

"A SHADOW-LESS
PUNXSUTAWNEY
MEANS AN EARLY
SPRING?"

THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

"I'LL BELIEVE IT
WHEN I SEE IT. IT'S
STILL FREEZING!"

VOL. LXXXIV

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16 Handles to Open in Washington Heights in February

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Jan. 12.

16 Handles will open its new Washington Heights location this February. Located at 400 Audubon Ave. at the corner of 185th St. and Audubon Ave., the new store will offer another kosher food option to students of the Wilf Campus and to the broader Washington Heights community.

The frozen yogurt franchise confirmed, in an email to The Commentator, that the store projects an opening in February, with an official opening date to be announced soon. "We're excited to be nearing the end of what we know has been a long wait for our Washington Heights location's opening," wrote the email. "We are in the home stretch."

"We're looking very much forward to being a part of the Washington Heights and Yeshiva community."

16 Handles

The email also confirmed that the store will have kosher certification and that it will serve exclusively kosher products. "We're looking very much forward to being a part of the Washington Heights and Yeshiva community," the email concluded.

The news from 16 Handles about the Washington Heights store follows several years of difficulties and delays dating back to early 2016. As recently as Sept. 2018, 16 Handles still did not have a definite date for when the Washington Heights store would open, aside from an assurance that it would open in "the very near future."

"I am excited that 16 Handles is opening," remarked Ezra Splaver (YC '21). "It's nice to have more food options in the Heights and I think 16 Handles will be a good place to have a study break or to hang out with friends."

16 Handles is a self-serve frozen dessert shop with over 30 locations in five states — mostly in the Tri-State Area, but also in upstate NY and in Boca Raton, FL. Stores offer a variety of frozen desserts, including frozen yogurt, Fro-Yo cakes, waffle bowls, Fro-Yo sandwiches, take-home pints and toppings to-go, as well as smoothies and shakes.

Other 16 Handles locations include a store near 3rd Ave. and E. 30th St. that students at the Beren Campus frequent, as well as stores in the Upper West Side — one near Broadway and W. 98th St. and another near Amsterdam Ave. and W. 75th St. — that are only a short subway ride away from the Wilf Campus. 16 Handles frozen yogurt was recently featured at the Beren Campus' student council-sponsored "Cram and Crunch" event during finals.



16 Handles will be located at the corner of 185th St. and Audubon Ave.

THE COMMENTATOR

Kalinsky Appointed Dean of UTS, Penner to Focus on RIETS

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER



Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky

YU NEWS

Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky was appointed as Dean for Men's Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) on Jan. 18. Rabbi Kalinsky previously held the role of Associate Dean of UTS and replaces Rabbi Menachem Penner as Dean. Rabbi Penner will continue to serve as the Max and Marion Grill Dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS).

The Men's UTS Department is responsible for the four undergraduate Torah morning programs which are the Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP), the Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP), the James Striar School (JSS) and the Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies (IBC).

"I hope that the students can truly appreciate the amount of time and emotional energy that Rabbi Kalinsky devotes to the Yeshiva. He cares deeply about every aspect of their experience on the campus as well as their futures," Rabbi Penner wrote in an email to The Commentator.

Rabbi Penner explained that he has

worked closely with Rabbi Kalinsky over the past five years and said that they will "continue to work closely together going forward." He added that he hopes to "focus even more attention on the *semikha* program, the *kollelei elyon* and the development of RIETS both in the Yeshiva and out in the community."

"I hope that the students can truly appreciate the amount of time and emotional energy that Rabbi Kalinsky devotes to the Yeshiva."

Rabbi Menachem Penner

When asked for comment, Rabbi Kalinsky directed The Commentator towards a YU News press release about the promotion. He also stated that no one will be appointed Associate Dean "at this point in time."

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THE COMMENTATOR

2018-2019

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BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Managing Editor
SHOSHY CIMENT

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 84 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 Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.

Visit us online at
www.yucommentator.org.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Will the Real President Berman Please Stand Up?

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Following his appointment as Yeshiva University's fifth president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman quickly became a presence on campus. For much of the Spring 2017 semester, Rabbi Berman lived in the Morgenstern dormitory and was regularly spotted chatting with students in YU's cafeterias, libraries and hallways. Rabbi Berman convened meetings with varied student focus groups in which he listened to students as they expressed their ideals, concerns and general thoughts about the institution.

President Berman's penchant for listening and brainstorming extended into his first year in office, which saw the creation of the "YU Ideas," an initiative that hosted seminars and lectures about themes related to education, leadership, values and "the world of tomorrow."

But President Berman's transition period, as one would expect from any new leader, was defined by abstract thinking and planning. However, his transition did not end after only one semester. It did not last two semesters, nor even three semesters. Arguably, one and a half years after President Berman's investiture, he is still functionally serving a primarily transitional role. Aside from a handful of examples, President Berman has not publicly instantiated his accumulated knowledge into practical, tangible leadership.

By avoiding any concrete stance regarding campus politics, President Berman allows preventable inefficiencies and dissatisfaction to persist.

Though the dearth of practical presidential leadership is evident in several capacities, it is perhaps most evident in President Berman's public addresses.

In his recent interview with The Commentator, President Berman described the most crucial role of his presidency as the responsibility to "formulate, articulate and represent the vision of the future for Yeshiva University" to the student bodies, faculties, alumni and other groups. Yet even a particularly creative reader would struggle to identify substance within President Berman's 45-minute interview. President Berman referred to vague notions like "market skills," "the world of tomorrow" and "leaders of the future," while avoiding direct answers. When asked about LGBTQ events on campus, President Berman not only pivoted to his vague and amorphous "Five Torot," but proceeded to spend several minutes reciting a full exposition of those values, a hackneyed account that he has delivered countless times to different audiences.

President Berman's habit of appealing to broad truisms — not only in the recent interview, which was one of a very small handful of his public interactions with the student body, but also in many of his other addresses to the broader community — is, in itself, unobjectionable. Such catchphrases and idioms appeal to basic institutional and communal values that all but demand a head nod from anyone in the extended YU community. This approach is not so different from those so often exemplified by politicians who speak in vague generalities to maximize unity of minds and minimize disagreements.

At a certain point, though, a politician must actualize generalizations into real substance if he is to have a practical impact as a leader.

Throughout the interview, President Berman exemplified

his substance-aversion with his refrain that "students should speak to each other with the right administrators and come up with the right vehicles." "I have confidence in our student body that if they work together, they can find the right directions and vehicles for these kinds of issues," he asserted. In these and similar expressions, President Berman effectively shifted the blame for issues related to women's Torah learning, the undergraduate Shabbat experience and LGBTQ issues on campus to students rather than to administrators.

Not only is such an articulation tone-deaf to the facts on the ground — YU's recent history is replete with instances of students presenting solutions and pitching ideas that have been ignored or warped by administrators — but it also avoids the very role that President Berman claims to serve: articulating and representing YU's vision. Students so often reach bureaucratic impasses — whether in trying to secure approval for events, create clubs or simply express themselves — due to YU's vague positions on its values. By avoiding any concrete stance regarding campus politics, President Berman allows preventable inefficiencies and dissatisfaction to persist.

President Berman's ongoing transitional period is evident not only in his recent interview and other public addresses, but also in YU's innovations, or lack thereof, during his presidency.

For all the talk of "building tomorrow, today" and "the world of tomorrow," there have been few new programs and minimal infrastructure improvements over the past year and a half. President Berman initiated new pathway programs between YU and Israel, whose nascent impact is still unclear. President Berman's administration also brought a revamped Career Center, which was no doubt a positive achievement, as well as a moderate expansion of the Katz School, an initiative that began during Richard Joel's presidency. But

faculty morale and salaries remain low. Enrollment and course offerings are in decline. And the institution still maintains its speculative grade B3 rating from Moody's Investors Service.

Perhaps institutional innovations and improvements take more than two years to roll out and to actualize. However, there is no reason for any further delay in the president stepping up as a substantive visionary.

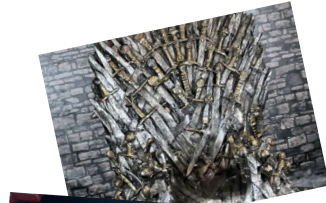
President Berman might begin showing substance by articulating institutional stances on some core issues: Where does YU draw the line regarding permissible speakers and clubs on campus? What is YU's precise position on the current state and the desired future of women's Torah learning? Where exactly does YU lie on the continuum between Yeshiva and University?

Taking substantive stances will inevitably alienate some and generate criticism. However, the role of a university president, and certainly a YU president, yields criticism regardless of

There is no reason for any further delay in the president stepping up as a substantive visionary.

what vision the president articulates. From President Berman's perspective, there is not much to lose by beginning to articulate direct messages. His experience in education and his extended transition period of listening and meeting with constituents certainly enable him to take on such a role.

A vision of only obvious clichés unites the community in vague values while championing nothing. It is time for President Berman to stop talking about "the world of tomorrow" and start articulating substance today.



1 “Game of Thrones” Trailer
Chills, literal and figurative chills.



2 YU Thailand Trip
Sounds like *Avodah Zarah*, but ok.



3 Return of Friday L.A.B. *Chevrah* Edition
So, the week after we note that the chevrah disappeared, SOY announces its triumphant return. Do we take full credit for this plot twist? Yes, absolutely we do. Just one request: Can you start serving Key Food grapes? #7up/7downforsoypres #getgushandshaalvimoutofsoy



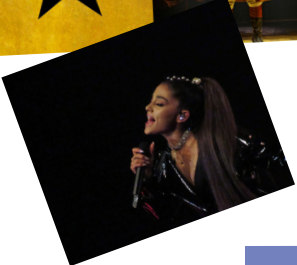
4 Couple’s Urinals
The perfect way to increase your *kesher* with your rebbe. Just remember, don’t cross the streams.



5 Bibi at Migdal Oz
This was followed by a *sevev* and corresponding arts and crafts *chug* led by Tekoa’s most famous potter where the *talmidot* had the opportunity to sculpt their emotional connection to *Am* and *Eretz Yisroel*.



6 YU Grad Wins Adult Film “Oscar”
And people say that the humanities are ignored at YU.



7 7 Rings
I know we mention her a lot, but this one has the number 7 in it! How could we not acknowledge it?

7 UP ⚡



1 #FrumFebruary
Yeah, this will definitely make everyone feel welcomed and included here. Great job, guys.



2 Trump Was Lonely Over the Holidays
Out-of-towner problems, am I right?



3 Date em’ till you hate em’
This is one of the worst pieces of advice I have ever heard and that is including my meetings with academic advising.



4 Hallmark Channel
Why...Why is everything so white?



5 Israel Club
We get it, Israel invented the cherry tomato.



6 Michael Bay
Crazed director hyped up on toxic masculinity and misplaced patriotism or film genius who knows he is just giving us exactly what we want?



7 License
The only thing more ridiculous is...LOL, just kidding. You thought I forgot? A woman has not spoken at Klein@9 for 415 days. #anagramsarefun

Something for Everyone in ‘Tevye Served Raw’

By SHOSHY CIMENT

Whoever said that Yiddish was a dying language must have never visited New York. From the National Yiddish Rep to the critically acclaimed, Off Broadway-bound Yiddish “Fiddler on the Roof,” the Big Apple has made a name for itself as a hub of Yiddish language appreciation, especially in the performing arts.

“Tevye Served Raw,” or the dramatized tales of Sholem Aleichem, is the latest of these special manifestations to hit New York. And it’s dripping with trademark Yiddish-ness. The website’s advertisement was correct in its proclamation of, “You’ll laugh, you’ll cry, you’ll krechtz.” The hour and a half runtime flew by in a blur of Yiddish aphorisms, insults, love letters and songs. And true to its name, Tevye, the beloved dairyman from the Aleichem-inspired “Fiddler on the Roof,” made a few noteworthy appearances.

But “Tevye Served Raw” is more than vignettes from the stories of one of the greatest Jewish writers of all time. As my plus one for the evening put it, much of the show was like a director’s cut of “Fiddler on the Roof,” arguably one of the Aleichem’s greatest contributions to the global theatrical canon. The audience—mostly Yiddish-familiar (judging by the timing of the laughs) — was treated to what can only be described as the “Fiddler” scenes that never made it onto the stage: Tevye and Golde’s meeting with the priest after they discover that their daughter, Chava, has converted to Christianity, Tevye’s extended monologues with God before he is evicted from his village—the story we thought we knew is imbued with a fresh texture, making for a heavier take on the tale often regarded as kitschy caricature.

The story we thought we knew is imbued with a fresh texture, making for a heavier take on the tale often regarded as kitschy caricature.

To be sure, “Tevye Served Raw” has its fair share of kitsch. The majority of the show is funny and plays around with exaggerated Jewish stereotypes. In one particularly funny sequence entitled “A Stepmother’s Trash-Talk,” a disgruntled woman (a shrill and captivating Yelena Shmulenson) and narrator (hysterically portrayed by Allen Lewis Rickman) engage in a spitfire alphabetically organized edification of Yiddish insults, from “Shabbos goy” to “A tailor that limps.”

The actors articulated the historic language with what seemed like professional ease. It was no surprise to discover that the entire three-person cast speaks the language fluently. For the audience, however, the action alternates between being performed in English and in Yiddish-with-English-supertitles.

The audience’s average age was about 50 — and my guest and I brought down the average significantly. Age aside, my guess is that most people in the small black box theater felt something close to what I felt that night: intense pride in my Jewish tradition and culture. “Tevye Served Raw” is just what its name implies: a genuine, heartfelt and uncooked staging of tradition that often gets watered down in the Broadway glitz and glam of today.

And let me be clear: I don’t think you have to be Jewish or even Jewishly inclined to enjoy what this touching and hilarious show has to offer. “Tevye Served Raw” has something for everyone, Jewish, Yiddish-speaking or none of the above. Beyond tradition, as celebration of the things that make us human, “Tevye Served Raw” succeeds.

Performances of “Tevye Served Raw” continue through Feb. 13. Tickets are available through TevyeServedRaw.com or by calling (800) 838-3006.

My Sympathies Towards Andy Reid

By **MAYER FINK**

The Kansas City Chiefs haven't seen many glorious years since the run the franchise had in the 1960s with head coach Hank Stram and quarterback Len Dawson, with 1969 being their only Super Bowl win. Andy Reid was supposed to change that. This season, Reid coached the Chiefs to the best record in the American Football Conference (AFC), going 12-4 in the regular season. The Chiefs also had a breakout star quarterback in Patrick Mahomes, who led the NFL with 50 touchdown passes and finished the season as the front-runner for the MVP of the league. Andy Reid hasn't had a quarterback as great and explosive as Patrick Mahomes since he was an offensive coach with the Green Bay Packers and Brett Favre in the 1990s. The Chiefs also displayed various weapons on offense, including world-class speedster in Tyreek Hill and a nightmare match-up in tight end Travis Kelce (too big for defensive backs, too fast for linebackers). Finally, this looked to be the year that the team would return to the championship and take home the Lombardi Trophy.

Andy Reid hasn't had a quarterback as great and explosive as Patrick Mahomes since he was an offensive coach with the Green Bay Packers and Brett Favre in the 1990s.

On Sunday, Jan. 20, the Chiefs played the New England Patriots for the right to go to the Super Bowl. The game went back and forth and could have gone either way, but the Patriots pulled it off in overtime with a final score of 37-31. As someone who picked the Patriots to win that game, I was actually rooting for the Chiefs and wanted to see Andy Reid and the Chiefs avenge those previous defeats and come out victorious. Granted, the officiating in the game wasn't up to par, giving New England numerous breaks. Granted, the Chiefs were trailing 14-0 at halftime and they had to play catch up the rest of the game. Granted, Bill Belichick might be the greatest head coach of all time and Tom Brady might be the greatest quarterback of all time (in my opinion both are the greatest). Granted, defensive coordinator

Bob Sutton was making terrible decisions on the defensive side of the ball, giving the Patriots many big plays, including key third downs and long conversions (Bob Sutton has since been relieved of his coaching duties). Granted, the overtime rule meant that as soon as New England won the coin toss they would be able to get the ball, march down the field and win without letting the Chiefs get the ball. But this was the Chiefs year. They had won their first playoff game at home for the first time in over twenty-five (1993) years the week before. Andy Reid didn't even choke the game away as he was calling plays aggressively and coaching very well on that Sunday. Why did their season have to end like this?

Andy Reid has a legacy of failure in the playoffs and terrible coaching defeats; there's no way around it. He's 12-14 in the postseason, including 1-5 in conference championship games, and the one time he made it to the Super Bowl he lost to Bill Belichick and Tom Brady. Some of these losses are on him, especially the ones that occurred in Kansas City. In the wild-card round in 2014 against the Colts, the Chiefs had a 28 point lead in the 3rd quarter only to lose 45-44. In the divi-

NFL are just incredible. For starters, he is a branch off of the Mike Holmgren family tree which is known for the evolution of the West Coast offense. However, Andy Reid has spun off of the Holmgren branch and created his own tree for offense and head coaching alike. Andy Reid is also known for watching film from every level (including the high school ranks) and isn't afraid to incorporate something he sees into his own offense. A few years ago, Reid gave his assistant coaches more responsibility and lessened his own power, allowing him to focus more on innovating schemes, creative plays, and greater play calls. During some coaching meetings with his offensive coaches, Reid doesn't focus on film or player personnel. Instead, he simply discusses ways they can improve their offense and opens the floor for input and creativity.

What really upsets me, however, about Andy Reid's legacy of defeat is his coaching tree: his assistant coaches who have gone on to become head coaches of other teams. Not only does Reid have one of the most successful coaching trees in the NFL but some of his previous assistants — John Harbaugh and Doug Peterson — have become head coaches and won the Super Bowl, Harbaugh with the Ravens (Super Bowl 47) and Pederson with the Eagles (Super Bowl 52). His assistants have taken the ideas and innovation that Andy Reid has instilled in them and used them to become successful head coaches. Some of Reid's disciples have noted how much he cares about each of his players and coaches. Ron Rivera once said in an interview that after taking a head coaching job in Carolina, Reid gave him a call and asked how he was doing and if he needed advice with the demands of being a head coach. There is also a rumor going around that Reid helped Doug Peterson land quarterback Nick Foles, indirectly leading the Eagles to their first Super Bowl championship in franchise history.

In a league where dominance comes and goes — unless you are Tom Brady and Bill Belichick — you never know how big your window is to win a championship. This may have been the best chance the Chiefs had to win a Super Bowl. In fact, it may have been their only chance. With so much turnover every year, it's very possible that the rest of the division or conference plays better next season and the Chiefs won't be as dominant as

From the Front and Back

By **RACHEL LIEBLING**

Pecking at the overturned shards
grounds every winged singer
singing of the season
before the ground turned over
“Don't give up,” forces motherbird
“play and sing
and your songs will melt the ice”

Perched on frozen diamonds
of a melting chandelier
“humming can not hurt you
if it's a happy tune
because falling forces you to fly,”
slips motherbird

“Return to the glaciers
tiptoe over
overturned crystal
sand the tip with your voice
so to not tip off the glass
if you're sharp,” winks motherbird

“Play your game on the ice
because you don't deal the cards
you must not press down so hard
to stay grounded
and when you do glide
wings are like washing new dishes

When you twirl
remember,
you are dancing on diamonds
that are no longer sharp
because you learned
the force of the ground
against your wings”

COURTESY OF THE YU POETRY CLUB

they were this season. At the same time, for as long as I have been watching football, I can say confidently that as long as you have Andy Reid as a head coach you have a chance to win it all. Still, I won't believe they can win the big game until they finally do so.



Andy Reid

WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: Just over 90 years ago, Yeshiva College opened its doors for its first class of undergraduate college students. In this issue, The Commentator reprints a throwback article that was written on the occasion of the college's fiftieth anniversary, in 1978.

From the Archives (April 19, 1978; Volume 43 Issue 11) — Yeshiva College Fiftieth Anniversary

By YECHIEL FRIEDMAN

Most Yeshiva students know little more about the history of the college than that which they gleaned from the outdated catalog when they were entering freshmen.

Besides a short history of our institution, the one-page article also extolls Yeshiva for what it has become today. Yet, the question remains, how did it get there?

In 1886 a group of Eastern-European Jewish immigrants formed the first yeshiva in America for the teaching of young Jews in the Lower East Side. The organizers, mostly local tradesmen, knew very little about running a school, though they were sincerely dedicated to the task.

An Early Experience

One of the first secular teachers hired by the school (none lasted too long) was Abraham Cahan, a clever young man who had shown great promise with his studies in a European yeshiva. In his autobiography, Cahan records that the curriculum at the time was loosely drawn to provide just for the study of the three "R's" — all within the "English department." Because the directors had no clear idea of what should be taught, the English department functioned haphazardly, more out of a perfunctory acknowledgement for these subjects than a sincere desire to provide the children with a modern education.

When Cahan tried to improve the situation by enlisting the other teacher, a fourteen year old boy who had just graduate public school, to pressure the directors for a \$50 allotment for new texts, he was criticized for being too extravagant. Cahan later became a prominent journalist, the editor of the Jewish Daily Forward, and a commanding figure in the Socialist movement for almost half a century.

Establishment of RIETS

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), was formed in 1897 as the response of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the increasingly secular Jewish Theological Seminary of the "Uptown" American Jews. It struggled in its first years, as did Yeshivat Etz Chaim, moving from shul to shul till 1904 when RIETS purchased a building in the Lower East Side for the then tremendous sum of \$28,500.

With the security of owning its own building, together with the accreditation of RIETS by the Agudath HaRabbanim, the administration turned its attention, successfully, to improving the quality of the religious instruction in RIETS.

A Student Strike

Though continually gaining students as a result of the excellent quality of its instruction, RIETS was forced to close its doors in 1907 because all its students went on strike to protest the director's continuous rebuffing of student requests for secular instruction.

The strike was successful. The Board of Directors and all officers were replaced, but the new directors pleaded financial instability. These problems were partially solved in 1915 with the merger of Yeshivat Etz Chaim and RIETS.

From then on, the new institution, called RIETS, was on the road of constant growth. A high school, called the Talmudical Academy, was established. More importantly, a new President of the Faculty was hired, Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel, a graduate of NYU and Dropsie College, as well as a universally acknowledged scholar in both religious and secular studies.

Early Growth

Soon, RIETS found itself with another division, the Teachers Institute, founded in 1917 as a supplemental religious school by Rabbi Judah Leib Fishman (Maimon), Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan) and other prominent members of the Mizrahi Organization of America.

To keep up with this rapid expansion, RIETS began a fundraising campaign to raise 5 million dollars for the creation

Division was also formed that year.

All this impressive growth was achieved under YU's new president, Dr. Samuel Belkin. This master plan of expansion neared completion in 1952 with another amendment to YU's charter, facilitating the establishment, in 1955, of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Still other schools of the fifties included Stern College (1954), Teachers Institute for Women (1952), Cantorial Training Institute (1954), the James Striar School of General Jewish Studies (1956), the Sue Golding Graduate Division of Medical Sciences of AECOM (1957), the Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences (1957), and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work (1957).

Effects of the Expansion

With this rapid expansion, the University was in an especially favorable position to take advantage of the effects of the go-go sixties, the post was baby boom, the Russian launching of Sputnik and its impetus to American education, and the government aid to education.

The advent of the seventies was a time for change in YU, but it took the administration too long to change. Nevertheless, new schools were established, one in Los Angeles called the West Coast Teachers College (1970) and the now much heralded Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law (1976).

These changes may have boded well for the University as a whole, but they nevertheless detracted from the undergraduate division. The recent closing of the Belfer Graduate School, to be replaced with a scientific research institute, and the recent change of administrators under the current president, Dr. Norman Lamm, may be steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, like YC's new business program, only time, as well as the administration's cooperation with the student body, can really tell.

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SPECIAL
ISSUE

The Commentator

SPECIAL
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67*5

YESHIVA COLLEGE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1978 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Yeshiva College. To celebrate this occasion THE COMMENTATOR offers a special commemorative issue. In an attempt to fully depict what life was like at Yeshiva College over the past fifty years, the next few pages will have a combination of articles from old issues and personal reminiscences from alumni and faculty. To evoke a smile, to call forth a tear, we proudly present this special anniversary issue.

By YECHIEL FRIEDMAN

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Furst Hall today, 1978. — YUPR

acquired. The total real estate value of the purchase was reported to be \$1,274,960.

A College and Grad School

With the granting of a charter by the Regents of the University of the State of New York, the newly formed Yeshiva College soon began producing outstanding graduates, and later, outstanding graduate students. The first graduate program in Jewish and Semitic studies was initiated in 1935 and expanded into a full

The Commentator Archives

of a new educational complex. With the money eventually raised, a site also had to be chosen. The proposals included an estate in southern New Jersey, a large tract of land near where AECOM is presently located, and the present site of the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital and Medical Center.

These sites were all rejected because they were either too far from New York City, too large, or too expensive. Finally, the building committee settled on a two-block area, known as the Barney Estate, lying west of Amsterdam Avenue between 186th and 187th Streets, in the Washington Heights section of upper Manhattan. This represented about fifty city building lots. Later, additional property to round out the parcels on the west side of Amsterdam Avenue and the Horton Estate on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue were acquired. The total real estate value of the purchase was reported to be \$1,274,960.

A College and Grad School

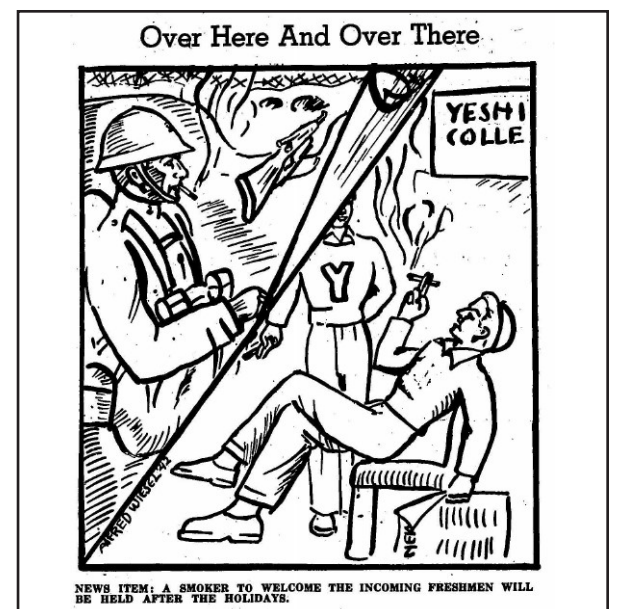
With the granting of a charter by the Regents of the University of the State of New York, the newly formed Yeshiva College soon began producing outstanding graduates, and later, outstanding graduate students.

The first graduate program in Jewish and Semitic studies was initiated in 1935 and expanded into a full graduate school in 1937, ten short years before the establishment of the Harry Fischel School for Higher Jewish Studies, a companion institute to the (later renamed) Bernard Revel Graduate School, which offers identical coursework during the summer semesters.

Another more important step forward in 1945 was YU's attaining full university status as recognized by the New York State Board of Regents, which distinguished YU as the first university in America under Jewish auspices. Two other new schools were also formed in that year; another high school and the Institute of mathematics, now known to us as the Belfer Graduate School of Science. The Community Services

Flashbacks

Editor's Note: Beginning in this issue, The Commentator will be reprinting political cartoons that appeared in past issues of the newspaper from the 30's to today.



"NEWS ITEM: A SMOKER TO WELCOME THE INCOMING FRESHMEN WILL BE HELD AFTER THE HOLIDAYS."

September 18, 1941; Volume 7 Issue 1

Law Review

Partisan Gerrymandering

By NOLAN EDMONSON

The Supreme Court and lower courts have not been able to produce a justiciable or manageable standard for determining when state legislatures have been too polical in drawing congressional districts. In *Baker v. Carr*, the Court held that legislative redistricting was certainly justiciable and as such federal courts had the authority to intervene and decide redistricting cases. Years later, the Court would decide in *Davis v. Bandemer* that claims of partisan gerrymandering — or the creation of districts by state legislatures with the intent of entrenching a particular party in power — were also justiciable but failed to determine what (if any) standard could be applied to prove intent in partisan gerrymandering.

In June 2018, the case of *Gill v. Whitford* came before the court and raised certain questions regarding the adjudication of partisan gerrymandering claims. This case concerned the 2011 redistricting of certain districts in Wisconsin, which allegedly gave the Republican party in Wisconsin 60 percent of seats in the state legislature despite receiving only 48 percent of the vote. The appellees in this case, like in *Bandemer*, attempted to prove that beyond partisan gerrymandering claims being justiciable, such claims could also be adjudicated by an establishment and review of standards created by the Court. Despite the Court ruling that the appellees lacked Article III standing and leaving the question unanswered, the proposed standard relies heavily upon the “efficiency gap” rather than provable intent.

The simple fact is, redistricting is an exercise with a purpose.

The efficiency gap is the difference between the parties respective wasted votes — either surplus votes cast in favor of a victor, or votes cast in favor of a loser — divided by the total number of votes cast. This standard becomes troublesome when considering the reality of political geography — that politically like-minded people will and almost always do situate themselves in the same towns, suburbs and districts. This fact undercuts the theory of the efficiency gap because it is inevitable that these populations will vote en masse and that some of those votes will wind up being wasted thus skewing the perceived pro-partisan efficiency. Without even making new districts, these political homogeneous neighborhoods and districts have, for the most part, already formed. Proving intentional partisan gerrymandering from the efficiency gap (or E.G.)

is difficult and imprecise and, as such, is a poor standard for the courts to utilize.

Another standard proposed by *Vieth* sought to employ a two-pronged framework by determining “predominant intent to achieve partisan advantage.” Simply put, if plaintiffs were able to produce “evidence or circumstantial evidence that other neutral and legitimate redistricting criteria were subordinated to the goal of achieving partisan advantage” — only then could they be said to have a standard to adjudicate. Predominant intent borrows from the tests used in racial gerrymandering cases *Shaw v. Reno* and *Miller v. Johnson*. These cases are in no way comparable to partisan gerrymandering as it is clear from the equal protections clause and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that segregating voters on the basis of race is unlawful. However, considering Article 1 § 4 of the Constitution which establishes that

the manner in which elections for Congress are conducted fall within the power of state legislatures, it seems clear that the Constitution at least considered that districts might be divided using partisan means. Because it often happens that state legislatures are continuously held by certain parties, the likelihood that districts are determined by some partisan means is inevitable. Furthermore, as Justice Scalia writes in the plurality opinion in *Vieth*, “it would be quixotic to attempt to bar state legislatures from considering politics as they draw district lines.” The simple fact is, redistricting is an exercise with a purpose. That purpose is to provide constituents with representation at the national level that most accurately reflects the political reality of those districts. To that end, districts will inevitably be designed in partisan ways. But while that might be the case, it does not necessarily mean that courts can never have

a standard by which to determine if some districts go too far in their gerrymandering, thus violating some precept of the Constitution.

In *League of United Latino American Citizens v. Perry* (LULAC), political science professors Gary King and Bernard Grofman devised a standard that seemed to address the issue of partisan fairness by implementing the *symmetry standard*. Instead of concerning itself with partisan bias in how districts are formed — a reality perhaps equally determined by legislatures and persons’ political affiliations — the symmetry standard requires that legislators treat similarly situated parties equally “so that each receives the same fraction of legislative seats for a particular vote percentage as the other party would receive if it had received the same percentage [of the vote].” So if Party A and Party B have near equal representation in geographically congruous

areas, legislatures should divide those areas equally allowing for the realistic possibility of either Party A or Party B to win in that area. This symmetry is best accomplished using highly sophisticated computer programs that map out political affiliations in geographic areas and create a number of maps able to be used by legislatures to determine the most appropriate redistricting scheme.

Using such a method as a standard by which the courts can determine political foul play bodes well for offering relief to the problems presented in *Bandemer*, *Vieth* and *LULAC*. It would be wholly feasible for a court to decide that, if given the tools to equitably divide areas into political districts, were a state legislature to not utilize that tool, the claim to excessive partisan gerrymandering could be made and the court would have a standard by which to intervene.



The “Gerry-Mander” cartoon, which first appeared in the “Boston Gazette” on March 26, 1812.

‘Shtisel’: Not Your Average TV Show

By ELI FRISHMAN

Recently, Netflix added the hit Israeli TV show “Shtisel” to its already wide-ranging global selection of TV shows. In many ways, “Shtisel” is like any other TV show, except “Shtisel,” as its name might already suggest, is centered around an ultra-Orthodox family living in Jerusalem’s Geula neighborhood. Besides for being incredibly authentic and funny, “Shtisel”’s greatest accomplishment is its ability to present a community that many are unfamiliar with and misinformed about in an incredibly humanistic way.

The show follows the recently widowed Shulem Shtisel, a life-long *melamed* (school teacher) at a local *cheder* (ultra-Orthodox primary school), as he is overwhelmed with responsibilities. Five out of his six children are married, but he’s still helping support all of them. His youngest son, Akiva, or as the show refers to him, the *majinsk* (Yiddish for youngest child), still lives at home and often

clashes with his father for turning down too many *shidduch* offers and trying to pursue his artistic interests, which his father considers to be a waste of time.

Shulem, while living a strict *charedi* lifestyle, is also internally conflicted. He makes secret visits to the home of the *cheder*’s secretary, also a recent widower. However, while the secretary makes subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) hints about the possibility of marriage, Shulem is oblivious, more interested in her cooking than in her as a long-term love interest.

The show also follows the lives of Shulem’s other children and elderly mother affectionately known as Bubby Malcha, who, since moving into a nursing home, is obsessed with Western television shows, even inserting some of the fictional characters on the shows into her *Tehillim* list. Perhaps one of the funniest parts of the show is when Shulem finds secular names such as “Brook Bas Bridget” and “Rich Bas Stephanie” in her *Tehillim* booklet. At first he’s confounded,

but then he realizes that his mother believes that these TV characters are actually real and therefore in need of prayer. Gitti, one of his daughters, is forced to support herself and her children after her husband leaves her for a non-Jewish woman while working as a *shochet* in Argentina. Another one of Shulem’s daughters, Racheli, severed her relationship with her father when she left the *charedi* community for a Chabad-Hasidic lifestyle. Tzvi Aryeh, Akiva’s older brother, studies at a local *kollel*. But while Tzvi Aryeh seems to have the most traditional and stable ultra-Orthodox lifestyle of anyone in the Shtisel family, at times he becomes uncertain of the fulfillment he can attain in the *kollel* lifestyle and questions whether he should have abandoned his childhood dream of becoming a singer.

Death and grievance are also a big part of the show. Members of the Shtisel family have recurring flashbacks and hallucinations of the late Devorah Shtisel, the wife of Shulem Shtisel and the mother of his

children. These flashbacks and hallucinations usually present themselves when the characters are dealing with difficult decisions or situations. When Shulem is offered various *shidduch* offers for himself, he is torn between staying committed to the memory of his late wife and moving forward.

While “Shtisel” originally aired two seasons of twelve episodes each between 2013 and 2016, its rise in popularity due to its availability on Netflix has generated rumors about a possible third season.

When considering which new TV show to watch, “*Shtisel*” should not be shunned because it lacks the glam and popularity of other TV shows. In fact, its average user rating on IMDb is 8.8/10, with one user calling it “a par above the best television and most cinema produced in Israel.” While “Shtisel”’s greatest appeal is obvious to those in the Jewish community, the situations and dilemmas are universally real, making “Shtisel” a TV show to be enjoyed by all.



The characters of “Shtisel”

NETFLIX

All the Stage’s a World

By ELI AZIZOLLAHOFF

The lights fade out and a man dressed for the wrong era runs out in front of you and begins to talk. For just a moment, you can still feel yourself holding on to reality and his presence and demeanor seem off — almost as if they could belong in the valley of the uncanny: almost normal, almost human, but not quite. It is a matter of seconds before the sensation fades and you get lost in his conversation, or maybe his song.

Spotlights beam and dancers move as if each step is as natural to them as walking. For two hours you sit enraptured by a performance, held at bay by an invisible fourth

wall, almost feeling like it is all too beautiful to be real and that this must be on a screen. Slowly, though, you remember that those actors are only a matter of feet away, almost close enough to touch.

nothing actually goes amiss in “The Play That Goes Wrong,” or the set that allows a rope to be Captain Hook’s boat as easily as it is a doorway, there is a wonder that awakens in your heart. Every pearl, every dash of blush,

Contrary to what Shakespeare once said, I do not believe that “all the world’s a stage,” but rather, all stages are a microcosm of the world.

It almost feels wrong, that sets and singers and costumes so perfect can still be real. But they are. As you sit and notice each stitch pinning down a sequin on Glinda’s blue gown, or the exact timing of the walls falling so

every lowering of the lights, every angle of a set piece, every sole of a shoe, every hair on a wig, every smile or quirk or movement on the stage before you weren’t just “planned”: it took *hours* of human effort and devotion.

And look how worthwhile it was. For two hours, within the confines of a single theater with a single stage, you are transported. Those who worked to make this piece of art before you did not rely on your imagination like books do and they can’t fix any mistakes in post-production like in film. Every night, time and again, you see genuine human creativity, passion and dedication to perfection, until entire worlds come to life before you.

As I sit there amazed, having happily spent enough money on this performance to buy me several movies tickets, all I can feel is pure awe. Contrary to what Shakespeare once

Continued on Page 10

Don't Build It

By ZACHARY GREENBERG

On Dec. 22, 2018, the United States government entered a partial shutdown, the third and longest such shutdown in

the history of the United States. Under the Constitution, Congress periodically passes a bill that approves the federal government spending over the next few weeks or months. Once the bill expires, a new bill must be written. However, if a new bill is not agreed

upon, a partial government shutdown occurs, resulting in several government agencies (excluding major programs like the military and Social Security) either stopping to provide services or staying open while forcing their employees to work without pay.

Currently, President Trump wants funding included in the next spending bill to start building the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Trump believes that the wall would more efficiently keep illegal immigrants from entering the country. Trump threatened that if funding for the wall was not included in the next bill, then he would veto the bill. So, the House of Representatives passed a bill including the \$5.7 billion dollars for funding the wall, but the bill did not garner the requisite 60 votes to pass in the Senate. Since there was no bill passed, there was no funding for the government, forcing a partial shutdown.

Whether the wall will help protect our borders or not is up for debate. Supporters of the wall argue that the wall would help keep out illegal immigrants. They argue that many of these illegal immigrants unfairly take away jobs from U.S. citizens, bring in drugs into the U.S., avoid paying taxes and many of whom are in gangs causing crimes. They believe that the wall will protect the integrity and safety of the United States if built. Opponents of the wall argue that the wall will be very difficult to build and would have to stretch over 2,000 miles, cutting through mountains, rivers, bridges and people's homes. The building of the wall would be extremely expensive, costing anywhere from \$15-25 billion. Further, maintaining the wall is estimated to cost around \$48.3 billion over the first decade which will have



Trump speaking in front of a sample piece of wall

NEW YORK TIMES

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TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY SACKLER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE NEW YORK STATE/AMERICAN PROGRAM



The Sackler School of Medicine-New York State/ American Program offers an outstanding four year medical school curriculum, taught in English, leading to the M.D. degree. The Program is chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York and is accredited by the State of Israel.

Graduates participate in the National Resident Matching Program and return to the United States for their residency training. Since its commencement in 1976, over 2,000 alumni have completed their residency training at the most distinguished hospitals in the United States.

www.sacklerschool.org provides extensive information about Sackler SOM. For further information, e-mail sacklermed@sacklermed.org



NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Got something to share?
Email benjamin.koslowe@mail.yu.edu

Consider the English Major

By JUDAH STIEFEL

Language is the means by which we relate to one another. Words allow us to relay thoughts, objects and ideas to our contemporaries, as well as to preserve these things for eternity. Expression is one of the most fundamental elements of our humanity. Learn about the history of human expression, and better yet, learn to express yourself.

I write this with no ulterior motives. I have not been promised an A in any of my classes for publishing this piece. A close reading of this text may reveal that I am in fact writing this article in my apartment, only hours before the Commentator's submission deadline. I have nothing to gain from you reading it or considering what I have to say, and what I have to say is this — consider being an English major. If you rolled your eyes at the blunt preachiness of what I've just proposed, it's possible this article wasn't meant for you. By all means, stop reading it. Pat on the back for reading at all.

Expression can be found in infinite forms and in infinite disciplines. There are countless reasons to express oneself. The skills you will gain from an English class are important for marketing, law, medicine, computer science, banking, and everything in between. Being able to express one's self well can open up channels of communication that previously stood closed. The best way to learn to do that is to understand what's been written until now.

Written language is the foundation upon which civilization is built. While the greatest writers and thinkers may have produced ideas of their own, their originality was always based on those that came before them. Being an English major will teach you to climb the scaffold of art and knowledge so that you may one day build upon it yourself.

Each class provided by the English department of YU represents a door into at least one new world of thinking you have likely not yet encountered. Books you had previously read, you will now learn to dissect. Books you've never heard of will teach you to think for yourself in a way you may have never realized you could. You can learn to understand how art influenced revolution and how social change influenced art. The lenses through which you learn to analyze text will also allow you to analyze life — what is literature if not the attempt to capture reality.

The quality of the classes provided is excellent and the diversity of topics covered is surprisingly vast. Additionally, the class sizes are small, giving each student the opportunity to connect with various professors with specialties in various disciplines.

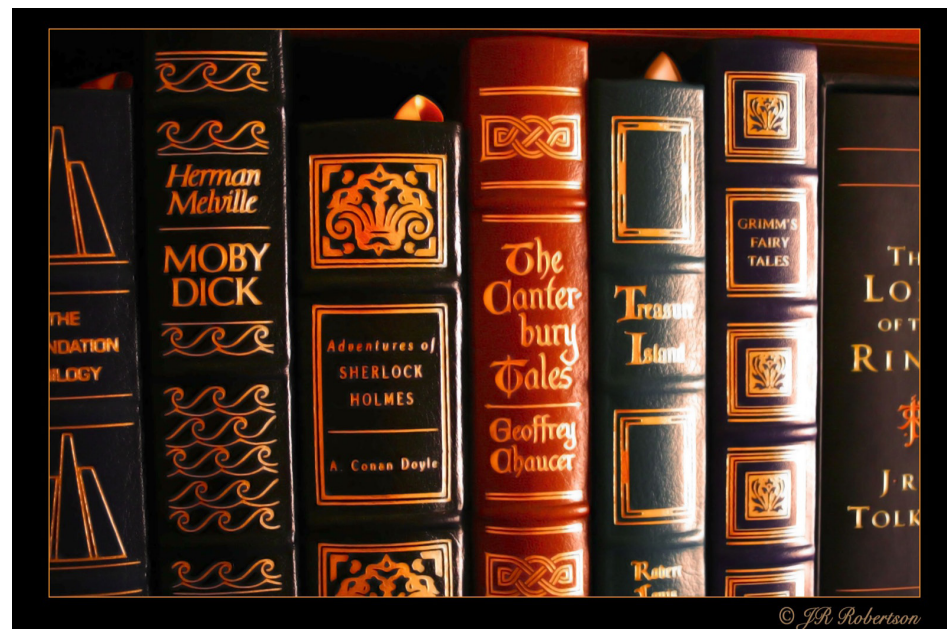
This may sound melodramatic, but I swear it's true. The English major at YU will help shape the way you interact the world. You'll realize that you are not just a spectator in it, but also able to shape it.

If you don't consider yourself the creative type, consider this: gaining a strong grasp on the English language can help you to

succeed in any field you wish to pursue. The writing classes provided by the English department are modeled so as to encourage you to learn from some of the all-time great writers of the English language, as well as from upperclassmen who have been at it for years. By the end of your experience, I can all but promise that you'll be surprised at how much your writing and critical thinking has improved.

This is not an essay. This is an article. I don't feel the need to wrap this up with a

conclusion, but I will conclude with this: Medical Schools love English majors. Your score on the critical reading section of the MCAT? Only improved through your time in the major. Analyzing LSAT passages? Easier after completing the English major. Your emails to employers and texts to significant others become works of poetry. There is no expiration date; the knowledge you acquire here will always be relevant.



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WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ALL THE STAGE,
continued from Page 7

said, I do not believe that “all the world's a stage,” but rather, all stages are a microcosm of the world. The nature of art is that it tries to be reflective and emblematic of the human experience. That is why we are drawn to good literature, films, performances or paintings — because we feel that they have effectively represented our world, helped us view our own reality in a new light, or have allowed us to feel empathy for the personal trials and triumphs of our lives. Theater does this in an incredibly acute way by allowing us to literally watch others live out one of these

little worlds live before our eyes.

For me, going to the theater is a deeply religious experience for this very reason. When I look at that stage and am consistently shocked and amazed by the thought and consideration that went into every little aspect and detail to present this miniature world before me, I cannot help but extrapolate outwards. This tiny world has had so much love and brilliance imbued into it in order for every audience to have a fully immersive and exceptional experience. But this is only a small version of the world, how much detail and love and consideration had to go into making the real world as beautiful and complex as it is?

If I can see the genius behind the use

of hidden magnets to do a quick change in order to turn Sleeping Beauty's gown from blue to pink as she waltzes around the stage, how can I turn a blind eye to the brilliance behind the Krebs Cycle that allows our body to function on a microscopic level? How do I ignore the balance of the world as leaves fall off trees in order to save water for the trunk and not get too weighted down as they freeze in the winter, while I notice the smooth doll house folding of a set that is secure enough to hold a whole cast safely as it transitions? How can I sit and wonder at the beautiful organism that is a perfectly performed play and pretend something even more awe-inspiring isn't happening every time a baby progresses into a new developmental stage

and can now recognize its mother? If I can see the source of the creativity in front of me when I've paid \$50 to sit in an audience for two hours, how can I ignore God in the world that He placed me in Himself?

Often, when people wonder why I am well near obsessed with theater, I realize they have never viewed the experience the way I have. At the very heart of *Torah Umadda* is the idea that the world around us is a wonderful place and that it is our job to imbue it with its spiritual potential. When I step in a theater the capacity for godliness practically screams at me, begging me to notice and to bring it beyond the walls of the atrium out into the players that fill the world.

DON'T BUILD IT,
continued from Page 8

to come out of taxpayers' pockets.

Given that other methods of border security can be met at cheaper costs, building a wall is not the most cost-effective solution. There is already a border wall that stretches nearly 700 miles and follows alongside the highest traffic areas. Instead of spending billions of dollars in building a massive wall, the government should spend more money developing “virtual walls” which could be made up using cameras, satellites and sensors to detect intruders. Currently, there are sensors tested by Quanergy in Del Rio, Texas which can detect a person up to 100 meters away. While a physical wall is estimated to cost around \$24.5 million per mile, the virtual wall is estimated to only cost around \$500 thousand per mile. Furthermore, the wall will prove to be ineffective since it's estimated that anywhere from 27-40 percent of illegal immigrants sneak into the U.S. using planes, not by crossing the borders. With a border fence already in place and the potential of creating a more effective and

cost-efficient virtual wall, the need for a new, physical wall becomes obsolete. Additionally, research has shown that both undocumented immigrants and legal immigrants are less dangerous than native-born Americans. The libertarian Cato Institute found that the imprisonment rate for native-born Americans is 1.53 percent, while it is only 0.85 percent for undocumented immigrants and 0.47 percent for legal immigrants.

On Friday, Jan. 25, after 35 days of the shutdown, President Trump has agreed to temporarily reopen the government. Over the next three weeks, representatives of both the House and Senate will meet to negotiate new border security plans. For now, the government will remain fully opened, but if negotiations are to fail, another government shutdown may arise.

The partial shutdown created a lot of controversy and Americans were split on the issue. Supporters argue that the shutdown was a necessary maneuver to finally commence building the new wall. For roughly two years, Trump has been trying to gain funding for the wall, but to no avail. Supporters claim that shutting down the government will be the best way for lawmakers to finally

include funding for the wall in the new bill. However, the shutdown resulted in about 800,000 government workers living without pay, many of whom were working and not expecting any compensation until the end of the shutdown. Additionally, some basic government functions like inspecting the national food supplies for disease and maintaining national parks were greatly reduced or stopped entirely.

A recent CNN opinions article argued that instead of having the funding included in the next bill and threatening to shut down the government if it is not, Trump should raise the money by issuing bonds to cover the cost. In general, throughout U.S. history, whenever there indeed is a “national crisis” and the government needs money, U.S. citizens have stepped up and purchased bonds to support the government. If the public

Given that other methods of border security can be met at cheaper costs, building a wall is not the most cost-effective solution.

While there needs to be increased border security to prevent illegal immigrants from bringing in drugs to the U.S. and harming U.S. citizens, the U.S. government didn't need to shut down to achieve this goal. There were hundreds of thousands of people who were affected by the shutdown and it is not fair that they should be harmed over a political issue about border security.

agrees that the wall is necessary, then Trump should have no problem raising the money and he can follow through with his plan. If he falls short, then it is clear from public opinion that U.S. citizens do not deem the wall a worthy cause to support. If he really feels like there is a national emergency, then Trump can purchase the remaining bonds from his own pocket.

YU Goes to Thailand: Activism or Exploitation?

By PHILLIP NAGLER

Before embarking on what would be an amazing journey to Thailand, I was unsure what the trip would be like. The YU mission to Thailand was pitched to its participants as a chance to explore the culture and scenery of the country while also engaging in activism and learning about the social issues that the country tackles. The trip's flyer stated that roughly half of the activities would be participating in activism, but it was unclear to me what exactly this activism entailed. I was skeptical of the impact that the group could make in only ten days, especially considering that only half of that time would be devoted towards activism.

In addition to my hesitations about the activism component of the trip, I felt the common moral dilemma one faces when it comes to activism abroad: Would it not be more helpful to donate money to a charity rather than to spend money on a hotel, lodging and food during my travels? There was guilt attached to the idea of traveling to a country and calling myself an "activist" while I could have simply donated money to a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Thailand.

On top of this guilt, I had the fear that our group would end up having more of an exploitative impact on the country than a charitable one. I use the term exploitation

loosely, as it can range from taking advantage of the cheap prices for goods and services — which is what we were doing — to benefiting from illegal sex trafficking. Nonetheless, exploitation is still exploitation, regardless of its magnitude.

Upon leaving Thailand, I started to evaluate what we as a group had done during our time in the country. As a pessimist, I immediately focused on how I and the group may have taken advantage of the Thai people. We took advantage of the cheap labor, getting

account of the trip, and, admittedly, I have omitted some of the amazing things we accomplished.

A personal highlight of the trip was spending two days at Thai elementary schools, volunteering our time to teach English to poor and underprivileged students. The smiles that we put on the faces of these children could not have been replaced with a donation to a charity. Yes, it is true that we got to feel good about ourselves for volunteering, which in a sense can be viewed as exploitative.

True activism is about implementing permanent and meaningful change, and that simply can not be done in such a short period of time.

30-minute full body massages for the meager price of \$4.50. We boosted our Instagram and Facebook profiles by posting cute pictures of ourselves with Thai children in their schools. These actions are not inherently bad, and I wouldn't say that I have regret from doing them. I do think, however, that it is important to reflect upon why I did what I did, and if I should act differently in the future.

At this point in my article, many of my fellow trip participants are probably fuming with disapproval over the tone of my article. Thus far, I have reported a very cynical

With that said, however, we still provided these children with a unique and positive experience that they would not have received otherwise.

In addition to the active volunteering, our group visited two NGOs and spoke to their founders. The first activist we met founded an organization called Home of New Beginnings, and she spoke about the issue of widespread sex trafficking in Thailand. After speaking to her, we walked the streets of the Nana red light district and saw the women working in bars, forced to sell their bodies to support themselves and their families.

The second activist we met started an organization devoted to helping Burmese refugees, called Thai Freedom House. She spoke to us about the general difficulties and the discrimination that these refugees face upon immigrating to Thailand. Although hearing from the speakers did not result in us actively contributing to the Thai people, I think that everyone in our group gained a social awareness to these issues which also serves an important purpose in activism.

Ultimately, I maintain my original position that true activism was not accomplished on this trip. True activism is about implementing permanent and meaningful change, and that simply cannot be done in such a short period of time. It would be inappropriate to give myself the title of "activist" upon the completion of this ten-day mission in Thailand.

I did, however, take away an important lesson from this trip: the moral obligation of social responsibility. Virtually all of the issues we encountered (i.e. sex trafficking, poverty, etc.) exist within our own communities. While the experience was not the full package of activism, it served as important enlightenment. Every person who attended the trip is a young, bright and determined individual. We each have the ability to use this experience as a stepping stone towards implementing positive change in an opaque and imperfect world.



YU students visit a school in Thailand over winter break.

Trump's 'America First' Policy Puts Israel in Danger

By ELIYAHU SPIVACK

Recently, a U.S. President made a reckless decision that aligned perfectly with Iran's interests and dealt a very heavy strategic blow to Israel's security. No, I'm not referring to President Obama's 2015 negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) also known as the "Iran Deal," but rather to President Trump's recent decision to pull all U.S. troops out of Syria.

Although both decisions have been detrimental to Israel's security, the pro-Israel community appears to have treated them differently. In response to the Iran Deal, pro-Israel organizations launched a long, sustained lobbying effort to try to stop its ratification, and some even accused Obama of hostility towards Israel. However, we have barely heard any response from these groups to Trump's recent Syria decision. AIPAC, for example, merely put out a vague, one-paragraph statement that is careful to not directly criticize Trump. As far as I know, none of the pro-Israel organizations that are always trying to rile up their followers against anti-Israel activity have made any public campaign to convince Trump to change his mind. Why are Israel supporters letting him off easy?

Since there has been no public campaign against Trump's decision, some may not even realize how bad the U.S. troop pullout is for Israel's security. To fully understand the potential danger of the pullout, it is necessary to understand the context of the Syrian Civil War.

Iran supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the civil war because his regime's survival is vital for Iran to achieve their goal of spreading their influence to Lebanon, and ultimately, to Israel's northern border. Throughout the war, Iran has been giving military and financial support to Hezbollah and various other Shiite militias that operate near the Golan Heights. According to the IDF, these militias have become an important part of Assad's coalition and will ensure a significant Iranian influence in Syria for years to come.

Of all these militias, Hezbollah stands as the biggest threat to Israel. With all the unrest in the Gaza Strip, there's been a lot of media attention on Hamas, but people shouldn't forget that Hezbollah is actually much more powerful. While Hamas is thought to have around 12,000 rockets, Hezbollah is estimated to have around 130,000, almost 11 times as many. Hezbollah's rockets are also generally more precise and advanced, with many capable of reaching all of Israel's populated areas, and with the precision to be aimed specifically at military bases or strategic infrastructure. Unlike Hamas, they also possess some capability to counter the IDF's tanks and fighter jets, making any IDF operation against them very risky.

On the home front, the IDF itself reports that a war with Hezbollah could lead to hundreds of civilian casualties, thousands of homes hit, and hundreds of thousands evacuated. To compare, of all three of Israel's operations in Gaza, "only" 13 Israeli citizens were killed. Essentially, a war with Hezbollah carries a great risk of much higher military and civilian death tolls than Israelis have become accustomed to in recent years. But this is not the biggest danger Hezbollah poses.

Iran has a strategic reason for supporting Hezbollah, besides for its similar hatred of Israel. The Iranian government understands that it cannot defeat Israel in a conventional war, therefore, its strategy, as laid out in Ayatollah Khamenei's book Palestine, is to have Hezbollah and other

Shiite militias make life increasingly unbearable and dangerous for Israeli citizens. They hope that a constant barrage of precision rockets and other weaponry will force enough Jews to leave Israel, creating a clear Palestinian majority between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. With Iran entrenching itself near the Golan Heights, arming Hezbollah and other Shiite militias, and there already being an almost equal number of Jews and Arabs in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Iran's long term strategy becomes less ridiculous of a prospect than it may have originally appeared. Remember that Israel's other major terrorist enemy, Hamas, is blockaded in the Gaza Strip. But Assad is expected to let Iran continue delivering more arms to Hezbollah and their other allies. This is why the U.S. presence in Syria is so vital for Israel's security.

The U.S. troops serve as both a physical and psychological deterrent against Iran. Currently deployed in northeast Syria, on the route between Iran and the Israeli border, the troops' mere presence forces Iran to think twice before moving weapons and equipment in that direction. With the U.S.'s tacit support, Israel has the leeway to conduct airstrikes on Iranian bases and terrorist training camps near the Golan Heights. Now, however, Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria essentially leaves a vacuum that will be filled by Iran. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) reports in a strategic assessment that the U.S.'s departure "leaves Israel alone in the campaign against Iran's military entrenchment in Syria," and ensures that Israel will not be able to drive them out. To put it bluntly, Trump just gifted Iran, Hezbollah, and other Iranian-backed militias a free route to Israel.

If Iran intensifies its transfers of weapons and manpower within Syria, which is likely because of the departure of U.S. troops, Israel will be stuck with the options of sitting quietly while their enemies get stronger or conducting airstrikes that could lead to war.

Trump didn't leave Syria because he dislikes Israel, rather because it fits with his isolationist, "America First" foreign policy. He has shown that he views international alliances as transactional relationships, not moral or ideological ones, and it was always a huge mistake for Israel supporters to believe that Trump views America's alliance with Israel any differently. He promised to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem because he knew it would help him win over the evangelical Christian wing of the Republican electorate, and his decision to leave the Iran deal fits with his isolationist policy anyway. He has shown his true hand by leaving Israel vulnerable to Iranian expansionism and the potential of a devastating war. When questioned if he was concerned that the U.S. leaving Syria would hurt Israel, Trump said "We give Israel \$4.5 billion dollars a year." Imagine how plenty of Israel supporters would have reacted if Obama had been so flippant about Israel's security?

Given all the danger Trump has put Israel in by unilaterally withdrawing from Syria, I don't understand why the pro-Israel community isn't outraged. Perhaps some find it easier to be loudly "pro-Israel" when the object of their ire is a Democratic president, as opposed to a Republican one who has made a few symbolic gestures towards Israel supporters. In any case, this lack of a response has been nothing less than a dereliction of duty by those who claim to be pro-Israel. It would be terrible if Israel's security became just another petty partisan issue, to be used when some view it as politically advantageous and ignored when they do not.



A view of Israel's border with Syria

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Developing a Reasonable Perspective on AI

By YONATON ABRAMS

Technological advancement is extremely exciting and tempting. For researchers, development is intellectually stimulating and mysterious. For the public, using the improved technology is convenient and pleasurable. But for the philosophers and economists, things are rarely so clear cut.

In his course “Travel, Technology, and Modernity,” YU’s Professor Douglass Burgess speaks at length about “technological overreach” — the idea that a society can implement new technology before it is fully prepared for the impact that technology would have on the culture or economy. Burgess explains that technological overreach is a failure of the scientific elite who blindly follow their passion to push boundaries in science and engineering and their materialistic desire to be the first one to earn the next million dollar patent and the respect of the public.

In the field of artificial intelligence (AI), the lack of ethical and economic oversight provides fertile ground for technological overreach, and we should be concerned about its possible repercussions. AI is the theory and development of computer algorithms that can behave in ways similar to human intelligence. AI algorithms are being used to autonomously drive cars, evaluate convicts for sentencing and parole, predictive typing and numerous other massively influential areas of our lives.

It is time for people to stop thinking about only the positives of AI.

In a discussion with the Wall Street Journal in April of 2018, technology policy experts Julia Powles, a researcher in law and technology at NYU School of Law and Cornell Tech, and Adam Thierer, a researcher with the Technology Policy Program at George Mason University’s Mercatus Center, expressed their concerns that private industry is calling all of the shots on issues of ethics and legality. Powles even reported the grave truth that “You’d be hard pressed to find experts [in the field of technology policy] that don’t hold a position at or find funding from the big technology [companies] ... basic concerns that ought to be at the center of debate, like whether technologies ought to be explained and proven before being released in the wild, are readily dismissed.”

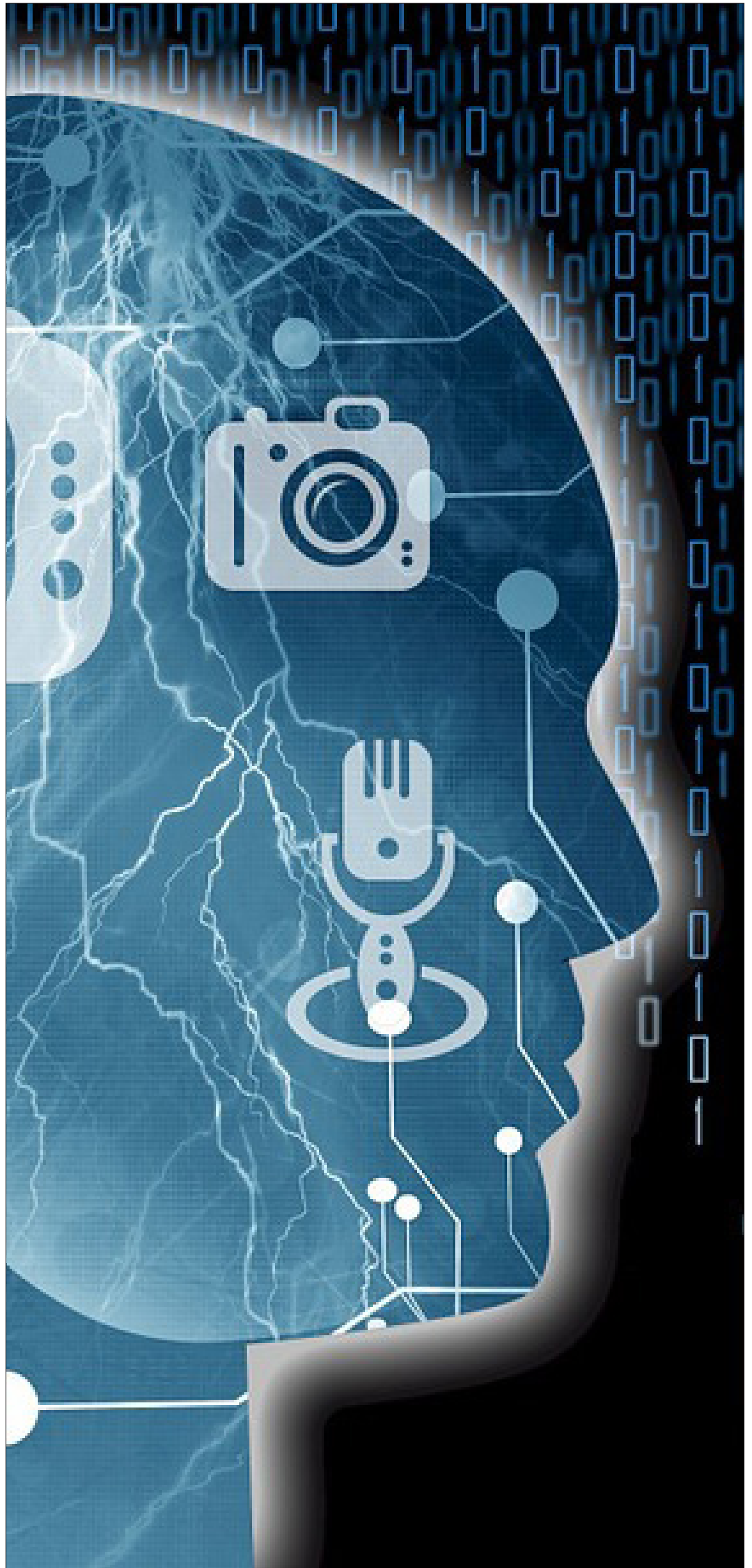
I am not claiming that everything is going to be horrible and that all human interaction will be lost, artificially intelligent robots will rule over us or that humans will become obsolete. Perhaps our leaders will help us smoothly guide technology into our society

with only a few blips. Already, there is an organization called Partnership on AI which, according to its mission statement found on their website, seeks “to shape best practices, research, and public dialogue about AI’s benefits for people and society.” Names like Amazon, Open AI, Google, Deep Mind and more than 80 others have already joined, and in Nov. of 2018 they held their second annual all-partners meeting.

While the meeting allows for some optimism, this isn’t good news at all. According to the event summary on their page, ethics and humanity were seemingly not part of their agenda. The forum focused on “topics ranging from the challenges of designing a global multi-stakeholder organization to designing and incentivizing equitable growth models to ensure that AI technology is built by and reflective of a diverse constituency, and that its benefits are broadly shared.” Seemingly, they were only concerned with guaranteeing that AI has healthy economic growth and produces profit for the relevant companies. Granted, the forum’s focus on equality amongst divers demographics is noble, but there are more fundamental issues at stake. For example, are governments setting up the correct policies and regulations on AI developers? Are current goals in AI going to be good for general human satisfaction and happiness? Are we just setting ourselves up to be pawns to AI’s wishes? They “aim to research the ways in which we can ensure that the development of

AI is used as a tool to effectively assist humans,” but why should we let industry heads choose what the goals for humanity are? Were they elected to do so? Are they some sort of elite tribe, worthy of making these choices for us?

It is time for people to stop thinking about only the positives of AI. Most currently applicable benefits of AI are obvious to the average person, because they can be generalized by imagining a really smart, really knowledgeable and really efficient person. I want to warn the deep thinking readers of this article about the pitfalls of being blindly optimistic and unreasonable. Thinking “things will be okay, just like they always are with new technology,” is an underestimation of what AI is really bringing to the table (and perhaps a misunderstanding of our present state). It is absolutely unclear what the world will look like, and the role humans will play in the world in the next half century is up in the air. Simply waiting for changes to play out is an acceptance of “the inevitable” that we cannot allow ourselves to indulge in.



Automated intelligence is growing at an alarming rate, leading to many ethical concerns.

The Travel Website Shaking Up the Airline Industry

By ELI FRISHMAN

For my recent trip back home for break, I made the usual rounds on Expedia, Travelocity and Orbitz in search of the best deal. Frustrated by their steep prices, I decided to visit a website called “Skiplagged,” a flight search engine that displays routes that include stopovers matching your intended

Skiplagged popularity began to surge. A CNN article from 2015 reported that Skiplagged’s monthly viewership had gone from averaging 250,000 a month in 2014 to over 1 million a month in 2015, leading Zaman to pursue the venture full time and hire two full-time engineers.

However, because of the financial implications involved, airlines were strongly opposed to Skiplagged. Hidden city tick-

outside of United’s jurisdiction. Skiplagged proudly boasts about this quasi-victory on the home page of its website, writing, “Our prices are so cheap that United sued us, but we won.” But for fliers themselves, is this form of travel actually legal?

According to a Business Insider article from 2018, hidden city travel, while not inherently illegal and therefore not punishable by U.S. Law, is in fact a violation of the terms

a passenger is rerouted through a different layover city, he would have to suffer the loss and be forced to rebook. Additionally, because travelers’ booked destination isn’t actually their intended destination, travelers should not check baggage as their luggage could end up hundreds of miles away from them. Similarly, travelers should refrain from bringing large carry-ons that don’t fit into the overheads as flight attendants could demand that these bags be checked to the unintended final destination.

Currently, passengers are benefiting from Skiplagged’s fares, however because airlines are suffering not only the lost revenues from passengers paying less for their intended destination, but also the potential losses from being unable to sell the seats on the second leg of the trip. Some believe that airlines could one day impose a standard rate for both destinations, which would make flying more expensive for everyone. So far, no airlines have taken these steps. Instead, airlines have been cracking down on seasoned hidden-city passengers and imposing the penalties set forth in their contract of carriage.



Skiplagged Website Home Page

destination. Surprisingly, in many cases the prices for these flights were considerably cheaper than on those sites that display only the traditional options. For instance, Expedia’s lowest priced fare to Minneapolis was \$240 while Skiplagged’s ticket to Denver with a stopover in Minneapolis was almost \$100 less. In theory, Skiplagged is a great option for fliers looking for the best deals, however there are some concerns with this form of travel.

While the concept of “hidden-city ticketing” has been around for a while, it wasn’t until 2014 that 22-year-old computer programmer Aktarer Zaman decided to create the website now known as Skiplagged. Interestingly, Zaman didn’t create the website as a business idea, but rather to help others get the very best possible deal. But

eting, which was originally limited to the savvy flying elite, had now become available to all passengers. United Airlines and Orbitz Travel sued Zaman, claiming that Skiplagged promoted “strictly prohibited travel” that broke the “contract of carriage” and demanding that Zaman pay \$75,000 in lost revenue. To an airline with over \$37.7 billion in revenues in 2017, losses of \$75,000 may seem inconsequential. United, however, was concerned about the future losses that Skiplagged would cause.

Zaman, in turn, claimed that since Skiplagged didn’t actually book the flights but just displayed various options for fliers, they hadn’t violated the airline’s policies. Luckily for Zaman, the lawsuit was filed in Chicago and a judge threw out the case because Skiplagged was based in New York,

and agreement between the passenger and the airline. If the airline were aware that a passenger pursued this form of travel, the

Hidden city ticketing, which was originally limited to the savvy flying elite, had now become available to all fliers.

airline would reserve the right to prevent him from flying or otherwise demand that he pay the full fare. Further repercussions could also include the airline stripping passengers of frequent flier miles. For a full list of penalties, see Rule 6 Article K in United’s contract of carriage.

While passengers may be getting a better deal with Skiplagged, there are some limitations with this form of travel. In the event

As you book your next ticket back home and are struck by overpriced tickets, developments in technology have opened up an alternative and potentially cheaper way of flying. While this form of traveling comes with some restraints and requires a passenger’s own moral discretion, it could save you a pretty significant amount of money. Just remember not to pack too much.

OlehStay: An Online Hospitality Service Not Settling for Discrimination

By EITAN LAVIAN

Airbnb, the unicorn startup functioning as a home rental site, is currently active in 81,000 cities around the world. Trailing only Uber in being the most valuable startup, Forbes estimates the company to be valued at \$38 million. At the end of 2018, after receiving pressure from Palestinian officials and anti-settlement advocates, Airbnb decided to remove nearly 200 listings, located in Israel’s West Bank, from the application. Many consider these settlements, captured in the war of 1967, to be a violation of international law, and have deemed the territories “occupied,” and unethical. Airbnb stated that they wrestled with this issue and struggled to find the right approach, but spent “considerable time” consulting experts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that led them to this decision, leaving many Israeli and U.S. officials outraged.

Gilad Erdan, Israel’s minister of strategic affairs, promoted suggested that all West Bank homeowners who list their properties on Airbnb to file lawsuits against the company under Israel’s anti-boycott law. He added that he would further discuss the issue with American officials to

see whether the decision violated an anti-boycott legislation that exists in 25 states. Eugene Kontorovich, director of international law at the Kohelet Policy Forum, suggested that Airbnb was singling Israel out, and their motive to remove these listings were was simply not due to the “occupation,” but rather was a discriminatory and anti-semitic act. He added that Airbnb has listings in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara, Turkish-occupied Cyprus and other controversial territories. Vice President Mike Pence criticized the company’s decision, and said their actions had “no place” in the market.

In 2014, Airbnb removed approximately 4,000 listings in Crimea. Although many have argued that today’s issue is similar, it clearly is not. Their previous decision followed U.S. and international sanctions after Russia annexed the region from Ukraine; today, however, there are no U.S. sanctions against Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Airbnb now faces lawsuits in both the U.S. and Israel. The city of Beverly Hills passed a resolution that called for a global boycott against Airbnb. In Florida, governor-elect Ron DeSantis said he was going to reconsider state

policy allowing employees to stay at Airbnb during business trips. Illinois governor Bruce Rauner also challenged Airbnb with his letter to the state’s investment policy board determining seeking to determine whether their actions break state law against aiding boycott against Israel.

It is in light of these events that OlehStay, an Airbnb alternative for Israel, was launched.

Noam Beltran, a current Yeshiva University student, and Joey Sokol, a U.S. native who immigrated to Israel, launched their website, www.OlehStay.com, ten days after Airbnb announced its decision to de-list properties in the disputed territories. OlehStay, similar to Airbnb, operates as an online marketplace and hospitality service. Members can use the website to arrange temporary lodging at rates far cheaper than a hotel. Hosts are often able to make more money offering their homes on rental services, like OlehStay, as opposed to renting their home to a full-time tenant. In an interview with The Times of Israel, Sokol mentioned that their motive was specifically in response to Airbnb’s decisions, hence the website’s slogan: “Any listing, anywhere in Israel.” Sokol added, “We are on a mission to be

the alternative to Airbnb in Israel and eventually around the world.”

Israeli homeowners, as well as U.S. and Israeli politicians, are not the only ones unhappy with Airbnb’s decision; Sokol added that renters around the world are unhappy with Airbnb’s new policy. He added that people in general are now looking for an alternative service, and to accommodate the changing landscape, he and Beltran are working hard to expand their platform as quickly as possible.

As of mid-December, Sokol stated that OlehStay had dozens of listings around Israel. Among those listings, two were located in Gush Etzion, as well as others in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Fifty people signed up after the site started off with an introductory post in a Facebook group called “Secret

Jerusalem.” Still, Sokol was unsure as to whether the trend of Jews listing and renting would continue.

According to co-founder Beltran, OlehStay has 1,100 users to date, with dozens more signing up daily. “We have almost 40 listed properties on the website and are working with management companies in Israel and Europe to create a more robust network of properties.” If things go as planned, the OlehStay platform will host over 200 properties by the end of next month. The company is receiving tremendous amounts of support from both U.S. and Israeli communities, and is happy to be advocating for such a noble cause. Beltran also noted that they have received requests from individuals and companies in Europe, Canada and the United States to expand.



Airbnb, embroiled in scandal surrounding their decision to remove listings from the West Bank, continues to thrive despite increased competition and alternative platforms for both renters and rentees.

Hold the Popcorn! Blockbuster, the Movie Titan Before Movie Titans

By AVI LEKOWSKY

The world moves pretty fast. While just a few years ago we had to drag ourselves out to the movie rental store in the freezing cold if we wanted to vege-out, today it's about as simple as pressing a button. Our ancestors would laugh at some of our problems today — not having anything to watch on a service with thousands of titles? Honestly, five-years-ago-us would probably agree.

The first Blockbuster store — housing 10,000 VHS and Beta tapes — was opened in 1985 in Dallas, Texas by David Cook. Although he began his career in the ever-lucrative oil industry, his wife convinced him that the video industry would be the next big thing. David quickly found success, and after building a \$6 million warehouse in Garland, Texas, he began opening stores more quickly.

The early 90's were a time of acquisitions and expansions for the company. They bought out rivals, music retail chains and other entertainment operations, which eventually led them to become a multibillion-dollar corporation. In 1991, when Time Warner announced they were upgrading their cable systems, Blockbuster's shares dropped. In response, they decided to differentiate themselves by participating more in the entertainment sector. By investing in Viacom, opening a "Block Party Store" — an

entertainment complex with restaurants, games and more — and tossing around the idea of a Blockbuster amusement park, they proved they were on the offense and ready to pounce on the smartest business strategy that could make them grow. In 1994, Viacom bought Blockbuster for \$8.4 billion. Also in this decade, they expanded into the UK and Ireland markets by purchasing Ritz's Video and Xtra-vision, respectively. Toward the end of the decade, they launched a successful rewards program and sold their music chain of stores.

On Sept. 23, 2010, Blockbuster officially filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Dish Network bought the company in the middle of 2011 and tried multiple times to revitalize it, to no avail.

The early 2000's were a transformative and transitional time for the entertainment industry. People were looking for ways to enjoy films in more convenient ways. Blockbuster realized this, and knew they had to act fast. Netflix's movie-by-mail service was gaining traction, and Blockbuster was struggling to come up with a viable competitive alternative to today's premiere streaming platform. After famously turning down the chance to buy Netflix for \$50 million in

2000, they partnered with Enron to help create a video-on-demand service. Enron terminated this partnership March of 2001, when they became worried Blockbuster wouldn't be able to provide enough films for the service.

In 2004, Viacom spun off Blockbuster to become its own independent company once again. With over 9,000 locations in the U.S., they felt like the future was bright. As we know today, that bright future turned out to be pretty dark. By 2010, the number of stores nationally decreased from 9,000 to

middle of 2011 and tried multiple times to revitalize it, to no avail. If you still want to visit a Blockbuster today, there's one left in America; you'd have to travel to Bend, Oregon to take a picture in front of the iconic yellow and blue accented sign.

What eventually led to Blockbuster's demise? The obvious answer is seemingly Netflix, but upon closer inspection, that might not be the case. Today, a person can look at the situation differently than a business executive back in the 2000s. Yes, Blockbuster failed to pick up the red-enveloped startup that went on to surpass them, but it wasn't for lack of thought. Late fees brought in money streaming couldn't, and the sales made in the front of the store (candy, food, etc.) made up another chunk of revenue that would be lost if they resorted to different ways of distribution. Their short-lived partnership with Enron proved they were thinking ahead of the times, but for a multitude of reasons, they just weren't able to dip their toe into the streaming services they desired to.

Whether it was poor executive decisions, fierce competition or spreading their business too thin, Blockbuster went from being one of the greats to... just about the opposite. All we can do now is sit back, relax, reminisce nostalgically for a bit, and then press the "watch next" on the Netflix app.

3,425. After announcing a plan to close about 900 more, they detailed a plan to establish 10,000 "Blockbuster Express" kiosks to take on Redbox.

Soon after, their financials took a turn for the worse; they were delisted from the New York Stock Exchange and found themselves hundreds of millions of dollars in debt. On Sept. 23, 2010, Blockbuster officially filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Dish Network bought the company in the



The only remnants of the iconic, once-successful company that has been wiped out by Redbox, Netflix and the ever-changing nature of the technological landscape.

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