

The Yeshiva University OBSERVER



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Editorials:

“If I Am Only For Myself, What Am I?” The *YU* *Observer*

By: Fruma
Landa, Editor
in Chief



*“Founded by the women of Yeshiva University’s Stern College in 1958, the *YU Observer* is one of two student-run publications of Yeshiva University. Writers on the *YU Observer* staff are *YU* undergraduates from a variety of backgrounds.*

*Views expressed in the *YU Observer* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University.”*

I am often approached with questions surrounding the role of the *YU Observer* and the students we serve. As there are currently two undergraduate, student-run *YU* newspapers, it is understandable that there are those who mistakenly assume that since there are two newspapers and two campuses, the *YU Observer* serves the Beren Campus students while The Commentator serves the Wilf Campus students. However, although the newspapers began gender-segregated and campus-

segregated, the *YU Observer* is a coed newspaper, boasting a diverse staff, dedicated to serving both the Beren and Wilf Campuses.

The *YU Observer* has a goal of representing our entire student body, and it is my mission, as well as the mission of the larger *YU Observer 2020-2021* staff, to further this goal. I noticed throughout my experience at *YU* that, sadly, student newspapers do not always reflect the diverse array of perspectives found on our campuses. Newspapers often become polarized and relevant nuances are lost; however, these nuances are not absent from the conversations occurring on our campuses. Conversations on our campuses are far from limited in perspective. In fact, I have found quite the opposite to be true — they often highlight overlooked facets, feature insight, and offer a viewpoint unique to the student sharing. These nuanced perspectives, so often glaringly absent from our newspapers, deserve to be captured and shared.

We are fortunate to have two different campuses, and three undergraduate schools, Stern College for Women, Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business — Wilf Campus and Beren Campus — each full of thoughtful individuals. These students come from different backgrounds, have differences in

theology, religious practice, and thought. There is power in our differences. We all can all bring someone into our world, broadening their horizons and painting the world through our unique perspectives. You have the power to influence and be influenced, to teach and to be taught. All of these differences deserve to be represented — it is the mission of the *YU Observer* to represent YOU.

So why are these nuances not reflected in student newspapers? Oftentimes, when students read an article, they discuss it, share their opinions, and offer perspectives, contributing greatly to the nuance in verbal dialogue. Yet, how many of those conversers decide to take the initiative and share their thoughts in a newspaper? Reading an article from a singular perspective can make students feel like their dissenting voice is not a wanted or valued contribution. In response, I would like to say to the greater *YU* community that the *YU Observer* is YOUR newspaper and YOUR opinion is welcome, wanted, and valued. It is useless to operate a newspaper run by students to serve our peers without representing them.

I want to bring out a line in the *YU Observer*’s mission statement. “Views expressed in the *YU Observer* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the

student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University.” Regardless of your agreement with the opinions published in the *YU Observer*, your perspective is not only welcome but necessary to further the dialogue. If you don’t agree with an article published, don’t let that argument dominate the dialogue. The space is not full and the dialogue is not complete without your voice. I encourage you to view it as a chance to share your thoughts and stake your claim in the dialogue.

Your voice deserves to be heard. Sharing your view in a newspaper gives you your chance to make a change. Your voice has the power to influence many — students, administrators and other readers. If you do not add your voice to the wider discussion, you lose all possibilities of changes your voice can make, leaving the influence up to voices you disagree with. That is just not fair. You deserve better.

There is a phrase from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of our Fathers) 1:14 that has imprinted itself on me. “He [Hillel] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” As a newspaper and as a community, we are here to learn from each other. We all have something to offer and something we can learn. I need your help sharing that. I can not create a newspaper serving you, representing your thoughts, if you don’t contribute your voice to the choir. Only together, each doing our part, can we form a harmonious dialogue representing us all. In the words

of Hillel, “if not now, when?”

#Cancelled: Where To Draw The Line

By: Shayna Herszage,
Managing Editor



This past summer has been a crash course in human rights and social activism. From the fight for racial equality and justice to various celebrities, such as [Madonna](#) and [Nick Cannon](#), making antisemitic comments or sharing antisemitic posts on social media, to other celebrities, such as [Shane Dawson](#) and [Jenna Marbles](#), being publicly shamed for other immoral actions, the past several months have made social and moral change impossible to ignore.

In such a time of social change in various domains, each person stands at a crossroads. With so many people, both in our lives and in the public eye, having terrible actions in their recent or distant pasts, there is temptation to invoke “cancel culture” and immediately label the individual as a “sinner” on the social scale. However, these sinners often act out of a lack of understanding — how can we “cancel” a person on the expectation that they should have an innate understanding of things that are, for better or for worse, not innate knowledge?

Meanwhile, if we are to combat cancel culture, we risk falling

victim to a slippery slope. At which point does it stop being resisting cancel culture and become refusing to hold people accountable for their actions?

As strange as it may sound, some direction in maintaining this balance can be found in Tractate *Bava Metziah* in the Babylonian Talmud. On [page 84a](#), Rabbi Yochanan meets Reish Lakish, who is a crusader, and Rabbi Yochanan convinces him to change his ways and study Jewish texts with him. Reish Lakish soon leaves his past in the dust as he becomes a scholar alongside Rabbi Yochanan.

However, this all changes when Rabbi Yochanan, in the middle of a Talmudic argument about purity status and the making of weapons, jokes that it is only natural that Reish Lakish would know about weaponry, being someone who wielded weapons on a regular basis in his past before he became a great scholar.

Bringing up Reish Lakish’s past is a great insult to Reish Lakish, and he and Rabbi Yochanan have a falling out, ultimately leading to the deaths of both scholars.

One may wonder: how does this anecdote in the Talmud relate to the balance between combating cancel culture and holding others accountable?

YouTuber Shane Dawson and scholar Reish Lakish, among their many differences, have one glaring difference between their stories: while Shane Dawson has continued to make racist and pedophilic offenses over the

years, Reish Lakish, upon learning there is another path, changed his ways and became better than the person he used to be.

In the public eye, some nearly “cancelled” celebrities have begun making efforts to become better people. For example, comedian Nick Cannon, after an antisemitic rant on social media, released a [public apology](#) and made an effort to visit the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles in order to educate himself about antisemitism and the people he targeted in his posts. Additionally, YouTuber Jenna Marbles made a humbling statement by posting an unprompted apology message on her channel for her past racist actions on her channel, followed by terminating her account after over a decade of YouTube success. While at this time I can not speak for the future developments of Nick Cannon and Jenna Marbles as people, I can commend them at this time for making conscious efforts to learn from their mistakes and be better than they were.

Ultimately, the balance between holding people accountable and not cancelling them is understanding that people are a work in progress. If they, like Reish Lakish did in the Talmud, are making a genuine, conscious effort to improve and become better people after their previous offenses or mistakes, do not reduce them to their pasts when their present depicts a person who has learned from their actions. However, if someone is not attempting to improve, it is

integral that those around them hold them accountable for their actions and make it clear that racism, antisemitism, and other offenses will not be tolerated.

On a local, smaller community scale, this teaches a similar lesson about balance: no one is perfect. People have dealt with lapses, losses, offenses, and mistakes. However, if a person is consciously attempting to move past these aspects of their life and become a better version of themselves, why reduce them to their shadowed past when that is not who they are anymore? Why cancel them when they are attempting to move past their darker moments?

Overall, people are more than their pasts. A person is partially their past, but they are also who they are in the present and who they hope to be in the future. We are all works in progress, and reducing someone to their first draft instead of considering who they have become, when they have worked hard to improve, is a discredit to who the person is and disservice who they may become.

The Work-Life Juggle

By: Shoshanah Marcus, News Editor



My grandma often reminds me of the remorse my mother felt when she dropped me off at my grandparents’ house when I was

six weeks old. As a young and passionate registered nurse with a husband in medical school and a newborn baby, my mother felt an overwhelming sense of guilt for leaving her baby during the day in order to pursue her career. Though I was well taken care of by my grandparents and other relatives, it was very difficult for my mother not to feel as if she was somewhat relinquishing her conventional responsibilities as a mother by not being fully present in my early years. From an outsider’s perspective, my mother seemed to have her work and family life in perfect balance: she worked in a field that she was passionate about but could also spend plenty of time with her family. However, in the ‘balance,’ my mother often felt as if her family life distracted her work and her work interrupted her family life.

After reading Yael Chatav Schonbrun and Elizabeth Corey’s “[Work-Life Conflict Can’t Be Solved — and That’s a Good Thing](#)” in The Wall Street Journal, I began to think about the additional expectations hindering Jewish women from having a competitive career while fulfilling their traditional role as a mother. Though there has been a recent revolutionary movement for Jewish women to undertake more time-consuming and rigorous careers, such as in the medical or law field, working Jewish mothers often feel residual guilt for not fulfilling their societal expectations as a mother and housewife. As a result, many young Jewish women pursue a job that allows for flexibility so that they can feel a sense of self-

accomplishment in their careers while having enough time to take care of their families.

However, the part-time nature of a job should not be the ultimate criteria in choosing a profession. Instead, Jewish women should be encouraged to pursue their passions without underlying feelings of guilt, just as Jewish men are. In their article, Schonbrun and Corey explain that though both men and women reportedly have a work-life conflict, “women tend to be more prone to guilt and self-doubt about their choices.” While the role of a mother is arguably one of the most fulfilling and important roles a woman can undertake, Jewish women should not be limited by the expectations surrounding motherhood. Though there are important and unique responsibilities that come with becoming a mother, women should not feel the need to suppress their passions out of fear that they will not be able to ‘balance’ their career and family life. Instead of attempting to *balance* their work and personal lives, which implies that the two roles are interconnected and intertwined, women should feel empowered to separate their careers and family in order to truly be present in both facets.

Weighing one’s responsibilities both in and out of work can become overwhelming and burdensome to many. In their article, Schonbrun and Corey add, “[y]et in a culture that prioritizes both intensive parenting and constant attention to work, the conflict between roles can be beneficial, since it forces us to

take turns detaching from each.” They explain: “Instead of lamenting the difficulty of balancing the two endeavors, then, we can try to appreciate the productivity from forces in opposition.” Rather than attempting to weigh both aspects of life and expect some sort of harmonious balance, women should feel empowered to not only separate the two aspects of their lives when possible, but to also accept that work and life will rarely be in perfect synchronization.

Rather than placing one’s professional aspirations and personal endeavors on a scale to weigh one priority against the other, perhaps the two important commitments should be viewed as a juggling act. One of the most important rules of juggling is to focus on the ball at hand in order to adequately prepare for the next ball. This metaphor can be extended to the work-life struggle. Not only does focusing on the task at hand allow one to better execute the task, but detaching from one task in order to complete the other allows for maximum productivity and self-fulfillment.

Professional aspirations should not be limited by the societal expectations surrounding motherhood or any other personal endeavor. Young Jewish women in particular, who often feel the pressures of raising a family, should not fear the crushing balance, but instead celebrate the juggle.

The 2020 Eclipse: When An Endemic Cowers Behind A Pandemic

By: Mili Chizhik, News Editor



The other day as I was doomsday scrolling on social media, a normal daily — or dare I say, hourly — activity during quarantine, I came upon a series of black and white photos of women along with the hashtags of “#womensupportingwomen,” “#challengeaccepted,” and others of the same sort. Initially, I thought it was in response to the lack of equal representation of women in Jewish publications, event flyers and invites, and social media. Little did I know the seemingly trivial social media challenge’s dark origin.

On July 16 in the southwestern Turkish [Muğla](#) region, 27-year-old economics student, Pınar Gültekin, disappeared. Five days later, her beaten, strangled, torched body was found in a garbage bin with concrete poured over her. Her 32-year-old ex-boyfriend led the police to her body and was arrested for her murder. However, the horrible and tragic murder of Gültekin was just one of the thousands of women who were victims of femicide in Turkey.

According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), femicide can be defined as the “intentional murder of women *because* they are women, but broader

definitions include any killings of women or girls.” At least 35% of the female victims in the world were killed by their partner, while only five percent of male homicides are committed by their partners. “Honour”-related murders are typically done to protect the family’s reputation after a possible bad deed done by the victim, whether it was “adultery, sexual intercourse or pregnancy outside marriage – or even for being raped.” The [WHO](#) suggests that strengthening surveillance and screening of femicide and intimate partner violence, training and sensitizing health staff and police, increasing prevention and intervention research, reducing gun ownership and strengthening gun laws, and, lastly, strengthening surveillance, research, laws, and awareness of murder in the name of ‘honour’ to reduce or even end femicide.

In July 2020 alone, over 40 women were murdered. Approximately [474](#) women were killed last year, the highest femicide rate in a decade, while [120](#) women and counting were killed this year. In the past decade the rates of femicide have been increasing each year, and due to the pandemic and lockdown, the rates are predicted to rise even further.

Following Gültekin’s murder, protesters flooded the streets demanding that the Turkish government take a stronger stance against the violence against women and protection of women and families that suffered domestic abuse. Protests and vigils were held in many cities throughout the country where

women waved purple flags and [repeated](#): “We are here Pınar. We will hold them accountable.” Despite Turkey’s infamously conservative [policies](#) and leadership, Turkish women are demanding equal rights and legal protection. Protesters are met with [rubber bullets and tear gas](#).

In [early 2011](#), Turkey adopted a human rights treaty of the Council of Europe, an international human rights organization, against gender-based violence and domestic violence known as the Istanbul Convention. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s conservative Turkish government, is currently trying to [repeal](#) the treaty entirely.

The families of murdered women, female politicians, lawyers, and many other civil organizations have banded together to create a platform to fight violence against women. The “[We Will Stop Femicide](#)” Platform, otherwise known as Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu, provides legal assistance for women and victims and demands that the authorities carry out Law No. 6284 (Law To Protect Family And Prevent Violence Against Women), which provides protection for families and women against violence, and that was passed on March 8, 2012.

They also help spread awareness and educate women of their rights and try to get local and global support for this important issue.

When the [government](#) said that it does not keep records of these crimes, the platform began keeping records and tracking cases of murders and violence

against women. The [platform](#) also made it more difficult for tie reductions to occur and makes it easier to support victims and their families. “[Tie reduction](#)” refers to the decision of a judge to reduce an offender’s sentence and charge for domestic violence and murder based on how the male presents himself at court (i.e. if he wears a neck-tie to court).

The We Will Stop Femicide [platform](#) tries to help prevent these cases from being deemed “suicides,” as is often done in order to close the case. Additionally, activists are trying to pressure the authorities to accept the platform’s five demands for preventing femicide rates from worsening, to pass a legislative proposal that demands an additional clause be added to have the “aggravated life imprisonment” in the Turkish Penal Code that gives the term “femicide” a legal status, to discontinue the practice of penalty and tie reductions, as well as to create a Ministry of Women and “a new constitution that prioritizes gender and sexual orientation equality,” where “the president, the prime minister and the leaders of all political parties condemn [the] violence against women.”

So, how does the Turkish femicide endemic connect to [Khloe Kardashian](#) and [Hilary Duff](#)’s black and white selfies?

One woman who participated in the social media challenge [wrote](#) that “in Turkey, everyday we wake up to the news of women who are murdered either by a

spouse, boyfriend, stalker or complete stranger, [and] a black and white photo is followed by details of horrific news. Any of us could be that woman. That's why we accept the challenge until the Turkish government takes the required steps.”

This challenge was taken on by millions of women all over the world on all forms of social media, but most are unaware of the origins of the challenge. The purpose of this challenge is to increase awareness among global citizens of the atrocities that are happening to Turkish women. We should also understand that violence against women is a brutal reality just about everywhere, including right here in the U.S., and right here in our very own communities. Patriarchal societies that place men as the heads of the families are more vulnerable to emotional and physical violence that put women and children at risk.

There are many ways one can get involved and help with these issues. One way is to use not just the hashtags written earlier, but [also](#) #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır, which translates to “enforce the Istanbul Convention,” and #kadınaşiddetehayır, which translates to “no to violence against women.” Another way is to reach out to organizations that help with these issues, like the “We Will Stop Femicide” [platform](#) or other international human rights and women rights organizations. Also, one can sign a [petition](#) to help release 17,000 women who were imprisoned due to Erdoğan’s conservative legislation, and demands that he

take legislative steps to help abuse victims, mainly women.

According to the “We Will Stop Femicide” [platform](#), they believe that “women will certainly gain their rights through struggle. However, they are not supposed to pay such a price. Patriarchy is the reason behind the loss of so many lives,” lives like Suheyla Yılmaz, Derya Aslan, Şule Bilgin, Sümeyye Ateş, Seher Fak, Pınar Gültekin, Nadira Kadirova, to name just a few of the victims that were tragically killed. We can never get these women back, but we can try and help prevent other women from becoming yet another black and white picture amongst the thousands of women murdered while their government did nothing to try and protect them and their fellow female citizens.

According to the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Justice, the femicide rates increased by 1,400% from 2002 to 2009. 42% of Turkish women from 15 to 60 years old were physically or sexually abused by their significant others, while 18% and 14% of women in rural and urban areas, respectively, were sexually abused. Around 34% of Turkish women were physically abused by their husbands, while that number rose to 40% while focusing on just females from the Eastern regions of Turkey. Once the Turkish government admitted to not maintaining records for those who were murdered or abused, non-government organizations (NGOs), such as news networks and websites, collected as much data as they could. They found that, in 2016 in Turkey, at least

261 women were murdered, 75 raped, 119 harassed, 348 injured, and 417 girls were sexually abused, all by men. These estimates are expected to be much lower than the actual number due to the lack of emotional and psychological support for abuse victims and the fear of the victim’s and her family’s reputation being ruined (Kerman & Betrus, 2018).

Many women are married at a young age, either through arranged or forced marriages, for various reasons, some of which can be to release the family’s burden (the woman/girl) or even to improve the family of the bride’s financial situation. Many women and girls are sold to help their families, despite the illegality of doing so. “Turkish women in arranged or forced marriages in Turkey are 1.6 times more likely to experience violence during the marriage” (Kerman & Betrus, 2018). Traditionally, husbands pay a price for a young bride, and after the marriage ceremony, she must leave her family to join her husband’s family. Thus, “living in a hierarchical and patriarchal family pattern makes women [much] more vulnerable to violence” (Kerman & Betrus, 2018).

As in many societies, female behavior deemed ‘improper,’ like ‘immodest’ dress, is thought to warrant violence. Furthermore, if women and men both witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers, their chances of them being abused or abusing others increase by 1.59 and 1.71 times,

respectively (Kerman & Betrus, 2018).

The only ways to change these issues dramatically is to improve educational and social policies (Krug & et al., 2002) and to have societies to look down upon and disgrace the men who are abusive. According to Kerman and Betrus, “societal acceptance of VAW [violence against women] must change primarily among men.” Another way is to actually implement all of these laws that were put into place to protect women, rather than have them there simply as a suggestion.

*** **

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My Evolving Relationship With Bitachon

By: Erica Rachel Sultan, News Editor



Bitachon (trust in God) is a fairly recent component of my understanding of Jewish beliefs. To be fair, a lot of ideas, even some as simple as the many names of *Hashem* (God), such as the word *Hashem* itself, would seem like natural knowledge to some of my peers at Yeshiva University, but to me, as little as two years ago, such things were unfamiliar — yet they are such integral elements of my life now as a *Baal Teshuva* (a newly observant Jew). Growing up in a secular, predominantly Christian town in South Jersey, shaped my understanding of *bitachon* (trust in God). I believed it to be

interchangeable with *emunah* (faith) in God. My teachings were that of western theology — that having faith in God was synonymous to believing the idea that everyone’s lives are predestined. I was taught to believe that God, the perfect Playwright, created this masterpiece by the name of “Life,” in which He has decided the plots of all His characters, which scenes they would be placed in in order to continue the play, but without the consideration of his audience and their feelings. This belief creates an interesting question though — what happens when we, human beings, are both the characters and the audience? It wasn’t until I placed myself in a Jewish environment that I was not only able to understand the difference between faith and trust in God, but I was also able to answer this question.

I had grown up around people who had this idea of faith and trust in God, and I saw the comfort it brought them. I had taught myself to be comforted by this idea, whether I’d need to rely on it in times of good or bad. When I did better on a test than what I thought I would have, I thought it was just destiny. If my parents let me have a sweet before dinner, I thought that was destiny as well. So, when my grandmother died when I was twelve, I told myself that it was her destiny. And when my grandpa died when I was thirteen, I told myself that it was his destiny. But when my friend died when I was fourteen, I found it really hard to swallow “that was his destiny.” And when my mom

died a few months later, I was starting to get angry with God. With the emotional, mental, and physical changes that the losses of those I loved brought me, I eventually began to feel like a mere puppet on a string, being controlled by a cruel puppeteer. And truthfully, I was scared — I wanted the strings to be cut! I was terrified of what I didn’t know and of what He knew. It wasn’t until I spent three weeks of summer in Israel that my helplessness started to fizzle away.

There is something about Jerusalem that allows the pumping of my heart to become a beat which I dance to. It plays as I hear the clicks from shoes on the shiny limestone trails. The wind and which it carries — the prayers, discussions, moans that were uttered by our forefathers — harmonizes with the thousands of voices that endure the land today. It’s a thrill that makes me feel as if I am a part of Jerusalem’s past, present, and future. So, when I had the opportunity to attend the Mechina Program’s “July in Jerusalem,” which allowed me to learn its past while exploring its present, I took it.

Excited as ever to learn about Jewish history in Jerusalem, that’s frankly all I thought I would learn. Learning Torah was expected, as it is integral to our history. Learning some *tefilot* (prayers) and a bit about *Mashiach* (the Messiah) was expected as well. I had no idea though, that the answer to my pondering over trusting *Hashem*, and my anger towards *Hashem*, would be put to an end.

The honorable Rebbetzin Dina Schoonmaker taught a few classes during my time in Israel. Our second shiur hit close to home as it was on *emunah* and *bitachon*. Immediately, I went to my default standpoint of feeling helpless in having control in my life — whatever happens to a person is their destiny because solely *Hashem* made it be their destiny. But I was absolutely shocked to hear from the Rebbetzin: “*Emunah* and *bitachon* can go hand in hand, but they are different.” She explained that *emunah* is a general belief that *Hashem* exists and is present in mine and everyone’s lives. And then she described *bitachon* in a way I’ve never heard before.

Rebbetzin Schoonmaker explained that while *bitachon* does mean putting your trust in *Hashem* and in what He has decreed, you should also have *bitachon* in yourself. “Have *bitachon* in yourself” made no sense to me at all. How could I have trust in myself if I had no control over what *Hashem* has planned for me?! I told the Rebbetzin: “We are just puppets on strings!”

Mrs. Schoonmaker gave me a knowing smile and the words that came out of her mouth next single handedly dismantled the age-old anger I had towards *Hashem* and His edicts on my life. She asked if I and my fellow classmates believe that our souls and bodies were separate. We unanimously said, “yes.” She then told us that when a soul is conceived, *Hashem* allows it to see everything that will happen in its lives — the

good, the bad, the ugly, the precious, it gets to see it all. Rebbetzin Schoonmaker told us that our souls then sign us up for the life that is placed in front of us. She explained that while we don't necessarily have a choice in the matter of "being puppets on strings," we do get to decide which scenes in the play, "Life," we want to be in. She explained that *neshamot* (souls) have the option of picking a "more pretty than pleasant life" or a "more pleasant than pretty life."

The perfect analogy to this philosophy is a person deciding to buy a car. One could be stuck between wanting the car of their dreams, or settling for something that will just get them to where they need to be. The dream car — it's the perfect color, has seat warmers and seat coolers, has a blaring stereo, will definitely benefit a growing family, but it also costs a pretty penny which they may not be able to afford right now. Then, there is another car that will get them to where they need to be — well, it will do just that, is small, may not pay off in the long run, but it is cheap and they can get the car as soon as possible. If they choose the dream car (the pretty), they will undoubtedly have to work more hours at work in order to afford it. If they choose the car that will get them to where they need to go (the pleasant), it will feel nice to own a car, but what happens when this car is not big enough to take a family road trip in?

Our *neshamot* chose pretty because *Hashem* is gracious enough to show them what they're in store for. So, *bitachon*

is not only about trusting *Hashem*, but it's also about trusting yourself, your soul, and what it has planned for you. And this is not to say that one should ever feel as if their emotions are illegitimate. Everyone has every right to be happy when something good happens unexpectedly, just as they have every right to feel devastated when something bad happens unexpectedly. These are our souls that chose to fight these struggles, not our bodies! But what *bitachon* does for our bodies, in times of struggle, is reassurance that while yes, we are the characters in *Hashem's* greatest show, we are also the audience who decided to pay for the tickets, grab some popcorn, and laugh and cry at the brilliant production *Hashem* created.

The Beauty Of Music Sometimes Forgotten

By: Yair
Shavrick,
Opinion Editor



Music has always been an instrumental (sorry for the pun) part of my life. I grew up surrounded by musical talent and passion as the majority of my family either sang, played guitar, wrote music, or all of the above. This naturally enriched environment made it easy for me to not only grow in musical skill but to have a great appreciation for music in general.

Most people can attest that music is a powerful force that drives the world. Throughout history, we can observe the blatant presence of music via songwriting, concerts, mythology, instruments, and tradition. This is especially true within the history of the Jewish people, as we have figures in our ancestry who played instruments or wrote music such as King David and King Solomon. Even within the Torah, we can see various versions of *Shira* (singing songs), such as *Az Yashir* (a song customarily sung as part of the Jewish morning prayer service). When we *daven* (pray), we have multiple points in which the words are sung rather than read in a hushed voice. What is so important about music and song that we apply it to our most coveted times?

Kabbalistic teachings explain that music is written from the soul, and when one listens to or plays a specific song, there is a direct connection to the soul of the composer. Hassidic sects of Judaism are primarily known for keeping this alive, as they sing various *niggunim* (musical melody without words) written by holy rabbis. I don't want to delve too far into esoteric realms, but it should be understood that connecting to Jewish music is looked upon highly due to its spiritual significance and deep-rooted connection to our ancestors who wrote it. I won't even broach the topic of how tradition and historical preservation are integral to the existence of Judaism — that's for a different article. This editorial has a different purpose.

There is a very apropos situation that does not receive enough spotlight. Over the years, Yeshiva College (YC) has neglected the musical side of their student body. The current funding for our musical department is non-existent, the classrooms have been abandoned, and the student body is being snubbed by the administration from expressing their musical talents. I am aware that not everyone has a desire to be a part of music-related activities, but there are a lot of people who do. The extent of extra-curricular activities involving music is the Jazz Club (which, to date, consists of four members), which is nice, but not for everyone.

A few decades ago, the music wing of YC consisted of many classes that were attended and sought after by many of the students. There were classes involving the teaching of piano, *shofar* (horn) blowing, cantorial training, and many other interesting topics. This all took place in the Schottenstein building behind Dunkin' Donuts on 185th and Amsterdam Ave. The wing is currently abandoned, with eerie sights of empty classrooms, recital rooms, recording studios, untuned pianos, and outdated artwork.

Some may say, "Yair, we have musical outlets! There are classes on theory, and we have the Y-Studs and Maccabeats!" The problem with that is the environment does not foster creativity or recreation. Music is an incredible aspect of life, and the student body of YU is beaming with creativity and

musical talent with no outlet. Equipment is understandably expensive, but it can also last for many years if taken care of properly. A few thousand dollars donated and dedicated to musical instruments and structure can affect the lives of students in the future. We spend so much time singing the songs of great composers and songwriters. Why can't we have those composed within the YU student body? I hope you have gained an understanding of how important music is to society and our student body. Moving forward there should be a greater focus on funding and fostering musical activities in the coming semesters.

"A Cover Is Not the Book"

By: Honey Rogoff, Opinion Editor



"A Cover Is Not the Book"-Emily Blunt and Lin-Manuel Miranda;
"Mary Poppins Returns."

The girl you see wearing short sleeves and a long skirt, she wore jeans during the summer. The girl passing you in joggers and a t-shirt, she spent the summer working at a day camp in skirts and long sleeves. The unifying factor in each of these hypothetical women: They are living their own personal journeys unbeknownst to you.

Every individual is living a life full of challenges and experiences. Claiming to know any one person's entire life journey is simply ignorant. The only person for whom we should be concerned is ourselves; to make assumptions about the way someone lives their life based on the way they dress is an ill-informed, unfair judgement. An assumption based solely on appearance is unfair to both the individual, and the assumer. To live is to change, whether voluntarily or by way of time. With change may come changes to one's lifestyle which are not discernible by their wardrobe.

One's personal values, their core values, cannot be assessed from a simple judgement at face value. People are more complex than what they put on their bodies. The way we express ourselves in clothing and material items may be an indicator of our personality, but it does not speak for our entire being. Even if someone does not wear the same clothes that you do, they may have the same or similar core values as you. But just by looking at them you've decided your values must be different, higher, because her knees are uncovered, because she wears pants. The assumption that one cannot be privy to the same knowledge or education because of the clothing one wears is just that — an assumption. It is not an educated guess or logical conclusion. A logical conclusion comes from educating oneself on the details of the topic at hand; in this case, an individual. Maybe there is a misunderstanding, maybe you cannot understand why one would dress the way

they do if they knew everything you claim to. However, the way to amend this misunderstanding is by taking the time to get to know a person, and not making a snap decision on a person as a whole before you've given them a chance.

Modesty is one aspect of living a religious life that affects both Jewish men and women in different capacities. But modesty doesn't stop at physical presentation, it is one's mindset, attitude, and treating people with kindness and respect — the common human decency they deserve. There are many values that reach further than the surface, the way someone dresses should not be a reason to show disrespect. If the girl you saw wearing joggers and a t-shirt started wearing skirts, would your opinion on her as a person change? Her views, opinions, core values all may be the same, but the snap judgment made because of her outfit obscured your view of the mind and substance that makes up a person.

Everyone deserves to receive respect and common human decency unless they have proven themselves unworthy. The way someone dresses should not be near the top of the list of reasons you would disrespect someone. There are many values that reach further than the surface. What if one decided to start wearing only skirts that hit their knees at least and short sleeves at the minimum? What then? Would they be looked at differently? Would different assumptions be made? Maybe they would be regarded as someone who values

the “right” things. How does what one puts around their legs affect their level of values and the standards to which they hold themselves? If you are looking at someone with a preconceived notion, you are not viewing the person for who they truly are, you are viewing them for who you expect them to be, forming an opinion before even giving the individual a chance.

A point has been made to the individual, the ones trying to navigate through a judgmental room, through critical eyes. I am reaching out directly to those critical eyes and asking them to close for a moment and listen. Do not judge before you have not only heard, but truly listened to the individual — their story. It may not be what your eyes perceive.

Connecting To Myself And To Others Through Chessed

By: Devorah
Gurevich,
Opinion Editor



Matthew and Alex ran full speed around the “quiet room,” a place where a child can play alone and wind down if they felt overwhelmed, then ducked into the pillow fort. I had been deemed

puppeteer of a man-eating (teddy) bear that I hauled to the fort, saying, “I’m coming to eat you…” Those classic words induced giggles and half-hearted battle with the giant teddy. Matthew, age 6, had been hiding under a table in the music room just minutes before, near tears, and refusing to join the sing-along. I had made an effort in encouraging him out from under the table, but he adamantly refused, eyes watering and cheeks becoming ruddy. I could tell he was feeling overwhelmed, and the noisy instruments weren't helping. Further, his distress began to upset his 3-year-old brother, Alex. “Let’s take a break,” I soothed. He nodded, and they led the way to the familiar sanctuary, the brothers holding each of my hands. Soon enough, both boys were lively again, building an impressive castle from pillows and goading the Teddy monster.

The Friendship Circle is as much of a pleasure for me as it is to the special needs kids of all ages that attended, including Matthew. Before joining the volunteer ranks at Friendship Circle, I had no experience with and little understanding of special needs. I joined the summer before my senior year, soon after moving to Cleveland (after a year and a half living in Israel), and I was inspired to continue working at Friendship Circle after volunteering at the organization's summer camp.

My family had moved to Safed, Israel, from Los Angeles in the middle of my 10th grade, and the transition was rough. Between the

language barrier and my sudden loneliness, our displacement created many academic and mental health challenges. Amid all the chaos, I searched for stability, and I found it in helping others.

In Safed, I took the initiative in finding volunteering gigs at a second-hand store for the needy and at an elderly day center. By doing so, I discovered how my skills and dedication could serve to make others happy. Moreover, I learned a lot from the individuals I met along the way.

From Yaffa, who founded and ran the second-hand store, I was inspired by her perseverance despite personal loss and genuine compassion for those in need. From 81-year-old Trudy, I learned companionship could be simply sitting in another's presence. And finally, from all the wonderful kids at the Friendship Circle, including Matthew and Alex, I discovered that our differences are not necessarily weaknesses. Everyone has a unique way of expressing themselves; love, passion, sadness communicated "unconventionally" are still valid.

Ultimately, my eagerness to learn and my general adoration for people drew me to volunteering for years. Further, although I work to help others, I have immense gratitude for those who allowed me to find assurance in their smiles when my world unsettled me.

The Illusion of Diversity

By: Dani Lane,
Opinion Editor



The first half of 2020 is going to be remembered for many watershed moments, from the deadly coronavirus ravaging through almost every country on the planet to the reminder that a country as progressive and modern as the United States of America continues to grapple with and struggle with deep rooted racism. It seems that no facet of daily life has not been touched by this new wave racial reckoning, from our schools and the communities we live in, to stores and businesses we frequent, every inch of American life is under a new and necessary scrutiny. Social media is flooded with eye-catching oh my graphics explaining concepts such as "red lining" and structural racism. The media is full of daily coverage of racial protests happening in almost every state. Political pundits can be found everywhere discussing defunding the police and the causes of systemic racism. It has been almost 200 years since slavery ended in the United States but the harmful remnants of the racism that allowed slavery has yet to leave our country.

Thankfully now, in 2020, after the public and brutal killing of George Floyd, the American people seem to finally be ready to face the music and confront the ugly side of our country.

In recent months, it has seemed like a daily occurrence that

organizations I follow on social media are posting about racism — whether it be statistics of how many Black, indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) they employ, how they plan on being more racially conscious going forward, or, in unfortunate cases, exposing racism in the organization. One such case involved the culinary magazine and Youtube channel "Bon Appetit", owned by the media company Conde Nast. Conde Nast is no stranger to racial controversy. One of their largest publications, "Vogue Magazine", is routinely criticised for the lack of diversity in its pages and the lack of attention given to "non-white" fashion. While Conde Nast is frequently criticized for turning a blind eye to racist culture and practices in their company, in recent years it appeared that its individual publications have been making more of an effort to be more inclusive and representative of their reader base. This illusion was shattered on June 8 when the floodgates of racial mistreatment were opened on to "Bon Appetit".

On June 8, 2020, images of "Bon Appetit" 's Editor-in-Chief, Adam Rapoport, wearing blackface as part of a 2008 costume were released, prompting others from the company to come forward with their own stories of the toxic racial environment that was allowed to take place inside "Bon Appetit" at the hands of Rapoport. This story is not unique. This same chain of events has occurred in countless companies and organizations throughout the racial reawakening of 2020, but what stuck out to me when I first started hearing about all of the

racism that had been growing and festering behind the scenes at one of my favorite magazine and Youtube channel was how well it was hidden. Oftentimes racism is hiding in plain sight and once you open your eyes it becomes clear as day. It looks like all white executive staff, it looks like a lack of representation, it looks like a glossing over racial biases and cultural disrespect.

But not at “Bon Appetit”. The “Bon Appetit” test kitchen and magazine are filled with BIPOC working and creating alongside their white counterparts. The videos from the test kitchen are filled with clips of Indian chefs recreating the recipes from their childhood, Asian and Black producers chit-chatting about the snacks they grew up on, and Hispanic kitchen managers effortlessly making empanadas while her students struggle to master the complex folding technique. One of the things that always struck me about the BA test kitchen was how diverse and well integrated it was. Individuals from all walks of life congregated in the state of the art kitchen to cook and explore the culinary arts. It seemed like a harmonious place that had overcome years of systemic racism to create a multicultural, muliracial melting pot.

In the weeks following Rapoport's scandal and resignation from the company, stories and accounts started to emerge about the mistreatment and unequal opportunities occurring behind the scenes. One of the highest grossing platforms in the Conde Nast universe is the BA Youtube

channel, with its over 9 million subscribers it is full of cooking videos for all interests and all levels of chefs. From the popular “Gourmet Makes” series to “It’s Alive”, the BA Youtube channel provides content for all types of foodie. Behind the fun and energetic videos was a darker, more troubling culture brewing. It was revealed that all white creators were being generously paid to create videos for the platform whereas all BIPOC chefs on the Youtube channel were not offered any compensation for their work in front of the camera. It was also revealed that BIPOC staff members were often silenced and told that there was no room or audience for cultural diversity in the magazine.

For the past two months there has been a continuous stream of testimonials, accusations, and revelations from the “Bon Appetit” staff. The events that occurred behind the scenes at “Bon Appetit” are not unique or truly that surprising. We are living in a time when BIPOC are systemically and routinely put down and brushed aside in order to make room for white people, they receive unequal compensation for equal work, and are told that their ideas are not up to the standards our white world expects.

What struck me the hardest in all of the turmoil at “Bon Appetit” was not that these injustices occurred, but rather the illusion of diversity and equality that was shattered. In the past few months a certain numbness has taken over and we have started to accept that no institution or person is what

they seem. Realizing and understanding that just because something looks inclusive and evolved does not mean that that is the truth. The ideas and practices are so deeply rooted in our society and culture that it is easy to gloss over them. It is easy to not to notice what is really happening. As a result of the racism at “Bon Appetit”, the BIPOC staff members did not feel like they could step forward and voice their grievances. They were told that their voices did not matter and that they should just feel fortunate to have the position they had. This is not uncommon, even in the most progressive institutions.

We can do better and we must do better. If the past few months have taught me anything it's that nothing is what it seems, that we hold accountable those in power so that they know that they cannot get away with maintaining the status quo, that it is imperative upon us that we question everything we take for granted. We must require that those in power, whether it be at an organization as large as Conde Nast or as small as a local business, act with the utmost respect and attention to ALL those in the community. Had those troubling images of Mr. Rapoport never been revealed, the dark underbelly of “Bon Appetit” may never have been exposed. We should not and cannot wait until circumstances demand action as they did at “Bon Appetit”, rather we should take action now looking in at ourselves and at the institutions around us to ensure the highest quality standards and cultures.

My Relationship with Alcohol

By: Yosef Rosenfield,
Features Editor



During the Spring 2020 semester, I took an excellent course with Rabbi Beny Rofeh titled Psychology, Relationships, and Halakhah. The class required that each student choose a number of personal challenges to complete over a few-week period, with the hope that we would grow spiritually, emotionally, and/or physically from these experiences. The list of challenges included options such as asking two girls out on a date, complimenting 10 different people, and listening to a complete stranger’s life story. Combing through the list, I had a particularly difficult time finding a challenge that was suitable during the socially restrictive coronavirus pandemic. I had ironically completed most of the personally relevant challenges not involving public interaction before COVID-19 forced YU to shut down, leaving very few appropriate options for my second set of challenges. But I did have to pick something, so I went for a popular choice: abstaining from alcohol consumption for 14 consecutive days. I did not expect much from the experience, but I figured I might surprise myself.

Now, I should clarify that my relationship with alcohol is not as uninteresting as my opening paragraph made it seem. Back in 12th grade, I nearly got expelled from my high school for alcohol possession and inebriation while living in the dormitory. I had already been kicked out of the dorm after 10th grade for lighting a fire in my room on *Lag Ba’omer* (a Jewish holiday on which there is a tradition to light bonfires), but I spent the first six months of 11th grade successfully scheming to be thrown out of my boarding family’s house, forcing the principal to put me back in the dorm. Now that I had been caught yet again, this time with alcohol, the principal gravely asked me if I wanted to remain in the school before sending me home to Rhode Island. When I returned to New York after a week-long suspension, the principal became even *more* furious, exclaiming that he had suspended me for *at least* a week. He ordered me into his office and — clearly trying to hide a lot of anger and resentment — gave me a “one more strike, and you’re out” warning.

To be honest, though, I do not blame myself completely. Unfortunately, alcohol obsession was part of the culture at my high school and likely many others. In fact, the weekend I was caught with the alcohol, my entire grade had a rare in-*Shabbos* (where everyone stays on campus for the weekend and spends the Sabbath together), in preparation of which a few of my classmates decided as a group to buy beer. Two other 12th graders were caught with alcohol that weekend and were both kicked out of the dorm for a

week. I got the harsher sentence of an actual suspension because I had been wrongly characterized as the “leader” of the contraband clan. This was likely a result of the size of my collection: three bottles of beer, 12 cans of Budweiser, and two unfinished bottles of bourbon. I definitely had a problem — just not the one my principal thought. My problem was that I was an underage high school kid living in a dormitory with rules and regulations, while heavily influenced by an alcohol connoisseur older brother who glorified tolerance building when it came to drinking.

By contrast, my current approach to drinking is far more conservative. About a year ago, I began taking my singing so seriously that I stopped drinking all carbonated beverages — which, of course, includes beer and carbonated wines. The acidity, I learned, is bad for your vocal cords and is anyway not great for bone health. I still enjoy toasting with my dad and my brother when we are together — and I am happy that the three of us get to bond over newly acquired wines and whiskeys — but I maintain a much more responsible attitude toward alcohol consumption than I did in high school. And even though my two-week challenge was not at all difficult to complete, that itself is a valuable lesson that demonstrates just how much I have, thank God, matured over the last few years of my life and have adopted a more level-headed approach to drinking and my overall health.

Saying Goodbye

By: Bina Davidson,
Features Editor



When choosing a place to spend my gap year, it was clear that Midreshet Torat Chessed (MTC) was the place for me. Nothing seemed more fitting to me than to have the opportunity to spend my mornings immersed in Torah learning, followed by afternoons filled with volunteering with children living in Bet Elazraki, an Israeli social orphanage.

At Bet Elazraki, there are three branches. The *Pnimiya* is the main branch of the home where approximately 200 children between the ages of 8 and 18 permanently live. Most of them are not orphans, but they are unable to live with their parents for a multitude of reasons. The second branch is the *Pnimitat Yom*. This is a day program for children between the ages of 5 and 13 years old. The children who attend this program usually come from a home where the parents are not abusive, but rather are ill-equipped to raise a child. The children attend school during the day and then come to the program at Bet Elazraki. There they are fed lunch, receive help with homework and school related issues, enjoy exciting programming, have dinner, and brush their teeth. Then, their parents pick them up, and they

return home to sleep. The final branch of the home is called the *Kelet*, the emergency shelter. From the time the government intervenes in a familial situation or a child is surrendered until it is legally decided where the child will go, they come to the *Kelet*. The duration of a child's stay can be anywhere from 3 days up until 3 months, typically.

When I arrived at MTC in August 2017, I was placed in the *Kelet* to volunteer for the year. Before my first day, I was briefed on the group and how it would be run by my principle. She had prepared me, as much as one can, for the difficultness and instability in the home. The children would be coming and going, the durations of their stay unknown. The social worker spoke to me about the difficulty of becoming such an important figure in these children's lives and explained that when they leave, I would not be able to contact them again. On my first day, I met the three children who were currently living in the home. One 6 year old boy named Naftali,* another 6 year old boy named Evan,* and his 7 year old brother named Noah.* Naftali had been living in the home for a couple of weeks, but Evan and Noah had already been living in the home for almost a year. It was extremely unusual for children to be living in the home for this long. However, these two brothers had a challenging story. They had gone to sleep one night only to wake up and find that their parents had left them, with no intent to return. After waiting a few days for their parents, they walked to their grandmother's home for help. She had not wanted them either, and

surrendered them to the shelter. These two little boys were now alone in this world with no one who wanted to claim them. Many thought it would be best for the two boys to move into the main *Pnimiya* and live there for the remainder of their adolescents. However, legally, Evan was too young for this move to be made and they did not want to separate the brothers. They would watch as children came and left, yet their own futures remained unknown.

Creating a relationship with the young boys was difficult, especially given their difficult and sensitive history. I would play soccer with them outside, have water gun fights, and spend many *Shabbat* (Sabbath) meals with them. I would take the time and effort to show them that from now on, life will be different. The process was challenging, but as time went on, our connections strengthened, I saw how worthwhile it was. Although there were many children and teenagers who had been through the home, Evan and Noah were the glue. As I welcomed new kids into the home, and said goodbye to ones beginning a new journey, I always had Evan and Noah by my side.

One day, a short time before *Pesach* (Passover), I had a breakdown. I was sitting in our weekly therapy sessions where, as a seminary, we would discuss our progress with the children. Accomplishments, difficulties and anything in between. A few days prior, one of my kids had left the home and Noah turned to me, pain in his eyes, and asked me: "When is it my turn?" Hearing those words and seeing the pain in

his eyes, longing for a family and a place to belong, broke my heart. I sat in therapy that week and I cried how it wasn't fair. I, like so many others who knew and loved these boys, were desperate for them to finally find a place where they can live and call home, forever.

A few short days after this scenario, the unexpected happened. A couple from Ashkelon would be adopting Evan and Noah on *Chol Hamoed Pesach* (the intermediate days of Passover). I had said goodbye many times in my life. Goodbye to friends when I moved, goodbye to grandparents when they passed away, goodbye to siblings who went to Israel for the year, and goodbye to other children who had left the home. But this goodbye was different, my heart was split. This goodbye was such a painful one. Yet this was a goodbye that I had yearned to say. This was such a happy and joyous goodbye. They were finally getting loving parents that every child deserves. I knew this goodbye meant that I would no longer be involved in their lives. I had been there when they did well on their exams. I had cheered them on the sidelines during their soccer games. I watched as they welcomed new children into the home. I saw them lose teeth and grow inches taller. But when I said this goodbye, I would no longer know their lives. They would grow up, hopefully to be kind, thoughtful, good human beings, and I won't even know if they would remember me.

During my last day with them, I took in every moment. The

trouble that they would try to get into, that would usually make my day more challenging, put a smile on my face. I enjoyed my day of "lasts" with them and I prayed that this would be the beginning of a beautiful life for them. I put Evan to bed that night, and took a little bit longer in reading him his goodnight story. I snuggled with him in bed, holding him as he fell asleep to my goodnight song, and with tears flowing down my face, I said my hardest goodbyes.

*Names have been changed.

The Magic Of The Theatre

By: Sarah Brill,
Science and
Technology
Editor



The most overlooked, unappreciated, and underfunded program in high schools and colleges is theatre. Theatre, one of the most heartwarming, transformative, and artistic experiences a person can have whether on stage or off stage.

I started acting at the age of five in my synagogue youth theatre production of "Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights." I believe I played the most important role of my theatrical career in that show, starring as a candle. In some ways, it was the most important role in my life because it made me realize that theatre was probably the best thing to grace

the planet. Since my candle debut, I have performed on mainstage, black box stages, and performing arts stages, but the one thing I have taken away from all of those experiences is that without them, I would not be the person I am today. Now you may be thinking: isn't that true for all experiences? All experiences shape us, right? I would say yes and no.

Theatre in particular serves as an outlet for myself and for many others. It harbors an atmosphere of inclusivity that might or might not be found elsewhere. Some may look to the theatre as an escape. An escape from life at home or from a school that thinks you are too quirky or weird. For the audience, that quirky-weirdness translates into an exceptional character. For actors, those two hours of performance feels like five minutes of pure bliss where we don't get to be ourselves, instead we get to portray magical dwarfs or townsfolk living in the 1960s. For two hours, everyone is at ease with themselves and their life because, and I hate to sound cliché, the theatre is a truly magical place.

In my last mainstage production, closing out my senior year of high school, the atmosphere in the theatre academy which I attended was tense. Our theatre was run on donations and community support, but with all the funds going towards other, "more important," activities it seemed like it would be the end of my theatre, regardless of if I was graduating or not. The high school theatre programs and theatre companies in my city, and

in many other cities across the U.S., were, and still are, facing an economic drought. Money is distributed elsewhere leaving the theatre and many other artistic programs, including studio art and video production, in a hole. What many people do not understand or fail to realize is that these types of programs serve as lifesavers for many of the students who perform there. College and especially high school social life has been built upon a hierarchy of jocks, nerds, and dorks, and the theatre serves as the only place where all of those people, no matter what status they fall under, can come together and create or experience a piece of art. So when I say the theatre is truly the most magical place in the minds of many, I truly mean it. My only hope is that one day other people can see that art, in any form, is worth just as much as an investment as any other program.

Should College Cost Less This Semester?

By: Rachel Jacobi, Science and Technology Editor



The history of distance learning dates back to the late 1800s. In fact, even during WWII Anne Frank wrote in her diary of ‘correspondence courses’ that she and her sister signed up for while living in the Annex. Online college, however, made its big debut in 1989, when the

University of Phoenix launched programs offering fully online bachelor's and master's degrees to students.

In 2020, the growth in online studying has been unprecedented, and for many colleges, this shift will continue into the Fall Semester of 2020. Harvard University, Princeton, and Columbia are just a few of the more prominent schools that have declared their courses this fall semester to be fully online.

Traditionally, online colleges and degrees are cheaper than ones obtained at brick-and-mortar universities. In 2019-2020, the average tuition for traditional, private colleges was \$36,801 with Yeshiva University at the higher end of the scale, with a tuition of \$44,900. Concurrently, according to the Arizona State University website (which boasts one of the largest US online colleges), the average tuition for an undergraduate, non-resident, full-time student is at an average of \$16,000 a year. Similarly, at Penn State's online school, Penn State World Campus, an undergraduate, full-time student would pay about \$7,000 a semester.

While Yeshiva University has presented a hybrid model to students of in-person courses, online courses, or both — pending a return to campus in mid-October — many courses (certainly a majority of mine) will be fully online for the duration of the semester regardless of whether the campus opens back up or not. Despite these changes, tuition rates at Yeshiva University have not been decreased for this

semester or even frozen. Last semester, both the *YU Observer* and *The Commentator* reported on the tuition hikes that students will be facing this year, an increase of \$1,575 (or 3.51%) from the 2019-2020 academic year. With the development of many courses transitioning from in-person to online, is a 3.51% increase in tuition warranted?

Traditional colleges justify the drastic price difference between online and traditional colleges with a variety of reasons. Online colleges have less staff and faculty to support. They also don't offer many of the amenities and resources available to students that would otherwise be available in a traditional college. Further, at Yeshiva University, many students pay for the more personal experience that the smaller class sizes offer, an experience that arguably does not transition easily into an online setting which tends to be more impersonal, making connecting with professors and networking with peers more difficult. In point of fact, a staggering 90% of students, surveyed by the *Real Estate Witch Survey (REW)*, agreed that courses online should cost less than in-person classes.

Further, students have been hit hard financially. REW has disclosed that of the students looking for jobs for the upcoming academic year, 76% of students reported difficulty doing so. Additionally, in comparison to students that were surveyed in May of 2019, students in 2020 are 64% less likely to have a part-time job to cover expenses. Not only that, but 48% are concerned

they won't be able to find a job for the school year.

Students are also going into greater debt this year to cover tuition. REW reports that “[w]hile the proportion of students who take on student loans to help pay for college is similar to a study we conducted last year (~48%), students report borrowing more for the upcoming school year as a result of the coronavirus. Nearly half of students who borrowed for college are borrowing more this year, 33% of whom said they're borrowing an additional \$10,000 compared to last year.”

Even though most colleges are transitioning to online or hybrid formats, less than 3% of colleges surveyed plan to reduce tuition in the fall. However, [CNBC](#) has also reported that a growing number of colleges are announcing a freeze in tuition — if not a decrease. Amongst them are Delaware Valley University, Kansas City University, and Central Michigan University.

A while ago, [The Commentator](#) called for the Yeshiva University administration to nix tuition increases for this semester. I urge them to do the same. I understand that YU has probably incurred financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19. However, the reality is difficult to deny and must be addressed. In examining the differences between online and in-person education, all colleges should consider that for this semester, students may be getting less bang for their buck. That, coupled with the unusually taxing financial situation many students find themselves in this semester,

warrants if not a decrease in tuition, then a freeze, least of all an increase.

Why We Really Lost Our Shiur

By: Sara Verschleisser,
Science and
Technology
Editor



In 2017, an evening advanced *Gemara* (Talmud) *shiur* (class) was created on the Beren Campus. Taught by Rosh Yeshiva Rav Ezra Schwartz, the *shiur* was created due to complaints from students that they could not take the offered *Gemara shiurim* because they conflicted with necessary secular classes. The addition of Rav Schwartz's *shiur* was specifically aimed to accommodate those pursuing science majors, which often have required courses which conflicted with previous *Gemara* course schedules. While the other advanced *Gemara shiur*, taught by Rav Moshe Kahn, begins, unofficially, at 8 a.m. (as students are required to prepare for *shiur* before the *shiur* course time slot begins), Rav Schwartz's *shiur* started around 6 p.m. Despite differences in *shiur* learning styles, for STEM students like myself, the most significant factor in choosing a *shiur* is the timing.

Even with two time slot options, both Rav Kahn and Rav Schwartz's classes overlapped with my hectic pre-med schedule, so in order to take either of the *Gemara shiurim*, I had to audit.

However, even my audit was not official, as one cannot audit classes which overlap with their registered courses. The schedule overlap with Rav Kahn's course took place during his *shiur*, while the conflict with Rav Schwartz's course only lost me 15 minutes of *seder* (partnered learning preparation done before *shiur*), making my decision to join Rav Schwartz's *shiur* easy. Despite not being enrolled in Rav Schwartz's *shiur*, I showed up 10-15 minutes late to *seder* each week, and joined the *chevra* (group). Each day when I arrived, I received a welcome greeting from Rav Schwartz to “check in on my Judaism lately” and became seamlessly part of the *shiur*. I wasn't the only student who was unregistered for *shiur* — Rav Schwartz was happy to have anyone come who wanted to learn.

This coming semester, I had overlapping classes again. Even so, I planned to rejoin *shiur*, where I knew I'd be welcome, despite my limited *seder* time. I may not have been enrolled, but it was built into my schedule, surrounded by MCAT study prep and my countless other extracurriculars. Unfortunately, in mid-June, I learned that Rav Schwartz's *shiur* was being cancelled because less than five students, Stern College's minimum, were registered for the upcoming semester.

The loss of Rav Schwartz's evening *shiur* means that most students studying the sciences are once again prevented from taking a *Gemara* course. Rav Schwartz's own words from an article

published in 2017 by The Commentator epitomize the problem Beren students face, “why would someone come to Stern College? It’s because we have Torah here! And then they can’t learn the Torah they want because they have to take biology!” Rav Schwartz’s class fulfilled this need for many students, even if those students were often unable to officially register. Personally, the loss of the *shiur* means that I cannot take a *Gemara* course this year.

The lack of Rav Schwartz’s *shiur* is also an unbelievable loss for YU as a whole. Since the creation of Rav Schwartz’s *Gemara shiur*, there have been four Talmud courses being taught on the Beren Campus: one introductory, one intermediate, and two advanced. This year, due to the five person minimum, both Introduction to the Talmud with Rabbi David Pahmer and Advanced Talmud with Rav Schwartz have been cancelled, halving the available *Gemara* options.

Stern College’s five person minimum is in place to prevent excess spending on classes which lack student interest. For *Gemara* courses however, lower interest is only a small part of the problem. By not creating a schedule in which students can take advanced Judaics without overlap, Stern is forcing students to decide between the two. Even though Rav Schwartz’s *shiur* was created to help this problem, and did allow students such as myself to take a *shiur* unofficially, it still didn’t allow science students to take Advanced Talmud for credit. In fact, when students were

informed that the class was cancelled, multiple students offered to drop some of their secular courses in order to officially register and maintain the *shiur*, but unfortunately, it was too late. These students had all planned to join Rav Schwartz’s *shiur*, they just hadn’t registered. The fact that five people would need to be formally registered for the *shiur*, and that non-registered attendees were ignored, suggests a significant difficulty when compared to the model of the Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP).

According to the online class registry, MYP, the Wilf Campus’s “most rigorous” *Gemara* morning program, offers its students 27 different options for *shiur*. There are 484 students currently enrolled in MYP *shiurim*. Some of the *shiurim* list as many as 49 students, yet many are small. Of those with students enrolled, there are three *shiurim* which have less than five students registered, and an additional four with under 10. Furthermore, of those enrolled in MYP *shiurim*, only 278 or 57% of students are actually taking *shiur* for credit. The other 43% of students registered for *shiurim* are essentially auditing. This number is likely higher than the count of who will actually take *shiur* for credit, as Yeshiva College (YC) allows men to change their *shiur* credits later in the semester. Therefore, YU is offering at least three if not more *shiurim* to men uptown which do not fill the Stern College course requirement of five students.

The reason that these, and other Wilf Campus courses, are still

being offered with less than five students is that Yeshiva College does not have the same minimum student requirement as Stern. According to Dean Karen Bacon: “Although there are guidelines, class cancellations [at YC] are decided on a case by case basis taking into account many factors, both academic and financial.” Despite being two supposedly equivalent undergraduate colleges within the same institution, Stern and YC appear to have different standards surrounding class cancellations, with the former basing decisions purely on the financials while the latter also assesses the value of its courses beyond student enrollment.

Independent of inconsistent administrative policies surrounding student interest, much of the difference between the treatment of *Gemara shiurim* on the Beren and Wilf Campuses can be explained by the administrative set-up for MYP and Stern’s Judaic courses. The Wilf Campus morning programs are designed so *Gemara* and Judaic studies don’t conflict with other courses, with their own time slot. Additionally, Wilf students are counted toward *Gemara shiur* registration regardless of whether they plan to take *shiur* for credit. *Gemara shiur* at Wilf is also treated as separate from normal courses, with none of the same requirements. In contrast, Stern Judaics are dispersed throughout the daily schedule, and are constantly in conflict with necessary secular classes. Whether one wants to take Bible, Jewish History, or Advanced Talmud, Beren Campus students

are always limited by their non-Judaic schedule. This conflict means that classes are judged, not by student interest, but by student availability, ignoring classes which would be more popular if scheduling conflicts were resolved and classes where students may attend, but cannot necessarily register for, like *Gemara*.

Maintaining Judaic studies with the same structure as general courses only leads to conflicts between *Torah and Madda* (science), forcing students to make a decision that is antithetical to YU's own goals. The current structure of Beren's Judaic courses takes away from our Judaic studies, when it should be striving to add to it.

As expressed by Mrs. Shoshana Schechter, the new associate dean of Torah Studies at Stern College for women: "Learning is so important to us at Stern. Learning Torah *sheBAal peh* [oral Torah], learning Torah *Shebechsav* [written Torah], learning of *Gemara* ... it's something that we value... it's hard when we have to cancel something because of lack of interest or lack of registration, but again, that's the structure of Stern, ... [Judaics] are of tremendous value and that's why we're trying to enhance these learning opportunities ... even outside of the classroom and make it more of a *yeshiva* [Torah study] type atmosphere." Extracurricular learning opportunities, as Associate Dean Schechter proposes, which occur when students are unencumbered by their courseloads, are what truly show the *Gemara* interest of

Stern students. June Zman, for example, had over 60 students in attendance this summer. However, extracurricular activities during the school year face the same scheduling challenges as any class, without the consistency, structure, and rigor of a genuine course. Instead of trying to supplement a problematic system, Stern needs to adjust their schedule to provide a separate time for Judaic courses, so that students don't need to search outside their classrooms for the Torah learning they desire.

The current structure of Stern's Judaic studies damages the goals that YU wants to achieve in women's learning. Students at Stern should not have to sacrifice their learning for the sake of their career, or vice versa. Serious *shiurim* that are available to all students should not be limited to extracurriculars. Advanced Talmud courses should not be treated as policy-based budgets cuts. There should not be inconsistent standards applied to men's and women's learning. If Stern truly values the Torah learning and growth of their students, they should be investing in a system which reflects those priorities rather than undermines them. For the sake of my lost *Gemara shiur* and the values the institution claims to uphold, I ask YU to question the impact of Stern's Judaics structure and realize that it's time for a change.

Why Is Tax So Important?

By: Benjamin Weis, Business Editor



In the duration of time spent in Syms School of Business, many students struggle to decide what they are going to do for the rest of their lives. Even those who have known what they are majoring in from day one still have to spend hours upon hours contemplating one of the biggest life decisions as each major opens many doors. As a dual major in finance and accounting, I, like many others, have chosen to work in tax, and I firmly believe it is a great career path that every Syms student should consider going into.

Besides for it being known as one of the safest career options, tax is crucial and impacts all of us in our everyday lives. Apart from the current legislation having many tax features, tax considerations can make or break an M&A deal. If one has a good hold on tax laws, they automatically know the most efficient way to invest based on tax laws. A great example of this is when the IRS loosened its timelines for 1031-exchange buyers. Without this, investors would have been responsible for capital gains taxes even if they would have found a replacement property within the allowable window. Everyone will tell you that tax is at the epicenter of all business and economic deals.

Another statistic that shows truly how important tax is, is the fact that the state of New York loses

nearly one percent of its population each year. People from states like New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and California are all moving to states like Texas and Florida. Originally, I thought this all had to do with the climate, and all the people migrating were doing so to retire in warmer weather. However, I realized that the migration to this extent is all due to the tax laws of those states. There isn't any state income tax in Texas and Florida while they are through the roof in New York and California. Essentially, moving to Florida from New York pretty much gives you a 12% raise.

Another great draw that a career in tax has is the amount of options within the field. You could work in corporate tax and help clients meet their tax obligations while at the same time managing the impact that it has on their business. You can also work in international tax which will give you the opportunity to work with foreign clients that do business in the United States. You can even work in tax analytics and design software solutions for complex tax problems. There are so many options in this vast field.

I hope that after reading this you would at least consider applying to an accounting firm. It is such a safe career path that the entire business world depends on.

Investing Your Way to Financial Freedom

By: Ionatan Wolfson,
Business Editor



Everyone, especially during these trying times, wants to build capital and create some sense of financial security. What many people fail to understand is that the easiest, surest way to make money has been around long before COVID-19. I am not referring to investing short term in single company stocks. I am referring to investing in the entire market. To make money, reducing risk is the name of the game. People do this by diversifying their portfolio: i.e. buying smaller amounts of many different assets as opposed to going all in on one asset. The S&P 500 index fund holds large positions in the top 500 publicly traded companies. Therefore it is the best representation of how the market is behaving. Investing in this fund is one of the best ways to diversify. You are basically buying into an already diversified portfolio. This option, both safe and effective, is one of the best ways of growing your money. Warren Buffett, largely regarded as one of the smartest modern investors and dubbed “The Oracle of Omaha,” strongly advises to invest in a low-cost index fund such as the S&P 500 index fund and hold it for the long term. You do not even need thousands of dollars to begin. With the increasing abundance of fractional shares among brokers, investments can be made with as little as \$1. Investing, as

unfamiliar as it may be to the average person, is one the easiest way to build long term capital.

There are a few reasons for why people like to invest in an S&P 500 index fund as opposed to single company stocks. Firstly, there are many requirements a company must fulfill in order to be added and to stay part of the S&P 500. Companies can be added or removed at any time. In general, companies must make money to survive, let alone stay in the S&P 500. And, if there is no profit, investors will be scared away. Additionally, getting added into the S&P 500 is a big honor for a company. It means they have joined the elites. Historically, share value rises after announcement of being added to the S&P 500. S&P 500 index fund managers then must buy stock in the newly added company. All of this means more demand and investors. That, in turn, pushes the stock's share price even higher. Therefore, it is in the best interest of a company to get added and stay in the fund.

Additionally, since the inception of the S&P 500 in the 1920s through 2019, it has had an annual return of about [10%](#). The incredibly impressive return rate is not the only attractive point of this investment. The real magic is letting money sit and allow for it to compound over time. If someone invests \$100 in an S&P 500 index fund and then invests just \$10 a month and then lets it grow for 30 years, that investment would on average become 21,484.22\$. Obviously, as with any investment, you should know there is risk involved. But holding

long term in a diversified portfolio will lessen the risk.

Unlike short term investors, long term diversified investors do not have to worry about the market having bad days. They are looking twenty years down the line. They're also not worried about one stock tanking because they could have many other positions that are doing better. Investing long term in an S&P 500 index fund could potentially be the key to financial freedom.

Should College Sports Take Place This Fall?

By: Nathan Hakakian, Business Editor



As the Fall 2020 semester rapidly approaches, college students are preparing to return to school. Some will return to campus with recently implemented health protocols, others will be fully remote, and some colleges are opting to integrate a hybrid learning environment. What is more certain is the state of college sports. While many professional sports leagues (NBA, MLB, MLS) have already adjusted new policies to protect their sports, college football has failed to make the necessary adjustments to ensure a season.

The sad reality is that because of their amateur status, these college athletes may not be able to display their talents. Many of

these athletes have sacrificed so much in their lives for a chance at going professional and capitalizing on their talents. Some are freshmen who are looking to make their mark, while others are seniors who are looking for that last chance to prove themselves. College sports have rescued many of them from a life of crime or poverty and opened doors and opportunities they could never have dreamed of. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has deprived these student-athletes to pursue their dreams at the highest level.

On a list of priorities during a 6-month-plus pandemic, sports would not rank amongst the top. There are countries that have been hammered by desperation, with cases rising daily. This article is not intended to discount the severity of the glaring issue at hand. But what is often lost in these unforeseen circumstances is the ability to seize the moment and capitalize on an opportunity. Many of us are quarantined and have not been able to live our lives as planned. But when our lives return to some semblance of nearly normal, how many of us will ask ourselves: "What did I achieve or learn during this quarantine?" "What opportunities did I miss out on and is there any way I could get those back?" I believe that college sports having a fall season is a cause worth fighting for because of the doors and possibilities it opens for the next generation. If professional sports found a way to organize the logistics, venues, and most importantly the safety of those involved, who's to say the same could not be done for college athletes?

In an effort to raise awareness for this issue, college athletes themselves have taken the matter into their own hands. Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence and Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields have been at the forefront of this endeavor. This campaign, known primarily as the "#letthemplay" movement, has sparked debate nationally. Lawrence's tweet inspired many athletes to speak up, even receiving a retweet from president Trump. As of 7:30 p.m. EST on August 16, Fields' petition had over 175,000 signatures.

Despite the immense support, many of the athletic directors have voted either to push back the season to the spring or for an outright cancellation. A recently conducted study has shown a rare heart condition, Myocarditis, that is linked with COVID-19. These findings have led to conferences, such as the Power Five and Mountain West Conferences to cancel their season, while the Big Ten and Pac-12 Conferences have opted to postpone their season. The SEC and the Big 12, however, have not announced plans to postpone their season. The question begs: Why is there so much disconnect between these conferences? College football alone generates \$31.9 million annually, yet NCAA President Mark Emmert has failed to create a structured dialogue amongst all the conferences. The NCAA prides itself as an entity representing the better interest of student-athletes across the country, yet they have repeatedly failed to look out for the amateurs. College sports had 6

months to find a solution and have made close to no progress.

The severity regarding COVID-19 is still at large, as its effects have crippled the world we once knew. It has forced us to reassess mundane tasks and all the more so crucial decisions. College athletic associations have withheld payment from millions of athletes since its inception as it continues to handsomely profit through lucrative television and apparel deals. Now more than ever would be the proper time to pay the student athletes. Treat them fairly in a give-and-take relationship, one that truly has the student's best interests in mind. I believe that students should be allowed to play this fall, as long as they sign a waiver that highlights the potential risks. Every time a college athlete steps on to a field or an arena, they are aware that an injury for example, could jeopardize their professional career. These are young adults who are capable of making their own decisions, putting their lives into their own hands. The NCAA should try to rectify what is left of a potential fall season, and if the students want to play, then #letthemplay.

Creativity Persists Amid Chaos

By: Mikki Treitel, Arts and
Culture Editor



During quarantine, I kept busy and sane by staying creative. I painted enough canvases to cover two of my bedroom walls, acted in a Zoom play, wrote an ode to croissants, and made Broadway choreography my cardio routine. These activities allowed me to feel accomplished on days that were otherwise devoid of productivity.

I also spent time as a consumer, appreciating the creative work of others. Rereading all of the “Harry Potter” books brought on a somewhat meditative state with their familiarity — which I gladly welcomed. Music has been a constant companion, with different genres to help me focus or unwind. I’ve streamed movies and shows to recharge on my own, or as an activity with friends using the Netflix Party extension. There was also much to enjoy from artists closer to home — fellow students of YU’s creative community hosting events and publications — from Stern College Dramatic Society’s Disney monologue competition, to Yeshiva University Journal of the Arts’ collective arts diary, to the Stern Studio Art Department’s online Senior Salon. These platforms for creativity and entertainment alike have been key to staying stimulated and finding comfort from home.

At the start of COVID-19, we all stocked up on supplies like dry goods, toilet paper, and Clorox wipes, but it wasn’t long before I added some more colorful items to my list of essentials. Indeed, shipping a projector and jumbo pack of acrylic paints to my house proved just as vital. With the

future so unnervingly vague, creating and consuming art allows us to make lemonade out of this time at home. In normal life, it’s easy to downplay the arts and entertainment as just pastimes, if not distractions. Now, having lost much of what once grounded us, the arts remain the constant that keeps us afloat. That give-and-take of expression allows us to escape, to connect, to *breathe*.

I hope these last few months have reminded the YU administration just how integral the arts are. YU’s past decisions that valued the arts were triumphant, not just for the actors receiving credit for play production or the students allowed to shape new majors, but for all of us who know that people need creativity to thrive. As YU restructures and adapts to our new normal, I hope they consider the arts a much greater priority than before, and devote more attention and resources to the creative programs we truly couldn’t live without.

I am honored to join the *YU Observer*’s new Arts and Culture section at a time when creativity is so crucial. I look forward to capturing all forms of creativity on campus and beyond, and making art known with the appreciation it deserves.

Social Media Vigilantes: How We Can Combat Hate Online

By: Avigail
Winokur, Arts
and Culture
Editor



A common refrain heard during the last six months is that the COVID-19 pandemic has upended life as we knew it. Many of us went from being active and involved individuals to suddenly having a lot more time on our hands. The internet became a refuge amongst the chaos of our reality. The internet remained unchanged, and if anything, was a salvation of sorts. It provided a means of connection, communication, and comfort for those who had been severed from those they held closest. It is our main source of information, for better or for worse, and internet consumption has drastically risen since the beginning of the pandemic.

One of the internet's main benefits, its ability to gather like-minded people, is also one of its main detriments. A quick internet search can become a swan dive into a cesspool of hate, extremism, and antisemitism that festers in all corners of the internet. Social media, a large subset of the internet's power of connectivity, is the main source of such hate. Apps such as TikTok and Instagram are filled with blatantly antisemitic and antizionistic rhetoric, many of which perpetuate longstanding anti-semitic conspiracy theories about Jews running the world. There are even modern blood

libels blaming the Jews for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, just as there were during the Black Death.

Anyone who spends even a bit of time on social media is aware of the lack of regulation and the danger in allowing hate speech to spread online. People with massive audiences can post anything they want, without consequence. While we are lucky to live in a country that champions free speech, the double standard that applies to different forms of hate speech is appalling. Rightfully, people who speak out against many marginalized groups are condemned. While I'm not a proponent of the toxic and counterproductive "cancel culture," it's hard to deny the impulse for the masses to eliminate the voice of something they deem harmful. However, it's rather disturbing that that impulse seems to end when it comes to antisemitism.

Several recent high profile incidents come to mind when thinking of antisemitism in the media. Nick Cannon, a famous actor, TV show host, and musician said on his Wild 'N Out podcast recently that "we give so much power to the 'theys,' and 'theys' turn into Illuminati, the Zionists, the Rothschilds." Cannon also claimed that "the Semitic people are the Black people" and that "you can't be anti-Semitic when we are the Semitic people. When we are the same people who they want to be. That's our birthright." He then went on to praise Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan: "Every

time I've heard him speak, it's positive, it's powerful, it's uplifting ... for whatever reason, he's been demonized." Basketball player DeSean Jackson posting an antisemitic message that he misattributed to Hitler, and praised Louis Farrakhan. His post featured a quote that said white Jews "will blackmail America. [They] will extort America, their plan for world domination won't work if the Negroes know who they were."

On a smaller scale, hate speech and antisemitism permeates every corner of the internet, not just on the pages of major influencers. TikTok and Instagram are chock full of passionate, misinformed teens and young adults claiming to champion the rights of Palestinian people, while in the same breath calling for the elimination of the Jews in Israel. These people fail to see peace as a compromise between two parties, as opposed to the domination of one ideal and group over another: that is war. Between the lack of education, the lack of fact-checking, and the impressionable minds of younger teenagers, a new generation is being indoctrinated with the idea that Jews are imperialist aggressors.

With all of this, it's easy to become frustrated, disillusioned, and feel helpless. Here, we can look to people and organizations like Hen Mazzig ([@henmazzig](#)), Rudy Rochman ([@rudy_israel](#)), Eve Barlow ([@evebarlow](#)), and [@jewishoncampus/@zionistoncampus](#). These are individuals and groups who understand that to combat the extremism that is so prominent online, you have to

spread truth and awareness to effectively change the narrative. There are also those of us who are present in the smaller arenas, commenting on problematic TikToks and Instagram posts, sharing things to our smaller followings, and making sure that our voices are heard and amplified to overcome those who try to silence them. If history has shown anything, it's how detrimental silence is in the face of adversity.

We have a responsibility to strengthen our online presence, both collectively and individually. To see change, we have to make a change. It's not enough to just be concerned about the rise in antisemitism, extremism, and fear of the other — we have to show our concern. From both the right and the left, Jews are coming under fire. No matter your alignment on the political spectrum, I think we can all agree on at least one thing: Jews have just as much as a right to exist as any other group.

The Value Of Science Fiction In The World Of Covid-19

By: Josef Kahn,
Arts and Culture
Editor



When people think of science fiction as a genre, they generally boil it down to aliens, robots, space, and usually some sort of time travel-y mess with inconsistent rules. And yes, that

does sum up a fair bit of sci-fi; however, in my humble opinion, science fiction in its purest form is known under a broader, yet more nuanced, banner — that of speculative fiction. The subtle difference is the relationship between the ‘science’ and the ‘fiction.’ Rather than a dissertation on some fantastical pseudoscientific discovery, like faster-than-light travel (as wonderful as that may be), a well-done piece of speculative fiction reflects a certain quality of humanity over itself. For example, Ursula K. Le Guin’s 1973 story, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is a powerful commentary on utilitarianism and deontology without the invocation of any of the aforementioned tropes. The story, simply put, is about us.

So, what exactly does this have to do with Covid-19? Well, in recent times, one of the ever-popular sci-fi tropes has had a strong spike in popularity: apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literature and media, with a particular emphasis on the zombie apocalypse (“The Walking Dead,” “The Last of Us,” “Dead Island,” etc). These stories are compelling to the audience for a wide variety of reasons: they allow for the exploration of anarchism as a social system without the need to overthrow our own government; they give us a window into a survivalist mentality without the threat of actually having to leave the couch; they even provide a platform and rationale for a minimalist lifestyle, something that more and more people are gravitating towards. However, perhaps the most important aspect

of post-apocalyptic fiction is the value of hope in a time of immense darkness. There are always a few survivors, steely-eyed men and women set against a backdrop of near-impossible odds to overcome. Who among us can’t relate to the ever-present feeling of being the underdog? In their crumbling world, they are forced to make the tough and often painful decisions; in doing so, they essentially hold up a mirror to humanity, daring us to look and see what we find. What makes us human? For zombie fiction, it’s all about the struggle of and for life.

This brings us to the frighteningly similar scenario currently unfolding all around us. Although there haven’t been any sightings of bloodthirsty undead (as of yet), this virus has effectively shut down the world in a way unlike any time in the past. Isolation has been a companion of many over these last few months, and the threat of sickness and death has been in all our minds. Accordingly, I believe it would be in all our benefit to learn from science fiction and seek to discover our own humanity in these trying times. Perhaps this doomsday scenario will ultimately be the story of how we as a race — as a people — became united during the worst of times.

Let’s look in the mirror together, shall we?

The Case For Bullet Journaling

By: Raizy Neuman, Website Manager



In the current era of COVID-19, I often hear comments from people who have sadly put away their planners until the start of the new term, claiming that there's just no reason anymore. Nobody's going anywhere, nobody's doing anything, they say, so why bother planning? Now, while I fundamentally disagree with this paradigm of planning, I am going to take hold of this opportunity to plug something that I am super passionate about — bullet journaling!

Ah, but what is bullet journaling, you ask? You say you don't have any interest in writing in a diary using bullet points? Hold on, and keep reading, because it seems like you may not yet know the definition of bullet journaling. Wikipedia's definition of a bullet journal goes like this: "Bullet Journal[ing] is a method of personal organization developed by designer Ryder Carroll. The system organizes scheduling, reminders, to-do lists, brainstorming, and other organizational tasks into a single notebook." In other words, it's essentially a build-your-own-planner, but so much more. Bullet journaling involves an empty notebook, either dotted or graphed, and handmade calendars, beginning with a yearly overview (known as a "future log"), and continuing to funnel down as the year progresses, with a "monthly log," "weekly log," and "daily

log." One is free to add in trackers (e.g. habits, mood, sleep), standard journaling, and photos, as well as lists of anything and everything, from "Books To Read" to "Worst Netflix Shows."

Bullet journals are often (though this is not a requirement) decorated, filled with colors and sometimes artwork. One of the most popular arguments I've heard as I enter my fourth year of bullet journaling is that some people "aren't artsy enough" to do it. I have two points to make to this notion. For one, like I said, it's not a requirement. In his [overview video of the process](#), Ryder Carroll uses a simple black pen; art does not make the system more effective (though for many, including myself, it makes it significantly more enjoyable, as well as personal). Also, I strongly believe that everyone has the ability to make art, and even if what you create may not be as "aesthetically pleasing" as another's work might be, keep in mind that your bullet journal is for you and only you. Your fun and your art making should not be hindered by society's definition of "art."

Another reason why people are reluctant to begin a bullet journal is that they're afraid that they'll start it and won't be able to keep at it. To that, I ask a question. How sad, how unfulfilling would life be, if we avoided things just because we were nervous about them? When it comes to bullet journaling, I think the key factor is not putting too much pressure on yourself. Messing up, or missing a day, even a week or two, is inevitable. What's

important is making the bullet journal work for you, not the other way around. One of the leading factors that backs a bullet journal versus a planner, I think, is its flexibility factor. It's not about making it perfect, it's about creating a system that's yours. If you miss a bit in the system, you can adapt it, because it belongs to you.

Bullet journaling has kept me grounded, especially now. While I may have less campus-related activities to schedule, I still track my daily life and continue to feel productive. When it's all in your bullet journal, there's a certain sense of accountability that just doesn't come with a standard planner. Because you create the spreads yourself, there's a much larger feeling of ownership and responsibility to fill them out which is a huge incentive to complete the tasks and goals you've set out for yourself. Let me tell you, there is *nothing* like the feeling of checking off a task in your bullet journal.

There are millions of bullet journal (or "BuJo") posts and several groups on social media, and some can seem daunting. I would implore, though, that you don't get discouraged by them. The bullet journal system was designed to be personalized, not copied. There's no pressure to include any spread or feature that you're not comfortable with, because it's your book (I, for example, rarely include daily logs, I just stick to my monthly and weekly ones).

I find one of the best parts of bullet journaling to be its

therapeutic aspect. No matter what's going on in the week, month, etc, you're always going to make time to sit down and work on creating new spreads. I have found it extremely healthy, as a simultaneous method to relax and to feel productive. There is productivity, of course, in the self-care of taking time for oneself, but there is also productivity in the actual creation of the spreads.

If anybody needs help with setting up their first bullet journal, you know who to reach out to. I hope I've convinced even one person to give it a try, because this system is life-changing. I'm forever grateful to have found bullet journaling — no matter what's happening in life, from a midterm to a pandemic, I know that I have the ability to keep track.

Coed Torah Learning: A Necessary Revolution

By: Adina Bruce, Website Manager



This summer, I was involved in organizing the Summer *Daf Yomi* (daily study of the Talmud) *Chabura* — a group of college students and recent graduates who met nightly to learn *Masechtot Moed Katan* and *Chagiga*. This *chabura* (Torah learning group) was a highlight of my summer as it provided me with a sense of structure, gave me something to

look forward to, guaranteed Torah learning for me every day, and created a place to see old friends and make new ones. While reflecting on this community that we created, I realized that part of the reason why this opportunity has been so special is because of the unlikelihood of this being a YU program.

Masechet Chagiga discusses the obligation to make a pilgrimage to the Temple and associated sacrifices, it also features many mystical stories touching on the experience of interacting with God as well as laws of ritual purity and impurity. The first *perek* (chapter) of *Masechet Chagiga* devotes much time to specifying who is or is not obligated to take the pilgrimage to the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple) on the three pilgrimage festivals. The obligation of women to come to the Temple and give offerings is debated. It felt uncomfortable for me to simultaneously learn about this poignant and spiritual occasion while also reading discussions by men that debate whether or not I would even be included in this auspicious event.

The Talmud delves into discussions about every aspect of my life and my body; ultimately the halachic life that I live today is dictated by those discussions — without a representation of my perspective as a woman. The historical context for when the Talmud was written excuses the lack of female representation within the text, but the opening of opportunities for women in high level Torah learning means that the conversation is no longer single gendered. As we took turns

in the *chabura* teaching the *daf* (Talmud page) and spending time discussing the interpretations of difficult lines, my voice and the voices of my female peers were given the same status as the men who learned this text alongside us. Through this dialogue between the religious texts and ourselves, we created a space within our rich and complex tradition for the female experience.

While it is understandable that a large portion of one's experience at YU would be separated by gender, there are plenty of opportunities throughout the year for coed interaction. Women are on the student council, are club heads or on club boards, and run [The Seforim Sale](#) — in all these situations, they are considered peers and equals to their male fellow students. However, specifically when it comes to coed Torah learning, there are too few opportunities for men and women to learn from one another and view each other as peers. There is a void on our campus that should be filled, whether with a club that creates Torah learning events, informal *chaburot* (multiple Torah learning groups), or coed *mishmarot* (nightly Torah learning).

This scarcity of coed Torah learning at YU goes further than just the lack of learning between undergraduates. On the Beren Campus, flyers promoting Torah learning events often feature male speakers outnumbering female speakers. On the Wilf Campus, out of the numerous classes offered as part of UTS (Undergraduate Torah Studies),

only Hebrew and Jewish History have female professors. With the Bible Torah education world being dominated by female scholars such as Dr. Yael Ziegler, Rabbanit Shani Taragin, and Dr. Erica Brown, is it not a disservice to the male undergraduate students to not offer them courses taught by the best? Furthermore, without the opportunity to learn from women, men lose out on learning Torah from unique perspectives and teaching styles.

As students, it is uniquely within our power to create spaces to rectify this disconnect. I encourage students to foster spaces around them to discuss and learn Torah from a multitude of people and perspectives.

Without coed Torah learning events or classes taught by women, men are not given the opportunity to see women as intellectual equals, whose voices and unique perspective are essential when it comes to interpreting Torah. A frequently quoted phrase from *Bamidbar Rabbah* (rabbinic text) states that there are “*shivim panim letorah* — 70 faces of the Torah.” I truly hope that some of these faces are female.

Nothing Is Perfect, But It Can Be Perfect For You

By: Yuval Surpin, Layout Editor



We are all familiar with the following example: you are sitting in front of the TV, ready to watch a movie. When you turn on Netflix, you are faced with a huge number of movies from all genres. Ten minutes pass, and you are still looking for a movie. Time goes by and while you are still trying to find the “perfect” movie, it gets too late — so you give up and go to sleep.

This simple Netflix example is reflected in many other situations in our lives. From food to books, from careers to relationships: today’s Western world is full of accessible options and opportunities that are just waiting for us. This exciting world is also full of information on those options. We no longer need to guess how good the food in the restaurant is since the reviews are on Google. We also don’t need to imagine what the office in our new job will look like because there are pictures of it online. But while having this variety of options and having easy access to information about them is an amazing thing we have today, this abundance also comes with a negative side.

Research shows that when we are surrounded by an abundance of options, we end up less satisfied with our decision than if we had been given fewer options. How can that be, you ask? According to psychologist Barry Schwartz, “it’s easy to imagine that you could’ve made a different choice that would’ve been better. And what happens is, this imagined alternative induces you to regret the decision you made, and this regret subtracts from the

satisfaction you get out of the decision you made, even if it was a good decision.” Imagine that you are shopping for a piano. After taking time to research your dream piano, you purchase one. However, the next day, you continue to see different piano commercials. It may be that the excitement on your piano choice will stay, but it is also possible that you will feel like you have made the wrong decision and that there are better piano options for you out there. This example can take place in every field of our lives, and if we do not notice, it can cause negative effects on our well-being. Although it is challenging, it does not have to be like that. As we think of how to make our choices less frustrating, it is important to remember that none of the options we would choose would be perfect. Even though it is hard to believe it these days, since commercials and social media present everything as perfect and glamorous, we will never find the “perfect” place, product, or relationship, simply because they do not exist. With that being said, with awareness to ourselves, we can recognize our wants and needs. When our choices meet our needs, we can decide to look at them as the perfect choices for *us* and feel fulfilled with them based on that. After all, isn’t that what it is all about?

Lessons from Covid-19

By: Danielle Jacobson, Social Media Manager



Personally, when I first heard that students were going to be sent home because of a global pandemic, I dreaded it. Not because I had to leave my friends, leave New York City, or leave the life I had built for myself in NYC, but simply because I couldn't stand being home. I didn't want to spend time with my family, I didn't want to talk to them on the phone. I truly believed that I needed some separation from them and planned to not come home until *Pesach* (Passover) — I even planned to be gone for the whole summer as well. But as the famous quote says: “Man plans and G-d laughs.” I couldn't relate more.

I arrived at Stern this past spring semester and had previously spent a semester in Israel on a very secular program. I transferred to Stern because, while in Israel, I realized that I want to keep *Shabbat* (Sabbath) and *Kosher*. This was a very difficult decision for me and I honestly didn't even know that it was one I wanted to make until someone asked me what I wanted religiously. As soon as I realized that I wanted that, I knew that going home to my face my parents wasn't going to be easy. Honestly, I planned to not tell them about it until *Pesach* and even then I planned to not stay home for *Shabbats*.

Upon hearing the news that Stern was closing due to coronavirus, I

was terrified. I didn't know how I was going to keep *Shabbat* and *Kosher* when my parents did none of that. But, thankfully, my parents were very accepting and supportive of it, much to my surprise. Shockingly, my first *Shabbat* home, my family decided to keep *Shabbat* with me! It was very nice to see my family do that. Life takes us through such loopholes — if I hadn't gone home because of coronavirus, I wouldn't have had the chance to keep *Shabbat* with my family. I wouldn't have been able to mend ties with them that had been severely severed.

Don't get me wrong — I can't wait to see my friends and go back to NYC as soon as possible, but this quarantine did help shine a new light on how much we should appreciate our families. I think a lot of us truly reconnected with our families in new and surprising ways. Although we are far from most of our friends and feel like our life has been uprooted, coronavirus helped us appreciate what we have and what we don't have.

News:

Intro. And Afternoon Advanced Talmud Course Cancelled On Beren Campus

By: Fruma Landa, Editor in Chief

On the Beren campus, the Advanced Talmud course, taught during evenings by Rosh Yeshiva and Assistant Director of RIETS Rabbi Ezra Schwartz, and the Introduction to the Talmud course, taught by Rabbi David A. Pahmer, have been canceled for the Fall 2020 semester due to a lack of course registration. Previously, four Talmud courses were offered: Intro to Talmud, Intermediate Talmud, and two Advanced Talmud courses. Currently, two Talmud courses remain — both taught by Rabbi Moshe Kahn: Intermediate Talmud and Advanced Talmud (taught in the morning, unlike the Advanced Talmud course taught by Rabbi Schwartz which is taught in the evening).

Dean Bacon explained to the *YU Observer* that the “Introduction to Talmud and Advanced Talmud (afternoon section) were cancelled because of very low registration. [...] Historically, the morning Advanced Talmud attracted greater registration than the afternoon class. For this fall the afternoon class had only 2 students registered.” However, the *YU Observer* is aware of five additional students who were interested in auditing this course, either officially or unofficially.

Rabbi Schwartz shared his disappointment with the *YU Observer*. He expressed: “I really love teaching at Stern and I am saddened that I will not be able to deliver my *[G]emara shiur* [Talmud course] at SCW this coming semester. I hope that in the very near future Stern will reinstitute a high level, analytical *[G]emara shiur*.”

Abigail Rochlin (SCW ‘22), one of the two students who had registered for the cancelled Advanced Talmud course, explained that “[a]side from being an interesting, insightful, inspiring, and overall enjoyable class, having an advanced *Gemara shiur* (one of only two) is fundamental for Stern's mission of helping its students grow in their *Avodat Hashem* [service to G-d].”

Prior to the addition of this second advanced Talmud course for the Fall 2017 semester, there was one advanced Talmud class taught every morning by Rabbi Kahn. The second course provided women who could not register for the morning advanced *shiur* due to scheduling conflicts an opportunity to register for another advanced Talmud *shiur*.

Rochlin shares: “Personally I am very disappointed that this class will not be available to me this coming semester, but I am also discouraged by what it means for Stern at large. Offering an advanced *Gemara shiur* is an inherent and core value, and it is sad to see that no longer being the case. I hope that in the future the *shiur* will come back and the option for a second advanced

Gemara shiur for women seeking to advance not only their skills but their *Avodat Hashem* can be offered.”

“Some Advanced Talmud students,” continued Bacon, “who are in their senior year, take advantage of the *shiurim* offered through GPATS, [[the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies for Women](#)]. This [program] gives them another robust learning opportunity beyond the SCW class offering.”

[Mrs. Shoshana Schechter](#), associate dean of Torah Studies at Stern College for Women, assured the *YU Observer* that these courses were not canceled because they weren't deemed valuable. Rather, the cancellation was due to the lack of registered students for these courses. As women's learning is still a value, Schechter assured that she hopes to create a “night *sefer* [evening Torah learning] program” on campus, which includes *shiurim* from Rabbi Schwartz, and to reinstate these cancelled courses for the Spring 2021 semester — assuming there is more interest.

“To my mind,” Schwatz concluded, “advanced level *[G]emara* is part of the core identity of Stern. This sort of *shiur* does more than serve the needs of students who desire studying *devar Hashem* [the word of God] at the highest level. It also advances *Klal Yisrael* [the Jewish people] who desperately need a core of educated, skilled and sophisticated women to better serve them.”

New Requirements For The SCW Biochemistry Major

By Mili Chizhik, News Editor

This past May, the Stern College for Women (SCW) [Department](#) of Chemistry and Biochemistry announced that the requirements for the biochemistry major will be changing. The SCW students typically major in biochemistry if they are pre-health or are interested in pursuing a career in research and academia.

The [previous major requirements](#) were the following: two semesters of Biology Principles with labs, or commonly referred to as “Bio for Majors,” (8 credits); two semesters of General Chemistry with labs (8 credits); two semesters of Organic Chemistry and one semester of lab (8 credits); two semesters of either Introductory Physics with labs or General Physics with labs (both 8 credits); one semester of Physical Chemistry (3 credits); Calculus I and II (8 credits); one semester of Biochemistry (3 credits); one semester of Biochemistry Lab (2 credits); and two of the following 4 credit lecture and lab courses: Cell Biology, Genetics, Immunology, and Molecular Biology.

The new requirements for the major requires only one semester of Calculus (Calculus I), and instead of two advanced biology courses, only one will be required. Starting in the upcoming spring semester, students will be able to take the Biochemistry II

course that will only be offered in the spring semesters. This change will add biochemistry to the major, increasing from the previous 5 credits of biochemistry to 8 credits out of the major’s 56 credits. The 2 semesters of Physics will act as correlates and will be counted towards one’s general education requirements, thus completing 8 out of the 12 elective credits.

With these changes, a student will be taking a year of general chemistry, organic chemistry, and biochemistry, with each year having 2 lecture courses and 1 semester of lab. If one already took two advanced biology courses, they may choose whether or not to take the second semester of biochemistry.

If a student has any questions regarding the major or courses, they are encouraged to reach out to either the head of the department or any of the faculty members, all of whom are found on the department [page](#).

Nissel’s Email Regarding The “COVID-19 Risk Acknowledgment Form” And Information Regarding Students On Campus

By: Erica Rachel Sultan, News Editor

On August 12th 2020, Yeshiva University’s undergraduate students received an email from Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provost for student affairs, relaying

information about the mandatory “COVID-19 Risk Acknowledgment form” and what will happen when students return to the campuses.

The form must be signed by all students, regardless of their decisions to study remotely or study in-person for the Fall 2020 semester. In the email, Nissel said that when students submit this form, they are required to “follow all safety protocols and [to] acknowledge there is some risk that [they] assume if [they] come to campus.” The form can be found on the [YU banner](#), under the “Student and Financial Aid” tab. If not filled out, students are subject to financial penalties, resulting in the student’s inability to add or drop classes and put registration on hold. Some YU students who were quick to fill out the form encountered errors when trying to submit the form. Then, once contacting the registrar, which is suggested by the form, their calls were met with voicemails.

Nissel has also stated that students and faculty will have access to some YU buildings starting August 17, 2020. In order to enter into any open building, students are required to submit a negative COVID-19 nasal swab test which has been taken within the previous fourteen days. They are only required to submit one test (upon arrival to campus), and it is to be sent to covidstudentline@yu.edu. Furthermore, students are required to complete a [pre-screen survey](#), which asks students if they’ve encountered anyone with COVID-19 within the previous

fourteen days, if they have COVID-19 symptoms, among other questions. The pre-screen survey is to be submitted daily, upon arrival at any open YU building. If the criteria are met, the students will be shown a green screen, to be shown to security, and allowed entry, otherwise a student will be shown a red screen, along with a message to consult one's health provider, and entry will be denied. Students must also submit to temperature checks upon entry. If one's temperature exceeds 100 °F, the student will be asked to leave the YU buildings, excluding the dormitories.

If students have any questions, they are to contact covidstudentline@yu.edu or answers@yu.edu.

GPATS Program Increase In Incoming Class Size

By: Shoshanah Marcus,
News Editor

For the Fall 2020 semester, GPATS (Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies), a two year Yeshiva University master program, has experienced a large increase in their incoming class size.

Nechama Price, the director of GPATS, was thrilled to share with the *YU Observer* that there will be 23 students enrolled in GPATS for the 2020-2021 year. Of the 23 students enrolled in GPATS, 16 are full time students, two are

undergraduate students taking GPATS classes, 18 are *Shana Aleph* (first year) students, four are *Shana Bet* (second year) students, and one is a *Shana Gimmel* (third year) student. While the program can be completed in two years, some students choose to remain an extra year to further their learning. Currently, five students are registered for the [new](#) GPATS *Tanakh* (Bible) [track](#).

Price attributed this growth to several factors. She began by explaining that the increased enrollment was due to the incredible impact of Torah learning. She expressed: "Being in GPATS is a life changing experience, where you learn a tremendous amount of Torah, enhance textual and conceptual skills in Torah learning, and are exposed to leading Torah scholars. Students benefit from a faculty with deep expertise in Talmud, *Halacha* [Jewish Law], and *Tanakh* and who embody the attributes of humility, kindness, and commitment." Moreover, Price credits the program's growth to the visible impact of GPATS alumni and the intentional expansion of the GPATS' visibility among college, seminary and high school students. "Unsurprisingly, increased awareness about GPATS has correlated with increased enrollment," Price explained to the *YU Observer*.

Even more so, GPATS launched a new *Tanakh* track, beginning in Fall 2020, which appeals to many women and is reflected in the rising number of enrolled students. "As an alumnae of

GPATS and now its [d]irector, it has been a dream of mine for GPATS to include a *Tanach* track. I am thrilled to see these dreams come true this year, and witness GPATS doubling our size and doubling our programming. I trust that this reflects a growing excitement amongst women for learning Torah and dedicating years to studying it," Price expressed.

While enrolled in GPATS, students not only gain a tremendous amount of Torah knowledge. but they also gain skills that can be used in any area of Jewish education. "Spending these years learning Torah is vital for anyone going into the field of Jewish education," Price explained. She continued: "Our alumni have demonstrated that these core years of *Talmud Torah* [Torah study] create a rock-solid foundation for the years ahead, when these amazing women spread their Torah to their future students, their communities and families."

"Irrespective of your intended career and life plans, time spent at GPATS can be transformational." Price concluded, "In my own life, I have experienced this transformation and seen it amongst my friends from GPATS. So many of our alumni are making incredible impacts on the world of Torah as educators and lay leaders. The impact of GPATS alumni on our community is extremely exciting!"

Sy Syms Courses Announced To Be Taught Solely Online

By: Fruma Landa, Editor in Chief

A little over a month after the YU Fall 2020 [reopening plan](#) was announced on June 30, Dean of Sy Syms School of Business [Noam Wasserman](#) announced via [email](#) that “the core mode of teaching will consist of online instruction that mixes asynchronous teaching and live-online teaching,” for all Syms courses on the Beren and Wilf Campuses. The email outlined the course policy and included tips to prepare for the Fall 2020 semester as well as a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) section.

“This month, several major schools that had made early public pronouncements about teaching in-person in the Fall semester, including my alma mater Wharton and my former employer USC, had to very publicly back away from those statements and announce that they would be teaching online this semester due to the serious health challenges still posed by Covid-19,” shared Wasserman to the *YU Observer*. “Their faculty now have less than a month to prepare to teach online. This made me even more grateful about the three months that our dedicated faculty have invested in developing multi-pronged online courses for our Sy Syms students.”

This decision was made by analyzing the class size, faculty teaching preference (in-

person/online), student learning preferences, and “the best pedagogical approach,” for the Sy Syms courses. When it came to class size, most were “too large to be held in existing classrooms while adhering to social-distancing guidelines” as Syms “courses are significantly larger than those in the other YU undergrad schools.”

Wasserman additionally pointed out that having the courses fully online ensures a smooth transition in the event that courses can no longer be conducted in-person due to a “second wave” of coronavirus.

Zachary Greenberg, YSU president and contributor to the attached FAQ, expressed to the *YU Observer*: “Many other schools are trying to open but there is obviously a lot of risk there. Syms has decided to give students the best quality online which is the safest move in terms of if outside circumstances would force other schools to revert back to online.”

Although courses will be taught online, many professors plan on “holding optional, socially-distant enrichment sessions” for those who wish to attend, as well as online enrichment courses for students who cannot attend the in-person sessions. While faculty will communicate their plans for the enrichment courses after the start of the semester, about “60% expressed enthusiasm or openness to holding such sessions if conditions permit it,” the email detailed.

“Thanks to the lessons we learned from our online courses in the Spring, and input from students, parents, and alumni through the summer months,” Wasserman continued, “YU is poised to have a productive and memorable Fall semester. If conditions permit, many of our faculty and deans look forward to holding optional enrichment sessions with our students both in-person and online, but we will deliver an excellent education regardless of the ups and downs of the pandemic.”

Some courses will be asynchronous and others synchronous, yet both will have a “live-online component.” These can be used to conduct reviews of asynchronous material or to answer questions. Courses may be alternate between live-online and asynchronous or remain solely live-online “while tapping more-sophisticated approaches to engaging students.” Students who have difficulty attending live-online sessions due to time differences should email symsadvising@yu.edu “to explore potential alternatives.”

As per the email, “on average Sy Syms professors are expecting to conduct 50% of their class sessions ... asynchronous ... with some at more than 75% of their class sessions. This is up significantly from the 25% of professors who were doing so at the end of the Spring semester.”

Wasserman recommends that professors include frequent small assessments as “it is consistent with research about how [students] learn best,” and they

provide an opportunity to engage with daily preparation, a method he recommends students adopt as a way to prepare for this new course format. “60% of Sy Syms professors are planning to use more-frequent, smaller assessments in their courses, and another 35% (many of whom were already doing so) are planning to maintain the same approach to assessment.” “I think Dean Wasserman and the faculty have been focusing all summer in preparing to be online and from the sound of it, are well equipped to do so,” shared Greenberg.

Aside from frequent assessment, Wasserman informed that most Syms professors plan on offering “more-frequent feedback” compared to the previous semester, as feedback is a “major factor” in learning. The feedback will “be facilitated by having more-frequent assessments,” creating a “two-way communication between students and faculty.” “While I would have loved to be in person,” Haviva Tirschwell, SSSB ‘21, expressed, “I completely understand and appreciate the administration for all their efforts on our behalf.” Similarly, Greenberg concluded, “Obviously it's upsetting that we can't be in person, but I understand why that's the case. With shiur, programing, and enrichment programs in person, campus life should exist and hopefully we'll all be fully back on campus soon.”

Some FAQ include:

“Will the same P/N options that we had in the spring remain in effect for the fall semester?”

No. For the Fall semester, the university is returning to its long-standing P/N policy.

“If the class is asynchronous, why is its enrollment capped?”

Professors play a central role with teaching any online course. That role is also central with asynchronous instruction, where professors answer questions about what the students read or videos they watched, review the material, and provide individualized support. Where possible, we are raising caps, but are doing so carefully so as to maintain academic excellence.

How will tests be handled?

Instructors are being encouraged to give assessments to students earlier in the semester and more frequently, to help students gauge their strengths and weaknesses. As they did in the Spring, faculty are looking closely at the best way to conduct midterms and finals online, adjusting their approaches to maximize academic integrity, and sometimes replacing tests with projects or presentations. In addition, the university is exploring online proctoring software for this semester.”

See [here](#) for the full list.

Classes To Be Held Under Three Formats: “Face To Face,” “Blended,” And “Online”

By: Adina Bruce, Website Manager

Following the shutdown of YU’s campus and the transfer of classes to fully online for the second half of the Spring 2020 semester through the summer, the YU administration announced plans to begin all Fall 2020 classes online and transition some courses to in-person after the *Chagim* (High Holidays). Class formats for the Fall 2020 semester were announced with contradictory messaging and inconsistent implementation which has led to confusion among students.

Universities in the NYC and Tri-State area have made plans to open in the Fall 2020 semester under all-virtual, fully reopen and hybrid models. YU has released details following a hybrid model.

“Face-to-face,” “blended,” and “online” course formats, composing the hybrid model, have been defined on the Office of the Registrar page on the university website, through emails, and a community call. The definitions of the three formats seem to have some overlap and have not been consistently applied to courses — listings of classes that have been released on YU Banner do not necessarily reflect the reality of faculty plans.

Some students have expressed confusion at the different course

categories and how the categories should affect their choice of whether to take the class. Yosef Rosenfield, YC '21 initially told the *YU Observer* that he “avoid[ed] [“face-to-face” classes] despite [his] interest in the subject matters,” but after reaching out to the professors of those classes, found that they would be offering online options. “It was a bit misleading how YU offered the course type options ... courses were simply marked by 'online,' 'blended' or 'face-to-face' instruction,” Rosenfield explained, expressing frustration at the lack of communication.

“Online” classes will take place virtually for the entire semester and may utilize a synchronous or asynchronous format.

“Blended” courses have been defined in multiple ambiguous ways. The way courses will integrate virtual and in person learning will vary between departments. In her email to undergraduate students, Karen Bacon, the Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz dean of undergraduate faculty of arts and sciences, defined “blended” courses as ones that “will be online for the semester but the faculty member hopes to be on campus for optional meetings with students.” This definition is similar to the Sy Syms School of Business plan to hold courses fully online while offering optional in-person enrichment sessions by professors who chose to do so. On the other hand, the Registrar page defines a “blended” course as one that “contains a blend of both face to face and online instruction,

whereby online instruction replaces or supplements face to face meeting time.”

Bacon clarified the discrepancy as being due to the fact that the “blended” category will encompass “a wide range of options all of which include both online and in person modalities.” Bacon then went on to give examples of how a “blended” class might be formatted. Examples included lab classes where some students would participate in the experiment on campus in a laboratory while others simultaneously participate from home using “kits.” Students in Judaic classes might have opportunities for in-person “informal learning opportunities.” Other classes might have the majority of class taught online with “optional conversations or projects” done in person. Bacon also suggested the possibility of technologically fitted classrooms with “a microphone, projection equipment and zoom” that would enable easier interactions between teachers and their virtual and in-person students.

According to the Office of the Registrar, “face-to-face” courses will take place fully in-person within a classroom setting. However, students who are unable to take the class in person would still be able to take it online. When asked to clarify the definition of which classes would be considered “face-to-face” as opposed to “blended,” Bacon defined “face-to-face” courses as those in which “all the enrolled students and the faculty member are on campus, and the total of students and faculty remains

small enough that they can meet in a typical classroom and maintain social distancing.” As of the time of publication, the only “face-to-face” class listed on the Beren Campus is Money and Banking, an economics course to be taught by Professor James Kahn. However, Kahn plans to partially offer his class virtually for students who will not be on campus, meaning that this class would practically be considered a “blended,” not “face-to-face” course. “When some students have not yet made firm decisions about returning to campus,” explained Bacon, “it is near impossible to define any course as exclusively face to face.”

While currently there are virtually no “face-to-face” classes listed on the Beren Campus, many of the Wilf Campus Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) *shiurim* (Torah study courses) are set to be offered as “face-to-face.” Students are able to choose between “online” and “face-to-face” *shiurim* options for their morning *shiur*. Some rebbeim have confirmed that although they will be teaching face-to-face, they are also planning for their *shiur* to be available virtually on Zoom. Although these *shiurim* would therefore seem to operate similarly to a “blended” class, their course listing categorizes them as “face-to-face.”

At least eight of the UTS classes listed as “face-to-face” currently have over 30 students registered. Rabbi Dr. Yosef Kalinsky, dean of Men’s Undergraduate Torah Studies, confirmed that the university was “identifying socially distanced locations for

learning” for *shiurim* with large class sizes. In a community call with YU’s undergraduate student body, Kalinsky described that the *batei midrash* (Torah study halls) will operate safely “with social distancing, with masks and plexiglass between chavrutot” to accommodate in-person learning.

Regarding the discrepancy between the number of “face-to-face” courses being offered on the Wilf Campus compared to the Beren Campus, Mrs. Shoshana Schechter, associate dean of Torah Studies at Stern College for Women, explained that “it’s easier with the uptown *Shiur* [UTS Torah learning program] structure for a student to switch from a virtual shiur to an in person one. On the Beren [C]ampus there is no morning *shiur* [UTS-like Torah studies program] just classes throughout the day so students can’t just switch seamlessly.”

Schechter stressed the importance of accommodating all while still providing in person opportunities for those on campus. “We want to be able to accommodate everyone which means that unless every student in the class is in person, the class has to be virtual,” she said. “Since most classes are virtual as a result we are trying to supplement with in person enrichment [f]or the benefit of the students who will be on campus.”

Explaining how the decision of categorizing each class was made, Dr. Selma Botman, provost and vice president of Academic Affairs, cited factors such as the number of students enrolled in the

class, the maximum number of students who would safely be able to fit into a classroom, how many students would be “in person” or “remote,” and the “ability and preference” of faculty to be on campus. Whether students would be on campus was determined through student surveys. Surveys were sent to the undergraduate student body through the Office of the Provost on May 7 and June 12, asking students to state their plans for the fall, and list their preferences for class formats. Bacon cited student surveys as showing that “online instruction is preferred by a significant number of YU students.”

While some students, such as Raphaela Hyman, SCW ‘22, said that they knew from March that “having the option to stay online ... would be wise,” other students such as Sarah Brill, SCW ‘21, had originally expected to be coming back to semester this fall but decided against it as the semester drew closer. “At the end of last semester I ... was excited to finish summer and go back to school to see my friends and professors,” she said. “Unfortunately, the virus did not go away. By early August I had made the decision not to go back to school because it is a health risk not only to myself but to others, including professors, as well.”

Despite the challenges in creating a campus life that has both virtual and in-person components, Bacon remains positive. “The faculty are fully engaged in making this a successful experience, and I believe that students can look forward to a ‘different’ but

nevertheless strong semester,” she said.

Opinions:

Save The USPS

By: Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor



Over the past few weeks, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has been in the headlines of many news sources over the controversial change to the postal system. The change had been initiated by President Trump and would cause the Postal System to slow down delivery times by upwards of a week. With the election around the corner, and vote-by-mail being a popular choice due to COVID-19, it is safe to say that this could drastically affect the amount of ballots accounted for. For example, say I mail in my ballot on November 1 — with this change to the postal system, my vote would not be counted resulting from the fact that my ballot would not be received in time.

This was all “talk” until the President appointed “Louis DeJoy — a major donor to President Donald Trump's campaign with large financial interests in the Postal Service's private

competitors — [to become] postmaster general ... ” Having DeJoy sitting in that position would grant President Trump the opportunity to use DeJoy as a pawn in his manipulation tactic. And that is exactly what happened. The initial phases of Trump's plan had begun and “[d]emocratic leaders said they wanted explanations for the ‘sweeping and dangerous operational changes at the Postal Service that are slowing the mail and jeopardizing the integrity of the election.’”

This hindrance in the passage of mail is a definite suspicion and raised a lot of eyes on the house floor as well as throughout the entire country. USA Today reported that “[o]n Monday, Reps. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., and Ted Lieu, D-Calif., urged FBI Director Christopher Wray to investigate whether DeJoy's acts were illegal in light of the ‘overwhelming evidence’ that he hindered the passage of mail.”

Needless to say, the hindrance of mail is an abuse of power and an attempt to sabotage the election.

So why is the President going through with this? There is no evidence to suggest that vote by mail leads to voter fraud — therefore it's clear that that isn't why he's doing this. The next argument, preceding this unfounded claim, was that the postal system does not have the money to take and deliver all the millions of ballots. It is ironic how the president is bringing lack-of-fund as an argument when, in 2019, the “USPS reported loss of nearly \$9 billion.”

It seems that the President only cares about the lives of postal workers when it directly affects him and his success. And even then he doesn't fully care about them. He has admitted that the USPS isn't getting enough funding as is, and yet President Trump refuses to sign in a new bill allowing more relief money to go to the postal service.

If we were to make a comparison between the postal service and another government-funded organization, let us choose the law enforcement system. Law enforcement, in 2017, received over \$115 billion in funding from local and state governments. The postal service, on the other hand, lost \$3.8 billion dollars and was required to lay-off workers in the year 2018. So in light of this all, American ballots should be accounted for, and there is no reason why the USPS should slow down their services, and no reason why a support bill, sending funds to USPS, should be declined.

One thing that has not been talked about enough is how mail in general will be affected. It seems to have not crossed people's minds that slowing the postal service will also slow the delivery of necessary medication and medical equipment. While most people get one-time medicines such as Tamiflu at the pharmacy, a great deal of people, including those with diabetes, cancer, or other life-threatening or chronic conditions, get theirs delivered by mail. If the postal system were to slow down, that could put millions at risk due to a delay in delivery of medication.

The decision to slow down the postal service during an election year is sabotage and unconstitutional. Not only is it sabotage towards the election, but it could also prove to be detrimental to the health of people who rely on medications being mailed in. The decision to tamper with the USPS is wrong, and it should be stopped immediately.

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Exposing Planned Parenthood

By: Raizy Neuman, Website Manager

Before beginning this article, I looked through the *YU Observer's* website to see if anyone had discussed Planned Parenthood before. Written approximately a year ago, the most recent article is one titled "Planned Parenthood: Myth Vs. Fact." I found that this article seems to cite a fallacy from Planned Parenthood themselves, one which I'd like to examine.

The article quotes Planned Parenthood's 2017-2018 Annual Report, claiming that "only 3.4 percent of the 9.6 million services provided by Planned Parenthood in 2017 were abortions." In

actuality, Planned Parenthood is misleading the public to believe that this is their truth. Here are the



facts: Planned Parenthood performs over 320,000 abortions per year, which comes out to about one abortion performed every 97 seconds. If one were to divide the one abortion per 97 seconds by Planned Parenthood's 2.5 million patients each year, this would come out to every 1 in 8 of its patients getting an abortion. Not 1 in 33, as they would like the world to believe.

To solve this clear public relations problem, Planned Parenthood came up with a way to minimize the number of abortions they present to the public. To get to 3.4%, they divide the number of abortions they perform by the number of overall services they provide (i.e. just about anything a patient does upon walking into their clinics, which they call "discrete clinical interactions"), and they weigh all of these services equally (see page 24, footnote 10 of the above cited Annual Report). This means that they are counting a breast examination, the act of handing a woman a contraceptive, and an abortion each as the same level of "service," with no regard to the cost or effort required for each one.

This manifests in the following scenario: if Jane walks into a Planned Parenthood clinic for an abortion today, let's say that in the process she receives a pregnancy test, an ultrasound (as these are necessary for the abortion to be obtained), birth control on her way out, and the actual abortion. Planned Parenthood, regarding all of these as individual "services," would thereby count the actual abortion as 25% of what they provided for Jane today. These services combined are what make up the 9.6 million services cited in their Annual Report. Using this math, even if 100% of women who walked into Planned Parenthood received an abortion, Planned Parenthood would still present their data as abortions being only 25% of what they do.

This Planned Parenthood marketing/calculation method would be the equivalent of saying that an ice cream store that sells ice cream with 9 additional toppings can no longer be called an ice cream store, because ice cream is only 10% of what they sell. While not technically false, this is a preposterous claim, and yet Planned Parenthood gets away with it because not enough people are fact-checking. They hide these numbers from the media in order to mislead the public into believing that they are a largely non-abortion focused corporation, while the opposite is in fact true.

When Planned Parenthood says that they are devoted to "women's reproductive rights" they are apparently covering up their actual goal, which seems to be to abort as many babies as possible.

In 2015, for every 160 abortions they performed, they gave only one adoption referral (see page 30 of its 2014-2015 Annual Report). In addition, Planned Parenthood claims to provide ultrasounds for the purposes of “prenatal care.” The facts remain, however, that their ultrasounds are used predominantly for abortion purposes. They won’t even show the images to the mother, because seeing one’s baby could spark feelings of doubt, which would potentially go against the corporation’s abortion agenda — therefore, only the staff has access to the screens, and they won’t print a picture. With an acclaimed racist, eugenicist woman like Margaret Sanger as their founder, source of core beliefs, and hero, one can only expect such data.

One may ask, though, why they even bother trying to hide it? Why should it matter to them if the public has direct access to their numbers? Well, aside from standard public relations ideals, Planned Parenthood is prohibited by federal law (through the Hyde Amendment) from spending any of its government funding (i.e. taxes) on abortions. With their “3.4%” cover-up, Planned Parenthood has given themselves the leeway to spend their 500+ million tax dollars a year on their other so-called “96.6% of services,” which ultimately function toward abortion.

Planned Parenthood need not be afraid of “pro-lifers,” conservatives, or religious anti-abortionists. Planned Parenthood should be afraid of those of us who care enough to know the truth.

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For additional information, see:
<https://youtu.be/ZDHyy9yCerg>
<https://youtu.be/GlfqAPTihRc>
<https://youtu.be/0vSf0FGRGHI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1Dcw2tJczI&t=89s>

Black Lives Matter: A Masterpiece of Manipulation and Misinformation

By: Sarah Max

Spoiler Alert: Racism isn’t tolerated in America. Racist groups are a fractional minority opposed by the majority and racist behavior is strictly illegal and punishable by law.

It would seem obvious that this is the case, but the term ‘racism’ has been hijacked. Racism today more often than not refers to discrimination or prejudice towards Black people only, particularly at the hands of caucasians. Racism is now an assumed character trait in every white person and is indoctrinated into governmental, societal, and social systems. The hypocrisy of deeming a person inherently racist *solely on the basis of their skin color* is overwhelmingly apparent, yet wholly ignored. The “Black Lives Matter” (BLM) is regressing western society back from crucial strides America has taken throughout recent history.

The BLM movement began in 2012 with the death of Trayvon Martin at the hands of a police officer. It later picked up traction following the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, both of whom were killed by white police officers. Today, the movement holds strong and gains infamy as it devolves into riots, assault, theft, and murder — all of which is proclaimed to be in the name of justice.

The list of allegedly ‘racist’ cases put forth by Black Lives Matter is often cited as evidence or racism simply because the victims were Black and the officers were white. *That doesn’t constitute racism.* Most of these situations share a common denominator of the victim committing a crime, violently resisting arrest, and being killed in the ensuing struggle. It doesn’t matter what color skin someone has, resisting arrest is never a good idea. The



fact is, it’s risky, *illegal* behavior, and yes, it puts one at high risk of being shot.

This is, however, not always the case. Some of the cases may involve levels of cruelty or injustice. However *there is no evidence of racism as the cause*. These cases are such a minority that they can’t be used to make

general statements; they don't support the premise that the system is racist or that police brutality is widespread and institutionalized.

This claim of racist intent is consistently seen throughout the movement. The movement insists that governmental court systems won't serve the correct justice in these instances. This is simply untrue, something which is easily verifiable by a quick online search. It's another malicious attempt to polarize and weaken our country, one which is among the freest, fairest, and most just in the world.

In legal proceedings, there is a concept of "reasonable doubt." If such a doubt is present, the person can't be convicted. The term "guilty beyond reasonable doubt" means there's no other logical explanation to be derived from the facts of the case, thereby overcoming the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. This is why many times the officers are acquitted of some, or even all charges from the incident. Justice is important, but the possibility that a mistake will be made (due to lack of absolute proof) isn't a chance we're willing to take. This is in accordance with the standards of freedom and right to trial granted to every American citizen under the Sixth Amendment. This doesn't mean that our justice system is faulty or racist — quite the opposite. Some of these cases may contain cruelty or injustice, but the policemen aren't penalized unless they are found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt

and this is not exclusive to cases with Black victims.

Evidence is important. It's absolutely necessary for the pursuit of justice. Not only is there an absence of evidence for racist motives in these particular cases, which are set forth by BLM as the most blatant examples of 'racism,' there's no indication whatsoever that skin color played a part in the events at all. To assume that the white person did something simply because he or she is racist towards Black people is blatant racism.

While the police officers involved are condemned as barbaric racists, the Black victims are transformed into the purest of angels. Their misdeeds are ignored and buried instantly so that the victims become martyrs. Many of the victims not only had criminal backgrounds, but at the time of arrest were partaking in something either suspicious or blatantly illegal. This isn't an argument in favor of justifying their deaths, it's a reality check. This strategy is taken full advantage of by BLM; all the articles about the victims start describing the victims as loving, gentle people when many times they were far from it. This is meant to induce sympathy, of course, but it's a gross manipulation of the facts. If you're going to protest something on moral grounds — like racism — it's best not to skirt over the other moral issues involved. It's hypocritical and invalidates the cause. One cannot pick and choose which of our societal morals — in the very least those which are considered crimes by

law — are to be upheld and by whom.

None of this is to say that deaths listed by BLM weren't terrible. It's a horrible thing for people to die, whatever their race — and no one denies that. BLM partakes in a nasty habit called "virtue signalling"— claiming moral correctness and superiority through political and ethical views. They use this to accuse anyone who disagrees with them inhumane, cruel, ignorant, and racist. This is exactly what happens when you say you don't support Black Lives Matter: you are accused of condoning the deaths of innocent Black people because "you hate Black people." To this I say: find me the person who is actually willing to say this. I dare you.

Black Lives Matter: Because They Do.

By: Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor



To say "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) is a joke or a term that should not be used — I would beg to differ. Upon my daily scroll through social media, I happened upon one of the most perfect descriptions of BLM. The post had three separate photos: one with white hands higher than colored hands, one with equal

level hands, and one with colored hands higher than white hands. Can you picture that? There is a common misconception illustrated in the third picture — if Black lives matter, then all of the white hands will be beneath them. That is inaccurate and a dangerous misconception as it could create a false notion of the BLM movement. The accurate depiction of this picture (and in reality) is that at the moment, white hands are above Black hands, but the hope is one day they will be at equal level. That is what BLM is all about.

The phrase “Black lives matter” is the name of the movement, yet it is much more than that. Black lives matter is a notion and a logical concept that Black lives actually matter. This phrase is used in response to the actions of law enforcement officers, as their actions treat Black lives as something that can be tossed around. In an [article](#) I wrote this summer, I outlined the systemic racism within our law enforcement system. Factually speaking, Black people are five times more likely to be stopped by cops than white people, this is based *only* on skin color. Being stopped by cops isn’t the only problem in the law enforcement system. Black unarmed men, in particular, are being killed by the hands of cops. Law enforcement isn’t the only one branch suffering from systemic racism. Government officials have normalized the murder innocent Black people, and in response, our country has turned a blind eye to their pleas of help.

Have you ever walked down the street in Manhattan, seen a Black man, and unconsciously steered clear of them? That is because years of systemic racism and constant media attention aimed at the Black community have made it normal for us to think that the Black “suspicious looking” person is the one who is dangerous. It is a no-brainer that Black people are racially profiled on a daily basis, and it is the job of the BLM movement to reconstruct society's conception of them.

One of the most harmful notions to put online is that if Black lives matter, then everyone else’s lives don’t matter as much. That is definitely not the case. People respond to the phrase “Black lives matter” by stating that “all lives matter.” Well, black lives are encompassed within all lives, so those people are right, yet since Black lives are not treated as though they matter, these people should be backing Black lives with their logic that all lives matter. One great explanation of BLM is as follows: You and your neighbor are standing on your lawns. Suddenly your house catches on fire and the fireman comes to put it out. All of the sudden, your neighbor yells to the fireman, “What about my house?” The fireman turns around and asks, “What about it?” Your neighbor says, “Well my house matters too!” The fireman responds by saying, “Well yes your house matters, all of the houses matter, but this one is on fire! So I am going to tend to this one.” Black lives are at risk on a daily basis. They are constantly mistreated and undermined, and it

is important to support them and be their ally until they are treated the same as any other lighter-skinned person.

Black lives matter because they do. If you say they don’t, you are saying innocent human lives do not matter. So, black lives matter.

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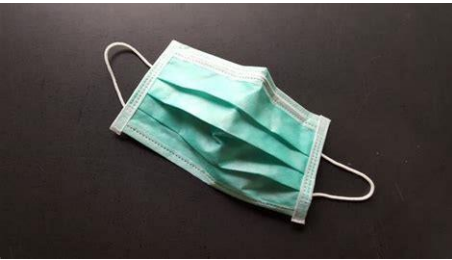
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/03/10-things-we-know-about-race-and-policing-in-the-u-s/>

The Fate Of Our Fellow Learners

By: Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

There has been a debate recently as to whether or not elementary, middle and high schoolers should return to the classroom this fall. Thus far, the CDC states that schools should reopen as the rate of infection for younger kids is very low. They considered students below or at the poverty line when making this decision stating “further, the lack of in-person educational options disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities. These students are far less likely to have access to private instruction and care and far more likely to rely on key school-supported resources like food programs, special education services, counseling, and after-school programs to meet basic developmental needs.” A case has been made by the CDC in favor of schools reopening for both the

physical and mental wellbeing of the students but there are also some serious caveats to their plan.



The main argument for reopening is that the educational experience online for both primary and secondary school students has been greatly affected. The CDC shared: “According to the Northwest Evaluation Association, in the summer following third grade, students lost nearly 20 percent of their school-year gains in reading and 27 percent of their school-year gains in math. By the summer after seventh grade, students lose on average 39 percent of their school-year gains in reading and 50 percent of their school-year gains in math.”

Schools not only provide an educational experience, but an emotional one as well. According to the CDC, for younger students “in an in-person school environment, children more easily learn how to develop and maintain friendships, how to behave in groups, and how to interact and form relationships with people outside of their family.” For older students, mental health services are provided at schools. “Among children ages 9-17, it is estimated that 21 percent, or more than 14 million children, experience some type of mental health condition. Yet only 16 percent of those with a condition receive any treatment.

Of those, 70-80 percent received such care in a school setting. School closures can be particularly damaging for the 7.4 million American children suffering from a serious emotional disturbance.”

On the flip side, the CDC fails to recognize the fate of the teachers and administration of the school if students return. In most states, the average age of teachers is between 30 to 49 years old. This greatly increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. Age is not the only factor involved. The students are as well. It has been proven that the transmission of this disease is carried via both symptomatic and asymptomatic people. So let’s say that Jimmy has an asymptomatic father at home who unknowingly passes the disease onto Jimmy and his siblings. He and his siblings arrive at school the next day, pass the temperature check and attend class as normal. During lunch time, Jimmy and his siblings take off their masks to eat and talk, thereby passing the disease along to other kids and their teachers. It would be reasonable to assume that the teachers are at risk for some of the major symptoms, and the same goes for the students sitting near Jimmy. They, the students, might unknowingly pass the disease onto their parents or grandparents. In their report, the CDC did not take into account the safety of the teachers nor the parents and grandparents of the students coming home from school that day.

Then we have janitorial staff who clean the school nightly. Their job is by far the most dangerous

during this time as they are the ones cleaning areas that may contain contaminants. It is not surprising that the CDC failed to recognize or take into account the safety of the staff doing the work that is meant to keep everyone else safe.

As for the students, the CDC reports that if they are back at school, their mental stability will increase. If the students, however, are unable to work in groups because of the six-foot distance and are unable to interact with their peers during lunch, then is it really beneficial for them to be in the classroom? It is also reasonable to assume that mental health services, despite being an integral part of many students' lives at school, will not reopen, as many sessions would occur in close proximity which is against CDC guidelines.

There are both pros and cons to having children return to school in the fall, but it is important to note that even if there is the slightest bit of risk or worry that a staff member, student, or janitorial staff could catch this virus, the schools should not reopen. Risking the safety of everyone around you just so students can have a “normal” school experience should not be a standard.

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Never Forget Means Stand Up Now

By: Nechama Carlsen



The American Jewish community must recognize the extremity of the Uyghur's situation to understand the glaring issue of our communal silence. Understanding requires painting a brutal and painful image. Picture the systematic destruction of European Jewry in addition to the strength of modern technology and geopolitical power. Sadly, this is not a terrifying hypothetical. This is the reality for Uyghurs in modern China.

The Uyghur (Wee-Ghur, spelled either Uighur or Uyghur) people are an ethnic and religious minority in China, Muslim and of Turkic descent. As such, while historically native to the land, they never fit into sinicized China. East Turkestan became the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone where they should be

allowed to practice Islam freely under Chinese rule.

In August 2018, the United Nations Overhead Committee on the Human Rights Council received evidence of the forced removal of at least one million Uyghurs to "detention centers" in Xinjiang. Few western news outlets spoke of the issue until late September. The BBC reported evidence proving over one million Uyghurs from Xinjiang were rounded up for "re-education." When interviewed, survivors spoke of brutal torture, forced labor, and disappearing families. Later, in 2019, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council heard more information from the Chinese Tribunal. It was confirmed that Uyghurs were being deported to forced labor camps and horrifically, were victims of organ harvesting. In response, Beijing simply declared that they had stopped taking organs from prisoners in 2015. Yet, no proof exists that they dismantled the system cited to have been used against the Falun Gong, another persecuted religious minority group.

This crisis has not gone completely unnoticed in the United States. After reports of forced labor and human rights violations, the U.S. seized 13 tons of human hair shipments from the Xinjiang region. Numerous women have spoken of cruel forced head shaving and drone footage confirms their testimonies.

The systematic cleansing of religious and ethnic minorities on

a mass scale should absolutely horrify and persuade every Jew to demand intervention. The British Jewish community seems to be the first to discuss the genocidal programs against the Uyghur people, while "America is in its own quagmire" says JewsForUighurs, the growing British social media movement. Many British Jewish community leaders and individuals have been forward on the issue. One anonymous London Orthodox man has been posting statistics throughout the city since January. Moreover, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote publicly in an Instagram post, condemning the treatment of Uyghurs and discussing the Jewish obligation to stand up against this human rights crime. "When the world allows dehumanization of the Other, evil follows, as night follows day," his post reads. Following the British community's example, American Jews need to focus their attention on this issue, spread awareness, and demand intervention on behalf of the Uyghurs.

As generations pass between the birth of the phrase "never forget" and those who risk forgetting, we must stand now. We have a responsibility to learn, inform others, and condemn such crimes against humanity. We have an obligation to use our voices to impact the political bodies that represent us, both at home and internationally. In the words of the anonymous London activist, "We said, the world said, never again."

How you can help!

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Joe Biden's Tokenized VP Pick

By: Raizy Neuman, Website Manager

Joe Biden, unfortunately, is in an objective state of cognitive decline. On separate occasions in recent months, he has forgotten both the location in which he was speaking and the position for which he is running, to name just the tip of the iceberg of his “gaffes.” It is obvious to everyone, including himself, that it is not likely that he would run for reelection should he win in 2020. It is doubtful, really, that he would even finish a first term at all.

I myself will admit that I knew next to nothing about former Vice President Biden until he became a contender for president himself. Normally, I don't think that many people pay much attention to the VP pick. This time around, though, we have no other choice. It seems more than likely that, should President Trump not win November's election, we are facing a future with Kamala Harris as our president.

Now, many seem to think that choosing Harris is a pretty safe choice. Biden had been saying for months that he would choose a woman to run alongside (quite the tokenistic criterion, if you ask me), and one of color would be the predictable route to take. Kamala Harris, being the second black woman to serve on the U.S. Senate, seems to fit the bill quite nicely — until one takes a closer look.

Joe Biden's primary campaign technique, running as a moderate Democrat, has been to bash President Trump. The Democratic Party has been feeding into the “anyone but Trump” ideal portrayed by the media, and according to polls (which, based on the 2016 election, we know to be less than trustworthy), it seems to be working. Now that he has chosen Kamala Harris, however, he incurs the risk of the Democrats who are against many of her radical beliefs. She was so unpopular that she didn't even make it past the first primary. Biden has portrayed himself as a moderate candidate who will restore peace, much needed after the havoc and whatnot that he claims Trump has wreaked upon

the country. To add a radical leftist like Ms. Harris to the ballot is counterproductive and it seems to be genuinely for emblem's sake alone.

In a 2019 ranking by www.govtrack.us, Kamala Harris was listed as the most left-leaning Senator of them all. She largely supports the likes of Bernie Sanders and seems to be willing to do anything, call anyone any name, to get herself politically ahead. She supports socialized medicine as well as trillions of dollars in new taxes. She has openly called for violation of the Constitution regarding gun control, she supports abortion up to the ninth month, and she fought to silence the publicity of information regarding Planned Parenthood's illegal sale of fetal body parts.

Kamala Harris, being the “pragmatic moderate” that the media is now attempting to spin her into, spent nearly 30 years enforcing laws that would send black individuals to prison. Kamala Harris, who now has a chance at becoming the United States' first female president, blocked (until forced to relent) the showing of evidence that would have revealed the innocence of a man on death row. Kamala Harris, who ran on the platform of a “prosecutor,” arrested parents whose children skipped school, and laughed about it. Kamala Harris, the candidate who implicitly called Joe Biden a racist, is now his running mate.

President Trump commented on the choice positively, as he now has a much more viable initiative.

To run against a cognitively deteriorating candidate is difficult per se, but running against a radical leftist will be significantly easier for his campaign. In Trump's words, "she was my number one pick." Joe Biden (or as Trump calls him, "Sleepy Joe") has called himself a "transition candidate;" everyone, including Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, knows that Biden's making it to January is a matter of thin ice. Because Kamala has a significantly larger chance of becoming president than previous vice presidential candidates, the current president can and should take advantage of her radical approach to leadership.

In addition to Harris' precarious proposals, Joe Biden himself has the potential to turn voters away. The former vice president has a bizarre history of touching women and young girls, hugging them inappropriately, and sniffing their hair. There are countless instances of his strange, racist, and downright creepy comments and behaviors documented online. Some memorable quotes include, "we choose truth over facts," "I love kids jumping on my lap," "poor kids are just as bright and just as talented as white kids," if you vote for Trump "you ain't black," "we hold these truths to be self evident to – you know the thing," "I've got hairy legs that turn blonde in the sun," "the kids used to come and reach in the pool and rub my leg down so it was straight and watch the hair come back up again," and "you're a lying-dog-faced-pony-soldier." His story about his run-in with the gang leader "CornPop" is, if nothing else, hilarious.

Joe Biden, in his unfortunate mental state, has made a strange choice indeed. Not only has he chosen one of the least-successful primary candidates of the Democratic Party, but he has chosen a woman who has called him out on being segregationist as well as for touching women inappropriately. When Biden was asked at a press conference if he was ever tested for cognitive decline, he claimed to be "constantly tested." It is unclear to me whether or not he fully knew what he was doing in choosing Kamala Harris, and this could have scary ramifications for our country. No matter our varying opinions of President Trump, we must ask ourselves: Is Joe Biden the man we want to see become our president? And, because it seems more likely than ever before, is his running mate someone we want to see take over as our leader?

Hi. My Name Is Chanie, And I Am An Art Student

By: Chanie Tropper

Choosing to attend Stern College for Women wasn't the easiest decision for me. Growing up, I fought to get out of the Orthodox education system and I could not wait to start college in a "normal" school and get that "normal" college experience — that is to say, in a secular college. However, after some impactful experiences, such as a gap year in Israel, I realized that for my

newfound relationship with God, Stern was my best option. This decision meant sacrificing certain things other colleges have to offer, a significant factor being the size of the student body. This is crucial because it is what determines the number and variety of classes that the school can offer per semester. This is minimized by smaller enrollment numbers. Class availability especially impacts the art students who do not have large enough classrooms, have too few teachers, and not nearly enough space for our large classes, ones which require us to spread out to efficiently work.

Throughout the Studio Art Department, there are students who have a focus within most of the various artistic fields, which in turn spreads us very thin and puts a lot of limits on the variety of classes we can take each semester. The majority of classes students take are not focused on a specific field's use of the material, but rather they are taught broadly to make it applicable to as many students and fields as possible. Thankfully, the limited faculty we do have are absolutely incredible and offer a lot of support and opportunities for their students. Additionally, the school has a partnership with the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) as a supplement which allows us to take career focused classes that specifically focus on a specific industry's use of the skills. Overall, the current system puts the Stern College studio art students at a disadvantage when entering their respective fields, or when transferring to a master's program.

Earlier this year, Randy Apfelbaum, chief of facilities and administrative officer at YU, showed people around 215 Lexington's eighth floor, which, at the time, housed the entire studio art department. When directly asked by Traci Tullius, chair of the art department, about who the people were and what he was doing, he responded that he was just showing some investors around. A few weeks later, Apfelbaum came back with another group, this time the tourists took measurements of various classrooms and spaces. When Apfelbaum was asked again who they were and what they were doing, he continued his ruse, and said they were just investors. A few weeks later, it was reported that the eighth floor would be divided to accommodate the Katz School of Health and Science's new Cybersecurity program. This decision was made without consulting with the chair of the department. Then, when emailed about the changes by both faculty and student body he — and the others involved — directly ignored all emails and questions for weeks at a time, leaving the entire department in the dark. To give some perspective on Apfelbaum's position at YU, his job encompasses all aspects of how our buildings' spaces are being used, in addition to things like the meal plan — for example, when the school attempted to change the [meal plan](#) for the Fall 2019 semester, the plan was headed by Apfelbaum. And as we saw with that change, it caused a lot of negative feedback from the student body, and was not a smart change for the school.

This new renovation will have detrimental effects on the Art Department, its students, the religious integrity of the school as a whole, and the school's future. By allowing the Katz School's program to be built, the Art Department will have to give up some of its already limited space, a third of the space it previously had. I have personally witnessed that the program is taking both of the media labs, which includes graphic design, photography, and videography labs. These labs double as lecture space when visuals need to be given. This will not only affect art students but anyone who hopes to take classes in any of these fields, such as media studies, journalism, and advertising. In a broader sense, this will affect anyone who wants to better their skills in the various softwares offered and anyone who wants to just learn the basic skills associated with them. This applies even to people who have a mere passion for forms of art such as photography or graphic design. The renovation will additionally take the faculty offices and the multimedia room which is used by seniors as a workspace for an array of senior projects and doubles as a greenscreen and light manipulation room for students to use. The plans will also cut off Stern students from the only bathroom on the floor, only allowing the Katz students access.

The original design is going to take away all of these crucial rooms, and the space wasn't being optimized! The original design included a "hangout area" for the Katz students, as well as a large pantry space. Apfelbaum has agreed to rebuild these

workspaces for us in a different location. Currently, the best suggested location he has had is in our open workspace that doubles as a location to wash our art supplies and as an additional lecture space when there are no other open rooms. The art floor is already lacking space for its own department — it certainly can not house a new program.

On the topic of challenging the school's religious integrity. This great new Katz program is coed, as is the rest of the graduate school. However, placing a coed program on a women's campus is a disaster waiting to happen. When you take an unobscured view of the situation, it is clearly very inappropriate, considering Stern has been built on the fact of it being a fully female school. The art students are known to be extremely late workers who work well into the night, and at times, I personally have been asked to leave by security at 11:30 p.m. when the building was being closed for the night. Not only that, art can get really messy; therefore, so many of the artists opt to bring a change of clothes designated specifically for the messiness of our classes. These outfits do not typically fall under official *tznius halacha* (Jewish modesty laws) since, up until recent developments, the art floor has been classified as a female-only floor, thus we have been able to wear whatever we wanted. Combining the late work hours with not-*tznius* dress and adding boys to the mix is very questionable decision making for an institution that "strives" for religious observance and education. Unfortunately, it seems

as though YU only cares about our Jewish education when it suits them.

I know a lot of people reading this may think: “Who cares? I’m not religious. I don’t dress *tznius*, I’m friends with guys, what’s the big deal?” Let me clarify: I’m not some religious fanatic, I have many male friends and I don’t dress to the strictest *halachic* standards, but I do follow *tznius* and *shomer negiah* (laws regarding the avoidance of physical contact with men, even platonically), and I am sensitive to the halacha of *yichud* (Jewish law of avoiding being alone with a man). Allowing the floor to have men on it would destroy the religious security currently provided by the floor. We are a women’s school and we should maintain that status. Katz, while connected as a YU institution, is not an undergraduate school and should by no means be taking learning space away from us. Having this construction project fulfilled will not only affect the current Stern students but generations to follow. If YU becomes coed, losing their religious integrity in the process, they risk losing funding from their religious donors and organizations, and the funding may become refocused towards other smaller schools that are trying to maintain and build a Jewish future according to their vision. This may just be the first step to the end of YU.

Features:

COVID-19 And The Pre-Med Experience

By: Shoshanah Marcus,
News Editor

For the students with aspirations of becoming a physician, the coronavirus pandemic has posed particularly challenging dilemmas.

Not only are medical school applicants expected to have stellar grades and Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) scores, but they are also tasked with the mission to demonstrate their passion for the medical field through various extracurricular activities. Such activities include volunteer work and laboratory research, both require hands-on experience rather than online commitments. Moreover, medicine itself is a hands-on experience; in order to become a physician, one is required to complete several years of residency and fellowship training designed to train future practicing physicians with some hands-on experience. However, with the rampant spread of COVID-19, aspiring medical school students are faced with several challenges.

While there is certainly a range in testing scores for students in various medical schools, it is common knowledge that in order to be accepted into medical schools, one needs to have a particularly high grade point average (GPA) and MCAT score. Since classes have been

transferred to an online format, many pre-medical (pre-med) students in Yeshiva University's undergraduate schools have felt that this has not only impacted their performance in their Spring 2020 classes, but also has hindered their ability to perform experiments effectively in their laboratory sections. According to [a survey that I spread among the student body](#) via social media, when students were asked if the COVID-19 outbreak impacted their performances in their Spring 2020 courses, 33.3% of respondents replied that the pandemic had no impact while the remaining respondents replied that the pandemic had either impacted or somewhat impacted their performance in their courses.

The coronavirus' interference with the extracurricular activities of many undergraduate students has left pre-med students especially worried. According to the survey, 97.6% of students answered that the coronavirus pandemic has interfered with their extracurriculars in some way. One second year student in Stern College remarked: "All of my volunteering and shadowing opportunities were cancelled due to the coronavirus. I feel as though I may end up behind in my studies and my extracurricular activities." When asked on the survey: "On a scale from 1-10, how has the pandemic impacted your stress and/or anxiety levels regarding your pre-med experience?" with 10 being: "The pandemic has caused my stress and/or anxiety levels to increase dramatically" and 1 being: "The pandemic has decreased my levels

of stress and/or anxiety," the average response was a 7.28.

With the heavy workload during the semester, many pre-med students usually designate the summer as the period in which they will be able to commit to more time-consuming tasks such as laboratory volunteer work. However, the coronavirus has posed issues that have caused summer plans of many pre-med undergraduates to be cancelled or conducted remotely. When asked: "Have your summer plans been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic?" 52.4% of students answered "yes," and 35.7% of students answered: "My plans have been altered to adapt to the new reality presented by the pandemic, but not cancelled." According to the survey, 73.8% of respondents are taking science related summer courses either as planned or instead of their previously scheduled plans, and 38.1% of respondents are studying for the MCAT.

Opinions on the pandemic vary greatly. Some students have responded with further interest and commitment to their studies, looking at the coronavirus as a springboard for greater medical interest and opportunity. "It has only further piqued my interest within the field of medicine, and the ultimate goal of keeping everyone safe!" remarked a first year student at Yeshiva College. Another second year student at Yeshiva College added: "Obviously everything got more difficult and the quality is less, but the teaching has been improving and lab experience too so that being out of the physical

classroom is not as much of a knockout punch to my experience.” Despite some students' positivity, there are major difficulties for many pre-medical students.

Upper undergraduate students have faced serious setbacks due to the coronavirus with regard to their MCAT exams and application to medical school. One fourth year student at Stern College explained: “The coronavirus has delayed my application to medical school because I will have to make up for all the extracurricular[s] I was supposed to do in the spring semester and in the summer.” Another fourth year student from Yeshiva College added that “[a]ll the libraries are closed so it's made studying for classes/MCAT much much more difficult.”

Since many pre-med students are not gaining valuable hands-on experience, some students look to the medical school admissions to reconsider their criteria for future applicants. Mili Chizhik (SCW '22) explained, “Many people are able to volunteer on the front lines which would then give a lot of experience and value to one's medical school application. However, there are also many people who are unable to volunteer because they do not want to risk getting COVID-19 and potentially spread the virus to their families and those around them. Obviously there are other ways we can give back to the community or build up our applications and extracurriculars, but this whole crisis creates an atmosphere of uncertainty beyond just the global health status but

our future careers and how the admissions committee will look at the applicants. ... The COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of financial uncertainty and many prospective medical school students do not have the luxury of having it paid for by their families, therefore it must come from their own pockets. Thus, to ensure a fair and a just, non-privileged application cycle, medical schools should modify their admissions criteria to give each student an equal chance.”

As the coronavirus continues to pose challenges to pre-med students and medical school applicants, now more than ever students need medical schools to be understanding. While students are challenged to search beyond what is conventionally expected from them for medical schools, this is a joint venture that requires both sides to start looking at things differently.

Author's note: Thank you to everyone who contributed to the survey!

A Summer To Remember

By: Shaina Levin, Business Manager

These past few months have been some of the most stressful months I've ever experienced but also the most insightful. With stress levels constantly elevated, I found myself facing new challenges day after day due to the quick [shutdown](#) of Yeshiva University,

and almost everything else around me. The transition to online classes and learning to be flexible was challenging, and mid-June I was faced with a situation many of my peers also found themselves in: the search for summer plans.



Being interested in tax accounting as a potential future career, I wanted to find an engaging opportunity that would fit with my summer class schedule, and that would push me out of my comfort zone. After discussing with the [Career Center](#), I was lucky enough to receive offers from professors reaching out asking me to work on research projects with them. From the start, I felt that I was in good hands when it came to relying on Yeshiva University and Sy Syms School of Business to help me with my summer plans.

This summer, while I am not immersed in online courses, I spend my time working with Professor Len Fuld and students Barak Cohen (SSSB '22) and David Mirsky (SSSB '21) on a practical, useful, and imperative tax accounting research project. As Professor Fuld explained: “Too many people who suddenly are on their own have no idea how to handle any financial

matters, from the simplest things, like opening a bank account, to planning for retirement, so I felt this would be the perfect opportunity to help them as well as provide a great learning platform for these really motivated students who may have lost summer internships due to COVID.”

Our research involves creating a practical guide to help individuals who have either been separated, widowed, divorced, or someone who has never had to deal with finances before and is now thrown into a new and confusing financial situation due to the coronavirus. Our research covers a range of topics such as opening bank accounts, budgeting, managing debt, and investing. As students, we understand how complex and daunting managing finances can seem, so we simplified the topics with step-by-step instructions and include clear and concise explanations of the topics covered. By the end of the summer, we hope to compile our research into a comprehensive guide, easing the stress of financial responsibility.

Each week, we gather on Zoom to discuss questions and concerns we have. With the professor’s insight and guidance, we learn more about taxes, writing skills, and daily financial advising skills that we wouldn’t learn in the classroom. Despite the stressful situation that the world has been thrown into, YU and Sy Syms School of Business have accommodated myself and many other students, helping them have a meaningful and worthwhile summer experience. As a student

who has benefited from the University’s dedication and hard work, I would like to say on behalf of myself and all the other students — your hard work has paid off, thank you!

Interview With Nechama Price Regarding The Publication Of Her New Book

By: Fruma Landa and Yosef Rosenfield



Nechama Price is the Director of Yeshiva University’s Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies for Women, from which she earned certification in 2003. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Bible and Judaic Studies departments at Stern College, where she has been teaching since 2004. Nechama earned a Masters Degree in Jewish Education from YU’s Azrieli Graduate School and an MA in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School. She is also a graduate of the inaugural class of the American branch of Nishmat’s Yoetzet Halacha Program.

Nechama Price recently published her first book, “Tribal Blueprints: Twelve Brothers and the Destiny of Israel.” Yosef Rosenfield and Fruma Landa, on behalf of the *YU Observer*, have interviewed Price regarding this accomplishment.

YU Observer: Can you share a little bit about your background? Specifically, what prompted you to publish your first book?

Professor Nechama Price: Six years ago, I gave a *shiur* [lecture] at a convention, and a man approached me after my *shiur* and said to me, “I believe you have a book in you” and handed me a card. I looked at the card, and it read “Matthew Miller, Publisher at Koren Publishers. At first, I thought he was joking, but he told me to get back to him with a proposal. After much thought, I jumped at this opportunity. Five years later the book was published! This same pattern happened again a few years later, regarding my current role at GPATS [[Graduate Program In Advanced Talmudic Studies For Women](#)], as I had never dreamt of administration. And, again, with becoming a Yoetzet Halacha.

O: What most inspired or influenced your writing? I noticed you teach undergraduate courses on the Beren Campus; is there content overlap?

P: Deciding what to write about was actually quite easy. Delving into the stories and personalities of the *Shevatim* [Tribes] is something I have been thinking about and working on for the last

20 years. The thesis of the book, that each tribe has its own personality that is reflected throughout *Tanach* [Bible], is an idea I started to contemplate as a student many years ago at MMY [Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim]. It started with a shiur on this topic that I presented in the MMY *Beit Midrash* [Torah study hall] to the entire school and faculty. Over the years, that shiur turned into a series of 2, then 3, then 6 *shiurim* [classes]. These morphed into a class I taught over the summer, until finally it became my course at Stern College, Tribes in Israel, that I am teaching this semester. For me, it was truly fitting for this information, that I had been developing for so many years, to be my first book.

O: What are some things you learned from this endeavor?

P: As part of the editorial process, I quickly learned how humbling it is for others to critique your work. Having to rework ideas, moving seemingly important information to footnotes or from the book entirely, can be personally painful, even as it improves the book.

O: What was the most enjoyable part of writing and publishing the book? Was this a rewarding experience?

P: As someone whose primary method of teaching is *shiurim* and in the classroom by interacting with my students, I was surprised to discover the fun of writing a book. Converting my material into a book required reworking the material for this format and

significantly more research. I found this part of the process extremely challenging, enjoyable and rewarding. To me, this was the highlight of the process.

O: What was the hardest part of this undertaking?

P: I learned quickly that the hardest part of the process was the editing. My husband, who is an incredible writer, was my first editor. He spent hours working on my book and I am very appreciative of his efforts. It was fun to have this be a joint project. A few of my former students, now friends, also helped editing. Lizzi Peled, Talia Molotsky, Sarah Epstein, all Stern College graduates, read and edited many of the chapters. Talia even came up with the title of the book while sitting at our *Shabbos* [Sabbath] table brainstorming ideas. Finally, after two years, the manuscript was ready to be sent to Koren/Maggid Publishers. Their parts of the process, including editing, formatting, printing and so much more took another two years. Learning the process of writing a book and how much time and effort invested by so many people was fascinating.

O: What do you hope the book will lead to in the future?

P: I very often tell my students that we never really know what is in store for us in the future. We decide our next step, but never know where that decision will lead. *Hashem* [G-d] really is in charge of our lives. We just need to be open to taking on opportunities as they arise and pushing ourselves further than

ever we imagined. This perspective represents my journey. If you had asked me when I was a student in Stern College what I would be up to after studying in GPATS, I'm sure my answer would not reflect my current reality. However, after sitting and learning for many years, the opportunity to teach *Tanach* and *Halacha/Gemara* [Jewish Law/Talmud] in Stern College was dropped into my lap. I jumped at the opportunity. It wasn't what I imagined; it was so much better.

O: What message can you offer people who would like to publish their work but might be overwhelmed by the thought of writing their own book?

P: Writing this book has been an absolute privilege. Having the opportunity to spread Torah to a broader audience via a different format is an honor. Personally, it has again reinforced the message that, with G-d's help, we can push ourselves to do things we never imagined accomplishing.

Zoom Zman: June Zman Goes Virtual

By: Adina Bruce, Website Manager

As the summer drew closer, many students began anxiously looking for productive ways to spend time during a summer that would be very different from what they had envisioned just a few months prior. *June Zman* (Torah learning session), a summer program facilitated by Yeshiva

University's Graduate Program In Advanced Talmudic Studies For Women (GPATS), provided a unique opportunity for many women around the world from the stressful situation that is the global COVID-19 pandemic.

June Zman, a month-long program that has been held for a number of years, offers the GPATS experience of a high level Talmud *shiur* (class), a *Beit Midrash* (Torah study hall), and *sefer* (preparation) time with a *chavruta* (learning partner). This year, the format was forced to change due to the realities of being unable to meet in person. Instead of taking place in the Beren Campus *Beit Midrash*, Zoom became the virtual setting for *shiur*, taught by Rabbi David Nachbar, and breakout rooms allowed pairs of *chavrutot* (learning partners) to still meet and learn face-to-face. Although no *Beit Midrash* buzzed with the voice of *Talmud Torah* (Torah learning), a collaborative google doc of texts set to be learned in each unit provided a space for people to communally comment questions and answers and in doing so were able to learn and connect with other people and *chavrutot*.

Starting at 9 a.m., Rabbi Nachbar, a *maggid shiur* (Torah teacher) at GPATS for almost 10 years, would begin the morning by first greeting each student as she entered the Zoom from the waiting room, and then giving a quick introduction to what would be covered that day. *Chavrutot* were then placed into breakout rooms. Students learned *Masechet* (tractate) *Rosh Hashanah*,

dividing their time between learning *dapim* (pages) on a more surface level (“*bekiut*”) style, and in depth (“*biyyun*”) style, complete with *Rishonim* and *Achronim* (earlier and later dated) commentaries. *Shiur* would start at 11:30 a.m., and the sources covered in *chavruta* (partnered learning) time were connected and explained by Rabbi Nachbar — frequent contributions, questions and discussions were provided by the attentive participants.

After sharing his initial worry about the different format and challenges of teaching over Zoom with the *YU Observer*, Rabbi Nachbar concluded that “I could not have been more pleased with how everything transpired.” Rabbi Nachbar went on to describe his impression of the summer as one of opening opportunities. “The online platform expanded the reach of our learning both geographically and demographically. . . . In the previous four years, June *Zman* enjoyed the participation of 25-30 women per year; however, our online platform attracted over 60 women over the course of the five weeks of learning.” Additionally, he expressed the significance teaching June *Zman* had on him specifically this summer. “It was especially meaningful to me to have dedicated our learning this summer in memory of Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, *zt”l* [zekher tzadik livrakhah, May the memory of this righteous one be a blessing], whose levaya took place one day prior to the commencement of our learning. Rabbi Dr. Lamm, *zt”l*, played such an instrumental role in

promoting women's learning both in the undergraduate program at Stern College and at the graduate level at GPATS. It was an honor to have paid tribute to his memory through our learning.”

Due to the unique accessibility virtual June *Zman* offered this summer, women from a variety of different backgrounds were able to attend. Sarah Robinson, SCW ‘15 and GPATS ‘17, has frequently participated in June *Zman* since graduating from GPATS. She described this year's experience as, “. . . as usual, it was lovely!” In reference to the teaching style she said: “Rav Nachbar has a unique blend of being a soft-spoken, humble, even quiet teacher. But make no mistake -- Rav Nachbar is also known for his rigor, intensity, thoroughness, and *ameilus ba[T]orah* [toiling with Torah learning]. He sets up the *sugya* [Talmud section] and *Rishonim* [early commentaries] clearly and thoroughly while simultaneously incorporating a number of student voices into the *shiur*. I feel that each class is a masterpiece.”

June *Zman* was also open to women not affiliated with YU — such as Shira Rachlin who attends Rutgers University. Talking about the experience she said, “I found it to be a really good experience overall . . . I thought I would feel out of place . . . but it ended up being that a lot of people there were in the same boat.” When discussing the virtual aspect to the program she said, “it was really well done as a virtual learning experience.”

Devora Chait has been a student at GPATS for one year and expressed much excitement about GPATS having been made so accessible. “I was thrilled to see how many women came to learn at June *Zman*. Being part of a dedicated cohort of *talmidot* (students) invigorates my learning, and it was so motivating to see how many women wanted to participate.” She further elaborated saying: “Not being in a physical *beit midrash* was definitely challenging, but continuing my learning in a virtual *beit midrash* helped me maintain serious [T]almud Torah and provided me with a sense of normalcy during these unpredictable times.”

Summer I Lab Program

By: Rachel Doretsky

Ever since the beginning of my senior year of high school, I was planning on pursuing a career in accounting. I was set on working for a big firm, and I convinced myself that accounting was for me — without having any experience in it whatsoever. Around *Pesach* (Passover) time, I found myself giving the accounting job more thought and began to realize it was not the job I wanted for my future.

As someone who plans everything, I felt uncomfortable being on the path of the unknown, unsure of my major or future career. I decided to speak about this with one of my professors, and she mentioned management strategy as a major and the possibility of pursuing a career in

consulting. I honestly never thought of that as a career path because I knew nothing about the field.

Soon after that conversation, my sister very eagerly told me all about the Consulting Force/Innovation Lab internship opportunity. This program consisted of a partnership between YU, Accenture, McKinsey, BCG, and the OU and provided us with two weeks of incredible training opportunities, a week of a challenging case competition, as well as six weeks of the opportunity to consult with amazing nonprofit organizations. Once again, it wasn't something I considered taking part of. I was originally supposed to go to Israel and work with a start up, but due to the pandemic, that didn't happen. I then planned on taking a few courses taught by my favorite professors at YU which would allow me to still have a productive, yet still relaxing summer. As one can see, my summer did not go as I had originally thought it would.

I applied to the program though I didn't expect to be accepted as it was mainly for juniors and seniors. Nonetheless I was ecstatic and so grateful to be given the opportunity to participate in such a program with YU and Accenture.

The partnership created between Accenture and the other firms and YU was innovative, exciting, impressive, educational, eye opening, and fun. This was my way of “dipping my toes in the consulting waters,” and it allowed me to make an informed decision

about pursuing consulting as a career.

This unique opportunity made it possible for me to combine both my passions, *chesed* (lovingkindness) and exploring the constantly innovating business landscape at large. This was a great way to gain hands on experience and training in consulting, and it allowed me to help others and the community during such a difficult time. After two weeks of training with renowned consulting professionals and my team winning the very exciting case competition, we began working with our assigned nonprofits. I was interning with Project Extreme, a one-of-a-kind nonprofit organization, providing unique, innovative, and individualized attention and services for teens-at-risk, their families, and their communities.

While working with Project Extreme, my partner and I mainly focused on researching corporate sponsorships, website development, and gaining awareness through implementing various marketing tactics. Having a diverse set of goals gave us the opportunity to strengthen and develop different skills. We were able to hone in on certain areas such as prioritization, client management, time management, teamwork, and many more.

The training by Accenture and the other firms was crucial and assisted us in accomplishing the goals set by Project Extreme. We received training in an engaging, clear, interactive, exciting and

practical way, which enabled our successes as interns.

From this program I gained an enormous amount of experience, knowledge, friendships and connections. I am excited to participate in new *chesed* opportunities and to continue exploring the consulting and vast business world. I am so grateful for the tireless efforts, attention, and patience from everyone who helped make this program into a possibility.

I constantly think about the sayings: “Everything happens for a reason” and “*Gam zu le'tovah*” (“This too, is for the best”). My plans had shifted multiple times and I had little to no control over what was happening, but the one thing that remained a constant was my faith in *Hashem* (God) — that it was all for the best. For as long as I can remember, I’ve been a strong believer in these philosophies, and this summer has reaffirmed those concepts for me.

The best one can do during this difficult time is to view obstacles as opportunities for growth, and trust that even if things aren’t clear in the moment, they’ll pan out to be for the best in the future.

Stepping Into The Zoom Spotlight: My Summer Experience Working At A Virtual Performing Arts Camp

By: Elisheva Hirsch



This summer I had planned on being in the Poconos organizing night activities, helping counselors and leading cheers as a head counselor at NCSY Camp Maor, a performing arts overnight camp for girls. I have been a camper and counselor there the past three years and was looking forward to taking on this leadership position. But when the world turned upside down, it became clear that, in the interest of everyone’s safety, we would not be engaging in the usual on-campus activities this summer. Instead, founder and director Sari Kahn and assistant director Rena Rubin decided to create a virtual Maor experience called Maor@Home. We worked together with other staff members to convert and adapt the traditional Maor program to the digital space. I welcomed July by covering my bedroom wall with a plastic tablecloth co-opted as a green screen and Amazon Priming some cute blue light glasses — unsure of what to expect but excited to begin.

Maor@Home garnered 45 campers (occupying a total of four bunks) from 25 cities across the United States and Canada. We sent each camper a “Maor box” that included a camp t-shirt, mask, green screen and other supplies they would need. Campers picked between concentrations of acting, singing and dancing, each of which culminated in a final performance. They also chose from a selection of master classes on art, dance, singing and acting which focused on improving skill and technique. Maor’s talented professional staff instructors (choreographer Rhonda Malkin is a former Rockette, play director Rachel Klein is an off-Broadway director — the list goes on) utilized the digital experience as an opportunity to explore new creative spaces with the girls. In addition to being a head counselor, I was the stage manager for the younger campers’ play; my excitement and awe grew daily as I watched our original Zoom play — a spaceship mystery which features the crew members communicating via video — develop into an incredible production. The schedule also included daily bunk time, *shiur* (Jewish studies learning), and other activities I helped create and run: electives, night activity, *chesed*, and other special programs. Our goals when planning were to reshape some

classic Maor activities for Zoom usage and also take advantage of the opportunity to do things we couldn't otherwise do at an in-person camp. Some of my favorite memories from camp were the guest workshops from Broadway actors and actresses; our partnership with a Brooklyn public school our assistant director teaches at for a social justice dance program; and writing, filming, and acting in a Murder Mystery night activity.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in Maor@Home this summer. The performing arts have a unique power to uplift spirits and connect us with each other and ourselves; in Maor, they bring a diverse group of Jewish girls together, creating an energy and atmosphere that is truly indescribable. I learned this summer that this holds true even across state lines and time zones, when new campers fit right in with the old. Although pulling off such an extensive and unprecedented program on such a short notice was hard and stressful at times, it was all well worth the effort seeing the joy it brought so many girls who really needed it during this difficult time, myself included. And hey — if you ever need someone to run a Zoom garbage bag dress fashion show, you know whom to call.

Daf Yomi At Beren: What Masekhet Shabbat Teaches Us About Resisting One's Nature

By: Shayna Herszage,
Managing Editor



Followers of the Daf Yomi cycle recently finished *Masekhet* (Tractate) *Shabbat* and began *Masekhet Eruvin*. At the end of *Shabbat*, the Talmud raises several anecdotes on the topic of astrology and unrealized or inaccurate astrological predictions.

One such excerpt, found in *Shabbat* 156b, can be paraphrased as follows:

Chaldean astrologers told the mother of Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak that her son would grow up to be a thief. In order to prevent this, she told her son to always cover his head so he would constantly have G-d in his thoughts, and to also pray. Despite not knowing why his mother would tell him this, Rav Nachman obeyed. One day, however, he was sitting and studying under a palm tree that did not belong to him. His head covering fell off, and he was overcome with the impulse to steal some of the dates from the

tree — an impulse upon which he acted immediately.

In this story, we see an example of someone whose future was predestined, and — after years of trying to resist — he eventually succumbed to his thieving personality.

This anecdote is interesting because it does not, on the surface, appear to fit the context of its *sugya* (section). While its *sugya* is focused on addressing cases of disproven astrological forecasts, this particular case ends with Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak falling prey to his nature as foretold in the constellations. Is this not contradictory to the argument of the *sugya*?

While I was unable to find a source explaining this difficulty, I believe that it is meant to foster a better understanding of one's limits and give credit where credit is due. Rav Nachman was, per the Chaldeans' conjectures, destined to be a career thief. Such a prediction might cause someone to simply accept a life of crime — it could easily serve as a stumbling block in the path to becoming a scholar. But Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak spent his entire life fighting this aspect of his personality, allowing him to become one of the great sages. To expect Rav Nachman to completely overcome his very nature would seemingly be unrealistic. Yet Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak defied expectations by combating his inclination for as long as he could, and he deserves immense respect for having managed to do so.

Similarly, we should give ourselves and those around us the same respect as they work to become better people. It is far from easy to reform a part of oneself — as the saying goes, old habits die hard. When someone regresses in their journey, whatever journey that may be, it is hardly a failure. View it rather as a temporary setback. By working hard to resist temptation and improve character, people already accomplish more than they realize.

This is particularly relevant as we enter the Jewish month of *Elul* and approach the High Holidays. During this period, we are often given the impression that repentance and self-improvement are measured on all-or-nothing scales. However, it is important to realize that making a serious effort to improve oneself is in its own right a laudable act that demonstrates strength of character. Once we acknowledge that no one is perfect — including ourselves — and that becoming better people is a work in progress, we can support each other on our personal journeys and ultimately create a kinder and more accepting society.

Summer Of Opportunity: Joy Ladin's "*Shekhinah* Speaks"

By: Shayna Herszage,
Managing Editor

This summer, I found myself in the same position as many other college students: at risk for being idle. With the coronavirus

pandemic causing many summer opportunities to be suddenly cancelled, thousands of college students in the United States were suddenly left without plans for summer break. In response, Yeshiva University's [Career Center](#) organized the "Summer of Opportunity," an initiative



focused on bringing opportunities such as internships and research positions to YU undergraduate students.

One of the research positions available was under Dr. Joy Ladin, a professor in the Stern College for Women English department. On the Career Center's online [CareerLink](#) database, Dr. Ladin's project description stated, "*Shekhinah* Speaks is a book-in-progress that consists of poems and an essay related to the *Shekhinah* [a form of G-d's presence]. The research I need includes tracking down references to the *Shekhinah* in rabbinic, Kabbalistic, and other ancient sources, and also in creative works such as poems and songs." Having taken two classes with Dr. Ladin, as well as having heard her discuss some of her poetry in relation to the *Shekhinah* at a 2019 [event](#) hosted by the Poetry, Feminist, and Jewish Activism Clubs, I was

interested in contributing to the research for this project.

Doing research for Dr. Ladin's project was by no means an easy task; in our first meeting via phone call, she explained the project in depth and told me the first step in my research was to collect and decipher as many sources as possible that refer to the *Shekhinah*. An initial search for mention of the *Shekhinah* on [Sefaria](#) brought well over 20,000 results, and I saw clearly that I was no longer at risk for being idle for the summer. For Dr. Ladin's project, I spent the summer collecting, translating, and summarizing sources from various categories of Jewish texts that refer to the *Shekhinah*.

Throughout the summer, I learned more about Dr. Ladin's project and her interest in the concept of the *Shekhinah* through phone calls, emails, reading her own [works](#), and attending an [event](#) she hosted through the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute. The *Shekhinah*, throughout Jewish texts, is often depicted as a female, often a passive component of G-d that is present in the world and often accompanies the Jewish people — both in times of joy and in times of exile. Dr. Ladin, in her Zoom event through the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, emphasized the fact that the *Shekhinah*, despite lacking a physical form, is considered a feminine entity. As such, She defies the gender binary and the traditional way of categorizing G-d and gender.

Through the Career Center's "Summer of Opportunity" and the opportunity Dr. Ladin has given me, I am learning more about the *Shekhinah* in literature and Jewish texts, getting firsthand experience in the Judaic research process, and gaining new information across a wide range of topics.

Science & Technology:

Lights, Fluorescence, Action: Live Imaging And Detection Of Genetic Sequences Using Molecular Probes

By: Mili Chizhik, News Editor

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, one can understand the importance of biological research and how it can impact each individual's life.

After my original summer plans fell through, I applied to a virtual summer internship at YU that allowed students to help research various subjects with the YU faculty. One lab that participated in this program was Dr. Irina Catrina's research lab, where the researchers are trying to find ways to image genetic sequences by using molecular probes or beacons. In simpler terms, if one wants to find a certain gene that encodes for a certain protein, or if one wants to locate a specific

genetic sequence within an area of an organism, a probe can be used to determine whether it is present. A molecular beacon or probe is an oligonucleotide — a short DNA or RNA molecule — that is complementary, or attracted, to the genetic sequence that one wants to image and locate. To create a probe that will find the proper target, one has to identify the specific gene they want and find the probe that will provide the most stable and spontaneous results.

For example, picture magnets — they are attracted to each other and will move towards each other unless something obstructs their ways. Just like the two magnets want to come close to each other, the probe's two ends will fold over and bond to each other, forming a hairpin-like shape. At the bottoms of the ends is a quencher dye and a fluorophore (something that releases a fluorescent light), and when they are together, no light is released (i.e. the light is quenched when together, otherwise a light/fluorescence is released and not quenched). When the probe is in the presence of the target sequence and it is more thermodynamically stable to bind to the target sequence than the original conformation (hairpin loop), light/fluorescence will be released because the quencher dye and fluorophore are not together (the fluorophore is not quenched by the quencher dye). With this fluorescence/light, one can identify whether the target sequence is present.

By using various programs written in Python, one can input a

file of the target genetic sequence and the program will provide a list of many potential probes that can be used to image the genetic material.

Using these techniques, researchers can learn more about genetic sequences in countless organisms. They can also help detect pathogens like the COVID-19 pathogen. When the nasal cavity is swabbed during the COVID-19 test, the contents are put in a solution and are broken down into smaller genetic components that can be detected by these probes and through fluorescence. Thus, it is very important and relevant for each individual to understand what impact the research has on the world and try to help further the advancements and breakthroughs of science.

Don't Let The Coronavirus Bite: Dreams During COVID-19

By: Shayna Herszage, Managing Editor

Each week since the United States went into quarantine mode, I have remembered vivid dreams ranging from almost comically mundane things such as learning an imagined page of Talmud or making a funny meme to bizarre images such as my pillow exploding with insects. Many other people I have spoken to have shared similar experiences — remembering several dreams that live on the polar ends of mundane and absurd.

Dr. Britney Blair of Stanford's Sleep Medicine Center explains that remembering dreams, as well as having these dreams belong on two very polar sides of a spectrum, is fitting to the changes we are all experiencing during coronavirus.

The absurd dreams, Dr. Blair believes, occur as a form of attempting to cope with the emotional toll of current events. Many professionals in the field of sleep view dreams as a way for a person's brain to process the emotions from throughout the day. According to Dr. Blair: "One of the reasons ... we are having this bizarre content and really vivid dreaming is because we don't have a specific visual to attach to this kind of collective trauma." Particularly due to the facts that the virus itself is not visible to the naked eye, and that most of the information people outside of the medical field receive is from the media, the brain generates its own dream content reflective of the emotions relevant to the individual.

A common element of the absurd emotional processing dreams, says Dr. Dierdre Barrett of the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is bugs — similar to my aforementioned dream about a pillow filled with insects. Other common elements include face masks and natural disasters. These components fit into bizarre dreams to help a person process the anxiety and other such emotions related to coronavirus and current events.

Meanwhile, the more mundane dreams, such as my dreams about Talmud and memes, may be occurring due to a lack of enrichment and stimulation outside of the home and technology. For example, Dr. Blair had a dream one night that she was shopping for a new bed by flipping through a catalog. She explains that the mundane quality and home setting of this dream may be reflective of her lack of new experiences in being stuck at home. She also believes that flipping through a physical catalog, instead of searching for one online, reflects her desire to have a break from technology, considering that almost all work and social interactions now occur through technology.

Additionally, Dr. Blair attributes the vivid remembering of dreams to a lowered sleep quality. While stuck at home, many people have started sleeping more hours each night. However, as she explains, a higher quantity of sleep leads to lower quality. As a result, people are waking up more frequently throughout the night, giving the brain a chance to process individual dreams and move them into long term memory.

In order to maintain more control over the content of dreams, Dr. Blair recommends sleeping in a dark room, having an organized sleep schedule, turning off technology at least 90 minutes before going to sleep. Additionally, she and Dr. Barrett both recommend focusing before bed on more desirable dream material.

What Is Physician-Assisted Suicide?

By: Rachel Jacobi, Science and Technology Editor

I was introduced to the concept of assisted suicide with the fiction novel "Me Before You" by Jojo Moyes. Published in 2012 and later turned into a movie, the controversial novel follows a romance in which the male protagonist, paralyzed by an accident, makes a conscious decision to undergo an assisted suicide procedure in an elite Swiss facility.

The clinic that assists the protagonist with his death does actually exist in Switzerland. This clinic, Dignitas (named for "death with dignity"), offers 'accompanied suicide' as one of its services. Their website advertises that "Dignitas can arrange, on reasoned request and medical proof, for its members the possibility of an accompanied suicide." At Dignitas, prerequisites for undergoing this process include possession of sound judgment, enough physical mobility to self administer a drug, and the cooperation of a physician — which is only obtained if the individual is suffering from a terminal illness, an incapacitating disability, or unbearable pain.

Physician-Assisted Suicide (PAS), or medical aid in dying, is not simply the withdrawal of medical care, like when 'pulling the plug.' PAS involves lethal intervention by a physician, deliberately designed to cause death.

As of 2019 in the United States, a legal prescription for such medication is available to adult residents of a few states that have embraced ‘death with dignity laws.’ These states include California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington. Not unlike Switzerland, individuals pursuing a PAS must be mentally sound, diagnosed with a terminal illness (defined as six months left to live, and confirmed by two physicians), and a capability to self administer the medication — either orally or via injection. In the U.S., any licensed physician in any of the above-mentioned states can agree to prescribe the medication necessary for PAS, although they legally retain the right to not participate.

To induce death, the method that Dignitas offers is a fast-acting and lethal barbiturate — a sedative that acts as a central nervous system depressant — that the patient consumes by dissolving a capsule in drinking water. Following consumption, the patient falls into sleep within minutes, and painlessly dies. In the U.S., physicians can determine the medication for this as there is no specific drug that physicians are required to prescribe. Patients can receive an oral dosage of pentobarbital, a fast-acting barbiturate that slows the activity of the brain and nervous systems. In large doses, it will shut down the activity of the brain and heart in as quickly as one minute. Secobarbital is another prescribed barbiturate for PAS. More common than pentobarbital, it is given at 9000

mg. in capsule form to induce a quick, painless death. Due to the high cost of these medications, beginning in 2015, other medications have also been used, and alternatives continue to be explored.

PAS is not a common procedure. In Colorado, the number of reported deaths by PAS for 2019 is 129, and in California, the number of reported deaths by PAS in 2018 was 337. Further, although PAS has been legal in Oregon since 1997, and has one of the highest numbers of reported deaths, that number is still relatively low, at 1,657 patients.

Despite the legality of PAS and the strict guidelines for eligibility, PAS remains an uncomfortable issue. Those that support PAS argue that overtreating patients takes a toll on frail patients and burned-out doctors, and continuing treatment when it will do little but prolong pain is cruelty. They differentiate PAS from suicide by pointing out that patients are terminally ill and mentally sound, and are thus making a logical, rather than irrational, decision to end physical pain on their own terms.

However, in addition to it being a morally questionable practice, many problems exist with PAS. First, there are instances that the prescribed drugs sometimes result in adverse outcomes, including unconsciousness, nausea, vomiting, and an extended death that can take up to 24 hours. Further, despite the laws that allow physicians to opt-out, there is evidence of physicians being

intimidated or pressured into participating involuntarily in PAS. Finally, many experts argue that, similar to otherwise healthy individuals who commit suicide because of severe emotional pain, people who opt for PAS do so because of severe physical pain that possibly leads to emotional complications, and should be treated for clinical depression. However, many PAS patients fail to be referred for psychiatric evaluation before being prescribed lethal medication.

Today, PAS remains prohibited by most states and countries. The ethics of PAS are medically and legally complex, and the morality of physicians medically assisting patients in dying is the cause for great debate. While many that are pro-PAS argue the importance of individual autonomy, in most cases the ethical and practical cons of PAS overwhelm that consideration. Moving forward, politicians and physicians need to seriously examine the ethical and practical questions surrounding PAS, and consider whether this practice truly is the best option for suffering patients.

Mars Is Becoming More Habitable As We Speak

By: Sara Muharremi

Last spring, I had written an [article](#) debating whether or not Mars was habitable, and if so — would people be willing to buy a Groupon for a piece of land on Mars?

On August 3, in the Nature Geoscience Journal, Western University and the University of

British Columbia reported that Mars' surface and valleys were carved by water melting beneath sheets of glacial ice, not necessarily by free-flowing water, as once thought.

The original hypothesis and assumption described ancient Mars as being a 'warm and wet' planet, where the free flowing waters had eroded, creating all the valleys on Mars. On Mars, all the valleys don't necessarily look the same which therefore depicts that they were carved in more than one type of manner (meaning not just free flowing waters). Similarly, Earth's valleys are also of distinctive shapes that were made by rivers, glaciers and other processes.

The lead author of this research, Anna Grau Galofre, developed and used new techniques in order to examine thousands of Martian valleys. These valleys were then compared to "subglacial channels" in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Similarities were found between the Martian valleys and those of the Archipelago, inspiring the researchers to further their study. In their research they found that Devon Island in the Canadian Arctic serves as the closest comparison we have to Mars on Earth as, "... it is a cold, dry, polar desert, and the glaciation is largely cold-based."

Further analysis of the Martian valleys yielded results that "... are the first evidence [...] that channels and valleys networks can form under ice sheets, as part of the drainage system that forms

naturally under an ice sheet when there's water accumulated at the base." These findings are revolutionary because they offer a better explanation as to how these valleys could have formed roughly 3.8 billion years ago, on a



planet that is situated further from the Sun than Earth, especially during a time where our Sun was not *as* strong. An ice sheet can also offer increased protection, support, and stability for any water beneath it, which can support survival conditions of any theoretical ancient previous life on Mars. And finally, the ice sheet could've also offered additional protection from solar radiation since Mars' magnetic field disappeared billions of years ago.

So maybe an investment in that Groupon would be worth it after all.

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In Other News: The Arctic Is On Fire And The Earth Is Melting

By: Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

On August 1, 2020, NASA's satellites captured images of the arctic on fire. BBC reported that the "satellite images show[ed] how the plumes of smoke from the fires, many caused by dry storms in hot weather, [could] be seen from space." Contrary to popular belief, wildfires in the arctic region are quite common between the months of May and October, but the intensity and the length of time (the average wildfire burns for roughly 37 days) that these fires lasted was a cause for suspicion. It doesn't take a scientist to note that abnormal wildfires, no matter the location, are caused by climate change. Not only is climate change causing these wildfires to ignite at the intensity that they are, but the fires themselves are also contributing towards raising atmospheric temperature. Every wildfire, no matter where they are

located, increases the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere, but because these fires were abnormal, they could cause detrimental effects to our atmosphere and ecosystem.

According to an analysis by science correspondent Jonathan Amos of BBC News, “global satellites are now tracking a swathe of new and ongoing wildfires within the Arctic Circle. The conditions were laid in June, the hottest June for the planet yet observed in the instrumented era. [...] A lot of the particulate matter from these fires will eventually come to settle on ice surfaces further north, darkening them and thus accelerating melting.”



One of the most pressing climate issues right now is the rise in sea level and the melting of the ice caps. With the information that Mr. Amos has supplied to BBC News, it can be concluded that the melting process is about to be accelerated. A recent computer model, provided by The Washington Post, showed that at the rate Earth is heating, the arctic could become seasonally ice-free by 2035. And the process has already begun.

“With unusually warm conditions settling over northern Canada, a substantial portion of the remaining sections of the Milne Ice Shelf — Canada’s last remaining intact ice shelf, broke off Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, between July 28 and July 31, according to the Canadian Ice Service and newly released satellite photos from Planet Labs.” What was once the size of the District of Columbia, the Canadian ice shelf is now all water.

It cannot be stressed enough that climate change is real and that the ice caps are melting whether people want to believe it or not. The truth of the matter is that unless something is done within the next five years to delay the melting, there will soon be nothing left of the arctic, and a major part of the Earth’s landscape will be decimated.

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Vitamin D And Calcium To Help With BPPV (Vertigo) Symptoms

By: Sara Muharremi



According to the National Health Service (NHS), vertigo is “... the sensation that you, or the environment around you is spinning.” Although vertigo can occur at any age, it is most commonly found in people who are 65 or older. Other symptoms that go along with vertigo can include loss of balance, feeling sick or being sick, and dizziness.

But what exactly can cause vertigo and how can it be treated?

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is one type of vertigo that occurs when certain head movements trigger the vertigo sensations. It is caused by tiny crystals of calcium carbonate located within chambers of the inner ear which affects balance. Dr. Cherian, from the Cleveland Clinic, provides an analogy regarding these crystals. “[I]magine a hill with blades of grass, and on top of each blade is a crystal. Together, these crystals form an interconnected matrix. Whenever the blades of grass move, so do the crystals. The

blades of grass represent cilia, hair-like processes that are attached to tiny nerves in your inner ear. When the crystals move, it stimulates the nerves to fire, which tells the brain your head is moving.”

The reason why these crystals might cause someone to experience vertigo and dizziness is because within the inner ear there are structures called the otolith organs which contain fluid and the calcium carbonate crystals. BPPV causes the crystals and the fluid to dislodge and move into the semicircular canals of the ear. Here, the crystals can touch the cilia, and the nerves will fire sending inaccurate information regarding how the person is moving and where they are positioned. This is where dizziness, feelings of spinning, and nausea may occur.

To treat BPPV, a specific series of head movements known as the Epley maneuver can help move the crystals back into their right place. This maneuver can have a high success rate if performed properly — but the symptoms still tend to recur often. There has been, however, new research and data to suggest that for people suffering from BPPV, taking a supplement of calcium and vitamin D can be a way to prevent vertigo from recurring, especially if someone is deficient in vitamin D to begin with.

There have been other studies involving women with osteoporosis and the prevalence of BPPV amongst them. The research confirms strong correlations between low bone

density and low vitamin D levels, with relation to BPPV. Vitamin D helps with absorption of calcium, and the crystals in the inner ear are made up of calcium carbonate, meaning that sufficient levels of calcium and vitamin D are crucial for inner ear health as well.

Although there still aren't any foolproof cures for BPPV, there is hope in knowing that something as simple as a vitamin D and calcium supplement may help.

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The Explosive Chemistry of Fireworks

By: Nicole Soussana



When we think of fireworks, we typically think of the Fourth of July or New Year's Eve. Scientists, on the other hand, prefer to think of fireworks in terms of their logistics. Three main aspects regarding the mechanics of fireworks can be further investigated and understood through chemistry. These categories are color, explosion, and the health and safety of our environment.

In the 1800s, the color of fireworks was due to black body radiation. This is the phenomenon that all objects radiate electromagnetic waves, and the object's color is influenced solely by its temperature. Those fireworks were a yellow-orange color. Modern fireworks are colored by a spectral emission of excited gases. Unlike black body radiation, this is dependent on chemical composition. The electrons of a certain element become excited by an explosive burst of heat and jump to a higher energy state. When they come back down to their original state, energy is released and a characteristic color is produced.

The fireworks displays we may have seen boast an array of colors. This is because scientists formulate fireworks with metal chloride compounds, including metals of known characteristic color, upon excitation. For example, barium chloride produces a green color, strontium chloride displays red, copper is associated with the color blue, calcium with orange, sodium with yellow, and a mixture of strontium and copper will result in purple. If you've taken a general chemistry lab course, you might be reminded of flame test experiments. Interestingly, similar experiments are conducted to produce new firework colors.

Metal chloride compounds are combined with fuel into dough-like lumps called 'stars.' The fuel is an oxidizer which assists in the burning process. Potassium perchlorate is often used in star formulas because it is an oxidizer as well as a chlorine donor. The colorful dots of light in the sky are a result of exploding stars.

Physics and chemistry work together to ensure a spark at just the right moment in the sky. The speed of burning, volume of gas released, weight this volume of gas can lift, and the strength of the casing for the star must all be taken into account for a successful fireworks display. In order to send a weight soaring into the sky before it bursts, a slow burning gunpowder, which gives off gas, is used. The gunpowder is in the form of pellets in order to prolong the burn time.

There is so much thought and science poured into the beautiful fireworks we enjoy, however it is important to consider the environmental side effects of our celebratory customs. The smoke and vapors which are released during a display pollute the environment. As an example, strontium, barium, chlorine, and unreacted perchlorate used for fuel, can all be toxic fallouts. The combustion of chemicals with oxygen results in greenhouse gases and pollutants which can cause acid rain, among other negative outcomes. Additionally, exploded metals take the form of aerosols, which can poison all of our basic needs for survival: air, soil, and water. In 2018, 8.6 million kilograms of fireworks were used in the US. In 2019 after the Diwali festival of lights in India, there were certain areas that had an Air Quality Index score of 500 which is the most severe level of air pollution.

It seems as though society is unlikely to give up on its love for fireworks, and therefore the responsibility falls on scientists to create safer materials. The US Armament Research and Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC) is developing chlorine-free compositions that will produce the same colors without using harmful metals. Research has shown that boron can be used instead of barium to form a green color. High nitrogen content materials can produce red rather than using strontium, and also has a low smoke and soot content because it can contain little carbon and hydrogen.

While military pyrotechnics have already begun to establish safer measures, it might be a while until our normal celebratory fireworks adapt to a more environmentally friendly composition. It is important to note that we can greatly affect our world with our choices, whether that be by polluting it or working to cure it. We can appreciate the science which goes into a beautiful fireworks display, but it's more worthwhile to appreciate the science that will undo the damage it has caused.

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Business:

Antitrust Or Alternate Agendas?

By: Yehuda Waitman



Imagine you live in the year 1890. Large corporations — known as trusts — seemingly dominate your everyday life. Want to purchase a cigarette for a quick smoke? American Tobacco Company, producer of 90% of U.S. cigarettes in 1890, has you covered. Need some oil to heat your home during the cold winters? Standard Oil, responsible for 90-95% of oil refinement in the U.S. in the 1890s, will provide that for you. Missing your Great Aunt Louise in Montana? J.P. Morgan's railroad trust, Northern Securities Company, will take you there. The examples are numerous. The scope of power and influence of such business trusts makes it appear to you that they've squashed all competition beneath their firm grip.

Consumers are being forced to pay the prices set by trusts, or face the harsh reality of living without basic necessities. It appears as if these trusts are in control of Congress, highlighted by lawmakers' receiving backing from trusts. Filled with rage, you think to yourself: "Something

must be done!" Heroically, in steps Congress and Senator John Sherman to approve the Sherman Antitrust Act with the goal of utilizing legislation to begin limiting the power of trusts. Over the next 25 years, antitrust legislation advances further. Slowly but surely, massive trusts are broken up, thereby restoring healthy competition to the American economy. "The American people are saved," you think to yourself! And indeed we were.

No longer do single businesses dominate entire industries as they once did. Need gas for your car? Options are abundant. Standard Oil was broken up into 34 *separate entities* following the passage of various antitrust bills, opening the door for the countless oil companies operating today. Want to head west to visit relatives? U.S. airlines are constantly engaging in price wars with one another for passengers. Everywhere you turn today, it seems competition is abundant, and when contemplating the intentions of antitrust legislation from the early 1900s, it certainly seems like goals have been achieved. Yet, many lawmakers today seem rather confused.

On Wednesday, July 29, 2020, lawmakers held a congressional hearing on four large tech firms' business practices. Top dogs at Apple, Facebook, Google, and Amazon were subject to several hours of grilling by representatives from both sides of the aisle, with lawmakers universally concerned about the level of influence these companies have on American

society. Amazon was accused of competing against third-party sellers on its own website; Facebook was speared with allegations of gobbling up rival social media platforms to maintain a vast market control; Google was charged with controlling too much of the internet's traffic; Apple was blamed for its App Store policies; the accusations were heaped on relentlessly for five grueling hours. Rep. David Cicilline, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's antitrust subcommittee, even began the hearing by stating: "Our founders would not bow before a king. Nor should we bow before the emperors of the online economy." Upon hearing these charges, a visitor from the early 1900s would conclude that trusts have managed to live on in America and still dominate our lives, despite our best efforts. Individuals reading this column, if unaware of additional information, might fairly conclude the same. Sadly, the truth laughs in the face of our lawmakers.

Our tech giants today have little parallels with the trusts of yesteryear. The biggest divergence, yet somehow unacknowledged by our representatives, is that today's tech giants are stalwarts in areas of life that are completely unessential for a functioning society. Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Google all offer products sustained by the internet. The internet, many of us may have forgotten, developed *just* in the past 50 years. As evidenced by the fact that humans have been

alive and thriving for much longer than 50 years, the internet is not necessarily a basic necessity. Even our most concerned representative at the July 29 hearing would have a hard time denying this fact. Simply put, we *do not need* any of these companies' products to live. The opposite is true of 20th century trusts — they *dominated* industries which were *critical* for society to function: Oil was a necessary basic good to survive cold winters; addicted smokers *had* to satisfy their nicotine cravings by smoking; many buildings could not be constructed without the metals produced by U.S. Steel; railroads were the only key to long distance travel; and so on. To suggest, even for just a moment, that the practices of today's tech firms warranted a hearing from a *House antitrust committee*, is akin to spitting in the face of our lawmakers who worked tirelessly a century ago to protect American citizens. The two categories of companies operate in completely different realms of necessity for society, and it is shameful for today's lawmakers to suggest they are paralleled.

Granted, one could still argue that despite the fact that these firms operate in non-essential business areas, their outsize market control is a reason for concern. Upon examination of *exactly how much* influence these four tech companies have within their industry, one would again find themselves bewildered with our lawmakers' attitudes. These firms have widely disparate levels of influence across their respective industries, certainly not

warranting a congressional hearing which did not distinguish between the four in terms of 'evilness' levels.

Amazon? It controls roughly [38%](#) of U.S. ecommerce sales, representing less than 5% of all total retail sales. Apple? It controls 40-45% of all mobile phone sales in America, with its closest competitor, Samsung, commanding a formidable [25-30%](#) of the market. Facebook? It hovers minimally north of [55%](#) of all U.S. social media site visits. Google? While it admittedly does control [85-90%](#) of the search engine market, it's among the *least* guilty of firms accused of beating up on ordinary citizens, simply because Google operates in a manner which offers *nothing for sale to its users*. No product or service is offered *anywhere* on Google through web searches, which means antitrust legislation is wildly irrelevant. It's impossible to proclaim a violation of antitrust laws when *no one is buying anything*. Even more so for Facebook which has a far smaller market share.

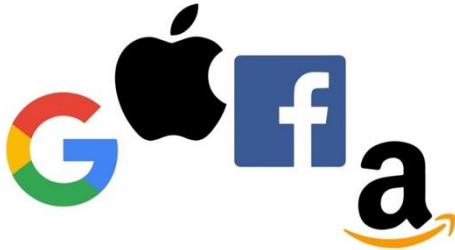
Concerning Amazon and Apple, which *do* actually offer products for sale, the market share data results in a conclusion which was exactly the goal of antitrust legislation: healthy competition. 50% of market share, as in Apple's case, is a far, far, cry from the 90% *or above* of market share 20th century trusts enjoyed. Amazon, controlling 38% of ecommerce and only 5% of total retail sales, clearly indicates robust and thriving competition. Clearly, these four companies have little reason to be grouped

together as equal villains; there are little to no parallels which exist between the firms' respective market influence. Lawmakers were comparing peaches to potatoes. If our representatives are legitimately concerned about anti-competitive business actions, perhaps they should stop handing out billions of dollars' worth of defense contracts to only a handful of firms — see Boeing's decades-long history of receiving such contracts with little competition.

If these companies all operate in unessential business realms and have widely varying levels of market control, what then motivated this congressional hearing under the guise of antitrust investigations, and the grouping these widely uncomparable companies as equal criminals? Could it be the ever-increasing Democratic disgust for ultra-wealthy individuals, as the heads of these firms all are? Or perhaps, it's the Republican dislike for liberal-leaning organizational policies which these companies adhere to? Theories abound. One thing is for certain: the lawmakers who called this hearing on July 28 have thrown piles of trash upon the legacy of our bravest antitrust legislators.

The Big Tech: Pandemic's Lifesavers or Dominators

By: Shaina Levin, Business
Manager



On Wednesday, July 29, 2020, CEOs of Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon, the four most powerful technology companies, together known as the “Big Tech,” sat virtually before Congress amid antitrust allegations. After years of speculation and investigation, Representative David Cicilline (D-RI), the chairman of the House Judiciary Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law Subcommittee, interrogated each CEO. The focus of their questions was regarding the claim that these highly influential technology companies consume too much market share and have unfair tactics of eliminating competition. With a combined market capitalization of \$5.28 trillion, the enormous amount of power and influence held by these four companies complicates fair business negotiations and a fair chance of competition with other companies. They were also interrogated for prioritizing monopoly rent, the ability for a company to charge more when there is less competition in the market — bullying smaller competitors into abiding by these

larger companies' rules. During this hearing, the committee questioned each of the four CEO's under oath as well as based off of emails and internal documents from these companies to determine the best solution to upkeep antitrust regulations.

While Amazon's investigation over the past year was not as detailed as that of the other companies, CEO Jeff Bezos was questioned just as much as the other CEOs. These questions primarily centered around Amazon's treatment of third party sellers and whether Amazon is responsible for dishonest selling practices such as counterfeit. Amazon was also questioned regarding internally-created algorithms which promote Amazon's products ahead of their competitors. Furthermore, when Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) asked Bezos if Amazon uses data from independent sellers when making business decisions to gain a competitive advantage, he replied, “I can't answer that question yes or no. What I can tell you is we have a policy against using seller-specific data to aid our private label business but I can't guarantee that policy has never been violated.”

Apple's Tim Cook was faced with fewer questions than the other CEOs which were mostly focused on the app store. The main issue at hand was whether Apple favors their own apps ahead of those of their competitors when considering key factors such as pricing apps or even making them accessible and known to consumers. Cook answered that they have always treated each app

equally, carefully reviewing each one for the sake of security. He continued to point out multiple non-Apple apps that continue to increase competition and give benefits for consumers. Cook continued to defend against these accusations throughout the entire hearing.

Next came Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, who faced a series of different questions revolving around Facebook's aggressive acquisition strategy. Zuckerberg defended both himself and Facebook, claiming that his company's practices were law-abiding and were encouraged by strategic investing tactics. An email that Zuckerberg sent in 2012 was read, and he was asked to explain his comment to a Facebook Senior Engineer that Facebook is “[l]ikely to buy other competitive startups, but it will be a while before we can buy Google.” This was in alignment with the claims of Facebook's strive for market power; for example, acquiring Instagram as this social media site was viewed as a rival. Zuckerberg responded that he didn't remember sending this email, but it sounded to him like a comment that was made as a joke.

Lastly, Cicilline started questioning Google's Sundai Pichai. Google is seen as the company with the highest risk due to their hitech. Pichai was questioned about their control over the advertising market, as well as the alleged abuse of search engines which diverted consumers' searches away from competing websites. Pichai responded that Google strives to

understand the data they see and use it to best serve customers as any company should and does do. Another point of questioning brought up by the committee was by the Republicans who questioned Google's biases to how the Republican party is viewed and represented on platforms such as YouTube and Google Search. Pichai denied these allegations.

On Thursday, July 30, 2020, the day following the hearing, all four companies showed an increase in their earnings per share in Q2 2020, despite being under scrutiny due to the hearing. Amazon completely conquered this quarter, despite being in the middle of a pandemic with an increase in revenues of \$88.9 billion from last quarters \$63.4 billion. Their revenue also exceeded their expectations of \$81.53 billion projected revenue. Along with this increase, their share price was \$3,051.88. Despite spending on safety measures in the workplace which amounted to \$4 billion, Amazon projects continuous increase for the remainder of the year and beyond.

Apple's revenues increased by 11% from prior years to \$59.7 billion, exceeding their expectations of only \$52.25 billion in revenue this quarter, and their share price amounted to \$384.76. In their quarterly report, Apple also announced their 4-1 stock split in order to make their stocks more available to a wider range of investors. Similarly, Facebook's revenue also went up 11% to \$18.7 billion (which is more than their projected revenue

of \$17.4 billion) with a share price of \$234.50. Finally, Google's parent company, Alphabet, reported an increased revenue of \$38.3 billion (more than the projected \$37.36 billion) and a share price of \$1,538.37.

These high tech companies have become a vital part of society, especially due to the coronavirus pandemic and the necessity for more online interactions. Despite the hearing putting these four companies under scrutiny, the rise in these companies' revenues and earnings proves the high success and vitality of these companies. Just as James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) explained at the beginning of Wednesday's hearing, "[b]eing big is not inherently bad, quite the opposite. In America you should be rewarded for success. We're here to better understand the role your companies have in the digital marketplace and importantly the effect they have on consumers and the public at large." The next step in the investigation will consist of Congress reviewing their findings from both the companies' emails and internal documents which will lead to an updated report.

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Stock Psychology: The Disposition Effect

By: Shayna Herszage,
Managing Editor



During summer break, I, like millions of college students, decided to experiment with something risky and strange. However, this risky behavior did not involve substances, fetishes, or crime — rather, I began to venture into the world of investing, specifically the stock market.

One thing I quickly learned about the stock market is that, in fact, I

know next to nothing about finance. However, as a psychology major, I can not help but notice that there is an undeniable psychological component to patterns of buying and trading stocks — one that I could use to my advantage.

The nature of the stock market is similar to that of gambling. A person takes their bets in the form of investment, but they ultimately have no control over the performance of the stock — only educated guesses based off of patterns, news reports, or off of the educated guesses of others.

As such, much of the existing literature about the [psychology of gambling](#) also applies to stock investing. For example, a common phenomenon in gambling psychology is the gambler's fallacy. The gambler's fallacy dictates that, if an outcome is repeated several times, the likelihood of said outcome occurring again decreases. However, the outcome is not necessarily less likely — hence the fallacy.

Similar to the gambler's fallacy is the [disposition effect](#) — the tendency for stocks to be sold when they are at a high, and the tendency for stocks to not be sold when they are at a low. When a person's stock is steadily high, they may subscribe, consciously or otherwise, to the notion that their stock may drop at any moment. As a result, they often sell their stocks and quit while they are ahead. Meanwhile, when a person's stock is steadily low, the opposite occurs. Rather than quitting while they are ahead and

selling the stock before it can drop further, people are more likely to hold onto this stock with the expectation that its value may rise at any moment. However, like the case of the gambler's fallacy, the disposition effect is not necessarily accurate — the low stock may stagnate or even plunge even lower, and the high stock may stagnate or spike upward. While stocks, by definition, do not exist in a vacuum, they are also not completely dependent on the recently charted data, nor do they strive to defy the patterns.

A [study](#) by Frydman et al. provides neuroscientific indication of the power of the disposition effect in stock investment. In the study, research participants traded stocks on a computer while in an fMRI scanner, allowing for observation of neural activity during the stock simulation. The study found that the majority of subjects, when selling stocks at a high price, had increased stimulation of the striatum — a part of the brain, specifically of the basal ganglia, that is instrumental in the reward system. Meanwhile, selling stocks at a low price did not cause the same level of reward system-related activity in the brain. Essentially, these findings showed that the subjects, on a neural level, believed that selling stocks at a high point was inherently more beneficial than selling them at a low point — a belief that is possible, but not inherent. This indicates the presence of the disposition effect in the subjects' stock trading decisions.

Resisting psychological phenomena is far from easy. By definition, it goes against the way many people are predisposed to perceiving the world around them. However, in the case of trading stocks, a person may benefit from understanding the fallacy of the disposition effect, such that they may overcome the urge to sell high stocks or keep low stocks when they should not. By looking at trends in the world instead of in the vacuum of following the gambler's fallacy, a stock investor may experience greater profits from their investments.

Day Trading: What Is It, And Should I Do It?

By: Yael Evgi

It's risky, exhilarating, and sometimes, ends in a drink or two. No, I'm not talking about a night in Vegas, I'm talking about the latest market trend; day trading. To understand what Day trading is, let us begin by defining it. The act of making a "Day Trade" involves the speculative buying and selling of a financial instrument such as stocks, options, Forex currency, and futures contracts within the same day. Day Trading is largely known as risky and irresponsible for its uncertain outcomes. Moreover, famous investors such as Warren Buffet look down upon the contested strategy as a contrast to the safer bets of value investing. However, 2020 has seen a year-to-date dramatic increase of individuals who trade speculatively. This trend was last

seen during the Dot-Com internet stock boom at the end of the 20th century. So — why are there so many day-traders now, and should you try it?

As our population became confined to our homes, computer, and phone screens, many began looking for alternative ways of making money. The attractive method of buying and selling a stock on the same day with hopes for that security to increase in price value has become one of the most popular. Google trends indicate that in the last 12 months, searches for “Day Trading” have been at their most popular in March at the onset of the pandemic, and recently in June. Searches on Youtube have additionally been at their peak. One can easily find thousands of videos explaining the art of day trading and some of the current hottest stocks to buy. Nowadays, It has become easier than ever to trade or invest in the market with almost all brokerages offering commission-free trading. One relatively new brokerage, in particular, Robinhood (Robinhood Markets Inc.), has become one of the most attractive trading platforms and communities during the Pandemic. Their game-like interface and simple functionalities make the interface attractive to millennials and even young Gen-Z traders in hopes to create riches. According to The Wall Street Journal, Robinhood reported a record-shattering number of 3 million new accounts opened during the first quarter of 2020.

I opened one of those 3 million new accounts. Personally, I’ve always been fascinated by the stock market, but as a political science and psychology major, I’ve never had a chance to truly learn about it. After the rest of our Spring 2020 semester was announced to remain online, I decided that now was my opportunity to learn about investing. While finishing my spring semester, I began reading the “Journal” every morning, I signed up for courses on the stock market, read “The Intelligent Investor” by Benjamin Graham, and joined a twitter community with like-minded traders (shoutout to my YU trading squad). After months of learning, losing, and gaining on paper trading programs, I tested my skills this summer. Since beginning, the exhilarating process has taught me a lot about perseverance, risk management, and the psychology of the stock market as a whole. I’ve created and joined a community of friends and peers who impel each other towards profit. I hope with all I’ve gained to create a platform of educational tools for those who were new to trading and investing like I was. The process of day trading is rewarding, but nonetheless not for everyone. Statistics show that profitable day traders make up a small proportion of all traders, roughly 10%. However, I believe that with passion comes perseverance, and anyone can become that 10%.

Arts & Culture:

August Poetry Feature: Unknown

who knows

By: Zippy Spanjer

Each month, the YU Observer sends a call to YU students for poetry submissions following a specific theme. This month, the theme was ‘Unknown’, and we are featuring Zippy Spanjer’s piece, ‘who knows’ Other submissions of [honorable mention](#) have been published as well.

There’s a stained-glass window, a mirror, a wall,

a mosaic perhaps

who knows

Not us. It has been

years since

it was clean

And the colors and the patterns
and the artist’s design

are

hidden

beneath years of accumulated
grime, dirt, dust

chips and cracks

who knows

The window in the woods it lies

In the ruins in the woods

the ruins of a castle, a manor, a
cottage

who knows

It's dirty and dusty and grimy and
musty and

beautiful under the layers of time.

There's a girl in the woods she
lies

alone, lost, abandoned,

who knows

Are they the same woods? Are
they others? Which would make a
better narrative?

Who knows?

She's wandering, wandering, on
and on

her shoes are tattered, her boots
are new, her feet are bare

who knows

She's seeking solace, answers,
friends, a name

Who knows

She's wandering, wandering, on
and on

If she finds the window, the ruins,
the wall

Will she see the beauty?

Who knows?

*Do you want to see your writing
published? The theme for
September's poetry submissions is
"Epiphany." Send all submissions
to theyuobserver@gmail.com by
September 18.*

Things To Do In NYC: COVID-19 Edition

By: Kate Weinberg

Typically, summer has been the
time that students have the
freedom to do as they please.
Without the usual classwork
responsibilities, the three months
that follow finals are often filled
with friends, trips, and whatever
else you can think of. However,
summer 2020 was anything but a
typical summer.

After a semester of transitioning
to online classes in your home,
taking lunch breaks in your home,
taking tests in your home,
communicating through Zoom in
your home, you begin to crave an
adventure outside of your living
quarters. But in line with COVID-
19 protocols, there are restrictions
that require you to think twice
about your days' plans. However,
New York City has not skipped a
beat in creating activities
accessible during this strange
time. Activities may look
different, but there are plenty of
highlights to choose from.

Here are some of my personal
favorites!

The Cliffs at DUMBO

Located under the Manhattan
bridge, the cliffs at [DUMBO](#) is an
outdoor rock climbing experience
allowing you to test your strength.

Kayak at Brooklyn Bridge Park

From August 19 until October 14,
you can head to the [East River](#) for
an amazing view of lower
Manhattan and see the Statue of
Liberty for FREE on Wednesday
evenings.

Drive-in Movie Theater

Yup, the drive-in movie theaters
are making a comeback, exciting
news especially since normal

theaters have been closed for
months. These drive-ins are
popping up all over town:
[Brooklyn Drive-in](#), [Queens' Bel
Aire Diner drive-in movie theater](#),
[Uptown Drive-In at Yankee
Stadium](#), [Courtesy Queens Drive-
In](#), [Queens Drive-In at Flushing
Meadows Corona Park](#). The
Skyline Drive-in is a must-see,
offering a view of the city and a
movie. You can visit [here](#) to find
your next movie near you!

The High Line

The High Line has [reopened!](#)
Now instead of taking long walks
in your own neighborhood you
can venture out to the Highline
and lift yourself above the city
and into an oasis of historic
buildings and beautiful scenery!

Governor's Island

New York City has a [172-acre
island](#) dedicated to recreation.
Grab a roundtrip ferry ride for just
\$3 and head to a day of fun. What
is there to do? Ride bikes, lay in
the hammock grove, go on slides,
and explore art and historic sites!

While COVID-19 had the
potential to put a damper on the
summer, there are many ideas just
like these to enjoy your time.
Finding the perfect activity takes
a bit more research, but with
creativity and effort to enjoy the
city, there are endless
opportunities.

As A Written Leaf: "Nickel and Dimed"

By: Elyanna Saperstien

Nickel and Dimed

By: Barbara Ehrenreich

Genre: Investigative

Journalism/Memoir

Total score: 9/10

Book in five words: America and the minimum wage.

If you Love: Easy but meaningful reads; strong narrative voices — this is the book for you.

If you Hate: Numerical understanding without the human aspect of social issues — this is the book for you.

This old book was a new discovery after I had seen a random, positive review on Goodreads recommending it to anyone who wanted to understand America's blue collar class (with a tenth of America's labor force laid off, it seems particularly apropos). The book follows the author's journey of trying to sustain herself for a year on working class wage. Ehrenreich examines the reality of the "other half" of America, and in the process, she chronicles her travels across the United States with her ever-present companions: fear, hunger, pain, and curiosity.

Though this book was written in 2001, it retains a startling relevance (at least in terms of the humanity aspect; although, as time and legislation has moved on, this book is relevant to some states in the U.S. more than others). As you read, you'll fall in love with both the language and all of the side characters you only meet for a couple of pages. From waitresses, busboys, and cooks, to housekeepers and dietary aides, she captures her surroundings with succinct accuracy and evocative depictions. What separates this book from other

explorations of minimum wage in America is its intense personability. Ehrenreich abandons coworkers, tries to help others, and deals with the guilt, empathy, privilege and compassion that led her on this journey in the first place. This lack of distance humanizes a population that, as Ehrenreich points out, has been largely hidden from view.

Ehrenreich travels from Florida to Maine — sit on her shoulder as she works the late shifts and searches for housing and food. For anyone who has not had to struggle with job, food, and home insecurity, this book will be a real eye-opener. As someone who grew up with parents in white collar jobs, who has been blessed with a college education, I still thought I was relatively 'in touch' with America. I could not have been more wrong. This book is for all those who have a desire to understand and engage with what American poverty, survival, and minimum wage appear as with their humanity still intact.

Though the book is not a rigorously statistical one, it's an incredibly human one. This book remains, and always should be, an integral part of the library of anyone with, or looking to form, an opinion on minimum wage.

Agree? Disagree? Have something to say? Books to suggest?

Hit me up on Facebook: Elyanna Saperstein

The Dark Side of TikTok

By: Aliza Leichter, Social Media Manager

TikTok, a viral video-sharing app, originally called Musical.ly, was acquired by Chinese tech company ByteDance in 2017 for up to \$1 billion. Three years later, the platform has become a massive success with more than two billion downloads and a value of \$50 billion. TikTok allows users to create and upload short videos showcasing their talents. In between innocuous videos of lip-synching to viral songs and choreographed dance challenges is a different sound, the sound of all-too-familiar antisemitism. One video featured racist sketches of characters with large noses labelled "A Sneaky Jew" and "Mega Jew," followed by antisemitic tropes that Jewish people control the media, financial sector, and government. In another clip, a TikTok user "duets" — a video reply alongside another original post — a video addressing the dangers of antisemitic slurs. The user filmed themselves opening an oven door — an obvious, horrific reference to the crematories at Auschwitz — as the original video plays in the background.

In adapting to their rapid growth, TikTok has largely ignored their own Terms of Service statement that users may not post "any material that is racist or discriminatory, including discrimination on the basis of someone's race, religion, age, gender, disability, or sexuality." While less than 20% of reported videos are removed, this often

happens after the content has been viewed millions of times. For example, TikTok's own algorithm promoted a since-removed video mocking Auschwitz victims with the lyrics: "We're going on a trip to a place called Auschwitz, it's shower time," referring to gas chambers in the death camp which were disguised as showers. The video went viral with a staggering 6.5 million views and some users employed the song in their own antisemitic videos.

According to watchdog group StopAntisemitism.org, reports of antisemitic TikTok videos have increased ten-fold since the start of the global pandemic in mid-March. These videos have become so normalized on the platform that they can be found trending on TikTok's explore page.

In a recent meeting between Israeli lawmakers and tech representatives from social media giants Google, Facebook, and Twitter, TikTok was notably absent. The Knesset's (Israel's lawmaking body) Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs said that the platform's refusal to participate leaves the impression that TikTok "shuns" ideas of tackling the rampant antisemitism on their platform.

While antisemitism and Holocaust denial are rooted in inaccurate opinions, their ramifications are all too real. In 2018, eleven people were murdered at the Tree of Life synagogue, the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the United States. The suspect was

deeply involved in spreading antisemitic conspiracy theories on social media sites. The following year, in 2019, the American Jewish community experienced the highest level of antisemitic incidents since tracking began in 1979, with more than 2,100 reported instances of assault, vandalism, and harassment. As the Jewish community mourned deaths in Poway, Jersey City, and Monsey, it was social media users who struck us with fragments of the same hatred our ancestors experienced during the Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms, and Holocaust, alongside the shattering realization that in the land of the free, our safety is no promise.

A Piece In Their Games: A Review Of "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes"

By: Raizy Neuman, Website Manager

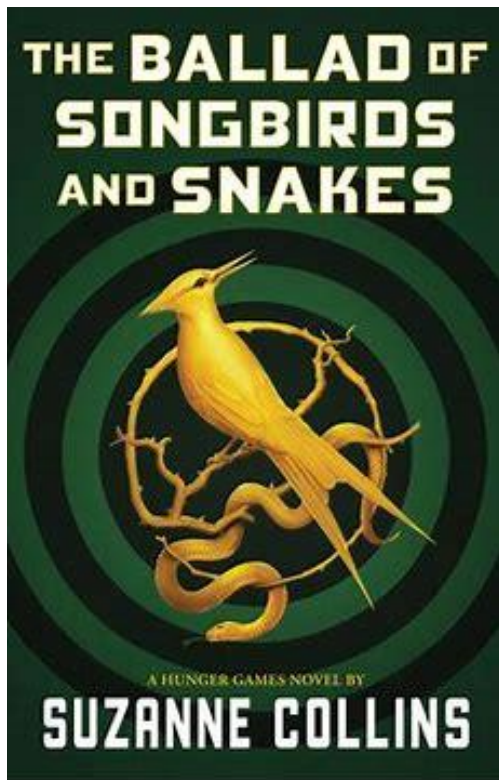
"The Hunger Games" is a series that will forever go unmatched. In 2008, Suzanne Collins, author of "The Hunger Games," ushered in a wildly successful era of dystopian YA literature. We have her to thank for pop culture icons like the three-fingered gesture of solidarity as well as the classic line "I volunteer as tribute!" Though I consider myself an avid fan, I did *not* see a prequel coming. I figured we were done with new Katniss content, but I turned out to be wrong. Well, half wrong.

"The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" isn't directly about Katniss at all. It's about the future President of Panem, Coriolanus Snow, 64 years before Katniss and Peeta held out their handfuls of poisonous berries. Collins takes us through pivotal years of the future president's life, centered around the 10th Hunger Games. Along the way, Collins throws in nuggets of how the Hunger Games came to be the Capitol-celebrated establishment that we came to know through Katniss's eyes. We learn about the true creator of the Games and how Coriolanus and his classmates affected its future rules and requirements.

After reading "The Ballad of Songbird and Snakes," I couldn't resist rereading the original series. I was thoroughly impressed by many of the slight continuity details that Collins worked into the prequel, and I now appreciate her so much more as a writer.

As I grow older (and hopefully wiser), and as our contemporary world moves in a frightening direction, I see how real the fiction of "The Hunger Games" is. The reasoning behind the Games, as we learn from the prequel, began with people who genuinely believed that it was for the betterment of society. Collins' series is a painful and terrifying reminder of the world that ours could become if we aren't vigilant enough.

Whether it be to create conspiracy theories, such as who in the prequel, if anyone, Katniss descends from (spoiler alert: I'm on the Maude Ivory train), or to



focused significantly more on character and societal development, and significantly less on bloody action. For readers looking for a thrill ride of violence and competition, this book may not be up to their standards. For readers looking for an intellectual thrill ride, though, I'd say look no further than "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes."

One aspect that I and many "Hunger Games" fans worried about upon hearing the news of this prequel was an issue that shows like "Wicked" and movies like "Maleficent" have tackled: villain sympathy. Coriolanus Snow did despicable things in the "Hunger Games" series, and I was not interested in excuses.

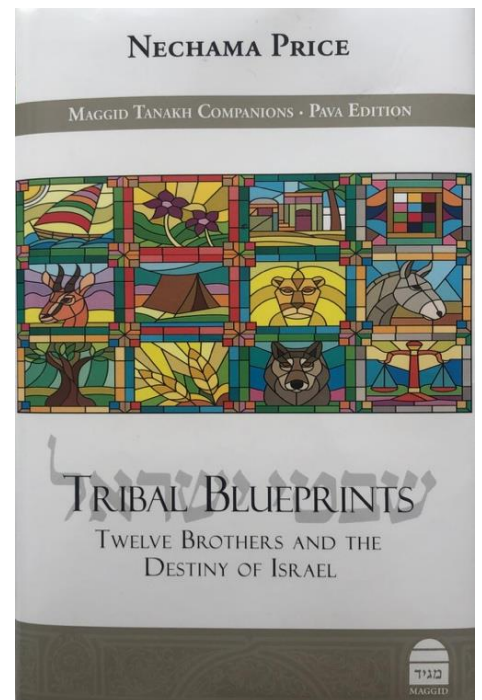
However, what Collins gave us was so much better. She gave us a book that explained Snow's character arc and a true, deep understanding of his personality and reasoning — without excusing any of it. As a reader, I gained insight into the importance of guarding oneself against one's own rationality and the need to step outside oneself. Snow failed to do that, and Collins gave us the opportunity to learn from it.

I can only hope that Collins writes more prequels in the future, perhaps about characters like Haymitch Abernathy, Johanna Mason, or even District 13 President Alma Coin. I hope also that her literature continues to grow up with its readers, and that as us original teenage readers of "The Hunger Games" age, the sophistication of her writing continues to develop. "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" taught me that, while one's actions are

what they are, the thought and rationale behind them make them significantly deeper. Being a member of the audience as the "Hunger Games" trilogy unfolded was a wild ride, but gaining from the development of its contributing characters is invaluable.

Reevaluating Entertainment Methods In Coronavirus Times, Landing On "Tribal Blueprints: Twelve Brothers and the Destiny of Israel"

By: Elka Wiesenberg



I'll start with a confession or two: I rarely read for pleasure anymore. I love reading, always have, but it's just a lot easier to watch TV. There's no brainpower, no thinking, not even pages to turn — just open Netflix

just discuss the revelations and subtle realizations gained from reading it, I'd argue that Collins' largest success with this installment is that she got people thinking. Personally, I was researching "BookTube" (the side of YouTube that does what the name implies) reviews for quite a while after turning the final page. Even now, months after reading the novel, I still find myself occasionally wandering upon "Ballad" threads. (I mean, seriously, Tigris the cat lady was his *cousin*?!)

The prequel wasn't 100% well-received. Many reviews called it lackluster, boring, and much too long, especially in comparison with the original trilogy. I have to disagree; I found the slower pace of the book refreshing and its information and overarching ideas fascinating. Honestly, I wish it had been longer. It certainly was different than the original, as it

and the show autoplays until your mind is numb. When I do read for pleasure, it's often something light and meaningless. I feel like I get enough heavy reading in school (first as an English major at Stern, now as a law student at Cardozo), and I don't need to add to that. But lately, I've found that TV shows and light reading don't provide me with the thrill I used to get from my *Shabbos* (Sabbath) afternoons, immersing myself in a really great read that has the time slipping away without me realizing it. There's something about a deeper read that gives so much satisfaction, an enjoyment that comes with intellectual stimulation and *not* shutting your brain off. Still, it can be hard to get into a book that challenges you, hard to pick reading material that may not be quite so easy to read.

That's why one of the most incredible feelings is finding a book that is accessible, that you can read easily and enjoy, but also is a learning experience that opens your mind. This is what I found in Professor Nechama Price's *sefer* (Judaic book) "Tribal Blueprints: Twelve Brothers and the Destiny of Israel."

Professor Nechama Price is a renowned scholar, one of the most famous teachers at Stern College for Women, particularly in the subjects of Jewish laws of marriage and purity, but also for her insight into the stories and personalities of the children of Jacob, the twelve brothers who would become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. "Tribal Blueprints" is divided into sections for each brother, or

sometimes for a group of the brothers. It takes the reader through an incredible analysis of each tribe, starting with their origins of name and birth, telling the stories of the brothers, and explaining how the characters of each brother ultimately impacted their entire tribal lineage.

I have to say, this *sefer* made me happy because it is just so well-organized. It's clear, it flows, and as I alluded to earlier, it's really an enjoyable read. For anyone who just wants something interesting to read during social isolation, this is a perfect option. For people looking for new English material with a *chavrusa* (partner in learning), it's broken down into sections so you can easily divide your learning sessions. For those who want even more in-depth learning, the footnotes provide sources on every page, so you can go look up your biblical commentaries and find the roots of the characterizations.

My favorite part of the *sefer*, though, is the way Price deals with differing opinions in the text. For example, there is much debate on the nature of Reuben's sin against his father, and the two main opinions on his transgression completely change the story and how it is read. "Tribal Blueprints" separates the two opinions into two possible storylines and what they mean, creating two complete narratives that a reader can compare. Each alternate version of the story is comprehensively fleshed out, and Price explains how the differing versions lead to different understandings of the character,

following through to discuss how this affects our interpretation of the entire tribal line.

An unexpected — but welcome — aspect of "Tribal Blueprints" is how deep the *sefer* goes into the intimate dynamics of Jacob's family as well, including the impact of his relationships with his wives. Much of the actions and characteristics of the brothers themselves are affected by the complex nature of their parents' relationships: Leah's children feeling the lack of care Jacob has for their mother and his seeming indifference towards her children, the maidservants' children's inferior treatment, and Jacob's preference for the children of Rachel, the most beloved wife, after her many years of struggling with infertility.

"Tribal Blueprints" lent me a lot of perspective on the backgrounds, stories, characters, and impacts of the brothers that became the twelve tribes of Israel. I loved the combination of the excitement of learning more Torah while also experiencing the joy reading an interesting book. This was honestly one of the most well-written *sefarim* (Judaic books) I've encountered, and it should be on your quarantine book list! The only thing I have to say is that I *wish* I had taken a class taught by Professor Nechama Price while in Stern — go do that, too!

My Shot to See Hamilton: Hamilfilm on Disney+

By: Sarah Brill, Science &
Technology Editor

Broadway's "Hamilton," created by composer Lin-Manuel Miranda, was an instant sensation upon its debut in August of 2015. Nearly five years later, "Hamilton" remains a showcase of creative ingenuity, combining modern day hip-hop and rap styles with the history of our founding fathers. "Hamilton" transcends conventions of standard Broadway performance, embracing an unfamiliar score and tackling a subject that had never before graced the Broadway stage.

"Hamilton" remains the musical of the century and a must-watch for this generation. Given the show's popularity, however, ticket prices are exorbitant. It wasn't until July 3 that the dreams and wishes of those, like me, who have been entering the "Hamilton" ten-dollar ticket lottery since 2015 had finally been answered: Lin-Manuel Miranda released a filmed version of "Hamilton" to Disney+.

This musical not only conquers new ground as a rap/hip-hop phenomenon; its cast also features racially diverse actors playing famously white characters, which in my opinion was both a brave and ambitious choice. The featured players included Lin-Manuel Miranda as the political overachiever Alexander Hamilton who became George



Washington's (Christopher Jackson) right-hand man. Hamilton is married to Eliza Schuyler (Phillipa Soo), but that doesn't stop him from having both a complex relationship with Eliza's sister, Angelica (Renée Elise Goldsberry) and an affair with Maria Reynolds (Jasmine Cephas Jones). Then there are Hamilton's rivals, Aaron Burr, (Leslie Odom Jr.), and Thomas Jefferson (Daveed Diggs), both of whom live the shadow of Hamilton's success throughout the show.

While the curtain opens with an overview of Hamilton's life, both personal and professional, the second act faces much deeper subject matters including death and political destruction.

And damn, they got the job done! Needless to say, both acts achieve their respective goals in communicating to the audience the life and death of Alexander Hamilton. "Hamilton" definitely lives up to the expectation set by 16-year-old me listening to the soundtrack for the first time with my theatre company. At first listen, I was confused about how a Spotify playlist could be over two hours in length, realizing then that this, like "Cats" and "Les Miserables," was a fully sung- and rapped-through performance. One of the perks of this mode of

performance is that we are not missing out on any dialogue to fill the gaps between numbers, so as I listened, my 16-year-old brain attempted to imagine what was actually happening on stage. I jumped to many conclusions, none of which were accurate, I might add, as to how this could have been staged. Only after seeing it on Disney+, five years after memorizing the song lyrics, did I realize how fresh and spirited this musical actually was.

"Hamilton" is a piece of theatrical ingenuity, captivating both older and younger audience members to experience this show-stopping performance.

I Don't Know How But They Found Me Invites You To Follow Along By: Talya Stehley

"We invite you to follow along," says the spoken-word intro to rock duo I Don't Know How But They Found Me's 2018 EP, "1981 Extended Play", and with their long-awaited debut album dropping October 16, now is a great time to start. I Don't Know How But They Found Me is a band consisting of Dallan Weekes (formerly of Panic! At The Disco and The Brobecks) and Ryan Seaman (formerly of Falling in Reverse), which started putting out music in 2017. But they also have this intriguing gimmick where they present themselves as if they were an 80s band that never quite made its mark.

Most of their music videos are shot in a 4:3 aspect ratio, with some VHS-style grain added for good measure. The YouTube descriptions often contain a little story of where the video in question came from. There's more to the gimmick than just an aesthetic. One of the first videos posted to their YouTube channel sets up an overarching narrative: a child tasked with cleaning out a cluttered basement finds a box of VHS tapes, most with dates in the mid-80s written on them. The one we see contains the music video for the band's first single, "Modern Day Cain." A "video diary" recently posted to the band's website features a grown-up version of that character discussing the mystery of the band. The music videos are chock-full of easter eggs and hints of some larger overarching story. In many videos, a man dressed in white and wearing a stylized skull mask looms in the background. Many videos reference an entity called "The Tellexx Foundation," whose exact nature is still unclear. As the August 12 video diary points out, the timeline presented in the video descriptions doesn't quite make sense, with "Do It All The Time" set twenty years earlier than most of the other videos, despite the guys in the band looking largely the same. What does it all mean? I don't know. My top theory is that they're cyborgs, but whatever happens, I, for one, am stoked to finally get a whole album worth of new information.

But you don't really need to care about any of that to enjoy the music itself. It's as synthy as you'd expect of something

pretending to be from the 80s, and the lyrics are delightfully hostile. Lines like "I wouldn't hesitate / to smile while you suffocate and die" or "I don't care what momma says, / you'll wind me up or you'll wind up dead" are par for the course for these guys, and it's the layer of artifice that makes this kind of thing enjoyable. Were the band not a fake band being played by a real band, a lot of their lyrics would be kind of distressing. But that layer of fakeness means it all works, and one can enjoy how delightfully evil they are, perfectly emphasized by that late cold-war sound. Even without the gimmicks, I think they're straight-up good. Consider their holiday-themed EP, "Christmas Drag". Those three songs are certainly dark by the standards of Christmas music, but they largely



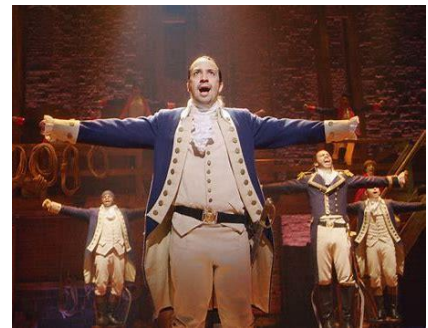
eschew the synthesizers trading hostility for sincerity. It's far more enjoyable than it has any right to be, which I believe shows that the band can be far more than just its central gimmick.

If any of that sounds like it could be your thing, you can listen to I Don't Know How But They Found Me's entire discography in under an hour. And if you like what you hear, you'll have a whole new album to listen to come October 16.

In The Room Where It Happens: The Hamilfilm on Disney+

By: Tova Wax

One must be living in an alternate universe if they haven't yet heard of the phenomenon that is "Hamilton". The show debuted on Broadway in 2015 and immediately skyrocketed in



popularity, broke records, won Tony and Grammy awards, and became a worldwide sensation. Due to its success, ticket prices quickly rose to several hundred dollars per seat, and theatres filled months in advance. However, those who were unfortunately unable to see the show live on the Broadway stage during its (currently paused for coronavirus) run at the Richards Rogers Theatre now have the opportunity to experience all of "Hamilton"'s magic and glory in the comforts of their own homes on Disney Plus.

The film version of "Hamilton" premiered on July 3 and quickly became one of the most-watched movies on the Disney Plus platform. The movie, directed by Thomas Kail, has made viewers feel like they "were in the room where it happened" and the

“Hamilton” cast most definitely “did not throw away their shot,” to quote its famous song lyrics.

“Hamilton” tells the story of Alexander Hamilton and of our U.S Founding Fathers. Through its brilliant musical score, viewers learn about “Hamilton”’s life, from growing up an orphan in the Caribbean to becoming the Secretary of the United States Treasury Department.

“Hamilton” was filmed in 2016 with the original cast of the show, whose chemistry is apparent to viewers even through the television screen. Although the show has been seen all over the world with many different casts, there is nothing quite like seeing the original cast perform material that seems to have been specifically written for them.

The cast, predominantly Black and Latinx, sends strong messages of the American Ideal and dream of equality throughout the hip-hop musical. Lin-Manuel Miranda (Alexander Hamilton), “Hamilton”’s playwright, composer, and lyricist, wrote the show with virtually no space for dialogue, as the musical tells its story through song and rapping. Regarding casting “Hamilton” with people of color, Miranda told The New York Times, “This is a story about America then, told by America now, and we want to eliminate any distance—our story should look the way our country looks. Then we found the best people to embody these parts, I think it’s a very powerful statement without having to be a statement.”

Additionally, Leslie Odom Jr. (Aaron Burr) spoke to The New York Times about how important and special it was to him that the cast was one of color and diversity and how the show would have meant the world to him if he would have seen it as a young kid.

From a musical standpoint, the show is pure genius. Every song transition is flawless, interwoven seamlessly with the story being told. Miranda’s incredibly crafted lyrics and rhymes, together with hip-hop and operatic influences, lend to a dynamic and gripping historically-based piece that engages the viewer from start to finish and leaves them wanting more.

Seeing “Hamilton” on film bridged the gap I didn’t know I had, as I already knew and adored the soundtrack. The film allowed me to follow the lyrics more accurately through the closed captioning provided, something I would not have had if I had seen it live. Seeing Jonathan Groff as King George III sing “You’ll Be Back”, spit flying from his lips as he maniacally enunciated the lyrics, added a new dimension to his portrayal of the character and performance of the song. Angelica’s heartfelt performance of “Satisfied” evoked my deep emotions as I watched an array of her emotions, from pain to longing, across her face. I had an up-close view of all the performers, their struggle, triumph, pain, longing, and so much more that I would not have otherwise seen in the “cheap seats” (were I among the lucky to snag tickets). While there is no

doubt I have always wanted to see the show on Broadway, seeing Disney Plus’s film version really blew me away and, in fact, has made me want to see the live show even more!

Taylor Swift's Folklore: Reflections In Isolation

By: Aliza Leichter, Social Media Manager

In Taylor Swift’s “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together,” the lead single from her 2012 “Red” album, Swift recounts her ex-boyfriend listening to “some indie record that’s much cooler than mine.” Eight years and four albums later, Swift has released her own indie album, “folklore” (stylized in all lowercase). Unlike previous album rollouts, such as “reputation’s” cryptic snake videos uploaded to social media and “Lover’s” “easter eggs” found everywhere from interviews to music videos, “folklore” was announced on social media hours before its release — an apropos announcement for an album created during unforeseen times.

Sonically, “folklore” differs from the rest of Swift’s discography, which consists almost entirely of upbeat, radio-friendly songs. “Folklore” feels melancholy with nostalgic songs like “the last great american dynasty” and “seven” becoming tinged in sadness when juxtaposed with “my tears ricochet.” Listeners of older albums such as “Red” and 2010’s “Speak Now” will recognize Swift’s lyrics sound like they’ve

been ripped from the pages of her diary. Replacing the heavy synthesizers and layered vocals found in Swift's crossover to pop, "1989," and "Lover," "folklore" is composed with moody strings, mellow acoustics, and soft pianos. The lo-fi production recalls "reputation's" final track, "New Year's Day," which producer Jack Antonoff wanted to "sound like itself" rather than "the perfect tune"; Antonoff wrote five of the sixteen songs on "folklore" with Swift.

"Folklore" is an album of storytelling, of past regrets and "what-ifs." On the opener, "the 1," Swift reflects on past relationships and how they could have turned out ("But it would've been fun / if you would've been the one"). In the same vein, on "Lover's" "I Forgot That You Existed," Swift claims to have forgotten about her exes despite having written a song about them. This is Swift's way of acknowledging that it's impossible to ever forget someone; past relationships permanently etch themselves in our memories, where doubts sometimes overshadow relief. These doubts surface in "hoax," a bleak, haunting song, in which the narrator is hesitant to leave a toxic partner, knowing that subsequent relationships may not be better ("Stood on the cliffside screaming, 'give me a reason' / Your faithless love's the only hoax I believe in").

In Swift's first release of her thirties, her maturity is reflected in her lyrics. "This is me trying" is reminiscent of "Red's" "Back to December," a track apologizing for how she ended a relationship. "This is me trying" paints a much darker picture, filled with intrusive thoughts ("Pulled the car off the road to the lookout, / could've followed my fears all the way down") and a dependency on alcohol to cope with mental health struggles ("They told me



all of my cages were mental / So I got wasted like all my potential"). Swift recalls a time when she "didn't pour the whiskey," though she may have been tempted to. What makes these honest, uncomfortable lyrics so important is that by publicly sharing her struggles, Swift normalizes topics that people are afraid to speak of.

"Only twenty minutes to sleep / but you dream of some epiphany / Just one single glimpse of relief / to make some sense of what you've seen," Swift sings in "epiphany," a song about her grandfather, Dean, landing at the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. These lyrics are an uncanny parallel to the experience of frontline workers during COVID-19. Swift references the difficulty in opening up conversations about

mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder ("some things you just can't speak about"), as both are topics not everyone can relate to.

Amid heavy themes, Swift intersperses light moments in "invisible strings" ("Bold was the waitress on our three-year trip / getting lunch down by the lakes / She said I looked like an American singer") and eccentricity in "the last great american dynasty" ("She stole his dog and dyed it key lime green"). The latter tells the intriguing story of Rebekah Harkness, heir to the Standard Oil fortune, who once scrubbed her pool with Dom Perignon.

The word "folklore" refers to an "often unsupported notion, story, or saying that is widely circulated," but in Swift's album of "fantasy, history, and memory," her stories transcend their origins — "folklore's" lyrics become instances of looking beyond the mundanities of isolation, and instead at humor and compassion drawn from dark chapters.

Umbrella Academy Season Two: Doomsdays 2.0

By: Sarah Brill, Science and
Technology Editor

Season two of "The Umbrella Academy" aired on July 31, 2020, following its season one debut in 2019. Having previously left off with Vanya (Ellen Page) destroying the world, and Five

(Aidan Gallagher), Vanya's brother, zapping himself and his siblings into space, the siblings of the Umbrella Academy are left scattered through Texas on different timelines. Klaus (Robert Sheehan) lands in 1960 and becomes a cult leader, with his ghost brother, Ben (Justin Min) tagging along. Allison (Emmy Raver-Lampman) lands in the same alleyway in 1961 and becomes a civil rights advocate. Luther lands in 1962 (Tom Hopper) and takes up boxing under the contract of Jack Ruby ([John Kapelos](#)). Diego (David Castañeda) lands in 1963 and is admitted to a mental hospital. Vanya also lands in 1963, and after being hit by a car and losing her memory, lives on a farm and is a caretaker for Harlan (Justin Paul Kelly), a child who is implied to be on the Autism spectrum, and is involved in a then-controversial affair with the mother of Harlan, Sissy (Marin Ireland).

Five lands last on November 25, 1963 in another doomsday. He sees his siblings once again, fighting to save the world, and, against all odds, they end up dying again. Before being engulfed by flames, Hazel (Cameron Britton) appears out of nowhere and transports Five out of that timeline to 10 days prior.

The siblings are all finally in the same timeline, and they eventually find each other. When they are united, they are once again told by Five that the end of the world is coming.

After hearing about doomsday part two, Vanya heads back to the

farm and tells Sissy that she may be returning to 2019. Harlan has a meltdown at the prospect of losing Vanya, runs away, and drowns in a nearby lake. Now Vanya, with her magic sparkly eyes to rival Aang's "Avatar State" (Avatar the Last Airbender 2005), lifts the water out from the lake, finds Harlan, and breathes life back into his body.

Unbeknownst to her at the time, she breathed some of her powers into him. Shortly after this event, Vanya tries to flee the farm with Sissy and a recovered Harlan. However, after a tip from Sissy's husband, Carl (Stephan Bogaert), the local police attempt to stop them, but Vanya incapacitates them with her powers. Soon after, she is taken into custody by the FBI and interrogated. Vanya's siblings find out that she is going to be the cause of this doomsday, just as she was for the 2019 doomsday, and they head over to FBI headquarters to stop her. Ben, who was immune to Vanya's great powers, enters Vanya's body to stop her from destroying the building. He succeeds but ends up losing his ghost spirit in the process.

Back on the farm, Harlan is having an identical glowing eyes situation and ends up killing his father by telekinetically reversing the trajectory of a bullet Carl initially shot at Harlan. The siblings arrive just in time to calm him down and fight an army of commission assassins including Lila (Ritu Arya), who was a "friend" to Diego and a superhuman like the Hargreeves siblings, whose power is mimicking other powers. The sibling's fight with Lila was

arduous and ended with them all being shot by The Handler (Kate Walsh), adoptive mother to Lila and Commission head. Five, however, was not fatally shot, and he time travels back by a minute and prevents his siblings deaths. After the whole ordeal, Five is granted permission to take a commission time-travel briefcase and transport himself and his siblings back to 2020.

Upon arrival at the Umbrella Academy, the siblings find out that they are not alone, and did not return to the same timeline as they left, leaving the audience on a cliffhanger.

This season of "The Umbrella Academy" lives up to TV standards and does an eloquent job in creating a show that combines the childhood nostalgia of superheroes and special powers with adult themes. All-in-all, this season of "The Umbrella Academy" is a Netflix must-watch and should immediately be added to your watch-list.

August Poetry Submissions: Unknown
By: Josef Z. Kahn, Arts & Culture Editor, Efrat Malachi, Jacob Jablonka, & Sophia Baradaran

Each month, the YU Observer sends a call to YU students for poetry submissions following a specific theme. This month, the theme was 'Unknown', and we are featuring Zippy Spanjer's piece, ['who knows'](#). However, the poems below are other

*submissions of honorable
mention.*

Unknown

By: Efrat Malachi

Knowing the much
grasping the little
The clock's a crutch
its ticks go brittle

Tells of a "when"
no sign of a "what"

Anti man's ken
missing the real putt

Makes one believe
learning is losing

A "known" meets eve
when "un" is rising

The unknown shines
passing through the years
As time confines
filling it with fears

Why so shallow?
rushing to know lots

While still hollow
like bows without knots

As the depth lends
the clock strikes midnight

True knowing scends
to a grateful height

For grasping the little "un" floods
a sea so great

While the much "known" always
flows to an empty strait

**Burrowed Deep, They Dream in
Silence**

By: Jacob Jablonka

Where are the words that will not
come?
When I see them fluttering by on
petals adrift, I hear nothing.
When they whisper from the
crevasses of my mind, I do not
see them.

Magicicada is a genus of cicadas
that populates North America.
Sometimes called periodical
cicadas, they are notable both for
their abnormal lifespans of either
thirteen or seventeen years, and
the synchronicity with which
entire broods emerge during those
prime years.

Sometimes, when I look at a page,
all I see is white. Absence in void.
Sometimes, when I look at the
page, the words pour out.
Sometimes, I look inside.

After emerging from the ground,
members of the Magicicada
broods live for only a few short
weeks. During this time, male
cicadas sing using exoskeletal
membranes called tymbals.
Humans have no such structures.

Somewhere between stomach and
spine, betwixt tooth and tongue,
they lie.
They lie because they fear, I fear.
The words that matter will not
come.

There are multiple theories for
why Magicicada appear at such
distant and precise intervals.
Some entomologists posit that
they do so in order to avoid
competing for resources with
different broods; others claim that
it is a means through which to
evade predation. None of them
consider how long it takes to
compose a chorus.

Burrowed deep, they dream in
silence.

Un Own

By: Josef Z. Kahn

What do I know in
This world of odd proportions
Arbitrary lines

Property of Me
There cannot be something free
All land is banded

A being asserts
Its will on a neutral plane
Boundaries are formed

This is mine and this
Is yours and this is his and
This is hers and this-

Who, then, claims the sky
The stars, the seas, galaxies
Pricing nebulae

Expanding space, flee!
Faster than light, it leaves us
And for good reason

We, who own nothing
Entitle ourselves to an
Unchained universe

I wish we could break
These tethers of possession
That possess us so

Regrettably, this
World of odd proportions is
Owned by someone else

Memories

By: Sophia Baradarian

The unapologetic *snap*
sizzle of
sun-bleached photos
seared in the candle's flame.
You turn them over
flip, *swish*,
switch, repeat,
deciding which to keep.
Until you know every touch and
corner.
Until you've palmed sepia cheeks
and auburn curls.
Until the names and places
where you'd held them meld,
melt on your tongue,
tumble and fuse
with the age-old blues
which take bitty
bites of the sounds and
sights they've
savagely left behind to
swallow you entire.
There you sit,
bottle of bitter wine in hand
and rummaging through,
if only to
down the remaining dregs
of a fading
dimpled smile.
Or to pluck what's
left of the dying
times when tinny

tines forked plump
cubes of watermelon
into mooching
little mouths
by the pool.
You've given up,
a creature hunted,
haunted by a past
which has yet to pass.
Not knowing whether to
caress or
crumple the tattered square
displaying three
picturesque children
hugging the skirts
of a long lost wife.
A long lost life.
Burn it or
turn it
between worn
fingers, still you'll
find its eager
edge will slice
through any callus.

*Do you want to see your writing
published? The theme for
September's poetry submissions is
"Epiphany." Send all submissions
to theyuobserver@gmail.com by
September 18.*

Thank you for reading!
If you have any questions, comments,
concerns or want to get involved, reach out
to us at
theyuobserver@gmail.com or
frumalanda725@gmail.com
We would love to hear from you!