

"DOESN'T THE TERM  
'COED' TECHNICALLY  
APPLY ONLY FOR  
EDUCATIONAL  
SETTINGS?"

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

"I THINK THAT'S  
THE REAL  
SCANDAL OF THE  
MONTH."

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## YU Students Attend Rally to Protest Chinese Internment of Uyghurs



The Uyghur Rally by the United Nations Headquarters

JONATHAN BECKER

By ZACHARY GREENBERG

Approximately 20 YU undergraduates and alumni attended the Uyghur Rally: Call to Action on Tuesday, Feb. 5 across the street from the United Nations Headquarters to protest China's Xinjiang re-education camps and their detainment of Uyghurs and Muslims.

The rally was organized by Yosef Roth (YC '16, RIETS '20), a current Yeshiva University *semikha* student who is pursuing a Ph.D. in Computational Biology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, as well as several other organizers. Over 150 people attended the rally, which took place from 12:00 to 12:50 p.m., concurrent with a similar protest that took place in Washington D.C.

It is estimated that up to one million

Muslims, or about seven percent of the Muslim population, are currently being confined in the Xinjiang "political" re-education camps. Many experts suspect that China is detaining these individuals in an attempt to counter a perceived threat of extremism from certain ethnic minorities. Former inmates of the camps have attested to torture, humiliation and forced propaganda. Some claim to have been bound to chairs and served

inadequate amounts of food.

The purpose of the rally, according to Roth, was to encourage the U.S. Department of State to address the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019, a recently proposed bill in the U.S. Congress. The bill recommends that the State Department investigate the

*Continued on Page 4*

## New YUTorah App Released

By YOSEF LEMEL

On Monday, Jan. 28, the Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future (CJF) released a new YUTorah application for iOS and Android. The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTorah Online is a website with around 180,000 *shiurim* uploaded and is the largest online platform for Torah study.

According to Rabbi Robert Shur, the director of YUTorah, the purpose of the app is to "maximize the user experience and provide [the] functionality you expect from an app and not just from a mobile site. It's faster, more stable, [more] customizable, has a lot of new options and really sets a new standard for mobile Torah learning."

A previous version of the YUTorah app was created in 2012. The production of that app was "done quickly and not well, and it wasn't able to be easily updated when iOS

*Continued on Page 4*

## Uptown Shabbaton Unites Wilf and Beren Campuses

By SHOSHY CIMENT

Approximately 150 students from the Wilf and Beren campuses gathered for the first uptown Shabbaton in almost 40 years this past weekend, Feb. 15-16. Despite a controversial statement from a *rosh yeshiva* urging male students to avoid the area this weekend, the Shabbaton was largely considered a success by the attendees and organizers.

*Notably, a Beren student — Bella Adler (SCW '20) — gave the post-shacharit dvar Torah at Klein@9, making her the first woman to do so since Lilly Gelman's speech ended the practice over one year ago.*

Meals were held in the Shenk Synagogue and female students lodged at various alumnae and residents throughout Washington Heights. Notably, a Beren student — Bella Adler (SCW '20) — gave the post-shacharit dvar Torah at Klein@9, making her the

first woman to do so since Lilly Gelman's speech ended the practice over one year ago. The community *minyan* was located in the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) basement as opposed to the usual Klein Beit Midrash.

"This Shabbos was both chill and meaningful in all the ways a Shabbaton should be," said Eli Weiss (Syms '19), an attendee of the Shabbaton who described the occasion as "momentous" in his Saturday *dvar*

Torah. "I felt that there was a real sense of community and that the food was excellent."

For many Beren students, the uptown coed Shabbaton was a welcome change from the usual coed *Shabbatonim* downtown. "It was refreshing to spend Shabbat with friends

and make new friends in a chill environment," said Talia Korn (SCW '19).

Preparations for the Shabbaton began as early as the fall. The Commentator reported in October about preliminary details regarding the Shabbaton which began to materialize thanks to efforts from Yeshiva and Stern College Student Councils. According to The Commentator archives, the last coed uptown Shabbaton took place on the Wilf Campus in May of 1980.

"This Shabbaton has been in works for years and it was amazing to see all the work — especially by the Office of Student Life and Nolan Edmonson from Yeshiva Student Union — come to fruition," remarked Stern College for Women Student Council President Shoshana Marder. "Overall a very chill and fun communal environment was created!"

Though the Wilf Campus' Furman Dining Hall cafeteria was open this Shabbat for those interested in a single-gender environment, only about 25 undergraduate men were in attendance.

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# THE COMMENTATOR

2018-2019

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

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## The Woman Question and the Problem of Undefined Leadership

By SHOSHY CIMENT

At this point, it's hard to deny: many YU *roshei yeshiva* act as though they would like to eliminate women from the Wilf Campus.

We were reminded of this last week when *Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman encouraged his male students to leave the Wilf Campus in protest of the uptown coed Shabbaton, the first of its kind in almost 40 years. Why? Because it was coed and therefore unfit for a *yeshiva* campus.

I wish I could say I was surprised. But unfortunately, empty and unfounded protest has become the regular answer to the slightest scent of a woman — however *tzanua* — on the Wilf Campus.

Let's not forget the Klein@9 debacle, where a woman giving a *dvar torah* at a community-oriented student *minyan* led to the official banning of women from ever doing so again.

What is it about a female presence on the Wilf Campus that seems to send some of the *roshei yeshiva* into a panicked frenzy? What tremendous power does this class of students unknowingly wield? And where do we draw the line between disagreement and complete degradation of an entire constituency?

Rabbi Shulman's fear — and the fear of many of his students and colleagues — is not entirely baseless. Their argument, as outlined by students and Rabbi Shulman himself, rests on the fact that coed events are inappropriate in a *yeshiva* setting. As Rabbi Shulman said, "Coed events have their place, but not in the *yeshiva* campus."

But that's the thing — Yeshiva University is no ordinary *yeshiva*. While the *beit midrash* component of the university is unique to YU, there is also a complementary and crucial "University" aspect as well, which includes secular studies, extracurricular events and a college with almost 1,000 women a few miles south of the Wilf Campus.

It's hard to imagine what some of the *roshei yeshiva* see when they think of a school-sanctioned uptown coed Shabbaton. The Shabbaton was approved by the Office of Student Life, the same body that has rejected multiple clubs' movie showings because of inappropriate subject matter. This Shabbaton was an attempt at community building between the two campuses. It featured learning activities, communal meals and set time for healthy and appropriate socializing.

"Boys and girls should date, but they don't have to date in the *beis midrash*," said Rabbi Shulman. What a *beit midrash* date actually looks like is left up to conjecture, but the idea that inviting women to eat, *daven* and learn within 500 feet of the *beit midrash* somehow breaches the sanctity of a *makom kadosh* is just fear-mongering nonsense.

The question of a woman's role on the Wilf Campus — and in Yeshiva University in general — bears no simple answer. Maybe that's because the roles of the *roshei yeshiva* on campus are eternally undefinable. In fact, the YU *roshei yeshiva* are not

even officially responsible for making *psak* for the university.

A student asked Rabbi Jeremy Wieder about this in April of 2018. He said, "I personally am not involved in any *psak* for the University, I have no idea who (if anyone) is asked and under what circumstances."

In the same article, Rabbi Yosef Blau was quoted as saying, "Not every Rebbe, because he says *shiur*, considers himself a *posek*."

But still, the YU *roshei yeshiva* somehow seem to eternally preside over the vacuum-tight bureaucracy of Yeshiva University. Somehow, it always comes back to them. And women are marginalized as a result.

If the *roshei yeshiva* don't make the rules, then who does? Who decides that women can't speak at a YU community *minyan* or that a university-approved Shabbaton should be boycotted? Who is responsible for the elusive and undefined policies that punctuate virtually every step — from club approvals to *Shabbatonim* to dress codes — at Yeshiva University?

According to President Ari Berman, the students — working with the proper administrators — are crucial to this. "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," said Berman on the topic of women giving *divrei Torah* on the Wilf Campus in a recent frustrating interview with The Commentator.

To any student, it is obvious that such decisions are not entirely up to us. There has to be some administrative power that codifies and sets the rules. Expectantly and perhaps optimistically, we look to the *roshei yeshiva* for this. The result is ambiguity, confusion and stagnation.

Maybe having only one *rosh yeshiva* would simplify things. But so would a definitive job description for the body that seems to hold more power than President Berman himself.

There's a problem of responsibility at YU. The Office of Student Life and other important bodies often stumble over hearsay rules and what can only be described as unofficial traditions masquerading as rules. We can't keep calling on the university for change when we ourselves don't know who hears our voice. If the *roshei yeshiva* are the people in power, their roles should be defined loudly and clearly for the entire university.

And if that means that women don't belong on the Wilf Campus, then codify it. A harmful, tangible rule is better than a nebulous, unfounded theory. If we know what we're fighting against, we might actually make a change.

With roles and positions that are clearly defined, there is no excuse for hiding in the fog of ambiguous leadership. To be sure, our calls might still fall on deaf ears. But at the very least, the policy-makers will be held accountable for the decisions — and announcements — they make that directly impact every student in YU.

*What tremendous power does this class of students unknowingly wield? And where do we draw the line between disagreement and complete degradation of an entire constituency?*



**1 Stomp Out the Stigma**  
Sorry for crashing the party with big news, but hats off to everyone that spoke. (YU Counseling Center — Beren (646-592-4210) — Wilf (646-592-4200).)

**2 The Seforim Sale**  
It's like Ben Yehudah, but with less drinking and sexual tension thicker than "The Prime Ministers."

**3 First Male Observer Editor**  
Breaking that glass ceiling.

**4 #FriendlyFebruary**  
My oh my how the tables have turned. 7 up/7 down has been 7 upped/7 downed. Well played, SOY. Well played.

**5 Tea Time With Dovid**  
My favorite time of day. Nothing better than a cup of tea with some Key Food grapes.

**6 This**  
"Yeshiva is a *makom kadosh*. Boys and girls should date, but they don't have to date in the *beis midrash*."

**7 New 7 Up/7 Down Byline**  
Don't worry Shifra, I'm not looking to steal your thunder.

# 7 UP / 7 DOWN

BY SAMUEL GELMAN



**1 Graduation Fee**  
So in order to graduate from the university that I paid for, I have to pay the university that I paid for? And if I don't pay the university that I paid for, I don't get the degree that I paid for?

**2 Rick Perry as the Designated Survivor**  
If Rabbi Berman gave a State of YU, who would be the designated survivor?

**3 The Super Bowl**  
If this column has not already upset you, I've got news for you: I am a Tom Brady fan.

**4 Post-Mincha Announcements**  
Ugh and we were so close, too.

**5 Coed Shabbaton**  
First an IBC *beit midrash* and now this! This is what happens when you get Gush out of SOY.

**6 Tl;dr**  
It stands for "too long; didn't read," which I guess makes this entire blurb counterproductive.

**7 Coed Shabbaton Controversy**  
If you think they were upset about the coed Shabbaton, wait until they find out that a woman spoke at Klein@9 for the first time in 428 days.

## Correction

The Editor-in-Chief and News editors of The Commentator would like to apologize for omitting the title of "Rabbi" for Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky and Rabbi Menachem Penner in the headline of the recent article titled "Kalinsky Appointed Dean of UTS, Penner to Focus on RIETS," which appeared in the Feb. 4 print issue. Though the Associated Press Stylebook, which is the style guide that The Commentator generally follows, recommends omitting titles in news reporting, respect for *rabbanim* is of the utmost importance. We apologize for the recent omission and for any disrespect that it may have suggested.

## Letter to the Editor: Show Some Respect

To the Editor:

This past Wednesday, Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman, YU *rosh yeshiva* and *magid shiur*, shared his views on the upcoming uptown coed Shabbaton. I myself was not present when the statements were made, and was first made aware of them when I overheard a conversation in the elevator. I didn't think much of it at the time. A *rosh yeshiva* had a religious opinion about an upcoming event, and wishing to share it with his students, he did.

As reported that evening by The Commentator: "Coed events have their place, but not in the *yeshiva* campus," Rabbi Shulman remarked about the coed Shabbaton, following his statement in the *beit midrash*. "No *yeshiva* past or present, none of the *yeshivot* where you learned before, would dream of hosting a coed Shabbaton on the *yeshiva* grounds. Nor was it ever done in the 100-year history of this *yeshiva*."

"I am not speaking for the other *roshei yeshiva*," Rabbi Shulman added. "I would encourage everyone to speak with their *rebbeim* and decide how to proceed."

Fairly quotidian stuff, in my opinion.

That was not the attitude adopted by several YU student leaders, however, as demonstrated in the subsequent article published in The Commentator.

One of the students who took exception to Rav Shulman's stance opined that Rav Shulman's remarks were "inappropriate and certainly uncalled for."

Another student had the following take: "It is disrespectful for a respected leader of this institution to condemn an initiative in this way."

Finally, a third student stated that "to announce that all men should leave because of a coed Shabbaton, one that is sponsored by this very institution, is deeply painful."

Meanwhile, Rav Shulman is the disrespectful party?

Full disclosure: I attended the Shabbaton, and I appreciated all the effort expended by Yeshiva Student Union and the Office of Student Life to bring the event to fruition. That said, I take issue with the declarations made by my fellow students in the article covering Rav Shulman's remarks. Of course, students are entitled to their opinions and to respectful disagreement. As the first student himself noted, "The beauty of our university is that we are able to engage in the free exchange of ideas and challenge each other while respectfully disagreeing."

Firstly, Rav Shulman has every right to condemn an event to students or to recommend their absence. He knows that he disagrees with some of his colleagues. He clearly stated that students should speak to their own *rebbeim* or religious authorities when making this decision. It is a *rebbe's* responsibility to express his opinions on how to live one's life in harmony with Torah Judaism to those who would listen. He was doing his job. College students should have the maturity to recognize that not everyone needs to share their opinion; Rav Shulman's disagreement with them is not personal and should not be "deeply painful."

More importantly, Rav Shulman is a noted Torah scholar and religious leader. He has spent his life steeped in Torah learning and in service to the Jewish Community. He is also several decades older than the average YU undergrad, has been at YU far longer and understands *halakhah*, *makhshavah* and YU tradition far better. To publicly criticize Rav Shulman in such a manner, referring to him as "disrespectful" and referring to his actions as "inappropriate," is shameful, to put it mildly.

Disagreeing with a rabbinic figure while demonstrating the appropriate level of deference is fine, and productive conversation is typically encouraged in YU. However, students must recognize that regardless of their personal views on the subject, the rabbinic position Rav Shulman holds demands a basic level of respect. It's clear that students have fallen far short of that standard.

CJ Wiesenfeld (YC '21)



## Letter to the Editor: Upset Alumnus

To the Editor:

As a concerned alumnus following Yeshiva College's latest news, including the successful men's basketball team, I am very upset with the lack of attention The Commentator gives its fellow student-athletes. I have not seen one score, one

*I am very upset with the lack of attention  
The Commentator gives its fellow  
student-athletes.*

paragraph, one photo, one interview with a men's basketball team member or coach, nor any mention of their historic 16 game winning streak which started on Dec. 1, 2018. Also, make note that YU is in first place in the Skyline Conference.

What an accomplishment!

I am well aware of our motto, *Torah Umadda*, but not one word on your fellow student-athletes seems wrong. These athletes do not receive athletic scholarships. They volunteer their time outside the classroom between practice, games, study and staying in shape in order to compete. It is just unheard of and inconsiderate for an event that should (and very often does) pack the MSAC gym for home games as well as visiting team gyms (which are located near Jewish communities) to not get one mention in the institution's publication. Where is the Sports Editor with the news coverage to show appreciation for your classmates' accomplishments?

In any event, good luck to the Macs the rest of the way: in the conference playoffs, and the potential automatic invite to the NCAA's Division III NE tournament. You bring pride to YU students past and present, and the Jewish community.

Alan Blumenthal (YC '70)

## Letter to the Editor: Coed Shabbaton and Daas Torah

To the Editor:

First of all, there needs to be more kavod hatorah shown to Rabbi Shulman, who is a world class talmid chacham. Even if you disagree with his approach, to print disparaging comments, as was done in the recent article that was published online on Feb. 13, is against what Torah stands for. Now to the issue: When an event like this is planned, there has to be rabbinic oversight; sit down with a rosh yeshiva and ask how can we make such an event agreeable. Define the purpose and the goals, and then plan and advertise the event. To have a coed Shabbaton at YU without asking the shaylah is wrong. To the people reading this article: be careful about what you say about a talmid chacham.

Rabbi (Rodney) Elisha Weiss (YC '90, RIETS '97)

*UYGHUR RALLY,  
continued from Front Page*

Xinjiang camps and, if China is found guilty of human rights violations, to initiate trade sanctions against certain Chinese officials. Similar tactics have been used in the past, for example, with the Global Magnitsky Act of 2012 which sanctioned Russian officials who were allegedly involved in human rights violations.

Activism on the part of Yeshiva University students to protest human rights violations is not a new phenomenon. Commentator archives report how, in Oct. 1968, several students staged a protest against the YU administration for not openly condemning acts of genocide that were being inflicted upon the Biafran people. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, who was a YU *rosh yeshiva* and *rosh kollel* at the time, arranged for some of his students to wake up early, *daven* at sunrise and have an early *shiur*, after which he accompanied them to a protest about the Biafra situation, which took place at the Isaiah Wall near the United Nations Headquarters.

Attendees from Yeshiva University at the recent Uyghur Rally included both men and women from the Wilf and Beren campuses. Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, a YU *rosh yeshiva*, scheduled for an early *shiur* to take place early on the morning of the rally, so that students would be able to attend. "As a follower of a religion that believes in rights for peoples of all religions, and as a citizen of a country whose foundational

principles include freedom to practice religion without discrimination, supporting the Uyghurs in their plight is a no-brainer," said Reuven Herzog (YC '19). "I am grateful to the work that Yosef and his fellow organizers put in; I did the super easy part of showing up."

Several keynote speakers, all from different religions and backgrounds, spoke at the Uyghur Rally about why they felt it was important to condemn the re-education camps. Yosef Roth served as master of ceremonies. He opened up

*"It is necessary for the rest of the world, and particularly the  
United States of America as a powerful country, to stand up to  
China."*

Rabbi Yosef Blau

the rally by stating, "It's hard to fathom the scale of this atrocity. This issue crosses all political, cultural and religious divides." He then introduced the first speaker, Arfat Aeriken, a U.S. student whose family members are currently imprisoned in Xinjiang. Arfat spoke about how he had kept silent when they took his friends' parents captive. But now that his parents are in the detention camps, he felt that he had no choice but to speak up.

The second speaker, Imam Suhaib Webb from the Islamic Center at New York University, explicitly associated the Uyghur issue to Palestinian oppression, at which point one YU student yelled out, "stop spreading hate," and at least

two students from the YU contingency left. After Webb's speech, Yosef Roth reminded the other speakers to keep the event focused on the specific Chinese oppression in Xinjiang.

Other speakers included Imam Khalid Latif, the Executive Director for the Islamic Center at NYU, Rushan Abbas, an Uyghur activist whose sister is currently imprisoned in Xinjiang, Rabbi Yosef Blau, a *rosh yeshiva* at Yeshiva University, Reverend Brian McWeeney, the head of inter-religious and ecumenical affairs for Cardinal Timothy Dolan, and Sami Steigmann, a Holocaust survivor.

"Tragically, human history is filled with stories of human oppression," said Rabbi Blau, who spoke last at the rally. "It is necessary for the rest of the world, and particularly the United States of America as a powerful country, to stand up to China," he told the crowd. "We believe that all human beings are created in God's image. Hopefully this [protest] will make a dent and change the narrative of history," Rabbi Blau added. Roth then concluded the rally by encouraging the attendees to reach out to their representatives to help make a difference.

"For Jewish people who hope to create a world where everyone is in service of God," explained Roth when asked about his motivations for organizing the rally, "it is important to defend those who worship God against those who would prevent them. As God-fearing people, we need to protest this enormous attack on human rights."

The Uyghur rally concluded with the crowd chanting, "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!"

*YU TORAH,  
continued from Front Page*

and Android released new versions," stated Rabbi Shur.

"It was therefore decided that it would be better to spend the time and resources to build a new app, with native code and a solid API (Application Programming Interface), that would work really well and be able to easily adapt to future changes to iOS and Android, rather than waste money on fixing the old one," explained Rabbi Shur. "We expect to have a regular stream of updated versions as we add more and more to the app over the coming months and years."

Rusty Brick was hired to create the app in conjunction with Integrate, the company that manages the YUTorah website. Rusty Brick is a company that has created other Jewish-themed apps such as Tanakh, Tikun Korim and Siddur.

Six weeks before the public release of the app, a beta version was released to a group of around 15 individuals.

Jacob Rosenfeld (YC '21), one of the beta testers, had a positive impression regarding the app. "It's great to have a new app with so many new features,"

he said. "The ability to easily search, download and change the speeds of *shiurim* is really amazing. As with any new app, there is always room for improvement, but I think they really did a great job putting it together."

According to Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, the David Mitzner Dean of the CJF, the creation and continued maintenance of the app was fully funded by the Katz family as a gift to Yeshiva University

the event will be given by Rabbi Hershel Schachter on the topic of "The History and Development of Talmud Torah," which will be followed by a panel discussion consisting of four speakers on the subject of "The Future of Talmud Torah."

Examples of the questions which will be addressed by the panel were provided by Rabbi Glasser, namely: "What does the accessibility of 180,000

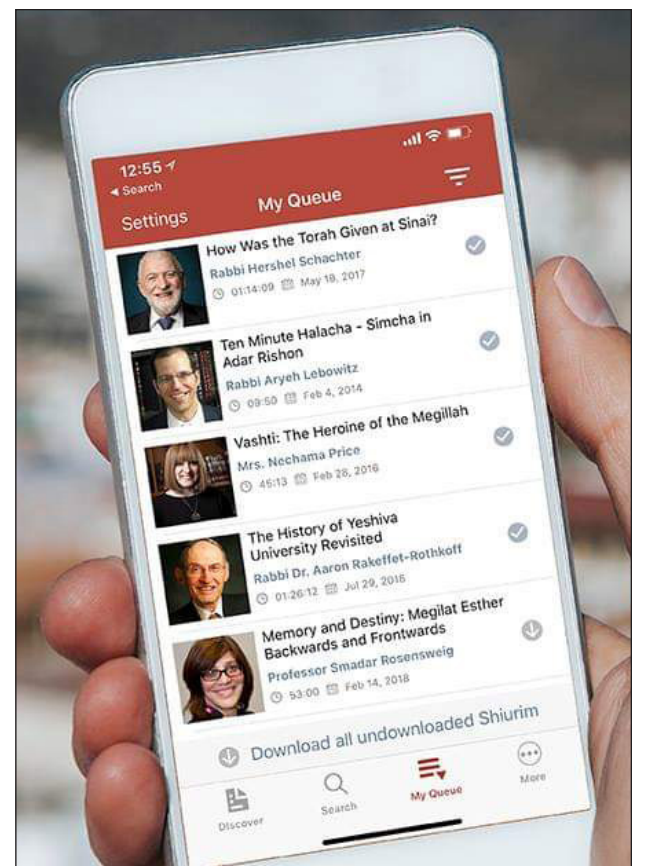
*"A more enhanced platform for connecting to this  
incredible, unparalleled resource, will further the spread  
of Torah throughout the world."*

Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, Dean of the Center for the Jewish  
Future

"A more enhanced platform for connecting to this incredible, unparalleled resource, will further the spread of Torah throughout the world," remarked Rabbi Glasser.

A special session of the Arbesfeld Yom Rishon Program will take place on Sunday, March 3 to celebrate the release of the app. The keynote speech of

*shiurim* mean for the role of educators and rabbis in their community? What will *rebbe-talmid* relationships look like in the future? And how will institutions be impacted by the opportunity to reach students beyond their walls — all over the world?"



A page from the new YUTorah app

YUTORAH.ORG  
FACEBOOK PAGE



## President Berman Participates in Inter-Faith Panel with Religious College Leaders

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER

President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman participated in a panel discussion with leaders of other religious colleges at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Presidents' Conference in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 1.

President Berman sat with the presidents of Brigham Young University (affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah), Zaytuna College (A Muslim Liberal Arts College in California),

Regis University (A Jesuit-Catholic school in Colorado) and Houghton College (A Protestant Institute in Utica, NY) to discuss "what faith-based schools from diverse backgrounds have in common," according to the Religious News Service (RNS).

At the panel, RNS reported that President

Berman stated that "Faith-based schools help students 'to contextualize our lives in a greater mission, to have a sense of holiness about everything that we do.'" He also explained that after he became president he sought out Brigham Young President Kevin J. Worthen and the presidents of Catholic University of America and Fordham University to "compare notes with colleagues of other faith-based institutions," according to the article.

Inside Higher Ed wrote that President Berman said, "I see this moment in time as a moment of opportunity for religion or faith," and that "I look at the world and the way things are analyzed or thought about, I see that there's place for us now

that is profound and necessary."

They reported that President Berman spoke about his disbelief at a Massachusetts Institute of Technology team of researchers that decided to answer the "trolley problem" for self-driving cars by taking a survey. "We come with a 3,000-year-old tradition

*President Berman stated that "Faith-based schools help students 'to contextualize our lives in a greater mission, to have a sense of holiness about everything that we do.'"*

of wisdom, of texts, of substance, of ideas, of values, of nuance. And we bring that to contemporary issues and challenges and we are able to speak with weight." "How did they resolve one of the great philosophical challenges or ethical issues of our time?" President Berman asked. "They took a survey."



From left to right: Brigham Young University's Kevin J. Worthen, President Berman, Regis University's John Fitzgibbons, Zaytuna College's Hamza Yusuf, Houghton College's Shirley Mullen and moderator Peter Wehner

INSIDER HIGHER ED, COURTESY OF COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

## Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz Hired as RIETS Director of Semikha Program

By JACOB ROSENFELD

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Feb. 14.*

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, currently a Senior *Magid Shiur* at Lander College for Men, will become the Director of *Semikha* at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) for the Fall 2019 semester, according to Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of RIETS.

When asked what Rabbi Lebowitz's role will entail, Rabbi Penner said, "He will give a *semikha* level *shiur* and develop relationships with all of the fellows in the *semikha* program. He will also interact with undergraduates in many different forums."

The news broke on Wednesday, Feb. 14, when Rabbi Elly Storch tweeted that Rabbi Lebowitz will be "going to @YUNews [sic]." Following this tweet, murmurs of Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz's name could be heard all over campus. The hire was later confirmed by Rabbi Penner.

In recent years, Rabbi Lebowitz has become a favorite of many students that may not have even met him. This due to his extreme popularity on YUTorah, where he has over 7,400 easy-to-understand, high-level *shiurim* uploaded — the most of any speaker on the website. Rabbi Penner referred to him as "a superstar educator and *rav* ... We are excited ... to be able to bring him back 'home' in a role that allows him to significantly impact the future of the North American Jewish community."

Rabbi Lebowitz is an alumnus of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh. Following his studies in Israel, he studied in Sy Syms School of Business and remained in RIETS following graduation. During his studies in the Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) program and subsequently RIETS, he became — and remains — a very close *talmid* of RIETS

*Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Hershel Schachter. He went on to also receive *semikha* from Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Following his tenure as Assistant Rabbi at Shaaray Tefilah, a shul in Lawrence, Rabbi Lebowitz established the *shul* of Beis Haknesses of North Woodmere in 2004, where he is currently the rabbi. Rabbi Lebowitz was a *magid shiur* at Davis Renov Stahler (DRS) Yeshiva High School until two and a half years ago when he was hired as a Senior *Magid Shiur* at Lander College for Men, a division of Touro College.

In an announcement on Wednesday, Feb. 13 in the Lander *Beis Medrash*, Rabbi Yonason Sacks, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Lander College for Men, and former YU *rosh yeshiva*, said, "[Rabbi Lebowitz] was granted an unusual opportunity to be a part of the *semikha* program at RIETS and he has accepted that opportunity for the fall." He then proceeded to thank Rabbi Lebowitz for all of his contributions to the yeshiva.

Rabbi Lebowitz was then called upon to speak and said that "although he [Rabbi Sacks] didn't say it, there's no doubt that the *rosh yeshiva* does not agree, necessarily, with this decision, but his incredible *middos*, his incredible *ahava* that he has for his *talmidim*, who I am fortunate to count myself among, is what led me to allow me just offer words of *hakaras hatov*." Rabbi Lebowitz praised Lander and the *rebbeim*.

Students around YU are clearly excited about the news. When asked, Rabbi Menachem Penner said he is very excited as well about the news. Last week, Rabbi Penner retweeted Rabbi Lebowitz's Feb. 8 tweet: "one of the most effective ways to become great is by joining a great team" - Dr. Dan Chambliss #chevra." Some viewed this retweet as a forerunner to the announcement, although it was likely a coincidence.

Meir Avracen (YC '21), a longtime *talmid* of Rabbi Lebowitz, expressed how excited he was to hear the news that Rabbi Lebowitz would be joining the staff and said, "Almost



Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

TOURO COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

as impressive as Rabbi Lebowitz's breadth of Torah knowledge is his ability to step into his students' shoes when issuing *piskei halakhah* and offering personal advice. This, along with his characteristic humility,

constant positivity and immeasurable kindness, will greatly inspire the *talmidim* of the *yeshiva* for years to come."

As of the time of publication, Rabbi Lebowitz could not be reached for comment.



# Rosh Yeshiva Encourages Male Students to Leave for the Weekend in Protest of Uptown Coed Shabbaton

By SHOSHY CIMENT

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Feb. 13.*

YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman urged students to leave the Wilf Campus this Shabbat in light of the scheduled uptown coed Shabbaton. The announcement was made publicly from the pulpit to over 100 students and *rebbeim* on Wednesday following the 2:30 p.m. *minchah minyan* in the Glueck Beit Midrash, which is typically attended by Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) students.

"Coed events have their place, but not in the *yeshiva* campus," Rabbi Shulman remarked to The Commentator about the coed Shabbaton, following his statement in the *beit midrash*. "No *yeshiva* past or present, none of the *yeshivot* where you learned before, would dream of hosting a coed Shabbaton on the *yeshiva* grounds. Nor was it ever done in the 100-year history

be productive," explained Rabbi Shulman. "I don't think they would even be understood. I do think that the best way to convey our unhappiness would be to go away for this Shabbos. That would be a powerful, quiet statement."

"I am not speaking for the other *roshei yeshiva*," Rabbi Shulman added. "I would encourage everyone to speak with their *rebbeim* and decide how to proceed."

suggest an underlying issue: that YU's *roshei yeshiva* are neglecting half of YU's students."

Torah Activities Council (TAC) Vice President of Speakers Yael Blau (SCW '19) was also upset, though she acknowledged that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. She stated: "I was very upset to hear about this announcement. I understand that everyone is entitled to their own opinions and if an individual was asking a personal

Rofeh.

"Coed events are not necessarily problematic in themselves, but it is not appropriate in a *yeshiva*," remarked Zaki Dayan (YC '20), an MYP student who has been in Rabbi Shulman's *shiur* for 1.5 years and planned on leaving for Shabbat before he heard Rabbi Shulman's announcement. "Even if I had not planned on leaving, after hearing *Rebbi's* opinion and the fact that no other *yeshiva*

*"I do think that the best way to convey our unhappiness would be to go away for this Shabbos. That would be a powerful, quiet statement."*

YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Several other *roshei yeshiva* reportedly made negative comments regarding the coed Shabbaton in their *shiurim* and attempted to dissuade students from attending and partaking in programming.

"This Shabbaton is most certainly in

question and the rabbi responded in this way, I would not have had the same reaction. However, to announce that all men should leave because of a coed shabbaton, one that is sponsored by this very institution, is deeply painful. Such a statement publicly ostracizes

past or present would consider this appropriate, I would have left too."

Coed Shabbatons are frequently held throughout the semester on the Beren Campus in midtown Manhattan.

Rabbi Shulman, who holds the Rabbi



Glueck Beit Midrash

YU NEWS

of this *yeshiva*."

University officials and student leaders have been working for months to coordinate YU's first coed uptown Shabbaton in nearly 40 years. According to preliminary plans, programming and women's housing for the weekend are slated to happen near — but not on — the Wilf Campus. It is unclear whether Rabbi Shulman was aware of this when making his remarks.

According to Rabbi Shulman, this Shabbaton, which was approved by the YU Office of Student Life, is strongly opposed by all the *roshei yeshiva* and *rebbeim*. "That itself is wrong," he said. Rabbi Shulman also mentioned that the *tzniut*, or modesty, of the Shabbaton is difficult to determine, and stated: "It doesn't belong in a *yeshiva*."

"I don't think protests or petitions would

line with the ethos of Yeshiva University and I would hope that others might see it that way too," said Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Nolan Edmonson (YC '19), who was instrumental in organizing the Shabbaton. "The beauty of our university is that we are able to engage in the free exchange of ideas and challenge each other while respectfully disagreeing."

Edmonson added that the manner in which Rabbi Shulman expressed his opinion regarding the Shabbaton was "inappropriate and certainly uncalled for," though he respects the rabbi's right to voice his thoughts.

Other students were upset with this announcement as well. "It is disrespectful for a respected leader of this institution to condemn an initiative in this way," said Chasya Klafter (SCW '19). "Statements like these

a large portion of our community, both the women who plan on attending as well as the men who choose to stay in."

"To announce that all men should leave because of a coed Shabbaton, one that is sponsored by this very institution, is deeply painful. Such a statement publicly ostracizes a large portion of our community, both the women who plan on attending as well as the men who choose to stay in."

Scheduled for the uptown Shabbaton were activities such as open *beit midrash* time in the Shenk Community Shul, a YU-affiliated synagogue located one block from the Wilf Campus, games in the Schottenstein Lounge located in the Shenk building and *chaburot* led by Noah Marlowe (YC '19) and Yoanna Rofeh, the wife of Isaac Breuer College *Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Beny

Henry H. Guterman chair in Talmud, also serves as rabbi of the Brooklyn-based Young Israel of Midwood. He previously studied at the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem and Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey.

"Yeshiva is a *makom kadosh*," Rabbi Shulman expressed. "Boys and girls should date, but they don't have to date in the *beis midrash*."

YU's Office of Communications and Public Affairs, the YU Office of Student Life, Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) Rabbi Menachem Penner and President Ari Berman declined to comment on the matter. The Commentator also reached out to several YU *roshei yeshiva*, all of whom declined to comment.



## YU Profiles

## The Country, the Cafeteria and Cabey: The Man Behind the Salmon

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE and YAIR LICHTMAN

*Editor's Note: The Commentator is pleased to reintroduce the "YU Profiles" column. The purpose of the column is to spotlight interesting Yeshiva University characters, from faculty to administrators to operations employees.*

In the underground cafeteria of a small liberal arts college in northern Manhattan, hundreds of hungry students every day walk through a narrow turnstile, shedding decades of American history as they enter a realm fossilized in their grandparents' generation. Pastels of faded yellow peel off the brick walls, furnished with hissing pipes whose steam mingles with the smell of teriyaki sauce. It is a simple place, as if ripped from an old legend or myth, briefly transporting those present out of a world saturated with screens and technology, and into a space whose dusty pillars have witnessed years of suppers scooped onto paper plates by stainless steel spoons. The low ceiling seems to trap words within the chamber whose dozens of homogeneous rectangular tables reek as much of student controversy as of the soup du jour.

It is 12:00 p.m. as Yeshiva Student descends into the bowels of Rubin Hall. Perspiration begins to lightly dot his palms and soak his flimsy cardboard tray, which he clutches with his left hand, while he grasps his racing heart with his right. Time seems to slow down as Yeshiva Student watches those ahead of him pass before the metallic ramparts that separate them from the fiery ovens within. The furnace's mighty guardian swiftly dispatches faint-hearted newcomers and battle-hardened elders alike, as from the depths of his soul emerges a trumpeting

refrain, equal parts sonorous and soothing: "Talk to me, kid."

One day, these kids did.

As we crossed the Furman Dining Hall to sit down with Carlton Cabey — known colloquially by his family name stitched in blue characters on the lapel of his double-breasted jacket — we were greeted by a smile, warm as a generous helping of half chicken (which, in a candid moment, Cabey revealed to be his favorite dinner option in the YU cafeteria). He extended a hand weathered by decades in the food services industry.

"Childhood was good," explained Cabey. The oldest of five brothers, Cabey "grew up with a nice life" on the Caribbean island of Saint Croix, home once to famous Broadway pop star Alexander Hamilton and coral reefs abundant with tropical fish. With an appetite for something more, Cabey emigrated to the United States at the age of 26. He settled in New York City, where he began a decades-long career in the culinary field before joining the ranks of Yeshiva University, where the 64-year-old hangs the *toque blanche* that adorns his salt-and-pepper hair until this day. "I wanted to take it much easier," laughed Cabey as he recalled his decision just over five years ago to retire as an assistant food services director for a senior living facility. "I'm still working hard!"

Serving food to students is the highlight of Cabey's day. "Dealing with students, that's very good," figured Cabey, who ensures that hundreds of YU undergraduates and employees can enjoy lunch and dinner six days a week. Cabey shared how students regularly smile at him and say hello when they pass him on the streets or the subway. "I'm on the train," related Cabey, "Hey Cabey, where you going? I'm up in the country, I'm walking to the mall, and guess who? 'Hey, Cabey!' Turn around, there's one of the students. I was like,

'What you doing up here?'" Cabey reflected, "it's nice to see guys. It's always nice."

Familiar faces are a rare sight for Cabey in "the country," though many of his patrons hear about the mythical weekend getaway on a regular basis. "Only two more days till the weekend," Cabey is known to say to students on Wednesdays. On Fridays, Cabey's dream becomes a sweet reality as he commutes south-west to the quiet rural village of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. "When I'm up there," smiled Cabey, an avid fan of the Philadelphia Eagles, "I work around the house or the lawn. Summertime, I plant my garden and get my veggies and all of that stuff here."

*We were greeted by a smile,  
warm as a generous helping of  
half chicken.*

A culinary aficionado in his own right, Cabey appreciates the soft ambiance of an easy meal prepared by his own cooking. "I love my cooking," boasted Cabey. "I'm a great cook, so I go to markets, I buy my own food, and I enjoy that. I love that."

In the YU cafeteria, Cabey rules with discipline gentle but firm, not unlike his famous salmon entrée. "You come up [to the counter]," reasoned Cabey, "you should know what you want. I mean, I can understand the new guys coming for the first time, and I'll teach them ... 'this is a cup, this is a plate.' You know, so we work with that." Newcomers aside, though, Cabey expects for the line to keep moving. "If I'm gonna stay with you for five minutes," Cabey explained, "the line gonna jam up. He behind you, he's gonna get mad, just like, he might not be sure he's

getting mad, but he wants to eat."

But Cabey also keeps the needs of students in mind. "Everybody loves salmon," he declared. "They go crazy for it."

His interests extend beyond the griddle, on which he prepares succulent hamburgers and delectable sausages. While he doesn't watch TV or movies, he curates a fine taste in music. "I used to play trumpet, but now I just take it easy," Cabey mused. "But I'm a jazz man." Though it has been many years, Cabey fondly remembers his evenings performing the trumpet on stages shared by the likes of Herbie Hancock, Stanley Turrentine and other jazz legends.

These days, Cabey's cultural encounters are confined to his daily commute on the A train from his home in Crown Heights to Washington Heights. Cabey regularly hobnobs with Jews across the spectrum, from black-hatted Chasidim to clean-shaven Jewish day school graduates. But there is still one Jew that Cabey has yet to meet. "There was a guy that used to come down to get food for him, lunch for him," pondered Cabey. "The other president, well, he used to come around sometime. Um, Dr. Joel? But I never see this guy. If I ever see him now, what's his name, Berman? Yeah, if I see him now, I wouldn't even know who he is."

Cabey professes a nuanced *weltanschauung* vis-à-vis YU's philosophy of *Torah Umadda*. "The Jewish thing I got no problem with," remarked Cabey as he chewed over the tantalizing balance between tradition and modernity. "Well, I mean, I know you guys do Torah, so you know, it is what it is. It is what it is." Clearly inspired by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's notion of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, Cabey also considers a

*Continued on Page 10*



Cabey adroitly apportioning a side of veggies onto a mean helping of salmon in the Furman Dining Hall



Tea Time with Dovid

A Tznius Proposal

By DOVID SCHWARTZ

My thanks to S. C., the Curator of The Complete Archives of Yehonasan Swifs, who generously and graciously supplied for me this document for reproduction in this present edition of The Commentator.

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great yeshiva, or travel on her campus, when they see the classrooms, the library and hallways crowded with students of the female sex, registered for three, four or six courses, each and all in accordance with

the dress code, each and all importuning a rabbi for an Uptown Shabbaton. Importuning is an action at once dreary and draining, and so, it seems beyond reproach and

do; *tznius* is as we make it; *tznius* is like a bird of paradise, whose beauty is diminished and dimmed by its cultivation, its capture and its subjugation to that base alloy of instruction.

once the expeditious and the *tznius* thing to do. Perhaps there is one minor problem — not so much an objection, but a problem. If we fire all of the rabbis in employ of the *yeshiva*,

everyone, no matter their views, even if they be rabbis.

I thus propose a minor addition to my previous plan: we hire the rabbis as waiters. Perhaps some of my modest readership will object: Why should we need more waiters? I modestly rebut that we will need more waiters for the upcoming Uptown Shabbaton.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my *yeshiva*, by elevating our *tznius*, providing for students, relieving the poor and giving some pleasure to the rich.

The most straightforward way to go about getting around to the undoing of the importuning is to remove every rabbi from his (or her) station.

above controversy to recommend that importuning should be done away with. *Tznius* (modesty), like any -ism, is first and foremost an ideology. As such, *tznius* suffers not from any authority or personage who can claim what it is and what it is not. No! *Tznius* is as we

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection. The most straightforward way to go about getting around to the undoing of the importuning is to remove every rabbi from his (or her) station. This is at

they will be out of work. Surely, firing the rabbis in the employ of the *yeshiva* is justified — for the sake of *tznius*, we would justify even more than this! — but we, a Modern Orthodox institution, hold this truth to be self-evident, sacred and undeniable: we must embrace



A cup of tea



# Vanilla Hip-Hop with Jewish Sprinkles: An Interview with J Rose

By AVI LEKOWSKY

*J Rose (Josh Rosenberg) is an upcoming musician who spent some time in YU. He's also about to release his debut project to the world. As a music enthusiast, he enjoys the everlasting journey of trying to improve his sound and taking it in new directions. When he's not opening for Nissim Black or working on his soon-to-be-released album "The Dilemma," he can be found freestyling on his Instagram account of over 6,000 followers. In this exclusive interview with The Commentator, J Rose discusses his background, personal role models and why it's so hard for an artist to pick a favorite song off their album.*

**Avi Lekowsky:** Alright J Rose, give us an introduction to your newest project.

**J Rose (Josh Rosenberg):** The music is a blend of hip-hop, jazz, blues and really any genre that catches my eye. The most important thing, though, are the Jewish ideas and concepts thrown in. Not Jewish music, but Jewish ideas. I would describe it as vanilla hip-hop with Jewish sprinkles.

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*I pursued it because people kept telling me it was awesome, and to me, it felt like music that mattered.*

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**AL:** What got you into music in the first place?

**Rose:** I was in Yeshivat Tiferet Jerusalem for three years, and towards the end of the second year — I think I was ditching shiur (*laughs*) — and I decided to write a song. I ended up showing it to my night *seider mashgiach*, who came up to check on me and see why I wasn't where I was supposed to be. I ended up showing the song to him, and he actually cried. I realized that I might have a talent that I want to work on. In my third year in Israel, I wrote about seven to eight more songs and actually recorded them while I was in the YU dorms. I pursued it because people kept on telling me it was awesome, and to me, it felt like music that mattered. I would write something and think, "I can't believe I just wrote that." It's like it was coming from above or something.

**AL:** Who do you consider your musical influences, and on top of that, your personal role models?

**Rose:** In the rap world, I look up to J. Cole, Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, Chance the Rapper, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Anderson .Paak and Mac Miller. Outside the rap world: Frank Sinatra, Louie Armstrong, Billie Holiday, a bit of Bob Marley, Bill Withers, Lin Manuel Miranda and Joe Williams. In terms of my personal role models, I would have to say my biggest role model in life would be my father. I can't think of any famous role models, but my personal rabbis are big influences in my life.

**AL:** Keeping in line with *Torah UMadda*, you mentioned your album has a lot of Jewish themes in it. How do you balance those Jewish themes and other themes you mention?

**Rose:** So, the name of the album is called "The Dilemma," and a big part of the album is about striking that balance. The album goes back and forth from Jewish to non-Jewish themes, and the further you get into it, the more cohesive the themes come together. On one of the last songs on the album, "Best Day Ever," talks a lot about Shabbos

and features a Chassidish choir in the hook, but the verses are over a dance beat with a heavy guitar, bass and horns. It's kind of a mix of the two genres and helps signify the balance between two worlds and finding a balance in life.

**AL:** Sounds like the album is conveying a cohesive story more than just tracks thrown together.

**Rose:** Yeah, absolutely. There are 14 tracks with an intro and outro, and I like to call it an audio movie. You only get the full experience by listening to the whole thing.

**AL:** If you could pick any activity to do while playing this project, what would it be?

**Rose:** For sure, driving. I love listening to music in the car while driving, or any types of traveling. When you don't have music when you're on the subway, it could be the worst thing ever, but music can change that around and make it the best thing ever. Whatever you see around you while traveling and listening to a song becomes part of the audio movie you're experiencing.

**AL:** Any interesting stories while working on the project?

**Rose:** There's a song on the album called "Perfect Game." It talks about striking a balance between the Jewish and secular worlds, and I decided to write a hook to it. I don't really have a good singing voice, so I found this guy on Instagram who was a good singer — literally a random guy. After singing the parts talking about Jewish themes, the guy tells me he's also Jewish. Not only that, he went to the same *yeshiva* I did about a decade before! We still keep in touch and talk about *yeshiva*. Think about how many users are on Instagram and how crazy the odds are to meet up with someone like that!

**AL:** Do you have a favorite song on the album?

**Rose:** That's tough, like asking a parent to choose their favorite child. Each one is so different and depends on the mood, so



J Rose

@CREATING\_MOVEMENT\_ ON INSTAGRAM/ J ROSE

I switch back and forth a lot. Right now, I would say "Best Day Ever" since I just finished it. I got a bass player who works with Ziggy Marley and Lauryn Hill, the Chassidish choir, a beatmaker from Tel Aviv, a guitar player ... I felt like I was combining all these different genres, and it took a lot of time to make. If you want to create something really unique and authentic, you have to put in the time and work.

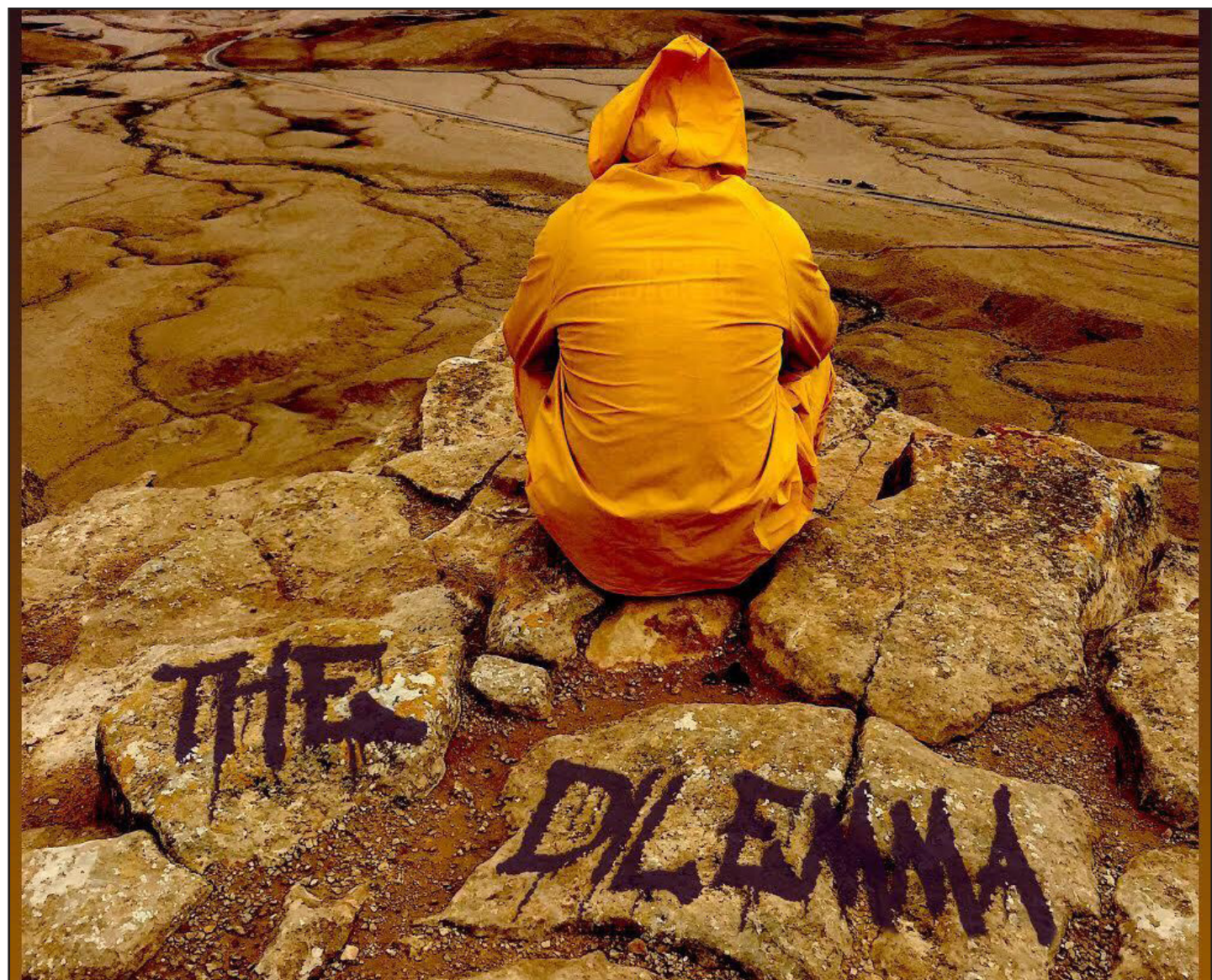
**AL:** Anything else you want to plug?

**Rose:** My album "The Dilemma" is coming out Feb. 26 on pretty much every music platform: Apple Music, SoundCloud, Spotify, Tidal, I'm there. I can't wait to show the world what I've been working on!

**AL:** Thanks for sitting down with us!

*In the Modern Orthodox world, people pragmatically choose their careers. Accountants, lawyers, and doctors are all stable Jewish careers. However, beyond pragmatism, it is important to realize how important it is to follow your interests and dreams. Whether it be as a career or as a side hobby, J Rose teaches us to never abandon that.*

*"The Dilemma" comes out Feb. 26 and features the already released singles "No One Got it Better," "Rose Colored Glasses" and "The Flow." Check out his Instagram @thejrose26 for more!*



The Dilemma

@CREATING\_MOVEMENT\_ ON INSTAGRAM/ J ROSE



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

*Editor's Note: Though 39 years have passed, many things about YU student life have changed very little since 1980. This article documents another Uptown Coed Shabbaton that was advertised at the time as the "first" of its kind. Will another such Shabbaton take place before 2058? Only time will tell.*

# Yeshiva Council Sponsors Intercollegiate Shabbaton

The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

## From the Archives (May 14, 1980; Volume 45 Issue 11) — Yeshiva Council Sponsors Intercollegiate Shabbaton

By **DORON LOESER**

In a string of successful events sponsored this year by the Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women Student Councils, the Intercollegiate Shabbaton held on May 2-3 proved to be no exception. The Shabbaton was held at Yeshiva College rather than at Stern because, according to YCSC President Marc Schneier, there is a "unique Shabbat atmosphere at Yeshiva" and the Council desired "to bring more events up to Washington Heights." The featured attraction for the 150 Shabbaton participants, which included students from YC, Stern, Queens, NYU, and Adelphi, was a special Lag Ba'omer Rollerskating Party held Saturday night in Yeshiva gym, probably another "first" in Yeshiva history.

On Friday afternoon, students arrived to check in at the Morgenstern dorm and taxi arrangements were made to take the

girls to their respective hosts in the Heights. The Shabbaton was officially inaugurated by Shabbaton Chairman Barry Tokayer who welcomed the participants after Kabbalat Shabbat services in the Morg Shul. This was followed by dinner in the Rubin cafeteria where Mr. Schneier greeted the group and Joel Yaffa, JSSSC President, delivered a D'var Torah to an appreciative audience. After a late Oneg Shabbat, the young women were escorted back to their apartments by highly spirited young men who quietly sang their way through the Valley of Fear and into the hearts of Washington Heights' Jewish residents.

### Weekly Shiur

Shabbat morning services were followed by Kiddush and the weekly Torah reading shiur was given by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen, Rosh Yeshiva at YUHS. The afternoon meal featured SCWSC President Betsy Mondschein who expressed her thanks to Shabbaton

workers and a D'var Torah by incoming YCSC Secretary-Treasurer Heshie Schertz. Following the meal, students were invited to a stimulating forum entitled "Jewish Communal Responsibilities in the 1980's" in the Rubin Shul where Yitz Wise of Aliyah and Outreach programs and Yitzchak Wagschul of Chabad addressed the attentive and, at times, over-enthusiastic audience.

At approximately 2:30 in the afternoon, the students were given free time to rest or take a walk through the sunny and beautifully scenic Fort Tryon Park. Many took the opportunity to visit an ill fellow student at a nearby hospital. At 4:30, refreshments were served in the Morg Lounge and at 6:00 graduating senior Simon Grunbaum conducted a Pirke Avot class.

Following afternoon services, the third Shabbat meal was served and Rabbi Dr. David Ebner delivered a thought-provoking D'var Torah. After Havdalah, preparations began to convert the YU gym into

Washington Heights' finest rollerskating rink with music, flashing lights, rented skates and enough bagels to last till Shavuot. Buses taking the girls back to Stern College finally left about 1:30 AM Lag Ba'omer morning.

In general, the 1980 YCSC-SCWSC Intercollegiate Shabbaton was an enjoyable and rousing success. Much of the credit goes to the outstanding planning of Shabbaton Chairpersons Barry Tokayer and Marc Schneier at YC and Beth Hoch and Julie Beyer at SCW. Special recognition should also be given to Joel Yaffa, other Shabbaton workers and speakers, hospitable Washington Heights residents, the Yeshiva Tabernacle Choir, and Colonel Marmorstein.

It is hoped that more Shabbatons and similar functions will be held more often next year in Washington Heights. As one student said to me before leaving for home: "I had a fantastic time! When is the next Shabbaton?" Are you listening, Freedy?

*CABEY,  
continued from Page 7*

sense of diligence and interpersonal respect among Yeshiva University's educational goals. "Just keep doing work hard," offered Cabey as advice to YU undergraduates. "I know they're stressed out at times, during finals or midterms, but that's why you're here, you know. And respect, as usual. I give them respect, I expect the same back from them. So it's mutual."

Though he feels close to YU, Cabey dreams of a quiet retirement beyond the ideological walls of the Washington Heights Modern Orthodox community. When asked about

his plans for the future, he wistfully contemplated returning to his home in the Virgin Islands and living a good life. Considering a possible world in which he wins the lottery, Cabey added, "I love the sea. I would have me a nice yacht. That's where I would spend a lot of time. In the ocean."

*"Everybody loves salmon."*

— Cabey

But Cabey is also happy right where he is, as a beloved YU chef. "I'm livin' rich," beamed Cabey.



Cabey enjoying the festivities at the annual Yom Ha'atzmaut Barbecue

THE COMMENTATOR

## Flashbacks



*"FAMOUS LAST WORDS . . ."  
". . . REGISTRATION 1966 SHOULD BE QUICK AND EFFICIENT . . ."*

September 22, 1966; Volume 32 Issue 1



## Law Review

## Drive Drunk? Prepare for a Prick

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

The procurement of a blood sample from an individual suspected of driving while under the influence of an intoxicating agent is critical to the investigation and prosecution of drunk and drugged driving cases. However, obtaining blood samples involuntarily from defendants is a complicated matter that touches upon contentious Constitutional issues. Accordingly, the current precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court has established that a court-authorized warrant is generally required to draw blood from a DUI defendant who is unwilling to provide a blood sample voluntarily.

Previously, in 1966, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that warrantless, involuntary blood tests on DUI defendants were not considered to be infringements upon the Fourth Amendment's protections against

exigent circumstances. See *Schmerber v. Cal.*, 384 U.S. 757 (1966); see also *Breithaupt v. Abram*, 352 U.S. 432 (1957); *Kentucky v. King*, 131 S. Ct. at 1856; *Mincey v. Arizona*, 437 U.S. 385, 394 (1978).

However, in 2013, case law was overturned in these respects, largely due to advancements in technology allowing for warrants to be remotely drafted, processed and approved. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected the notion that the metabolism of alcohol and drugs in the bloodstream constitutes a blanket exigent exemption in all drunk driving cases, and ruled that a DUI defendant's Fourth Amendment rights were violated when after the defendant declined a breathalyzer test, he was then forcibly subjected to a blood draw shortly thereafter at a hospital, and the search and seizure vis-à-vis the blood test was unlawful. Noting technological advancements such as email, video-chat and mobile phone calls, the Court

arrest and without a warrant, whereas absent extreme exigencies, invasive blood testing to detect the presence of intoxicants in a defendant's bloodstream may only be conducted if a warrant is issued. Nevertheless, gener-

in an effort to avoid limited civil penalties, generally speaking, blood samples may only be taken involuntarily from motorists via the issuance of a judicially-approved search warrant. Federal courts have consistently noted

*The procurement of a blood sample from an individual suspected of driving while under the influence of an intoxicating agent is critical to the investigation and prosecution of drunk and drugged driving cases.*

ally speaking, a judicially-approved search warrant is required to draw a defendant's blood in a drunk driving case. See *Birchfield v. North Dakota*, 136 S. Ct. 2160 (2016).

Additionally, all 50 states have "implied consent" laws on the books with respect to DUI chemical testing. As a condition of

in dicta that warrants for the procurement of corporeal evidence via invasive procedures (e.g. blood tests) should generally be limited to cases in which the acquisition of such evidence is critical to the investigation and prosecution of a serious criminal matter. See *Birchfield v. North Dakota*, *supra*; see also



All 50 states have "implied consent" laws on the books with respect to DUI chemical testing.

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unlawful searches and seizures. In the case, a drunken driver crashed his car, injuring both himself and a passenger in his car. The Court posited that due to the fact that alcohol and drugs dissipate from an individual's bloodstream as time elapses, the need to obtain an accurate blood sample in an expedient fashion could be inhibited by the process of drafting and obtaining a warrant. Accordingly, the Court ruled that due to the evanescent nature of the evidence and in light of the delay that would be caused by the procurement of a warrant, the nature of the situation "threatened the destruction of evidence," and therefore, the officer was justified in ordering the blood test without a warrant due to the foregoing

held that officers must obtain a warrant prior to conducting involuntary blood tests on drunk driving defendants. In the majority opinion, the Court noted the importance of considering the "totality of the circumstances" with respect to assessing whether a given scenario constitutes an exigency, writing that "the natural dissipation of alcohol in the bloodstream [in DUI investigations] does not constitute an exigency in every case sufficient to justify conducting a blood test without a warrant." See e.g. *Missouri v. McNeely*, 569 U.S. 141 (2013).

On the flip side, the Supreme Court distinguished between invasive blood testing and non-invasive breath tests, noting that the latter may be administered prior to an

operating a motor vehicle within a given state, under implied consent laws, motorists are required to submit to breath, saliva and/or urine testing upon a police officer's reasonable request, or face a civil penalty — often a license suspension or monetary fine. Supreme Court jurisprudence has noted that only civil — not criminal — penalties may be imposed for failing to submit to a warrantless chemical test under implied consent laws. However, researchers have found that intoxicated individuals often opt to have their licenses suspended and/or pay a monetary fine in lieu of taking a chemical test and ostensibly generating incriminating evidence of impairment thereof. Therefore, at the end of the day, absent a motorist's consent

*Rochin v. California*, 342 U.S. 165 (1952).

As the legalization of recreational marijuana spreads from state to state across the nation, this matter is being brought to the forefront of the policy debate. Conventional breathalyzers are not capable of determining the amount of drugs within an individual's bloodstream, which necessitates a widespread use of blood tests to determine how much marijuana a motorist has consumed. Accordingly, in the coming months, as New York and New Jersey lawmakers grapple with the notion of marijuana legalization, this issue will be especially contentious.



# Valentine's Day: What's Our Relationship Status

By ELI AZIZOLLAHOFF

Plastic red heart. Sugary cards. Too-sweet chocolate. Slightly wilting flowers. All the making for a classic modern Valentine's Day. In the Jewish community, though, it's a little more complicated. Most of us grew up hearing about how it was a Christian holiday (re: *Saint* Valentine) and thus we are totally forbidden to take part.

*Though Valentine's Day may be none of what we have been led to believe it is, it is at the same time all of it.*

As we got older though, it became more apparent that this day is the epitome of a "Hallmark Holiday" (a Hall-iday, if you will) that exists largely to get innocent love-sick gals and guys to shell out some hard earned money on overpriced teddy bears and candy in order to prove their love to their significant other. As this because omes the rising association with this "day of love," what re-

disagree on if they were really two different people and who some aspects of each story should be attributed to since their stories have a suspicious amount of overlap. Along with this, Valentine's Day can also be traced to the ancient Roman festival *Lupercalia*, as well as to a poem from the Middle Ages by Geoffrey Chaucer. Confusing, isn't it?

Let's start by clarifying the story you have probably already heard; the late, great, ever so romantic St. Valentine(s). The two men

who this holiday have been attributed to have such shockingly similar stories that many historians actually hypothesize they were the same person, though the name was fairly common at the time.

Valentine #1's story goes as follows: He was a priest in ancient Rome where it was outlawed for young men to marry because Claudius II, the emperor at the time, be-

though a bit less romantic. He was the bishop of Terni who also illegally married couples at a time that it was outlawed, and was killed — and effectively martyred — for this act, on the same day, also in the third century, but with a few years difference. Regardless, there is very little credibility for either of these stories being origin story of this pretty pink holiday.

Taking a step back, Valentine's Day also has roots in *Lupercalia*, a Roman harvest festival in which a dog and goat would be sacrificed, a whip would be made from their skins and priests and men would go through the streets flailing them about. Many female bystanders would deliberately try to receive such a hit because they believed it would increase fertility.

Along with this, women would write their names on clay pieces and insert them into a jug. Men would then come and pick out a name and that pair were set to match up for the duration of the festival, leading to many marriages.

Some say that this was transformed into the celebration of Valentine's Day in the

Valentine's Day, when every bird comes there to choose his mate," in a poem titled "Parliament of Fowls," which has been hypothesized to be about King Henry II's marriage to Anne of Bohemia.

This association with birds' mating season is why birds are a common visual theme on Valentine's Day. It was this poem about yearning and forbidden love that also led, over the next few hundred years, to the writing of many love poems known as "valentines."

Now this history is well and good, both clarifying and confusing a lot of the conceptions that exist around Valentine's Day, but where does that leave the Jewish relationship with this day? It is not clearly associated with Christianity or a Roman festival but that is its major association. However, it is still known as a day commemorating those distinctly polytheistic holidays and is named after a saint. So where does that leave us?

Do we disregard the history and accept it as a commercial holiday that's just around to make us buy overpriced candy? Do we have to embrace its religious associations? Do we declare it a day simply for telling those you care about that you love them? Can any of these things exist in a vacuum?

Though Valentine's Day may be none of what we have been led to believe it is, it is, at the same time, all of it. Tied into this day of paper hearts and lace trim are the lives and deaths of at least two Catholics martyrs, the memory of an ancient celebration that would today be viewed as scandalous to say the least, the wedding for a king and his forbidden love and an ancient bird mating season. We cannot pretend that when we wish someone a "Happy Valentine's Day!" it exist solely in its own time or own reality. As with all things, it must be embraced with its history, as indistinct as it may be.

It is really for each man or woman to decide for themselves what this day is. Whether it is a memory of ancient traditions and stories or simply a commercial opportunity to say I love you is a choice that lies in your hands as it is your perspective.

A day to acknowledge and appreciate those you love — such as Mother's and Father's Day — has its values and virtues. But by celebrating on this day specifically, as opposed to a day that has personal significance — like an anniversary — you must at the very least acknowledge that there is a history that goes with it, whether or not that is the reason why you are doing it. There is a history behind this single day and, like any other moment of significance, it would be wrong to ignore the context that led us here.



Chocolate

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ally is the harm in buying some dyed roses and telling your sweetheart you love them? Is this day really as blasphemous as we have been taught to believe? And even if it's history is not our own, does that mean we can't appreciate it for what it is today?

Contrary to popular belief, the history of Valentine's Day is one that is actually shrouded in a mist of mythology and confusion. Though a St. Valentine did exist, and the day's name is attributed to such a man, who he was and the details of his story are both historically pretty shady. There are *two* tales related to St. Valentines, but historians

believed men with wives and families make soldiers that just weren't as good as their single counterparts. This priest rebelled by illegally marrying numerous couples during this time and was eventually captured and decapitated on, you guessed it, Feb. 14. Before he lost his head though, it said that he healed his blind captor's daughter, arguably wooing her and/or converting her whole family to Catholicism in the process. It is said that he wrote the jailor's daughter a letter which he signed with "from your Valentine."

St. Valentine #2's story is largely similar,

fifth century when the Catholic Church tried to gear the festival away from the polytheism around the *Lupercalia* by creating this holiday of love on a saint's celebrated day.

Bruce Forbes, a professor of religious studies in Iowa's Morningside College, says though, that there is a single tie between the two holidays — a picture of two men with the aforementioned whips — and that *Lupercalia* had very little romantic symbolism.

He argues that most of the fanfare of Valentine's Day as we know it comes from a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer. In the late 1300s Chaucer wrote, "For this was on Saint

## An Insider's Guide to the International Community at YU

By ELISHEVA KOHN

For the vast majority of international students, attending Yeshiva University means being far away from home, turning down offers from larger and more affordable universities and adjusting to a completely different culture. Despite these challenges, the international community has grown tremendously in the last few years. A closer look at the Yeshiva University experience from the perspective of current and past international students may give a more refined insight into their mentality and help the greater YU student body relate to their

international peers.

To some extent, the YU experience for international students is nowhere near that of their American friends. For many American YU students, attending YU has always been an option presented to them by their school faculty or family members. They have been exposed to the YU ideology early on, attended open houses and are related to alumni. Many of them have grown up in large Jewish communities with a robust Jewish infrastructure. Perhaps they go home every Thursday afternoon and return to the dorms late Sunday night, while their international peers search for a place to stay and make weekend plans in the city. International students don't have it

so easy. Isaac Bendahan (YC '20), who hails from the Canary Islands, pointed out that the American "in town" mentality sometimes hinders international students from getting close to their fellow American peers. "We come from very small communities while almost all of them have lived in enormous Jewish communities," he said.

It is not just the community size that differentiates these two groups. International students are being exposed to the concepts of *Torah Umadda* for the first time, getting to know the American educational system, learning how to navigate around New York City and becoming familiar with American culture. This cultural divide becomes

noticeable when they interact with American students and often leaves international students feeling confused or frustrated.

For Spanish and French speakers, the solution to this challenge is to remain within their own circle of peers and develop their own supportive environment. "I believe it's okay, to a certain extent. We need to feel comfortable, speak our own language and make our own jokes," said Bendahan. Students who are the sole or one of the very few representatives of their countries, such as Lithuanians, South Africans, Dutch or

*Continued on Page 13*





ELISHEVA KOHN

International students come from all over the world.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, continued from Page 12

Austrians, tend to integrate more easily into the American YU community and, as a result, are more distant from the rest of the international community. This phenomenon also applies to international students who spent a year in Israel learning or traveling alongside Americans. When they arrived in New York, they knew who to approach for help, had an established circle of American friends and were familiar with American culture.

Canadians also tend to feel more comfortable among American YU students because the international community does not quite regard them as one of their own. This divide between international students who consider themselves to be typical YU students and international students who feel more comfortable around like-minded people who speak their language is quite noticeable. While the majority of French- and Spanish-speaking students pride themselves on the

community. International students have established a presence at YU, which is apparent in the number of clubs on campus that were founded in order to make the international students feel at home. In addition to the highly active and influential International Club — which hosts popular events such as the International Shabbaton and the Great Challah Bake — Yeshiva University is home to the Russian Society, the Canada Club and the newly found Europeans at YU Club.

It is not just Jewish life and the academic setting that attracts international students. The career and networking opportunities are also a big factor. Looking back, Akiva Eisenberg (Syms '15) from Vienna, Austria, would not change anything in terms of his college experience. "For me, that was a huge draw, to be able to continue my Jewish studies while at the same time getting a high-class degree in my desired field." Eisenberg is convinced that choosing to attend an American University instead of an institution in his hometown was beneficial to him career-wise.

Geri Mansdorf, with the guidance of former President Richard Joel, decided to create an international admissions process that was similar to the domestic admissions process. "The greatest challenge that international students face — aside from the obvious English requirements and the visa process — in the application process is that they are not aware of the process. Our goal is to make more students and their families aware of the benefits of a YU education and to raise awareness about how studying at YU can work and has worked for students from thirty countries across the globe," explained Rabbi Ari Solomont, who is in his fourth year as YU's Director of International Admissions and Recruitment. "There is no other university where students can have it all, make no compromises, gain a world-class education ... and have high-level Jewish experiences."

The question of where to settle after graduation is on many international students' minds. While many students arrived in New York with the intention to return to their hometown or make *aliyah* upon graduation, quite a number of students regard YU to be their first step towards settling down in the United States. For some, the vibrant social life they enjoy in New York makes it seemingly impossible to ever go back to their former communities. Others strive to attend graduate school in New York and are drawn to the numerous academic and religious opportunities that are offered in the area.

The vast majority of students who were approached for this article are thoroughly

enjoying their college experience in New York. When asked whether they are happy with their decision to attend YU, nearly all of them responded with a definite "yes." International students are highly involved in student life, take full advantage of Torah learning on campus and are eager to meet new people. Kershteyn summed it up quite nicely: "People in YU are very nice. I am not used to it. I come from a depressing country."

However, there is room for improvement. Students have been vocal about various changes the administration should consider implementing, such as additional travel days and generous scholarships for internationals. These suggestions are important and should be taken seriously by the administration, but it's mostly up to the student body to ensure that international students continue to feel at home at Yeshiva University. It is necessary to examine what divides the different communities in YU in order to focus on what unites them.

You would all benefit greatly from exploring the colorful perspectives of your fellow international students. Ask your international friends about their background (they love talking about where they are from, trust me), invite them over for Shabbat (if you are in Teaneck, they will laugh at your reflective belts) and include them in your cultural activities (if you can't properly explain the rules of American football, do you really know what you're talking about?). It's the small gestures that count.

*To some extent, the YU experience for international students is nowhere near that of their American friends.*

strong relationships they have fostered with one another, other students feel excluded at events for international students. "If you are Spanish-speaking or French-speaking, you have a lot more of a community. Once you are more separated you make your own micro-communities," said Zak Benarroch (Syms '20). "As a whole, the YU international club and YU community do include us in stuff, but I feel like it's catered towards non-English speakers."

Elizabeth Kershteyn (Stern '22), a pre-med student from Vilnius, Lithuania, is also aware of the prominent disparity between the French- and Spanish-speaking students and the rest of the international community. However, she is hopeful that the situation will gradually change for the better "once other international students start to be more active." Even with the current divide, she still sees a "deep connection" between all international students "since they are in a similar situation of being in a foreign country."

Despite, and possibly as a positive result of these challenges, international students at YU feel privileged to be here and are flourishing academically and socially. Many students had heard about the vibrant Jewish community and the opportunities to explore secular and Jewish subjects in an academic setting, which is why they decided to enroll in YU. They are fully committed to their new life in New York, take on the challenge of "living in English," as Aline Halpern (Stern '20) from Brazil phrases it, and actively contribute to the greater YU

"The fact that it's a smaller school gives you the ability to stand out, take initiative, be the president of a club, found your own club. I think that stands out on a resume." He also emphasized that the "alumni base is smaller [and] people are more inclined to help you. If you can get yourself into that infrastructure, it is very helpful in terms of the career trajectory."

Finally, attending Yeshiva University exposes international students to a Jewish world they did not know existed and are eager to explore. Especially in smaller communities, in which very few Jewish schooling options are offered, students attend institutions they do not identify with religiously or philosophically. They haven't yet found their niche within Orthodox Judaism because their previous education did not allow them to explore the complexity and nuances of Judaism thoroughly. Yeshiva University offers classes, resources and teachers to support students who want to explore their religious identities. Additionally, the wide religious spectrum of students who attend YU creates a friendly environment for international students to discuss their questions and ideas related to Judaism.

Yeshiva University goes through great lengths to recruit students from all around the world. About five years ago, Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander, former Vice President for University and Community Life at YU and current President and *Rosh haYeshiva* at Ohr Torah Stone, and Director of Admissions

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## The Democrats Know Best

By AVRAHAM WALKENFELD

The government was recently partially shut down while both parties used 800,000 government workers as giant pawns to achieve their own respective ends in the battle over a border wall. This government shutdown holds the record as the longest in American history. Republicans, with President Donald Trump leading the charge, remain adamant that there can be no full border security without a physical barrier between America and Mexico. Although funding the wall would have been significantly cheaper than keeping the government shut down, the Democrats refuse to realize that not building a wall is completely immoral and antithetical to American values.

Drugs claim tens of thousands of lives every year. Drugs destroy lives and shatter families. Drugs lead to all sorts of crimes, particularly violent crimes. Drugs cost taxpayers billions of dollars every year. Over 99 percent of U.S. border seizures of marijuana and methamphetamine in 2015 were at the Mexican border.

There are over 65,000 fatal overdoses every year, and this figure does not include thousands more yearly deaths because of drugs, including gang turf wars, robberies gone bad and fights between rival drug dealers. This is a staggering number when compared to the entire Vietnam War, which claimed a grand total of 58,000 American lives.

Illegal drugs also take an enormous toll on all of society. The Federal Bureau of Prisons reported that there are over 77,500 inmates in federal prison for drug-related offenses. They also reported that each incarcerated inmate costs somewhere between 20,000 dollars and 40,000 dollars per year. In addition to this, thousands of children are neglected as a result of their parents' drug use. Families are torn apart when members are locked up, stuck in rehab, not functioning as a result of their addiction or dead.

The government spends billions of taxpayer dollars every year fighting the war on drugs.

The wall can save thousands of lives lost to drugs every year. The wall can save billions of dollars lost because of drugs every year. The wall can save families lost to drugs. The wall can lower crime rates across the country. But the Democrats say the wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

Sex traffickers use our Southern border

*Common sense dictates that it is immoral to not build the wall!*

to smuggle in their victims. Securing the border will minimize their ability to operate. As Americans, it is our duty to hinder the ability of sex traffickers, no matter what the price tag is. But the Democrats say the wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

Terrorists exploit our Mexican border to sneak in unnoticed. There were at least fifteen suspected terrorists that were caught trying to enter the country through the southern border in 2018. Terrorists will always use our most vulnerable points to gain entry into America. We are only as secure as our weakest border, and one terrorist

can kill and harm way too many people. The number of terrorists apprehended at the border proves that we must do more to protect our borders because even just a single terrorist must be prevented from entering our homeland at all costs. But the Democrats say the wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

Illegal immigrants are responsible for killing thousands of Americans, with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency reporting 2,028 homicide offenses in 2018. Illegal immigrants are responsible for raping thousands of Americans and for killing police officers. There are children who have lost their parents, parents who have lost their children, wives who became widows and husbands who have become widowers because of our unsecured borders. Illegal immigrants are inherently criminal and many have long rap sheets. MS-13, an extremely violent and brutal gang, is also exploiting our lack of proper border security to gain access to our country. The common sense response to prevent more deaths would be to erect a physical barrier to secure our border. But the Democrats say a wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

In 2017, nearly 400 illegal border crossers died on their way through the desert. The journey is extremely perilous; it can be

a five-day trek through the hot desert with very little water. The coyotes, paid smugglers, often ditch their human cargo and force them to face the tough elements on their own. Building a wall will not only save American lives but also the lives of illegal crossers by deterring them from making the dangerous trip. But the Democrats say a wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

In 2015, there were 4.4 million people waiting in lines for as long as 10 years to become legal citizens. Yet, without a border wall, we are allowing criminals to walk into our country and cut the millions of law-abiders in line. We are encouraging criminals to break the law and punishing law abiders for abiding by our laws. But the Democrats say a wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

Illegal immigrants become a burden on society. They receive free healthcare, free education, welfare and food stamps from our pockets. They take the jobs that would otherwise go to American citizens. In America, we have respect for the rule of law. However, when it comes to illegal immigration, we are respecting lawlessness. Using taxpayers' money to support illegal aliens is antithetical to American values. But the Democrats say a wall is immoral, and the Democrats know best.

Common sense dictates that it is immoral

to not stem the flow of drugs into America. Drugs kill thousands of people and cost billions of dollars every year. Common sense dictates that it is immoral to not hinder sex traffickers from smuggling their victims into America. Common sense dictates that it is immoral to not prevent terrorists from entering our homeland. Common sense dictates that it is immoral to not prevent illegal aliens, who kill and rape Americans, from illegally entering the United States. Common sense dictates that it is immoral to not build the wall! But the Democrats say a wall is immoral, and the Democrats *think* they know best.



President Trump visiting border wall prototypes in San Diego

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## For the Sake of Our Children

By YOSEF LEMEL

It is impossible to properly describe the horrors unleashed on the victims of child sexual abuse. Those horrors will likely haunt the victims for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, some sectors of the Jewish community have turned a blind eye to these victims. This attitude is seemingly apparent in a statement issued by the Agudath Israel of America, which noted the organization's disapproval of the recent passage of the Child Victims Act in the New York State Legislature.

Signed into law by Gov. Cuomo on Feb. 14, the Child Victims Act raised the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse crimes from age 23 to 55 in civil cases. The statute of limitations for bringing a suit against a public or private institution that hired an abuser will also be moved from age 23 to 55. In addition, under the new law, criminal

charges may be brought against an abuser until the victim reaches the age of 28.

The Agudah's primary concern with the Child Victims Act is that "the unprecedented ability to revive decades-old claims in civil suits could jeopardize the ongoing viability of schools, houses of worship that sponsor youth programs, summer camps and other institutions that are the very lifeblood of communities like ours."

The new law may turn out to be a dilemma for Yeshiva University. In 2013, a lawsuit of \$680 million was brought against the university for its alleged enabling of multiple child abusers in Yeshiva University High School for Boys over the course of several decades. The suit was struck down by a federal judge because "the statutes of limitations have expired." The enactment of the Child Victims Act would potentially allow the victims to revivify their suit against the university.

The Agudah's statement misses a crucial point. The jeopardization of institutions that

have enabled abusers will be beneficial for the Jewish people in the long-run. With the enactment of the Child Victims Act into law,

*Are we meant to stand aside and watch while the institutions that have enabled abusers are allowed to remain as they are without suffering the appropriate repercussions for their malfeasance?*

these institutions will be more introspective with regard to their employment policies. They will be more reluctant to hire an individual with a spotty record out of concern for future civil lawsuits against them. In

addition, if some institutions are sued out of existence, other institutions will surely fill their place and fulfill their functions for the Jewish community, this time without enabling sexual abusers.

The defenders of the Agudah's statement may counter my argument with the following question: "What about an institution that changed its leadership over the course of several decades? Did the abuse not occur under different management? How can one be enabled to sue the current management of an institution for the misconduct of their predecessors?"

I sympathize with this argument. Children should not be punished for the sins of their fathers. However, why don't we ask the converse of the Agudah's argument: What about an institution that has not substantially changed its leadership over the

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# Football Season is Over

By **MAYER FINK**

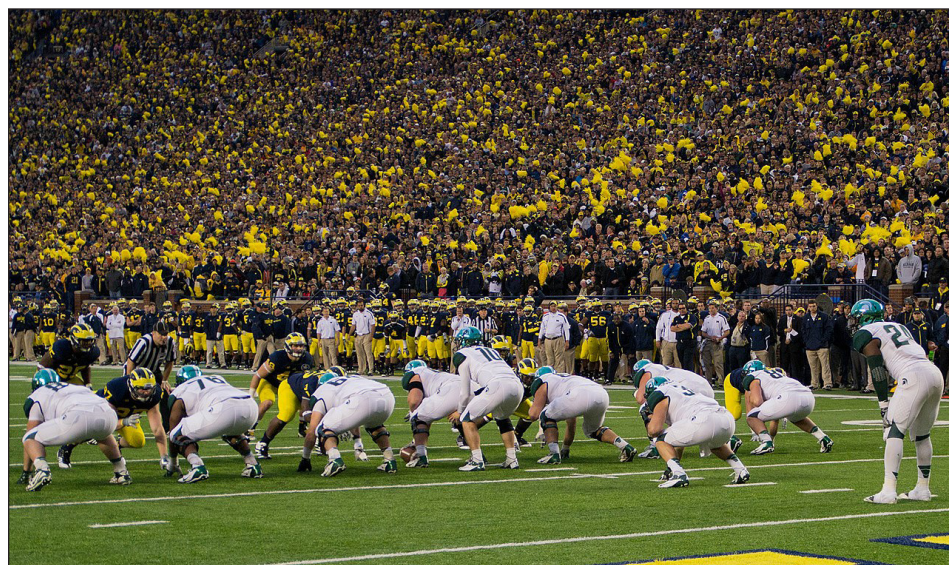
The football season is over. It looks like we're in for a long, arduous, potentially boring offseason. For those of you that don't watch football as their primary sport: don't read this. For those who are already feeling the effects of football withdrawal, I will try to give you a guide on how to survive this offseason. There are plenty of big sports events/games from now until the season starts on Sept. 5.

Let's look at the upcoming events that as sports fans you might be interested in following. Sidenote, I won't be talking about the Alliance Football League. It's just starting out and we have to give the league time to see if it's even worth watching. But let's look at some key dates during the offseason:

**NFL scouting combine (Feb. 26-March 4):** Glorified draft hopefuls running around an indoor field in their underwear. While this may be perceived as a viable way of evaluating draft prospects, it's quite obvious that draft scouts use more material than just the combine to evaluate the players. As a football fan, I will probably watch this event as I'll be desperate to see anything

**MLB Opening Day (March 28):** For me, this is one of the most exciting days in the lull of football offseason. Baseball will be back. The exciting thing about the upcoming baseball season is that no one knows who will win it all. Unlike the NBA or even the NFL, baseball is completely unpredictable, with many teams having the capability of over-achieving and underachieving. The Yankees and Red Sox are the only two teams that have star-studded lineups, but both teams will still have to make some moves to help their chances of making it to the World Series and winning the championship. All this excitement starts on Opening Day.

**NCAA March Madness Final Four (April 6-April 8):** The road ends this year in the anti-climatic setting of Minnesota. The Final Four games usually live up to the hype and occasionally we will see a game that we can remember forever. The Villanova vs. North Carolina National Championship game in 2016 with the Kris Jenkins buzzer beater stands out as one of the best. For many players on these teams, their tournament games are their championship. It is also worth watching the "one shining moment" video at the end of the final game. You may cry when you watch this.



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Look forward to the start of college football during the NFL offseason.

**NFL Draft (April 25-27):** The draft is how dynasties and Super Bowl contenders are built. This draft has many big names, especially on defense. What makes the draft watchable is the fact that it is reality T.V. Whether it's watching Aaron Rodgers or Johnny Manziel sweating through their fancy suits as they slide in the first round or Laremy Tunsil dropping in the draft because of a released video of him taking rips from a bong through a gas mask, the draft has all the drama. Draft night has also been known for having big trades that affect the process. All-pro receiver Antonio Brown might be traded prior to the draft in exchange for draft picks.

**NHL Stanley Cup Final (start date TBD- June 1):** After all the close games in the previous rounds we will get the final two teams. We can't predict who will make it but regardless of who plays in the Final, we are guaranteed to see a great final round. Another convincing reason to watch the Stanley Cup Final over the NBA Finals is the fact that a full roster is needed to win the championship. Last season the Cleveland Cavaliers were carried by one guy, LeBron James. So much for it being a team game.

**NBA Finals (May 30-June 16 including a possible game 7):** Will the Warriors be dethroned? Is there anyone who can beat the Warriors? If not, we will see the dynasty continue. I guess every fan will be hoping that the super team gets broken up in hopes that another super team gets formed to overtake them.

**NBA Draft (June 20):** The Knicks are in a tank war with the Cavaliers to try to land generational talent in Zion Williamson. There are plenty of other talented players entering the draft but Zion Williamson has had more hype than any prospect since LeBron. This is the start of the offseason, which by my account is the most exciting part of the NBA season.

**NHL Draft (June 21):** There are a few cellar dwellers hoping to land the next Connor McDavid. Other than those teams, the draft is a useful time to reload on depth

positions that many rosters lack. The NHL draft is one of those drafts that you can only see the impact of several years later.

**NHL free agency (July 1):** Last season John Tavares left the Islanders to play for his hometown team in the Maple Leafs. How dare he! What a traitor! NHL free agency, like any version of free agency, is key to starting a championship run.

**NBA free agency (all of July):** The start of the most exciting part of the basketball season! Will Kevin Durant or Klay Thompson leave the Warriors? Will LeBron bring in another star player? Will Kyrie, Kawhi Leonard or Jimmy Butler try to join a super team or take the maximum salary? Most fans are hoping that the Warriors get their roster pulled apart, giving the rest of the league a shot at winning the championship. Everyone is dreading the scenario in which the Warriors will land another star player and be even tougher to defeat.

**MLB Home Run Derby and All-Star Game (July 8-July 9):** Like the NBA all-star week, if you watch this you are watching practice. On the positive side, this game no longer determines which league gets home-field advantage in the World Series.

**NFL preseason (all of August):** The significance of the pro bowl without any talent. At least you get to see your favorite players dressed and playing for five minutes. Rookies get over-analyzed during this time, which will give optimism to the fans of the teams that draft Dwayne Haskins and Kyler Murray (assuming Kyler Murray is playing in these games and not playing baseball).

**College Football Kickoff (Aug. 31):** A little taste of football. It's also the start of many national championships runs as well as draft prospect speculation (you'll see some players before they become famous). This week may not have many close games or matchups between ranked teams, but it shows that you've made it and survived the offseason.

We can do it! I know this won't be as exciting as football but there are still things worth watching.

*There are plenty of big sports events/games from now until the season starts on September 5th.*

football related. Saquon Barkley took the combine by storm last year, impressing in all the drills. Barkley did 29 reps in the weight lifting, a premonition of the dominance he would display on the field this past season.

**NFL free agency (begins March 13):** In one week we will see the landscape of the NFL change as star players switch teams and some teams suddenly become Super Bowl contenders. There are plenty of big names on the market, including former Steelers, running back Le'Veon Bell, Cowboys defensive end Demarcus Lawrence, former Super Bowl champion quarterback Nick Foles and many other star players. In this process, we will see great players turn down large sums of money in the request for larger sums of money. I know you are probably thinking that if you were offered 50 million dollars you would just accept the offer. Of course, you would also probably suck at playing football. These players are some of the best in their respective positions.

**NCAA March Madness, first rounds through Elite Eight (March 21-March 24, March 28-March 31):** The road to the Final Four starts here. These two weekends are good basketball games on top of good basketball games. Some of these games will be blowouts while others will be buzzer-beating thrillers. There are many teams which can make a run to the national championship, a list headlined by the Duke Blue Devils and the projected number one draft pick in Zion Williamson. Duke seems too good to fail, right? Right?

**NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs (begin April 10):** This is much more exciting than the NBA playoffs, which most people already know will be won by the Warriors. The NHL playoffs are always exciting with many overtime games as well as the unpredictability of who will take home the Cup. There are many teams that look like they can contend for the cup this year. Last season the Washington Capitals erased their legacy of failure and won the Stanley Cup for the first time in their franchise's history. Some of the teams looking to erase the choking tag attached to them are the San Jose Sharks, Winnipeg Jets, Columbus Blue Jackets and New York Islanders (of recent years they've been a joke). Of course, fate may have it that the Penguins, Canadiens or Maple Leafs will win it and the drought will continue for the rest of those teams, but it will be exciting to see which teams will advance and play in the Cup.

**NBA Playoffs (begin April 13):** The only thing to look forward to is seeing which teams will have the honor of getting demolished by the Golden State Warriors. If we are lucky we may see the Warriors get upset but we'd be kidding ourselves if we actually believed that would happen.

**The Masters (April 11-14):** This is a good tournament to fall asleep to. The combination of many golf shots and Jim Nantz's voice are the perfect recipe for a Sunday afternoon nap. If only we could get Tony Romo to comment alongside Nantz. That would be exciting even for the dull game of golf.

will recognize the difference between an institution that is currently comprised of enablers versus one that is not. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, what is the alternative? Are we meant to stand aside and watch while the institutions that have enabled abusers are allowed to remain as they are without suffering the appropriate repercussions for their malfeasance? It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for us to enthusiastically support the passage of the Child Victims Act, for the sake of the Jewish people, for the sake of our children.

*CHILDREN,  
continued from Page 14*

past few decades? Why should a childhood victim of sexual abuse — who for whatever reason, be it trauma or fear, waited to report the abuse — be restricted from bringing a suit against the enablers of his abuser?

For this reason, the law is restricted to the introduction of a lawsuit to court, and not of the adjudication thereof. Adjudication is fully up to the judges' or juries' discretions. This requires a certain level of confidence among the masses that the judicial system



State lawmakers hold a press conference in support of the Child Victims Act.

FINGERLAKES



# Partisan Gerrymandering Overstepping Bounds

By CHAYA BRACHA  
WALKENFELD

I am writing in response to a recent Commentator article titled “Law Review: Partisan Gerrymandering.” I respectfully disagree with the main claim of that article, which was that gerrymandering on purely political grounds is justiciable, or an issue that the court can adjudicate. If courts had the ability to rule on partisan gerrymandering cases, this would give the job of the legislature to the judiciary, thus breaching the separation of powers on which our government is based.

In the case of *Davis v. Bandemer*, the Supreme Court ruled that gerrymandering can violate the First and Fourteenth Amendments; however, they could not find a neutral standard with which to identify and correct those violations. They overturned this ruling in *Vieth v. Jubelirer* when they ruled that gerrymandering is unconstitutional; however, there is no way to find a neutral standard. Gerrymandering comes in many different shapes and sizes, but it requires a standard that is one size fits all; the absence of such a standard makes ruling on these cases impossible.

In his plurality opinion for *Vieth*, Justice Scalia explained that redistricting is left solely to the legislative branch because they are explicitly given that power in the Constitution. In article one, section four of the Constitution, it gives the power of redistricting to the legislative branch of each respective state and allows Congress to make or alter most of these regulations. If Congress has that power, Scalia’s opinion denotes that the Court does not.

The precedent that the judiciary cannot get involved in some powers that the Constitution gives to the legislature comes from a case unrelated to gerrymandering, *Nixon v. United States*. In that case, Federal Judge Nixon challenged the process by which the Senate had removed him from office. The Court ruled that since this involved a political question, it would be an overreach for the judiciary to get involved. The Senate, not the Court, should decide what procedures are proper in this circumstance because the Constitution gives the Senate “the sole power to try all impeachments.” What this means for gerrymandering is that because redistricting is a political issue, the Court cannot get involved. Instead, the United States Congress is the check on individual states, and it alone can legislate to ensure that districts are made in a way that is fair.

Furthermore, if the Court later overturns the ruling of *Vieth v. Jubelirer* and finds that gerrymandering based on political considerations is justiciable, that would create a major problem: a torrent of cases would flood the courts because numerous states are gerrymandered. Thus, judges would not only step in on select cases but would have to learn a new skill: how to legislate across the country in state, federal and local elections. In other words, the court would act as legislature.

Notwithstanding the legal argument against judicial intervention, there is also the practical argument of how courts will be able to rule on gerrymandering. In order to rule on any political gerrymandered case, judges will need to use past performance to predict the future. According to that logic, people are pre-programmed robots and

make the same decisions repeatedly. In other words, if they voted Democrat in the last election or in the last twenty, they will vote for Democrats forever.

There is also the question of technology. Some say that because technology has improved dramatically, the state legislatures can gerrymander more effectively using historical precedent. History, however, has proven just the opposite: people vote for whom they want, which cannot be predicted by any program. They do not always vote based on party lines in a single election. Also, technology is not only used by the legislature to

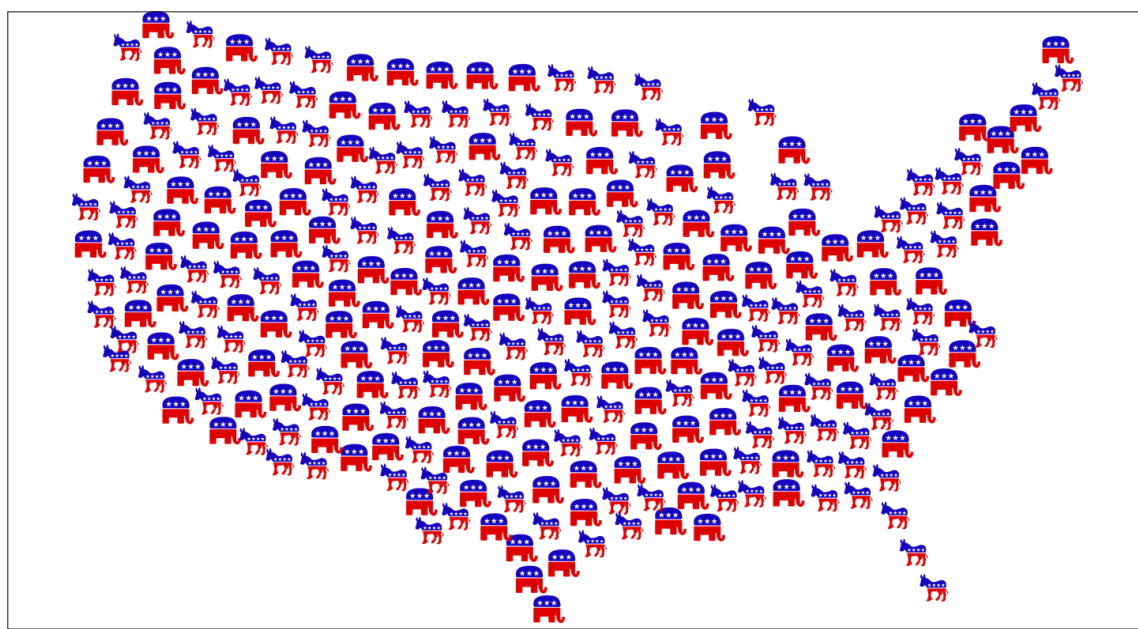
of polls that were wrong. In fact, twenty-two Wisconsin counties that voted for President Obama in 2012 voted for President Trump in 2016. Everyone assumed that Clinton was going to win because of the polls; however, the polls were inaccurate, and something inaccurate cannot be used as a judicial standard.

Fortunately, our Founding Fathers in their wisdom saw through this charade and knew that no one is preprogrammed, including those who do the redistricting, so everyone will use the redistricting process to their advantage, including the courts. Indeed,

the worst maps. They found that ten out of those seventeen worst maps were neutral maps, whether court-drawn, commission-drawn or bipartisan drawn.

This plainly shows that there is no possible way of finding a judicially acceptable standard for judges to use in ruling on gerrymandering because even the maps that neutral bodies drew were found to be gerrymandered. Map drawers always have to use either history, polls or some social science metric to determine the future.

Essentially these standards are trying to predetermine elections by drawing districts according to for-



A visual representation of congressional districts sorted by party

GORDON JOHNSON, PIXABAY.COM

gerrymander more effectively but is also used by the people to gain more information about the candidates, helping them vote for the person and not just for the party. This past presidential election is a great example of many people switching their party alliance, and

in last year’s court case, *Gill v. Whitford*, the appellants pointed out that neutral bodies are unable to come up with maps that are any better than the legislature. They explained that the plaintiff’s experts analyzed maps that spanned thirty years and listed seventeen of

mula. As Judge Easterbrook questioned (in *Baird v. Consolidated City Of Indianapolis*), “[i]f specified groups are entitled to ‘their’ members in the legislature, why bother with elections?”

## Why I Stayed

By REUVEN HERZOG

On Tuesday, Feb. 5, I attended a rally at the United Nations. The rally protested against the Chinese government’s treatment of the Uyghur people and was organized by YC alumnus and current *semikha* student Yosef Roth, as well as Corby Johnson and Fawzia Syed. The Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group who live primarily in north-western China, and they practice Islam. Within the past half-decade, the Chinese government has worked extensively to strip the Uyghur people of their identity, severely curtailing their rights to practice their religion and interning close to one million people in “re-education camps.”

The speakers at the rally were a Uyghur expat student whose family is suffering, a Uyghur activist, a Holocaust survivor and faith leaders from Islam, Christianity and Judaism — including YU *Mashgiach* Rabbi Yosef Blau. The attendees at the rally were of a diverse population, including many visibly religious Muslims, and a contingent of students and faculty from YU.

The second speaker of the afternoon was Imam Suhaib Webb. A resident scholar at the Islamic Center at NYU, Imam Webb

opened his speech with the anecdote that the Uyghur people last had autonomy in 1934. Imam Webb immediately pivoted and stated that the same year was close to when the Palestinian people lost their own independence. He continued to paint a grand narrative that all Muslims are oppressed, the white man always will try to keep down the brown man, and all Muslims and all People of Color must unite to protest all oppression against the white ruling class. He mentioned the Uyghurs a few times throughout his speech, but almost as often mentioned his other example, Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians.

Imam Webb’s speech was rude, disrespectful and counterproductive. He either did not appreciate that the central organizer is both a religious Jew and a Zionist, or he did not care. Likewise with the visible contingent of religious Jews standing in the small block of asphalt, and with one of his fellow speakers.

I personally was deeply offended by Imam Webb’s words. He did not seem to care what the cause of the rally even was, instead preferring to use this opportunity to preach what he thought was more important and relevant than the issue that brought people to that square in the first place.

However, I was also troubled by the response of a couple of my fellow YU students who attended the rally. Severely disagreeing with the imam’s words, two students left the rally during his speech and did not return. Though on a smaller scale and with less publicity, these students were guilty of the same essential error as the speaker: They coopted an event centered around the Uyghurs into whatever they cared about. Passionate Jews and Zionists, they refused to stand by while their people were being publicly bashed. On its own, that is an admirable trait. But in context it was a distraction, it was almost

*tove’ yosher*, even in profoundly uncomfortable spaces.

Imam Webb implicitly shouted that Jews aren’t welcome in any progressive activist spaces unless they renounce some of their core values. The students who left acted in accordance with his premise, standing proudly with Israel and leaving the rally and the Uyghurs alone. But how sad is this? Living in a Jewish society in the Land of Israel is one of the core tenets of our religion; caring for the poor and oppressed is another. Why should we let an outsider dictate to us that we can choose only one?

*The danger in grand narratives is that those who disagree with components can get thrown out of the larger program; it is critical that we do not fall into this trap.*

bait, and they took it. The Uyghurs’ plight wasn’t important enough to suck up our pride in Israel for six minutes, so it was okay to leave in protest.

Though I understand many in our community would agree with these students’ actions, I hope that we all can learn to feel comfortable and present in our pursuit of

I remained at the rally because I cared about the Uyghur plight; showing up and holding a sign for the cameras was the least I could do. As an Orthodox Jew raised in the tradition of Yeshayahu, I felt immense

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## Eliminate the ‘Middlecow’

By JACOB STONE

There are 1.3 to 1.5 billion cows on this planet. Yearly, each cow emits 70 to 120 kilograms of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide at trapping energy in the Earth’s atmosphere, contributing to the climate change crisis. But cow farts and burps are only part of the problem; 14.5 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by livestock, mainly large animals raised for slaughter and consumption by humans.

People tend not to think of their diets as ways to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but changing a diet to cut beef can have dramatically positive environmental effects. Cows eat much less efficiently than other animals and are disproportionately responsible for the 14.5 percent of global emissions blamed on all livestock. Red meat requires 11 times as much clean freshwater and produces five times as much greenhouse gas emissions

per kilogram of meat in comparison to other sources of protein, such as pork, chicken and fish, and produces 11 times as much greenhouse gasses per kilogram compared to vegetables and grains like potatoes and rice.

Basic biology explains this inefficiency. Living beings use up energy to survive and grow, and the bigger they are the more energy they waste. When cows graze, they use up most of the energy in their feed in order to stay alive. When humans eat those cows, they only obtain a fraction of the original energy in the grain used to make the feed. If we eliminated the “middlecow,” we’d become much more efficient at converting valuable grain into energy that we need.

Chicken, pigs, fish and other animals are much more efficient at converting feed into meat for human consumption. Trading beef for other forms of protein can, therefore, have an extremely positive effect on the

environment. A recently published article in The Guardian quoted Prof. Tim Benton, an environmental researcher at the University of Leeds, who said that “The biggest intervention people could make towards reducing their carbon footprints would not be to abandon cars, but to eat significantly less red meat.”

*14.5 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by livestock, mainly large animals raised for slaughter and consumption by humans.*

A U.K. study of over 23,000 vegetarians and fish-eaters and 29,000 red-meat eaters found that meat eaters’ diets produced approximately 7.2 kilograms of carbon dioxide daily, while both vegetarian and fish-based diets produced only 3.8 kilograms.

Meat eating also strains our world’s

precious freshwater supply. It takes 2,400 gallons of water to produce a pound of meat, the equivalent of six month’s worth of showers. The U.N. predicts that by 2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people will live in regions of absolute water scarcity. Using other sources of nourishment drastically lowers freshwater footprints and can help alleviate the growing problem of a global scarcity of freshwater.

We are only exacerbating the problem by consuming more and more meat per capita each year worldwide. A recent Scientific American article reported that worldwide meat consumption tripled between 1971 and 2010 while world population only grew by 81 percent. Americans are one of the main sources of this problem, eating 97 kilograms of meat per person per year, double the worldwide average of 41.9 kilograms.

Our dietary habits are wreaking irreversible change to the environment around us and are relatively easy to change. The solution: stop eating (or eat less) red meat.



Cows are responsible for a disproportional amount of greenhouse gasses emitted by livestock.

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WHY I STAYED,  
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pride in wearing my *kippah* while holding a sign echoing *Vayikra* 25’s exhortation to proclaim freedom throughout the land, standing next to a *rosh yeshiva* who altered his scheduled *shiur* to enable him and his students to attend the rally. And though I was extremely uncomfortable for that component of the speech, I thought just as my religion expected me to show up, it expected me to sit through those six minutes of discomfort.

Activism, like politics, makes for strange bedfellows. This past week I attended a panel discussion devoted to the tension in the interface between The Women’s March and antisemitism. All of the panelists agreed that progressive causes — e.g. feminism, support for the working class, eradicating racism, sustainable environmental policies — are good and that antisemitism is bad. All were proud Jews, most were proud Zionists and thought that was entirely compatible with Social Justice, and they all acknowledged the deep tension that many progressive Jews feel in spaces where they are asked to check their identities at the door. None provided a complete answer to the problem, but one line from the discussion is particularly relevant here: Worry less about whom you are talking *with* than whom you are talking *to*. You might feel deeply about a

cause, and someone else may agree with you on that cause, and you may feel equally deeply opposed to each other on another issue. Don’t ignore that disagreement, but at least be willing to temporarily put that on the back burner while you work for the common good.

The world of social justice activism is not the most hospitable for Jews. But that doesn’t change the fact that social justice is a core principle of Judaism. The danger in grand narratives is that those who disagree with components can get thrown out of the larger program; it is critical that we do not fall into this trap. And I very much appreciate the comments of Imam Khalid Latif, the Muslim University Chaplain for NYU, who followed Imam Webb’s speech in calling all of us to hear the narrative of the other and to ensure that narrative is not erased. I do not know if it was an intentional rebuke to Imam Webb, but it certainly argued against Imam Webb’s narrow-minded and divisive comments.

So I am immensely grateful to Yosef for his effort in putting this event together, and I hope our small presence across the US Mission to the UN makes an impact, however small, in the lives of the Uyghur people. And I am proud of the bulk of my peers who stayed through the whole rally in solidarity with the Muslims from 6,500 miles away. Because it is better to seethe in silence for six minutes than to skip out on the full hour.



The Uyghur Rally at the United Nations Headquarters

JONATHAN BECKER



## Online Optical: Seeing Things Differently

By ELI FRISHMAN

The very first pair of glasses were said to have been invented over 700 years ago. These proto-glasses were essentially two stones connected with a metal wire that balanced on wearer's nose. While there have been various improvements in the corrective capabilities of glasses, little has changed in their overall structure. What has changed dramatically, however, is the glasses industry. In the past 20 years, with the rise of the internet, the once heavily monopolized industry now has to compete with online glasses providers, with some companies even selling prescription lenses for less than the cost of a sandwich at Nagel Bageel. For the 60 percent of the population who wears glasses, online optical providers are changing the way they see the world, literally.

Beyond their practical function, glasses have historically been a style accessory, with some providers selling high-end frames costing in the thousands. Various name brand glasses and optical centers such as Ray Bans, Oakley and Lens Crafters, are all owned by the same company, Luxottica. In addition to their own brands, Luxottica also has licensing rights to manufacture glasses for luxury brands such as Burberry, Ralph Lauren and Versace. In 2017, Luxottica's own brands, together with their licensing deals, combined to make up 60 percent of all glasses sold in the U.S., effectively allowing Luxottica to control market prices for glasses.

In 2010, this monopoly caused a couple of college students to start the online retailer now known as Warby Parker. According to the Warby Parker website, the idea came to them when one of the company's founding members lost his glasses on a backpacking

trip. The cost of replacing them was so much that this cash-strapped college student was forced to spend his first semester of grad school squinting during lectures.

In a Forbes Magazine article from 2016, Neil Blumenthal, Warby's Co-CEO, explained their original business model: "It was really about bypassing the middle men that would mark-up lenses 3-5x what they cost, so we could transfer all of that cost directly to consumers and save them money." Thus, buyers would purchase glasses directly from the Warby Parker website and have them delivered straight to their homes.

While the idea was innovative, the founders were concerned that customers would be hesitant to purchase from Warby because they wouldn't actually be able to see how the frames would fit on their faces. To solve this issue, Warby has a variety of resources including uploading your picture to the website, virtually trying the lenses on. Warby also allows customers a home try-on program where customers can order five frames for free and select the one that suits them best.

Surprisingly, Warby's success has brought their once exclusively online platform back into brick and mortar stores. In 2013, Warby opened up its first retail store and by the end of 2018, that number was approaching 100. The decision to move "offline" was primarily to attract customers who prefer the traditional glasses shopping experience and to gain insight into customer shopping habits. The online-to-offline business trend is not unique to Warby, in fact many once exclusively online startups now have numerous physical locations, a phenomenon detailed in

Sarah Torgueman's "Virtual Reality Bringing You Back to Brick and-Mortar Retail."

While an average pair of prescription Warby Parker glasses costs between \$95-\$145, which is far less than many of Luxottica's brands, some online optical companies such as Zennis offers low-cost prescription frames starting at even five dollars. Benji Morris (YC '20) has taken advantage of the pricing and style options provided by online optical, noting, "The right

*For the 60 percent of the population who wears glasses, online optical providers are changing the way they see the world, literally.*

pair of glasses can turn an okay outfit into a perfect one, and given the affordability that online optical provides, I've bought probably 13 pairs in the past year for under 75 dollars, for various occasions and styles." For Morris, online optical has turned glasses into a style

accessory much like a tie where purchases are frequent and relatively inexpensive.

Yet, even as the internet has made glasses extremely affordable, in 2017, only 4.2 percent of total glasses were sold online. This is primarily because eye exams are done in a physical location and many customers value the convenience of getting their glasses at the same place where they get their prescription. However, a company called Opternative has developed a fully online eye examination. Currently, the FDA has yet to approve of Opternative's eye examinations, but if that changes, online optical could one day constitute a majority of glasses sales.

While the glasses industry persisted for many years with outrageous prices for inexpensive materials, it was not immune to developments in production methods and has been disrupted by various online providers. Although the thought of using your computer for an eye exam may seem a little too futuristic, it might just be around the corner.



An increased number of people are purchasing glasses from online retailers.

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## Ikea Emerges with Prominent Growth Plan: Furniture Leasing

By SARAH TORQUEMAN

These are the days where you can "share" just about anything with just about anyone. And just when we thought the subscription model of business had been exhausted and dozens of industries had been refreshed, Swedish furniture retailer Ikea joins hundreds of businesses in pivoting as they employ these promising strategies.

Ikea recently announced what's up next for the retailer: furniture rentals on a subscription basis. The company plans to offer customers the option to lease pieces of furniture that they will then return at the end of a time period, and then pick out new pieces of furniture for the next period. It will also include a furniture buy-back option. Redecorating just got a whole lot easier, not to mention incentivized, with hopes for rises in customer retention while prolonging product lifespan.

The pilot is to be launched this quarter in Switzerland, where it will include both office and home furniture rentals. Depending on the outcome there, Ikea may roll out the initiative worldwide, according to the Financial Times.

Ikea has long prided itself on its high-quality, yet inexpensive furniture. Additionally, Ikea has become known for its flat-packing and self-assembly product model, allowing customers to build its ready-to-assemble (RTA) products. This model reduced shipping expenses significantly — furniture can literally be flat-packed — while rebranding furniture into a DIY project for adults.

Eventually, however, either the fun wore off or consumers have come to prefer even more convenience, prompting platforms like TaskRabbit, which connects users with freelancers-for-hire to complete one-off tasks and errands, to take off. In an effort to capture some of this burgeoning market and harness the resource thousands

were using for product assembly, Ikea partnered with TaskRabbit in Sept. 2017. With its pilot of furniture leasing to launch in 2019, Ikea continues to adapt to consumer trends and join the sharing economy, as detailed by the Financial Times.

*Redecorating just got a whole lot easier, not to mention incentivized, with hopes for rises in customer retention while prolonging product lifespan.*

Ikea's leasing project enables consumers to "share" furniture by agreeing to rent pieces for a certain period of time after which other consumers may rent the very same pieces once they are refurbished by Ikea in-between. For Ikea, this "scalable subscription service" is much more than the glamorous stream of recurring revenue that has made the subscription model popular among business development teams and favored by venture capitalists. As told in an interview with the Financial Times, this business model will not only improve Ikea's manufacturing processes, making it possible to easily swap products like kitchen cabinets at the end of leasing periods, but will prolong product lifespan, as well. Ikea's development team is also considering to launch a "spare parts" business, aimed at selling interchangeable parts such as screws and hinges.

Ikea's new project was initiated as part of the company's pivot toward a circular business model — maximizing resources and minimizing waste by selling products that can be reused to create new ones, or refurbished and resold.

Torbjorn Loof, CEO of Ikea's holding company, Inter Ikea, who leads company branding, mentioned in the aforementioned interview with the Financial Times that Ikea plans to reduce landfill waste, recycle products and reuse materials such as wood, metal,

foam and textiles by launching its furniture leasing project, thereby prolonging lifespan of products. In fact, Loof mentioned that Ikea hopes to reduce its overall climate footprint by 15 percent by reducing the footprint per product by 70 percent in the next four years.

While Ikea's furniture leasing project represents a large portion of its long-term growth plan, it has also announced other potential avenues for expansion. Ikea seeks to move beyond large outlet stores typically situated in suburban areas, and instead relocate to urban areas with revamped, smaller stores and utilize the concept of pop-up shops. Digital solutions such as virtual reality will soon be incorporated to help consumers with furniture planning, while customer services will be upgraded through advanced online sales and better home delivery options. Ultimately, with its furniture leasing pilot soon underway and its overall growth strategy, Ikea may gain more traction while maintaining its reputation of affordability, coupled with its vision for convenience and sustainability.



Ikea executives plan to roll out a new leasing strategy among other potential avenues for expansion.

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## The SEC: A Double-Edged Sword

By NATHAN HAKAKIAN

The partial government shutdown has caused a ripple effect that has been felt through various government branches, and although some sectors such as Social Security, Medicare and the U.S. Postal Service are still in service, other departments such as the Security Exchange Commission (SEC) — run by Jay Clayton — have shut down. According to their official website, [sec.gov](http://sec.gov), the SEC's mission is to “protect investors, promote fairness in the securities markets, and share information about companies and investment professionals to help investors make informed decisions and invest with confidence.”

But what role does the SEC really play, anyway? What's its importance? When a company decides “to go public,” it will launch an Initial Public Offering (IPO), with the goal being to raise capital, by selling pieces of their company, known as “shares.” Within

economy really beneficial?

The SEC's heavy hand is both beneficial and detrimental. On one hand, the SEC works tirelessly to regulate the market to prevent fraud. This includes a free, detailed database (named EDGAR) which is accessible to everyone. Investors can analyze companies' balance sheets, income and cash flow statement, and formulate theses regarding the future movement of a given company's stock. Additionally, because the SEC is a government-funded organization, it plays an essential role in stabilizing the economy. Lastly, in an effort to establish a fair-trading market, the SEC began awarding settlements to “whistleblowers” or informants, who reported illegal activity. According to their website, the SEC has awarded over \$262 million to 53 whistleblowers since 2012.

On the other side, many corporations, financial institutions, and investors in particular, view the SEC as too powerful and controlling. Companies must spend countless hours and allocate significant resources to

went to prison! A more current example is that after Tesla CEO Elon Musk falsely announced that he would be taking Tesla private, increasing the stock price by over 10 percent in one day; the SEC was outraged. This “outrage” led them fining the billionaire a mere \$20 million and forcing him to cede his Tesla Chairmanship. Many felt that the punishment did not fit crime, and that this was merely “a slap on the wrist.”

SEC involvement in our markets is a necessary evil; the agency is almost like an overprotective parent that must monitor its many

millions of children. Although the United States encourages a free-trade market, basic guidelines must be created to ensure this possibility. Without the SEC, companies could mislead countless investors, and the rate of fraud would dramatically increase. Even though the SEC's policies can be frustrating at times, at the end of the day the benefits outweigh the detriments. Despite the controversy surrounding the importance of the SEC, one thing is clear: The SEC is the best possible way to monitor public companies and their investors.

*SEC involvement in our markets is a necessary evil; the agency is almost like an overprotective parent that must monitor its many millions of children.*

that long procedure, companies must be extensively vetted to ensure that the information listed in the documents is accurate. The SEC will then issue a document called an S-1, which details what the company is doing and why. The SEC will then take a few months to conduct further diligence, and will eventually approve or deny the motion. After receiving approval, the company will then choose an exchange — such as the New York Stock Exchange — on which to trade. Once listed publicly, anyone can buy or sell as many shares as they please.

But is the SEC's involvement in the

fulfill the SEC's mandated quarterly, annual and other filings. If the SEC suspects that securities are being bought or sold with non-public information, or insider trading, a ban is imposed. Until the ban is lifted, a process called suspended trading is in place. This process can be burdensome for a company, hurting both the stock price and reputation of a company. Furthermore, scheduling a hearing with the SEC can be a lengthy process.

Even when the SEC does flex its muscles and exerts its power, some argue that its punishments are oftentimes too lenient; following the Great Recession, only one banker



Jay Clayton, Head of the SEC

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## Robinhood: Release the Inner Investor

By EITAN LAVIAN

When we receive money, whether it be as a birthday present or a paycheck, most of us initially react by asking ourselves what we're going to buy next, always looking to spend more. This hasn't always been the case, though. Bankrate, a financial-advice website shows that today, in contrast to generation X-ers (ages 36-51) and Baby Boomers (ages 52-70), millennials have the lowest number of active investors. Bankrate also notes that only one in three millennials (33 percent) is currently investing in the stock market, versus Generation Xers at 51 percent and Baby Boomers at 48 percent.

While it seems that older millennials understand the financial value of starting to invest one's money at an early age leads to major financial gain, the general population

is far from actually doing so. It isn't entirely clear as to why the younger population is reluctant to invest their money. Researchers from Gallup assume the 2008 market crash and the market's latest volatility contribute to this surprising this phenomenon, and Ally Invest believes anxiety is the major reason. Furthermore, the added commission fees do not help. Regardless of what's causing the issue, with the help of their application, Robinhood, co-founders Vladimir Tenev and Baiju Bhatt, may help make a change.

Tenev and Bhatt were roommates at Stanford University. The two were closely involved in selling trading software to hedge funds and took issue with the fact that, in comparison to Wall Street firms who essentially pay nothing in order to trade stocks, a normal American is charged up to \$10 for each trade. They were convinced that a project, like Robinhood, specifically tailored to

the needs of the average individual involved with the financial markets is far more important than helping wealthy investors. The two decided to launch Robinhood, an online investing platform aimed at democratizing access to the American financial system, allowing one to buy and sell stocks, exchange-traded funds, options and cryptocurrencies with zero commission.

Released in Dec. 2014, the application started off as an invite-only platform, but with over 700,000 users on the waiting list, the company finally offered its services to the public in March 2015. That Nov., the company facilitated over \$1 billion in transactions. In 2017, the company was valued at \$1.3 billion, and has since quadrupled its valuation to approximately \$5.6. The company intends to go public sometime in 2019.

Sleek and simple in design, the application caters to more than four million users with a sign-up process that takes only a few minutes. Users then link their bank account to transfer the amount of money they prefer and are then asked a series of questions to distinguish those who are investing for their first times in the hopes to limiting their financial risk. It also provides advice on whether one should buy, sell or hold a stock, and offers a timeline of the stock's performance history.

Robinhood makes money in three simple ways. Firstly, like other brokers, Robinhood earns interest on un-invested cash in customers' accounts, similar to a bank collecting interest on deposits. The company passes

through any regulatory fees that incur with a trade, although the fees may be worth fractions of a penny, they still add up. According to co-CEO Vladimir Tenev, the company earns 2.6 cents per \$100 traded. The company also offers Robinhood Gold, a margin trading service starting at \$6 a month, in which customers are able to buy stocks with funds borrowed by a brokerage — a feature similar to the way one makes purchases with a credit card. The company illustrates this package by providing an example: For customers borrowing over \$50,000 there's an interest rate of 5 percent APR. If you borrow \$125,000, you'll be charged interest on \$75,000 (\$125,000 minus \$50,000). The daily rate for borrowing \$75,000 will be \$10.42 (\$75,000 times 5 percent, divided by 360).

Although it might sound to some as though one is guaranteed to make money, Robinhood does have its cons. Unlike other investment services, Robinhood tends to add \$0.20 on each stock when placing an order. In addition, many have criticized the app's slow software, noting many instances in which they have missed trades. However, if one is eager to invest, interested in the idea of owning shares of a company, or is just looking for a way to gain experience in the financial markets, it may very well be worth one's time to download Robinhood. Keep in mind that you should only invest what you are willing to lose.



The Robinhood logo

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