours, and food orders.

YBH provided for three daily meals. Additionally, a snack corner was stocked up in Zysman Hall so students could get a quick bite to eat and then go back to the learning in the Beis Midrash. Reflecting on YBH, Schonbrun stated, "YBH definitely met my expectations this year— with all of the learning and programming that were set up, it was guaranteed."

The programming included late night Cholent, a question-and-answer session with Rabbi Twersky, participation in a wedding that took place in Klein Hall, and much more. Moshe Lonner, another YBH participant, said that the most memorable moment of the program for him was YBH's Chinese dinner with Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Herschel Schachter and his wife. As Mr. Lonner, a student of Rabbi Schachter explained, "The dinner with Rav Schachter was a great opportunity to connect with him not only inside the Beis Midrash and shiur, but also outside." Mr. Lonner reports that the dinner setting was so informal that night that it concluded with a very special *Kumzitz*, with Rebetzin Schachter impressively playing classic Jewish songs on the piano.

Ezra Teichman's YBH highlight took place in a different setting, and a different zip code: the trip to Riverdale with Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig. As Teichman recounted, "We had lunch with Rav Willig and were able ask him a few questions," but the trip didn't end there. Afterwards the students went across town to the Telshe Yeshiva, to hear from their Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Avrohom Ausband. Mr. Teichman reported, "Rav Ausband is a great Torah personality, and being able to hear his inspiring words on *Talmud Torah* is something I'll keep with me for a long time."

On its last day, YBH ended with a bang in a lunch featuring the two things it does best: spiritual inspiration and good food. Menachem Freedman made a Siyum on Tractate *Bava Metzia* with the YBH participants as they celebrated with a delicious Carlos and Gabby's lunch.

Understandably, the students who took part in YBH had a great time. But why is it so important? Another YBH participant, Yoni Rabinovitch, said that, "being able to spend a week in the YU Beis Midrash, only needing to think about learning Torah, is what will enable me to recharge and get ready to have a great semester both in my classes and my learning here." Rabinovitch added, "it is programs like these that make YU unique. I mean, how many universities have this many students devoted to Torah learning during their break? It's really true when people say 'Nowhere but Here.'"



SYMS, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

as the final piece of the puzzle when he was named Associate Dean. Thus, Syms was securely in the hands of three administrators who were each independently very successful and who possessed complementary skillsets to run an undergraduate business school.

From the moment that they began working together in 2011, the three deans knew that this would be a successful partnership, especially with Dean Pava as their leader. "I credit the success of the program to Dean Pava," associate Dean Strauss remarked. "I never worked with somebody who was able to create such a close working relationship with his colleagues. Even though we all came from different spectra, I can count on one hand the number of times that we disagreed. Dean Pava is not just a guru in ethics, but his personality is really what allowed him to shine and create this close partnership."

"Our combination of skills played a pivotal role in what the three of us did," Dr. Giloni reflected. "We are friends, we work very well together, and the fact that we have both different opinions and mutual respect allowed us to succeed."

And succeed they did. A complete list of the accomplishments of this trio includes the following:

- Achieving AACSB Accreditation,
- Creating a chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society
- Launching the SSSB Honors and Entrepreneurial Leadership Program,
- Launching new Academic Jewish Studies Program emphasizing Jewish values,
- Developing the new BIMA major,
- Increasing undergraduate enrollments from approximately 400 students to over 700 students,
- Increasing the quality of incoming students as measured by average SAT scores,
- Increasing the number of student internships,
- Significantly improving job placement,
- Significantly improving student advising,
- Launching fully online MS in Marketing Program,
- Developing plans for additional graduate programs including MS in Tax, MS in Finance, and one year MBA program,
- Designing several blended and online courses,
- Hiring several new high quality faculty members in all of our disciplines,
- Improving quality and quantity of faculty research (including the establishment of regular faculty research seminars),
- Improving relationship with Board,
- Improving and streamlining SSSB curriculum,
- Participating as active members in the Aspen

Undergraduate Business Consortium (a group of 30 of the top undergraduate business schools in the country examining ways to better integrate liberal arts and business education).

While each of these achievements would warrant an article of its own, it can be succinctly summarized by stating that they far exceeded the expectations set out for them. "One of the benefits of being in a university are that your weaknesses can be compensated by others strengths," said President Joel. "We built a team [in Syms] that worked effectively, and students are very satisfied with the product of their efforts."

In addition to Dean Pava returning to faculty as a professor, he will also be assuming leadership of the Business Honors and Entrepreneurial Leadership Program, a position that has been held by Dr. Giloni since the honors program's inception. Dr. Giloni will be leaving that position, and has also stated that, although nothing is finalized, he is likely to step down from his position as Associate Dean as well and rejoin the faculty as a full-time professor and researcher. Dr. Giloni is at the forefront of Syms' Data Science initiative, and hopes to be able to narrow his focus towards improving that area of the college should he officially step down.

To find a replacement for Dean Pava, a job listing for dean has been posted on the YU website, and the Office of the Provost under Dr. Selma Botman has begun to arrange a search committee to interview and evaluate candidates for the position. According to Dr. Botman "both internal and external [to YU] candidates will be considered."

President Joel described the school's vision for its new dean. "We are looking for someone who is entrepreneurial and committed to moving the school ahead, while at the same time being committed to the core business values of the school." President Joel also indicated that the incoming president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, would certainly have an opportunity to weigh in on the decision of whom to hire.

When asked about the uncertainty that comes with bringing in new administrative members, Dean Strauss commented "our administration has clearly indicated the direction that we would like this program to continue to move in. We hope that our plans will continue to have support from the new dean and that the administration will continue to move the school forward in this same direction." Dean Strauss did mention the possibility that the Provost's choice for dean would impact his own decision of whether or not to stay on as Associate Dean. "If and when they find a dean, I may work with him or her, or I may allow a different person to take my place so that I can continue to add value to the school and be involved with students," he said.

When asked if he thought this potential overhaul of the administration would bring an end to the good times of the previous years in the Sy Syms School of Business, Dr. Giloni replied "It's not the end of an era. It's very common for there to be changes in leadership in a business school. 5-10 years is typical time to stay on as dean; it is healthy for a school to be able to move on." In addition, the deans all stressed their commitment to Sy Syms and their willingness to provide help and support to any future administration.

After his long and successful tenure as dean, Dr. Pava looks forward to continuing on in his expanded future role on the faculty. "The past six years have been an exciting time for me and a tremendous learning experience," he said. "Next year, I look forward to being able to spend more time with our unique students, which in the end is what makes Yeshiva University truly special." Dr. Botman expressed appreciation for Dr. Pava's work for the university: "For the past six years Dean Pava has committed himself to the administration of Sy Syms School of Business, steering it through AACSB accreditation and expanding its faculty and programs. He has now decided to turn his focus back to his teaching and scholarship roles, both of which he loves. I look forward to his continued contributions to teaching and learning at YU. He deserves the University's gratitude for his dedication to Sy Syms, its students, and its faculty."

For updates on the process as the search for a new dean progresses, make sure to keep an eye on *The Commentator's* social media accounts.



Cardozo Minority Student Alliance Successfully Petitions for Protection for Immigrant Students

By Mindy Schwartz

On January 18th, the Minority Law Students Alliance (MLSA) of Cardozo Law School sent a petition to President Richard Joel. The petition outlined two demands by the students and faculty who signed it: that the university provide sanctuary protection to any immigrant students and faculty who may be at risk under the Trump administration's proposed immigration policies and that it increase financial aid to its immigrant students.

After the election, many Cardozo students felt nervous, even hopeless, about what the future would hold under a president whose campaign was, in the words of the petition, "explicitly xenophobic [and] anti-immigrant." MLSA Secretary Sophia Gurule explained that a number of fellow students felt they needed to do something to alleviate their feelings of "hopelessness." They chose to write the petition to ensure that their university address the most vulnerable members of its

"WHILE MANY STUDENTS CAME OUT OF THE ELECTION FEELING 'HOPELESS,' MS. GURULE HOPES THAT THE MLSA'S PETITION AND PRES. JOEL'S RESPONSE WILL GIVE THEM HOPE AND INVIGORATE THEM FOR THE LONG ROAD AHEAD."

community under the new administration. Their actions were inspired by similar student initiatives at schools like Columbia University, Wesleyan University, Reed College, and California State University.

The MLSA petition specifically refers to those immigrants, also known as Dreamers, who fall under President Obama's 2012 executive action known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). To be

a recipient of DACA, one must have entered the country illegally before turning 16, prior to June 2007, or been under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012. In addition, a recipient must also be in school, have graduated from high school, have otherwise obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or Armed forces, and have no criminal record. Those who qualify receive a temporary reprieve from deportation and gain a work permit so that they may be lawfully employed. There are anywhere from 740,000 to 800,000 immigrants with registred DACA status, which must be renewed every two to three years.

During his campaign Trump made numerous promises concerning immigration policy, most famously - or infamously - a proposed Muslim ban and the construction of a wall between the US and Mexico. Trump pledged to "cancel every unconstitutional executive action issued by President Obama," including DACA. Although he has yet to enact such a repeal, Trump will almost certainly not continue to renew the DACA status of Dreamers and many are still concerned that the program will be cancelled within his first 100 days in office. This would leave those with current DACA status in a dangerous limbo, unable to work legally and vulnerable to deportation.

DACA students specifically at universities are in a double bind. Because the university has the student's legal information on file, in the event of DACA's repeal the university could hand over information to immigration officials to aid in his or her deportation. Additionally, a student who loses his or her DACA status can longer get work authorization, barring him or her from paid student research positions, work study, or other outside jobs, and would thereby be unable to pay for basic living expenses, let alone tuition for university.

The petition addresses both of these issues. First, it demands that Yeshiva become a sanctuary campus, meaning that it will not voluntarily hand over student information without a court subpoena. Second, it demands that Yeshiva provide financial aid for such students and special stipend programs, like that of the University of Berkeley, in order for them to continue attending and paying for university.

An anonymous survey given by the MLSA identified

that there are students with DACA status at Yeshiva University, although an exact number was withheld to protect respondents. "We know the DACA students are out there and we want them to know that in Yeshiva they will be safe," said Ms.

Gurule. President Joel's response, sent by email to the MLSA on January 25, a week after receiving the petition, does indeed give those feeling hopeless some sense of comfort. Pres. Joel wrote: "Our policy is not to disclose any private information about our students, faculty, or staff unless we are presented with a subpoena or court order. Further to this point, we will not act on behalf of federal agents and not assist in any efforts to investigate or detain students, staff or faculty unless presented with a warrant or other legal process. Moreover, if a student's continued enrollment at our school is jeopardized by an inability to work because of loss of DACA status, we will make every effort to assist and explore options to keep the student in class."

The MLSA views Joel's response as an indication that he has "accepted all of our requests." Ms. Gurule stressed Joel's final statement as clarifying the core message behind the response in its entirety: "I hope this clarifies our position: to support all members of our community to the greatest degree possible under the law." Given past precedent, the MLSA took the President's email as a public statement and has publicized it and shared it with student groups.

Although the petition was brought by Cardozo students, Ms. Gurule noted that this issue should not be seen as a localized one but rather as an issue that involves the "whole Yeshiva community."

"We did this because we care about a deeply vulnerable community," said Gurule, and "we wanted all of Yeshiva to care about them as well" and take action.

Beyond easing the fears of the vulnerable, Ms. Gurule pointed to the critical power of the petition and its success to show the "collective power" of students to make real change. While many students came out of the election feeling "hopeless," Ms. Gurule hopes that the MLSA's petition and Pres. Joel's response will give them hope and invigorate them for the long road ahead.

I want to state clearly that we are committed to protecting the privacy of our students, staff and faculty to the fullest extent allowed by law. Our policy is not to disclose any private information about our students, faculty or staff unless we are presented with a subpoena or court order. Further to this point, we will not act on behalf of federal agents and not assist in any efforts to investigate or detain students, staff or faculty unless presented with a warrant or other legal process. Moreover, if a student's continued enrollment at our school is jeopardized by an inability to work because of loss of DACA status, we will make every effort to assist and explore options to keep the student in class.

I hope this clarifies our position: to support all members of our community to the greatest degree possible under the law. Thank you for your keen expression of the issues and concern for your fellow community members.

Richard M. Joel
President
Bravmann Family University Professor
Yeshiva University

With Alumni in Key YUNMUN Positions, TABC Delegation Looks to Bring Acceptable Fun to Conference

By Judah Stiefel

There is a circle of life for Yeshiva University Model United Nations (YUNMUN) each couple of years. Students who have served as staff, chairs, and secretaries for the event graduate while new students step up to fill their positions. As old make way for the new, some traditions remain solid while others are built upon. Each new selection of YUNMUN staff bring their own personalities to maintain the event's excellence while adding their own new ideas to improve. Many of the those running the event this year participated as competitors in previous years. For prospective students, YUNMUN

“THE STUDENTS THAT WERE ACCUSED OF OVERSTEPPING THEIR MANDATE TO ENTERTAIN HAVE MATURED AND ARE NOW ABLE TO BRING AN EXCELLENT BALANCE TO THE EVENT.”

may be their best chance to glimpse the college. Not only is it hosted by the Admissions Office, but it is also largely managed and run by representatives of the YU student body. For the 450 plus potential students who show up from high schools across the country it is an excellent glimpse not only into the Yeshiva University of great socializing and marketing pamphlets but also into the accomplished students that make our school the unique place that it is.

Of the staff at this year's YUNMUN, many are alumni of Torah Academy of Bergen County, a boys' yeshiva high school in New Jersey. The Secretary General, Avi Strauss; three committee chairs, Shai Berman, Akiva Marder, and Ariel Hochman; and five junior staff members are all alumni of TABC. Nearly all were members of the illustrious TABC delegations that were famous for their shtick and light-hearted approach to the mock debates Model UN is known for. Several of this year's staff members were

on the 2013 Model UN team from TABC that caused a controversy that made its way into The Commentator and led to more subdued TABC delegations in the years since.

For years, TABC had a reputation of adding what many considered the fun side to YUNMUN, a 3-day competition that can often become intense and cutthroat. However, some felt that at the conference of 2013 the TABC students had gone too far, with stunts like mock marriage proposals to committee chairs and rewriting placards to read “Narnia.” Other shenanigans went on as well which were deemed inappropriate.

“I believe it's important not to live in the past. I think TABC showed its true strength by transitioning from the ‘joke’ team to one of the top-placing schools on the conference in only a matter of 3 years,” Yehoshua Zirman, a YUNMUN media center staff member on this upcoming conference who competed on TABC's delegation, wrote in an email. “TABC alumni are basically running the entire YUNMUN this year and, I think that shows TABC's true colors much more than an article written in [The Commentator] 5 years ago.”

Some would like to see an irony in the fact that the conference is now being run by TABC students. However, others would argue the fact that these students play large roles in the current YUNMUN administration is of no coincidence. The students that were accused of overstepping their mandate to entertain have matured and are now able to bring an excellent balance to the event.

The high school students that participate in YUNMUN from around the country interact with the staff, and it's important for the YU student staffers to be able to portray both the academic and the fun sides of YU. Mr. Strauss said, “the event serves as a microcosm of the intense academics a college student may face, but also opens up opportunities for some quality, good spirited humor. Nearly all the delegates are looking for respite from over 12 hours of committee sessions in a 27-hour window of time. The TABC alumni who staff the conference have learned to polish up their acts from when they were in high school, adding some levity to the event, but in good taste.”

YU student Avery Ennis says that often Model UN could become extremely intense and he thinks it will be a large enhancement to the event to have staff members who understand how to run a fun event that had a healthy amount of fun to – every once in awhile – lighten the mood.

An example of this fun can be seen in a YUNMUN tradition, the elevator-barber shop quartet, of which Secretary General Strauss and the other senior staff TABC alumni have participated since they were delegates. Those who have participated in YUNMUN in the past may know of the singing tradition. A delegate on YUNMUN using the glass elevator in the middle of the conference center may be lucky enough to catch the elevator shop quartet's legendary rendition of The Beach Boys' “Barbra Anne.” The show lightens the mood of the conference for delegates who have been sitting in intense conference settings all day. Other conference chairs have designed exciting crises to excite the committee atmosphere. A good crisis will have the delegates laughing while also attempting to solve serious world threats. In the past, committee chairs have broken crises with anything from ransom demands hidden in cakes to morph suit-wearing food viruses ransacking the room and the world's food stores. Current staff members, many of whom are TABC alumni, know how excellent the conference can be with the right amounts of serious committee sessions and appropriate entertainment.

The TABC delegation has toned down their antics from their controversial behavior of the past. In the 2016 conference TABC came in 5th out of over 40 schools and demonstrated that its students are serious while also adding a subdued, yet fun atmosphere to the conference. TABC alumnus Daniel Jerome Schwarz commented, “I'm excited to see how TABC does in the conference this year. It's important to me that they win as much as possible without losing their ability to get a laugh.”

High school and college students alike are all waiting to see how this year's conference rapidly approaching conference will run, and how the TABC renaissance in YUNMUN will build on the progress of years past.

YUNMUN
Yeshiva University National Model UN

Three Intramural Sports Leagues Suspended

By Nathan Feifel

In an effort to increase open gym hours, the intramural Basketball, Frisbee, and Soccer leagues, all of which compete in the Max Stern Athletic Center's Melvin J. Furst Gymnasium, will have a delayed start to their season this Spring semester.

On Wednesday, January 25, undergraduates of the Wilf Campus received an email from the school's Athletic Director Joe Bednarsh issuing such a mandate in response to students expressing frustrations about the facility's limited availability. “I have heard your valid concerns about available free time in the facility and am exploring ways to increase open gym hours,” wrote Mr. Bednarsh. “One immediate step we have

taken is to implement a later start of the intramural seasons.”

This past Fall semester, the Basketball league occupied the gym from 10:00 pm to 12:00 am on Monday nights, and both the Soccer and Frisbee leagues played on Sundays, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm and 10:00 pm to 12:00 pm, respectively. These time slots will now be available for general student use instead of being reserved for intramural leagues as it had been in previous semesters.

“While I understand where Mr. Bednarsh is coming from, I don't think that the hundred-or-so students involved in intramurals should be forced to make sacrifices when the time slots they occupy are not the ones being contested,” said frustrated senior Aaron

Haber, who serves as commissioner for the Frisbee League. “Very few people are looking to shoot around at 11:30 at night.”

Some students have expressed interest in utilizing these hours that had previously been unavailable, however. Jeremy Shevach, a Syms junior, said, “I'm pleased to hear about the extra hours for open gym. I have a lot of classes and work, so this gives me more flexibility for when I want to work out in the gym.”

The intramural hockey league, which plays its games in the MTA gym, is unaffected by this development and will commence in early February.

Mr. Bednarsh noted that details about the start dates and registration for the affected leagues would be sent out shortly.

UNSC Resolution 2334 is a Friedens-Diktat: How the International Community's Democratic Fundamentalism Imperils Global Stability

By Aryeh Schonbrun

This past December, in a sly act committed with unprecedented spite, and against the directives of the incoming administration, President Obama decided to punish Israel, the Jews, and especially Bibi Netanyahu for their perceived intransigence on what has become a global pet issue. Without the U.S. veto on the vote, the international community, led by Jew-haters and impotent ideologues alike, succeeded in castigating Israel for her policies in the most public of venues. While UNSC Resolution 2334 does not wield much power by itself, it sets a dangerous tone for the future. It demonizes Israel in a way not seen since the demise of the Soviet dictatorship, and although it doesn't come as much of a surprise, it gives voice to the tension that has been building between Israel and the rest of the civilized world.

The resolution itself does not even approach that of a fair, balanced, proposal. The resolution does not recognize any Jewish connection to the territory called the "West Bank," and even goes so far as to delegitimize Jewish sovereignty over Israel's capital, Jerusalem, thereby expropriating Judaism's holiest site from the soul of the Jewish people. While it calls upon all parties to abstain from terrorist activities, it places much of the blame for the current impasse upon the Jewish settlements whose "establishment... has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace." It further "Calls upon all States... to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967," thus supporting the practice of western countries boycotting Jewish products manufactured in "the territories," organizations with activities that involve Jewish settlers, and stigmatizing those individuals who associate themselves with such "illegal" activities.

As an American Jew who feels a deep connection to his ancestral homeland, I could not have been more dismayed at our former President's stab-in-the-back, so clearly meant to send us the very vivid message that we had for so long tried to avoid hearing: the world does not consent to our continued presence on what is presumed to be Palestinian territory. I am not surprised by this deep, menacing conviction that most of the world's leaders hold, but I admit that I had hoped that Obama would save face and yield to President Trump's more sympathetic view of the conflict. Alas, politics is politics, and, as Obama did not trust President Trump's intuition regarding this matter, he made a lame-duck decision that will go down in history as just plain SAD.

"FACING ENORMOUS INTERNAL TENSION DUE TO THE DISINTEGRATION OF A COLLECTIVE AMERICAN IDENTITY, THE U.S. COMPENSATES BY FOCUSING ON A COUNTRY WITH EVEN GREATER IDENTITY PROBLEMS AS A WAY OF DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM ITS OWN FAILING SOCIETY!"

However, regardless of the intent that brought the resolution to a vote, and ignoring the conflicts surrounding Obama and Bibi's personal relationship, I find it necessary to engage in a deeper analysis of the underlying motives of the countries (some of them important allies) that voted against us at the U.N.

Shortly after abstaining from the vote, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power explained in her speech that "the settlement problem has gotten so much worse that it is now putting at risk the very viability of that two-state solution... One cannot simultaneously

champion expanding Israeli settlements and champion a viable two-state solution that would end the conflict. One has to make a choice between settlements and separation... since 2011, President Obama and Secretary Kerry have repeatedly warned – publicly and privately – that the absence of progress toward peace and continued settlement expansion was going to put the two-state solution at risk, and threaten Israel's stated objective to remain both a Jewish State and a democracy." Former Secretary Kerry echoed that sentiment a week later when, addressing an international audience during an interminable, repetitious diatribe, he said that "the two-state solution is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is the only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state... the United States of America... cannot be true to our own values or even the stated democratic values of Israel and we cannot properly defend and protect Israel if we allow a viable two-state solution to be destroyed before our own eyes. And that's the bottom line... here is a fundamental reality, if the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or Democratic, it cannot be both... How does Israel reconcile a permanent occupation with its democratic ideals? How does the U.S. continue to defend that and still live up to our own democratic ideals?... Is ours the generation that gives up on the dream of a Jewish-Democratic state of Israel?"

You should call me a fool if I were to discount fully the purely evil, antisemitic motives behind such a resolution, but it would do wrong to those who honestly believe in Democracy to make such broad generalizations. Clearly, John Kerry did not wake up one morning harboring an irrational desire to hurt Israel. Instead, the zeal he expressed during his speech could be better understood in light of his recapitulations of his professed loyalty to those hallowed Democratic ideals.

This utter devotion to Democratic ideals above all is actually a very old, and strong, American sentiment. Ever since those brave rebels opened fire on the Redcoats on the outskirts of Lexington, MA in 1775, we Americans have defined and refined our nation based on the concepts of equality, democracy, and God-given liberties. The American struggle against tyrannical, monarchical rule in many ways signified the beginning of the end of absolutist, arbitrary, and unjust forms of government. In fact, our example of democratic self-rule became emblematic of popular revolt and the motto "Live Free or Die" continues to empower the oppressed throughout the world. Although Democracy-for-all remains a lofty goal, our self-assured spirit, confident in our country's Democratic exceptionalism, allows us to continue to dream and hope for better days. In recognition of the just nature of our cause, and in response to our aghast observation of the ills of the world at large, the west, and America in particular, have for some time engaged in the struggle to bring Democracy to the "four corners of the Earth." While this philosophy sometimes delivered positive results, helping many nascent democracies on their way, many times U.S. intervention in the domestic politics of foreign states has led to disorder, instability, and ultimately to bloodshed.

Omar Encarnacion, an associate professor of politics at Bard College, wrote an article titled "The Follies of Democratic Imperialism" in the *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2005) documenting the historical precedent for the Iraq War. In the article he surveys past attempts at establishing democracies abroad, and, in the end, concludes that "however outwardly attractive and compelling, the return of democratic imperialism is rooted in faulty premises that are not merely quixotic but actually counterproductive in spreading democracy, peace and order around the world."

Beginning in the days of President Wilson (i.e. the Fourteen Points) and up until the present, the U.S. has tried repeatedly to impose democracy on unwilling or ill-prepared regions of the world. President Wilson notably failed in forcing parts of Latin America to accept democratic rule, as Encarnacion highlights: "The attempt to impose democratic practices throughout Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in the years between 1913 and 1921 failed to yield stable democratic governance. In the wake of the American intervention of 1914, the Mexican political class turned not only authoritarian and nationalistic but also intensely anti-American... In Central America and the Caribbean, Wilson's military occupations and attempts at creating democracy paved the way for a new generation of brutal tyrannies, including those of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, and



"Friedens-Diktat [Dictated Peace] for the Middle-East?"
(Der Spiegel 1/27/1969)

Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua." He ascribes the failures of Wilson and subsequent American presidents to the lack of control over circumstances. The U.S., when it intervenes in the affairs of a foreign state, cannot restructure the entirety of its society. Encarnacion writes that religious, ethnic, economic, and societal differences make matters quite difficult when working to create democracy.

In particular, he stresses the dangers of imposing democracy on volatile regions such as Iraq: "There is Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity, with Shia in the south, Sunnis in the center, and Kurds in the north. This volatile mix discourages a strong sense of national identity, making it difficult for democratization to rest on widespread societal solidarity. It also increases the possibility that democracy will become a source of conflict in its own right. In the last three decades, few multiethnic states have been able to orchestrate a successful transition to democracy: witness the case of the Soviet Union and its successor states (most notably those in Central Asia and the Caucasus). More tragically, there is the case of Yugoslavia, where 'ethnic cleansing' was an early fruit of majority rule." This agrees with his statement earlier that "there is a well-documented affinity between democratization and conflict, which suggests that during the early phases of democratization, countries become 'more aggressive and war-prone,

SEE UNSC, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

BroadwayCon: A Theatre-Nerds' Heaven

By Shoshy Ciment

On Friday, January 27, 2017, the curtain rose at the Javits Center and ushered in the second annual BroadwayCon, a weekend-long celebration of all things theatre. For three days, Broadway fans countrywide converged in New York City for a jam-packed program of performances, workshops, and autograph signings featuring the biggest names in stage acting, directing, and producing.

"FOR ME, WALKING INTO BROADWAYCON WAS LIKE COMING HOME. I WAS WITH MY PEOPLE."

Ever since BroadwayCon was first created in 2016, I playfully entertained the possibility of attending one day. As a Florida native, the daydream seemed unlikely to ever graduate into reality. But once I started college in New York, my dreams of attending BroadwayCon were suddenly not as chimerical as before, as I now lived down the street from its venue. Needless to say, I booked the all-inclusive weekend pass for BroadwayCon 2017 without much hesitation.

BroadwayCon is basically Comic Con if you replace the Star Wars clad geeks with triple-threats in character shoes. It is, for the most part, a gathering of serious Broadway fans. This year, the program featured panels with stars, specialized workshops for voice, dance, and acting, and multiple performances that showcased the best of Broadway's past and what's to come next season. But aside from the panels that featured those who made it to the Great White Way, there were also Q&A sessions with real casting directors and panels with Tony-Award winning directors that revealed a behind the scenes look at producing a Broadway show.

For me, walking into BroadwayCon was like coming home. I was with my people; the ones with the iPods filled with cast recordings, who enter Broadway lotteries on a daily basis, and know what a sitzprobe is. There is an unspoken connection between theatre-geeks. It is

different from one that exists between trekkies or sci-fi nerds, probably because true theatre nerds are harder to come by. Everyone likes a good Broadway show. But the people who live and breathe for the creation of this essential art are unique.

BroadwayCon was a celebration of this bond. All of us there were affected by theatre, in one way or another. And as I strolled through the *Wicked* cosplayers and Broadway legends (I quite literally walked right into Alexandra Silber of Broadway's *Fiddler on the Roof*), Sondheim's iconic lyrics from his *West Side Story*, affirming that "there's a place for us, somewhere a place for us", rang truer than ever.

But despite the obvious influence theatre had on all of us, our stories were far from identical. For some people at BroadwayCon, theatre was a just a hobby. For others, it was the ultimate goal in their fledgling career. Some people just liked watching shows and for some, costumes and tap-numbers were an essential escape from the all-too real world around them.

One of the walls at BroadwayCon read #TheatreMakesMe. The idea was to inspire passersby to post a note on the wall to complete the hashtag according to their own feelings. Although it started out bare, by the end of the weekend the wall abounded with sticky notes bearing exclamations like "Defy Gravity!" and "Feel Alive!"

For some reason, when I tried to articulate what theatre made me, I was stuck. The overflow of responses to the wall intimidated me. Surely, my response wouldn't be able to hold its own weight amidst a sea of equally meaningful sticky notes.

I still put my note on that wall and as I walked away from it, I was surprised to feel an intense pride in taking part in something bigger than myself. BroadwayCon was a symbol of this movement, a community of people who, for whatever reason, just love the theatre.



The Art of the Absurd

By Hillel Field

*Alright now, right brain, you're being insane
No, left brain, I'm just being alive
You should try it, you might like it*

These lines come from a sketch by Bo Burnham, a young stand-up comedian who has received a lot of attention for his wildly creative and diverse performing style. In this clever ditty, he makes use of the oft-quoted notion that the two sides of the brain have vastly different functions: the left side as the rational, and the right side managing more creative activity. While not quite scientifically precise, this way of looking at human cognition is certainly relatable. We persistently feel the push and pull between the part of ourselves that endlessly calculate and analyze, and the part that feels emotion deeply, taking pleasure in the simpler things in life. In this sketch, Burnham pits the left and right brains against each other, demonstrating that when isolated, they are locked together in constant conflict. He finally suggests that there is one way that both brains can join their best features together in a mutually beneficial manner: through comedy.

This balancing act comedy performs is reflected by the way stand-up comics deliver their material. While the best comedians have a laid-back, spontaneous feel to their acts, they freely admit the complex strategizing that goes into a single joke. In an illuminating HBO special, *Talking Funny*, contemporary stand-up greats Louis C.K., Ricky Gervais, Jerry Seinfeld, and Chris Rock discuss the niceties of their craft. At one point, Rock emphasizes the importance of establishing the premise of a joke, which, if not set up correctly, detracts from the heft of the punchline. Professional comedians like these greats anticipate just where they will get a laugh, and use those moments to let the absurdity of the moment sink in. While they may sound like they are simply relating an anecdote, every word is carefully selected to achieve a specific effect. In the mind of

SEE ART, CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Just Another Cliche

By Shaina Bakhshi

Ever wonder what it would be like to have all of your mHow many times have you heard the phrase "Everything happens for a reason"? Probably over a million. Of course as Jews we believe that it's true, but, more often than not, we can't help but have our doubts. If everything happens for a reason, then why did I fail my exam after studying so hard? If everything happens for a reason, then why am I the one who has to beg my other roommates to clean? I mean really, what did that add to my life? Did I really gain something out of that experience? Doubtful. And yet, we express the cliche all the time. It soothes us and placates us to hear, well, at least everything happens for a reason.

And you know what? It does. Everything does actually happen for a reason. And I'd like to thank you (yes, YOU)

"I NEVER WOULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT THIS ONE ASPECT OF YU - THE KINDNESS AND ACCEPTING NATURE OF THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY - WOULD BE WHAT I WOULD NEED THE MOST."

for that.

Coming to Yeshiva University was not a natural choice for me. All my life I attended public school, and my priorities lay in my academics. I took many AP's as I dreamed of attending Columbia, Barnard, or NYU; Judaism was on the back burner. Yes, my family celebrated Shabbat, the holidays, and kept a kosher home, but past

that I was uninvolved in Judaism. I remember my first day of orientation at Stern when so many girls asked me what seminary I went to - I kid you not, I had no idea what seminary was. I had never heard the term in life. When people in my hometown first heard I decided to attend YU, they would often ask me, "Why YU?" and have even told me that they never imagined me here. My answer used to be simple: honors program, scholarship, and YU is in the City. When I visited YU prior to my acceptance I did note the unusually warm environment; still, at the time, I never would have imagined that this one aspect of YU - the kindness and accepting nature of the students and faculty - would be what I would need the most.

Last year, as I stepped foot into 245 Lex as a freshman, I remember sitting in my first ever Jewish classes. I found certain classes interesting, and yet, overall it felt like a chore and a setback. Rather than studying for my "important" classes that were necessary for my major, I was studying Bereishit or Hebrew. Yet these classes would soon become my source of strength. At the time, though, I didn't know it.

In late December 2015 my father was diagnosed with Lymphoma. A month later he had his first treatment, and, after many ups and downs, my father passed away in November 2016. Throughout all of this, from the beginning to the end, I was supported by the community I had around me here at YU. We often say "#NoWhereButHere" without much thought, but I know for a fact that the people who surround me here, and the people who raise my spirits day in and day out, can in fact be found nowhere but here. My friends and classmates have many times gone out of their way to offer what they could, whether it be notes, a lunch date, or just a relaxing hour in the dorms together. Each and every gesture has meant so much to me. Coming from a public school environment, I've never seen a community this caring,

this invested in helping one another. Every time I try to imagine going through this past year at a different school, I know that I wouldn't have had the support system I have here, the caring teachers I have here, and the giving environment I have here. I have been truly amazed.

My Jewish classes that I dreaded so much also became my source of strength. Learning about Judaism and the Torah on a deeper level gave me hope and faith throughout this difficult journey. The energy I gained from those classes remains with me to this very moment. Once I began to look deeply into the Torah and the many traditions we practice each week, I realized how many Jewish ideas are conceptually related to one another. Simply analyzing the Torah word-by-word reveals a huge criss-cross of intersecting lines, uniting one teaching to another without one unnecessary word. The same theme of unity and connection becomes visible when learning about our traditions and our holidays. This unity transcends the depth of Judaism. Throughout everything we have faced as Jews, we have managed to unite and overcome.

So too for my journey. This is the same way that the people at YU have united around me, and I have been left in awe. Many times we don't know what we need, but God does. Next time you hear the words, "Everything happens for a reason," I implore you not to pass it off as just another cliche.



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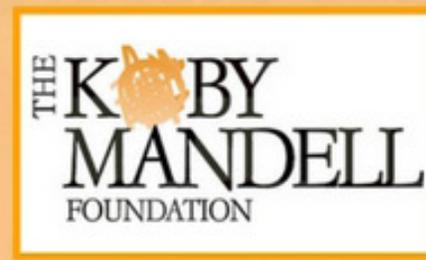
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1984 - If All Hope is Lost

By Lilly Gelman

I was disappointed after reading George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). I found the plot and characters static and the ending anticlimactic. I could not grasp why everyone praised the novel so highly, and felt a little disheartened by my unmet expectations. The primary reason why I did not like the novel was because the protagonist, Winston Smith, does not succeed in his goal. He fails to mount a rebellion against the tyrannical and authoritarian state known as "Big Brother." Up until the very last sentence, Orwell leads the reader to believe that Smith will somehow carry out his plans of revolt. Despite his forced reeducation by authorities, Smith continues to believe that the government is ruthless and corrupt. Ultimately, however, Winston affirms in the very last sentence of the text that "I love Big Brother." Apparently, the government is victorious, succeeding in turning Winston into yet another brainwashed citizen by pulverizing each act of Winston's rebellion, even if it is only in his thoughts.

Years of reading novels in which the good guy comes out on top had trained my mind to reject the pessimistic, post-apocalyptic ending where the protagonist did not somehow overcome difficulties, however imposing they may have been. After some thought, however, I began to understand that the brilliance of the novel

lies in Smith's failure to overcome the government's mental control. Through Smith and other characters, Orwell illustrates humankind's greatest fear, the loss of all hope. Winston repeatedly says, "Hope lies in the proles (the uneducated working classes)," expressing the idea that perhaps, someday, someone will be able to overthrow the government. In the end, however, Big Brother suppresses Winston's optimism...and mine.

Winston Smith's loss of hope captivates the reader because it is a feeling which defines the human experience. Elie Wiesel said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "Hope is like peace. It is not a gift from God. It is a gift only we can give one another." We as people are the only ones who have the power to provide and sustain faith. If humanity fails to deliver hope in the face of catastrophe, then there is no possibility of survival. In Orwell's novel, O'Brien, the police agent who tortures Winston, says, "[i]f you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." This is a chilling statement of what will be left of humanity if all hope is eradicated.

I still hate the ending of the novel, but have gained an appreciation of the worldly insight offered by Orwell. The disappearance of hope in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* represents the worst possible trauma that a society can experience. Existence loses much of its meaning and richness when devoid of the hope that the future will be better than the present,

and when there is no longer any belief that humans have a role in shaping their destiny. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston Smith lost hope, and with it the possibility of change was destroyed as well.



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not less, and they fight wars with democratic states.' (Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," *Foreign Affairs*.) He argues that instead of stabilizing the regions in question, the imposition of democracy by a foreign power jeopardizes the resolution of existing conflicts and is liable to rekindle dormant discord. Although he wrote in 2005, we had already begun to recognize our mistake in occupying Iraq. President Bush's Democratic idealism, while good at heart, was misguided and failed to democratize the region. Instead, it left a power vacuum, leading to civil war, terror, and now ISIS. Our further interventions in the region during President Obama's tenure (i.e. Libya and Syria) similarly have been deemed questionable.

Encarnacion, when criticizing the American attempt at imposing democracy, makes reference to "Democratic Peace Theory," the theory that provides a scientific backing to the moral evaluation of democracy. According to the theory, democratic states tend to refrain from warring with other similarly democratic adversaries. It follows that we should want more democracies, which would thus yield greater stability. However, as Christopher Layne argues in "The Myth of the Democratic Peace" (*The MIT Press* Fall 1994), the theory does not answer for all of history's many wars. Drawing upon the events of the 19th and 20th centuries, Layne chooses a number of cases that seem to counter the expected peaceful results of the theory.

According to the theory, if a country possesses a democratic government, it surely must not lack a democratically, peace-loving populace, intent on avoiding conflict with another democracy at (mostly) all costs. Either as a result of deeply embedded "democratic norms and culture," or through the exercise of a system of checks and balances, democracies usually appear to us as peaceful, free societies. Nevertheless, over the past 150 years, some of these democracies have taken up armed combat against a democratic foe, and, in the cases when they didn't, their reasoning did not follow the dictates of democratic values.

The first and strongest case that comes to mind, of course, must be the American Civil War. By all accounts it was fought between two warring parties, democratic in nature, and sufficiently independent of each other. (Though some may argue that we should not consider the South a "foreign" adversary, and call the war a purely "domestic conflict," they would have to explain the independent nature of the sides' respective legislatures, armies, and diplomatic relations with foreign powers.) The French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 represents another clear example of one democracy taking up arms against another democracy (the Weimar Republic). Some also classify WWI as a war between democracies (though many would

not view the Kaiser's power as especially democratic, one can argue that Germany was both a democracy and a monarchy, since it did possess a democratically-elected parliament.)

Layne stresses, though, that even in cases where no conflict resulted, what he calls "near misses" such as the Trent Affair (1861), Venezuela crisis (1895-6), and Fashoda (1898), either realistic military, or economic concerns prevented one of the parties from acting (which would have affected a non-democracy too), or that the diplomatic parties successfully averted conflict in spite of the public's warmongering. These examples led Layne to seriously question the viability of the theory. In conclusion, he communicates his fear that "as long as the Wilsonian worldview underpins American foreign policy, policymakers will be blind... liberal international relations theory is based on hope, not on fact." He warns against an overly-zealous foreign policy: "Democratic peace theory panders to impulses which, however noble in the abstract, have led to disastrous military interventions abroad... there is little wisdom in assuming such potentially risky undertakings on the basis of dubious assumptions about the pacifying effects of democracy."

Instead, he argues that democracies naturally form in stable environments and autocracies tend to take hold in unstable, competitive regions. Layne writes that "States that are, or that believe they are, in high-threat environments are less likely to be democracies... international systemic structure is not only the primary determinant of a state's external behavior but may also be a crucial element in shaping its domestic political system." Therefore, in order to encourage the growth of democracies, the world order should devote itself to ameliorating the external stresses affecting particular states (dearth of resources, warlike neighbors), and enhance the internal environment necessary to produce a stable democracy.

On a psychological level, one cannot ignore the phenomenon of transforming democracy from a form of government into a civil religion. The tenacity with which American presidents hold onto the "mission" to civilize/democratize the wayward masses bespeaks of an inner insecurity, an existential doubt that targets America's *raison d'être*. If democracy is not a universal right, a necessity, how can we justify our irreverent actions of July, 1776? We can further question the benefits engendered by democracy by observing the fact that the Civil War, one of the country's bloodiest, most cruel wars, began on the coattails of a disputed election and remains a sore-point for many Southerners. You would think that the bloody mess of secession (plus the hard lessons of France's failed experiment) would have taught our country some humility, but, on the contrary, it reinvigorated our desire to preach to the world the goodness and beneficence

of democratic governance. I do not disagree with the assertion that *ideally* a "government by the people, for the people" promises the most comfort and security, but I doubt the practicality of adapting democracy to areas of the globe ill-suited for it.

In a *The Atlantic* article titled "The Coming Anarchy" (2/1994), Robert Kaplan exposes the severe inequalities, instabilities, and natural challenges that threaten the world's well-being. Diseases, depletion of natural resources, overpopulation, wealth inequality, and ideological warfare are sources of the anarchy and disorder that he predicts for us in the coming years. While some of his predictions did not come to pass, his recognition of these increasingly important issues presciently identified lots of today's problems. When discussing American democracy, he notes the significance of the multicultural nature of our country: "Because America is a multi-ethnic society, the nation-state has always been more fragile here than it is in more homogeneous societies." Ethnic/racial divide has caused much strife in the past, and continues to divide American politics. Identity politics is on the rise, and going by the decision of over 60 congressmen to boycott President Trump's inauguration (?), one can begin to wonder/worry what will become of the complex fabric of American society.

In a follow-up on that point, Kaplan writes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (remember that he wrote this during the Oslo Accords) that "America's fascination with the Israeli-Palestinian issue... is a function of its own domestic and ethnic obsessions." Facing enormous internal tension due to the disintegration of a collective American identity, the U.S. (and other similarly troubled democracies) compensates by focusing on a country with even greater identity problems as a way of diverting attention from its own failing society. Israel, a socially progressive country that relies heavily on American aid and diplomatic support presents itself to the U.S. as an inviting target and potential "test case" of democratic peace theory. If the theory holds, then Israel will see solace and security; if it should fail—oy!

Theoretically, democracy serves as a just, equitable system of government. Realistically, it can exist only under conditions that allow for its survival: an abundance of natural resources, a peaceful neighborhood, and an internal societal structure conducive to unity. The deification of democracy into a *deus ex machina*, capable of solving all the world's problems by simply flipping a switch and holding elections foolishly ignores the reality that governs international and domestic politics. Only by addressing those underlying issues will we succeed in creating a more just world.

The Crafters Of The Trump-Netanyahu Alliance

By David Aaronson

This past week, it was announced that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and United States President Donald Trump will hold their first Oval Office meeting on February 15th. After eight years of a tenuous relationship between the White House and the Prime Minister's Office, many people, like myself, are optimistic as to what future this meeting will bring for Israeli- U.S. relations. Participants in this meeting will not be limited just to President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Even more importantly, the meeting will consist of their closest advisors and confidants, who will be tasked with working together to repair this strong bilateral alliance. While both leaders have many aides, it's important to get to know the backgrounds of the few who will be influencing their bosses' decisions on issues regarding the U.S.- Israel partnership.

On the American side:

1) Jared Kushner

Kushner, 36, is the Orthodox Jewish son-in-law of President Trump. Originally from New Jersey and a graduate of the Frisch School, he works in the White House as the Senior Advisor to the President, advising Trump on nearly every issue. Kushner, like his father-in-law, is also a wealthy businessman who works in real estate. Both his mother and sister are graduates of Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women, to which their family has donated a lot of money. President Trump has tasked Kushner with solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, recently saying of his son-in-law that "if he can't make peace in the Middle East, no one can." Kushner was the only US official to join Trump in his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu last September.

2) David Friedman

Friedman, 58, is President Trump's nominee for the post of United States Ambassador to Israel. Previously, he worked as a bankruptcy lawyer who represented Mr. Trump and his family in several court cases since 2005. The son of a Conservative Rabbi, Friedman was born and raised in Long Island and still lives there today. He is also the President of American Friends of Beit El (Beit El is

an Israeli community in Judea and Samaria). Friedman owns an apartment in Jerusalem, where he has pledged to work and live once he takes up his post. Friedman is described by Trump as a "long-time friend and trusted adviser, whose strong relationships in Israel will form the foundation of his diplomatic mission."

3) Jason Greenblatt

Greenblatt, 49, currently works at the White House as President Trump's assistant for international negotiations. He previously served as Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of The Trump Organization, where he worked for twenty years. Greenblatt has known President Trump longer than any other White House official and is a graduate of both the Yeshiva University High School for Boys (MTA) and Yeshiva College. He also recently worked as a professor at the Sy Syms School of Business, where he taught a class entitled "The Anatomy of a Real Estate Deal." When appointing Greenblatt to his White House staff, Trump described him as "brilliant and terrific at everything he does."

On the Israeli side:

1) Ron Dermer

Dermer, 45, is Israel's ambassador to the United States. He is originally from Miami Beach, where both his father and brother served as Mayor. Dermer recently served as the Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu and is said to still be the Prime Minister's closest confidant. He comes from an Orthodox family, and both his wife and sister are graduates of Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women. Dermer has a close relationship with Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior advisor. Last year, he even gave Mr. Kushner advice on what Mr. Trump should speak about at the annual AIPAC Policy Conference. Dermer was the only Israeli official to join Prime Minister Netanyahu in his meeting with President Trump last September.

2) Jonathan Schachter

Schachter, 46, is currently the Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu, a job he has held for nearly four years. He was born and raised in Chicago, where he worked as a college professor before making aliyah.

His area of expertise is counter-terrorism, previously serving as a soldier in the IDF's Counter-Terrorism Unit, as Director of Counter-Terrorism Studies at the Israeli Institute of National Strategic Studies, and as Director of American Affairs on Israel's National Security Council. Schachter advises the Prime Minister on all aspects of foreign policy, particularly on Israeli-US relations, and is said to have established a close relationship with President Trump's incoming ambassador to Israel, David Friedman.

3) Jacob Nagel

Nagel, 60, is the acting head of Israel's National Security Council. He currently works in the Prime Minister's Office as Netanyahu's National Security Advisor. Nagel is a native-born Israeli, who served in the IDF with the rank of General. Nagel was in charge of negotiating the recent defense memorandum between Israel and the United States. He also traveled to the United States this past December to meet with his new counterpart, General Michael Flynn. While not very political, Nagel will be one of Netanyahu's key people in maintaining Israel's security cooperation with the United States, under the new Trump administration.



Review: Black Mirror Seasons 1-2

By Benjamin Koslowe

Ever wonder what it would be like to have all of your memories easily accessible via an intracranial recording device? Or if it were possible to use phone and computer data to recreate dead loved ones in the form of convincing robots? What about if the entire world was an endless fortress of electronic screens incessantly advertising and marketing to your specific interests?

As implied by the title, *Black Mirror's* unifying theme is ubiquitous modern technology and their associated dark screens of different shapes, sizes, and types. Darkness is manifest as well in the show's tone. Some episodes mirror our world pretty closely, while others craft very new worlds starkly more technologically advanced than our own. But, true to the science fiction genre, the fashioned universe never feels fantastical or impossible. The brilliant editing and storytelling make these depictions of the near-future seem convincing. Whether the society will actually look like a particular episode in a few decades, years, months, or even never at all, the portrayal is always believable.

Black Mirror, with three seasons released (available on Netflix) and a fourth on the way, is similar to *The Twilight Zone* in conception and theme. It creates fictional worlds with suspenseful and psychologically thrilling stories. Each episode, averaging between 40 minutes and an

hour, features a new cast of characters. And it is unlike any other show out there today.

Almost every episode is horrifying to watch, but, paradoxically, leaves the viewer hungry for more. In one episode the people and technology resemble our own society, with one crucial addition: Implanted chips that track people's every memory. The episode follows a few characters and how their lives are impacted by these small devices in their heads that allow them to reproduce on a screen any past experience. Suffice to say that this technology creates quite a bit of an emotional mess for the characters.

Another episode, with hardly any elements of science fiction, is based entirely on a bizarre scenario. When a member of the British royalty is kidnapped, the abductors demand that the Prime Minister perform an obscene act on public television; else, they will murder the captive. This episode, which tracks the development of the news via Twitter and other social media, as well as how England and the world at large respond, is disturbing. It is disturbing not only because of the content, but because the plot is so relatable.

Much of *Black Mirror's* genius lies in how it uses science fiction to show rather than to tell. In the case of the episode described above, the viewer is forced to think about complicated moral dilemmas where it is unclear which terrible course of action is worse. Likewise, it is one thing to write an essay about philosophical mysteries like human consciousness, but actually depicting a world with convincing robots that are mainstream in society is something else. It is one thing to theorize about complicated human relationships, but actually showing a world where people can use augmented reality to literally block others from their lives with the click of a button is in another league. And the episodes are rarely predictable,

often ending with a big twist. Viewers are left unsettled during the credits which, fittingly, usually have a black background and eerily feature no soundtrack. It takes a few moments to process what you just watched before being able to move (one episode, titled "White Bear," is particularly horrifying and takes much time, emotion, and thought to fully digest and keep down).

"ALMOST EVERY EPISODE IS HORRIFYING TO WATCH, BUT, PARADOXICALLY, LEAVES THE VIEWER HUNGRY FOR MORE."

Perhaps the most intriguing impression from *Black Mirror* is its implied criticism of our society today. The modern world with its technology is itself, in a way, an episode of *Black Mirror*. Consider phenomena such as constant contact via WhatsApp, hordes of people walking down streets with their heads tilted down at their mobile devices, or the popularity of instantaneous and solitary pleasure in the form of online television. Only a generation or two ago, such and other similar images would seem dystopian and disconcerting.

Are the realities depicted in *Black Mirror* hyperbolic, or are they imminent and forthcoming? Do we live today in a dystopian world of dark screens, or is the current state of humanity not so fundamentally different from eras past? The answers to both, as the show suggests, are probably somewhere in between.



A Letter to the Students of YU About the Immigration Crisis

By Gabriel Cwilich, Professor of Physics, Professor of the Graduate Program in Mathematics

I am away from campus this semester, but trying to follow as best as I can the news from YU; I must confess that I was surprised, and in some sense disappointed, that your newspaper, which supposedly reflects the concerns of the student population, does not carry even one single line about the crisis unleashed by the ill-conceived and cruel Executive Order on Immigration from President Trump, which represents a shocking departure from America's core values of compassion and kindness, introduces the dangerous precedent of religious profiling on persons trying to reach our country, and shuts the doors to the most vulnerable people in the world.

A cursory look at the front pages of student newspapers around the country, and in particular in all the universities of our city, can immediately show the concern and indignation of student leaders who have joined the many professional organizations, academic groups, business and technology leaders, and civil organizations that have mobilized around the country to repudiate these discriminatory policies which by now more than 18,000 American academicians (including 50 Nobel Laureates and several hundred members of our National Academies of Sciences, Arts and Engineering) have identified here as detrimental to our national interests; their effect will be felt even among some of our own YU faculty members who have been placed at risk and potentially our students.

I would have guessed that a University in which the immense majority of the student body has relatives who arrived to these shores as immigrants or refugees escaping the war in Europe or the Holocaust would be particularly sensitive to this issue. Yet, when, with thousands of New Yorkers, I went on Saturday evening to JFK to express that hate and discrimination have no place in this city and that we welcome the people who the administration is trying to push out, I could not find YU students in the crowd.

I have a confession to make; I left my home, where I was convalescing these last few days, to go to JFK on Saturday night because this issue is quite personal in my case. Not only because I was once an immigrant arriving to that same airport many decades ago, fleeing persecution and anti-Semitism in the country where I was born, but because my four grandparents also were immigrants who left Eastern Europe in search of a better life and to escape the horrors of war.

As a physicist I travel a lot and have many dear friends among my colleagues in Eastern, Central and Western

European countries (I will happily join them in a few weeks); although their friendship is dear to me, there is always a voice in the back of my head when I meet a new friend, thinking of asking that impossible and perhaps unfair question: "Did you ever ask your grandparents what did they do, how did they react when the relatives of MY grandparents were shoved in those trains to the camps? Did they know? Did they protest? Did they even fantasize about placing their bodies in front of those trains?" And I always wondered what I would have done in their place, if I would have had the courage of my convictions or not. And now I have two grandchildren in this country (ages six and eight) and I know that very soon they will ask me the same question: "What did you do when the most deprived among us were turned back at our doors?" And I needed to be able to have an answer for them.

It is my hope that the current students of YU, who in due time will face the same question from their grandchildren, will be able to provide an answer too.

But since I do not want to finish this letter in a tone of bleakness and remonstrance, but in one of great hope and, yes, happiness, I want to share something with you.

This Sunday I spent the afternoon in Lamport Auditorium at the swear-in ceremony of our new US Congressman in Washington, Adriano Espaillat, the first Dominican American to be elected to Congress, and a dear friend of YU. It was a joyful occasion, although we were all aware of the difficult times for the republic. Thousands of people from all colors, creeds, religions and ethnicities filled the auditorium and spilled into the hallways and street, and many wonderful artistic groups from all over the city performed. Imams, priests and reverends from different denominations addressed the crowd. We heard words from the most important political figures in our state, including several US congressmen, the Manhattan and Bronx Borough Presidents, our Mayor, our lieutenant governor, Senator Schumer, and many dignitaries from Albany and City Hall. Most of these people had been with me the night before in JFK, making sure that the last of the arriving people who had been targeted by the administration could gain access to this country.

No speaker failed to thank our university for hosting them, and to point out how fitting it was that an institution which flourished among the Jewish refugees arriving to Washington Heights many decades ago and welcomed new immigrants to the neighborhood was now seeing those immigrants come of age and sending one of them, also an immigrant, to Congress. I wish more than just a handful of YU students would have been present and heard that wonderful coming together event, in the same auditorium where only a few weeks ago words to

keep us apart were spoken.

But my joy was truly complete when, to close the event, we all listened to one of our Roshei HaYeshiva, Rabbi Ezra Schwartz, give the final benediction; with his permission I am quoting generously from his speech.

"Almighty G-d, Master of the Universe, in these trying times when sacred American ideals are under assault and facts themselves are questioned, we beseech You to grant wisdom, courage, vision and compassion to Congressman Adriano Espaillat.

[...]

Ours has always been a community of deep and abiding faith. Of equal importance we are, and always have been, a community of immigrants, people like yourself who came to these shores in search of a better life, people who arrived so vulnerable -- seeking something better, searching for opportunity. Many of the original Jewish members of this community and so many others came here as refugees, fleeing horrible conditions in their native lands. Congressman, may you be blessed to advocate for the noble ideals that are emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty. May you proudly advocate for the American dream that ours is a land of opportunity, a country that provides safe harbor from tyranny, a land that provides religious freedom, and gives everyone a chance to succeed.

[...]

The prophet Isaiah, in a passage read by Jews throughout the world on our Holiest day—Yom Kippur—admonishes us: "loosen the chains of injustice, untie the cords, set the oppressed free. Share your food with the hungry, provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, clothe them."

These Biblical values call upon us to protect every person, regardless of their identity: be they male or female, straight or gay, immigrant or American born, indigent or wealthy, Republican or Democrat, healthy or ill, Jew, Christian or Moslem, people of all faiths or people of no faith. Everyone is entitled to warm and affordable housing; everyone is entitled to nourishing meals; everyone is entitled to education, healthcare, and clothing

May you, Congressman Adriano Espaillat, serve as an agent of Almighty God to unite our community and advance the American dream. May you safeguard these cherished values and make them into a reality. Let us say Amen!"

From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Rabbi Schwartz, for bringing us hope and showing us the noble way at this juncture. Let each one of your words become a beacon of light for ALL the members of our University in the difficult days ahead.

Learn How To Vote

By Samuel Gelman (Houston, Texas)

While sitting in class one afternoon, waiting for the professor to arrive, I overheard a conversation between two of my peers. They were discussing American politics and the election. One topic led to another, until they arrived at President Donald Trump. Like many Americans, they could not understand how he pulled off his victory. "I just don't get it," student #1 said. "Same," student #2 replied. "This would have never happened if Obama ran for a third term." Confused, student #1 looked at his friend. "I'm almost positive the president can only serve two terms." Now also confused, student #2 replied: "I'm pretty sure he can serve for as many as he wants. Look it up."

With this conversation the two students answered their own question. The reason Donald Trump is sitting in the White House is because the average American voter is an ignorant and irrational voter. They don't know basic information about their country or government and don't base their vote on policy, instead allowing their emotions to get the best of them. And to all the Democrats smirking right now, I include us in this category as well. Who were the two people that we put all of our support behind? A scandal ridden Hillary Clinton, whose policies would have kept us in the same divided and lost state we are in now, and a "revolutionary" senator from Vermont, with little foreign policy experience and an economic policy that would have been disastrous for the country.

In order to place a competent President into office, Americans must first understand what they are voting for. Sadly, we as a nation do not know much about our government. Many of us have seen those Youtube videos where a guy goes on the street and asks random people basic questions about American history and government, only to have them all give ridiculously incorrect answers. That is not staged or edited. This is a real problem in America. According to a poll taken by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind program, 66% of Americans can't name the three branches of government, 31% can't name the party that controls Congress, and 79% can't name the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. But wait, there's more. A national survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania found that 28% of Americans think that a 5-4 ruling is sent back to Congress and 12% think that the right to have a pet is stated in the Bill of Rights.

With numbers like these, it's no wonder that Donald Trump is going by the title of President. If Americans can't understand the basics of our government, then there is no way they will understand the complex issues facing our nation, including race relations, immigration, the South China Sea, or military reform. This allows candidates like Sanders and Trump to strip the issues of all their substance and present the voters with a skeleton explanation of the problems facing our nation. Yes, the rich have played a large role in our economic problems, and yes immigration hurts American workers, but it is



not only the rich that are to blame and immigration also helps our country grow. Presidential candidates know that Americans don't understand the full issues so they present us with easy explanations, tricking us into voting on a misinformed and ignorant basis.

Due to the fact that many voters don't know much about their country or its political issues, they end up basing their votes on other, less important factors. Some voters will ignore policy altogether, instead focusing on the candidate's personality. A great example comes from the election of 2004. During the campaign, a majority of voters stated that they felt that President Bush had mishandled the economy and the war in Iraq, and that the country was headed in the wrong direction. Despite

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The Dark Irony of the Immigration Protests

By Avi Strauss

Over the past week, I've had several conversations with friends and fellow students about President Trump's executive order on immigration. Virtually all of those conversations involved questioning the proper "Jewish" response to the order in particular and issue of Syrian refugees as a whole. All questioned the un-Americanism of not accepting refugees--with millions suffering in Syria and the Middle East, how could we as a nation of immigrants turn them away? America is a nation built by immigrants, therefore it is our duty to grant asylum to those in need. To stand by idly and neglect the millions displaced and fleeing destruction, would be to forfeit our moral high ground, they exclaimed.

Certainly, as a human being (before we even get to the question of a Jewish response), we ought to have sympathy for our fellow man suffering terrible indignities, tragedies and worse. Moreover, my coming analysis is in no way meant to indicate support for Trump's decision or his administration as a whole. And yet, my political science and debate experience just couldn't resist questioning the intensity of the outrage at this point during the 6-year old Syrian conflict:

"Well, what do you think is the proper number of refugees we should accept? What percentage of the American population should we match when considering the acceptance of refugees?"

Needless to say, most people were thrown off by this reversal. No longer did I want the discussion to be about the minimum, i.e. Trump's temporary "zero," but rather actually focus on what the proper response to a mass refugee crisis, in their eyes, should look like.

Not once did I get anything remotely resembling a number. Realizing the risks involved in choosing a number of refugees out of thin air, every single person moved to dodge and evade. But I knew what logical corner I was pushing them towards.

"You don't need a specific number. Just ballpark it. How many tens of thousands? Compare it to the amount President Obama accepted per year."

Still, I could not get a response. And that's because much of the irony of their current interest in the plight of the refugees had been exposed, as had a huge motivating factor in the nationwide protests. A different person occupies the Oval Office.

For years under the Obama administration, America wrung its hands over the entire Syrian conflict and refugee issues, wavering between periods of downright apathy to moments of stern condemnations coupled with a small wave of front page articles discussing milestone death tolls and refugee counts.

"100,000 dead as Syrian Conflict Rages On." "250,000 dead as Obama Administration Weighs Arming Moderate Rebels" "Over 10 Million Syrians Displaced During Conflict."

These things all occurred during a tepid, five and a half-years of "smart power," some of which I commented on last year, while suggesting certain policies to alleviate the worst of the refugee crisis. Yet how many refugees did America take in while the Middle East underwent tremendous instability?

Less than 85,000 total in fiscal year 2016, of whom only 38,901 (46%) were Muslim. But don't mistake that year of benevolence as standard. In the years prior to 2016, since the Arab Spring in 2009, America averaged less than 70,000 refugees total per year, of whom only around 1/3 were Muslim (around 20,000 per year on average), according to the Pew Research Center.

Where were the protests? Where was the righteous indignation? Overnight, the decision to temporarily ban refugees from 7 of the 50 Muslim-majority nations in the world earned the scorn of self-styled humanitarians across the country, but when we were accepting just a token amount of refugees from around the entire planet during the Obama years, we heard the sounds of silence.

How many refugees did Sweden accept, by comparison? In around a year's time, during the initial height of the immigration crisis, Sweden welcomed 190,000 refugees, or the equivalent of 2 percent of its entire population.

In the year 2015 alone, Germany accepted 1,000,000 refugees, according to the Washington Post. That's equivalent to 1.25% of its population. Certainly the overall count in the years before and after far exceeds that number, with Germany taking the leading international role beyond the Middle East for refugee acceptance.

Last I checked, Sweden and Germany don't self-identify as "nations of immigrants," sporting population demographics that include 85% and 80% natural-born populations, respectively (with a large total of their foreign-born populations from neighboring European countries). These nations don't have historical traditions for welcoming the world's "poor, huddled masses," yet they managed to summon the backbone necessary to welcome massive influxes of refugees through the duration of the immigration crisis.

America accepted an embarrassing proportion by comparison-- a mere 0.17% over an 8-year period, while President Obama was in office. For the wealthiest nation in the world that simultaneously billed itself as the beacon of morality, this was downright pathetic.

Granted, these Sweden and Germany are now

grappling over what to do with such a large influx of foreign-born migrants and refugees, but they nonetheless confronted the crisis and welcomed as many refugees as possible.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration stood silent--as did our newly-minted indignant protestors. These outraged demonstrators seem to believe a temporary ban on refugees, put in place on January 28, 2017, is the only trigger capable of galvanizing an organized response. "Never Again" lay a dormant force until our (mostly) peaceful transition of power made it politically expedient to revive. Mind you, the Middle East is only one of MANY war-torn, refugee-filled regions in the world, most of which were not subject to any hold on refugees, as per the executive order. All these places deserve our protests alongside political and humanitarian asylum.

It seems to me that the protestors are far more animated by their disgust for our current president than they are the plight of millions of displaced and suffering Syrians. They're playing politics with a humanitarian disaster.

To be sure, I think there is a somewhat reasonable response to my initial query: "well, I'm not sure what the total number of refugees we should accept is, but we can all acknowledge that the difference between accepting none and accepting one is much greater than the difference between accepting one refugee and accepting two." It's a statement of values to endeavor to take in refugees. But, seeing as the executive order only limited refugees from a specific area, for a temporary period, I'd still challenge that there is a huge strain of partisanship coloring the protestors current worldviews.

Ideally, we would be able to give shelter and grant asylum to all those across the world who lack

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this, 70% said that they would rather have a beer with Bush than Kerry and that they trusted Bush to walk their dog more than they did Kerry. It did not matter what policies Kerry advocated. He did not have the right personality to win.

President Trump's victory similarly shows how personality affects votes. Part of President Trump's appeal was that he was blunt and "honest." He said what was on his mind, ignoring political correctness and any other social norm that got in his way. It did not matter that what he was saying was hurtful to the social fabric of the country or just plain false. The fact that he was willing to say it was enough to grab the attention of many voters and helped establish him as a serious candidate. In a way, he truly did have the "best words."

Studies show that looks also play a part in American voting. A study by Alex Todorov and a team of psychologists found, after looking at photographs of various candidates, those who were rated as "competent" were more likely to win elections for the House, Senate, and state governor. Not surprisingly, a follow up study showed that looks played a larger role with voters that were less informed on the issues (bringing us back to my earlier point about education on the issues). A study conducted by MIT found similar results and even attributed Senator John Thune's 2004 Senate victory over then Senate Minority Leader

Tom Daschle to Thune's good looks.

Another aspect that the American voter will base their vote on is the brand that the candidate presents. This election especially saw the defeat of ideology at the hands of brand. Both Senator Sanders and President Trump took full advantage of the brands they represented. Sanders positioned himself as the clean and no nonsense senator who would come to Washington to remove the oligarchy and restore American democracy, while Trump used his name and business (successes?) to paint himself as the only one who could bring America back to its glory days. Both campaigns were highly reliant on slogans, imagery, and the way the candidates played their respective characters. They were not bound to policies or ideas, which is why Sanders did not have to present a viable economic plan and why Trump was able to switch from a Democrat to a Republican. People loved them for what they represented and the way they made them feel, not for what they would actually accomplish.

Despite all of this, the question of why we remain so uneducated about our political system remains. Some blame the education system and the lack of classes on government in current curricula. Others say that pop culture and social media have turned the population into an uneducated mass that thrives on instant gratification and, therefore, can't handle a complicated political system like that of the United States. While these may play some role in the epidemic of ignorance, the true answer

lies in how our political system is set up. The American electoral system and the winner take all rule that most states use makes many individual votes irrelevant, as it is easy to predict which way certain states will vote as a whole. New York will remain a Democratic stronghold for years to come, and Texas will always vote Republican. Since their individual votes don't seem to really matter, there is no incentive for Americans to invest in the political system and the issues. If Americans don't view their individual votes as significant, they will treat them as a joke, which turns our political system into a joke and allows unqualified candidates to win elections. The individual cost of investing in our political system exceed the individual gains, and until that changes nothing will change.

If Americans want to continue to govern themselves, they must show that they care and that they take voting seriously. Until we can find a way to educate the general populace, we will continue to see more candidates like Sanders and more wins like that of President Trump. Winston Churchill said that "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." Let's prove him wrong.

Silence is not Neutral

By Shaul Elson

Though my light-grey *yarmulke* was perched atop my head that night, I didn't give it much thought. I had come to protest at Trump Tower as an *American*: the flag pin fastened to the lapel of my pea coat felt relevant; what I wore on my head seemed beside the point.

But then a man pulled up in front of our picket line in his black Hyundai. My eyes lingered over his *kippah*, and I could feel his gaze trained on mine. I smiled and nodded. He rolled down his window and shouted, right into my face, "Hillary for Prison!"

He sounded gleeful. There were about twenty of us demonstrating there on 5th Avenue, between 56th and 57th, but our protest amused him; our earnest signage ("Say 'No' to Hate"; "R.E.S.P.E.C.T") seemed silly. By the time the fourth Orthodox driver (and then the fifth) rolled down their windows to boo or shout ("Stop Whining!"; "We LOVE Trump!"), my sign hung limp by my knees. "All these Jews, man," I heard a fellow protester say nearby. "What's their deal?"

On November 17, former Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn was tapped as Trump's national security advisor. A few days later, CNN uncovered a video of a speech Flynn gave back in August, 2016, at Congregation Ahavath Torah, a synagogue in Stoughton, Mass. Standing in front of the Torah ark, Flynn said this: "Islamism is a vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people on this planet, and it has to be excised." Trump's elevation of Flynn to the highest levels of the executive government is damning—of Trump's judgment, his campaign, and his fledgling administration. Flynn's casual aligning of an entire religious group with vicious hazard and invasive cancer chills my blood. We've heard it before. In a famous radiotherapy lecture held in Frankfurt in 1936, X-Ray specialist and SS officer Dr. Hans Holfeder showed his professional and academic audience slides that depicted cancer cells as Jews and the healing rays as stormtroopers.

And it's not like this vagrant Islamophobia is unique to Flynn. At a Newtown, Iowa campaign event on November 20, 2015, an NBC reporter asked Trump if his White House would work to implement "a database system that tracks the Muslims in this country." Trump was unequivocal—breath-takingly so: "I would certainly implement it," he said. "Absolutely." Would a Trump administration *force* Muslims to be "legally" in the database? "They have to be," Trump answered, "they have to be."

While the imagery here should terrify all thinking people of good will, it should particularly raise alarm-bells among American Jews, who have been inculcated from a young age to acknowledge, and fear, the discriminatory policies that led to abject horror in Nazi Germany.

5th Avenue was not the first street on which someone shouted at me from a car. When I was eleven, my friend Yoni and I were taking our usual route home from our Jewish day school, when a passing car slowed down in the middle of Brook Avenue. The windows were down, and someone shouted, "Filthy kikes!" There was whooping, and then the car drove off—just as the passengers in the back seat let loose a ringing "%#\$^ the Jews!" I can still feel my insides unraveling and dissolving in my stomach. It wasn't really fear for safety—fight-or-flight!—that pulled it all loose (though Yoni and I, sure as hell, ran pell-mell for our homes); no, it was being cast as a hated "Other," as a loathsome alien, that rattled me to my core, that left me feeling as if I had been drained or thawed out.

I know: this juxtaposition is crude. A heckle directed at a protest, after all, is *very* different from shouting explicit, grotesque hate-speech at a pair of children. So

why, as the black Hyundai drove off, did I want to toss my sign aside and sprint for home? Passers-by had been directing abuse at our small, peaceful protest all night ("Trump That B*\$^#!"), but none had fazed me like this man. In response to these other (mostly white, middle aged) jeerers, I had simply gripped my sign harder and chanted louder. But when that someone who looked like me also wore a *yarmulke*—well, resistance suddenly seemed more futile.

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. argued that his civil rights movement was not political. Sure, activists like him were targeting political, economical, and sociological realities; but first and foremost, he insisted, segregation was "morally wrong and sinful," and as such, the fight to challenge that discriminatory policy, as well as other manifestations of racism, was primarily an ethical one. I don't mean to liken the anti-Trump protest I joined that night (nor the several others I have participated in since then) to the arduous, centuries-in-the-making Civil Rights struggle; that would be needlessly disrespectful and entirely beside the point. I invoke MLK simply to underscore, far more eloquently than I can, this simple point: that when I

"...STANDING AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA IS NOT ABOUT POLITICAL POSITIONING OR THE SUPPORT OF PARTICULAR POLICY AGENDAS; IT'S ABOUT BASIC HUMAN DECENCY, WHAT'S JUST AND WHAT'S UNJUST"

squeezed between the metal crowd-control barriers that lined 5th Avenue that night (and several times thereafter), I did not do so as a *political* protester, not really. Because though I disagree with nearly everything Trump has said, policy wise—on everything from international affairs to education reform—I did not demonstrate in support of a particular brand of politics or policy. I wasn't there as a Hillary supporter, nor as a card-carrying liberal Democrat, at least not primarily.



The protest was about something far more basic than politics. First and foremost, I stood there, sign held aloft, as a *human being*—a human being unsettled by the rise of a political ideology that depends so much on *dehumanization*.

I began this opinion piece during Trump's transition

period, when members of his fledgling administration reignited talks of a Muslim registry. Then, on January 27, Trump signed his executive order. Potential, theoretical discrimination suddenly became law. Because make no mistake: this order *is* a Muslim ban. Sure, the order itself doesn't use the word *Muslim*, but coming from the man who, in December 2015, called for the "complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," and who has said that "Islam hates us," the real targets of his policy is clear. By indefinitely barring entry for Syrian refugees, undoubtedly some of the most vulnerable people in the world—by abandoning families who, like Jewish refugees in the 1940's, desperately wish to flee unimaginable horror and utter destruction—Trump has shown his hand. And it is not a helpful hand; it is cruelly indifferent, entirely uninterested in lifting up the Other from the rubble-strewn floor.

I don't, therefore, think that my reaction to the man with the *kippah* (and the the Orthodox counter-protesters) was melodramatic, partly because when real human rights are at stake, "overreaction" is obligatory. It's possible that the Orthodox hecklers agree with Trump's tax plans and wanted to let us protesters know. And that's fine. But that doesn't mean they are off the hook from being held accountable for their candidates morally repugnant rhetoric and policies. You don't get to pick and choose issues, not when the systematic debasement of an entire minority population is at play. Our little protest was about prejudice and hate, and by jeering at and mocking us, these Orthodox men suggested prejudice and hate did not bother them.

Sure. They were only a few men. And sure, a small handful can hardly be representative of the way the wider Modern Orthodox communities feels and behave. It would be reckless to argue otherwise. But here's the thing: these strangers' behavior felt *familiar*. I had seen it before. Those particular heckles did not occur in a vacuum; they came embedded within a more pervasive discourse circulating within the Modern Orthodox communities I move through—a discourse I have personally encountered frequently, and that Orthodox communities must account for.

For months before that night, I had met, face-to-face, fervent support for Trump (and/or enthusiastic disdain for Hillary) on the Yeshiva University campus, that self-described "center" of the Modern Orthodox world. At the *Shabbat* table, people I have called friends have told me—through smiling teeth—that they would be voting for Trump. They were prodding me. Not long ago, I bumped into into a young Orthodox man at the grocery store. He was in front of me at the register, and only when I finished placing my items on the conveyor belt did I notice the baseball cap he was wearing. "12 more Years" it read, just above Barack Obama's curlicued signature. "Nice hat," I said. He looked up and let out something between a laugh and a snort: "This? It's for s*%&s and giggles," he said. "I'm with Trump."

There's that flippancy again. I don't take issue with opposition to Hillary and Obama, or to "liberal" policies per se. Disagree with elements of Obamacare, or the specifics of foreign policy. Object to the approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No, it's the concomitant cheek that gets me, the exuberant disdain—the mugs I see in the YU library labeled "Liberal Tears": it betrays a fundamental lack of respect, a complete obliviousness to, genuine pathetic concerns, to existential fears—not just among Muslim Americans, but among immigrants and members of the LGBTQ community, as well. It trivializes the tears of huddled millions and the frightened, sideways

glances of the masses. Shame fizzed to the surface when that man rolled down his window in front of our protest. I felt fundamentally ashamed to be a Jew, to count myself a member of an Orthodox community that has not done enough to distance itself from hate, a community that should know better.

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A Call for Tolerance: An Analysis of the Degrading State of Effective Political Discourse

By Isaac Krasnopolsky

The hideous act of vandalism perpetrated by a Yeshiva University student targeting the efforts of the Immigration Ban Awareness Campaign on Wednesday evening sparked distinct outrage within the student body. Although the motives of the perpetrator(s) remain unknown, the emotional message the action sent was crystal clear. Stern College student Rachel Lelonek, who was present while the event unfolded, and even confronted the perpetrator, described her thoughts after the incident:

"To be completely honest, I was in total and utter shock that someone would just tear down the wall while someone - myself - begged him to stop. He ignored me and simply said it was his freedom of expression. The way he crumpled the signs, ripped them up and threw them away, with such disrespect, genuinely left me angry and confused. I also don't understand how someone could receive such joy watching his friend demolish the mural that he would record it and coax him on in the video. It just furthers my frustrations with a highly bigoted community on campus that I wish could be more tolerant."

As someone who also witnessed the vandalism first hand, I would be remiss not to convey the atmosphere felt by me and a few other witnesses to this supreme act of intolerance and fundamental disregard for and misunderstanding of the freedom of expression.

Before I express my main point, it is important to mention that I write this piece as a conservative Republican. I support the security goals (but not necessarily the methods) of the temporary immigration ban from Islamic countries, and certainly do not agree with many of the messages the refugee mural conveyed. I believe that comparing the current Syrian refugee crisis to the nearly international rejection of Jewish refugees during World War II stems from a misunderstanding of history and of current international politics. I am more than glad to engage in political discourse with anyone up for the task. This article however, aims to focus on something that, in my opinion, is far more important, and which has ramifications on the future of human decency in political discourse.

The pressing issue at hand, that I wish to convey, transcends the differences between Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, "snowflakes" and "islamophobes." Wednesday evening's explosively expedient and rage-filled act of vandalism showcased the worsening symptoms of an aggressively metastasizing cancer characterized by intolerance and a gross disregard for the First Amendment. This growing trend is now commonplace, with groups on either side of the aisle barraging each other with caps-locked tweets and emboldened hashtags. What happened to the civilized political debates that existed in the not so distant past, before the tremendous influx of social media that so many claim exists to unite us? What happened to assertions backed up by facts? Rebuttals bolstered by more facts? Using words instead of breaking windows, burning flags, and tearing down posters containing dissenting opinions? I urge those still reading this article to YouTube the historic presidential debates of Ronald Reagan or JFK, debates replete with constructive political discourse, with both sides genuinely working towards a common goal: the betterment of our nation.

With so many fraught events unfolding around the globe (violent escalations in the Middle East, radical

Islamic terrorism largely impacting many parts of the world, and the changing landscape of domestic policies), the entire free world is looking at us, the United States, as a role model and as one who is expected to lead by example. The actions this country should, could, and would take in response to these issues are matters to be discussed and determined using the utilities and freedoms provided by our nation's constitution. However, the task of leading by example does not stop with our government, especially if you belong to the group that believes that our government is not acting as it should. One of the many duties we possess as citizens of this great nation is to use the freedoms and rights granted to us by this

passed that mural numerous times, and despite disagreeing with many of its messages, managed to keep our collective cool. Think about the message you are sending to those who do disagree with you. Think about the bad light you are putting on those who do share your opinions. And if all that isn't enough, think about the message of ill-tolerance you are sending to the nation and to the rest of the world as a Jew representing Yeshiva University.

As I mentioned previously, this far too common ineptitude for seeing the bigger picture combined with a nearly childish degree of intolerance extends beyond the right. To my liberal friends: do you truly and wholeheartedly believe that branding right wing



thriving democracy in order to be beacons of tolerance for the rest of the world. Unlike the assertions of some globalists, the United States is not like other free nations. Our nation is unique in its ability to inspire change, whether good or bad, on an international level.

It is for this reason that we, as citizens of the United States, must take care to adequately communicate the importance of tolerance. Both the left and the right need to pause their squabbling for a moment to regroup and to remember what our shared goals are. To our vandal, I do not dare assume the exact motives and ideologies behind your actions. However, one point should be made abundantly clear, to you and those who condone your behavior: if your goal was to delegitimize the views of those against the immigration ban, you failed. You failed to detract from the messages portrayed on that mural and, instead, succeeded to debunk your own opinions. Your actions on Wednesday evening were not categorized by the respectful voice of reason and genuine, constructive dialogue. Instead you showcased a stark inability to initiate necessary and productive discourse. I and many other students who share dissenting opinions,

conservatives as "islamophobes" and "bigots" is an effective political strategy? Other than successfully demonizing half of the nation and rendering it irrelevant to your synthetic moral high horse, is there any way in which your destructive rhetoric contributes to the betterment of our society? The left's name calling is characteristic of the very same intolerance that it accuses the right of possessing towards minorities and other marginalized groups. Two wrongs do not make a right! I speak to everyone when I ask to stop with the ludicrous hashtags, the name calling, and the mind-numbing idiocy!

It is time for Americans on all sides, and especially Yeshiva University students, to unite in a common objective, as the partisan system was designed to facilitate. Disagreement should not be suppressed, but rather should be encouraged when communicated in a civilized and *mentchlich* way. Don't tear down the messages of others, and instead put up your own. Perhaps I'm being hilariously naive, but something tells me that if we spend a little more time listening and a little less time trying to delegitimize one another, then perhaps real progress can be achieved within the framework of a more tolerant democracy.

PROTESTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

safe haven and basic humanitarian needs in their original homes, where they'd probably stay if they could. Further, I'd agree that the ban was carried out horrifically, resulting in many visa and green-card holders being denied rightful entry into the United States. I may even concede that the ban on refugee arrivals and travelers from those 7 Muslim majority countries poses more of a threat to "America" as we

know it than the potential for terrorists to slip through our vetting system. But these are just ancillary points--the reasons we summon to rationalize and justify our basest political reflexes.

I'll give credit where it's due--the passion and fervor of the protestors has been a spectacle to behold--a true demonstration of the power of free speech and assembly. But at the same time I wonder if any of these suddenly enlightened activists are aware of the apparent incongruity in their current protests vs.

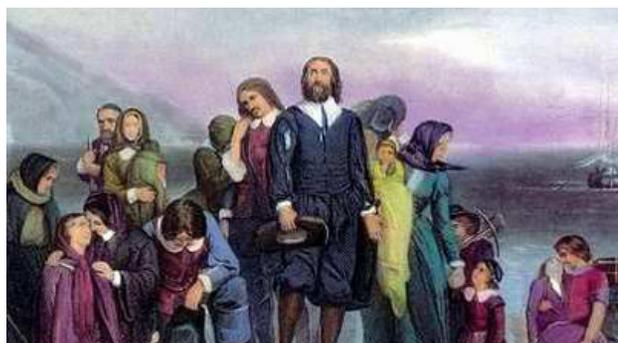
years of silence. Refugees were starving and drowning and dying by the thousands and millions under the previous administration, which only managed to bring to America a few thousand of those suffering most during an 8-year span. Protestors, where were you then?

What Jews Can Learn from the Puritans

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

I recently wrote a research paper on the Puritans, a group of Christians who sailed from England in 1630 and founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As I conducted my research, I realized that the subject matter is fascinating to consider from a Jewish perspective, and I'd like to share my findings with you. Although many aspects of Puritanism are theologically unacceptable according to Judaism, the story of the Puritans has surprising relevance for Jews.

One significant common denominator between Puritans and Jews is the struggle with modernity. Puritanism, unlike other branches of Christianity, strongly emphasized the Old Testament. When the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts, they attempted to create a biblical society modeled after ancient Israel, with a legal system substantially based upon Mosaic Law. Historian Theodore Bozeman describes this phenomenon as the "primitivist dimension" of Puritanism - a desire to reject modernity and return to the original biblical culture. Similarly, Jews have constantly grappled with the challenges of modernity. Throughout history - in Canaan, Greece, Rome, Germany, and America - there has been a constant tension between Torah values and those of the majority culture. Jewish communities have often pondered a difficult dilemma: should we divorce ourselves from modern society, or should we harmonize the Torah with modern society?



R. Lichtenstein characterized this question as a binary of "confluence and conflict" - a dilemma that historically has prompted much debate. Even today, some Jewish communities pursue the latter option, whereas others follow the former. The Puritans' efforts to create a pure society according to their worldview illustrates that the influence of modernity is not specifically a Jewish concern, but rather a phenomenon that faces other religions as well. The Puritans' decision to escape modernity should cause us to question our own contemporary involvement in Western culture: why or why not, in what manner, and to what extent should we attempt to harmonize the Torah with Western literature, philosophy, and history? I do not aim here to provide an answer, but merely to spark personal introspection about this important issue.

There are other aspects of Puritan theology that should be of interest to Jews. Like Protestants, Puritans believed in *sola scriptura*, that scripture is the sole basis of all truth. This belief constitutes a rejection of Catholic papal hierarchies, ceremonies and traditions that have no basis in scripture. *Sola scriptura* also

rejects the Catholic Church's interpretive authority and instead advocates for understanding the biblical text on the simple, literal level. If this sounds familiar, you're probably thinking of a similar phenomenon in Jewish history: the medieval *Karaim* (Karaites), or the earlier *Tzedukim* (Sadducees) who rejected the *Torah she-b'al peh* (Oral Law) of traditional rabbis, often referred to as the *Perushim* (Pharisees).

I am not the first to draw such an analogy. In 1650, theologian John Dury argued that the Karaites and Pharisees "differ from one another... as Protestants do from Papists; for the Pharisees, as the Papists, attribute

"WHY OR WHY NOT, IN WHAT MANNER, AND TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD WE ATTEMPT TO HARMONIZE THE TORAH WITH WESTERN LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND HISTORY?"

more to the authority and traditions of their rabbis and fathers than to the word of God; but the Karaites will receive nothing for a rule of faith and obedience but what is delivered from the word of God immediately." Dury, himself sympathetic to Protestantism, elaborated on this contrast: "As their principles and affections are thus different, so are their opinions, and the course of their life extremely opposite; the Pharisees are full of superstitious imaginary foolish conceits, and talmudical questions and niceties in their sermons and books; [but] the Karaites are rational men that take up no doctrines but what the Scriptures teach."

Yet Dury's analogy, although it constitutes an attack on traditional Judaism, can actually serve to strengthen our belief in *Torah she-b'al peh*. The Puritans' religious experiment in New England demonstrates the foolishness of following the literal understanding of the Bible in practical law. Firstly, the Bible is extremely ambiguous and is notoriously susceptible to varied interpretation, even within exegetical traditions. Without a *Torah she-b'al peh*, one can manipulate the text to reach any desired conclusion. Secondly, the Bible, when understood literally, is barbaric by modern standards - especially regarding corporal punishment - and would thus seem to be inapplicable to a modern society.

To illustrate the folly of *sola scriptura*, I will use the Puritans' adultery legislation as an example. Although theoretically Puritan law, like the Bible, prescribed capital punishment for adultery, only once did the American Puritans ever execute people on that basis. Why only this once? Legal historian Carolyn Ramsey argues that the anomalous execution occurred because one of the adulterers was a religious dissident. Despite lacking testimony from more than one witness - which is required by biblical law - the judges conveniently decided that the adulterers' confessions qualified as an equivalent thereof. It is clear that although, officially, Mosaic Law constituted the basis for capital laws, in reality, law followed the whims of the judges.

Tellingly, a few months following the execution,

then-governor John Winthrop declared in his "Discourse on Arbitrary Government" that "judges are gods upon earth" and thus have the authority to exercise leniency "as occasion shall require." Winthrop adduced biblical evidence for this notion: "David's life was not taken away for his adultery... in respect of [public] interest and advantage, he was valued at 10,000 common men; Bathsheba was not put to death for her adultery, because the king's desire had with her the force of a law." In other words, Winthrop manipulated the biblical text to suit his political purposes, clearly revealing that the true locus of Puritan legal authority lay not in God's hands, but in those of man.

Winthrop's discourse contains another point noteworthy for Jewish readers. While marshalling support for his claim of judicial latitude, Winthrop demonstrated great respect and reverence for the *avos* (Patriarchs): "Adultery and incest deserved death, by the law, in Jacob's time (as appears by Judah's sentence, in the case of Tamar): yet Ruben was punished only with loss of his birthright, because he was a Patriarch." Winthrop here refers to a passage in the Torah that, translated literally, states that Reuven committed incest with the concubine of his father Yaakov. Bothered by the apparent impropriety of Reuven's actions and the lack of punishment thereof, Winthrop felt forced to conclude that the elevated status of the *avos* renders them above reproach. Granted, Winthrop's exegetical logic contradicts the traditional Jewish view, which maintains that Reuven did not actually commit incest (and even if he did, status as a "Patriarch" would not constitute a valid excuse). Nevertheless, Winthrop's reluctance to criticize the *avos*, and his efforts to downplay their mistakes, reflects an admirable attitude that has rich implications regarding our interpretations of biblical characters.

Recently, in some circles, it has become popular to analyze biblical characters - including the *avos* - as if they were regular people. This methodology is comfortable exposing apparent flaws in these characters. However, traditional Jewish interpretation views the *avos* and other righteous characters as extremely holy people who lived on a level much higher than we can imagine. According to the latter view, it is inconceivable that such people had flaws similar to our own, and it would be disrespectful and inappropriate to criticize them. I believe that Winthrop's comment enables the following *kal vachomer* (a fortiori argument): if the Puritans, who believed in *sola scriptura*, nevertheless held the *avos* in extremely high esteem (despite seemingly incriminating verses), all the more so should we have a similarly humble perspective, for we are not bound to the literal interpretation, and we have an exegetical tradition that often eliminates or minimizes the *avos'* mistakes.

I hope that I have demonstrated how a body of knowledge seemingly antithetical to Judaism can in fact contain much valuable information that enriches our perspectives. In this case, the Puritans can serve as a means of reflection upon our involvement in general culture, a source of inspiration for the validity and necessity of *Torah she-b'al peh*, and a rejoinder to embrace traditional interpretations of biblical characters.

ART, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

the comedian, the entirety of a performance unfolds like a chess match between him or herself and the audience. Stand-up comedians have the appeal of an entertaining drinking buddy, but they possess a deep understanding of human psychology

Although they often happen to induce side-splitting laughter, stand-up comics can talk about topics, no matter how sensitive, in an unmistakably casual way. A stand-up becomes a staged version of a late-night conversation with a good friend, reminiscing about each other's weird experiences. Louis C.K. pulls this off effortlessly - he comes across as the average working-class father you would bump into at a bar who starts spilling out his troubles to you in way that is more meaningful than annoying. In contrast to other forms of entertainment, such as concerts or movies, stand-up comedy, when done right, gets closer to real life

than any art form does. Yet, at the same time, it exposes life's absurdities, allowing the audience to share in a collective human experience.

There is no coincidence that a significant number of TV watchers prefer shows with a comedic layer, such as *The Daily Show* and *Last Week Tonight*, as sources of news over "legitimate" news networks like CNN. Getting news that is delivered in a humorous way allows viewers to kill two birds with one stone: you can get your fill of entertainment without the usual guilt associated with time-wasting. Besides for this benefit, there is something unique about humor that makes it the perfect medium for news. People generally don't watch the news to get an update about all that is pleasant and cheery in the world; viewers have a sense that they should know if there are things going on in society that they should be concerned about. Comedy allows us to face upsetting issues head-on, as it can subtly

transform a feeling of disgust or disapproval into a sense of absurdity.

Anyone with a modicum of cultural appreciation would agree that forms of entertainment such as art, music, and movies can delight on an aesthetic level, and at the same time make people think deeply about lofty ideas. We might hesitate to say the same about stand-up comedy given that in everyday life, jokes are so often used just for the sake of being crass or to pass time. Yet, stand-up comedy is an art form that can transcend the trappings of entertainment, when it is used as a medium of meditating on the absurd aspects of life, or when there is an underlying social critique beneath the surface of humor. Those who listen to stand-up solely to hear witty humor can appreciate it on a superficial level, but the attentive listener can come away with much more.

The Jewish Case for Life

By Jonathan Roytenberg

Radical, extremist, fundamentalist. These are the “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed (Deut. 30:19).”

The above quote is quite relevant immediately following the annual March for Life in Washington DC on January 27th, as the United States Congress takes the first steps to defunding Planned Parenthood, and as a likely pro-life judge has been nominated to the Supreme Court to fill the seat of the late Justice Antonin Scalia. Given all of this, I want to make the case for why both Jewish Law and Jewish tradition favors a world free of abortion.

First, the question many in the YU community, especially those supporting abortion rights, will undoubtedly ask is “what does *halakha* say about it?” First, there is an absolute prohibition of murder in the Torah, to the point where we have to sacrifice our own lives rather than take another life. There is a universal agreement (Hayim Donin, *To Be a Jew*, 140-141) among the *poskim* (Jewish legal decisors) that elective abortion is absolutely prohibited by *halakha*. While there is debate among various *poskim* regarding which circumstances warrant such a procedure, I will bring forth an opinion that I believe should be the model for a paradigm shift in the way we treat the topic: that of the *Rambam*.

The *Rambam* (Maimonides) absolutely prohibited abortion, classifying it as murder, except under the

following very limited circumstance: if the mother’s life is in danger, and there is no other way to save her. It could even then be argued that such a situation is not considered abortion at all, but rather, simply intervening to save the mother’s life, an action legal even in Ireland where abortion has been outlawed. This opinion is also held by R’ Moshe Feinstein and R’ Issar Unterman.

Here’s the reason why this opinion should be the basis for our meta-*halakhic* discourse of the issue: our *mesorah*, tradition, demands of us to respect every single human life.

In contrast to Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, who supported aborting children of color and children with special needs, our tradition recognizes that every single human being is created *b’tzelem Elokim* (in the image of God), and is therefore afforded an irrevocable right to life. It cannot be understated just how much the Matriarchs, Sarah, Rivka and Rachel, appreciated the worth of all human life. These three women each faced a struggle with infertility, and prayed intensely for the opportunity to bring new life into the world. Another example of such a woman is Chana, whose prayer for a child is considered to be the basis for prayer in our day and age.

Many of the more lenient opinions in *halakha* were based on a very different reality that is increasingly not present today. We take it for granted that we live in a time where, due to tremendous advances in reproductive technology, childbirth is safer today than at any point in human history. We forget

that, not too long ago, childbirth was a traumatic and potentially life-endangering ordeal and many women tragically died as a result. Today, such occurrences are becoming increasingly rare. Despite this, abortion is still unfortunately too common in the United States, where more than 1,000,000 children per year will not see the light of day.

This begs the question: By continuing to debate whether *halakha* permits abortion or not, are we asking the wrong question? Instead, perhaps we should be asking what more can we do to lessen the need for abortion. If that is our goal, then there is much we can do to start. Increasing access to prenatal care, family planning, and affordable child-care, strengthening child-support requirements, and ensuring justice for survivors of sexual violence, are just a few of the things that could eliminate the need for abortion.

As all these things happen on Capitol Hill and in various state legislatures, the humanity of the unborn, this is the discussion we must have in our own communities. The days of allowing Planned Parenthood to profit off the exploitation of women are about to come to an end. This is where we, as *b’nai Torah* (children of the Torah), must come in by volunteering, advocating, and yes, continuing to debate the ramifications of this new reality. It’s time to start creating the ultimate world that Hashem has planned for us, which includes a true culture of life and an end to all death and suffering, including by those who are voiceless and most vulnerable.

Finding Common Ground

By Avigayil Adouth

Life is full of choices. On May 1st 2015, after much deliberation, dozens of lists of pro’s and con’s, and conversations with just about every college student who would respond to my texts, I made the choice to take my talents to Yeshiva University. Life at Yeshiva University promised unparalleled religious conveniences. It was the only place where I felt I could have it all. At YU I wouldn’t have to miss any events or be barred from participating in any extracurricular activities due to religious constraints. However, the thing that drew me to YU most was what I thought was a homogenous student body. I was under the naive impression that at YU I wouldn’t have to worry about being “different”. I would be living and studying with other young adults who would share all of my beliefs. I would be in a place where I could continue to grow without having my every move challenged by my peers.

When I arrived on campus in the fall I was shocked to learn that this expectation could not have been farther from the reality. I have since gotten used to, and become immensely grateful for, all the opportunities being wrong has presented me with. To be sure, I don’t think diversity is our strong suit. However, what I am suggesting that I learned when I arrived on “campus” is that despite our lack of racial diversity, we are far from uniform.

We as a student body are a group of people who all see the world and our relationships to Judaism very differently. I arrived on campus during a particularly politically-charged season, the presidential election was coming up and controversial speakers were scheduled to address a wide range of political issues. At first I thought that those factors were the sole cause of the combative mood permeating campus. I soon realized that the divisiveness runs much deeper than any election season or lightning rod speaker.

Divisiveness is multifaceted--there is the kind that breeds intelligible conversation and pushes the community forward and the kind that leads to animosity. We as a student body have fallen prey to the latter. We continuously divide ourselves over and over again. We find any and every reason to close

ourselves off from each other and form highschool-esque cliques. We’ve created social castes so strict that they’re reminiscent of Pre-Ghandi India.

The girls who learn Gemara are instantly dubbed “radical feminists”, the Netiv “flipouts” who partied in high school and now never leave the Beis. We insist that the “Gush” boys would only ever think to learn for intellectual stimulation, and deem the girls whose skirts are a little longer than ours “Yeshivish” off the bat. There are the “Poster Children” who are paradigmatic of the Torah U’Maddah philosophy

“WE ARE LOSING SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THIS DIVERSITY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CREATE A BEAUTIFUL SYMPHONY WHERE DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS CAN FIND A WAY TO PLAY IN HARMONY.”

and the kids that come to YU for easy access to New York City. The students whose parents gave them no choice but to come here, and the should-be Ivy Leaguers who came because they were offered seductive scholarships.

We’ve gotten to a point where we think we can learn everything about each other based on thirty second interactions we have attempting to avoid awkward silences in the elevator, or the two word descriptions we’ve been given by our mutual friends. We assume entire Hashkafic (religious-approach based) Identities based on where a persons 18-year old self chose to spend their year in Israel. We sum up a person’s IQ based on their major, and when someone doesn’t fit into our boxes quite as neatly as we’d like them to, we wave them off--claim they’re confusing, they don’t make sense--deem them anomalies, and move on.

We are losing sight of the fact that this diversity has the potential to create a beautiful

symphony where different instruments can find a way to play in harmony. Instead, we are creating a ruckus. Each instrument is struggling to keep tempo, fighting for their own solos, limiting some of the most talented musicians to only one instrument. Attempting to see the YU community objectively, I feel that we are a microcosm of the Jewish world-- more specifically the Orthodox world. As Orthodox Jews, we too, try to divide ourselves from one another, pushing forward our own agendas, sometimes so blinded by our desire to be correct that we fail to move forward. We are Chassidish, Misnagid, Charedi, Open Orthodox, Left-Wing Modern Orthodox, Centrist, Right-Wing Modern Orthodox, Egalitarian, Chardal, Dati Leumi, Yeshivish, Conservative, Reform, Conservadox. We somehow manage to use the minutiae of our religious practice to divide ourselves. We swear time and time again that our way is right, we are the “ideal”, the quintessential Jews. What we fail to be conscious of however is that we are all share a common goal, to serve God in the best possible way.

In parshat (Torah portion) Vayechi, which we read a few weeks ago, Yaakov blesses all of his children as he lays on his deathbed. He calls them to be blessed with the following words “heiyasfu veyagida lachem” loosely translated as “gather and I will tell you”. He continues on to give each of his children their unique blessings, catered to their



SEE COMMON GROUND,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

On Speaking Up

By Moshe Papier

For as long as I can remember I have been an introvert. When presented with the opportunity to step onto center stage, time and time again I have declined, opting for the quieter and less obtrusive route. I am embarrassed to say that there have even been times when this aspect of my personality has kept me from speaking up when something I disagree with is discussed or debated.

"Those who know me well know how I feel," is what I would tell myself. And for years it was enough to know that the people closest to me knew where I stood. To an extent, I have reacted this way when I have come under personal attack. However, in light of a recent article that calls into question my morals and beliefs, I feel compelled to defend myself. This article, published in the last issue of *The Commentator*, spoke about how a certain YU student left his roommate when he found out that his roommate was gay.

Now, when I feel silenced by a former roommate and friend's misrepresentation of my actions and values, I have to ask myself if it even matters how I react to his words. My instinct, as it always is, is to avoid responding publicly -- and that is not easy to overcome. But upon rethinking my situation, I realized that since my side of the story was being distorted, it mattered a great deal.

I agree with aspects of what my former roommate wrote and I do not argue that he has experienced forms of homophobic treatment. I have no intention of attacking him, and I do not wish for my response to be misconstrued in this way. However, I will also not continue to stay silent while he again attempts to vilify and misrepresent me in order to make larger claims about the Orthodox community.

In his article, he claims that it was a one-sided decision where I chose to leave abruptly because of my alleged homophobic beliefs. However, in reality our joint decision to separate for the remaining time that we would be living in the dorms at YU was handled with the utmost respect and sensitivity as well as with great discretion and common decency by the Office of University Housing and Residence Life, the resident advisors, and by me.

When my roommate first reached out to me two years ago, he expressed that he expected to attract a lot of negative attention to himself and those around him through publishing a provocative article in which he planned to come out to the larger public and criticize YU as an institution. He voiced that a primary concern of his at the time was over the fallout from such a controversial article, and he was worried about the potential negative effects that it could have on those closest to him, myself included.

In our messages to each other over Spring break, after he suggested the move in the first place, he again expressed his understanding that this was a complicated issue and decision to be made. "I want to stress that whatever you decide, I absolutely will not be offended," he messaged me. "I am making public decisions that affect more than me and it's only right to allow others that may be affected the ability to respond appropriately." I remember telling him how much respect I had for him for considering the effects his decisions would have on others, especially when dealing with something so personal. Therefore, with only three weeks of the semester remaining, we agreed that it was best for both of us to be able to focus on our final exams, and that, while our friendship was still intact, rooming together was no longer the best option.

I have been saddened to read in his articles since then that he has clearly forgotten the common respect we once held for each other and has even turned to doing what we initially both hoped to avoid from others when we made that decision two years ago.

I remember the first time this happened. Two years ago, he published an article in which I was misrepresented and denigrated like I am today. It didn't take long for the article to find its way to my Facebook newsfeed, despite the fact that he had defriended me only moments before publishing the article. Now, like before, came the numerous shares and posts applauding my former roommate's courage and bravery. Misled posts, fed with misinformation, by the very people for whom I hold so much respect and look up to -- did they know it was me that they were talking about when furthering this false idea of the roommate being the face of hatred towards the LGBTQ community? Would they ever know that it was a lie?

And while I appreciate the courage that it took to write such a personal account of his experience and time at YU, I cannot ignore the fact that I am once again unfairly and inaccurately portrayed as the face of homophobia in the Modern Orthodox community.

By associating me with homophobia in an article about Ben Shapiro's speech at YU, the article suggests that I tend to agree with Ben Shapiro on these issues. I did not plan to speak up about the event, but now that I have been labelled this way, I feel the need to clarify my views. Those who know me well know that many of the things said by Ben Shapiro last month, as well as the great amounts of applause and support received from the student body in attendance, was something that concerned me. While I did not then, nor do I now agree with many of the beliefs held and sentiments shared by Mr. Shapiro, I attended this student-organized event as an opportunity to hear an opinion

different from my own. I was disturbed by what Mr. Shapiro said, but I was also in awe of the few students who had the confidence to stand up and ask questions, especially those who asked questions in opposition. It was a courage I wish I had.

Those who know me well know that I too acknowledge that there are issues with the Modern Orthodox community's current relationship with its LGBTQ members. I believe that we need to do more to ensure that respect and decency are granted to every member of our community regardless of sexual orientation. I hope that our community can be full of acceptance and I believe that the language of the conversation can and should change. I welcome and encourage the continued important discussions on

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campus, but my concern lies with this conversation remaining honest.

This concern is especially what drove me to write a response to clarify my role in this story. Many comments in response to this article that are support me have grossly misunderstood my motivations. I did not move out because of the fact that my roommate was gay, and I do not wish to be supported and cheered on by people who defend this as an appropriate response.

I am writing because I too value the human lives at stake that are affected by public speeches and published articles, lives of people who have more to them than what one distorted story may claim. I hope that we can strive towards a more accepting and honest community, one where we don't have to put each other down in order to make ourselves feel heard.

Fellow students and peers, whether they view themselves as introverts or as not worthy of voicing a public opinion even to defend themselves, should not simply go gently into that good night. As I am now learning, it is not enough if only people who know you well know where you stand when the very things you stand for are publicly called into question. While I remain an introvert, I will no longer allow that to be an excuse for not standing up for what I believe.

SILENCE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

In December 1986, during his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Elie Wiesel warned that silence can be dangerous. That's why, he explained, "I swore never to be silent when and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation." He continued: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

But in the Orthodox Jewish communities I hear too much silence. Granted, after the executive order went public, the OU and the RCA did release a joint statement, affirming that "discrimination against any group based solely upon religion is wrong" And though their statement does not make the kind of poetic and emotional pleas of solidarity with Muslim communities that the ADL, JTS, and the URJ made with theirs, its timely objection is well taken. It's a good first step—but it's only that. A religious minority is being demonized, cast as a hated "Other," and the world's most vulnerable are being callously abandoned: among those institutions that stage annual public memorials on *Yom Hashoah*, spirited outrage is needed. Which is why I was deeply disheartened when President Joel published his (no doubt well-intentioned) statement

on the crises. "Yeshiva University is unwavering in its support of religious rights and societal values," he wrote, which sounds...stale, anemic and overly cautious. This is not a time for hedging; it is a time to mount a vigorous stand against apathy and hate.

In Yeshiva University's "Pathways to our Future," a forward-looking strategic plan published in 2016, YU imagines itself as a "global" force driven to "strengthen society through the continuous advancement of knowledge for the betterment of the Jewish people and humanity as a whole." Accordingly, Yeshiva must champion "love for humankind" and strive to "Hold ourselves and each other to the highest ethical standards." The document encourages members of the Yeshiva University community to help YU "secure our place as the intellectual and spiritual center of the Modern Orthodox community." It argues that YU is a "platform" that must be utilized to bring "Yeshiva's collective wisdom to the world," to add its "ethical and moral values" to global conversations.

But amid a bona-fide ethical-moral crises, Yeshiva has not spoken enough. If Yeshiva University is truly interested in claiming an ethical leadership role in the Jewish community and beyond, it must publicly condemn this policy and other manifestations of Islamophobia with far more forceful and empathetic language. To do so would not be politicking; standing

against Islamophobia is not about political positioning or the support of particular policy agendas; it's about basic human decency, what's just and what's unjust. Wiesel argued that "Whenever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that must—at that moment—become the center of the universe." For Wiesel, prioritizing the awareness and combating of persecution is, in some ways, the necessary Jewish response to the memory of the Holocaust. It is to say, loudly and into the night, *We will never Forget*. Which is not a political assertion; it is an ethical-moral one.

When I first joined that Trump Tower protest, I did not have a sign with me. I hadn't even thought of making one. A woman who looked about my age and who clutched tightly a neon-green poster—"All WE NEED IS LOVE (Jba-ba-da-da-da)"—walked towards me. She wore a grapefruit-orange hijab, and she beamed at me and offered me her extra sign. I smiled and raised it over my head. "LOVE TRUMPS HATE," it read.

I'll be back soon for another protest, at Trump Tower and elsewhere, this time with my own sign in hand: "We are All Refugees, We are All Muslims," it will say, in messy block letters. I am hopeful that I will see many *kippahs* in the crowds. I fear that I will not.

How the Left Ruined Entertainment

By Elliot Fuchs

In light of recent events, a couple of thoughts percolated in my mind and I have since decided to share with you after watching some material that suggests that others are feeling the same way.

As someone who is actively involved in politics and has also dabbled in the entertainment industry I think I offer a unique, albeit not necessarily original, analysis on the fact that the Left is completely ruining TV, movies, and entertainment.

Here are four points that I would like to make that I think many individuals will identify with.

1) The reason that people spend their hard earned money on film, the theatre, or a TV is not because they want to hear biased liberal entertainers attempt to advance their political agendas. For an example of this look no further than the cast of Hamilton berating Vice Presidential candidate Mike Pence at the conclusion of their show. They go to different forms of entertainment as an escape from what is going on around them. They go to that source of entertainment to leave the stresses of the real world and enter the excitement of the fictional one. A perfect example is illustrated through an anecdote that I clearly recollect from my year in Israel. I was living in a Yeshiva with a tedious daily schedule. I enjoyed my time there but sometimes would just get burned out. The effect was intensified since, while I was there, there was a wave of terrorist attacks that kept our campus under lockdown. It honestly didn't take too long for me to get antsy due to all the repetition of my setting, schedule, and the limited number of people I was encountering on campus. It was during those moments of despair that I would go to books or other forms of entertainment so that I could meet new people (the characters), visit new places (the setting), and undergo a different schedule or adventure (the plot.) The same principle applies to the world of entertainment. The last thing I want to encounter is the exact political atmosphere I am trying to avoid when I turn to entertainment. It is with this disconnect between the actor and the ordinary person, and their inability to understand the preferences of one another, that the Hollywood Leftists continue to shoot themselves in the foot. When Meryl Streep ruins the Golden Globes, a celebration of cinematic achievement, by ripping into Donald Trump, it only hurts her plea for people to join her in her opposition of Donald Trump. By frustrating the people who tuned into the golden globes to evade

President Trump and the lunacy associated with him, she's causing more eyes to roll than she is drawing people to her cause. Clearly her colleagues did not learn from her misguided opinion, because just a week or so later, at the SAG awards, they did the exact same thing, bothering regular people who live outside of the bubbles of New York and Los Angeles even more. I think that Ben Shapiro explained this phenomenon best on his show, which appears on dailywire.com. He explains that the reason he doesn't watch shows like *House of Cards* — a political show— is because as a political pundit, he lives *House of Cards*. The last thing Ben wants to spend his free time doing is exactly what he already does all day.

2) The worst thing to happen to entertainment these days is the politicization of characters. I was recently reading an article in the arts section of *The Wall Street Journal* where they described Cary Matheson, the protagonist of Showtime television series *Homeland*, and her recent transition from a badass character to a left-wing hack. I observed this evolution before *The Wall Street Journal*, which is why I stopped watching the show after season 2 (well that, and its deteriorating story line.) But how sad is it that the makers of entertainment have stooped to a point that they are willing to take their quality show and throw it in the trash for the sake of political correctness and advancement of agenda?

3) In an effort to advance the discussion of political correctness and how it is destroying cinema, I would like to tell you about an interview of Andrew Klaven by Mark Steyn on the Conservative Review Television Network. In the interview, they discussed the fact that political correctness doesn't allow for an antagonist in a terror film named Mohammed, because that would be "islamophobic" and "offensive." Unfortunately, this garbage is accurate and as a result it diminishes the quality of the art. You see, terrorism films are frightening when they are realistic. So when you have a radical Islamic terrorist in your film named Terry Johnson from Idaho, it is less practical and therefore, less entertaining. Nowadays, the only enemy or hero we can have is a guy who shoots spider webs out of his arms in a desperate effort not to offend anyone. And while there is absolutely nothing wrong with films like *Spiderman*, there is something very wrong about the fact that most blockbuster films that come out these days are like that because of Hollywood's inability to make put realistic films on the big screen due because of their political agenda.



4) I would be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that casting directors can no longer even pick the actors that best fit the role anymore because if the script they are given calls for a predominantly white cast, and they cast as such, they risk being called bigots. The notion that every film must have a character representing every gender or race is ridiculous -- viewers enjoy realistic scenarios on screen and sometimes the two protagonists in a story are going to be two white males. And believe it or not, not every life story features a transgender gay couple that kills babies. Sorry. And what about this new notion that all genders and races have to be equally represented at award ceremonies? Absurd! You are nominated for an award due to the quality of your work, not due to the color of your skin and to suggest otherwise is literally the definition of racism. Yes, last year's Oscar fiasco entitled #Oscarssowhite involved racism, but not for having a supposedly disproportionate amount of actors of color. What was racist was the fact that it was suggested that actors should be judged based on skin color and not on quality of performance. The awards-race game has gotten so out of hand that this year's nominees, who are mostly non-caucasian, triggered rebuke by the Left because it was obviously fixed in an effort to appease last year's protests. So thank you leftists, now due to your virtue signaling, our Oscar awards are going to be filled with under-qualified candidates.

So in an extremely condensed analysis, this is how the left is destroying one more great thing that we have in our lives. I just hope that they don't go after Nutella next. I love that stuff.

The True Genius of America

By Brian Snow

"Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America... We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." (Barack Obama Speech at 2004 DNC Convention)

About 12 years ago a State Senator from Illinois by the name of Barack Obama stated these words in his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. He reaffirmed the fundamental importance of being one, united nation. Under his vision Americans could belong to various political parties and could even have major differences of opinion on the important issues of the time. However, at the end of the day Barack Obama called for a post-partisan era where a sense of unity was felt amongst all Americans.

Twelve years later, one wonders if the former President's words are still an apt description of the country. Recently, it has become abundantly clear that this country has not lived up to its name; "The United States of America". Rather hyperpolarization driven our politics factions further apart, reaching new heights in the most recent presidential election. With this polarization many have wondered whether America can regain its mojo as a home to a wide range

of political views that can ultimately live in harmony with its counterfactions. Can we reunite this divided country? Do President Obama's words still have a place in the United States of America of 2017?

I believe that the answer to this question lies in

"WHAT MAKES AMERICA GREAT IS THE FACT THAT WHEN WE HAVE DIFFERING OPINIONS AND WE ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS OUR OPINIONS WITHOUT FEAR OF RETRIBUTION."

another statement that President Obama made in the same speech. He said, "Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy; our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal... that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' That is the true genius of America." (Barack Obama Speech at 2004 DNC Convention)

In his speech, President Obama elaborated on what exactly makes America a great nation. Why is the idea of America revered all around the world? He explained that it is not because of anything material, but because of our democracy and the equality that comes with it. What makes America great is the fact that when we have differing opinions and we all have the right to express our opinions without fear of retribution. The democratic values which bind us together in this country are stronger than any disagreements that may push us apart.

The words of President Obama are not only relevant for the country as a whole but for our university as well. Late last year when it came time for the student council elections, it became obvious that there were deep divisions among the various groups of students in our institution. Many students felt that one candidate or another did not represent the values that they wanted to permeate the university. Of course, it is perfectly legitimate for students to disagree over which person will be the best representative for the student body. However, it is important to remember that while we may have disagreements, the ties and values that bind us together are greater than any minor disputes that we may have--just like the United States.

While unfortunately we have not yet entered into this post-partisan era that President Obama excitedly heralded, we can still continue to dream about it. It may not have happened yet but if we continue to believe in "the true genius of America" then it may yet still come in the future.

Leave Health Care Alone: Capitalism 101

By Joey Salvin and the College Republicans

The other day, I was speaking with someone about Obamacare, and I was told that healthcare is a fundamental human right. Of course, it's easy to spread that belief, since it makes a fantastic bumper sticker, and objectors can easily be labeled nasty people who don't care about poor citizens, as I know from personal experience. Therefore, it's important to explain the opposing approach to healthcare and the markets in general.

Few things are worse for a market than unneeded government intervention. For example, politicians constantly deem the healthcare market "special" and therefore in need of some form of drastic government involvement. In the hopes of radically rewriting the current system of healthcare, a team of Democrats have decided that they and their colleagues from Harvard could write a law that defies gravity. They set out to write something so complex and ingenious that only they and their esteemed contemporaries could cause something so abstract to actually work.

In December 2009, Obama hauled America along on a major step towards centralization of the American healthcare system. Obamacare, or the Affordable Care Act (ACA), is regarded as the first step toward single-payer universal healthcare. However, Obama made the critical error in assuming that the government can write a law complex enough to account for all the variables in the market and thus the world. This law is also decidedly socialist, in that it makes the fatal assumption that citizens can be deceived, or are willing to pay for their neighbors' healthcare. In theory, this law would work if it operated in a universe where individuals are motivated by altruism and not the current universe where people are motivated by personal goals and incentives.

Obamacare insurers are required to ignore age and sex, as well as preexisting conditions. These are key predictors of cost, and therefore the pricing system disconnects from the value of the goods being sold, a reality that should make any economist red in the face. The ACA is engineered to account for this price problem by enforcing an individual mandate, where people who would otherwise buy cheaper health insurance are forced to buy ACA insurance. There is a principle called the 'adverse selection problem,' which insists that enrollees are more aware of their current (costly) health conditions than their providers. Thus, recently, disproportionate numbers of enrollees have joined health plans because their benefits outweigh their costs. People who see a bargain run to join Obamacare, while people who see an overpriced product shy away. Obama thought this effect wouldn't occur in the amount that it has, wrongly assuming that government coercion could reduce or eliminate human nature. However, many people opted out, paying a fine and avoiding the individual mandate. Also, fundamentally, promises of free goods incentivize individuals not to save. Why should we save for an emergency when someone else will pay for it? Is it your responsibility to pay for your health or is it your neighbors'?

To bring proof of Obamacare's inefficiency, currently, three of the largest healthcare companies, Aetna, UnitedHealth, and Humana, are either dropping out or making major pullbacks from the Obamacare health insurance exchange markets. In order to correct for losses, these health insurance companies needed to raise premiums (monthly payments), averaging at a 25% increase nationally, and in some states up to 100%. Obama is not a magician, and as the healthcare industry tilts off balance, plans become more expensive.

Defenders of the failed government program insist that only more government involvement can solve the problem. Obama saw problems in the healthcare markets and, rather than liberalising and deregulating the industry and allowing market forces to fill demand, he decided more government subsidies and regulation was necessary. Now that Obamacare

is failing, we see mistaken politicians campaigning for a single-payer approach. The idea that socialism works is a deadly myth that ignores the grueling history of socialism and other market-restricting ideologies. Therefore, we must ask the question of which healthcare system provides the cheapest and most practical plans for *everyone*. There is no doubt that healthcare is fundamentally important, so when conservatives plead to repeal the ACA, it's because they understand that it's only part of the problem.

Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics,

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conceptualized the invisible hand, where, so long as individuals pursue their dreams and passions, and trade is voluntary, markets become more efficient, while progress and innovation produce extraordinary achievements. Free market competition has resulted in all the outstanding services and gadgets we consume every day, and has brought the United States to the pinnacle of success, where the standard of living is greater than anywhere in the world at any time throughout history.

However, the great achievement of the United States is the idea that the people can use government as a means to protect individual freedoms and opportunity for the pursuit of happiness. In economic affairs, government is meant to be an umpire protecting individuals from harm, not a player in the game itself. This is based on the fact that free markets achieve what government mandate cannot, ultimately working through the principle that people operate due to incentives for personal gain. In a free market, the best way to become wildly successful is to maximize utility of resources and provide fantastic goods or services, filling the needs of fellow citizens. In a socialist society, the way to become wildly successful is to con the system, or become politically powerful enough to coerce the general population. When government centralizes, the initial redistribution may seem beneficial. However, investment is greatly reduced, innovation is killed, progress flat-lines, entrepreneurship is destroyed, and then more government is needed to bear down on the freedoms of its citizens in order to account for its overbearing costs.

As much as it might offend your progressive cousin at Yale, healthcare is a commodity and must be treated as one. Competition and innovation is necessary in order to provide the best possible utility out of the healthcare market. When unnecessary government mandates and regulations enter into a free market, personal responsibility is greatly decreased, leading to costly inefficiency and stagnant innovation and growth.

Healthcare is an important human need; however, insisting that it's a human right, one that individuals are coerced into purchasing even against their will, is deceptive and wrong. By painting a misleading picture of greedy capitalists, many on the left have pushed a false fantasy: an all-caring, benevolent government that can solve everyone's problems, so long as taxes are increased on "the rich." This type of thinking is detrimental to those worst off in society. Replacing a competitive healthcare market with a government monopoly that uses coercion to enforce its objectives is tyrannical, counter-economic, and dangerously counterproductive.

The claim that we need to be more like Denmark or Canada is a stretch that ignores several key differences between them and the USA. The Frasier

Institute, a Canadian think tank, recently published that it takes, on average, 18.3 weeks between referral from a general practitioner and receipt of treatment in Canada. The study also insisted that everything about the Canadian system is slower and weaker than it could be. We need to end the myth that something can be "free." Nothing in the universe is free. Everything comes at a cost. Where that cost is hidden is another question entirely.

A single-payer system uses the logic of cutting down a tree that repeatedly feeds the townspeople in order to take all the fruits in a faster manner. It may be good in the beginning, but eventually you run out of fruit. Obamacare has run out of money and will continue to bleed. Right now, people can't buy cheaper and less inclusive plans because health insurers aren't offering them. If you gave free reign to insurers to innovate as they like, they would make less inclusive, yet cheaper plans for those who can't afford a more luxurious plan. You can buy a meal from McDonalds for \$5.00. This isn't because the government decided we needed to create meal plans for cheaper. It's because its founders saw market opportunity in feeding lower income individuals.

With cheaper healthcare comes cheaper insurance, and right now there are many steps Trump could take to liberalize the market and reduce regulation in healthcare. For example, it costs on average \$2.75 billion to get a drug on the market. Most of these costs come not from creating the drug, but from overreaching FDA regulations regarding drug application. Overbearing patent laws also make drug companies safe from competition, essentially increasing prices of drugs. Scaling back these regulations enforced by the FDA would drastically decrease the price of medicine. Competition would effectively create better and cheaper drugs at a faster rate. We must be extremely skeptical of any organization, especially with federal power, which has control over a particular market, such as the FDA.



The effects of the free market have made America the richest country, with an incredibly high standard of living. In the USA, we have the ability to fulfill our dreams and aspirations, while becoming wealthy. As long as government does not pick winners and losers by redistributing money to inefficient institutions or implementing unfair tax systems riddled with loopholes, society is best off. Survival of the fittest in a free market should apply to businesses who compete to create the best, cheapest, highest quality products and services for consumers. Healthcare is very important, and Donald Trump has the opportunity to fix the current mess by cutting regulations and liberalizing the healthcare and insurance market, thus letting market forces fill the health care/insurance needs of *all* citizens.

The YU Student Guide to Getting a Job in Finance

By Evan Axelrod

As we at Yeshiva University begin the Spring semester, the summer draws ever closer. For those looking into a career in the financial services industry, it is important to prepare well in advance for whatever position you are looking for. A career in financial services could include a plethora of positions and opportunities. For students looking into working at an investment bank, most junior employees start out at the analyst level, with the exception of an Equity Research role, where one starts out as an associate. There are opportunities for students within Investment Banking, Equity Research, Wealth Management, among many other departments. The purpose of this article is to give students, primarily freshmen and sophomores with an interest in finance, a guide for what they should do to prepare themselves for the recruitment process.

There are several essentials that candidates must have to lock down a job after Junior year. First off is a resume. A resume is usually the first item firms look at to determine whether you have the right credentials and characteristics for the job. Ideal candidates should have a strong GPA, prior work experience, and involvement in extracurricular activities, preferably with leadership positions. For a freshman starting their first or second semester on campus, this is probably a tall order. This is where interest and ambition comes in. For example, by signing up and involving yourself in the Yeshiva University Investment Club or Finance Club, you can show your contacts that you have a drive to learn more about finance. By joining these clubs, you can learn more about the industry, while also having some solid extracurricular activities to put on your resume. In addition, members who are the most committed and enthusiastic about participating in the club may receive leadership positions by the time recruitment season in Junior year comes around. This checks the leadership box that firms are constantly looking for.

Another important section of the resume is the section reserved for work experience. This will require the most effort on your part. For those without prior work experience, it is extremely difficult to land a full-time offer, let alone a summer internship. Many freshmen and sophomores are unsure of how to begin the process of searching for an internship. Some students have family friends that work in finance who they can reach out to for internships, but for those without this network the

first step should be to recognize that you're not alone and more importantly, recognize that Yeshiva University offers an amazing alumni network that has—and will continue to help—current YU students land internships and jobs. This is where the Career Center and LinkedIn comes in. Don't wait any longer to book an appointment at the Career Center. This way you have a place to go to get advice on your resume, networking skills, and interviewing skills. The Career Center is also in touch with alumni who they can connect you with. LinkedIn is another extremely useful tool and comes in handy for the second step in your internship search. Think of LinkedIn

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as the Facebook for professionals, without all the memes and “fake news.” LinkedIn is your portal to get in touch with a multitude of professionals, whether Yeshiva University alumni or professionals within your industry of interest. All you have to do is create a profile, add in some detail about yourself, and invite professionals to connect with you. Once the third step is complete, think about reaching out to them either via email or through LinkedIn's internal messaging system.

Now, although many people are willing to help students out, some just don't have the time to answer every message request and email sent to them. If you don't get a response, don't take it personally, it happens to everyone. The email you are sending out is considered a cold-email; usually you will have no prior relationship with the contact, other than possibly the shared YU connection, so it is similar to walking up to a stranger and introducing yourself. This thought makes many students uncomfortable and deters them from reaching out to

their contacts. However, it is essential to think about the cold-email as a low-risk/high reward situation. Just ask yourself, “What do I have to lose?” The answer should be nothing, other than the few minutes it takes to write the email. However, the upside is tremendous. Perhaps the person responds and offers to have a phone call with you to discuss what he/she does. This can develop either into a job offer (for those who are lucky) or he/she can put you in touch with professionals in their network and your web of connections can expand from there. This seems to be an easy trade-off. After reading this article, make a LinkedIn. If you already have one, make it a habit to connect with a certain number of professionals in your field of interest every week until you either have a job for the summer or can ask your contacts to refer you to people they know who are looking for an intern.

The networking process is perhaps the most important factor—in addition to luck—in getting an internship or job. When networking, be mindful about presenting yourself in a professional manner, either on the phone or in person. This can have a positive impression on the person you are meeting with, or a regrettably bad impression if not handled correctly. When preparing to speak to someone, whether in person or on the phone, make sure to research, research, and research some more. Read up on the industry and recent current events. Understand your contact's role in the firm he/she works for and read about the firm's history and its role in the financial services industry. This preparation can make it or break it for you.

To understand the importance of an internship, I recently spoke with a Yeshiva University student who is set to work as an Investment Banking Analyst at a top-tier investment bank upon graduation. He emphasized that, “Not only do internships provide employers with the confidence that the student has attained valuable work experience, but also aids the student in his learning experience from the facet of narrowing down his specific interests within finance.”

By now, there are three items to prioritize to increase your chances of securing a finance job come graduation. Build your resume, start expanding your network, and obtain a summer internship within finance.

Don't waste time. Come this weekend you should have an idea of what clubs you want to join, who you want to get in touch with, and what method you will use to achieve your early professional goals.

Good Luck!

The Essentials of Human Psychology and Financial Decisions

By Ezra Berman

In the late 1800's, psychologist Wilhelm Wundt incorporated different scientific research methods to investigate the reaction times of his subjects. Wundt ultimately viewed these methods as the study of human consciousness, and was eager to apply experimental methods to study mental processes. Since inception, the field of psychology has been explored in a variety of fields ranging from business to education. In recent years, behavioral finance and economics have become a fertile ground for many new research projects because of its recent acceptance within the field of traditional finance. Behavioral finance and economics attempt to combine human rationale and conventional finance and economics to further understand and explain why and how people make irrational financial and economic decisions.

As the fields of human psychology and finance have grown, it is essential to understand the findings of this field in order to make better financial decisions. Behavioral finance and economics are very significant, because unlike conventional finance and economics, which assume humans act rationally (e.g. perceiving the same level of risk in identical decision-making scenarios), behavioral finance and economics take into account the repeated mistakes of an imperfect human decision-making model. Psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky emphasized this by presenting an idea known as “prospect theory,” which states that people value gains and losses differently. The theory further explains that

losses have more of an impact on people than equivalent gains, otherwise known as loss aversion. This can be demonstrated by analyzing the following two cases: 1) A person receives \$1000 2) A person receives \$2000 but loses \$1000. Although in both cases the result is a net gain of \$1000, studies show that most people view the single gain more favorably. Experiments similar to this one further prove why behavioral finance and economics are so important in understanding how humans make

“BEHAVIORAL FINANCE AND ECONOMICS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE REPEATED MISTAKES OF AN IMPERFECT HUMAN DECISION-MAKING MODEL.”

financial decisions.

Human psychological biases within economics, such as “prospect theory” pertain to several specific irrational financial decisions. As explained earlier, humans view financial losses in a much harsher fashion than financial gains, and this is evident in stock market transactions where the disposition effect often affects investor performance. The disposition effect is the tendency of investors to sell winning stocks prematurely in order to assure themselves of gains, despite the potential of the gains becoming much larger in the future, as well as the

tendency to hold losing stocks in their portfolio with the hopes of them rebounding in order to avoid recognizing the prospective loss. The issue of loss aversion, which triggers the disposition effect, is also prevalent when investors contemplate which stocks to invest in. While it is clear that investors chase past performance, a study conducted by behavioral economist Richard Thaler demonstrated that stocks with a high mean return over the past few years typically had a subsequent low return, while stocks that exhibited poor returns had improved performance in the future. Because many investors focus their attention on past performance, their perception of the stock is altered. This recency bias ultimately leads investors to allocate money into stocks, that according to Thaler's study, will perform worse in the future. This is where conventional finance and behavioral finance clash. Conventional finance assumes that nobody will follow this investing method because it is irrational for an outlook on a stock to depend on past performance. While Thaler's studies suggest that poor stocks may perform well in the future, they do not indicate that investing in stocks based on previous performance is rational. Unfortunately, because humans are irrational beings, and therefore are often too caught up on past results they are presented with an incorrect investing framework.

Regardless of the investments made, humans possess biases in the way that they process certain information and

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Michael Peres: His 1-year Journey from the YU library to Owner of 2 LA Tech Companies

By Adam Kramer

Tell me about yourself, what is your nationality, background, education.

I'm a Moroccan Jew, and was born and raised in Montreal. I moved to NYC for 6 years where I graduated in Computer Science and Pure Mathematics. I currently live in Los Angeles, pursuing an MS in Bio-Medical Engineering. I also run 2 fast growing tech companies that cater to a wide spectrum of clients, from startups to celebrities. I'm also the CTO of an online movie streaming company, and I'm working on other projects such as a new framework for web development and news aggregating systems. I'm becoming engrossed in the untapped realms of biotech, including research in reversing the process of biological aging.

Can you give a brief explanation of your businesses?

HexaTiger.com - A company which aims to create state of the art designs with very efficient code. We generally cater this service to public figures or companies that are interested in tailor based designs. We do more than just make the website; we essentially take over their entire virtual division and build up our company alongside theirs. We have recently opened up a division for social media marketing, such as search engine optimization (SEO) and unique Instagram marketing services. Current clients include Ryan Serhant from the hit TV Show Million Dollar Listing New York (www.ryanserhant.com), DrinkH2 Rose (www.drinkh2rose.com), and of course the YU Commentator (www.yucommentator.org).

HectoFox.com - A company that is only 8 months old and already boasts over 300 clients running all their online services with us. We provide high quality cloud hosting services and look to offer useful features that our competitors don't offer at our prices/quality.

TohuMovies.com - I'm CTO at Tohu Movies, a new and promising online movie streaming company offering a competitive service to Netflix and Hulu.

ScienceHawk.org - A free service which creates a live stream of science news updates from around the internet. This was built over a winter vacation and the underlying algorithm is currently in the process of being bought out by another tech company.

IsraelTalk.org - Similar to ScienceHawk.org, but this free service fetches live middle eastern news instead of science news.

What do you credit to Hexa Tiger's and Hecto Fox's exponential growth in the past year?

I have worked in the industry since the age of 12. It all started off with building computers in my basement, to building server systems in corporate offices. I have since moved over to the virtual realm of Software Engineering and cloud computing. Hexa Tiger is about 16 months old and Hecto Fox is about 8 months old. Both are growing impressively fast and show strong promise. One of the reasons for their success is that I have used all my work opportunities to take jobs that made me smarter rather than richer. I only turned profitable recently. The education I have acquired in this patient process has directly given me the skills needed to professionally manage and adapt to the complexities of 2 expanding tech companies.

What advice do you give to those leaving YU and entering the work world?

I personally believe that one of the most common mistakes individuals make when transitioning into the work industry is their lack of patience. They tend to be concerned with making money, rather than with the essential steps required to achieve it. If your sole focus is immediate monetary return you may be selling yourself short and compromising on the far greater asset, your ability hone your skills as a master of your field.

Therefore, it's truly imperative that one be patient in their pursuits, mastering every opportunity for knowledge along their economic journey. If you are willing to go to the trenches for knowledge, you will become capable of delivering to the world what others can't. After such, you

will have the confidence to lead and improvise in your own unique fashion, something which renders you an irreplaceable asset. When such a philosophy is exercised making money is less of an immediate focus but rather, the inevitable byproduct of stellar service.

How long ago did you graduate YU? Has YU offered you any valuable skills? If so, please elaborate.

YU has provided me with more than words can describe. First, studying advanced Mathematics at YU provided a lens in which I view science in an abstract and in-depth manner. The ramifications of this have extended way beyond my academic career, and even past my professional career, it has directly influenced the way I articulate and philosophize life. For that, I thank YU, YU's Math department and its former Chair, Thomas Otway.

Second, YU has allowed me to realize the true value of time, how to efficiently organize and manage a busy day. As many readers know, YU requires all students to exercise a full time curriculum in both Hebrew and secular studies. Managing a full course load of Hebrew studies alongside a full course load of advanced sciences and Mathematics taught me how to effectively make use of every moment throughout my day.

Third, YU helped form my personal ethical and moral foundation, which has influenced how I interact with my peers and clients.

What role do you see Bio-Medical engineering playing in the tech industry?

The science of today is the technology of tomorrow. For instance, number theorists studied prime numbers decades before they saw any practical application for them. Today, prime numbers have a wide array of practical uses, serve as the foundation for data encryption theory, and are the backbone to your safe surfing of the internet.

With respect to my current field of study, I strongly believe that Biotech will become prevalent in the near future. Biological systems will eventually become inferior to technological systems, as their progression is confined by darwinian evolution. Such systems are constantly assessing their environment and adapting at a slow and gradual pace by means of the successive genetic mutations and variations of offspring. On the contrary, technological systems are subject to the exponential rate of growth described by Moore's law. That being said, biological systems will soon become existentially reliant and aided by technological systems. Given our current progressive reliance on technology, there is little reason

to assume otherwise.

The near future would result in a relationship where a tiny increment of time results in a huge rate of technological growth. To put this specific point into perspective, imagine you traveled back in time 250 years (insignificant amount of time relative to the age of our species), before the discovery of electricity. Telling anyone about the internet, smartphones or space travel would make you seem like a crazy person. However, 250 years later, it's a natural part of life. This rate of growth is exponential and there is no reason to believe this would change. So if you were to tell us about life in just 50 years from now, you would seem exponentially crazier.

In conclusion, it's very difficult for one to make specific predictions that hold meaningful weight about the future of biotech. However, one can say with confidence, these fields are merging and those who develop strong skills in both fields will have a tremendous and unique advantage when such a time comes to fruition. I don't have a meaningful prediction of what I will do with my current bio-med studies but I'm very confident that the educational investments will reap benefits in the long run.

How do you balance being a student and a professional at the same time? E.g. how do you balance business meetings with having to create time to do homework, etc.?

To me, they are genuinely one of the same. My passion for both share a common and inseparable core, working cohesively to aid my progression forward in life. The pursuit for knowledge should never expire and the success in my professional life is directly supported by this pillar of education. For this reason, I will always commit to strong educational pursuits alongside my professional works.

Specifically, I am constantly juggling between the two and prioritizing based on deadlines. I enjoy every single moment of what I do, whether I'm engrossed in the trenches of deep thought, or working all night building an awesome website for a client.

Please don't hesitate to reach out. I am currently looking for interns to fill the following areas: Project Manager, Graphic Designer, Server Admin, PHP/ Wordpress Developer, Sales.

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Update from the Syms Academic Integrity Committee

By Adam Kramer

The Syms Academic Integrity Committee was created in fall 2015 in order to facilitate better communication between the students and faculty of Yeshiva University's Sy Syms School of Business. The committee was created by Dean Moses Pava and is currently led by Michael Klein and Fraidy Steinberger. The goal of the committee is to help students understand that integrity is more important than academic success, that cheating is the antithesis of what YU stands for, and for students to realize the severity of cheating, both ethically and halachically.

To start the conversation, we sent out a survey to all YU students to hear what they had to say on the matter, and received over 200 responses. The three main points we wanted to gather from the polls and comments section in the survey were how prevalent students felt cheating was in the classroom, what students considered cheating, and how they suggest we, together with the faculty, eradicate cheating in our school. This article will discuss some of the findings from this anonymous survey, and include some direct quotes on cheating and related topics.

Students generally agreed that cheating can be defined as "people obtaining information that is not theirs and presenting it as their own." Students gave various examples of cheating including plagiarism, paying someone to write a paper, using notes or other material during a test, and having access to an old exam and using it to study. Some direct quotes included were, "tricking the test giver into thinking you know something by way of external help," "working together on a take home midterm," and "discussing answers with a classmate who hasn't taken an exam yet." Interestingly, one student responded that taking ADHD medication when it's not prescribed for you would be considered cheating as well.

However, "test banks" seemed to be more of a grey issue for students. For those who may have not heard of test banks, they are Microsoft Word documents, provided to professors, that contain thousands of possible questions that professors can use when creating tests. Although they are intended for teachers' use only, students often have access to them. Theoretically, by preparing all of the thousands of questions in a test bank, a student can guarantee that any question that is on their test they will have seen beforehand. One answer from our survey relating to test banks said the following, "if a teacher is using test banks and old exams then it's not cheating to

prepare with the same documents. The teachers are in full right to create a test but if it's known that every test is a replica of last year's test, or that they use the same test banks, then there is an issue with the faculty."

We also had survey responses discussing the similar practice of using old tests from the same course to study. One of the responses we received claimed "you should be able to study with old tests because the teacher should have made the effort to write a new test" and "I don't believe that seeing a copy of a old test in advance is cheating if you don't have it with you at the time of taking the test yourself, because then it's just like having really good notes."

We also received a few interesting responses discussing the general practice of cheating. Some students complained that "cheating hurts the class' curve, which is unfair to the class and that "cheating allows an unfair advantage to students and it takes away from the legitimacy of the school." 77.7% of responders said that knowledge of their peers cheating negatively affects how they look at them.

While 91.7% of students believe cheating to be wrong only 72.4% say that if an exam is unfair then cheating is still not allowed. One student wrote, "I find that most people I know who have cheated have only done it in a class where the teacher was either expecting unreasonable things for a test, or hadn't done an adequate job teaching the material and the student was under pressure to teach it to herself." Although 91.7% of students agree that cheating is not acceptable both ethically and Halachically, one student explains that, "The pressure to cheat on exams is very high in YU which is extremely unfortunate. It's prevalent in the student body and not fair to those of us who are trying to keep up our moral, ethical, and Halachic standards."

Many students used the comment section of the survey to suggest ideas on how to minimize cheating throughout our student body. Their suggestions varied from implementing stricter testing rules and enacting harsher punishments, to changing the style of tests to having less take-home tests. We also had survey answers focusing more on the school's culture, and suggesting the school can do a better job of teaching morals and reinforcing "that it's more important to get a lower grade and not cheat, than to cheat." Additionally, students suggested ideas such as "formalizing and publicizing study groups as a setting where students can review material together." Other students suggested that professors should "clearly

define what needs to be done in order to succeed and offer "extra credit for poor grades on exams."

There were also survey responses that suggested innovative approaches to solving this issue. One student suggested that the faculty consider alternative ways of assessing a student's comprehension of the material instead of traditional classroom testing, saying, "professors should use papers, projects, and other assignments which are equally capable of assessing how well each student has retained the information, while removing the pressure associated with the timed, in-class, eyes-on-you environment of taking a test."

Looking a little closer at some of the data that we collected, although over 90% of students said they believe cheating to be wrong, 55.6% of students said if they were to cheat they would cheat in the moment while 9.5% said they would plan it beforehand. This poll points out how students view cheating as conditional and may opt towards cheating when they see themselves at a disadvantage if they don't cheat.

Another issue that emerged from a number of survey responses was that some students feel that only grades and tests are valued in school as opposed to mastery of the subject, which causes them to devalue the education they are receiving. When they begin to devalue the education and classroom material, they'll become more inclined to cheat. Additionally, students who cheat fail to understand that aside from receiving a college education, they are forming a reputation with their peers, and future colleagues. In the future, when they are applying for a job, this reputation will influence the recommendations they receive. It is harder to recommend a peer who has a history of cheating than a peer with an honest reputation and a possibly lower GPA.

A final takeaway from these surveys pertained to encouraging the school administration and professors to continue to emphasize the importance of academic integrity. Cheating is a clear violation of gneivat daat, not only by deceiving the teacher and getting a false grade, but by receiving a college degree which is not truly reflective of the education and standards the certificate represents. This, in turn, leads to a lifelong issue of gneivat daat, from getting accepted to graduate school to getting a job. With the continued efforts by the faculty and our academic integrity committee, we hope that students will come to view academic integrity as more than, in the words of one of the survey responses, "just another institutional rule."

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own strengths and weaknesses. Rabbi Jesse Horn, a Rabbi at Yeshivat Hakotel, suggests that this comes to teach us that only after we have gathered can our individuality be productive, and can our unique character traits complement each other.

YU is unique in that it is a place where we are all gathered. Jews who will someday be forced into one of the many boxes society creates. We are the institution in which future leaders, rabbis, doctors, social workers, lawyers, and teachers are nurtured. We will develop into a group of professionals who will all continue to relate to their religion very differently. Fast forward 20 years, the current students of YU will be living their lives very differently from another. Will they remain members of every artificial group we

have created? The culture of the Jewish world is at our fingertips. Our job is to create an attitude on campus that will allow us to mold the culture of orthodoxy when we leave this safe space. It is our immense duty and responsibility, to make this gathering one of more than just proximity. We share the same Batei Midrash, Dining halls, dorm buildings, and classes, but let's start sharing more than that. As a community let's start sharing ideas, openly. Let's us lower our defense mechanisms so that we can try to learn from and with one another.

In my short time here I have found that I have more in common with people who I couldn't have felt more different from. I have learnt that when I am open, honest, and non-confrontational, I am a better me. Honest dialogue with peers who hold differing viewpoints has swayed my opinions on some matters, and solidified them on others. If we used the time

that we spend trying to label people to start talking, to respectfully question each other, not as attackers but as people with a genuine interest in one another, we could do a lot of good for the orthodox world. If we can do this, then we have the potential to send forth students, whose passion for unity surpasses their passion for correctness. We have an opportunity to create unity to pave the way toward a less divisive Orthodoxy, Judaism, and world. Let us take this unorganized clamoring of instruments and turn it into an award winning symphony.

There are very few groups of people presented with the opportunity to create a new culture. People who have been presented with the ability to make a tangible change in our children's lives, let's not let that go to waste.

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events. Within the field of behavioral finance we are most often confronted by confirmation bias, optimism bias, and hindsight bias. Confirmation bias creates problems for investors because it causes them to gravitate towards information that will confirm their belief regardless of the information being good or bad. An example of optimism bias is when an investor's holdings are performing poorly; they will look for any news to support their belief that the holdings will recover. Optimism bias is when investors think that they are at less risk of experiencing negative results in relation to other investors. In my opinion, this bias is demonstrated by every investor today, because

everybody thinks that their investments are "the best" and will outperform others' investments. A few months ago, before the presidential elections took place, Wall Street, along with the majority of polls were sure that Hillary Clinton would become the 45th President of the United States. As the election results poured in, and indicated that Donald Trump would become the next President, market futures suffered tremendously. Despite the mere few hours of market downfall, the market has performed excellently since Election Day. Most notably, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has surpassed the 20,000 mark for the first time in its history. Hindsight bias, which is the human inclination to believe that a certain outcome was predictable only after the outcome has occurred, is evidenced by people's perception that they knew how

well the market would perform in the months following the election. Furthermore, when it comes to investing in general, hindsight bias is the investor's tendency to say, "I told you so" when analyzing historical market performance.

The field of behavioral finance has, and continues to expand substantially. In order for investors to be successful in the market, it is essential to properly understand the way humans behave, and explore our behavior within the realm of finance. By understanding ideas such as loss aversion, confirmation bias, optimism bias, and hindsight bias, investors can become more prosperous. If people succeed in doing so and focus on rationally valuing companies and the market, there is a greater chance that they will meet their future financial goals.



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