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Editorial:

In Response To An LGBTQ+ Club Denial

By Fruma Landa, Editor in Chief



After years of fighting to break the silence surrounding the needs of LGBTQ+ students on campus, a fight I have been involved in as a board member of the YU Pride Alliance (a group of LGBTQ+ students and allies), the existence of LGBTQ+ students on campus has been acknowledged and validated. On September 3, Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provost for Student Affairs, introduced the “Fostering an Inclusive Community” letter signed by Dr. Yael Muskat, director of the YU Counseling Center, Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger, Rosh Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), Dr. Rona Novick, dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, and Dr. David Pelcovitz, Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus chair in psychology and Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. This team, dedicated to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals, was formed by President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman and previously led by past Senior Vice President Josh Joseph.

As an LGBTQ+ rights advocate on campus, this letter feels like a personal accomplishment. I have spent countless hours pushing through the frustration of what felt like futile attempts for change, facing obstacle after obstacle, determined to pour every last bit of strength into this cause. Now, *finally*, I, along with many others, see the fruits of our labor. I want to commend and express my gratitude to this panel and YU for breaking the silence and publicly showing their commitment to furthering dialogue surrounding LGBTQ+ students on campus. This letter, screaming of success and triumph, has the potential to be the start of life changing changes for LGBTQ+ individuals in YU. Yet as I read the words: “forming a new club as requested under the auspices of YU will cloud this nuanced [Torah] message,” my initial feelings of victory and gratitude dissipated, leaving me hollow. A club, a chance to build a space where queer students are guaranteed to feel safe and accepted, was denied.

The reason for the denial, as cited in the letter, is that a club would cloud Torah nuances. With such a bold claim, there are shockingly no sources cited to back it up. What nuances would be clouded? Will there be a *shiur* (Torah lecture) dedicated to explain the logic and sources behind such a statement, or is it based on homophobic beliefs shielded by the guise of religion? The Statement of Principles clearly states that *halacha* (Jewish Law) “does not prohibit orientation or feelings of same-sex attraction, and nothing in

the Torah devalues the human beings who struggle with them.” I do not want to assume homophobia, but I am at a loss over what aspect of a club such as the YU Pride Alliance aiming to “foster awareness and sensitivity to the unique experiences of being a LGBTQ+ person in YU and the Orthodox community, and to advocate for their unconditional tolerance and acceptance,” according to the group’s mission statement, can cloud Torah nuances.

LGBTQ+ students don't need another voice occasionally coming out of the woodwork at times of convenience to dictate what is and isn't allowed, as these voices seem to be publicly absent when the queer community is looking for guidance and advice. Members of the LGBTQ+ community deserve the commitment of leaders who are committed to working with members of the LGBTQ+ community in opening a space for them in Orthodox communities. Just as LGBTQ+ people can't choose when to be part of the LGBTQ+ community and when not to be, our leaders should not choose when to stand with the queer community and when not to.

Aside from the denial of a club abruptly putting a limit on acceptance of queer students, this message can further stigma, shame and fear regarding the identity of queer students simply due to a part of them that they can not change. Queer individuals in heterosexual-appearing relationships, for example, are not immune to the stigma and fear that often

comes along with being part of the LGBTQ+ community. These individuals can be behaving in the same way as their fellow straight peers, yet instead of giving them a space in the form of a club “hoping to provide a supportive space on campus for all students, of all sexual orientations and gender identities, to feel respected, visible, and represented,” the notion that their very identity goes against Torah values is furthered. Regardless of one's sexuality and religious practices, we are all a part of the YU community and deserve to feel unconditionally accepted.

The denial of a club is not a *halachic* decision — and frankly, I don't see how it clouds Torah nuances. A club is necessary to foster a community, offer support and resources to marginalized individuals and help reduce harmful shame around an identity — aspects far removed from advocating for Torah prohibitions. Thus, there is no reason why an LGBTQ+ club cannot exist at a Yeshiva University college. The claim that a club goes against Torah nuances is offensive to the many queer students on campus who are committed to a Torah lifestyle.

If LGBTQ+ students of Yeshiva University aren't going to be provided with a space to feel accepted on their very own college campus, how are they expected to believe they will be accepted into communities and *shuls* (synagogues) that align with their levels of religious commitment in the future? We need to actively accept

members of the LGBTQ+ community with open arms and show them that they are wanted, valued members of our communities who will be accepted into our homes and hearts.

We cannot build a community without including all of us. *Finally*, the conversation of LGBTQ+ acceptance has publically begun at YU. My hope is that our leaders will become leaders who are consistently involved in the conversation and committed to working to build a better future — leaders we can rely on.

News:

Fall 2020 Wilf and Beren Undergraduate Student Government Election Results

By Shaina Matveev

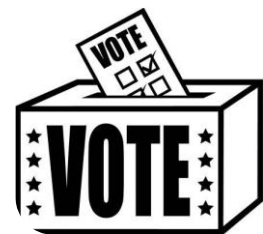
On the morning of Friday, September 18, the results of the Fall 2020 undergraduate student government elections were released to the student body, announcing the winning candidates for both the Wilf and Beren campus elections. Voting took place the previous day, on Thursday, September 17, for the Beren campus and last Tuesday, September 15, for the Wilf Campus, after nearly half a week of candidate campaigning. Listed below are the winning candidates for each position voted for during this election, followed by a breakdown of student votes:

Wilf Campus:

Freshman Representative:
Gilad Menashe
Sophomore Representative:
Shay Fishman
Katz School Representative: Dan Marouni
JSS Representative: Ilan Marouni
Makor Representative: Akiva Sasson

Beren Campus:
Freshman Class President: Maxine Pravda
Sophomore Class Vice President: Rebecca Aduculesi
Katz School Class President: Enya Smilovic
Katz School Class Vice President: Renee Lisbon

The Canvassing Committee — overseeing student elections — released a more detailed breakdown of student votes for the Wilf Campus elections to the *YU Observer*, though a more detailed breakdown of votes for the Beren campus elections was not disclosed.



Voting turnout on the Wilf campus was unexpectedly low with only 133 students voting, in total. Listed below are the candidates who ran for each position in the Wilf elections, followed by the percent of votes submitted for that respective candidate, as well as the percent of write-in votes cast for each position:

YSU Freshman Representative:
Gilad Menashe: 81.48%

Write-in: 18.52%

YSU Sophomore Representative:

Jacob Goldsmith: 76.56%
(disqualification)
Shay Fishman: 17.19%
Write In: 6.25%

Katz School Representative:

Dan Marouni: 87.50%
Mike Fink: 12.50%
Write In: 0.00%

JSS Representative:

Ilan Marouni: 72.00%
Adir Cohen: 24.00%
Write In: 4.00%

Makor Representative:

Akiva Sasson: 44.44%
Menachem Aharon Wallach: 33.33%
Yehoshua Fineberg: 22.22%

After the winning candidates of this year's fall elections were announced, these winning candidates assumed their positions immediately on their respective Wilf and Beren student governments.

New Wireless Network For YU Campus Visitors

By Mili Chizhik, News Editor

Early Wednesday, September 9, the ITS Help Desk sent out an email to all students and relevant individuals describing the new change in wireless networks for campus visitors.

After several years of implementing a new wireless network for visitors on the Yeshiva University's campuses, the "YUGuest" network will no longer be used starting on

October 1, 2020. Instead, the network "YUVisitor" will be primarily used for guests. This new network ensures that its users will receive "a better, more secure, and faster user experience."

For those who will be bringing visitors to the YU campus, the Wifi network they should use is "YUVisitor." Once they select the network, instructions will be provided on how to officially connect.

Contact the [IT Help Desk](#) with any questions.

Zoom Bombings At Yeshiva University

By Erica Rachel Sultan, News Editor

On Tuesday, September 15, a "[Zoom bombing](#)" occurred in a Wilf Sy Syms School of Business class, Principles of Strategy with Professor Al Golzari. This is the first Zoom bombing (when an unknown and unwelcome perpetrator disrupts an online class by creating distractions), known to the *YU Observer*, since the Yeshiva University administration has placed a systematic "waiting room" on every YU faculty member's Zoom in order to prevent any additional Zoom bombing, as reported by a YU ITS email which was sent to the all-students email listing, on September 4, after experiencing an unspecified amount of Zoom bombs.



On the occurrence of the September 15 Zoom bombing, an anonymous student in Professor Golzari's class, told the *YU Observer*, "As I was answering a question posed by my professor, I was interrupted by someone saying extremely graphic profanity ... I was in shock, as was the rest of the class. Following the profanity was pornographic audio being played by the Zoom-bomber. I clicked through to see the rest of the class and everybody's hand was covering their mouth in complete shock. I was also shocked because there is a waiting room before entering every class and I am not quite sure how the Zoom-bomber was let in."

This incident comes after many others which merited the required waiting room at YU faculty's Zoom meetings. Akiva Zahtz (IBC/YC '24), has been a victim to three Zoom bombings during the first two weeks of the online Fall semester: two of which occurred in general studies courses, and one which occurred in a Judaic studies class. Akiva shared a first-hand account of the incidents saying, "[Before the methodical Zoom waiting room was implemented], in the Judaic class someone joined with a fake name and began loudly asking stupid questions before just saying they were dropping

out of YU and then they left the call. They rejoined a few minutes later but by then class had basically ended and then we didn't see them again. They had their camera on though ... In my Judaic studies class everyone reacted privately ... The Rabbi didn't seem to comprehend what the kid was actually saying."

Zahtz continued: "During one of my general studies courses, the Zoom-bomber had their camera off with a profile picture displayed, and it would change to various pornographic images. The Zoom-bomber would play inappropriate sounds as well during the class. My general studies class is a lot larger so everyone reacted by audibly telling the guy to leave. The third class that was Zoom-bombed [on September 9] was a lot smaller and it was the same type of [Z]oom bombing as the second one with inappropriate things being posted. However, they started changing their name to the same one as members of the actual class which delayed kicking them out since the professor had to make sure the right person was being removed."

When asked what both students thought of the new precautions taken into place due to the Zoom bombings, both agreed that the waiting-rooms, although faulty at times due to non-technologically savvy teachers and the incident which occurred on September 15, are necessary to stop further disruptions.

New Strides Promised By The YU Administration For The Inclusion Of LGBTQ+ Students In The YU Community

By Rachel Jacobi, Science and Technology Editor



Yesterday, September 3, in an email sent out by Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provost for Student Affairs, students were informed of a new development in the fight for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students into the YU community. In the mass email, Dr. Nissel promised that new initiatives had been formulated to "generate awareness and sensitivity, and help our students develop a thoughtful, *halakhic* [in line with Jewish Law], value-driven approach to their interactions with the wide spectrum of people who are members of our community."

This announcement comes following a year that was particularly turbulent in terms of LGBTQ+ activism, and countless attempts by YU students and student leaders to have the administration acknowledge LGBTQ+ students as part of the YU community. These attempts include a petition for a safe space, controversy about LGBTQ+ awareness signs on campus, and

the brief disbandment of the YU College Democrats club following an organized "We Too, Are YU" march for LGBTQ+ student rights at the start of the 2019 Fall semester.

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University, announced yesterday to the *YU Observer* of this new development, stating: "This is a highly charged, highly emotional subject. We are the bearers of a 3000-year-old Torah tradition. Our LGBTQ+ students are our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, family, and friends. At the heart of our Jewish values is love – love for God and love for each of His children. I thank the committee for their detailed work in bringing the full plethora of our values to bear in formulating their initiatives, and I share in their optimism that their ongoing efforts will further enhance our beloved Yeshiva's undergraduate culture of belonging."

These initiatives have been formulated by a team that was created by Berman and led by former Senior Vice President Josh Joseph. This team includes Dr. Yael Muskat, director of the Counseling Center; Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger, rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS); Dr. Rona Novick, dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration; and Dr. David Pelcovitz, Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus chair in psychology and Jewish

education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration.

In developing these new initiatives and steps, the team has met with alumni, student leaders, inclusion experts, members of other faith-based organizations, and individual students over the course of four months. In their announcement, titled 'Fostering an Inclusive Community', they wrote, "Through these conversations, we have gained perspective, awareness and sensitivity to the unique experiences of diverse groups within Yeshiva University and the Orthodox community, and fully appreciate the importance of understanding, inclusion and acceptance of all students." They further promised: "We are announcing concrete additional steps to ensure that our undergraduate campus environments continue to be supportive of all our students, with the goal of fostering an inclusive community of belonging. While this will be part of a larger, ongoing, campus-wide effort to identify educational and support programs for all those who feel marginalized, our initial initiatives will focus on increased support for our students who have raised concerns regarding sexual orientation and gender identity."

This announcement introduces a concrete, multi-pronged plan to ensure the inclusiveness of LGBTQ+ students. The first step includes a reaffirmation of

the protection of all students from discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

The second step includes a promise that diversity training for administrators will be immediately implemented this semester, and will focus on sensitivity and inclusion towards diverse student groups, emphasizing the inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This training will be further developed to include all staff, students, and faculty.

Further, the YU Counseling Center will have a clinician with LGBTQ+ experience. A Warm Line will also be available this semester to report or talk about any concerns about discriminatory behavior, including harassment and bullying. Finally, they promise a continuation of the conversation about the inclusion and acknowledgment of acceptance of LGBTQ+ students into the YU community.

In response to this announcement SCWSC President Shira Schneider SCW '21 remarked, "I appreciate the strides that this committee and YU are making in creating a more inclusive environment on campus, and I will do what I can to further this culture and represent the needs of the student body as best as I can." Akiva Poppers, SOY president,

similarly expressed that, "This is a well-written letter, and I applaud the team of administrators, psychologists, and *rabbanim* for expressing themselves with some level of lucidity. To be clear, this is not a statement from the Student Government, but rather one from the administration and *rabbanim*. As a member of Student Government, I have always and will continue to look for ways to cultivate and create an accepting, warm, and safe environment for the entire Student Body."

Notably, the 'Fostering an Inclusive Community' announcement also included a response towards the creation of a formal club, stating that, "The message of Torah on this issue is nuanced, both accepting each individual with love and affirming its timeless prescriptions. While students will of course socialize in gatherings they see fit, forming a new club as requested under the auspices of YU will cloud this nuanced message." This is possibly in reference to the repeated attempts of the YU Pride Alliance to be acknowledged as a formal club by the YU administration. A bisexual WilfSy Syms School of Business student expressed his frustration over this decision. "By making exclusions and not treating [LGBTQ students] as equals it shows there is much more to be done," he shared with the *YU Observer*.

The YU Pride Alliance, in a press release issued on September 3 by Vice President Chana Weiss on behalf of the 2020-2021 YU Pride Alliance Board, said:

“While the YU Pride Alliance is pleased to see the committee release a statement addressing matters present in our mission statement, albeit nearly a year after the committee was formed, we remain disappointed that YU continues to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. In meetings between our board and the YU administration, we have delineated that the ultimate course of action to achieve our shared goals will be the establishment of an official club for the YU LGBTQ+ community and we are deeply saddened that the YU administration is unable to recognize that.

“The administration has failed to be transparent about which *halachic* [Jewish Law] “nuances” are at odds with the club and, on the contrary, we stand firm in our belief that *pikuach nefesh* [the Jewish obligation of saving a life] necessitates the creation of our club. A club application was submitted for the upcoming semester and we remind student leaders of their responsibility to represent and advocate on behalf of the *entire* student body in dealings with the administration, rather than vice versa.”

Other students similarly noted that while they are grateful for the progress that is being made, they feel that this acknowledgment is not enough. Phillip Nagler, YC ‘20, former president of the Jewish Activism Club, who pushed for LGBTQ+ awareness last year, said, “After reading the email, I get the impression that these new policies-such as a Warm Line and a new counselor-are mainly just damage control. The main issue is that gay students at YU have been chronically ignored. None of these new policies seek to create real dialogue on the topic and ways of normalizing being gay in YU.”

Conversely, many YU students, clubs, and LGBTQ+ students have expressed a positive, and in many cases, relieved, reaction to the YU administration’s formal acknowledgment of LGBTQ+ students rights and inclusion.

Co-President of the YU College Democrats Sarah Brill, on behalf of the YU Democrats, shared with the *YU Observer*, “Dr. Nissel’s email this evening was a positive step in the right direction for the LGBTQ+ community on campus. Getting the administration’s feet wet in this ongoing issue will help so many students and I do not believe the administration realized that until now. That being said, there is still much to be done and like the saying goes ‘actions speak louder than words’ so hopefully the school can follow through

on both what was outlined in the email, and other LGBTQ+ issues on campus. It is, however, relieving to know that YU is making positive changes that will make the university a better and more inclusive Jewish community.”

Courtney Marks, SCW ‘21, noted that, “Four years ago I was the only openly out person at Stern College, today they acknowledged we exist. Last year we marched demanding change and this is just the beginning, not the end, of how we are going to change the Jewish world. I am overcome with emotion right now. Four years ago when a rabbi said homophobic things in lecture I felt so alone, and like I would never feel safe at my own school. Today I feel hopeful that one day another gay student won’t have to go through the harassment and the isolation I felt but will feel loved and welcomed at YU/Stern.”

Zippy Spanjer, SCW ‘21, expressed to the *YU Observer*, “I’m glad the university is finally taking steps to acknowledge and include us LGBTQ+ members of its student body.”

New Academic Aid Opportunities In Place For Fall 2020
By Shoshanah Marcus, News Editor

For the Fall 2020 semester, new student and faculty run

academic aid opportunities have been instated on the Beren Campus to accommodate students which can help them during this unforeseeable academic year. The recent additions consist of the Stern Coding Center and the addition of experimental psychology to the Peer Tutoring Center.

The new Coding Center at Stern College has opened, specifically catering to computer science (CS) majors and minors, as well as any other interested students. “The center’s objective is to offer services to CS students that complement those usually provided by peer tutors,” Professor Alan Broder, chair of the computer science department at Stern College and a faculty member involved in the Coding Center, shared with the *YU Observer*. “In the center, we are focused on helping students develop a professional coding style, and to increase their abilities in design, commenting, testing, and debugging. The center will also help students develop the problem solving skills needed to attack coding challenges from HackerRank and other websites used by employers to screen candidates,” he concluded.

Professor Lawrence Teitelman, Coding Center coordinator, shared the mission of the Coding Center with the *YU Observer* saying, “The Stern Coding Center ... aims to cultivate [the] best practices in the design, implementation, and testing of computer programs.” Teitelman adds that the center opened because “there is a recognition that, like at Stern's Writing Center, students can

benefit from such a general service in addition to the resources (faculty, TA's, peer tutors) that are already associated with individual CS courses.” Teitelman is optimistic about the center’s growth, sharing: “While initially intended for CS-majors and non-CS majors taking CS courses, the hope is to one day expand to the point where we can support students doing coding across the broader college curriculum.”



In response to the *YU Observer*'s queries about new additions to the Peer Tutoring Center, Meirah Shedlo, academic coordinator of the Peer Tutoring Center, shared: “This year, the Peer Tutoring Center at Stern College has reinstated tutoring in [subjects such as] Hebrew, organic chemistry, and physics. Experimental psychology is also a recent addition to our offerings, bringing our total to 12 subjects. We are pleased to be able to enhance the Tutoring Center in response to student demand and tutor interest in these subjects.”

With the majority of classes being conducted in an online format for the fall semester,

students are faced with the difficulties of doing much more learning from home. For some students, virtual classes do not present any major obstacles to their learning abilities, but for many students, asynchronous or semi-synchronous learning poses difficulties in their ability to effectively understand the material in their courses. Shedlo explained, “It is a priority for us to provide this support to students wherever they may be, and virtual appointments have been available to students since we shifted to remote learning in the spring (with nearly 170 appointments booked since mid-March).”

For subjects like organic chemistry, physics, and Hebrew, the Peer Tutoring Center has become especially useful. One organic chemistry peer tutor, Mili Chizhik (SCW '22) shared with the *YU Observer* that “Organic chemistry tutoring gives students clarification on hard topics that they’re apprehensive to ask teachers to explain. Organic chemistry is an essential subject for understanding the makeup of all living things and the interactions between them, thus a solid foundation is a must to understand more advanced topics, as well as pursue a career in the biomedical sciences.”

According to the YU website, “The Peer Tutoring Center provides one-to-one tutoring as a service to the students of Stern College to help them achieve their academic goals. Tutors are encouraged to empower students to comprehend

material independently.” Since many classes for the Fall 2020 semester are going to be online or asynchronous, many students are going to be learning the course material independently and can benefit from this resource.

With the Peer Tutoring Center continuing to thrive, especially as the majority of classes remain virtual, Shedlo expressed, “I am impressed by how enthusiastic our tutors have been to go virtual and ensure they can continue to help their peers during this challenging time!”

**To make a free appointment with the Peer Tutoring Center and the Coding Center, click [here](#).*

Features:

Yeshiva University Sports:
The Unofficial Update
By Sarah Brill, Science and
Technology Editor



Yeshiva University is home to 15 NCAA sports teams — seven women’s teams and eight men’s teams — the majority of which play in the NCAA Division III Skyline Conference. With the semester starting online and the future looking as hazy as it does now,

student-athletes are left with limited information regarding what their respective sports are planning to do for the fall season.

On August 11, Marty Craft, Director of Athletics Compliance, sent out a try-out form to all of the student-athletes which, when filled out, will allow the coaches to get a rough estimate of how many players are planning to return and participate in this year’s sports.

Bess Goldstein, SCW ‘21, who plays both softball (a spring sport) and soccer (a fall sport), commented that as of yet neither of her

coaches has assigned in-home workouts. She added: “it’s sad for freshmen, and [the sports will] not [be] the same.”

Rookies, who hear about the various sports options and associated tryout dates through the mass emails that students receive daily, will unfortunately have no opportunity to compete in fall sports until next school year — which begs the question: will this unusual situation impact the 2021-2022 win-loss records of those sports teams?

Michael Stark, SSSB ‘22, a men’s volleyball player, echoed Goldstein’s sentiment and also reported that, “to [his] knowledge,” his coaches had not assigned sport-specific activities.

Men’s baseball head coach Marty Craft told the *YU*

Observer that he is “[t]rying to get [student-athletes] 30 hours of coaching contact in order to earn full credit for the Fall. On the baseball side, we will start up as soon as [he has] a decent number of the tryout agreements.” He also hopes to “start doing two team meetings per week, and some additional individual and small group meetings as well for position[-]specific work.”

When asked his opinion on playing sports online, fourth-year baseball player Yosef Rosenfield, YC ‘21, said: “To play a sport is hardly to engage in the theoretical. Even the mental aspects of a game should be practiced in the physical presence of those situations ... It’s great [however] that the coaches are at least doing something so students who actually need the credit can earn it.”

Women’s soccer head coach Marc Zharnest had a plan similar to Marty Craft’s, telling the *YU Observer*: “...the hope is that athletes return to campus after the holidays in October, ...so [with] who[m]ever is around we will be doing live socially-distanced practices, and most importantly, we are doing virtual meetings.

One of the most important aspects of playing a sport at the collegiate level is getting proper training that will reduce the risk of injury. Many of YU’s male and female student-athletes reported that both Emma Irwin and Xavier Alzate, athletic trainers on the female and male campuses, respectively, sent in-home workouts over the

summer for student-athletes to complete on their own time.

According to Danielle DeStaso, head coach of women's softball, "as of right now, softball is expected to participate in training virtually with Emma ... " DeStaso said further that she "will be sending out a plan of drills ... and will be having a mandatory check-in meeting weekly, and in the spring, as of now, we have a shortened schedule to play a season."

Joe Bednarsh, Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation, answered the *YU Observer's* questions about our return to campus with regard to fall and spring sports. In preparation for the upcoming season, per Bednarsh's statement "our coaches are working on practice plans that will work over Zoom until after the *chagim*, at which point we will transition to in-person practices. Xavier and Emma are also working with the coaches on strength and conditioning programs so that all the student-athletes can come back to campus ready to hit the ground running."

Bednarsh also remarked: "we have been working all summer and even now with multiple plans so that we are ready to switch between plans as the situation with COVID-19 changes. We are taking the position that we want to be ready to make sure that the memory of this season will be something other than the coronavirus for all our student-athletes. Skyline has cancelled the fall championships, so we will not be able to compete on a

championship track in any of the sports with the exception of golf and women's tennis, which have been moved to the spring."

He concluded by saying that "it is our intention to start winter sport practice as soon as students return to campus, and we are putting plans in place to do it as safely as possible. Assuming things with the virus are on a positive trajectory, I don't see a reason why we can't have a full, robust season in the winter and spring. I am hopeful that by the end of 2020 or beginning of 2021, we will have a vaccine — and with that vaccine, a return to a more typical look to our spring season. Even if we have not yet reached that point, softball, baseball, tennis, and golf lend themselves pretty well to social distancing, so I think those sports provide a very positive outlook."

In tandem with the above statement to the *YU Observer*, men's basketball head coach Elliot Steinmetz expressed similar ideas, stating that "[u]nofficially it looks like a January start for competitions. Practices are scheduled to start late October following various NCAA and medical protocols. But obviously we will see how things go leading up to that. The world is a weird place right now. Everything seems to change often. Our athletic department has been awesome about adjusting and keeping us posted on anything going on. Hopefully[,] they're able to continue to plan and do what's needed to [put] the safety of our students first and hopefully

[give them] the [opportunity] to compete as well."

As for students who have received no word from their coaches, Joe Bednarsh wrote in an email sent out to student-athletes on September 18 that "in anticipation of what we expect to be a wonderful year for us, as we navigate the uncharted territory of athletic competition in the COVID-19 landscape ... we have set up a Zoom call for Tuesday night, September 22nd at 8 p.m." During the call, Bednarsh addressed student questions and introduced new student-athlete protocol regarding games, practices and the workout facilities.

The athletics department has been working hard with the coaches to create a regimen so that student-athletes can remain engaged with their respective sports and receive credit. Based on Joe Bednarsh's communication, student-athletes should be hearing from coaches and the athletics administration in the near future regarding what their plan is going forward.

Zooming Into Trivia Night By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

On September 1, 2020 at 7 p.m. EST, the student councils of both the Wilf and Beren Campuses hosted a trivia night on Zoom. To set the mood, student council members introduced themselves and played the song "Beautiful Soul" by Jesse McCartney.

The first round of trivia night involved the members of the Zoom call playing a Kahoot game where everyone was for themselves. Technical difficulties arose within the first minute of the game and the student council members were forced to reset and begin again. After a fierce 17 rounds of Kahoot trivia on random YU knowledge, the podium was announced and the Kahoot ended.

Working in teams, Zoom members participated in the second trivia game, which was composed of three rounds. Prior to trivia night, students had the opportunity to choose team members via a Google Form sent out Thursday, August 26. During the Kahoot, one of the student council members created break-out rooms with the pre-selected groups to accommodate everyone.



The topics for the team trivia rounds were: music and TV, sports and pop culture, and topics from the 2000's. With the tension building on the Zoom call, and the anxious faces of college students looking to win

the prize of lunch with a YU dean, the breakout rooms were listed, and the games began.

The trivia worked as such: a Google Form link was sent to the main Zoom group prior to members joining breakout rooms. This form contained the music, pictures, or questions the groups were supposed to answer. After each round, the groups were sent back to the main Zoom call and given a new link. The response to this format was positive with one student, Shani Lewis (SCW '21), commenting to the *YU Observer* that the trivia was “interactive and fun.”

All in all, this attempt at creating an activity that would have normally been offered in-person was a massive success. The student council outdid themselves and their hard work putting this event together paid off. The student body could benefit from more nights like these. It was elegantly crafted, with a few hiccups at the beginning, but overall an amazing night.

Faculty Spotlight: Dina Shvetsov

By Bina Davidson on behalf of Features Staff

Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight a YU faculty member. For the September edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Professor Dina Shvetsov.

Name: Dina Shvetsov



Department: The Sociology Department at Stern College Educational

Background/Qualifications: I have Masters degrees from Brandeis University and The New School for Social Research. I'm in the process of getting a PhD in Political Science at the moment.

Hometown: Ryazan (USSR, now Russia.)

How long have you worked at YU?: Since Spring 2019

What got you passionate about your field?: I studied a few social sciences, so I don't always distinguish among them, particularly when it comes to the disciplinary origins of ideas. When I began my university education in Russia in the early 2000s, sociology and political science were the new and “trendy” disciplines. In the public imagination they were connected to the democratization and liberalization of the Russian society, for which so many people had high hopes. But with years and especially after I moved to the U.S, I understood that the project of social sciences is much broader, and seeks to answer universal questions whose importance transcends the concerns of just one society.

What do you like about working at YU?: The students. They are very intelligent and often get excited about learning.

How has COVID/Zoom affected the way your classes function?: I am trying a mixed (synchronous/asynchronous) format in one of my classes. There, I am trying a few different formats of the delivery of the course material. I'd like to think of this semester as an opportunity to extend the [repertoire] of my teaching tools. I do miss teaching in person though.

If you could bring in any guest lecturer, alive or deceased, who would it be, and what would they speak about?: Charles Tilly. I think he made a very important contribution into historical sociology and political sociology.

Do you have any advice for students interested in a career in your field?: My own progress became much faster and easier when I met an inspiring and attentive academic advisor. So, my advice is to seek good mentors.

What is one thing you want students to know about you?: I was absolutely fascinated and inspired by Stern's students' resilience and the grace with which they managed to navigate studying during the first months of COVID-19 crisis.

Is there a YU professor you admire who you would like to see highlighted in future editions? Email us at theyuobserver@gmail.com.

Staff Writer Profile: Zippy Spanjer
By Bina Davidson on behalf of Features Staff



Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight some of the YU undergraduate students who have written articles for us over the course of the semester. For the September edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Zippy Spanjer and Sarah Muharremi.

Name: Zippy Spanjer
College: SCW
Major: Biology
Year: 2021
Where are you for the COVID-19 pandemic? With Whom?:

I'm home with my family.
Currently reading: "Call Down the Hawk" by Maggie Stiefvater
Currently watching: "The Old Guard" (Netflix Original)
Currently listening to: "Level Up" by Vienna Teng. Also "Welcome to Night Vale"
Favorite way to social distance with friends: Zoom movie night

Any cool things you've done/hobbies you've picked up over the COVID-19 pandemic?: I started playing my first ever campaign of Dungeons and Dragons! Also, I'm sewing skirts and masks.

What do you miss most about your pre-COVID-19 life?:

Hugging my friends.

What is your favorite thing about YU?: I really enjoy the extracurricular activities, like the Beren *Bekiyus* (surface level learning) Program.

What's a quote/thought/or piece of advice you have for your fellow students? Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it—from your friends or your professors or your family.

Alternatively: "The most important step a man can take. It's not the first one, is it? It's the next one. Always the next step."

— Brandon Sanderson, "Oathbringer"

Read some of her articles here:
<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/fatured-august-poem-who-knows/>
<https://yuobserver.org/2020/07/reopening-plan-stands-on-three-things-yu-community-call/>

Staff Writer Profile: Sarah Muharremi
By Bina Davidson on behalf of Features Staff

Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight some of the YU undergraduate students who have written articles for us over the course of the semester. For the September edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Zippy Spanjer and Sarah Muharremi.



Name: Sara Muharremi

College: SCW

Major: Biology

Year: Senior, third year on campus

Where are you for the COVID-19 pandemic? With Whom?: I've been home in Bronx, NY with my parents and my goldfish.

Currently reading: I am currently reading "Reaching Down the Rabbit Hole" By Dr. Allan H. Ropper and Brian David Burrell. Dr. Ropper is a renowned neurologist who works at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and he goes through some of his cases and patients that he's seen; highly recommend!

Currently watching: 'Sister, Sister' and 'Dexter'

Currently listening to: Knock Three Times by Tony Orlando & Dawn

Favorite way to social distance with friends: I haven't gone out much, but Zoom-ing with friends and screen sharing a yoga video has been a great way to catch up and stay active with friends while not physically being near each other.

Any cool things you've done/hobbies you've picked up over the COVID-19 pandemic?: I started doing yoga and I have been getting really good at cleaning my room and cooking! I also bought a ukulele from Amazon on a whim but I can't figure it out for the life of me.

What do you miss most about your pre-COVID-19 life?: Being in a dorm environment, finding random places and cafes in the city to study in, meeting up with friends, and eating pringles for dinner because I'd be too lazy to go to the caf for food (now I have no excuse at home).

What is your favorite thing about YU?: I love the YU library in the heights. For me it was the perfect environment to be able to sit in a little corner and get things done, and now that we're online I'm really missing it. I miss getting shushed on the fourth floor after coughing.

What's a quote/thought/or piece of advice you have for your fellow students?: Take some time to breathe. With classes starting, it's easy to fall back into a stressed mindset, especially because they are all online and we're still home with other responsibilities. Take a minute before you go to sleep — sit or lay down on the floor, put on some calming piano music/nature sounds/or whatever works for you, try to clear your mind and just breathe for the duration of one song. Reground your mind and reconnect with yourself.

Read some of her articles here:

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/mars-is-becoming-more-habitable-as-we-speak/>
<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/vitamin-d-and-calcium-to-help-with-bppv-vertigo-symptoms/>

Club Profile: Active Minds
By Yosef Rosenfield on behalf of Features Staff

Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight one club available to the YU undergraduate community. For the September issue, the YU Observer is highlighting "Active Minds."



Club Name: Active Minds
<https://contactmeactivemin.wixsite.com/website>

Heads: Rivky Terebelo, Benji Morris, Sarina Hilowitz and Aaron Purow

Relevant Campus(es): Beren and Wilf

What is your club's mission statement?: Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. We are dedicated to saving lives and to building stronger families and communities. Through education, research and advocacy, Active Minds is

opening up the conversation about mental health and creating lasting change in the way mental health is discussed and valued in the United States. We believe that no one should have to struggle alone. By empowering young adults to speak openly about mental health, we can reduce stigma, encourage help seeking, and prevent suicides.

Why is this club important?:

Rivky: Mental health is a component of everyone's life, which means that every single person can benefit from a club that focuses on mental health awareness. Whether people live with a mental illness or simply want to give their mental health a boost, the club will provide programs, events and educational opportunities that apply to them.

Benji: I think a lot of people don't stop to take their mental health into account unless something is clearly going wrong, at which point they are not aware of what resources are available or which to use. I believe that unfortunately mental health literacy isn't where it should be, and a lot of people don't necessarily think to educate themselves on their own. Our club provides additional resources, and the more people learn the more useful that knowledge can become if someone needs help.

Sarina: Mental health affects everyone, and not enough students recognize this fact. Many who do often feel uncomfortable discussing it. We want the students of Yeshiva University to not only be aware of mental health, but feel comfortable talking and opening up about it. We are

essentially trying to make our community more aware and more compassionate, as these are two very important qualities for a community to possess.

Aaron: Whether you are dealing with a mental illness or just feel sad, depressed, anxious or obsessive from time to time, mental health applies to everyone. Since thoughts and emotions are intangible, however, mental health can be a taboo or sensitive topic for many people. The goal of Active Minds is to offer compassion to those suffering and address the topic of mental health in a way that respects its sensitive nature.

What prompted you to get involved in/start the club?:

Rivky: Mental health is something that I've always believed was inadequately discussed in the Jewish community. It's so important for people to speak up about it and share their stories so that others know that they are not alone and can then get the help they need. When I started in YU and heard about Active Minds, I knew I needed to get involved. Last year I was on the board, as well as on the editorial staff for Active Minds' publication, The Breather, and this year I have the opportunity to be involved as president.

Benji: As a freshman I attended one of their on-campus events, Stomp Out the Stigma, which I found to be really powerful. Since then I have attended many of their other events. Although I am not working toward a degree in psychology, the field has always really interested me, and I love hearing/learning about other people's life experiences.

Sarina: I have to give co-president Aaron Purow a lot of credit for recruiting me. It was the summer before my first year at Stern when Aaron told me all about Active Minds and the impact they were making on people's lives. I was inspired instantaneously. There's quite the pull toward a club that is as raw, personal and genuine as Active Minds. Having the opportunity to be a shoulder for those around you is truly a privilege.

Aaron: Mental health has always been a topic that I've been passionate about. Given that I've struggled with some mental health disorders and have thankfully persevered, I felt that it was my absolute responsibility to share my experiences and be there for people who are going through similar challenges. Between speaking at Stomp Out the Stigma two years ago and being the president of the club last year as well as this year, it has honestly been such a privilege to work with some of the nicest, most driven and unbelievably compassionate people I have ever met.

What are some things your club has done in the past (if the club is not new)?:

We've done programs like the Jonathan's Fellowship, a partnership in which students at YU connect with Frisch High School students to talk about their struggles with mental health and how they got help. Active Minds has also brought in various speakers and experts to discuss and raise awareness for mental health. The most well-known event we have is Stomp Out the Stigma; this program features student

speakers from the Beren and Wilf campuses, who come to discuss their experiences and journeys with mental illness.

What are some plans you have for this semester and/or future semesters?:

Rivky: Although this semester, and possibly the next one as well, will look very different than most, we spent time over the summer discussing ways to make the best plans we can. We, together with our amazing board members and The Breather staff, are excited to run many events, programs and initiatives that can benefit every single person. Whether the events need to stay on Zoom or we can do in-person functions, we're excited to show you all of what we have in store for the year.

Benji: Thanks to our truly amazing team — and I really have to give it up to my co-presidents — we already have the first event of the year ready to go. We also have an awesome newsletter. I look forward to many more events that will help me and others learn about what different mental illnesses look like and about mental health in general.

Sarina: The plan is — G-d willing, when circumstances allow it and we're back on campus — to continue with in-person events and hopefully a shabbaton as well. But in the meantime we hope to find engaging ways to involve everyone, whether through Zoom or by any other means.

Aaron: Right now we have some great virtual events taking place over the next couple of months. We are starting off the year with a "How to Get Excited for the Upcoming

Unique Year" panel, followed by some other virtual events which are still in the making. We have also been blessed to publish this year's first edition of The Breather, our club's official newsletter. We'd like to thank Shayna Herzage and Avigayil Winokur (editors-in-chief of The Breather) who have spent countless hours putting it together. Other events that our club runs will be advertised throughout the year.

What is your favorite OSU-provided food at club events?:

Rivky: We all know food is what brings people to events — so any and all.

Benji: To be honest, YU's food is probably the one thing I haven't been missing (shhh).

Sarina: Honestly, anything.

Aaron: Considering we are still virtual, I'd recommend people go to their local supermarket and grab a pint of ice cream.

Since COVID-19 hit, how has your club adjusted?:

Thank G-d, it's actually been adjusting pretty smoothly for the most part. Active Minds is all about raising awareness for mental health and removing the stigma around mental illness, and these are both things we can do regardless of physical proximity. We wish our efforts could be made in person, but that goes without saying. We have our first event of the year (a panel) over Zoom and that will be the first of many virtual events to come! We also learned that social media is a really big part of raising awareness, and together with our amazing team we have been working on using that to our advantage.

What is your advice to people who are looking to get involved on campus?:

Rivky: Apply, apply, apply. If at the beginning of the semester you get an email about a club that you're interested in, just submit an application. Be on the board. A lot of clubs don't necessarily demand a specific time commitment, but simply encourage members to be as involved as they would like — so if you want to join a club, do it! There are so many opportunities at YU; if there's something that interests you, contact those involved to hear more about it.

Benji: People reach out all the time, and so many people have such awesome skills and come up with ideas that never would have even crossed our minds. People can contact us either through social media or by getting in touch with any one of us individually.

Sarina: Definitely just get involved. I know it's easier said than done, but literally hit us up in any capacity (Instagram, Facebook, email, in person!!). What Active Minds is doing is creating a positive, life-changing movement within our community. That is something you want to be a part of.

Aaron: We absolutely love when people want to get involved!!! If Active Minds is something you want to get on board with, please bother us incessantly to find ways of helping. The more people we have on board helping, the larger impact we can make.

Anything else to say about your club?:

Rivky: We'd love to hear from you about thoughts, ideas, or questions you have regarding

Active Minds, so please reach out to us at contactme.activeminds@gmail.com.

Benji: Nothing is ever too insignificant to be said, and all of us are always happy to listen/talk.

Sarina: I feel like Active Minds speaks for itself on so many levels!

Aaron: Please, please, please reach out to us if you want to get involved in the most impactful club on campus. We want you!!!

Are you a YU undergraduate club head interested in seeing your club featured in a future edition? Email us at theyuobserver@gmail.com with your club name and the names of the club heads!

Meet Your Wilf Campus Student Government Candidates Fall 2020

Compiled by Fruma Landa, Editor in Chief

Candidate Akiva Sasson has not submitted a photo nor bio to the YU Observer.



Wilf Campus YSU Freshman Representative

Gilad Menashe

“Hello! My name is Gilad Menashe and I am running for the Freshmen Representative position for YSU. As we embark on this exciting chapter in our lives, I hope to serve as a voice and a middleman between our class and the administration. I cannot wait for an exciting year and the amazing journey we are just beginning. Hope to see you all soon!”

YSU Sophomore Representative

Shay Fishman

“I am running because I want to represent the voice of the sophomore class. I have been on campus for 3 semesters and know the real frustrations and issues the students face on a daily basis. I have the passion to make change whether big or small. I would love to implement an automatic renewal of shower curtains every year in the dorms (rather than showering next to mold 🤢). I would love to fix the elevators rather than putting band-aids on them every time they break. I don’t plan to make a big change by myself, but I know that I can help make a big change backed with the voices of my classmates. I don’t only offer a voice to speak, but also an ear to listen.”

Jacob Goldsmith

“My name is Jacob Goldsmith and I am running for the Prestigious position of Sophomore Representative. I recently completed my service in Tzahal and am excited to bring my leadership and teamwork skills to the Student

Body. Additionally, last year I was a Madrich at Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh and know a lot of the Sophomores. My goals for this year include bussing for Intowners, high-quality cameras, and getting army credits for people who served in Tzahal.”

YSU Katz Representative

Mike Finn

Hello my name is Mike Finn, I am a 20 year old 3rd year YU student and am running for JSS representative. I feel that I can bring much to the table when spreading awareness for the Katz school. My goal is to guide all Katz students to a better future for themselves.

Dan Marouani

“My name is Dan Marouani. I was born in Israel and I grew up in France. It is my third semester at Yeshiva University, and I am currently in my senior year in Katz. At the end of the day, my main goal is to help the Katz students succeed in everything that they do throughout the course of their life. I would like to make sure that each student chooses the career that they will enjoy the most throughout their life.”

Makor Representative

Menachem Aharon Wallach

“My name is Menachem Aharon Wallach and I would love to be the Makor student government representative. As representative, I would do my best to ensure that Makor students have opportunities to attend YU events and clubs and interact with students and faculty in other capacities.

Specifically, among other things, I would advocate for Makor students to be allowed to ride on the intercampus and local shuttles and for students at Beren to have free bus transportation to and from every Macs home game.”

Yehoshua Fineberg

“Hi, my name is Yehoshua. I am running because I want to represent YU.”

Akiva Sasson

SOY JSS Representative

Ilan Marouani

“My name is Ilan Marouani, I am from Paris, France and I am running for JSS representative. My main goal is to be helpful to the students of the program. I will first of all be on campus so I could directly interact with many first year students who might have a hard time to situate themselves within the system of YU and in New York City. I will try to help the students to learn more about JSS and help them determine their goals in the program and in religion.

Furthermore, I will try to help the students to enjoy the campus as much as possible by implementing events and shabbatons so that they would not only spend more time on campus than going back home, but also for them to meet new people and create connections. Finally, I want people to enjoy their time at YU and the morning programs are taking half of the day in most students' schedules, and by improving the program and their interaction with it I would be able to make

at least half of the students' day better. Thanks.”

Adir Cohen

“Hi, I’m Adir Cohen and I’m running for JSS Representative! JSS has been a huge part of my YU experience and helped me grow in so many ways. From amazing Rebbeim and classes to the group of friends I’ve made, JSS is a truly unique program where we all grow together. Some goals of mine as JSS Representative are to create more special shiurim for JSS students, more Coed events, and Shabbatons. I know the ins and outs of JSS and I’m excited to have the opportunity to run as your JSS Representative!”

Meet Your Beren Campus Student Government Candidates Fall 2020

Compiled by Shayna Herszage, Managing Editor

Freshman Class Presidential candidates Leeor Benshabat and Taliah Soleymani have not submitted a photo nor bio to the YU Observer.



Beren Campus Freshman Class Council - President

Leeor Benshabat

Maxine Pravda

“As a native New Yorker, I am thrilled to continue my education here in the Big Apple...but not just here in NYC...here, at Stern! As excited and as eager as I am to bring to the Freshman Class and Student Council my experiences in student government, most importantly, I am eager to bring *your* ideas to the Student Council. As a member of student government throughout high school—including Class President, board member of the Student Faculty Administration Committee, and Vice President of Operations—I liaised between my classmates and administrators to effectuate initiatives, both academic and social. These leadership roles afforded invaluable opportunities for collaboration.

“Over the past two weeks, I have identified the need for a streamlined system through which correspondence may be disseminated. I aspire to create and implement a centralized and organized platform for information—exclusively for the Freshman Class (and each respective class)—especially given the multitude of emails/communications circulated. As Freshman Class Council President during this unprecedented time, I hope to aid in meeting the challenges associated with online courses and an online campus. And, together, foster and build

community—even across our screens. Thank you for your time and support. I look forward to meeting you all in person. Stay safe and well!”

Taliah Soleymani

Sophomore Class Council - Vice President

Rebecca Aducalesi

“Hi guys!!! My name is Rebecca Aducalesi, and I'm super excited to be running for Sophomore Class VP!!! My goal is to make Stern the best possible experience for all of us, and I'm passionate about helping you in whatever way that I can. This is my first semester at Stern, and I want to do my best to make it incredible for everyone!! Whether that means planning events, planning additional learning opportunities, or just listening to what you guys have to say, I'm all in!!!”

Devorah Gurevich

“Hi! I'm Devorah Gurevich, from Cleveland, OH, and I'm really excited to be running for sophomore class council VP! This is my second year at Stern, and I'm majoring in political science. I'm passionate about creating positive change in the world, and I hope that a future in politics can help me achieve that!

“I decided to run for VP because I believe this year can be fun and social, even online. I would love to develop cool and creative ideas for activities the sophomore class can connect through and enjoy. I can't wait to meet everyone!”

Belina Milhem Jena

“My name is Belina Milhem Jena and I'm from Miami, Fl. This is my third semester at Stern and it's been amazing so far. I decided to run for Sophomore VP because we are going through a very strange time and I want to ease my classmates and make it feel like we are all together on campus. I want to plan many fun things so that we can all get to know each other better and to help cope with hard times.”

Ayelet Monas

“My goal as sophomore vice president is simple. It is to enhance my fellow classmates' experiences at Stern. As crazy and as unprecedented this year is, I know that I will be able to find ways and plan events that will bring the sophomore class together. As someone who went to a small high school, where everyone knew everyone, I understand the importance of getting to know your peers. As your vice president I plan to have many in person events—all within the guidelines of the CDC. I know we all wish we were on campus together (not that we don't all LOVE Zoom school), but I can assure you that as sophomore vice president, I will use this crazy time, despite its challenges, to create the most enjoyable experience for you guys. I look forward to and can't wait to be on campus and meet everyone in person.”

Katz School Class Council - President

Abigail Grigoryan

“Hi everyone! My name is Abigail and I'm from Brooklyn, NY. I'm a true freshman part of the Katz program but I plan to continue my education at Stern with a double major in Political Science and Judaic Studies. Some of you might already know me because I'm one of the co-owners of the Stern Class of 2024 account on Instagram. I'm running for Katz Class Council President because I am motivated to be someone you can rely on and I'm committed to the success of our class. Being a Baal Teshuva in a public high school, I faced an overwhelming amount of Antisemitism from students and staff, hence I chose Stern to have a sense of self and safety. The account was created to build a bridge between students from different high schools, countries, and backgrounds because every student should feel like a part of the family we have here, and I want to make sure that happens with academic events and extracurriculars. I believe that I have the ability to effectively serve as I played an avid role in my high school's student government as senior class president. However, I don't want to focus on what I've done in the past, but what I can do for you as we move forward. As President, it is not my voice that will matter but yours as I represent you to make this year the absolute best it can be. I hope you join me and I'd be thankful for your vote this Thursday.”

Enya Smilovic

“My name is Enya Smilovic and I'm from Phoenix, AZ. It's my second year in Stern and the Katz program and I came here

after spending a year in Israel. Since I'm from a small town I know how much of a struggle it can be to make friends in a new place so my main goal as your Katz president will be to connect everyone. Being virtual doesn't mean we can't all form great bonds. Regardless of if school is online or in person, my presidency will make you feel like we are all together all the time. I had a hard time getting adjusted to Stern at first so I want to be here to support everyone. While also showing everyone how they can be a part of the community. My presidency will include everyone's voice and everyone's ideas. All in all, I will be putting the U in YU."

Katz School Class Council - Vice President

Renee Lisbon

"Hey everyone, I'm Renee Lisbon from Tampa, Florida and I am running for Katz Class Council Vice President. I am currently a true Freshman in the Katz program where I plan to graduate and continue my education at Stern College to major in political science. The leadership and communication skills I've developed throughout my involvement in political campaigns and organizations will help contribute to the role of Katz VP. As Katz Vice President, I'll preside over the Katz President while representing and uplifting concerns and ideas from the student body to make sure that every student's voice is heard and to make Katz not only a program but a community!"

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Photo: Featured clockwise from top left hand corner: Maxine Pravda, Rebecca Aduculesi, Devorah Gurevich, Belina Milhem Jena, Ayelet Monas, Abigail Grigoryan, Enya Smilovic, Renee Lisbon.

Photo Source: Individual photos credited to respective candidates, compiled by Shayna Herszage on Fotor.

Making Masechet Eruvin More Practical: Camping And Personal Vs. Communal Responsibility By Temmi Lattin

Anyone who is following the *daf yomi* (learning one page of Talmud daily) cycle will remember the many posts and messages about "how to get through *Masechet* (tractate) *Eruvin*" attesting to the *masechet*'s difficult and technical content. Some view the detailed *halachot* (Jewish laws) of *eruv* (an enclosure permitting items to be carried on the sabbath according to Jewish Law) as largely inapplicable, given that many people live in suburban communities with well-established *eruvim* (enclosures), which the Jews in the area hardly need to think about. For me, however, *eruvim* proved to be a practical and exciting topic because of my family's annual *Shabbat* (Sabbath) camping trips. One of the most memorable parts of every camping trip was scoping out the site for the best trees to construct our *eruv*. Every year

we bring our *eruv* supplies — wooden rods, ratchets (to attach them to trees), metal loops at the top of the rods and a bright colored string — all necessary to build an *eruv*, which allows us to carry throughout the campsite on *Shabbat*.

On *Eruvin* 2b, the *Gemara* (Talmud) speaks about a *korah* — a crossbeam over a doorway needed to permit carrying inside an alleyway — and discusses the many opinions on its required measurements. The debate centers on the maximum height of a *korah* — with one of the concerns being that it won't be noticeable if placed too high. *Daf* (page) 3a raises the opinion that if the *korah* has a *maltrah* — a cornice, or decorative molding — the *korah* is especially noticeable and may be higher than the suggested 20 *amot* (cubits) limit; carrying in an alleyway with such a *korah* would therefore be permitted — and in support of this ruling, a comparison is made to the roof of a *sukkah* (booth), which has similar qualifications. The *Gemara* explains that, according to the rabbis, a *korah* serves as a *heker* — a conspicuous marker that demarcates the boundaries between the alleyway, where one may carry objects, and a public domain, where one may not. The addition of a cornice thus brings attention to the *korah*, which consequently becomes kosher even if its height is greater than 20 *amot*. This passage in the *Gemara* highlights the importance of being aware of an *eruv* — knowing where carrying is

permissible and where it is not. Many Jews lack this awareness as they live in suburban neighborhoods, where kosher *eruv* are often taken for granted, so I therefore recognize how much camping with my family on *Shabbat* has made me appreciate what goes into constructing an *eruv*. But for those who aren't crazy about the idea of roughing it in the outdoors, there are other ways to make this *masechet* practical and learn some meaningful lessons that the *dapim* (pages) have to teach us.

Later on *daf* 3, the *Gemara* discusses a situation where part of the *korah* of an alleyway is above 20 *amot* and part of it is below this measurement. Rabbah says that this setup is OK for an alleyway, but not a *sukkah*. Rava MiParzakya explains that in a *sukkah*, which is generally made for a *yachid* (individual), if the kosher part of the roofing — which is under 20 *amot* — was removed, that individual would not have anyone to remind them to fix this issue and will end up using what has become an invalid *sukkah*; an alleyway, by contrast, is used by many people — so if the kosher part of the *korah* became detached, all the Jews using that *eruv* would make sure the problem was resolved.

The *Gemara* later cites Rav Adda Bar Matanah, who quotes Rabbah saying the opposite: a *sukkah* roof that is partially over 20 *amot* is valid, but an alleyway *korah* that's partially over 20 *amot* is not kosher. The *Gemara* explains that because a *sukkah* is built only for a

yachid, this person will accept all responsibility and make sure on his own that the *sukkah* is kosher instead of relying on others — whereas regarding an alleyway that many people utilize, everyone might rely on each other and assume that someone else has taken care of the issue, ultimately providing no guarantee that the *eruv* is in fact kosher.

These two conflicting views toward the requirements of two different structures — a *sukkah* roof and a *korah* — highlight



both the benefits and challenges of two types of responsibilities: personal and communal. While personally taking accountability for something can mean that one is more likely to make sure that the task will be performed, when a single person shoulders all of the responsibility without any help, they might be less likely to execute the task properly or even remember to do it at all. At the same time, communal responsibilities also have pros and cons: having everyone be “in it together” can fuel joint effort and collaboration, or can instead lead to each person relying on everyone else to accomplish something that, in the end, may never come to fruition. Having

a reliable communal *eruv* is one of the many wonderful aspects of living in a Jewish community, but maybe — once in a while — it's worth it to venture out of your comfort zone, spend a weekend away from home and build your own personal *eruv* for *Shabbat*.

Daf Yomi at Beren: Individual Truth and Jewish Academia

By Shayna Herszage, Managing
Editor

From a young age, I have heard the following joke: If there are two Jewish people stranded alone together on an island, there will be at least three synagogues because they disagree too often. Growing up in a community with few Jewish people but many synagogues, this joke always amused me. However, it was not until adulthood that I fully understood the truth of the statement.



The *Beit Midrash* (Jewish study hall) has been a place of argument and debate for as long as Torah study has existed. This is evident throughout the entirety of the Talmud, highlighted through characters such as Hillel and Shammai, the famous pair of rabbis who seldom agreed on an issue, and Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish, the near-inseparable study partners who made each other better scholars through

disagreement. One recent page in the *daf yomi* (learning one page of Talmud daily) cycle, Eruvin 38b, made a strange statement about disagreements. Sefaria translates it as such:

“The Gemara now asks: **Let us also count Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi** among these Elders, as he too holds that the two days are distinct sanctities. The Gemara answers: **Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi taught this opinion, and he himself did not hold it** to be correct.”

When I first learned this page, almost three years ago, I was perplexed. If Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi did not agree with the opinion the others taught, why would he teach it?

One possible reason I have considered is because he may have understood that there is power in the idea of the subjective truth. While he himself may not have agreed with the opinion of the Elders, the honest and respectful way to teach his students is to raise both perspectives and allow them to form their own subjective truth.

It is easy to teach students only the teacher’s perspective, ignoring the other views. However, this is not the most educational method of teaching, because the students do not get the chance to develop their own individual truths and ways of connecting and understanding the material. In order for a person to understand and be firm in establishing their truth,

they must understand multiple perspectives.

This understanding of truth is similar to that of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his essay “Self Reliance,” Emerson states: “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.” That is to say, truth is not an instant phenomenon — a person must personally connect to and accept it before it can be *their* truth. Like Emerson, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi wishes for his students to develop their own truth, their own understanding of Jewish law, and is willing to teach other opinions in order to help them achieve that.

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, in his decision to teach an opinion he does not agree with, captures the nature of Jewish academia. The world of Jewish academia is not one of universal truths. Rather, it is one of Hillel and Shammai, of Reish Lakish and Rabbi Yochanan, of the rational Maimonides and the mystical Nachmanides. As such, learning and understanding multiple truths is how a person comes to have a basis in developing one’s own individual truth.

Opinions:

Your Free Speech Doesn’t Offend Me

By Raizy Neuman, Website Manager

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the

press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The first amendment of our constitution, over two hundred years after its creation, is coming under attack. To me, it seems that “hate speech” has become the latest trend, with today’s generation believing that people do not have the right to express themselves freely. On college campuses, it has become the norm to be made to follow highly restrictive speech codes. “Cancel culture” is rampant, and speakers who students do not wish to speak on their campuses are often disinvited. The idea that everyone deserves the right to be intellectually and idealistically unchallenged is disturbing, yet this is the current predicament of our country.



There is a misconstrued belief that people should not be allowed to say things that have the potential to offend others. Many of the holders of this belief claim that *this* is what is destroying our society, that *this* notion of free speech is tearing us apart. These proponents for limitation say that if the government were to place more

restrictions on our speech, we would finally be able to unify.

This censorship sounds a lot like communism to me, but I digress.

Isn't college a place where we *should* feel safe to speak our minds? To hold unpopular opinions? To be able to peacefully coexist with those who disagree with us, and not quash them into silence?

Sadly, it seems that we have become akin to communists, declaring authority over others' right to express what they choose. Those of us with differing opinions are left in the dust, wondering if we even deserve validity. College campuses are gaining a one-track mind, which is the exact opposite of what we are here to accomplish. We're here to learn *how* to think, not *what* to think.

"Safe spaces" on college campuses, blurring the lines between offense and harm, are excellent examples of this intellectual repression. Students are being taught to constantly refer to "authority" for all of their information, from professors to social media. These acclaimed "authorities" become the sources for all things political and moral, opinion and fact (the latter of which is not often differentiated). Critical thinking skills have been torn away from our generation, and have students declaring that it is better to feel safe than to challenge themselves with ideas that don't align with what makes them feel good.

I have noticed that many people, under the guise of "let's have conversations!" are actually quite intolerant of differing views. Against any who disagree, these people retreat into identity politics, crying racism, white privilege, mansplaining, and womansplaining, to name a few. If I am pro-life, I am allegedly anti women's rights. If I don't support the "Black Lives Matter" organization, I am allegedly racist. If I don't believe that, with the proper variables taken into account, there is an existing significant gender wage gap, I am allegedly misogynistic.

To claim that one does not have the right to express what they choose, and to cry an undefined "hate speech" just because one's opinion has the potential to make another feel bad, goes beyond the first amendment, and it goes beyond the Constitution. It penetrates our very humanity. We exist not to blindly nod and cheer for words that sound nice. We exist not to keep each other sheltered, or to keep another's political correctness in check. We exist to push intellectual boundaries, and this cannot happen if we aren't comfortable with challenging narratives.



As Americans, we have and should treasure our right to freedom of expression. This freedom was fought for by our founding fathers, and several other countries don't even possess our extent of this privilege. We have never received, nor should we strive for, the right to not be offended. I would never encourage, of course, the *intent* to offend, or the *intent* to hurt others. I only maintain that there is a difference between stating facts (and opinions based on those facts), and explicit, or even implicit, malice. To address the latter case, though, we can all agree that intentionally insulting, disrespecting, and offending another is rude and likely a sign of poor character. However, in most cases, this is still protected under the Constitution, and under our free society. We should not be fighting to change that. In its use as a tool to censor, political correctness seems to have the potential to destroy America as we know it, and we *must* fight it.

Today, I challenge you, to truly challenge yourself. Do you know exactly what it is you're fighting for? Do you know who it is you're supporting? Are you investigating what these platforms that sound so innocent, so harmless, are advocating? Are you pushing yourself to ask questions, to learn what is *actually* happening around us? And, arguably more importantly, what isn't?

If not, it's time to find out. Don't allow society and the mainstream media, entrenched in their own manipulation, to

control what you say, what you think, what you ask. It's time to wake up, and get a little intellectually uncomfortable.

The Hypocrisy And Devastating Effects Of The American Disease

By Mili Chizhik, News Editor

"You must hate all cops and want the police system abolished," "Black Lives Matter movement supporters believe that all white people are racist," or my personal favorite, "the Black Lives Matter movement's goal is to show that only Black people are important and no one else," are examples of lines commonly thrown out in response to when I share my thoughts regarding the current sociopolitical unrest. Perhaps "favorite" isn't the right word ... "most frustrating to me" seems more fitting.

I generally don't like to share my opinion on anything unless I have a solid foundation on the topic, therefore I rely on what the research and statistics show, rather than what someone posts on their Facebook page or Instagram story.

So, what does the research show? It was found that from 2013 to 2015, Black young males were 2.5 times more likely to be killed than their fellow white male citizens. One of the leading causes of death in young men is police violence (Edwards, 2019). So, this is a public health issue, just like controlling a disease or trying to eliminate sexual violence (Edwards, 2019). The belief that Black men are more violent is a

catastrophic stereotype that has to be eradicated, otherwise America will have to face the tragic murders of more innocent citizens.

Okay, so we got the statistical data but what if these people were actually dangerous and pose a threat to the communities? Shouldn't the police detain them and do what they must and not be penalized for doing their jobs?

Well, some might say that according to the sixth amendment, all citizens have a right to a speedy and just trial, therefore the accused policemen will many times be acquitted due to lack of evidence so as not to make a mistake of locking up an innocent citizen. No one can deny these principles, but why is a fair and speedy trial only given to the policemen and not given to the detainee of whom these policemen maimed or killed?

For example, one of the most notorious serial killers in the U.S., Ted Bundy, who killed and raped at least 30 women and escaped prison twice, violently resisted his final arrest and even so, was taken into the custody of the police unscathed. During the arrest, the policemen gave warning shots, chased after and tackled him, and then finally arrested him after him being on run for 5 years (Rule, 2008). If this despicable and clearly guilty person was able to stand trial and get the justice he deserved, despite his trail of cruel and tragic deeds, why do so many potential "criminals"

not even make it to the judges bench or even to the jail cell?

Let's take the claim that these people had known criminal histories. Some of these people *did* have undeniable criminal histories and they are not angels, but why is that even relevant to their deaths? The role of an officer is to maintain order and safety for their fellow citizens, and shooting to kill is not in the job description. If taking the history of these men is so important, then one must also take the history of the policemen into account.

According to a study conducted in the Yale Law Journal, policemen who have a history of misconduct or have been fired and rehired are more likely to have instances of future misconduct (Grunwald, 2019). Furthermore, white officers are more likely to use force than their Black colleagues. While the Black officers don't take more forceful actions based on race and purely on resistance of the arrestee, the white officers are more likely to use force based on race, with or without resistance, specifically when it comes to Black or African American citizens (Paoline III, 2018).

Rather than wasting our breaths and time with biased social media posts denying what the research shows, increasing awareness accurately must be the priority. This does not necessarily translate to defunding or abolishing the police forces, as many believe, but rather to have a better police education curriculum and a stronger vetting screening to recruit the people who we are

supposed to look to protect us. The laws and regulations on firing police officers also must be changed because of their protective conditions that prevent officers who had a history of misconduct from being penalized.

Furthermore, the U.S. education curriculum must be modified to educate their students on the history of the U.S. from the lens of all minorities, especially through the devastating and troubling history of Black people in America. Both public and private schools are at fault for not teaching the full American history, thus the majority of the American people have a severe gap in their historical knowledge.

This is not to say that the lives of policemen or anyone who is not Black don't matter, but there must be an acknowledgement of this public health issue. Approximately 1 out of 1000 young Black men are killed from police violence (Edwards, 2019); that is the same rate as the spreading of COVID-19 in New York City metro area circa mid- to late-March 2020. The lack of awareness or care of this racially specific disease of police violence not only demonstrates the priorities that this country has but its values, as well.

Our lack of knowledge of historical events and of this issue will have a cascading effect: it leads to inaccurate understandings and unethical belief systems and largely contributes to the perpetual systemic racism that is tightly-

woven in the foundational fabric of our country, the land of the "free." But please, do tell me more about how the killing of these victims was unjustified, *but* they had a criminal history/they were violently resisting arrest/fill-in-the-blank a reason to justify murder.

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Tragedy: Beirut Explosion; Featuring An Interview With A Lebanese Woman
By Diba Khalili

In Beirut, Lebanon, on August 4, 2020 at 6 p.m. Warehouse 12 in the Beirut port had smoke blowing off the roof. What is to be noted is that the warehouse was exactly next to grain silos, which had been triggered and oxidized and transformed into an eruption. Lebanese civilians

would go on to suffer 190 losses, 6,000 wounded, and 300,000 temporarily displaced as a result of the explosion.

Warehouse 12 had caught ablaze since ammonium nitrate had combined with oil fuels, becoming flammable, which set a domino effect of small blasts until there was an explosion heard all around Lebanon. Beirut, the capital, had the worst damage than any other city in Lebanon. The 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored unsafely in warehouse 12 is to be blamed, says Lebanon's Prime Minister.

Interview — 09/17/2020

Once the news of the Beirut explosion broke out, I had decided to call my Lebanese friend Celine to check in on her. Celine was born in New York but had lived in Lebanon for two years, having recently moved back to New Jersey with her family. Knowing that Celine had more information about the explosion and personal ties to Lebanon, I thought why not interview her about the tragedy. The interview had started dense with solitude and ended with the unexpectedness of what the future holds for Lebanon.

Diba: Why did you move to Lebanon?

Celine: I would visit Lebanon every couple of years and My family decided to pick up and move to Lebanon because it was doing really well at that time and it was time to really live my culture. I had to move

back because of my dad's work and my parents wanted me to receive an American diploma and to start college and build a future in America.

Diba: Have you ever visited the Beirut port, and what goes on there?

Celine: No, but I would always pass by it. What goes on at the port is the importing and exporting of goods in Lebanon, but here's nothing going as of now because the explosion has made the port filled with shattered glass, dead bodies, and debris from the buildings.

Diba: How is Lebanon dealing with the explosion?

Celine: Not well at all. After a couple of weeks, the same place had gone on fire but thankfully no one was around because the explosion made them evacuate the Beirut port. But recently, downtown Beirut also had another fire, the Beirut Souks mall — no one is hurt but it's said that they're opening a case of why the fire happened.

Diba: How did you feel about the unexpected explosion?

Celine: Depressed. It's my hometown and my people are suffering out there and life there seems to be collapsing. There's COVID-19, corruption, protests since October 2019, government problems, economic problems — and now there's an explosion? Weeks have been spent searching for those lost and ending up finding them burned, drowned, or injured. It's not getting any better and it's hard to have hope during these trying times. Lebanon is having a hard time recovering, but the people of Lebanon and those around

the world had chosen to clean up and help and build up Beirut together in this tragedy.

Diba: How are your friends and family doing in Lebanon?

Celine: No one I know was hurt, but their living situation is disastrous; my mom's aunt's house broke down and she was covered in glass. My friend's house also broke down and her family was trying to look for her and thankfully they found her. Some of my friends and family are leaving and some are stuck in Lebanon because they don't have visas or documents.

In conclusion, Lebanon and its people have been suffering from the outcome of the explosion. There's a chance it may take Lebanon a long time to recover from the explosion and everything else going on at the moment — yet they still have a sliver of hope for the future. I would like to thank Celine for bringing me some insight into the news and letting me interview her during these hard times for her home country.

Working At Key Food: The Inside Scoop

By Eli Greenfield

Getting a job at Key Food was easy as pie. Yes, you know the store I'm talking about. The one on 187th and Broadway where all the Jews go to shop for kosher meat and challah for *Shabbat* (Sabbath). Yes, that one! Well, as I was saying, getting a job there was super easy. I walked into the store and asked if they were hiring. After being pointed in the direction of the hiring manager, I was

ushered into the corner and asked a few questions.

“Are you over 18?”

“Yes.”

“What's your availability?”

“Sunday through Friday.”

“Fill out this paperwork and you're hired as a cashier.” It was that simple.

I came back the next day for training wearing the required long pants and sneakers (I got sent home to change once when I walked in with slides), donned the loose employee jacket, and waited for directions. I was told to stand in front of the register while an experienced cashier whispered instructions. Sounds simple, right? Just scan items, put it in the bags, and wait for them to pay. Well, it's a bit more complicated than that. First off, did the customer bring their own bags? Key Food, as per NY state law, does not provide plastic bags. You have to bring your own. Well, what if you forgot to bring a bag? You have to carry it all in your hands? No, Key Food has a solution. You can purchase these flimsy, no-handle, paper bags for five cents each. Or, you can purchase a reusable bag for a dollar, but as most of us have



countless of those bags already and simply forget to bring it to the store (for the tenth time), we purchase the paper. So, lesson number one, ask the customer if they need bags. If they do, type in the special bag code, 9095, to charge them five cents per bag.

The next thing I learned was that produce does not scan. Every product has a code to it that must be entered. If I was lucky, there was a sticker on the fruit containing the code. Most times, though, I had to hunt through my trusty produce sheet containing every fruit and vegetable known to humankind and its four-digit code. Fun fact, all supermarkets have the same codes. Are you buying an avocado? The cashier will punch in 4225 or 4046, depending on whether it's a tropical avocado or not. A cucumber? 4042. Pepper? This depends on the color. Either 4889 (red), 3121 (orange), 4689 (yellow), etc. It's all about the numbers. An experienced cashier can rattle off the codes to every fruit or vegetable down to stuff like yuca (4819) or sweet potato (4816). But a newbie? They'll be perusing the produce sheet, desperately trying to find the darn code. But the codes weren't the first thing I learned, oh no. The first thing I learned was what half of these vegetables are called. Do you know what arugula is? I certainly didn't. And good luck trying to tell the difference between cilantro and parsley. My first line of defense was asking the customer the names of the produce. "Bok choy! It's

Bok choy!" I never heard of such a thing in my life, but if that's what the customer says, let me check the produce sheet. Sure enough, there it is. One customer claimed her vegetable was called "peanuts." Now that's just too far. I may not have known what artichokes are, but I know what peanuts are, and this leafy vegetable ain't it. So, I turned to my second line of defense, the floor manager. After I finished my nine hours of training, all questions and problems that arose were directed to the floor manager. There were always two of them chilling by the cash registers waiting for problems to smooth over. I called over the manager who told me the name of the vegetable (and no, it was not some sort of peanut leaf).

Speaking of the manager, there were two phrases I quickly picked up. "Override," and "price check." These phrases were only to be yelled, followed by a manager perking their ears and walking over. Let me explain. You, the customer, put down a zucchini to scan, and I accidentally typed in the wrong code — I need an override before you pay. Did you decide last minute you actually don't want the item I just scanned? That's fine, but we now need an override. Any mistake or mess-up needs an override in the form of a manager loafing over and scanning their manager card as I mumble what happened to cause it. So, if you're not sure if the chocolate you picked up fits into your budget, don't wait for the cashier to scan it before you decide. Ask for a price-check, which gives you time to see the price and determine if it will be

staying in the store or gracing your stomach.

The next phrase is "price-check!" This is when you bring an item to the register, and for some reason, it's not scanning, or you saw the price on the big screen facing the customer and did a double-take, spluttering, "that's not \$8.00, it's \$4.50!" I yell, "price check!" causing the manager to breeze over asking what the item in question is. I hold it up, and they go to the shelf to check the price. Sometimes the customer will be right, and the cashier will mark it down to the lower price (necessitating an override), but if the price is \$8.00, don't bother arguing. You won't win.

Now that we've covered the basic training, let's run through the other random tasks and turn to a more exciting topic, the customers. If I was by my register, waiting around with no customers, the manager would eye me. What that eye meant is, "you better find something to do, or I'll find it for you." As a cashier, I would work mostly six- or seven-hour shifts a couple of times a week (anywhere between 20 to 32 hours), with only a half-hour break in the middle. The rest of the time, I was expected to be on my toes (literally, the first few weeks of standing non-stop were tough), working diligently. The first most immediate thing to do was to return the carts and baskets to the front door. As there was no cart corral near the exit, customers would simply leave their cart by the register and the cashiers would return them to the corral at the entrance. When I was done with

that, I would return all the stuff that you all decided last minute that you don't actually want (which is totally cool, thanks for the unanticipated break). If there are none, I would grab a towel and cleaning spray and wipe down my counter. I would also be assigned to: level the shelves, (a tedious job involving walking down the aisles arranging all the items on the shelf toward the front, so they look more appealing), help stock new shipments, empty the bottle machine, or box crushing (which is actually really fun. There is a big four-cornered machine in the backroom (employees only) where I toss in boxes until it's full. I then press the big red button, which activates the crusher, slowly bearing down onto the boxes until they're crushed to a pulp. The power in that machine is exhilarating. I was also assigned any other random task the current floor manager finds for me. And now, to the customers.

Considering the diverse nature of the neighborhood, our customers were equally diverse. Many of our customers spoke Spanish as a first language. Many times, I found myself saying, "sorry, I don't understand Spanish." I was tempted just to nod and smile, but then they would ask me a question in Spanish and I'm busted.

No matter the culture, there were always similar types of customers. There were the customers who've been coming there for years, usually older, staring at the screen as I scanned the items and prayed they all came out as expected.

There were the customers who knew the drill cold, handing me their Key Food card together with their reusable bags, and the customers who looked at me aghast saying, "you don't supply bags?!" Most customers fell somewhere in the middle, polite, pretty much on point, and totally unmemorable. Then there were, shall we say, the more interesting clientele. First, there were the "Karens," who waged war on the "no plastic bag" policy. After fuming about us charging an inconceivable five cents a bag, they came up with a loophole. They started taking (free) plastic produce bags and using them for everything, from tin pans to cleaning products. When Management found out about this, they were not OK with it. We received strict orders that anyone using produce bags for anything other than produce, meats, or frozen items, shall be charged the large amount of five cents. Oh, this caused a couple of "Karens" to blow their top. "It's illegal! Get me your manager," one customer screamed at me. At least I wasn't the cashier who had someone curse out her and the manager, leaving us all shaken. It was these types of customers who held up the line, indignant that they were being charged twenty-five cents too much, who cursed us out when it took "too long" for us to empty the bottle machine, and had to be kicked out for not wearing a mask (your shirt pulled up to your face is not a mask, but I'll let it slide just this once).

Then, there was the conspiracy theorist who announced to the cashiers that there was a gang of

thieves who moved from upstate after ravaging the stores there, and were now targeting this neighborhood. "Be on your guard," she earnestly told us. "I spoke to the police, the FBI. They won't listen to me." There was the Jewish guy who solemnly told another cashier that he was a big rabbi and that his job was to "bless the meat in the back to make it kosher." Then there was the sad old lady who sidled up to the register with a bag of chips and upon hearing it was three dollars, she informed me that she had the money last week, so she'd take it, along with the difference. I had no idea what that meant, so I again asked if she had the money, but she held her ground, looking at me expectantly while telling me she'll take the difference. The poor woman came back with the same exact request with the same bag of chips five minutes later.

There were really nice customers too, like the coronavirus tippers (one customer gave me twenty dollars!), the old *bubbies* (Jewish grandmothers) who *schmoozed* (chatted) me up, asking me my name and telling me they actually have a grandson who is also named Eli (surprise, surprise), and that one customer who, despite not being Jewish, randomly started *schmoozing* (chatting) with me in Hebrew and lived in Israel for a while.

Let me leave off with some tips to anyone who shops in Key Food, and really any supermarket. First off, that theory that the stuff in the back of the shelf is fresher? Straight

up facts. When I was restocking shelves, I was specifically told to put the fresh stock in the back so the not-as-fresh-but-still-fresh stuff would sell first. Second, always swipe your store club card, and if you don't have one, ask the cashier to swipe for you. You have nothing to lose and only discounts to gain. Thirdly, please, please, use a produce bag for your onions. Those things shed more than a cat with fleas. It was frustrating to finish cleaning and wiping down my register only to have a customer walk up with a handful of onions and dump them onto my clean conveyor belt. And those blighters will shed all over your car and pantry too.

Don't forget to take your cash, located below the scanner. Take your change and your receipt. Thank you for shopping at, Key Food!

The Importance Of Pronouns

By The Yeshiva University College Democrats Executive Board

Put yourself in someone else's shoes for a moment. You walk into class and see a person and they look female, act female, but their name is that of a male. The only thing you can do that can make them feel female until they legally change their name is use their pronouns. At the start of class, the professor does not ask for their pronouns and refers to the person using the pronouns he, him, and his. Internally, that student is either too self-conscious to speak up and correct the professor, or gets the impression that the professor doesn't care about his

or her pronouns. Using correct pronouns provides a safe space for everyone to express themselves, and they are the smallest way to acknowledge a person's identity.

Over the past few weeks, the Yeshiva University College Democrats have taken up the pronouns initiative over Zoom. With the ability to rename our names on a Zoom call, our board and club members thought it would be the perfect opportunity to show off our pronouns to normalize their usage. One main difference between "syllabus week" at another college and Yeshiva is when the professor asks your name at another college, they often also ask for your pronouns. For example, at the start of the semester professors usually go around and ask the same questions, "name, where you live, and major." What if Yeshiva asked for preferred pronouns as well? Unfortunately, no such thing is done. Pronouns aren't a political issue; they are a sign of respect towards the receiving person. Similarly, assuming another person's pronouns or inflicting a false identity onto that person is wrong and can be harmful.

"Misgendering is when someone's pronouns are not respected, which can be an act of violence." There is a difference between misgendering on purpose and misgendering by accident. If someone has expressly stated their pronouns to you, and you blatantly disrespect them because they do not conform to the gender norms you were

raised to believe, then that is misgendering on purpose. If you meet a person for the first time and misgender them without knowing their pronouns, then that is misgendering an accident as long as you refer to them by their correct pronouns in the future. So let's talk about misgendering on purpose. If you are constantly misgendering a person, that action would be considered harassment and an act of violence. Being called something that makes you uncomfortable consistently is considered bullying. If, for example, you were in middle school and a classmate frequently called you an "idiot" that would be regarded as harassment and bullying. The same logic applied to misgendering. In the workforce, and in colleges, that person has the opportunity to file a Title IX report against you, and you would be at risk of losing your job.

Leviticus states that as Jews we must "Love your fellow as yourself." To love a fellow Jew as yourself does not mean to love only a select few and exclude everyone else. As Jews, we must strive to accept and love everyone because not only is it written in the Torah, but Rabbi Akiva agrees, stating that



this particular verse is a “major principle of the Torah.” We are meant to bring the Jewish people together and tear down the walls that divide us to bring peace amongst ourselves. This starts with accepting everyone for who they are and, subsequently, their pronouns because that is a part of them.

At Yeshiva, it is unsafe to assume that all the students attending the school go by their “appeared” pronouns (ex. A person who looks female but prefers a different set of pronouns not specific to their gender). There are students at Yeshiva who are gender non-binary and may prefer to be called they and them, but instead are forced to choose a gendered pronoun. This is why our club has started this initiative. We want to start making students and professors comfortable with pronouns on the screen, so hopefully, that same sentiment can be transferred into the classroom one day.

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In Defense of Donald: Why the President Deserves the Nobel Peace Prize Nomination

By Jacob Leichter

On September 9, reports broke that President Trump was nominated by Norwegian Parliament member Christian Tybring-Gjedde for the Nobel Peace Prize, his reason being Trump’s brokering of the August 2020 agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel. This is the second time Tybring-Gjedde has put forth Trump’s name for the Peace Prize; the first being in 2018 following the US-North Korea summit in Singapore. Whether or not he wins, this news is a boon for the president’s reelection campaign as we draw closer to the election on November 3.



The nomination has stirred up strong responses on both sides of the political aisle in which his supporters applaud the decision, while his detractors disagree, arguing that Trump’s brash personality fails to merit such an award. Before deciding whether or not the president is deserving of a Nobel Peace Prize, it would be wise to look at past presidential laureates, of which there were four. The committee gave the prize to Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 for

negotiating peace in the Russo-Japanese War. Woodrow Wilson was next to receive the accolade in 1919 for his efforts in creating the League of Nations. Jimmy Carter, for his efforts for peace in Northern Ireland, North Korea, Uganda, and for the Egypt-Israel agreement at Camp David, was granted the award following his presidency in 2002. The most recent recipient was Barack Obama in 2009. Obama won the prize less than a year into his first term, for “extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between people,” as the Nobel committee justified the seemingly premature accolade.

Considering the reasoning behind previous leaders’ nominations and receptions of the Peace Prize, Trump is likewise deserving of the nomination and, should the Norwegian organization deem it so, the award itself. Trump and his administration have made significant strides in improving and strengthening diplomacy between countries that in the past were at odds. Besides the UAE-Israel talks, the United States brokered a Serbia-Kosovo normalization agreement and accords between Israel and Bahrain on September 4 and 15, respectively. Trump earlier this year as well offered to help ease tensions between India and Pakistan who were engaging in disputes over territory at the Kashmir border. These landmarks in the realm of foreign policy, as well as Trump’s withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan,

signaling an end to the protracted wars in both countries, deserve recognition and should be commended.

Yes, it is true that the president's personality and proclivity for voicing his opinions on Twitter are some of his character flaws, but that should not detract from his efforts and success in negotiating peace around the world. Other Nobel recipients' records as leaders were tainted with greater injustices than narcissism and name-calling. Such examples include U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt (1906) and his imperialistic conquest of the Philippines, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1945) and his opposition to taking in Jewish refugees on the *SS St. Louis* in 1939, and Yasser Arafat (1994), a sponsor of terrorism through the Palestinian Liberation Organization. If individuals like these can have their efforts towards peace solidified with a Nobel Prize, it goes without saying that Trump, who has tried and triumphed in achieving amity between nations on several occasions, is more than a worthy candidate for such an award. The die has been cast, so all that's left to do now is wait for the Oslo-based committee to announce the winner of the Peace Prize on October 9. Whether Trump joins the ranks of presidential laureates or is snubbed again, his foreign policy endeavors will remain a testament to his strides towards peace and serve as hallmarks of his administration's achievements.

Pandemic In Prison

By Shayna Herszage, Managing Editor and YU College Democrats Vice President of Criminal Justice and Racial Inequality

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most people focus on ways to protect themselves and their loved ones from getting sick. However, not all people have been granted the autonomy and humanity required to be able to protect themselves from the virus. Individuals who have been incarcerated in the United States are lacking safe precautions and conditions, endangering themselves, their fellow inmates, and those working within the prisons.

Many prisons have reported high rates of COVID infection of inmates and staff members, such as San Quentin State Prison in California, which reported over 2,000 inmates and 261 staff members infected as of last month. According to Kevin T. Schnepel, an assistant professor of economics at Simon Fraser University, the rate of infection in prisons is nearly 7,000 per every 100,000 inmates — more than four times the rate for non-incarcerated individuals in the United States, according to data from the Marshall Project.

The spread of disease among such a vulnerable population is significantly due to an issue of fear of consequences for the inmates. Kenneth Clayton, an inmate at the Bonne Terre Facility in Missouri, has stated that his fellow inmates are afraid to report COVID-like symptoms. This is primarily because they do not trust the

staff members of the prison to treat them properly and respectfully if they admit to being sick. According to Clayton, the inmates fear being placed in more inhumane conditions than that of the prison itself, but most of all, they fear being isolated without their needs and illness being cared for. As a result, they are more likely to deny symptoms because inmates generally trust more of their fellow inmates with their safety than they trust the staff members working in the prison.

In addition to the distrust and fear among the inmates, the poor conditions within the prisons lead to increased infection rates. According to CNN, prisons do not allow for the quarantining or social distancing necessary to curb the spread of disease. While there are frequent mass testings of inmates and staff members, many are asymptomatic, as is common in general with COVID-19. In such an environment, disease travels too quickly for mass testing to be effective. Those who are in the United States incarceration system during this pandemic are forced to live in a petri dish of a fast-moving, as-yet incurable disease.

Additionally, all resources within a prison cost money — most of which comes from civilian tax dollars. During the COVID-19 pandemic, proper prison precautions would require expensive testing and disinfection processes that the prisons are simply not paying for. As a result, inmates such as Clayton have reported that

prison cleaning supplies are diluted with water in order to save money, and that healthy inmates are forced to clean the cells of infected inmates. The unwillingness to raise prison budgets is causing direct exposure of healthy inmates to the virus.

One may ask: what can be done about the budget? Is it our problem, as non-incarcerated individuals, to the point that our taxes should be allotted to prisons? Why should we care about incarcerated individuals if we ourselves are not in prisons?

My answer, however surprising, is *yes*, the government *should* allot more tax money to prisons in this time. We are living in the midst of an international crisis, and the virus is spreading quickly. As the aforementioned data indicates, prisons are places of high spread and high risk. If taxes are focused toward curbing the spread in such a high-risk location, infection rates will inevitably be lower in the United States. So even if we are not incarcerated, those in the incarceration system are still part of our community as fellow people in the United States.

Additionally, while the inmates can be considered separate enough from society to not pose a health risk to the public if they are infected, some individuals leave the walls of the prison on a regular basis: the guards. If the guards are placed in unsafe, unhygienic conditions during work hours, they may bring the infection with them when they leave — thus increasing the spread not only in prisons, but outside the incarceration system

as well. Even if one does not have empathy for prison inmates, unsafe prison conditions also pose a health risk to those beyond the prison because of the many guards and staff members who leave the prison at the end of the day.



Furthermore, those in the incarceration system are part of the global community of fellow humans in general. Why should we leave vulnerable individuals to be forced to crowd together and catch and spread disease when such a problem can *at least* be curbed, even if it can not be prevented altogether? The statement that we are a global community of humans may sound cheesy, but an international pandemic has shown just how small the world can be. If diseases can be spread all over the world so easily, why not spread empathy as well, and try to give help to those who need it?

The death penalty and capital punishment in the criminal justice system have been subjects of debate for decades, if not centuries. However, regardless of whether a person is in favor of or against the death penalty, it is inarguable that not all individuals who have been incarcerated should be at risk for execution, all the more so in such a long and

painful way. As Kenneth Clayton said, “At the end of the day we are human beings. We wasn't sentenced to die in prison because of COVID.”

Offensive Language Is Unacceptable, Despite Freedom Of Speech

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

There are just some things that should not be said. When a person views the concept of “Freedom of Speech” they have two options: they can either interpret that phrase literally and say who knows what to whomever they want, or they can restrain themselves and instead have an honest and adult conversation with the person to whom they might have wished to say those choice things.

Let us take the “R” word for a moment. A word that has been around for centuries describing those who have disabilities. This word is very offensive to a large group of people for one reason: it implies something that they are not. The “R” word, or “Retard” by its noun definition means “a person who has a mental disability (often used as a general term of abuse).” As of 2010, “President Barack Obama ... replace[d] the term ‘mental retardation’ with ‘intellectual disability’ in many areas of government. The measure known as Rosa’s Law was approved unanimously by Congress ... ” So even if a person in the United States has the ability to speak the “R” word, does that mean that they should do so? no. It is abusive and bordering on harassment

and the United States government recognized that in 2010.

Most offensive language aims at singling out a group of people to gain the upper hand. In the case of the “R” word, it classifies a group of people under one overarching umbrella and eliminates the person’s individuality. “‘The word retard is considered hate speech because it offends people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as the people that care for and support them. It alienates and excludes them. It also emphasizes the negative stereotypes surrounding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; the common belief that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be segregated, hidden away from society, which, in my opinion, is really old fashioned,’ stated Karleigh Jones, Special Olympics New Zealand athlete.”

In the same sense, you would not want to walk down the street and hear someone call out behind you an offensive Jewish slur. You might turn around, look at the caller in disgust, and go on your way. That is the best case scenario. The worst case scenario is that same person calls out an offensive slur and decides to shoot or insight violence. So what started as a usage of speech, turns into someone being injured or killed due to antisemitism. Speech is normally not single-sided. If someone is using offensive language, the upper-handed party involved will typically not relinquish power so quickly.

The ball is in the court of the person who used their language, and they decide how to proceed. More often than not, hateful



free speech, results in hate crimes.

Some people do not realize or understand that speech is also a thought pattern. If a person is saying something offensive, they have grown up either thinking those things, or have been influenced in some way. This build-up of hateful emotion often bubbles to the top and leads to the violence that is so often politicized in the media. Speech is just a way of expressing thoughts, and actions are a way of expressing speech and thoughts. Just because speech may be free and just because it may offend one party and not the other, doesn’t mean anything should be said whenever.

We can put this same logic into concepts and laws we find in the Torah. We are Jews living in America. We have the freedom of speech, a right awarded to us in the Constitution. Does that mean that us as Jewish Americans should go around speaking *Hashem’s* (God’s) name in

vain? Does freedom of speech mean we throw all morality out the window because some man three centuries ago told us we could? Absolutely not. We have laws in the Torah that govern our actions. We know, by growing up in the ways of *Hashem*, that we should not speak ill of Him or speak His name in vain. The only reason we know this is by studying Torah, and learning it from our parents and schools. But we are American citizens. Doesn’t that mean I can speak *Hashem’s* name in vain? No, because I have a sense of right and wrong, a sense of morality or what is good and what is not.

Even if it does not offend you personally, that does not mean it will not offend someone else. You could be at a solemn event and someone comes up to the hosts and screams provocative speech at them. Would that be acceptable even if they do have freedom of speech? You cannot think solely of yourself when saying whatever you want. There always needs to be an underlying sense of morality and composure when speaking otherwise the words that come out can affect any of the parties involved.

There will always be consequences to your words whether those be on the governmental level or on the familial level; so watch your language.

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Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Legend. A Legacy.

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born March 15, 1933 in Brooklyn, New York to Jewish parents. Bader attended Cornell as an undergraduate, and after working in the Social Security Administration, she attended Harvard University Law School where she was one out of nine women in a 500-person class. After her husband, Martin D. Ginsburg, received a job offer in New York City, Bader transferred to Columbia University, and graduated with a law degree, tying for first in her class.

1959 was not the time for women in the workplace. Bader had difficulty finding employment following her graduation. In 1960, Ginsburg applied to Justice Felix Frankfurter of the Supreme Court's office as a law clerk, but was denied due to her gender because "he just wasn't ready to hire a woman ..."

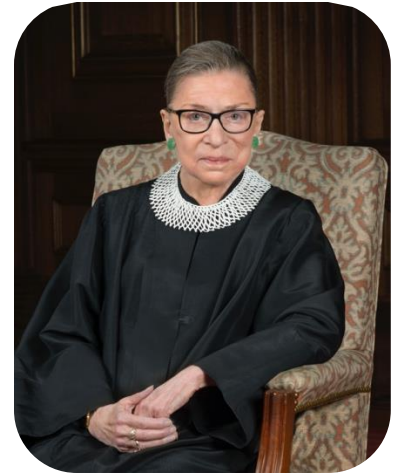
One of Ginsburg's Columbia law professors, Gerald Gunther, pushed for her to be hired, this time by Judge Edmund L. Palmieri of the U.S. District

Court for the Southern District of New York. After attempting to refuse, the professor threatened to never recommend another Columbia graduate to his office if he did not hire her. Ginsburg was hired and served as a federal law clerk for two years.

The sex divide continued to haunt Ginsburg as she accepted a faculty position at Rutgers University Law School on the basis that she would be paid less than her male counterparts because her husband also had a job.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's first large case took place in Colorado. Charles Moritz, caretaker of his 89-year-old mother, was unable to claim IRS tax deduction because "by statute, [it] could only be claimed by women, or widowed or divorced men. But Moritz had never married." An unmarried man was unconventional and controversial at the time. Bader was fighting an sex equality case for the opposite gender. According to her husband, Ruth Bader Ginsburg deemed this case the "mother brief." She had to think through all the issues and how to fix the inequity. The solution was to ask the court not to invalidate the statute but to apply it equally to both sexes. She won in the lower courts."

After many years of law, Ginsburg was appointed to the Supreme Court in "1993 by President Bill Clinton and in recent years served as the most senior member of the court's liberal wing ..."



One of her most notable cases fighting against gender inequality was about the Virginia Military Institute. Three years after Ginsburg joined the Supreme court, a new case took the stage in 1996 challenging an all-male admissions policy at the Virginia Military Institute. Ginsburg took this case with a fierce drive aiming to have state-funded schools accept women. Ginsburg wrote "generalizations about 'the way women are,' estimates of what is appropriate for most women, no longer justify denying opportunity to women whose talent and capacity place them outside the average description." This case resonates in history as a landmark of sex equality because in arguing her claim, she was also aiming to establish sex equality as a "fundamental constitutional norm."

Three years after this historic case, Bader received news that she had colon cancer. After fighting it and going into remission, a decade later, Bader was diagnosed with early-stage pancreatic cancer. Despite her diagnosis and constantly being in and out of remission, Bader

continued to fight for the rights of all. Her dedication to her job and to the people shined through in May of 2020 when, from the hospital bed, Bader went to war for free birth control. This came on the heels of a new rule that made it 'ok' for employers with religious or moral objections to avoid offering healthcare coverage. "You have just tossed entirely to the winds what Congress thought was essential, that is, that women be provided these services with no hassle, no cost to them. Instead you are shifting the employer's religious beliefs — the cost of them — onto the employees," Ginsburg told Solicitor General Noel Francisco who was defending the Trump administration rules alongside the Little Sisters of the Poor, an order of nuns who say covering contraception for their employees would violate their religious beliefs."

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's rise as a pop-culture icon began in 2013 when a blog from former New York University student Shana Knizhnik depicted Ginsburg as the 'Notorious RBG.' This came as a play on the late rapper The Notorious B.I.G., and it features a visage of the justice wearing a crown and her trademark lace collar. The blog came on the heels of Ginsburg's dissent about voting rights in states with histories of racial discrimination.

In May of 2018, Ginsburg's status as a political and pop icon turned many heads in her direction. A documentary about her life and her accomplishments was released titled "RBG" because director

Betsy West had noticed Ginsburg's track record and trailblazing success. West stated that "It's this incongruousness of an 85-year-old Jewish grandmother who is speaking truth to power." Six months after the documentary released, the movie "On the Basis of Sex" aired in theaters. This movie outlined the numerous obstacles Ginsburg had to face while starting and maintaining his career. Her popularity increased as Kate Mckinnon from "Saturday Night Live" started depicting her as a bada** grandma in a prominent seat of power.

This political, pop, feminist, Jewish icon devastatingly lost her battle to metastatic pancreatic cancer on September 18, 2020. Ruth Bader Ginsburg died at 87 in her home in Washington DC.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's legacy will live on forever. She paved the way for Jewish women to take seats of power, as she herself was the first Jewish woman appointed to the Supreme Court. She was vivacious, resilient, and altogether notorious, and her memory will forever be a blessing.

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Science & Technology:

In Captivity: Exposing The Marine Entertainment and Education Industry
By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

For many years, countries across the globe have normalized the marine entertainment and education industry. Pleasure is received from seeing a sea animal jump through hoops or perform stunts that they have rehearsed with their trainers. What the audience doesn't see behind the closed doors of the amusement park is how sea animals are torn away from their families or bred in captivity.

One of the most common sea animals that have been used in this industry are killer whales, also known as orcas. Orcas are of the most intelligent animals to be found in the ocean.

According to Lori Marino, a marine mammal neuroscientist, founder of the Utah-based Kimmela Center for Animal Advocacy, and executive director of the Whale Sanctuary Project, “[orcas] have a brain that obtains pleasure in figuring out how to go places, how to get prey with others, in swimming and deep diving, even in navigating their social lives and communicating over long distances.” With these evolved adaptations, being locked in a confined space with no ability to communicate with other orcas or move freely, can greatly affect the animal.

These animals, evolved to navigate the ocean, are either taken into captivity at a young age or are bred within the confines of the facility. At least 166 orcas have been taken into captivity from the wild since 1961 and 129 of those are now dead from unnatural causes. In an enclosed space, orcas either become depressed or suffer from pneumonia — causing them to die. The conditions provided to them are not comparable to their ocean habitat, and therefore disease is more likely. Imagine being taken away from your home and being forced to live in a cage your entire life. You are bound to suffer from both mental and physical illnesses.

One company that has been in the spotlight of marine entertainment and education is SeaWorld. Not only does SeaWorld function as a marine entertainment and education facility, but it is also an amusement park located on both east and west coasts. SeaWorld

is also one of the marine organizations that has had many scrutinize their treatment of marine animals. In response to the criticism, Sea World went as far as to create a SeaWorld Rescue division, which takes hurt animals and releases them back into the wild once they are recovered. What a great irony that is. While the sea life is being healed on one side of the facility, on the other side, animals are being trained in captivity for their entire life to please audience members.

There have been many environmental activists who have spoken against the treatment of these animals, demanding that they should be released into either a sanctuary or an ocean. But the problem with breeding animals is that if they were to be released, they would not survive in the ocean. It would be like releasing a domesticated dog into the woods. The only answer is to let the sea animal die in captivity and, most importantly, *cease breeding them*. As of 2016, SeaWorld San Diego has made this step in the positive direction by vowing to cease the breeding orcas in captivity and to put an end to orca shows.

There is also an argument that contends that without marine entertainment, or seeing marine animals in captivity such as in a zoo or aquarium, the younger generation will have no way of learning about these animals first hand. But the question remains, is it preferable to normalize the abuse of marine animals, or learn about sea life another way? There is another way. An adequate substitution

for marine education is either simulation labs or real-life exposure. Sanctuaries have been a great substitute for marine education, and they provide young people with the opportunity to see marine animals in their natural habitats without being confined to walls or structures.

There is always another way to learn. There is always another way to get entertainment. But placing marine animals in captivity is not one of those ways.

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How Stress Can Affect Your Health

By Shoshanah Marcus, News Editor

As many things continue to face a downward trajectory due the coronavirus pandemic, one thing has increased drastically: stress. Whether it be in one’s personal or professional life, stress has integrated itself as part of the human experience. According to the “American Psychological Association,” 75% of adults reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress in the past

month. Though some level of stress is necessary for survival, especially to detect and avoid dangerous situations, too much stress can be detrimental to one's health.



When someone's brain confirms that they are in a threatening or stressful situation, a signal is sent to their hypothalamus; the part of the brain that releases hormones. The short term impact is a "flight or flight" response that physiologically prepares them to either fight for their survival or avoid the situation. In response to stressful stimuli, their heart races, breath quickens, muscles tense and the hormone adrenaline is secreted, getting the body ready to fight off potential threats. However, the long term effect of stress can result in activation of the pituitary gland, the major gland in controlling the production of hormones, secreting adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH). This hormone is then sent to the adrenal glands and produces a hormone called corticosteroid (cortisol). Cortisol allows the body to maintain a consistent blood sugar, which can be useful when dealing with a stressful situation. The goal of cortisol is to bring the body back to normal, but the downside of the

hormone is that it suppresses the immune system.

High amounts of cortisol, which are typically released in response to long periods of stress, can have a detrimental effect on one's physical health, resulting in an increased susceptibility to disease. According to the "American Psychological Association," researchers studied the impact of the stressful conditions of medical school on medical students and "among other things, they found that the students' immunity went down every year under the simple stress of the three-day exam period. Test takers had fewer natural killer cells, which fight tumors and viral infections. They almost stopped producing immunity-boosting gamma interferon and infection-fighting T-cells responded only weakly to test-tube stimulation." This study confirms that stressed people are more likely to catch disease due to heightened cortisol release.

Not only do high levels of stress impact one's physical health, but poor management of stress can breed an unhealthy lifestyle. Without proper techniques to manage stress taught at a young age, one can experience serious long-term detriments to one's lifestyle. According to a study conducted by the "American Psychological Association" in 2011, "[a]lmost a third of adults say they skipped a meal because of stress in the past month. Two-fifths reported overeating or eating unhealthy foods because of stress. And more

than 40 percent reported that they had lain awake at night." Improper management of stress can breed an inconsistent and unhealthy lifestyle, making one's physical and emotional health worse-off.

Especially during these unprecedented and uncertain times, it is important to find ways to minimize stress. Whether it is working out, journaling, meditating, talking to friends and family, or listening to music, each person has their own way of destressing. It is crucial to develop techniques to destress in order to maintain physical and emotional health as well as a balanced, healthy lifestyle.

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Genetically Engineered Mosquitoes: As if the World Needs More Crazy
By Sara Muharremi

750 million genetically engineered mosquitoes have been approved by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and The Florida Keys Mosquito Control District to be released in the Florida Keys, and it could begin as soon as 2021.

A UK-based biotech company called Oxitec is working to

genetically alter the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which is responsible for carrying and spreading many deadly diseases to humans such as dengue, Zika, chikungunya, and yellow fever. The goal is to reduce the rates at which these diseases appear and spread. It is important to note that when it comes to mosquitoes, only the females bite so that they may use the blood to produce eggs; whereas male mosquitoes feed on nectar in flowers.

Back in 2012, Oxitec had originally developed a genetically engineered male mosquito (OX513A) which would be able to live and mate with female mosquitoes, but their offspring were programmed to die in infancy which would, in turn, reduce the population size. This worked well, but only to an extent; some of the offspring were found alive and able to mate. “This crossbreeding might have actually strengthened the *Jacobina aegypti*, the study suggested—sparking a media firestorm ...” These trials were tested in Brazil, Panama, and the Cayman Islands. When word reached the Florida Keys, the public was highly against it; they refused to be “... treated as ‘guinea pigs’ for the ‘superbug’ or ‘Robo-Frankenstein’ mosquito” and for the “Oxitec to treat US states ‘as testing grounds for these mutant bugs.’”

Oxitec has now engineered a new male mosquito (OX5034) which is designed to carry a protein that will essentially kill off and inhibit chances of survival for female offspring.

The goal, again, is to shrink the population size, but this time focusing on just the females rather than the population as a whole since the males are not responsible for the carrying or spread of the disease.

Tensions are still apparent amongst residents of Florida however. The mosquitoes still need to be released for trials for a minimum of ten weeks to ensure that the female offspring do not reach adulthood, and there is still a risk of this not being successful or for something to go awry amongst the crossbred offspring. Many are furious that “[w]ith all the urgent crises facing our nation and the State of Florida - the Covid-19 pandemic, racial injustice, climate change - the administration has used tax dollars and government resources for a Jurassic Park experiment ...” as stated by a policy director for the International Center for Technology Assessment and Center for Food Safety.



The people are right and it would be wise for officials to take a step back for a moment and direct their attention elsewhere to more current and pressing matters. Meanwhile, Oxitec can use their energy for additional research to be able to ensure the public with *full*

assurance that the genetically engineered mosquitoes, and crossbred offspring, will not pose any health risks to humans or any environmental issues to wildlife which feed on these insects. If the EPA tells Oxitec to push off the release date to do further research, and government officials turn their attention towards the COVID-19 pandemic, then the public might feel more at ease knowing that their safety regarding the pandemic is coming first.

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An Explanation Of The Asymptomatic Phenomenon Of Covid-19
By Nicole Soussana

When it comes to the novel coronavirus, it seems as though every person you speak to or every news source you turn to has a different theory. With contrasting explanations, many questions can arise. Is it possible to become reinfected or not? Are organs outside of the lungs affected? Why do some people fall deathly ill, while

others don't realize the virus has invaded their bodies? The truth of the matter is that any answers you find to these questions are not precise. There hasn't been enough time for scientists to state anything definitively. What we can do, however, is study, research, and present intellectually stimulating and plausible explanations.

A typical explanation as to why there exists asymptomatic victims of COVID-19 is that they have a stronger immune system than those who present symptoms. This theory provides an explanation as to why the majority of asymptomatic individuals are children or young adults (under the age of 20). However, some scientists have presented the idea that this phenomenon is not solely explained by immunity but rather in conjunction with disease tolerance.



Disease tolerance is a mechanism which keeps our bodies healthy without directly attacking a pathogen or invader. Disease resistance, on the other hand, aims to kill the pathogen or inhibit its ability to grow and spread. The immune system is an example of the latter. With disease tolerance, there is an internal adjustment that adapts the body for the infection without directly targeting the

pathogen. This can be by diminishing the reaction a pathogen causes or by pacifying the pathogen in some way. The outcome? An infected individual does not feel ill. Scientists have seen tolerance responses in plants, and have only recently discovered that animals possess it as well.

An example of disease tolerance that can be compared to the coronavirus is tuberculosis (TB). Research has shown that 90% of individuals with TB don't fall ill. The TB pathogen has a tendency to stick around for quite some time in the body, increasing immune response, and leading to the chronic inflammatory disease. The ability for a pathogenic disease, such as TB, to live symbiotically in the human body is an example of tolerance. Individuals who present pathogen tolerance, in TB cases, utilize macrophages to suppress inflammation. This mechanism subdues inflammation to a 'sweet spot' where the immune system can fight the pathogen, while lasting tissue damage is prevented. Studies have similarly shown that asymptomatic individuals with the novel coronavirus present a weaker immune response compared to those who fell ill, meaning less inflammation. If healthy individuals carrying the coronavirus are not displaying a strong immune response as we would have assumed, this points to there being an additional process outside of the immune system at play in protecting the body from the virus.

Another example of studying disease tolerance sheds light on its rewards. A group researching disease tolerance in mice introduced them to a diarrhea-causing infection. It was found that the mice either died or were completely healthy because they used iron stores to satisfy the bacteria. Iron was then used as a treatment and resulted in 100% success rate of surviving mice.

It is clear from the above examples, that when there are cases of individuals who seem to be able to fight off a pathogen naturally, it may be worthwhile to study those systems. A solution to fighting off a disease may not be the actual battle which ends in killing a pathogen, but rather focuses on maintaining health. While this area of study is fairly new and there is no concrete evidence that it occurs in asymptomatic individuals of COVID-19, it does have future implications on the way we approach a scary pathogen. Maybe 'attack' isn't always the solution.

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How to Prevent “Zoom Fatigue”

By Leia Rubinstein

The new school year has just begun, but with classes on Zoom for this semester, many of us are feeling more drained by the end of the day than we did in the past. What is it about online-learning that is so exhausting?

The problem seems to stem from the brain struggling to process the non-verbal social cues via the computer that we unconsciously pick up in face-to-face conversations. Things like hand gestures, facial expressions, tone, pitch of voice, and the relative positions of the professor and our classmates, are difficult to pick up on over a screen. We seem to tire more quickly because our minds need to work extra hard to detect these non-verbal signals.

Thankfully, experts have suggested several useful tips to reduce fatigue and make the Zoom experience more enjoyable. By learning to adapt to this new classroom environment, despite being online, we can still have an effective semester.

Make the switch to speaker mode

As tempting as it is to see other faces on the screen, being on gallery view may be a leading cause of our “Zoom fatigue”. We are unintentionally overworking ourselves by trying to process each person and their background while also trying to listen to what the professor is saying. Scrambling to find who is speaking in a large class can lead to even more stress. Switching to speaker mode can allow our brains to relax by enabling us to focus on one person at a time.



Limit unnecessary distractions

Distractions such as checking texts and emails can create extra strain as we try to focus on multiple things at once. Although we often multitask, our brains actually are not made for it, and attempting to do so generally results in a lack of attention on either task. Once we are interrupted, it can be stressful to try and adjust back to what is happening in the class.

By silencing our phones and closing other computer tabs, we can allow our minds to more easily focus on the class, and conserve energy for the rest of the day.

Hide self view

Since many of us have taken online-learning as an opportunity to put minimal effort into the way we look, seeing ourselves on screen can be stressful. We are suddenly aware that everyone is watching us, directing our attention to our appearance and our behavior. It can be tiresome to feel the need to be “on” the whole class.

To alleviate some of that pressure, there is an option on Zoom to hide self view. Simply click on the three dots in the right corner of your video and click “Hide Self View”. While others can still see you, you will no longer see your face on the screen.

Take a break in between classes

We are used to walking from classroom to classroom to refresh ourselves in between classes. Experts claim that walking actually boosts creativity and reduces stress. Now that many of us are in the same room the whole day, it can be beneficial to get up in between classes to clear our minds. Simply getting a drink or a snack, or taking a walk around the block, can be a helpful break and give us the strength for the next class.

While we are all looking forward to resuming (or beginning!) our studies on campus, in the meantime, adopting some of these simple changes to our everyday routine can enhance our experiences with online-learning.

Have a good semester!

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California Is On Fire

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

On August 17, 2020, 37 wildfires, named The August Complex, started burning as a result of lightning strikes on the Mendocino National Forest. The fire has now spread to regions in the Coast Range of Northern California, in Glenn, Lake, Mendocino, Tehama, and Trinity Counties. At 520,000 acres burned, climate scientist Daniel Swain, of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA stated “that is ‘an unbelievable number to say out loud, even in the last few years.’” This California wildfire has now been deemed the biggest fire ever recorded in California and

is now 60% larger than its starting size and has covered a total of 746,000 acres of land.



“Recently, ‘we have seen multiple fires expand by tens of thousands of acres in a matter of hours, and 30 years or more ago that just wasn’t fire behavior that we saw,’ said Jacob Bendix, a professor of geography and the environment at Syracuse University who studies wildfires.” With every environmental condition, whether that be drought or flooding, there is a standard, or a normal amount of time these conditions are meant to occur. However, the mere size of these fires, coupled with the intensity at which they have maintained throughout the past month have been associated with drought conditions that specifically relate to climate change. This is one of the prime factors in this fire behavior trend. “When you have a fire run 15 miles in one day, in one afternoon, there’s no model that can predict that,’ U.S. Forest Service forester Steve Lohr said, ‘The fires are behaving in such a way that we’ve not seen.’”

So how much is climate change playing a role in these wildfires? The ignition of the fires, in and of itself, was unusual, as a “‘dry lightning’ storm, which produced nearly

11,000 bursts of lightning between August 15 and August 19, set off devastating wildfires across California.”

“The storm ... was the result of a particular, unusual set of circumstances. But the region was already primed for fires, the stage set by a prolonged and record-breaking heat wave in the western United States — one of the hottest temperatures ever measured on Earth, at Death Valley, — as well as extreme dryness in the region (*SN*: 8/17/20). And those conditions bear the fingerprints of climate change,” Daniel Swain says.

“‘The extreme dryness is particularly key,’ he adds. ‘It’s not just incremental; it absolutely matters *how* dry it is. You don’t just flip a switch from dry enough to burn to not dry enough to burn. There’s a wide gradient up to dry enough to burn explosively.’”

The residents of California are confined to their home as California Gov. Gavin Newsom said that the air quality in wildfire zones “is equivalent to smoking 20 packs of cigarettes.” This type of exposure could be detrimental to a person’s lungs and could also increase the risk of getting COVID-19. 28 people have been killed due to these wildfires and dozens remain missing.

Let us keep in mind, wildfires are not uncommon to the Northern California area, due to its dry weather and windy conditions, but unlike the

annual fires that occur, these ones are the direct result of climate change. Just like the recent fires in the arctic, with the length of burn time, along with the damage of such a large area of land, it can be concluded that these are abnormal fires and are caused by climate change. If we choose not to address this climate crisis soon, our planet could be at risk of extinction.

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Business:

Interview with Dean Noam Wasserman, Dean of Sy Syms School of Business
By Shaina Levin

Dean Noam Wasserman began serving as dean of YU's Sy Syms School of Business in May 2019. Before joining the Sy Syms faculty, he was involved in the business and academic worlds in many

different aspects. Since his time at Yeshiva University, he has provided students with a wealth of opportunities, serving as a mentor in both the business and secular industries. I had the honor and opportunity to interview Dean Wasserman about his past experiences, current and upcoming initiatives at YU, and hearing advice he has for the current students.

***YU Observer:* What was your background before you came to YU, and what led you to YU?**

Dean Noam Wasserman: I started life as an engineer, then added business when I was an undergraduate and have continued that combination since then. After college, I first worked as a techie, then as a project manager, then as an entrepreneur before going back to school to get my MBA. While I was in the MBA program, I got experience as a venture capitalist and as an equity analyst (working with two mutual-fund managers) before a couple of key mentors pushed me to think about becoming a professor. Doing that as a career required me to get a PhD, so after having a difficult conversation with my wife about this change in plans, I walked out the MBA graduation door and in the PhD orientation door.

During the PhD program, I started delving into the early decisions founders make that tend to come back to haunt them, their teams, and their startups. (I had personally experienced many of those issues when I was a pre-MBA

entrepreneur.) While publishing that research, I developed an MBA course based on the results and based on two dozen Harvard Business School case studies and exercises I developed. That "Founder's Dilemmas" course debuted in 2009, started spreading around the world, and sparked the first of my books (see below).

A few years later, I got a chance to go back home to Los Angeles to start a new center at USC based on my founder work. I was in the midst of growing that center when Rabbi Berman and Provost Botman approached me about the Sy Syms position. The initial attraction for me was the chance to have a dean-level impact on the most important Jewish university in the world. However, when I visited campus to interview for the position, the stellar faculty, the delightful students and alumni, and the other deans I met were also strong attractions to come to YU.

***O:* What was it like switching from a secular college (Harvard) to a religious one (YU)?**

W: In some ways, switching was a big deal. Instead of having to drive off campus in mid-afternoon for half an hour in each direction to get to a *mincha minyan* [afternoon prayer service], I have a wide range of wonderful choices within steps of my office. I feel like a kid in a candy store when it comes to all of the wonderful *shiurim* [Torah Lectures] I can attend any day and almost any time, and when it comes to just

walking across the street to attend *Night Seder* [evening Torah study]. I don't have to go out of my way to make sure that every meal I provide visitors or at faculty meetings is kosher.

On the other hand, there are a lot of things that are quite similar: the striving for academic excellence, the way in which there is a wide range of student interests and capabilities we want to help, and the way in which there is huge untapped potential in the alumni base.

O: A highlight of this year definitely has been the *Siyum Hashas* [completion of the Talmud] you made at the 2019 YU *Chanukah* [Hanukkah] Concert. How has your *Gemara* [Talmud] and Torah learning influenced your views in the business world?

W: When I first started researching and teaching about entrepreneurship challenges, I realized that Torah and *Chazal* [rabbis] had a lot of insights to add about the “modern day” issues we were studying. For instance, the first morning of my *Founder's Dilemmas* course at Harvard, in response to a student question, I described the concept of “*eizer kenegdo*” [partner] as applied to the founding team of the world, Adam and Chava [Eve], and showed how it captured the best practices for creating founding teams today. When we were looking at the best sizes and composition for boards of directors, we drew insights from the first mishna in *Masechet*

[tractate] *Sanhedrin*, which covered the sizes of Jewish courts. Insights from the *Gemara* [Talmud] about incentive structures and conflict resolution are also extremely applicable to today's business world. Tapping those timeless insights can give us a real advantage today.

Since then, I have seen how *Chazal's* lessons about Jewish values are also applicable to a wide range of business issues. R' Akiva and Nachum Ish Gamzu teach us how to recover from – and even gain strength from – apparent setbacks. *Chazal* teach us how to develop our *Hakarot Hatov* [gratitude] muscles, how to develop our drive to go *m'chayil el chayil* (striving for continuous improvement), and the importance of seeking feedback on how we can improve rather than continuing on auto-pilot. We have begun tapping those insights in our new Jewish Values curriculum and in other courses within Sy Syms.

Before coming to YU, I used to talk about some of those topics in the classroom. For instance, the last day of the semester I would talk about R' Akiva and *Gam Zu L'Tova* [the belief that everything will turn out for the best], and would end by thanking my students after citing R' Chanina's statement (*Taanit 7a*) that he had learned the most of all from his students. At YU, though, we can and are making those lessons and values an integral part of what we are doing both in class and outside of it. I was even able to touch on some of those themes during my *Siyum*

HaShas at the *Chanukah Concert* -- another uniquely-YU experience.



O: Can you tell us what we could expect and learn as students when reading your books, “*The Founder's Dilemmas*” and “*Life Is a Startup*”, and what made you decide you wanted to become an author?

W: At first, I was able to have an impact on a couple of hundred MBA students per year, having them experience the early decisions founders make that tend to come back to haunt them, and developing better approaches to make those decisions. However, there are thousands of people who start companies each year who would never enter my classroom. Writing *The Founder's Dilemmas* book was my effort to extend the lessons to those people, and also to provide professors from around the world with another type of material with which to educate their future founders. With about 100,000 copies of the book out there, *Hashem* [God] has helped me spread those lessons to the people who can most benefit from them.

Almost a decade later, after thinking about the broader

applicability of those founding best practices, my *Life Is a Startup* book was my effort to bring many of those lessons to non-founders who could apply them to their career decisions, to their personal relationships, and to their work in large companies. I've learned a tremendous amount from people who have reached out to tell me how they applied the concepts to their specific challenges to find new solutions that would not have occurred to them otherwise.

O: This summer you helped many students, including myself, through providing different summer initiatives. Can you tell us more about how you went about creating these programs and making sure every student has the best and most educational summer possible?

W: I am delighted that you were able to take advantage of the new summer initiatives!

Back in March, our initial focus was on moving YU courses fully online in record time. Once that was accomplished, my focus turned to what might be the next crisis facing our students. Namely, the summer is a key building block for students to explore career options, build new skills, and gain credibility with potential employers. However, due to Covid, there seemed to be a good chance that the usual summer-internship opportunities might disappear. In addition, we realized that we would have to defer our brand-new YU Israel Summer

Internship program, which we had put in place in January.

So we started brainstorming about new summer initiatives we might be able to create and develop for our students, enabling them to turn the summer of crisis for all college students into a summer of opportunity for YU students. By taking advantage of these opportunities, our students would get stronger just as everyone else was in the midst of a “woe is me” summer.

As with many things, it was key for us to understand from the students what would be most interesting and useful to them. We came up with 7 or 8 possible initiatives and sent a survey to the student body to see which ones would be of most interest to them. We then took the four highest-ranked possibilities and developed them further.

As a result, we created YU's first-ever research assistantships program, converted the YU Israel Summer Internships program into a virtual-internship program (and grew it to three times its originally-planned size), added the first-ever summer cohort of Innovation Lab startups with which student teams could do projects, and worked with esteemed alumni from consulting firms to create the YU Consulting Force / Innovation Lab internships initiative.

More than 120 students took advantage of these initiatives to get substantive experiences. Dozens of Israeli

companies were able to tap YU interns, and a dozen Jewish non-profits tapped YU Consulting Force teams to have a real impact on their organizations. Many of the students found new talents, developed new skills, and explored new options for their career focuses.

O: What was behind Sy Syms' decision to have a fully online fall semester as opposed to blended learning?

W: Our initial inclination – and that of many of our faculty members – was to offer as much as possible in person. After all, Syms faculty have excelled at that mode of teaching for decades. At the same time, we wanted to maximize students' choice of courses. Given that many students might not be able to attend in-person classes (e.g., international students who might not be able to get to New York, students for whom there would be medical reasons not to attend in person), holding classes online would enable all students to choose any class.

Early in the summer, we analyzed every Sy Syms course and section that would be offered in the Fall semester. Our analyses took into account the following factors:

- the class size (most centrally, sections too large to be held in existing classrooms while adhering to social-distancing guidelines, which is particularly relevant to Syms given that on average our courses are significantly larger than those in the other YU undergrad schools),

- the faculty ability and preference to teach in person vs. online,
- the percentage of students in each section who indicated in-person vs. remote preferences in the provost's early-summer survey, and
- the best pedagogical approach for the specific material. (Sy Syms courses tend to be more Socratic and dynamic than lecture classes, making it hard to conduct them with students being split between in-person and remote participation. Research has shown that focusing on doing either in-person or online well is better than trying to accomplish both within the same class session.)

If any of the factors indicated that a course should be online, that determined the course's status. In addition, should there be a second wave during the Fall semester, our having focused on developing and teaching online courses would enable the students to smoothly continue having the best education in any scenario.

The analysis showed that the vast majority of Sy Syms courses should be online. For the remaining courses, faculty surveyed their specific students to find out how many would be coming in person. Every professor found that too many students would be remote and thus decided to hold their classes online.

At the same time, we realized that if conditions permit, our professors could also hold

optional, socially-distanced enrichment sessions with any students who want to attend in person on campus, and similar enrichment sessions online for students who are not on campus. A majority of our professors expressed an interest in doing so, and many have already discussed that option with their students. Those sessions promise to further enable the development of the close student-professor relationships that are a hallmark of a YU education.

At the time we were developing these plans in early summer, several universities very prominently declared that they would be conducting classes in person. Recently, many of them have retracted those plans in favor of fully-online teaching. Unfortunately, as a result, their faculty have had very little time to develop their online courses. In contrast, because our faculty used the last three months to develop sophisticated online versions of their courses by tapping the new online-teaching skills we helped them develop over the summer, we will be able to excel at online teaching while other schools are hoping only to survive online this semester.

O: What are some new initiatives Sy Syms students can look forward to in the near future?

W: A major new initiative this semester is the launching of the Sy Syms Jewish Values curriculum. The core of the curriculum is the fact that difficult dilemmas emerge when we transition from college into

the workplace. How can we excel professionally while adhering to our Torah Values? How can we resolve conflicts between our work demands and our priorities as religious Jews?

We typically are not prepared for these dilemmas. As a first step to helping our students prepare, last year on the Beren campus we approved our students attending Rabbi Aaron Cohen's new course on Halachic Challenges in the Workplace. Last month for the Fall 2020 semester, we introduced at Wilf three courses, including a parallel course on Practical Workplace Halacha.

This Jewish Values curriculum will give our students deep grounding in the challenges typically faced when entering the broader post-graduation world, practice with dealing with those challenges, and knowledge of how best to interact with others in the workplace and society.

So far, the student appetite for these courses has been impressive, with very strong demand for every course. As a third stage of development of this curriculum, we are exploring bringing the remaining new courses to the Beren campus as well.

We have also continued to strengthen new initiatives from last year. For instance, working with our student-led Honors Program Committee, we have created a student-to-student mentoring program, are continuing the strong growth in Honors course offerings, and

are putting in place a new Book Club in addition to Honors fireside chats.

Last year, we also introduced an undergrad Real Estate minor. This year, with the launch of our Mitzner MS program in Real Estate, our undergraduate Real Estate seniors will be able to start taking MS courses. In addition, our undergraduate Accounting students will be able to take advantage of our new BS/MS program where they can take up to four graduate courses while they are seniors.

In short, when our graduate programs get stronger, our undergraduates benefit. This will also be true of our MBA program; a completely redesigned version of the program will be debuting in Fall 2021, and should have further impacts on our undergraduate business students.

O: What advice can you give Syms students who are entering the workforce during COVID?

W: Solidify your foundation, embody professionalism, and be patient.

Regarding your foundation, make sure you aren't short-changing yourself by taking shortcuts with your education, rushing through college, and only developing expertise in a single area. Instead, prepare for each day of class as if you will be having a business meeting where your boss will be calling on you to get your insights. Take your time to get firm grounding in the key parts of

business rather than rushing through YU too quickly. Develop more than one "pillar" on which to build your career, possibly by adding on a minor (either within Syms or in YC/SCW) or even a second major within Sy Syms.

Regarding professionalism, learn how to write an excellent business email, practice for your interviews, and make sure to embody professional midos like showing hakarat hatov to everyone who helped arrange your interview.

Be patient even more than usual, given the challenging job environment. Pre-Covid the YU Class of 2019 had the best job placement of any recent class, and the hiring landscape will *iy"H* [may God will it] rebound soon. Until it does, though, it will take extra effort and persistence to find your first post-graduation job and start your career. The people who are most likely to succeed at their job searches are the ones who used the current environment to get stronger rather than being defeated by the pandemic, and who see new opportunities now to build skills that will be even more valuable post-Covid. Those include the students who turned what was a summer of crisis for most college students into a summer of opportunity via YU's new summer initiatives. It includes students who found a "dual" major or minor to add to their initial focus. It includes students who are using YU's Pathways programs to strengthen their knowledge and qualifications further before going on the job market, by graduating with a

graduate degree when their peers are just achieving their college graduations.

We are in a time of reinvention, and employers want to see resilience and that you made the most out of this time of challenge. This can come in your classes, in communal activities, in stepping up to lead others through the challenges, or in other ways in which you can get stronger by facing these challenges productively.

O: What advice can you give students as we begin this semester online?

W: Adopt a Preparation Mindset, be ready to make adjustments along with your professors, and take advantage of the full range of new activities YU will be conducting for you. And, act with integrity in everything you do, including taking exams in class.

First, start the semester with a Preparation Mindset in which you're prepared for class each day. Applying that mindset early in the semester will make it increasingly easy to excel at your work as the semester progresses, will make it easier for you at midterms and finals times, will enhance your long-term learning, and will strengthen your Day 1 Job Readiness.

The resilience of YU students was impressive in the Spring. As one indication, surprisingly few students availed themselves of the broadened P/N "safety net," and almost all who did use the P/N policy did so for fewer classes than they could have.

Compared to the intense and unexpected adjustments they had to make in the middle of the Spring, the adjustments for this Fall semester should be far less dramatic, giving me strong confidence that our students will succeed. At the same time, students should be ready to make some adjustments, and to have heightened communication with their professors about how well those adjustments are going.

In addition, the university and student leaders have developed and are developing a wide range of great activities for students to help students gain a fuller YU experience despite being mostly online. Find at least one new great activity in which to participate, meet new people, and gain new experiences. Although the rhythms and opportunities will be different than usual, they are still extremely rich and valuable, if you take advantage of them.

Finally, and most importantly, maintaining the highest level of integrity is critical for our creating a *Kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of God's name] rather than a *Chillul Hashem* [desecration of God's name]. This is critical to do when we're working after college, but the foundation for it is developed in every assignment and every exam we complete during college, and in every interaction that we have with others now. The first question we will each be asked at the end of days is whether we acted with integrity in all of our dealings (*Shabbos* 31a), and right now, we are developing our answer to that question. If you prepare for

class each day, use that preparation to be ready for every midterm and final, and practice creating a *Kiddush Hashem* in and out of class, you will be able to do it when you get to the workplace and throughout your upcoming decades of life.

How To Begin Investing: A Step By Step Guide By Loren Elmann

When it comes to investing, the first thing you need to know is that you should never invest more than you are willing to lose. Investing is a learning process and it is more than likely that you will make some bad calls at first as you get used to the market. The second thing you need to know is that you should always do extensive research on a company before investing in it. You should be able to iterate exactly why you chose to invest in the company before putting your money into it.

Now for the advice you're really here for: How to get started!



STEP 1: Read. Read. Read.
Learn the jargon. Learn what a stock is. Learn the difference between bear and bull markets.

Learn about buying and selling options. Learn about day trading. Learn about long-term vs short-term investing. Learn about penny-stocks. Learn everything.

Get your hands on at least three of the following books:

1. "Stock Market 101" by Michele Cagan
2. "A Random Walk Down Wall Street" by Burton Malkiel
3. "The Intelligent Investor" by Benjamin Graham
4. "Rich Dad Poor Dad" by Robert Kiyosaki
5. "The Millionaire Next Door" by Thomas J. Stanley
6. "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill
7. "Beating the Street" by Peter Lynch
8. "The Essays of Warren Buffett" by Warren Buffett

By the end of this, you should be familiar with investment jargon and know what kind of investor you want to be and why. Are you risk-averse? Are you growth-oriented? Do you want to be solely a long-term investor or do you want to be a short-term investor and possibly get into day trading (buying and selling a stock within the same day or week)? Maybe instead, you want to have a balanced approach and change your strategy depending on the company. It is totally up to you, your goals and how much money you are willing to put on the line.

Once you understand the stock market, you have two choices: you can start investing your money, or practice investing with fake virtual money. It is important to realize that if you

start investing without having practiced or at least watching some stocks for an extended period of time beforehand, you will most likely lose money at first. This is not to say that if you do practice, you won't lose the money — but that if you do practice, it is more likely that you will minimize your losses because you underwent the trial and error period with fake money.

STEP 2A: Practice.

I recommend practicing with trading simulators for at least three months.

Trading Simulators:

MarketWatch Virtual Stock Exchange, HowTheMarketWorks, and Wall Street Survivor are among the top stock market simulations to help beginner investors understand the stock market better by investing fake money and watching it grow or decline over time.

STEP 2B: Choose your stock broker/investment platform.

A broker is the entity that buys and sells investments on your behalf. Usually, you pay a fee for this service. In the case of an online discount broker, you often pay a flat commission per trade. Other brokers, especially if they also manage your assets as a whole, just charge a percentage of your assets each year. Choosing a stock broker is very similar to choosing a stock. Research is the name of the game. Identify your needs and find the broker that meets them. Your choice of broker should match the investment style that you identified for yourself from your step 1 research.

Investopedia has very thorough reviews of online brokers so I suggest doing your research on that site. Also: keep in mind that many brokers charge fees and make sure you are aware of them before getting started!!

The following two investor classifications should help you understand a bit better how to choose a broker that will fit your needs:

Trader: Active investor. Traders don't hold onto stocks for a long time. They are interested in quick gains greater than the market average based on short-term price volatility, and they may make many trade executions over a short time span. (If you identify yourself as a trader look for a broker with low execution fees.)

Buy-and-hold investor: Passive investor. Buy-and-hold investors hold stocks long term. (As a buy-and-hold investor, execution fees are not such a big deal because you will rarely pay them.)

Here is [Investopedia's](#) 2020 lineup of online brokers and trading platforms:

“Fidelity Investments: Best Online Broker
TD Ameritrade: Best Broker for Beginners
tastyworks: Best Broker for Options
Interactive Brokers: Best Broker for Advanced Traders
TD Ameritrade: Best Broker for Mobile
Interactive Brokers: Best Broker for International Trading
tastyworks: Best Broker for Low Costs

Charles Schwab: Best Broker for ETFs”

STEP 3: Research and Invest!

Yahoo Finance is the best platform for stock/company research. You'll want to look at a number of factors, from human capital to profit margin to revenue to the balance sheet, when deciding on a company.

So what are you waiting for?
Time to hustle!

Here are 20 investment terms and definitions adapted from [InvestorJunkie](#) to get started:

1. **“Balance sheet:** A statement showing what a company owns, as well as the liabilities the company has and stating the outstanding shareholder equity.
2. **Bear market:** This is a market that is falling. A bear market has a downward trend, and someone who believes the market is headed for a drop is often referred to as a ‘bear’. Bear markets can last for a few weeks or years.
3. **Blue chip:** You might hear reporters and others refer to ‘blue-chip stocks.’ Blue chips are companies that have a long history of good earnings, good balance sheets, and even regularly increasing dividends. These are solid companies that may not be exciting, but they are likely to provide reasonable returns over time.
4. **Bull market:** This is a market that is trending

higher, likely to gain. If you think that the market is going to go up, you are considered a 'bull.' Additionally, the term, like bear, can be applied to how you feel about an individual investment. If you are 'bullish' on a specific company, it means you think the stock price will rise.

5. **Capital gain (or loss):** This is the difference between what you bought an investment for and what you sell it for. If you buy 100 shares of a stock at \$10 a share (spending \$1,000) and sell your shares later for \$25 a share (\$2,500), you have a capital gain of \$1,500. A loss occurs when you sell for less than you paid. So, if you sell this stock for \$5 instead (\$500), you have a capital loss of \$500).
6. **Dividend:** In some cases, a company will offer to divide up some of its income among shareholders. Dividends can be paid once, as a special use of them, or they can be paid more regularly, such as monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually.
7. **Dow Jones Industrial Average:** This average includes a price-weighted list of 30 blue-chip stocks. While there are only 30 companies included on the list, many people think of the Dow when they hear

that 'the stock market' gained or lost. The Dow is often used as a gauge of the health of the stock market as a whole, even though it is only a very small portion."

8. **Diversity:** A portfolio characteristic that ensures you have more than one type of asset. It also means choosing to buy investments in different sectors, industries, or geographic locations. Diversifying your portfolio is the most popular way to reduce the risk of loss.
9. **Earnings Calendar:** The schedule according to which various publicly-traded companies announce their earnings for a certain period such as a quarter or a year. The earnings calendar organizes these announcements by date and company. There are many different websites you can use to get this information.
10. **EBIT: Earnings before interest and taxes** is an indicator of a company's profitability. EBIT can be calculated as revenue minus expenses excluding tax and interest. EBIT is also referred to as operating earnings, operating profit, and profit before interest and taxes.
11. **"ETF: Exchange-traded funds,** a type of investment fund that trades like a stock. Investors buy and sell ETFs on the same exchanges as shares of stock.
12. **IRA:** This stands for an individual retirement account. It is a tax-advantaged account. There are several types of IRAs. Anyone over 18 with a job can open an IRA for themselves. However, not everyone will have access to every type of IRA.
13. **NASDAQ:** This is a U.S. exchange for buying and selling securities. It is based in New York City. Nasdaq is also an index of the stocks bought and sold on the Nasdaq exchange. (In case you're curious, the initials stand for the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations.
14. **New York Stock Exchange:** One of the most famous stock exchanges is the NYSE, which trades stocks in companies all over the United States, and even includes stocks of some international companies.
15. **P/E ratio:** This measure reflects how much you pay for each dollar that the company earns. A company often reports profits on a per-share basis. So a company might say that it has earned \$5 per share. If that same stock is selling for \$75 a share on the market, you divide \$75 by \$5 to come up with a P/E ratio of 15 to 1. The higher a P/E ratio is, the more there is

expectations for higher earnings.

16. **Portfolio:** A collection of investments owned by an investor makes up his or her portfolio. You can have as few as one stock in a portfolio, but you can also own an infinite amount of stocks or other securities.
17. **S&P 500:** The Standard & Poor's 500 is a stock market index that tracks the value of 500 companies in the United States. It's similar to the Dow Jones in that it is also a stock market index.
18. **Stock:** A stock represents ownership in a company. Companies divide their ownership stakes into shares, and the amount of shares you purchase indicates your level of ownership in the company. Stock is bought in the hopes that the company will be successful, and more people will want a stake, so you can sell your stake later at a higher price than you paid.”
19. **Vix:** VIX is the ticker symbol and the popular name for the Chicago Board Options Exchange's CBOE Volatility Index, a measure of the stock market's expectation of volatility based on S&P 500 index options. Basically, it tells you how volatile a stock is.
20. **Volatility:** The liability of a stock to change rapidly and

unpredictably, especially for the worse.

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**If you are interested in joining the YU Stock Exchange Club for daily information, news, advice on the stock market, daily access to assistance on buying/selling stocks, options, information related to earnings dates, dividends/returns, and more join the [WhatsApp group chat!](#)*

Etsy Overview

By Jacob Mermelstein

Background:

Etsy is a global e-commerce platform with a niche for handmade creative goods. Sellers on the platform are entrepreneurs. Buyers come to the website because of the unique products. Its platform offers a wide range of products and retail categories supplied by entrepreneurs internationally.

Market and competitive advantage:

Etsy has positioned itself to take advantage of a total market worth \$1.7 trillion. It currently occupies 5% of the ‘special items’ market which has an estimated worth of \$100 billion. However, there is fierce competition in e-commerce. Etsy distinguishes itself from competition in four ways. First, they have built an algorithm for its website which offers customers superior search, discovery and recommendations of products. Etsy has built a trusted brand name and continues to build trust with their new initiatives each quarter. Most recently, they offer free shipping for products bought in bundles. Etsy’s unique items are by far the most distinguishable factor from its competitors. A 2019 survey of its buyers revealed 88% of its products were not available on other platforms. Lastly, it has set a tone of human connection through empowering its sellers to post videos on their inspiration for their products.

Acquisitions:

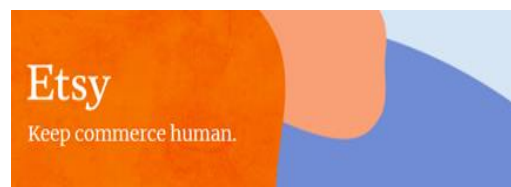
Etsy is an effective capital allocator. It has performed three acquisitions within the past four years. Not all managements are created equal. Those that possess the skill of effectively deploying capital reap huge reward for shareholders. In 2016, Etsy acquired a private company named Blackbird. The acquisition improved Etsy’s technological capabilities and employee talent. Blackbird’s capabilities drastically improved the functionality of

Etsy's website. Improvements were made in machine learning that analyzes user behavior, natural language processing, deep learning-based image recognition and spelling correction and predictive typeahead. In 2018, Etsy's management decided to expand internationally and acquired DaWanda. The deal was at no cost to Etsy as Dawanda was struggling to survive and accepted an offer from Etsy to transfer over their customers and sellers to its platform since it would close shop either way. A magnificent win to Etsy, this increased their geographical exposure, total addressable market and customer base without costing a dime. DaWanda was a lower tier but direct competitor with Etsy in the marketplace for homemade items. Its customer bases were in Germany, Poland, Austria, and Switzerland. In 2019, Etsy vertically expanded its category offerings by acquiring Reverb, the reseller of musical instruments. This acquisition was not integrated directly into Etsy's platform but remained a subsidiary. Since acquisition, Reverb has been a positive contribution to Etsy's revenue and growth.

Financials:

Healthy and growing financials are imperative to the success of a public company in the market. Etsy has accomplished outstanding revenue growth averaging above 30% for the past five quarters. Most importantly, it has been cash flow positive during that time. This has allowed it to amass over one billion in cash. As the

saying goes, "cash is king." Most importantly, a management with cash can further improve a company's balance sheet. After this past quarter's earnings call, Management disclosed it would raise a zero interest convertible note worth \$650 million, due in 2027, to pay off a different convertible loan, due in 2023 and reestablish its share repurchasing program with excess cash. These moves are positive for shareholders and illustrates management's priority to maximize shareholder profits. Also, the platform recorded \$2.7 billion in GMV (Gross Merchandise Value) which is the total merchandise sold on the platform's customer to customer exchange site. In comparison to last year, that number grew 147%. The transactions on the platform have dramatically increased and illustrate the benefits Etsy received from the transition of brick and mortar retail to online shops.



Management:

A management team that is highly experienced and has integrity towards shareholders is of endless value. Financial history is filled with incidents of corrupt management and fraud. The result in most cases is shareholders lose their investment. Etsy's track record has shown to be beneficial to shareholders. Its management has chosen to reinvest its

earnings in both share repurchases and carefully chosen acquisitions. Above all, the company has been chosen to join the S&P 500 before many other candidates like Tesla. The notable achievement will likely propel the company and create a further challenge in remaining in the exclusive club.

The experience of Etsy management is rooted deep within all positions of its executives. CEO Josh Silverman "served as President of Consumer Products and Services at American Express, CEO of Skype, and CEO of shopping.com, and held various executive roles at eBay." CFO Rachel Glaser "[b]rings more than 30 years of senior financial experience to Etsy." "She was previously employed at Leaf Group, where she served as CFO since 2015." "As the CFO at Move, Inc. she helped lead a successful sale of the company to News Corporation." CTO Mike Fisher "[p]rior to joining Etsy, was the co-founder and managing partner of the consulting firm AKF Partners." "Mike's career in technology has also included the roles of Chief, Technology Officer of Quigo, Vice President of Engineering & Architecture for PayPal, and various roles at General Electric." The remainder of its management have long tenures at other companies and held leadership positions.

The acceleration of ecommerce:

McKinney recently released a study on the acceleration of ecommerce in the U.S.. They concluded that ten years of growth had taken place within the months after COVID-19. The acceleration is attributable to businesses adapting their sales and operations to reflect demand from online purchasers wanting a contactless way to shop. The full report on the impact of ecommerce on the retail industry is linked [here](#).

The current environment of economic uncertainty has been overall beneficial for Etsy. COVID-19 has accelerated U.S. ecommerce penetration in the market. Retail store closures, shifts in offline to online spending, government stimulus, and demand for PPE equipment continue to benefit online marketplaces. On the flip side, unemployment, competitive dynamics, consumer confidence and economic uncertainty will be headwinds for the industry as a whole for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion:

Etsy has been able to prosper through one of the most challenging years in market history. Its industry has more room for growth and its management is likely to take advantage of that both in the U.S. and internationally. Next quarter, it expects another outstanding quarter. I would keep an eye on this company's growth and development.

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What Are Options?

By Jason Jubas

Options are one of the riskiest investments an investor can make. An option is an asset that gives the buyer the right, but not the obligation, to purchase or sell a specific underlying asset at a precise price at or before a certain date. Each option contract typically represents a hundred shares of the underlying asset. The two most common types of options are known as calls and puts. A call allows the buyer to purchase a hundred shares of a specific underlying asset at a predetermined price and set date, while a put allows the buyer to sell a hundred shares of a specific underlying asset at a predetermined price and set date. Options are used in a variety of ways such as [hedging](#), to earn extra income, for tax purposes, and most dangerously, for speculation.

A common objective for most portfolios is to have the largest gain with the smallest amount of risk. Options play a huge role in minimizing risk by providing downside security. For example, if you owned 100 shares of Apple at its current price, say \$500, and you are risk averse, in a shaky market you can buy a put option on Apple with a \$500 strike price. Now if Apple goes down \$50, you

would lose \$5,000 on your actual Apple shares (\$50 per share at 100 shares), but you would make \$5,000 on the Apple put, essentially canceling out the drop in price. However, if Apple went up \$50, you would make \$5,000 on my Apple shares and you would not lose \$5,000 on the Apple put because you do not and should not exercise your right to sell your 100 shares on Apple at \$500, while you are able to sell your Apple shares at \$550 on the current market. However, you would lose out on the premium (cost) of the put. It is important to know that this scenario does not bode well with a stable market where you could very well lose the money of the option, but not make any money on the actual Apple shares itself either.

A second reason investors use options is to earn extra income in a very calm market. Say you own 100 shares of Apple at \$500 and you think in a month Apple will still be at \$500 or very close to its current price. You can sell a call for Apple at \$500, earn the premium from the cost of the option that you sold, and even if Apple goes up \$100, you are covered since you own 100 shares of Apple, which will pay for the call that you sold. The official terminology in the finance world of this method is called a [covered call](#).

A third reason investors use options is to evade paying higher taxes. Because short term gains are taxed at a much higher rate than long term gains, many investors will hold onto

large short-term gains and buy options in the opposite direction; essentially hedging out their position without officially realizing a gain. For example, if you are holding onto a \$100,000 gain on the 1,000 Tesla shares that you own, it is wise for an individual in a high-income tax bracket to purchase 10 puts on Tesla. This would neutralize their position without officially closing out their position and realizing their gain until it becomes a long-term gain, which depending on their tax bracket, could save them a significant amount of money.



A fourth and extremely risky use of options is for speculative buyers and sellers. If you really have a feeling that a company or even the market as an entity is going to go up or down within a certain period of time, you can purchase or sell options without having any underlying positions. This is extremely risky as many times options expire worthless. If you buy a call for Apple at \$510 for the end of the week and Apple is only at \$505 when the expiration date has arrived, your option is worthless since there is no reason to pay \$510 per share of Apple when you can buy Apple shares on the market at only \$505, thus losing the entire value of the option. This strategy works best in volatile markets and assets.

Each option has two components to it: the time premium and its intrinsic value. The time premium represents how much the option is worth based on the time remaining until expiration. The closer the option is to expiring, the smaller the time premium portion of the option will be. On the other hand, the intrinsic value represents how much money the option is worth if the option were to expire or be exercised immediately. As the option moves deeper and deeper in the money, there is less risk that the option will expire worthless and will be mainly comprised of the intrinsic value. Options out of the money will be comprised of only the time premium value, while options deep in the money will nearly be comprised of intrinsic value. The Greek letter Delta contains a value between zero and one and it tells you how much the option moves in value relative to the moves in the underlying asset. The Greek letter Theta tells you how much value you are losing each day due to time decay on the option. Understanding how both Delta and Theta move as the underlying asset moves is crucial for option trading.

The Serbia-Kosovo Economic Normalization Agreement: What Is It And Why Is It Important?

By Jacob Leichter

On September 4, 2020, U.S. President Donald Trump brokered talks between Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovar Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti at the White

House, which culminated in an economic normalization agreement between the two Balkan nations. This deal is especially promising, in that it signals a potential resolution to the bitter conflict that has plagued both countries for over two decades. For a bit of background, in February 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), comprised of Kosovar Albanians, sparked a rebellion to liberate Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the remnant of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and what is now Serbia and Montenegro. The bloody war lasted until June 1999, when The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), who entered the war to back the KLA, signed accords with Yugoslavia and ceded control of Kosovo to the United Nations. Bouts of violent anti-Serb campaigns erupted sporadically between then and February 2008, when Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. As of September 2020, 98 countries recognize an independent Kosovo, the United States among them.

However, Kosovo has been unsuccessful in its numerous attempts to enter international groups, like the United Nations, due to the efforts of Serbia and her allies, Russia and China. Part of the agreement between the two nations this month was a promise of yearlong cessation: Kosovo would stop trying to normalize diplomacy, while Serbia would stop advocating against normalization. Despite what could be viewed as an impasse in the forming of a positive relationship between

the two states, the other elements of the economic normalization agreement are of great benefit to the economies and citizens of Serbia and Kosovo. Most important are the transnational elements, namely the reopening of the Merdare Common Crossing Point, the recognition of each country's diplomas and certifications, and Serbia's admittance of Kosovo into the proposed "Mini-Schengen" region in the Western Balkans. This enables an easier flow of travelers, workers, students, and trade between the two. The agreement also offers comfort as both countries agreed to a joint effort to locate and identify the remains of unidentified bodies, and to implement solutions for refugees and displaced persons, two lasting wounds from the war that ended just over 20 years ago.

An added, albeit surprise, element to the talks between Serbia and Kosovo was their relationship with Israel. Though diplomacy between Israel and Serbia is nothing new, this is a big step for Kosovo and Israel. Serbia, when it was still referred to as Yugoslavia, was the second European power to recognize the fledgling Israel in 1948, and the two established ties shortly thereafter. However, with the onset of the Six-Day War in 1967, Serbia severed all connection to the Jewish State. In 1992, internationally isolated amid the Yugoslav Wars, Serbia looked for any allies and reestablished diplomacy with Israel. The two have enjoyed a bond since then — especially economically and in tourism.

Serbia agreed, as part of the September 4 discussions, to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.



Kosovo, unlike Serbia, has had quite a different relationship to Israel. Kosovan President Hashim Thaçi has continuously touted his country's admiration of the Middle Eastern nation, even proclaiming that "Kosovo is a friend of Israel" before declaring independence in 2008. Over the years, the Kosovan government has displayed flags of Israel in the president's office and boasted about their love of the Jewish people and Israel as a model nation. Israel, on the other hand, remained firm in their indecision regarding the acknowledgement of Kosovo as a legitimate country, largely due to concerns that the Palestinians would try emulating Kosovo by engaging in a bloody war for independence. However, this no longer seems to be a concern, as both Kosovo and Israel recognize each other's legitimacy. Kosovo will be the first Muslim-majority nation to open an embassy in Jerusalem. This makes Serbia and Kosovo the third and fourth countries to defy the internationally

accepted practice of establishing embassies in Tel Aviv, following Guatemala and the United States, both of whom moved their facilities to Jerusalem in May 2018. The move, and any associated international partnerships, mark an improvement between Israel and her allies in the Balkans.

While this economic normalization agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is far from complete amity for the previously hostile nations. It does help their citizens and open new doorways for stronger ties in the future, though that will remain to be seen. The Israel element also signals the forging of both new and improved diplomatic relations with Jerusalem, which may lead to interesting developments for the Middle Eastern and Balkan states going forward.

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Is It Too Late To Ride The Bull Market?

By Jake Sheckter

Is this bull market headed for a massive correction or does it still have room to run? Over the last eight months, the market,

especially the arguably over-valued tech sector, has been a rollercoaster ride. Tech stocks with no new announcements or significant updates have gone on weeks-long exponential runs (Tesla Aug. 11-Sep. 1). Meanwhile, stocks with amazing earnings calls, incredible guidance, and projections for massive growth took inexplicable dives (Peloton Sep. 10-Sep. 14). As North America moved indoors back in March due to quarantine restrictions, stock traders and those looking to start a new hobby took to simple, user-friendly apps like Robinhood to satisfy their market desires.



“In the first three months of 2020, Robinhood users traded nine times as many shares as E-Trade customers, and 40 times as many shares as Charles Schwab customers, per dollar in the average customer account in the most recent quarter,” The New York Times reported on Robinhood’s record success in July of this year. While apps like Robinhood help make the world of investing more easily accessible to the inexperienced trader, some argue that the app’s simplicity and gamified style “guides” users to certain actions which may cause large fluctuations in stock and option pricing. According to a research done by Investopedia “About half of Robinhood customers are first-time investors.”

Volatility is the name of the game right now, opening rare opportunities for astronomical returns in the options market and their respective astronomical risks. For those who like to play the long game, choose a great stock, and wait. Or, choose a stock with a decent dividend and collect 4% annually while you wait out the storm. But for the adrenaline junkies and thrill seekers, do some research on the company, analyze the trends, choose a stock, and get ready to sell when the stock jumps. It has not been uncommon as of late to see 20%-30% swings in stock prices over a matter of days or sometimes even hours. These gains have added billions to the market caps of these companies, while the companies themselves have not changed a thing.

How long is this going to last? And is it too late to get in on the action?

As political tensions rise in the United States and continue to do so as we get closer to November 3, the stock market will likely become increasingly volatile. With rumors of mail-in ballot fraud and talk of a contested election, instability could be a major player between now and November. If you like to “play it safe” and do not enjoy checking the stock market 20 times per day, you may find it wise to put yourself in a cash position before the 2020 election. Remember, if the market takes some big hits, that also means an amazing buying opportunity and great entry point for long term growth has

presented itself. But, if you love keeping an ever-watching eye on the stock market and love the thrill that a volatile market provides, then by all means grab that bull by the horns and enjoy the ride, we ain’t seen nothing yet.

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Finance Club And YU Career Center Host “Finance 101: Wall Street Seniors”

By Aliza Leichter, Social Media Manager

On September 1, the YU Career Center and Finance Club hosted an event titled “Finance 101: Wall Street Seniors.” The virtual discussion consisted of students in their final year at YU who received full-time offers from their internships. The event allowed for students who were on the other side of the table just a year or two ago to share their experience of being in that position. Over 35 students were in attendance.

Featured on the panel were Adam Baron (SSSB’ 21), who interned at Goldman Sachs in their investment banking division, Abraham Benjamin (YC’ 21), in RRS at Moody’s, Jacob Dauer (YC’ 21), in sales and trading at JP Morgan, and Zachary Lowinger (SSSB’ 21), in risk management at Morgan Stanley. Nathan Hakakian

(SSSB' 21), president of the Finance Club and MC of the event, welcomed attendees and introduced the panelists.



The panelists shared advice on their experience within the competitive finance industry. Due to the gap year system at YU, students have less time to explore different career options. The panelists stressed the importance of starting research early and utilizing all resources available — including YU alumni, family members, and Google searches — to gain direction. Every speaker on the panel received their job offer through networking, showing their continued interest through cold emails (unsolicited emails sent to a receiver without prior communication), and contacting alumni.

After the event, Hakakian sent a follow-up email containing key takeaways to summarize the event. Also included in the email were the panelists' personal contact information which attests to the sincerity and community of the YU network.

Arts & Culture:

As A Written Leaf:
“Letters from the Earth”
By Elyanna Saperstein

“Letters from the Earth”
By: Mark Twain
Genre: Fiction
Total score: 7/10
Book in five words: Satanic memoir, heresy, religious musings

If you love: Heresy and heretical takes on history, cynicism — this is the book for you.

If you hate: Serious images of G-d, optimistic views of religion and the human race, super long books — this is the book for you.

P.S. If you're looking for a less heretical, albeit slightly more Christian and positive take on G-d and humanity, may I please recommend C.S Lewis's “Screwtape” letters.

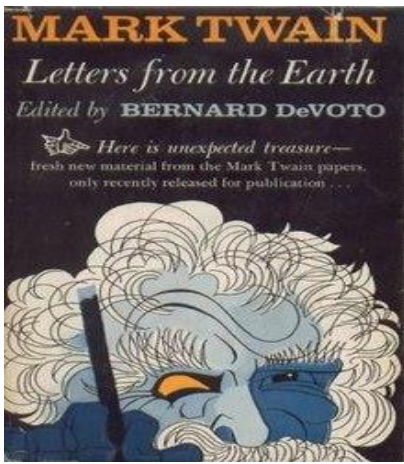
Mark Twain's “Letters from the Earth” is a surprisingly short book, clocking in at 22 pages. It's really a super long essay or a short collection of letters, more reminiscent of “Cannibals in Cars” than “Tom Sawyer.” Anyone familiar with Twain's biting sense of humor and sarcasm will find much fun in this heretical little novel.

It starts off with Twain's take on the creation of the world by an incredibly humanized G-d (whose depiction only devolves throughout the book). Satan, then portrayed as a rational

ministering angel, soon gets kicked out of heaven and goes to check in on his Lord's creation. He writes letters back to his old friends, Gabriel and Michael, in which he describes the paradoxical nature of religion. As the letters progress, they become less about the human follies of religion and more about the fundamental paradox of religious good and evil. Essentially, this paradox is the requirement of humans to do good versus the fact that G-d created evil.

The book and letters are funny (as literary heresy often is); however, the narrative fails to arrive at any sort of conclusion on the matter. Twain does not attempt to reconcile his perception of G-d as a hypocrite, leaving the reader with a deeply cynical feeling at the end. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but as the book goes on, it sacrifices its humor for pontification on G-d's perceived evils. The last two letters are essentially Twain bemoaning the violent nature of historical religion while pointing out textual discrepancies in scripture. All we are left with at the end is the idea that yes, if G-d was human and acted the way he did ... we wouldn't understand. Without humor, it's hard to justify the consistent harping on the subject.

As a religious Jew, I have grappled with the idea of the existence of evil in conjunction with G-d's ultimate good, and that dialect is complex, to say the least. Nonetheless, I am



pleased (albeit a little disappointed) to admit that this book lacked any real addition or influence to that conversation. By humanizing G-d to the point that, other than immense power, there seems to be little about him that is actually G-dly, Twain unfortunately neuters all serious discussion.

All in all, I recommend “Letters from the Earth,” but more for its words and humor, as opposed to the overall message.

Agree? Disagree? Have something to say? Books to suggest? Reach out to me on Facebook: Elyanna Saperstein.

September Poetry Feature:
Epiphany
Epiphany
By Michael Zoldan

Each month, the YU Observer sends a call to YU students for poetry submissions following a specific theme. This month, the theme was ‘Epiphany’, and we are featuring Michael Zoldan’s piece, ‘Epiphany.’ Other submissions of honorable mention have been published as well.

cries of pain, cries of joy

gentle care, yet fear and 'ware

a bag, a bottle, a bed, a gown
a man, a woman, a child, & One

Life begins, life continues
life continues and then life ends
a time to sew and a time to rend

But a week is spent in measured
delay
One week to feel life, before the
day
One week of joy, one week
alone
And one day more to love my
boy

cries of pain, cries of joy
recalling all that's come before
we sit and we learn, and we
love and we fight
we are family and tonight's the
first night

This poem was inspired by and
intended for my firstborn son
Levi who was born on August
11, 2013.

I will always remember the day
because it was the happiest day
of my life.

*Do you want to see your writing
published? The theme for
October’s poetry submissions is
“Faith.” Send all submissions
to theyuobserver@gmail.com by
October 21.*

September Poetry
Submissions: Epiphany
By Hakohein & Anonymous

*Each month, the YU Observer
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theme was ‘Epiphany’, and we
are featuring Michael Zoldan’s*

*piece, ‘Epiphany’. However, the
poems below are other
submissions of honorable
mention.*

Epiphany
By HaKohein

There is no air to breathe
between the tears,

your hand lies limp, not
interested, in mine.

My pleas fall short before your
shuttered ears,

I’m broken down inside; you’re
somehow fine.

The fragments of my heart litter
the floor,

Hope whispers that you still
may make it right.

I turn to you as you walk out the
door

and disappear into the empty
night.

Without your numbing touch
how can I heal?

Yet truth screams out at me
from my damned soul:

my heart of flesh destroyed by
yours of steel,

must find another way to
become whole.

Through stunted gasps I
block you from my phone,

In twos, we break; to
mend we walk alone.

Contendunt
By Anonymous

Everything I am, and everything
I am not, are bound tightly

within: That which I am, I struggle to reveal; that which I am not all too easily finds its way through the cracks. All the while, the constant battle between everything I am and everything I can become rages on. The future holds steady while the present rocks in its wake. All that I want to become is in front of me, yet there is so much that has slipped away. Mistakes made, paths taken and bridges burned- actions whose future decided upon their existence. The ebb and flow of what must happen and what should never become crashes upon the shore of my present as I row my way, inch by inch, towards the illumination of that Path Which Sheds Light On All Things

Do you want to see your writing published? The theme for October's poetry submissions is "Faith." Send all submissions to theyuobserver@gmail.com by October 21.

**The Legacy of Mulan:
Disney's Faux-Pas**
By Elisheva Zahtz, Features Editor

It is not unfair to say that the release of the new live-action version of Disney's "Mulan" was one of the most anticipated releases of 2020. It is also not unfair to say that the release of this movie has resulted in cultural embarrassments, controversy, and offense.

"[The Ballad of Mulan](#)" is a Northern Chinese folktale telling the story of a young woman who takes her father's place in the army. She served

for 12 years before revealing herself to her comrades. The ballad's ending line: "When a pair of rabbits run side by side, who can distinguish male from female?" may be familiar to many of us who have seen the movie as Mulan's statement to her parents before they inform her she will be married. The Ballad is a proud piece of Northern Chinese culture and heritage.

This explains why so many Northern Chinese people were upset by the presentation of Mulan's village and Mulan herself in the new live-action movie. The circular village structure depicted in the movie is [from Southern China](#) — it's known as a "tulou," something common to Southeastern China. The issues with setting in the movie have created much upset among Chinese fans who feel Northern China's representation in the movie has been botched and lost. However, this is not the only cultural misrepresentation upsetting fans about the movie.

The Chinese culture throughout the movie has been highly Westernized, earning the criticism from some fans that Disney is portraying "[an American-style ancient China](#)," and that the movie shows "[a foreign, superficial understanding of China](#)." The description of qi (or "chi") throughout the movie is explained as something "only men can use." But the nature of qi, as explained by [a frustrated Chinese fan on Twitter](#), is that qi is the basic life force inside everyone and every person. The attempt of the movie to show

Mulan's use of qi as feminist inherently goes against the basic concept of qi. Additionally, the explanation of the bird spirit as a "witch" is inherently Western, as there is no concept of witches in Eastern mythology. Spirits are common, but the explanation of Mulan being considered a "witch" is incorrect. The phoenix has also been Westernized, since Eastern phoenixes do not burn away and [rise from the ashes](#). Perhaps the most glaring cultural upset is the depiction of Mulan's makeup when she prepares for the matchmaker. The elements of traditional Chinese makeup is there — the cherry blossom lips, and the floral decoration on the forehead, but the rest has been applied sloppily and almost appears to be making a mockery of the art.

Of course, the cultural upset is not the only offense Disney has committed with this film. More recently, with the release of the movie, the reality that they have interacted with political stances and entities has brought the hashtag [#BoycottMulan](#) into attention.

The actress they chose for Mulan, Liu Yifei, has spoken out against Hong Kong and the protests for democracy taking place there. Her [messages supporting the police](#) read, "I support Hong Kong's police, you can beat me up now," and "what a shame for Hong Kong." These comments were made and published in Summer 2019, but they have come back into light as the movie was released and people began to realize that

there were deep-running controversies. This is, however, only one of the pieces to bring Disney's new remake under fire.



One of the places credited with filming is the province in China known as Xinjiang. This is a province notorious for containing at least 14 different internment camps and concentration camps run by the Turpan public security bureau — which is listed on the U.S. Commerce Department's sanctions list. They have detained and interned masses of Uighur Muslims and other ethnicities in these camps, which the survivors liken to “prisons,” rather than the advertised “vocational training,” or “reeducation camps.” U.S. Senator Marco Rubio joined together with many other senators, penning a letter to the CEO of Disney, condemning him for the choice to film in such a place and inquiring about their cooperation with such people.

To paint the movie in such a Western light, and to ignore the roots and the spirit of the story,

leaves people disappointed, disgusted, and hurt. Cultural influences were portrayed badly and/or neglected, and American national sanctions appear to have been ignored in favor of filming in an area known for horrendous treatment of its people. As of right now there has been no official response from Disney, and their statement is anxiously awaited.

Why Czerny's Inserted Measure In Bach's C Major Prelude Is Wrong By Yosef Rosenfield

In J. S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C Major, there is an inserted measure presumably meant as a “correction” of Bach's prelude that is attributed to pianist and composer Carl Czerny. Czerny seemingly noticed the movement in the bass from F sharp in measure 22 to A flat in measure 23, an interval of a diminished third, and sought to “fix” this issue by composing his own measure with G in the bass and placing it between the two. Adding this measure would theoretically remove the dissonant interval created by the adjacent measures, thereby introducing a smoother transition from the F sharp to the A flat. This editorialization, however, is made (at best) misguidedly and in fact does not improve Bach's prelude. Given the broader framework surrounding measures 22 and 23, every musical analyst can hopefully recognize that Czerny's measure actually runs counter to the chordal patterns that Bach reinforces and is therefore

wrong in the context of this prelude.

With the opening phrase of his prelude, Bach establishes “first principles” of the piece: C, d^7/C , G^7/B , C. Using A minor as a pivot chord, Bach continues with ii-V-I cadences, but in the key of G major, and this time repeating the pattern with an added predominant chord in the middle: a/C , D^7/C , G/B - C^{M7}/B - a^7 , D^7 , G. Not only does the C^{M7} chord develop the ii-V-I theme in G major, which ends up being a tonicized half cadence at the end of the phrase, it also maintains a circle-of-fifths progression – a, D, G, and now C – which is another prominent motif in Bach's prelude. Phrase number three features a direct modulation from $c\#^{o7}$ into a tonicized ii^6 chord, d/F . This is followed by b^{o7}/F , which is still a dominant substitution, and C/E. The phrase closes with more circle-of-fifths movement and another ii-V-I cadence: F^{M7}/E , d^7 , G^7 , C.



By the time we reach the fourth phrase, which contains Czerny's measure, Bach has already emphasized circle-of-fifths progressions and ii-V-I cadences as major themes in his prelude. Phrase number four starts as follows: C^7 , F^{M7} , $f\#^o$,

b^{o7}/Ab. Czerny's inserted C^{mM7} chord after the f#^o simply does not make sense in the key and certainly does not contribute to the motivic structure of Bach's composition. On the contrary, Czerny's chord interrupts the circle-of-fifths progression from f#^o to b^{o7}.

The rest of the prelude indeed strengthens our previously established ii-V-I and circle-of-fifths progressions, following an extended period during which G is highlighted: G⁷, C/G, G^{sus4}, G⁷. After prolonging the dominant chord for a few measures, Bach finally includes another ii-V-I sequence in what is structurally a half cadence: f#^{o7}/Eb/DP (Dominant Pedal, which is G in the key of C), C/G, G^{sus4}, G⁷. Even the last four measures, which begin and end with the concluding C major chord, contain one last ii-V-I cadence, voicing the middle chords over the Tonic Pedal (in this case C): C⁷, F/C/TP, d⁷/C/TP, G⁷/B/TP, C. As evidenced by these thematic progressions, Bach's chordal structure makes it fairly obvious that Czerny's inserted C^{mM7} chord has no place in this prelude.

Insider Tips for Students in New York City

By Abigail Grigoryan

As new students coming from a public high school without knowing anyone but each other, my roommate and I wanted to create a way to connect incoming students. We teamed up to start [@SternClassof2024](#), a women-only account for Stern

students on Instagram. Our goal was to bridge the gap between students from different countries and backgrounds while providing a way to check out what's going in and around Stern. As a girl born and raised on the streets of Brooklyn, I spent a lot of my life exploring the city. I wanted to provide some insider tips for anyone coming, so people can truly experience the beauty of city life.

As the largest city in the nation and one of the world's most significant centers for everything from finance to fashion, New York City is a hot spot for a social life. New York City's five boroughs are the greatest campus in the world, and this transition to city life will be the most exciting time. While it may seem very scary for a non-native New Yorker, you'll grow to call the city home. Check out these tips to make the most of your experience.



1. Buy a Metrocard

NYC is a walking and busing-oriented city, so the subway is the fastest way to get around! The app [Transit](#) has so many features that will help you navigate the train lines, and it's especially useful for people who are not used to riding the

subway! Fun fact: you can transfer for free between buses and subways. The transfer gets encoded on your MetroCard, so when you swipe it again, you won't be charged. Transfers are good within two hours of when you paid the fare!

2. Get the Citizen App

In NYC, you need to be situationally aware. Citizen alerts go out within seconds of a 911 or user report. If there's an incident, like a robbery, nearby, you'll know to avoid that area. If there's commotion like police activity, helicopters overhead, or road closures, you can open the app and find out why.

3. Carry an ID

In New York City, you should always have some kind of identification. In addition to safety purposes, a student ID can get you discounts for tickets to Broadway shows, performances at Carnegie Hall, and entry to awesome museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Frick Art Collection, and the New Museum.

4. Learn and understand "foot traffic" etiquette

New York is a walking city, and "foot traffic" etiquette is important. If you need to stop and check a map, make a cell phone call, or do anything else that causes you to stop walking, step to the side and let others pass. If walking in a group of three or more, make sure that your group is not blocking the way for others who wish to pass you. It's common courtesy — you will get glares and be called out if you don't.

5. Go explore the Neighborhoods and Boroughs

If you're coming to NYC and all you're doing is staying in Manhattan, you're boring. There's a bunch of awesome things to do all over. Go across the bridge to Park Slope and check out all the cute shops. Take a spontaneous trip to the Bronx! Just don't over exaggerate that you're "New York Living," especially if you're too scared to go to a different borough. Go explore and take some pictures!

New Yorkers are a different breed, and I'm not talking about the people coming from the suburbs. "Gossip Girl," "Friends," or any other New York-based show does not account for the actual way of life here. New York is the city of dreams so don't let yours get away due to a negative attitude. Your attitude will affect the way you work and maintain relationships with others, you should treat others the way you want to be treated because you'll see how much people will influence your life for the better. Above all, enjoy yourself. Have fun, get lost, and find your way back. New York is the perfect place to be young and free.

Follow [@SternClassof2024](#) on Instagram for more tips!

Finding Oneself Vs. Losing Others: Ableism In Literary Discussion

By Shayna Herszage

Since beginning my time at Yeshiva University, I have taken several courses that rely

on classic literature for discussion. Over the semesters, one strange common thread has woven through them all at least once: the urge to diagnose literary characters.

The diagnoses given to classic fictional characters vary. Some of the diagnoses I have heard in class discussions include dissociative identity disorder (which some may know as multiple personality disorder), schizophrenia, and autism spectrum disorder.

For example, in discussions of the often-assigned book "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley, my classmates in past semesters have frequently ventured to diagnose Victor Frankenstein with autism spectrum disorder, particularly due to his detachment from other people and his way of describing, in chapter 1, his childhood friend, Elizabeth, such as describing his love for her as being like the love he would have for "a favorite animal."

Diagnosis of fictional characters never sat well with me, but it was not until about a year ago that I realized why. More often than not, the literary discussions I have witnessed that featured diagnoses have been focused on characters that are morally gray at best, but most likely the villains of their stories — the likes of Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll (or, if you will, Mr. Hyde) from "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The fact that the villains, not the heroes, are the characters being diagnosed with disorders and disabilities begs a

difficult question: what is the intention behind the diagnosis?

Often, we read because we want to see ourselves in the story. But what if a character is someone we do not want to see ourselves in? What if the character is strange, or morally gray, or different from how we wish to see ourselves?

When such characters appear, many try to distance ourselves any way we can to protect self image. One way to distance the reader from the character is diagnosis — deciding the character has a specific disorder that can be interpreted as influencing their difference. But this seemingly harmless defense can become one that promotes ableism and stigmatization. The rampant diagnosing by neurotypical readers of literary villains or oddballs with disorders, particularly by those who lack the credentials to diagnose at all, acts against the many efforts today against stigma and ableism, such as [Active Minds](#) for mental illness and [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#) for autism spectrum disorder.

This is a problem for two main reasons. Firstly, reducing a character to their unofficial diagnosis may easily translate to reducing neurodivergent people to their diagnoses in real-life interactions. In diagnosing a character, a neurotypical person may view the character as little more than a disorder. With the character unofficially diagnosed with a disability or disorder, neurotypical readers may allow themselves to view the character as so different that

they could not possibly find common ground. They often refrain, consciously or unconsciously, from finding the similarities that may be present — the goals, the emotions, the likes and dislikes — because this newly diagnosed character is somehow defined by, and set apart from others by, the disorder. In doing so, the character loses their humanity — they are no longer a character or a person, only a diagnosis.



Additionally, the characters receiving said diagnoses from neurotypical readers are seldom the lovable protagonists who every reader roots for. Instead, the Victor Frankensteins and the Jekylls/Hydes receive the diagnoses. This pattern demonizes neurodivergent individuals beyond the limits of literature. When meeting someone with dissociative identity disorder for the first time, for example, a reader who previously diagnosed Jekyll/Hyde as such may see this new person, recall the evil rampages in the novel, and immediately label this person as inherently dangerous. However, this is incorrect for two reasons: Jekyll/Hyde does not have dissociative identity disorder in the novel (not only because it is not stated in the novel, but also because the splitting is clearly

stated as being induced by Jekyll — and people with dissociative identity disorder do not change form, as Jekyll/Hyde did, when their alters take over their consciousness), and people with dissociative identity disorder are not inherently dangerous — much less inherently *evil* as Hyde is intended to be. When strange or villainous characters are diagnosed with disorders, the stigma against the disorder in real life only grows.

Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that neurodivergent readers may also feel an urge to diagnose a character, but with very different intentions. As previously said, readers often wish to see themselves in stories and characters. If a reader is neurodivergent and they see their neurodivergence in a character, the intentions are not backed by stigma and ableism, but by a sense of connection to a character. The same way neurotypical readers (or, for that matter, neurodivergent readers as well) may see other parts of themselves in a character, neurodivergent readers may see their neurodivergence in a character. Because that is what neurodivergence is — a part of a person. Not one to be ignored as if it does not exist, but not one that obliterates all other qualities.

As this semester continues, and as future class discussions take place, I encourage neurotypical readers to consider their intentions when they wish to diagnose a character with a disorder. And to neurodivergent readers: continue finding

yourself in literature, and remember that you are the protagonist of your story.

Seven Books to Keep You Occupied Over the Chagim By Alexander Fischer

Let's face it, this is going to be a long holiday season and we could all use a good book or two to keep us company over the break. Here are some fast-paced reads that are guaranteed to mitigate the *chag* (holiday) fatigue.

1. "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy

This is a perfect novel for our seemingly post-apocalyptic times. The novel tells the story of a father and son struggling to survive in an America covered in ash. Its tone and pacing are reminiscent of the earlier seasons of "The Walking Dead". The story sucks you in and the ending hits you hard.



2. "Queenie" by Candice Carty-Williams

Where to start with "Queenie"? The story is incredibly simple: a young woman struggles to find herself after a breakup. But where "Queenie" truly stands out is in the masterful style in which Carty-Williams writes "Queenie". Her story is

thought-provoking, sad, and funny in a way that makes her unique story incredibly relatable. It's a great read with a better message of self-sufficiency and the importance of mental health.

3. "The Disaster Artist" by Greg Sestero and Tom Bissel

This one is for you non-fiction/memoir folk. I have never read a funnier book than "The Disaster Artist". The book tells the story behind the production of the movie "The Room", infamous for being the worst film ever produced. If you haven't seen "The Room" go watch it now, (it's available for free on YouTube) then read this book. You will not be disappointed. At its heart though, "The Disaster Artist" is about the complex and nuanced friendship of Greg Sestero and Tommy Wiseau (the writer, director, producer, and lead actor of "The Room") and has a lot to say about friendship as a whole. Also, the humor is unmatched.

4. "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" by Junot Diaz

This one is a little long, but it's loads of fun and a very quick read. Diaz tells the story of Oscar, a Dominican boy who longs to write fantasy novels and fall in love, through the eyes of Yunior, Oscar's college roommate. Yunior is an incredibly engaging narrator combining colloquial language, Dominican Republic history, and pop culture references seamlessly in his narration. Oscar's story is engaging, raw, and full of magical realism. Also, it references Washington Heights a couple of times and

it's always fun to recognize places you know in a book.

5. "The Wicked Sister" by Karen Dionne

A girl commits herself to a mental institution after killing her parents until years later she realizes she never actually killed them. Rachel leaves the hospital and returns to her childhood home, a cabin in northern Michigan, to uncover the truth about her family. From there, the story is hard to explain without spoilers, but it is a must-read. Dionne draws heavily from the ethos of traditional fairy tales to create a world that is both familiar and fantastical. The story is a perfect balance of the crime and fantasy genres.

6 and 7. The Kyoshi Novels: "The Rise of Kyoshi" and "The Shadow of Kyoshi" by F.C. Yee

The Kyoshi novels take place within the universe of "Avatar: The Last Airbender", so whether you are a longtime fan of the show, or just recently became a fan after binging on Netflix, you will thoroughly enjoy these books. Even if you haven't seen the show before, the books do a great job of giving you the context you need to understand the story, although you would definitely get more out of them if you've seen the show. Kyoshi is a strong and compelling leader and her challenges as an Avatar are unique. In fact, when the book starts she isn't a good bender by any standard, and people don't believe that she is the Avatar. Kyoshi's world is complex and her lines between right and wrong are often

blurred; this is a compelling origin story for an incredible character.

Letter to the Editor:

Letter To The Editor From Wurzweiler School Of Social Work Faculty

By: Wurzweiler Faculty

We appreciate the Stern College students for expressing their thoughts in public discourse on the tough issues of systemic racism, public protest, and the cultural shifts we are witnessing and living through at this moment in history. These are critical issues in our time. Students, faculty, and staff in undergraduate and graduate programs should engage in thoughtful analysis, commentary, and finally, take action.

As social workers, scholars, and educators, it is imperative that we contribute to the discourse. We spend a lot of time at Wurzweiler understanding not just what historical and systemic racism is, but also how it translates into the daily lives of our citizens today, as well as how it disproportionately impacts, degrades, and devalues people of color. In the cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Michael Chauvin, Rayshard Brooks, Daniel Prude, Atatiana Jefferson, Aura Rosser, Botham Jean, Stephon Clark, Philando Castille, Alton Sterling, Michelle Cusseaux, Fredrick Gray, Janisha Fonville, Eric

Garner, Akai Gurley, Ahmaud Aubury, and many more, there were clear examples of denial of due process which led to the unnecessary deaths of our citizens. These are the names of those killed in recent memory, but the list could continue and extend back to and before the Jim Crow era.

Black Lives Matter is experienced by many as an extension of the Civil Rights movement; a 21st Century endeavor to call attention to disparities in policing, housing, health care, education, and voting rights. This is a large movement that endeavors to complete the unfinished business from the 20th Century, which spawned the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. While many advances have been achieved, the facts before us cannot be ignored; grave injustices and inequalities continue to exist.

Black men, women, and children have been the subjects of systemic racism in our country for more than 400 years. Black men are 50% more likely to be wrongly accused and convicted of crimes (1). One in 1,000 black men are killed by a police officer (2). Black male offenders continue to receive longer sentences than similarly situated White male offenders. Black male offenders received sentences on average 19.1 percent longer than similarly situated White male offenders (3).

The argument "all lives matter" can be experienced as a denial of the unique dangers and inequities facing the Black community. To say "Black lives

matter" is not to say other lives don't matter, but says there are unique dynamics that have resulted in a sense that Black lives did not matter. If you are a Black man or woman who has lived in a country where those empowered by privilege, status, or title unjustly and systematically treat Black human beings with reckless disregard for their lives. It is as if your house is on fire and you are seeking help to put the fire out. There are other houses that matter too, but they are not on fire at this moment.

The data shared here is but the tip of the iceberg. There are other ways in which our major institutions have created disadvantages. They involve policies, laws, and informal practices around housing, lending, city planning and zoning, access to education, medical research, access to medical care, law enforcement, policing patterns, and sentencing patterns. All of our major institutions have held hands to create what James A. Kushner in 1980 labeled 'Apartheid in America.' It is time for all of us to become students of inequity, to understand what it is and how it is written onto human lives and experiences, and, with that understanding, to help create change.

At Wurzweiler, this is our work. We understand human pain and work together to better understand the ways in which systems and policies impact human lives, sometimes forever. While any one of us may not be personally responsible for inequity, we must recognize our role in not

perpetuating racism and working diligently to create an equal and just society for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Akerman, PhD, LCSW

Charles Auerbach, Ph.D, LCSW

Joan Beder, LCSW, DSW

Nancy Beckerman, LCSW, DSW

Timothy B. Conley, Ph. D., LCSW, CAS

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Lynn Levy, LCSW, PhD

Susan Mason, LCSW, PhD

Akiva Perlman, PhD

Tzipora Shub, LCSW

Sari Skolnik, LCSW, PhD

Gary L. Stein, JD, MSW

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