

# THE COMMENTATOR

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## YUNMUN Conference Scheduled To Be In Person This March



2019 Delegates at YUNMUN 30

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

Yeshiva University National Model United Nations (YUNMUN) XXXII Conference will be in person this year, taking place from Mar. 13-15 at its pre-COVID location of the Crown Plaza Hotel in Stamford, CT.

According to YU's website, YUNMUN is "a student-run simulation of the workings of the real United Nations" for high school students to "experience and learn about the complex landscape of international diplomacy." High school students represent different countries, researching their countries' interests and policies over a variety of world issues, and YU students facilitate the conference by running and planning the operations of each committee.

Over 30 high schools are joining the conference, with over 300 high school students. Last year, YUNMUN was held via Zoom due to COVID. The conference is usually held in February, but it was pushed off to March in hopes that it could be in person. 75% of delegates registered to come to the conference agreed to be in person, which was the final push that allowed it to happen. This year's conference is smaller than previous years; in previous years the conference attracted over

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## Belz Family Gives \$20 Million Gift To Renovate, Rename Furst Hall

By CHAIM BOOK

A \$20 million gift by the Belz family will be dedicated to the renovation and rededication of Furst Hall on Wilf Campus, Yeshiva University announced on Monday, Jan. 31. The academic building will be renamed the "Belz Building."

*"I am deeply grateful for our personal friendship and for this extraordinary gift which will profoundly elevate and enhance the YU experience for our students, faculty and entire community."*

—  
President Ari Berman

The renovation will focus on updating all classrooms and administrative spaces as well as the interior and exterior of the building. The donation includes a private collection of Judaica and artwork valued at \$6 million, which will be put on permanent



The building was named Sol and Hilda Furst Hall in 1962.

MICAH PAVA

display on the first floor of the new building in what will be known as the Belz Collections and Galleries.

A permanent memorial to Sol and Hilda Furst, the building's previous namesake, will be established in the lobby "with the full support of the Sol and Hilda Furst Foundation," the press release noted. In October 1962, the building was designated as the Sol and Hilda Furst Hall after the couple gave \$1 million to the university's expansion program at the time.

The Belz family's gift provides a significant boost for "Rise Up: The Campaign for 613," YU's recently announced campaign that will "fund scholarships, facilities and faculty to help move Yeshiva University into its next great era." According to its website, the Rise Up campaign has already raised over \$256 million.

"Their lifelong dedication to educating our students, the leaders of tomorrow, reflects the multigenerational partnership between the Belz family and Yeshiva University," President Ari Berman said in the press release. "I am deeply grateful for our personal friendship and for this extraordinary gift which will profoundly elevate and enhance the YU experience for our students, faculty and entire community."

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## YU's Langfan Oratory Competition Blurs the Line Between Law and Politics — That's Dangerous

By DANIEL MELOOL

YU has announced the return of the Langfan Family Constitutional Oratory Competition, an annual oratory competition that allows undergraduate students to present a “short uninterrupted speech on a constitutional topic.” Taking part in this competition allows aspiring attorneys to practice and hone some of the skills they will need when they practice law. However, over the past few years, the competition has strayed from its intended purpose of being a place to analyze complex constitutional questions. Instead, the questions presented have become more political, and this year's topic — stand-your-ground laws — is no exception.

On its face, this appears to be an innocuous shift in the competition's focus. But the Langfan Oratory Competition's jump from legal to political represents a growing trend of the line between the two being blurred: What's legal is seen as what's political, and what's political is seen as what's legal. Any past distinction between the two is naught, and the competition's change in questions shows this.

Let me be clear about what I mean when I say that the questions are more political than legal. A political question is a question that the courts cannot adjudicate, for the nature of the question is outside the law. If I am a smoker and I do not like my city's no-smoking ordinance, I can petition the city to remove it. But if I go to a court to ask that the ordinance be struck down, the court will laugh at me and not take the case because smoking laws are a political question. They are neither required nor prohibited by law from being enacted.

A legal issue is quite different. For an issue to be considered legal, it must be governed by federal, state or constitutional law, thus being within the jurisdiction of the courts. For example, A steals money from B; B then files a lawsuit against A for damages; of course, the court rules in favor of B because

embezzlement is a crime. Now, this laughably obvious example might seem too simplistic, so let us discuss a more complex one. In *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the Supreme Court held that the Second Amendment right to “keep and bear arms” protects an individual right to own guns instead of just the possession of firearms in connection with militia service. However, the Court also noted that the right to own firearms “is not unlimited.” Well, where is the limit? Does the Second Amendment include the right to own a rocket launcher? This is a legal question that the courts will have to resolve in drawing the line where the right to bear arms ends.

*Though the Langfan competition was once an opportunity to test legal knowledge and advance oral argument skills, it has now devolved into a place for mere policy discussions.*

The phrasing of this year's question — “Should stand-your-ground laws be allowed in the United States?” — clearly indicates a political question. Legal questions never ponder whether a proposition ought to happen. They only ask if the proposition is allowed to happen. What the law ought to be is resolved by the political process, not the courts. Ironically, the details for the event state that this oratory is “not an invitation for an airing of political views.” This sentence is laughable. What answers should one expect from this question other than political views? On a topic as controversial as stand-your-ground laws, one can rest assured that the

contestants will display their deepest political convictions.

If the Langfan competition was a policy forum, such a question would be an excellent one to dissect. But, according to the competition's description, the oratory is supposed to be about a “constitutional topic.” The current topic is not a legal question, and, therefore, a fortiori not a constitutional topic. Indeed, stand-your-ground laws have nothing to do with the constitution as the issue is dealt with on the state level.

Respect for the rule of law is essential for a functioning society. We must be able to distinguish between which issues belong in the political process and which in the legal process. Ignoring any distinctions between the two leads to less confidence in our judiciary to properly adjudicate cases and less trust that our government officials are acting in the best interest of our country.

Policy discussions and legal arguments are very different. Although both require public speaking skills, the former are more subjective and allow people to argue what the law ought to be. Typically, the positions put forth are based on a person's underlying values. Such values determine what a person considers to be the best policy. Matters of law require one to assess an issue based on certain axioms regardless of their desirability. Legal arguments also require knowledge of certain canons that guide how to evaluate the given scenario. In essence, legal questions require one to argue within a given framework, while policy discussions are much more open-ended.

Now, if this was the first time the competition asked a political question, that would be less concerning. However, this has been a trend over the past few times the competition was held. In 2020, the question was: “Should President Trump be impeached?” Like this year's question, impeachment is entirely a political question. The process is carried out by Congress, a political branch of our government.

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## THE COMMENTATOR

2021-2022

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*For 87 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

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

*We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.*

Read more at [yucommentator.org](http://yucommentator.org)



# 1 Picture Day

Seniors: get your punim etched into the YU archives for eternity



# 2 Torah u'TikTok

President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman adds "Viral TikToker" to list of achievements. His resume is starting to look like a CVS receipt



# 3 NYT Buys Wordle for Millions

Tbh not the best procrastination device, but Mazel Tov regardless



# 4 Seforim Sale Returns

Everybody's favorite coed get-together is back



# 5 Super Bowl Sunday

I'm personally hyped to do a literary analysis of whatever goes down in this halftime show



# 6 New York Lifts Mask Mandate

YC faculty members sign letter of protest to Governor Hochul



# 7 Jamaica, They Have a Bobsled Team

90s kids rejoice

# 7 UP by Raphael Alcabes NMODL

## Whoopi Goldberg Canceled

BC forces the talk show host to change her name back to Johnson

## Spotify Faces Backlash for Hosting Joe Rogan

Crosby, Stills and Nash join Neil Young in removing their musical catalog from the platform. If my mom knew how to use Spotify she'd be very upset right now

## Razzlekhan Jailed

Assault allegations? Gang relations? Nope—the "World's Worst Rapper" has been arrested for laundering billions in Bitcoin

## Winter Olympics Kick Off in Beijing

Yet nobody's talking about it... kinda like the Uyghur genocide ~\\_(:)\_/

## BDE Milltown Mel

New Jersey's leading meteorologist dies just before annual ceremony

## Tinder Swindler

Banned from the platform for fraud, the Israeli conman has taken his talents to YUConnects

## Furst Hall to be Renovated and Renamed

Every legend must come to an end



# 1



# 2



# 3



# 4



# 5



# 6



# 7

EDITORIAL  
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Additionally, there is no place for the courts in the impeachment process, as a unanimous Supreme Court declared the matter outside the realm of the judiciary in *Nixon v. United States*. Once again, the question of President Trump's impeachment is an important one for the political process, but it has no place being asked in a constitutional oratory.

In 2018, the question concerned gerrymandering and if the judiciary should "Review the Constitutionality of Gerrymandering Schemes Adopted on Allegedly Political Grounds[.]" As I mentioned earlier, legal questions do not ask what ought to be, they only ask what is allowed to be. While gerrymandering is a real problem that weakens citizens' ability to have a meaningful voice in Congress, the issue has long been recognized as a political issue. To be fair, there is an exception to this rule: race. The Supreme Court has held that gerrymandering conducted on racial lines is unconstitutional. However, race is not the concern in the question posed – partisanship is. To that extent, gerrymandering is a political question, which, even if one believes the courts ought to get involved, is to be resolved in the political process.

When one becomes so vested in a particular cause, they can forget the proper place and manner in which that cause should be pursued. Blurring the lines between what is legal and what is political is a perfect example of distorting the proper route to affect change. Such a distortion is not only improper – it is dangerous. If people are made to believe that their best efforts for change lay in one channel when they should focus their ire elsewhere, the society we live in will break down. After all, they will find no success, for their petitions are misguided, and if the system is irreparable – as they are made to believe – then it must be torn down to oblivion.

Though the Langfan competition was once an opportunity to test legal knowledge and advance oral argument skills, it has now devolved into a place for mere policy discussions. Of course, there is nothing wrong with a policy discussion, but it is no substitute for a legal forum. Students who are pursuing law are being deprived of an opportunity to partake in a constitutional forum that will prepare them for their legal careers. That being said, if you are interested in partaking in this oratory in hopes of winning the cash prize, by all means, enter the competition. But also be honest enough to understand the importance of distinguishing a legal question from a political question. Your university has failed to do so.

# YU Launches New Siyum Initiative for Beren and Wilf Students

By YONATAN KURZ

Yeshiva University is launching a new initiative for male and female undergraduate students to commit to and complete their own Torah learning projects, which will be celebrated during the annual May commencement ceremony.

"This year, we have a unique opportunity to start a new tradition in Yeshiva," Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, dean of the Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) program and overseer of the program for Wilf Campus, told The Commentator. "We will be celebrating not only the academic accomplishments of our *talmidim* at graduation, but also their learning accomplishments in a major way."

For personal *siyumim* and other learning accomplishments, students have the ability to commit and sign up to learn anything through the program's website, which will send monthly reminders to help complete their goals, such as any amount of *dafim* or *perakim* of Gemara, *shenayim mikra* with Rashi, Tanach, or an English *sefer*, among other options.

This new program will be celebrated in addition to the collective *siyum* by the entire university, which will take place over the week of commencement. YU's communal *siyumim* will consist of *shas Bavli*, *shas mishnayos*, and Tanach, with individuals selecting to learn *perek* of Tanach, a *masechta* of Mishnah, or a *daf* of Gemara that collectively complete the project.

"We'd like this to be a community-wide siyum; just as graduation is a celebration of one's academic accomplishments over their time in university, so too, the Torah learned throughout one's time in YU is a major part of their college experience and is something major that should be reflected

upon and celebrated at graduation," said Associate Dean of Torah Studies Shoshana Schechter, noting that this was President Ari Berman's initiative. Schechter is overseeing the program on Beren Campus.

"Traditionally, commencement has been about academic accomplishments, celebrating graduates but not necessarily always highlighting their accomplishments in learning," Rabbi Kalinsky explained. "This isn't to change the pomp and circumstance of the academic aspects of graduation, but to add a

greater *ruchani* element and 'up our game,' adding the spiritual element."

Rabbi Kalinsky said that he felt this new initiative was a necessary complement to the communal *siyumim*. "You can always have a communal *siyum*, but it's not always inclusive, and it doesn't necessarily change us as people or grow," he explained. "To me, the most exciting part is the personal goals which could be any *limmud* or even a personal goal that a person may be working on."

Student leaders are excited about this

program. "As so much of the YU experience is founded in academic and religious growth specifically in group/classroom settings, it's exciting to see an opportunity for students that allows them to make strides as an individual, with support from YU at the same time," commented Torah Activities Council President Suzanne Rabinovich (SSSB '22). "To come together as a community all growing as individuals, together, is something very special that I can't wait for the student body to take advantage of."

Yoni Laub (YC '22), president of Student Organization of Yeshiva, felt similarly. "It's exciting to see a special emphasis on growth in Torah learning become a part of YU graduation, as religious growth is part and parcel to the YU experience," he said.

Rabbi Kalinsky spoke about the importance of these Torah learning goals in a Sichas Mussar earlier this month in the Glueck Beit Midrash on Wilf Campus. "To me, the most exciting part is the personal goals, which can be any *limmud*, or even a personal goal that a person may be working on, such as not checking their phone during davening, starting a *nach yomi* program, or committing to learn a set amount of time before Shacharis every morning," he shared. "Part of the goal of this initiative is about encouraging *talmidim* to 'set goals in their learning' in order to assist our *talmidim* to be in the habit of setting goals so that it will *im yirtzah Hashem* continue after they graduate."

He added, "We want the *talmidim* to not only have a connection and learn a great deal with their *rebbeim* and *mashgichim*, while on campus, but also to establish a foundation of life-long learning."

The siyumim will be celebrated during the commencement ceremony in May.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## YUNMUN 2022

Continued from Front Page

40 schools with over 400 students. Deposits paid by schools that are no longer attending will be rolled over to next year.

Dena Feigenbaum, a staff member of the YU admissions office who is actively involved in facilitating YUNMUN every year, outlined the COVID guidelines in an email sent to YUNMUN chaperones and advisors. She wrote that all participants, delegates and advisors are required to have at least two COVID-19 vaccines and must submit proof upon registering. Boosters are recommended but not required. All participants will also be required to have a negative PCR test within 48 hours of arrival at the conference. Additionally, no one is allowed to leave the hotel once they have arrived unless they leave due to sickness. If a student gets sick while at the conference, it is at the discretion of their school to either pay for a private hotel room until the student can travel home or to provide transportation home for the student. Students who test positive will not be refunded their registration fee.

"The administration has been doing everything it can to try to make the conference the best and safest conference it can be," shared YUNMUN Co-Secretary General Charlie Kramer (YC '22). "Once we got the go-ahead from the YU Covid team, as well as the majority of high schools, we made the decision to give our high school delegates the in-person conference they so deserve."

Leeba Sullivan (SCW '22), the other co-secretary general, agreed. "I think I can speak on behalf of all of the staff for this year's conference that we are extremely excited for the conference this year to be in person," she told The Commentator. "Especially

given the past two years, we are so grateful to have this opportunity being able to gather together and facilitate a conversation for high school students to discuss and debate some of the real issues our world is currently facing, such as the Covid-19 vaccine distribution, the Uighur Crisis and the Taliban takeover just to name a few."

*"Once we got the go-ahead from the YU Covid team, as well as the majority of high schools, we made the decision to give our high school delegates the in-person conference they so deserve."*

YUNMUN Co-Secretary General Charlie Kramer (YC '22)

The new March date for the conference presents conflicts with midterms for some undergraduates partaking in YUNMUN. YU students were required to submit the CRNs for any classes that have midterms they will miss, and they are awaiting further instructions.

"While we needed to postpone the conference from its original date in February, we knew that we were not going to find any other 'perfect' date for the conference," said Kramer. "We are working diligently with students who have potential conflicts, as well as administrators and professors, to ensure that everyone finds a solution that works for them. In our new world remade by Covid-19, both students and professors are doing their best to be understanding and accommodating, and we are very grateful for that."

Students were excited about the announcement that YUNMUN will be taking

place in person. "One of the beautiful and most amazing aspects of YUNMUN is bringing high schoolers from all around North America to not only participate in the wonderful sessions but to get to know each other and make new friends as well," said Head of YUNMUN Media Center Ayelet Marder (SCW '22). "An in person event allows for that true

social experience."

Kramer and Sullivan expressed their gratitude to those who enabled YUNMUN to happen this year. "We are very grateful for all the time, dedication and flexibility the YU students and admission office have put into this conference, especially given all the uncertainty throughout the planning process," said Sullivan.

"Leeba and I would like to thank Dena Feigenbaum from the admissions department, as well as Menachem Lewin from operations, who do so much to make YUNMUN a reality," said Kramer. "We also want to give a shout-out to our amazing staff, who help mold the conference into the amazing experience that we all know it to be. See you at YUNMUN XXXII!!!!!"

## BELZ DONATION

Continued from Front Page

The Belz family, founders of the Belz Museum of Asian & Judaic Art in Downtown Memphis, is famous for their art and philanthropy in their hometown Memphis and throughout the Jewish community. A longstanding supporter of YU, Philip Belz established the Belz School of Jewish Music in 1984 and sat on YU's Board of Trustees. His son Jack, a trustee emeritus on YU's board since 1986 and member of the Sy Syms School of Business Board of Overseers, has now furthered his father's philanthropic legacy.

At the conclusion of the press release, Jack Belz shared, "We have always recognized and admired Yeshiva University and its national and international reputation as the flagship Jewish university that provides a remarkable multifaceted education for its men and women students in their pursuit of excellence in both Jewish education and general education as they pursue such varied careers as rabbinics, law, medicine, psychology, science, finance and other areas."

Faculty members look forward to the advanced workplace. "I am thrilled that what is now Furst Hall will be substantially modernized to provide high quality classrooms, offices and other spaces to enhance our educational environment," said Karen Bacon, dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "The Belz Family gift of their Judaica collection represents a true treasure."

## Ryan Turell Breaks YU's All-Time Basketball Scoring Record

By SAMMY INTRATOR

This article was published online on Feb. 9.

Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) broke the Macs' all-time scoring record in an 82-66 win against the United States Merchant Marine Academy at the Max Stern Athletic Center on Feb. 1.

*“What Ryan has accomplished in a short time is incredible and a testament to the hours of hard work he puts into becoming better every day.”*

Macs Coach Elliot Steinmetz

Turell's 31 points put his career point total at 1,882 through 79 career games played, despite his junior year being shortened to only 7 games due to COVID restrictions. Turell passed Yossy Gev's — a 2002 YU graduate — record of 1,871 points, after he made a three-point shot off an assist from graduate student Ethan Lasko, just under four minutes into the second half. Turell passed Gev who became the all-time scorer after passing Ayal Hod in the 2001-02 season.

“Mazel tov for breaking the record ... you're going to remember this for the rest of your life,” Gev said in a short video posted

on the Yeshiva Athletics Instagram account after the game. “You should be proud of yourself ... I hope you guys are gonna go all the way.” With the Feb. 1 win, the Macs punched their ticket to the Skyline Conference Championship Tournament.

On Nov. 28, Turell broke the Macs single game scoring record with 51 points against Manhattanville College in the Macs' eighth win of the season. Turell surpassed 1966 graduate Sheldon Rokach's record of 48 points against Queens College in December 1964.

Coach Elliot Steinmetz, who has coached Turell during his four years on the Macs and recruited him out of Valley Torah in Los Angeles in 2018, said, “What Ryan has accomplished in a short time is incredible and a testament to the hours of hard work he puts into becoming better every day. Couldn't be prouder to be a witness.”

Turell has been the Macs' lead scorer through the last few seasons and helped the team reach a 50-game win streak, which was broken in a game against the Illinois-Wesleyan Titans, the then-ranked No. 4 team, on Dec. 30.

The Macs beat Sarah Lawrence College 96-45 in their next game on Feb. 3 and then picked up their second loss of the season to Farmingdale State College 75-79 on Feb. 5.

The Macs are 17-2 this season and are ranked No. 15 in DIII basketball, down from their No. 1 ranking in December, and their No. 6 ranking last week.



Ryan Turell put his career point total at 1,882 through 79 games.

MACS LIVE/ JOE BEDNARSH

## After Phone Call Threat Made to YU, NYPD Concludes Campus Is Safe

By SHLOMIT EBBIN AND  
SRULI FRUCHTER

After a phone call threat was made against Wilf Campus on Monday, Jan. 31, the New York Police Department (NYPD) investigated the matter and concluded that there was no danger. It is currently unclear if the threat was antisemitic in nature.

Students were notified of heightened police activity on Wilf Campus at 8:40 a.m. on Jan. 31 via a YU update. The update reported that the NYPD was investigating “a unsubstantiated phone call threat.” Students were advised to “stay indoors, if possible, or use extra caution if outside” and to report any suspicious activity to security. At 9:52 a.m., students were updated that YU received the “ALL CLEAR” from the NYPD.

Earlier today, six historically Black colleges and universities received bomb threats. Some of the institutions received the all-clear from law enforcement, while others closed for the remainder of the day.

YU is distinguished as an essentially Jewish university, and this incident, while still unclear as to the perpetrator's motivation, comes at a time when antisemitism is rising across the U.S.

A report by the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency found that 2021 was the worst year for antisemitism in the past decade, the Times of Israel reported. Two weeks ago on Shabbat, Jan. 15, a gunman held four people hostage in a Texas shul for 11 hours in what the FBI director called an act of antisemitism.

In the past few years, YU itself has faced different incidents involving antisemitism. In October 2018, the NYPD investigated swastikas being scrawled and etched on

different YU-owned buildings in Washington Heights. One year later, before the fall semester began in 2019, The Commentator reported that a neo-Nazi forum had posted hundreds of photos of YU students, staff and alumni. The following spring, antisemitic trolls “Zoombombed” President Ari Berman's Zoom call with the YU community.

*YU is distinguished as an essentially Jewish university, and this incident, while still unclear as to the perpetrator's motivation, comes at a time when antisemitism is rising across the U.S.*

Police activity had begun before 8 a.m., with numerous police cars outside YU's Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) high school and Morgenstern Residence Hall. Rabbi Joshua Kahn, head of school at MTA, emailed students and parents regarding the security updates. Similar to the message from YU's Security Department, he urged students to report anything suspicious and stay indoors until the investigation was completed; he also emailed out once the NYPD declared campus “all clear.”

As of publication, the university has not released any statements aside from the security updates, and the YU Security Department did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries. The NYPD was contacted just before publication and did not yet respond.



Students were notified of heightened police activity on Wilf Campus at 8:40 a.m.

THE COMMENTATOR



**CLASS OF 2022**

## UNDERGRADUATE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY CHECKLIST

Graduating This Year? Mazel Tov!

Be sure to complete all the items below to participate in your Commencement Ceremony.

### **STEP 1**

Consult with your academic advisor or program director to be sure that all of your graduation requirements have been met.

Visit [yu.edu/academic-advising](https://yu.edu/academic-advising) to schedule.

### **STEP 2**

Degrees are awarded in September, January and May. Contact your campus Registrar to determine if you are eligible to attend Commencement.

Visit [yu.edu/registrar/graduation](https://yu.edu/registrar/graduation) for additional information.

### **STEP 3**

Apply for Graduation by your degree's deadline:

**February 15th**  
(May Degrees)

**March 1st**  
(September Degrees)

The Application for Graduation—Undergraduate Degree can be found here: [yu.edu/registrar/forms](https://yu.edu/registrar/forms)

**NOTE:** If you miss this deadline your name will not be included in the Commencement Program.

*Be sure to RSVP on the application to Commencement and give your accurate height and weight so your gown fits just right!*

### **STEP 4**

Pay your graduation/diploma fee of \$150 to the Office of Student Finance.

### **STEP 5**

Cap and Gown Distribution Events will be held on each campus in early May.

Come with friends; have your picture taken in the photo booth to be featured at Commencement!

*If you cannot pick up your attire at a distribution event you may pick it up from the Office of Student Life starting the day after the event.*

*No attire will be distributed at Commencement.*

### **STEP 6**

Each graduate will receive **6 guest tickets** when picking up their cap and gown.

If you would like to request additional tickets, please fill out the request form by visiting [yu.edu/commencement](https://yu.edu/commencement)

### **QUESTIONS?**

Visit [yu.edu/commencement](https://yu.edu/commencement) for updates closer to the ceremony, or email [commencement@yu.edu](mailto:commencement@yu.edu)

**WE ARE EXCITED  
TO CELEBRATE  
WITH YOU!**

**YU.EDU/COMMENCEMENT**

# Prof. Nechama Price Wants To Create The Next Generation of Women Scholars and Torah Educators

By RIVKA BENNUN

Stern College for Women is blessed with a plethora of brilliant women Torah scholars who teach and inspire their students every day. Among them, Prof. Nechama Price stands out as not only a Senior Judaic Studies and Bible Lecturer, but also as the director of the Graduate Program for Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) and a *yoetzet halacha* serving the communities of Englewood, Tenafly, Livingston, West Orange and Long Branch, NJ. She lives in Bergenfield with her husband and four children.

Price has always loved to learn Torah. Her exposure to *Talmud Torah* up until seminary was largely in the worlds of Tanach and *Torah She Baal Peh*. She grew up in Teaneck, NJ, graduated from Bruria High School and then attended Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalym (MMY) in Israel for two years. Price had always thought her career lay in teaching Tanach to high schoolers, but while in MMY, she was introduced to Gemara study for the first time, and realized that she really

liked it and that she “was so behind.” She then attended Stern for her bachelor’s degree.

When she completed her bachelor’s in Judaic studies, Price realized she needed to sit and learn for a while and joined GPATS, which had only opened the year before — she considers this to have been “a gift from God.” GPATS was a new program, and with that came the hesitations of doing something unprecedented. “It’s always hard to do something that’s new; that’s always a difficulty of being in the first/second year of these types of programs,” Price commented. “But I believe so strongly in women and *Talmud Torah* and the value of *Talmud Torah*, so it was never a hesitation for me to do GPATS.”

There was no doubt that Price would continue to learn after college. “It’s not like I was applying to jobs,” she said. “I was going to GPATS; it was no question.” She got married during her second year of GPATS and then stayed for an additional year, even though it was only a two-year program.

Price was unsure what to do after GPATS. “The third year, I did apply for a few jobs and I didn’t want any of those

jobs,” she said. “My husband turned to me and was like, ‘you just want to stay, so stay,’ and thank God he was so supportive.”

Staying for the third year ultimately led Price to her career. Upon graduation from GPATS in 2003, she was offered to teach a *mechina* course, a *niddah* course and to sit in the Beit Midrash for 20 hours a week and learn with different undergraduate students.

By her second semester as a teacher, she added her “Introduction to Exegesis course,” which she affectionately calls “Ambiguities,” as its main goal is to solve various ambiguities found in Biblical text. While she loves all of her courses, Ambiguities is her favorite because “my number one passion, other than of course my family, is Tanach.” She explained that she loves “the ability to see the ambiguity within the language, within the characters, the complexity within all of them, and to allow people to view stories and view people in different ways that they’ve never seen before.” Additionally, Price loves her Ambiguities course because she feels it enables her students to teach Torah in the future using the skills they gain from the course.

As she began her teaching career at Stern, Price also went on to complete two master’s degrees in Jewish Education and Bible at Azrieli and Revel, respectively. By the time her second child was born, she became a full-time professor at Stern, and is currently pursuing her doctorate at Azrieli. Price now teaches two *niddah* courses, two marriage courses, and four Tanach courses. She is also the only female lecturer on the Judaic Studies advanced faculty. Eventually, Price accepted the position of director of GPATS because the program changed her life, and she feels that it can push women to higher levels of learning and teaching — she believes very strongly in the need for women scholars to teach Torah.

Price joined the first class of *yoatzot halacha* in the United States ten years ago and has served as a *yoetzet* for the past eight years. Before joining the program, she made sure to check that it was permitted with her *poskim*, among them Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, and also to “check with my life—I had three children at that point.” She feels that she has always had a strong support system from her family, husband, and *poskim*, and this

did not stop when she pursued her *yoetzet* certification. “It is an honor on a daily basis to be a *yoetzet halacha*, to be able to have the privilege to answer and help women with their *shailas*,” she said.

Price sees great importance in teaching *hilchot niddah* in a formal classroom setting. She feels that “if you don’t learn it inside and don’t learn it well, it is very hard to keep correctly in the future.” Her aim is to help women navigate *hilchot niddah* in a healthy way.

In addition to teaching and community work, Price published her first book in 2020, titled “Tribal Blueprints: Twelve Brothers and the Destiny of Israel.” She had written a course for Stern which explored the twelve *shevatim* (tribes) in a revolutionary way. She explained how she noticed that most of the time, the *shevatim* are studied as one unit, but that she has never seen anyone explore each *shevet* as an individual entity.

Generally, Price loves to delve into the numerous personalities of people in Tanach. Her course on the *shevatim* explored the characteristics of each *shevet* individually by grouping together all the stories related to that *shevet*. She explained that the goal is “trying to take characters that we all think we know and breaking down their stories to see the complexity of each of their stories.” Price then explained that one day, she was giving over a shiur at a community event when Koren publisher Matthew Miller walked up to her and said, “You have a book in you.” She chose to use her *shevatim* course as content, and thus her book came about.

Price never left YU — she went straight from being a student at Stern to teaching; this is her 18th year at Stern. She loves everything about YU, especially the relationships she is able to build with her students: “I think a fundamental part of teaching Torah is the relationships you create with your students,” she said. “I love my students, I love their passion, their desire and excitement to learn, and I love their questions.” For Price, YU is a second home.

Price emphasizes to her GPATS students the importance of sitting and immersing oneself in Talmud Torah for a few years before beginning to teach. She recognizes that “in the world of scholar-in-residences and *shiurim*, there’s a very small list of women who go around from our world of Yeshiva University,” and she hopes that GPATS will produce more women who can do so. She wants more women to understand that “Torah can change your life, that it is worthwhile to spend time learning Torah.” She stresses the importance of having a space for women who want to sit and learn for a long period of time.

The main message Price wants to impart to her students and children through all of the work that she does both in and out of YU is that “*Talmud Torah* is for us women, too. *Talmud Torah* is a beautiful way to connect to God, to connect to spirituality, and to connect to your religiosity.” She believes it is crucial to convey the message that “women who love Torah and want to learn Torah — we are doing it because we love Torah and we want to learn Torah,” she explained. “Not agendas, not other reasons — we learn and teach Torah because we love Torah.”

“My goal as a teacher is not just to give over Torah,” Price concluded. “My goal as a teacher — and I believe this with every core of myself — is to gain relationships with my students, to help my students and to create the next generation of women scholars and Torah educators.”



Prof. Nechama Price

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## ‘The Privilege of a Lifetime’: Dr. Erica Brown Has Big Plans for the Sacks-Herenstein Center

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

Over the summer, Dr. Erica Brown was invited by President Ari Berman to direct the Sacks-Herenstein Center. The Sacks Center was founded in Oct. 2021 to spread Rabbi Sacks’ teachings and values through education and opportunities including seminars, literary initiatives, and academic courses. Rabbi Sacks, who passed away in 2020, embodied YU’s mission, leaving a legacy of Jewish education and empowerment. The new center, powered by his teachings, will be dedicated to both transmitting values and educating next generations’ leaders,” stated President Berman.



Dr. Erica Brown THE JEWISH LINK

“Losing my teacher, Rabbi Sacks, was very painful, and this center seemed to be the perfect opportunity to honor him and his teachings and make sure that they live on at Yeshiva. It’s the privilege of a lifetime,” said Brown. However, the privilege of having Brown lead a YU institute so crucial to the future of Jewish education and prosperity is all ours. This became apparent to me upon asking Brown some questions about herself and her background.

*“Losing my teacher, Rabbi Sacks, was very painful, and this Center seemed to be the perfect opportunity to honor him and his teachings and make sure that they live on at Yeshiva.”*

Sacks-Herenstein Center Director Dr. Erica Brown

Brown has an impressive background in academia and education. She previously served as the director of The Mayberg Center for Jewish Education and Leadership and was an associate professor of curriculum and pedagogy at George Washington University. She also served as a scholar-in-residence and as a community scholar in multiple communities in America. An alumnus of Yeshiva University herself, she went on to receive degrees from the University of London, Harvard University and Baltimore Hebrew University, and received many awards and fellowships for her work in education. “I only

have three skill sets: I teach, I write and I read,” she told me. “YU is a great space to use those skills and develop them. More than a teacher, I am always a student and am already learning so much being here. And it’s only been a month.”

Brown is excited to have joined the YU staff: “I love teaching and am thrilled to work with students, get to know the faculty, create leadership cohort groups and watch people grow to reach their potential.” She will be

non-gendered terms. Often I’m asked in interviews and panels to reflect exclusively on being a female when what I want to do is think out-loud about Jewish texts, Jewish ideas and Jewish leadership. When you have something serious to say and to contribute, people listen and respond, no matter your genetic makeup. I find that focus tends generally to diminish women’s voices rather than enhance them.”

These discussions and values are crucial in the changing field of higher education. Today, universities can be an “ideologically hazardous place,” says Brown, becoming a “minefield of identity politics that can be very hard to negotiate and can be an enormous distraction to learning.” While important, this tends to “eclipse the central role of the university as a place for the dissemination and production of ideas in a spirit of curiosity and exploration.” She hopes that students appreciate the safe, nurturing environment at YU to pursue their education and explore new ideas.

We look forward to benefiting from Brown’s expertise as she takes on her new role. The community as a whole is sure to grow from her leadership and help in promoting our core values. Thanks to Brown and the Sacks Center, we can ensure Rabbi Sacks’ legacy lives on at YU.

## We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

### Excitement at YU

By ETHAN SCHUMAN

Every semester at Yeshiva University, there is a wide range of clubs, events and activities on campus that students are excited to partake in and particularly anticipate. These events and activities could range from a fun shabbaton on campus to a trip with one’s favorite club. In an effort to analyze which activities excited students the most, The Commentator reached out to several students, asking them what clubs, events and activities on campus excited them the most.

*“I want to join many clubs and go to as many events as possible. I hope to make the most of my time on campus while I am here, and that involves going to everything from basketball games to the baking club.”*

Avigayl Zucker (SCW '24)

**Benny Klein (YC '24)**  
Psychology

“I am really looking forward to Model UN. I hope the delay allows the in-person

aspect to take place. It is truly a fun time to be creative, collaborative, and goofy (at least for me). I also have a sick committee squad—shoutout to Ellie Burger and Josh Hirt!

“I am currently on the board of SASA: Students Against Sexual Assault. I think club events are usually great. I do hope to see a lot of free food events — that’s a classic draw for people. Aside from SASA events, I hope to go to the Strategy Board Game Society events, Soccer Intramurals, MCU club and Israel club events.”

**Avigayl Zucker (SCW '24)**  
Political Science

“Events pertaining to other clubs are of high interest to me. The play, Stomp Out The Stigma, and comedy nights are all things I hope to come to and watch. In Stern, there are *roshei yeshiva shiurim*, and I am looking forward to being able to go to a few of those.

“I want to join many clubs and go to as many events as possible. I hope to make the most of my time on campus while I am here, and that involves going to everything from basketball games to the baking club. In terms of joining, I am always down for another WhatsApp chat and to get more involved.”

**Yaacov Strickon (YC '25)**  
Physics

“While there are many events I am looking forward to this coming semester, I am

most excited for the Bronx Zoo trip from the Zoology Club.

“I plan on joining many clubs this semester and going forward during my time at YU. In particular, I hope to join the environmental club, engineering club, JAC, and the Zoology club.”

**Oze Botach (YC '24)**  
Computer Science

“Although I want to be a part of as many

clubs and events as possible while I spend my time here at YU, there are a few events I am particularly excited for. I am highly looking forward to the club events, JSS events, the Hackathon, and most importantly the Shabbatons.

“Some of the clubs I am hoping to join this semester include, DevelopYU, Engineering club, HackerRank Club, and also any other clubs that are not academically oriented so I can relax!”



Wilf Campus



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

# The Opening of Furst Hall

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

*Editor's Note: Yeshiva University has recently announced the renaming of Furst Hall to the Belz Building. Below is a pair of 1962 Commentator articles detailing the opening ceremony of Furst Hall, which was dedicated by Sol and Hilda Furst.*

## (November 1, 1962; Volume 56, Issue 2) — Furst Gives Million To Yeshiva U. Drive

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Yeshiva's Blueprint for the Sixties development program got another substantial boost toward its thirty million dollar goal Oct. 19, upon receipt of a million dollar gift from Mr. Sol Furst. This is the fourth million-dollar gift donated to the development program since it was launched in the spring of last year.

Mr. First, in presenting the gift, said: "I am delighted to contribute to the advancement of a cause which is uppermost in my mind — religion education. Only through an intensive Jewish education can we hope to train a future generation loyal to the precepts of our noble heritage and at the same time richly endowed to serve this wonderful country as loyal citizens. For me, Yeshiva University has always exemplified the highest ideals of Judaism and democracy, the ideals I cherish most."

Acknowledging the gift, Dr. Belkin stated that Mr. Furst was helping Yeshiva meet a national need by building now to meet the needs of the future. He added: "We are equally encouraged by the fact that Jewish laymen in particular are developing an increasing awareness of the needs of Jewish education. As a religious Jew, Mr. Furst understands this well and is acting with resourcefulness and generosity in a manner we hope will set an example for others to emulate."

Dr. Belkin announced that the University's new three million dollar classroom and administration building will be named Sol and Hilda Furst Hall in recognition of their leadership and generosity.

Mr. Furst, who is the founder and former president and board-chairman of the Circle Wire and Cable Corporation, came to the United States from Czechoslovakia in 1908, at the age of fifteen. He immediately started attending high school classes at night, and at the age of eighteen, with his two cousins, opened a small electrical supply store on Avenue A in New York City. From this small beginning, Mr Furst was able to found in 1920 the Circle Wire and Cable Co., which became one of the largest manufacturers of electrical wire in the world. He served as president and chairman of the board from the firm's founding until its sale in 1955 to Circo de Pasco Corporation. Mr. Furst is now engaged in private investments.

## (November 1, 1962; Volume 56, Issue 2) — New Building Is Dedicated; Javitz Addresses Conclave

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Yeshiva University dedicated its new \$3 million, five-story classroom and administration building Sunday afternoon as the Sol and Hilda Furst Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Furst gave \$1 million toward the \$30 million expansion program two weeks ago.

Sunday's ceremonies began with tours of the new building, followed by a luncheon in the Harry and Sara Silver Lecture Hall of the new building. After being greeted by various University representatives, fifty-three Master Builders, each of whom contributed \$18,000 or more to the expansion program, received plaques for "exemplary service to higher education and to the Jewish community."

The public portion of the ceremony began on Danciger Campus at 2:30 P.M. with the singing of the national anthem and the Hatikvah by Cantor Moshe Koussevitsky. He was accompanied by Dr. Karl Adler, conducting the University Philharmonic Ensemble. Rabbi Arthur Schnieder of Congregation Zichron Ephraim delivered the invocation.

Chairman of the Development Committee Louis J. Glickman, extended greetings and Myron A. Minskoff, chairman of the Dedication Day and prominent New York builder, praised the development of the Jewish community, exemplified by Yeshiva's

expansion.

Joseph Rappoport '63, president of the Yeshiva College Student Council, represented the student body in thanking those who have contributed to the expansion of Yeshiva University from its earliest days as Yeshiva Eitz Chaim, founded in 1886.

The next speaker was Mrs. Anita Rothman, president of the Yeshiva University Women's Organization, who extended greetings from her organization. Then Rabbi Herschel Schacter, president of the Rabbinic Alumni of Yeshiva, cited the custom of reciting the "shehecheyanu" at the dedication of a new building and showed that the blessing has triple significance. First, it is recited in thanks for sustaining us physically to this day. Second, it is recited in thanks for sustaining us spiritually to this day. Third, it is recited in thanks for this dedication as a symbol for future success.

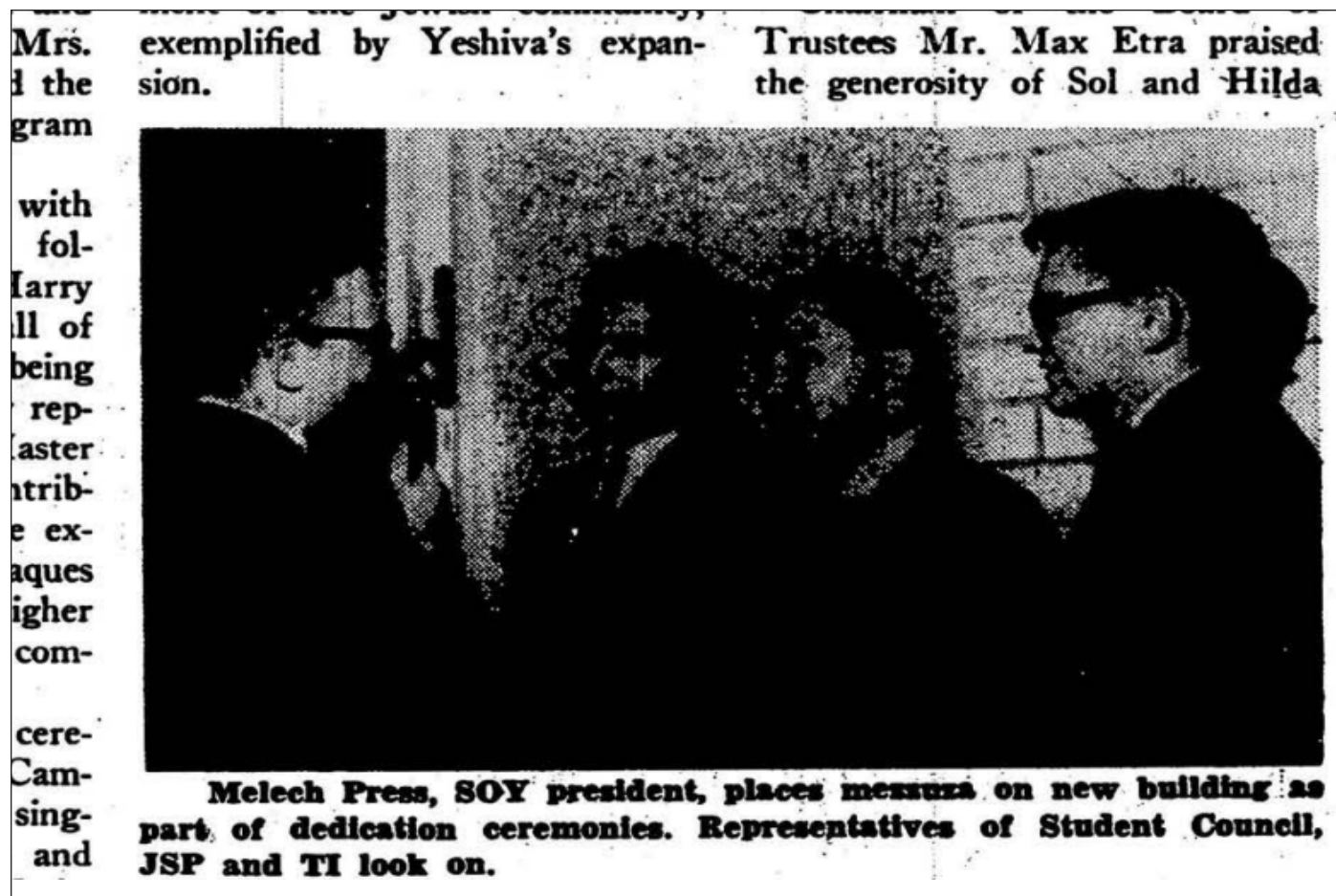
Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mr. Max Etra praised the generosity of Sol and Hilda Furst, emphasizing their continued devotion in supporting the school and its ideals. Mrs. Furst, aided by Mr. Furst and Dr. Belkin, cut the ribbon, officially opening the new building. Mr. Etra went on to say that today's ceremonies have a multiple significance. The most profound significance, he said, "lies in the reaffirmation by the leaders of the Jewish community of their faith in

Yeshiva University's traditions and ideals." Scrolls of the reaffirmation were then placed in the cornerstone of the new dormitory to be constructed at the main academic center. It was the desire of the Master Builders, he said, that dedication of a completed building mark the inception of the next.

Senator Jacob Javitz, who gave the principal address of the day, praised Yeshiva's development in which he was glad to play a major part.

In the main body of his address he suggested that the next "hot spot" on the world scene would be the Middle East. With the Russian buildup of Egypt with arms, Israel must seek aid from our government. He cited the United States' shipment of small rockets to Israel: "... we cannot pretend that the arms imbalance will be corrected by United States' shipment of ... Hawk missiles to Israel ... However, this does indicate that at long last there is a recognition that Israel is at a disadvantage in the Middle East..." He suggested that this shipment would set a precedent in future U.S.-Israel relations.

Comptroller Abraham Beame congratulated Yeshiva University on its step forward and Cantor Koussevitsky concluded the ceremonies singing some Jewish numbers.



## The Pundit

## MLK's Nightmare and the Link Between Racism and Opposition to Democracy

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

Having just celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day last month, I'm reminded of a chilling statement made by the civil rights leader just over three years after his landmark 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech: "I saw my dream turn into a nightmare." King had come to see the progress of the civil rights movement as superficial, as his peaceful ideology had begun to be overshadowed by violent "Black power" movements, and he had grown pessimistic in his evolving realist outlook on the true state of equality.

In his famous 1963 address, King drew a correlation between the strength of a democracy and the state of its racial equality. Unfortunately though, our democracy itself is a contradiction; our nation was founded on freedom and equality, yet has fostered systemic oppression since its inception. According to King, our democracy — built under the premise that "all men are created equal" — cannot succeed until there is full racial equality. This "dream" hadn't been achieved during King's lifetime, and, though strides have been made, hasn't yet been fully realized.

Glaring proof of this came from last year's insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, when supporters of then-President Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol to try to interfere with certification of the 2020 presidential election. The effects of this continue to shake our country, representing the threat our democracy faces. Some have theorized that mistrust in government caused the eruption of a full-scale insurrection. I argue that there's more to the backsliding of our democracy by connecting this phenomenon of mistrust in government weakening the state with King's theory that racial prejudice leads to the failure of democracy. "As long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having recurrences of violence and riots over and over again," he said. He predicted that those who disregard the problem of racial inequality are those who condone events that collapse democratic systems like the Jan. 6 insurrection, which is a further example of the "nightmare" of violence hindering progress Dr. King mentioned in 1967. If racial inequality results in a weak democracy (as postulated by Dr. King), and low trust in government results in weak democracy, then low trust in government and

racial prejudice are covariants. Let's explore how racial prejudice is actually the driving force behind the lack of faith in government institutions.

*Just as Dr. King warned, democracy is compromised by the continued existence of racial prejudice.*

Surveys conducted by the American National Election Studies (ANES) during elections between 1992 and 2020 have proven that racial prejudice is a predictor of lower trust in government. Studies also indicated that such biases have links to skepticism about the fairness of the 2020 election. The theory that racial prejudice is further backed by a separate study done on faith in previous elections shows a higher level of distrust during the Obama elections of 2008 and 2012 than in the 2016 election and previous elections. An elevated level of skepticism when a Black president was elected suggests a correlation with racial prejudice. Distrust in government hinders the success and ability of the federal government to function. Just as King warned, democracy is compromised by the continued existence of racial prejudice.

A Reuters poll shows that 53% of Republicans believe the election was tainted and that former president Donald Trump actually won. Dangerous rhetoric from the former president and his supporters has spurred skepticism regarding elections with the tactic of appealing to racial prejudices (i.e. the idea of illegal voters, violent agitators, etc). Trump catalyzed fears of some white Americans who have long viewed the attempt to promote racial equality as anti-white and discriminatory. (This motivated many white Americans to vote for Trump; a study published in the Washington Post stated that "racial resentment is the biggest predictor of white vulnerability among white millennials.") This sentiment is directly linked to mistrust in the election system and results, as seen in the ANES study. It again suggests that views on racial equality are behind the lack of faith in the government.

Blossoming anti-government paranoia is a problem on both sides. The harmful phenomenon of distrust exists in African Americans facing systemic racism through inequality in workplaces and police brutality. There are those in the community who therefore become wary of government

agencies and law enforcement. Their difficult history in the country causes their distrust; it disenfranchises people, causing discouragement that leads to lower voter turnout,

skewing the key institution of democracy that is fair elections.

A major detrimental ramification of mistrust in the federal government is inefficiency. With public distrust and little support, it's hard for the government to effectively achieve goals. As political theorist David Easton argued in his "Systems Analysis of Political Life," democracy can't function without citizens' trust in institutions. Low election faith leads to low faith in the entire

democratic system, driving people to violent anti-democratic methods and ideals, such as an insurrection attempt like the one we saw on Jan. 6.

I'd like to draw a connection between the current state of distrust and Dr. King's message. If racial prejudice fuels mistrust in elections and government, and since democracy can't function without trust in such institutions, then Dr. King's hypothesis of racial prejudices preventing the success of democracy has proven true. Jan. 6. was a materialization of King's "nightmare" of violence and racial supremacy movements overpowering his peaceful ideology due to dangerous distrust in government. To strengthen our democracy, we must face the problem of racism and work to actively solve it. We must continue to fight to bring Dr. King's dream, rather his nightmare, to fruition.



The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, site of Martin Luther King Jr.'s now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

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## Biden's Racist Supreme Court Promise

By NAOMI ROSE

On Jan. 27, Justice Stephen Breyer announced his plans to retire from the Supreme Court. Born in 1938, Breyer graduated from Harvard Law School and worked there as a professor. He also served as the chief counsel for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and as the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, before being sworn in as an associate Supreme Court justice in 1994 under President Bill Clinton. He has since then served as a liberal Supreme Court justice.

So who is President Biden planning on nominating to succeed Breyer? Although one might assume that any candidate nominated for the position should be chosen based solely on their qualifications, Biden seems

to disagree with this basic notion. Instead, he stated that "The person I will nominate will be someone with extraordinary qualifications, character, experience and integrity, and that person will be the first Black woman ever nominated to the United States Supreme Court. It's long overdue, in my view."

*As Chief Justice Roberts famously said, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." It is time to end identity politics.*

Now it is true that we have never had a Black woman on the Supreme Court. But why should that justify using race and gender as the leading criteria for a Supreme Court nomination? Why could not Biden leave out

the second half of his statement? Nominate someone with extraordinary qualifications! If that person happens to be a Black woman, then great! But why the need to point out that he is only looking at Black, female candidates?

While Biden is trying to appear as non-discriminatory, he is in fact proving that

he is the opposite. By refusing to look at a large number of talented, qualified nominees simply because of their race or gender, Biden is actually acting in the most discriminatory way possible. He is showing prejudice

against everyone who is not a Black female — something which can be described as reverse discrimination. Senator Ted Cruz noted on his podcast "Verdict," "The fact that he's willing to make a promise at the outset, that it must be a Black woman, I gotta say that's offensive. You know, you know Black women are what, 6% of the U.S. population? He's saying to 94% of Americans, 'I don't give a damn about you, you are ineligible.'"

Now aside from being extremely biased against the majority of America, Biden is actually insulting Black women as well. He is effectively saying that he does not believe a Black woman can become a Supreme Court Justice based simply on her own merit and qualifications. To quote Cruz once again, "If he came and said, 'I'm gonna put the best jurist on the court' and he looked at a

Continued on Page 12

## Despite YU's Promises Regarding Sexual Assault, More Work May Be Needed

By YITZHAK KORNBLUTH

As readers of The Commentator know, YU is still dealing with the fallout of a report of sexual assault involving students. A few weeks ago, YU announced that it would implement a “restructured” Title IX office, among other more minute changes. While I applaud YU’s action to try to resolve this, there are still significant concerns as to whether this response is sufficient to address the underlying cause(s) of YU’s mishandling of that entire episode. In order to explain my concerns, I would like to present four possibilities as to what problem was underlying YU’s mishandling of this case.

It may be that this was simply a matter of manpower; every individual in the Title IX office had other roles at the university, and may simply have been too busy to give the case the attention it deserved. Alternatively, YU may have lacked anyone with sufficient relevant experience. If either of these factors is in fact the cause, the proposed restructuring will, in fact, fix the problem.

A third possibility is that this was due to administrators having priorities that were inappropriate for the task before them. Jeff Lax — a radio show host who discussed the matter — pointed out that all individuals in the office have other roles in the university and this may have created a conflict of interest. However, such issues can be far more subtle than such an overt conflict; any time a department of YU acts in accordance with priorities and values different than those of YU itself, this too is another form of the same fundamental problem. Indeed, YU’s statement published Aug. 26 lacks any reference to YU’s Core Torah values (so prevalent in other contexts, and clearly relevant to this case), suggesting that the priorities of the Title IX administrators were not properly aligned with those of YU.

The restructuring will thus fix the obvious form of conflict of interest by ensuring that every Title IX officer has no other

responsibilities, but not be effective against the more subtle form. Furthermore, YU’s status as a prominent Jewish organization means that such a mismatch of values can cause great harm even outside Title IX if important matters are dealt with by departments that do not share our values. His will

is responsive to inquiries and complaints and demonstrates a commitment to their professional duties, it may be assumed that this incident was unique to the Title IX system and the reorganization will therefore suffice. If it is found that each department demonstrates professionalism with regard

that failures in these matters are met with real consequences. Such consequences need not be large in most cases; for example, an apology for wrongdoing is a minor enough consequence to be usable even when the failure was accidental in nature, but nevertheless demonstrates a commitment both to professionalism and to the Torah values of the university. Second, any approach must apply to both the top-level administration and the lower-level employees who make small everyday decisions. If it applies only to the top level, problems in everyday decisions will still cause issues on a regular basis, while if it applies only to the lower level, it will be seen as hypocritical and create unnecessary resistance. Third, if an authority on YU’s values is needed to align all departments, YU’s president can take this role.

Last and most importantly, there must be means to determine whether the solution is actually effective. One way to do this is with further surveys, some time after implementing a solution, to determine whether it has had its intended effect or not. (Such a survey could also measure if the effectiveness of a solution varies by department.) Another, more promising approach to evaluating the effectiveness of a solution is to create a system by which those who encounter such problems can report a complaint, thereby providing YU with guidance as to whether the solution is effective, and helping detect any failures that need to be addressed as described in the solution. Such reporting must not show the failures that were seen in this report of sexual assault; on the contrary, the complainant must be guaranteed full information regarding all findings and resulting decisions, and must have the ability to appeal if there is sufficient basis to do so. By implementing a solution and assessing its effectiveness, the solution can be adjusted as necessary until all such problems have been eliminated, allowing Yeshiva University to be truly worthy of its status as the flagship institution of Modern Orthodoxy.

*YU’s status as a prominent Jewish organization means that such a mismatch of values can cause great harm even outside Title IX.*

not at all be solved by YU’s current approach.

The last possibility, and the least complimentary to YU, is that this was simple laziness on the part of the administration. According to this theory, various individuals in the administration performed a cursory investigation because it was easier, refused to reopen the case (despite having failed the first time to consider the “rape kit” test the claimant underwent) because that would constitute additional work for them, and did not respond to Jeff Lax’s first attempt to contact them because they couldn’t be bothered. If this is the cause, a restructuring will likely accomplish nothing at all.

This then raises the question: Can we determine whether the latter two factors are in fact present, thus demanding further work on YU’s part? I believe such determination is possible, as each of these factors is driven in large part by the cultures of the departments in question, and is not unique to cases of sexual assault. Thus, a comprehensive survey of the YU community (including students, faculty, alumni and staff) regarding the everyday functioning of YU’s administration can determine whether such misplaced priorities and/or unprofessionalism are in fact part of the administrative culture. If they are, then they were presumably also factors at play in this case of responding to a report of sexual assault.

If the survey demonstrates that the administration and administrative staff of YU, other than in this one case, reliably considers all relevant factors in a decision,

to the primary purpose of that department but is lax or lackadaisical regarding other matters that may fall under their purview, we may assume that misplaced priorities are a significant factor that needs to be addressed. Likewise, if departments make decisions that consider only matters pertaining to their own department and not the needs of YU as a whole, this too suggests a mismatch with YU’s values. Finally, if administrators or staff regularly show a lack of professionalism or responsiveness even in the primary role of their department, YU must take steps to rectify such a tendency toward unprofessionalism in order to prevent it from having further detrimental effects, whether in further cases of sexual assault or other serious matters. (I will leave it to others, perhaps the editorial staff of The Commentator, to determine how best to perform the necessary survey.)

Once any problems have been identified, YU must then take action to solve them. This will likely not be easy; problems such as misplaced priorities and unprofessionalism often arise in a manner that creates significant resistance to reform, and this resistance will make it very tempting to attempt a superficial approach that does not address the core issues. While I have some thoughts on how to overcome such resistance, they are beyond the scope of this article. I will, however, provide some general guidelines as to how to ensure that the approach taken to fix these issues is an effective one and not superficial:

First, any approach taken must ensure

## From Yeshiva to Yeshiva

By SHUIE BERGER

Everyone told me it was going to be hard. Everyone told me it was going to be rough. I heard it so many times. “You know college is going to be a lot of work.” I always knew that to be true, but I really had no idea going in. Being pre-med, I was told countless times by my brother and many others that it was going to be a metaphorical hell for me. Especially from my background. Because I was coming from the Yeshiva system, I would have to work harder than others to succeed.

While the students on campus come from various backgrounds and upbringings, many of them share a similar feature: a high-level secular high school education. Many of the “in-town” high schools and many other schools across the US and all over the world offer various APs, high level classes, extra-curricular activities, and many other secular educational opportunities for students. Whether it be clubs, events or internships, many of these schools enable the students to take full advantage of their opportunities. Additionally, there are many schools that can offer the type of Judaic studies that a student might prefer, without skipping on secular studies. The balance is quite marvelous, and very admirable in today’s fast-moving world. However, not

every high school imparts the same skills and knowledge nor do they all provide the same opportunities.

I grew up in Atlanta, a relatively small Jewish community. There are not many options that give those secular educational opportunities without sacrificing the Judaics that I also highly desired. There were two schools, a yeshiva that was strong in their Judaics, but their secular curriculum was not to my standards, and the other was a more traditional modern orthodox school that offered more of a secular education, but

was like to have a burdening workload. My high school had not adequately prepared me for college, nor, more specifically, for pre-med classes.

Being in a high school that focused primarily on Judaic studies, the rigor I required for secular education was simply not there. Because they felt that learning Gemara was most important, we only started learning secular studies at 3 p.m. and finished at 6:45 with breaks, followed by night seder for over an hour, finishing after maariv at 9 p.m. The schedule allowed for over five hours of

on homework in high school, I continue to struggle in college to figure out how to balance my personal life with schoolwork.

I do not doubt that other graduates from my high school felt prepared for college and are very successful. They might be reading this right now, questioning my experience based on the fact that they have had much success in college and beyond and felt that they received a satisfactory secular education. I do not doubt their experience. There is most certainly a subjective angle to the high school experience. I am sure that, if desired, it was possible to be sufficiently educated, as others were. However, in hindsight, I did not go that extra mile and I did not feel I received an adequate education required for me that I may have had at another school. Don’t get me wrong. I loved high school. It was so much fun, and I learned a lot in Gemara and other Judaics, but I would have benefitted from a more solid secular education.

I know I am not alone. I have spoken to others that went through similar high schools, and they agree that a strong work ethic and time management skills would have come in handy and they are forced to learn it now, when it counts more. There are many who come from these types of backgrounds and many who feel similarly.

*Being that I wasn’t taught how to manage my time working on homework in high school, I continue to struggle in college to figure out how to balance my personal life with schoolwork.*

the Judaics were not what I was looking for. These were the only realistic options for me, aside from going out of town, which was not really an option for a naive, socially-driven 8th grader. I ended up at the Yeshiva, and my parents told me I would have to make up the secular studies at a later time.

Well, college is that later time. I tried to take a math course at a local college after Israel. There, I was utterly lost and the prospect of hard work frightened me. I was not ready for college. I had no idea what it

Judaics with less than 3.5 hours of secular studies. Because of the rigorous Judaic studies, we were not allowed to have homework, which led to our day-to-day lives being set for us. Consequently, I never learned how to manage my time or develop a work ethic. These are the two most important things I believe I missed out on. Most other schools provided necessary workloads to force the students to learn time management and cultivate a work ethic. Being that I wasn’t taught how to manage my time working

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# Google's 20-Percent Rule and How It Could Benefit You

By Yossi Friedman

Leaders strive to improve their team's performance and achieve the goals that lead to success. One of the traditionally overlooked metrics that significantly impacts the team's success is the happiness levels of the group. While it may seem counterintuitive, one way to build a more connected team and achieve quantifiable success is to give each team member paid time off to research and pursue personal projects related to the organization. Sticking with the status quo and ignoring this initiative is one way a leader can fail their team.

On the surface, time off from the workplace may permit team members less time to work on crucial tasks. Instead of sitting in the home office, classroom, or traditional workplace concentrated on projects with approaching deadlines, time away from the office allows workers to focus on undertakings that may have no apparent connection with the organization's current objectives. In addition, leaving the workplace and its unfinished duties behind can foster a sense of procrastination when another mandated task arrives in the work inbox. However, despite these potential downsides, the data highlights a positive angle for implementing paid time off to pursue individual projects.

Many upsides can negate the adverse side effects of providing paid time off for unassigned projects. First, leaders who offer consent and motivation for workers to pursue their passions will foster loyalty and gratitude within the organization. When leaders give time, arguably one's most valuable asset, the data shows that users are

willing to reciprocate significantly more than the original gift. Providing the initial act of giving will subconsciously motivate grateful workers to give back to their organization through working extended hours, a positive attitude, and loyalty. Finally, having the option for workers to pursue personal projects can persuade employees to stay at organizations for longer and even recruit other prospective workers. Consequently, managers who do not provide employees with personal time can lead to organization-wide resentment, decreasing overall commitment to the team's success.

Permeating this initiative within all levels of an organization can increase the team's happiness and morale. The time users invest in their projects can allow them to decompress from the stresses of the workplace and focus on the aspects of their job that make them happy. One study shows that happy workers are 31% more productive. Not only will happiness increase overall productivity, but it can make employees three times more creative than their unhappy counterparts. To outline the importance of spreading this initiative to every organization, look at one of the world's largest companies, Google, and its parent company, Alphabet. Since 2004, Alphabet has encouraged its employees to spend 20% of their time working on what they think will benefit Alphabet. The "20-Percent Rule" initiative includes projects that show no promise of providing immediate dividends, thus empowering employees to be more creative and innovative in their work. Some of the projects completed through the "20-Percent rule" initiative are Gmail, Google Maps, and AdSense. Alphabet

is just one company that pays its employees to complete tasks that are not directly related to assignments given to them by executives.

Granting employees paid time for unassigned projects can increase the employee's overall productivity. Early in the nineteenth century, organized labor unions successfully persuaded factory owners to decrease the imposed workday length to eight hours and found that output surprisingly increased. Instead of pressuring their workers to work harder and longer shifts, they reduced the time spent in the factory, which helped eliminate costly mistakes and reduce the number of accidents. In addition to eliminating errors from the workplace through overworking employees, implementing Parkinson's Law can help save the organization valuable resources and time. According to Parkinson's Law, when a manager delegates a single-day task to someone with a deadline of seven days, the job will stretch out and take the

individual the entire week to complete it. By implementing a new initiative to allow workers to pursue unassigned projects while on payroll, many benefits can arise to help the organization achieve its goals and surpass its competition.

An organization that gives time for unassigned projects may receive benefits including reciprocated loyalty and gratitude, raised morale and happiness levels (which can increase productivity and creativity), and long-term projects that could bring sustained success to the company and its employees. Overall, whether the leader is a project manager, CEO, or professor, ignorance of this initiative and the tremendous dividends it can provide is one of the ways a leader can fail to guide their team to success. Those who implement this strategy may not see the constructive results immediately, but with time this initiative can provide immense rewards for years to come; just ask Alphabet.



Google's parent company, Alphabet, encourages workers to spend time doing what they think will benefit the company.

PIXABAY

*YESHIVA TO YESHIVA*  
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I want to reiterate that my experience is mine and only mine. There may be others who feel similarly, but I am in no way blaming my high school, my parents, my friends or the university.

And please don't get me wrong. I am not asking the school for extra time or an easier workload. I am not saying that it is unfair that I came in with fewer skills or that others need to be given more work.

And I want to be clear about the reason I wrote this article. You may be wondering:

why would I care about some guy's high school experience? Why is he telling everyone? I wrote this for a few reasons. I wrote this as a way to inform other struggling students — who feel extreme pressure having had no previous experience in an onerous and rigid environment — that there are many of us, many more than you think, and you are not alone. Many struggle with these aspects of college and there are important resources that can help. I also wrote this for the whole student body, to inform

them that there are a lot of kids who did not receive the advantages they received and that they should be appreciative of the opportunities they had in high school. Your schools have helped you without even realizing it. And maybe that struggling kid sitting next to you in class never learned the necessary skills and they could use some help and advice. Thirdly, I wrote this for the small chance that high school students will pick this up and I want to tell them to take advantage of what they can do in high

school. It matters much more than you might think, and it is important to realize how integral these tools are for life. Having a demanding high school experience can equip the students with the work ethic and time management skills that make the college experience much less burdensome. Going from Yeshiva (to Yeshiva) to Yeshiva gave me invaluable learning skills in Gemara, but never underestimate the importance of a solid secular education.

*BIDEN*

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number of people and he ended up nominating a Black woman, he could credibly say, "OK, I'm nominating the person who's most qualified." But now, people will forever say that whoever is nominated only received that position because of her race and gender. This is an insult to Black women everywhere. Biden's supposed anti-racist, anti-misogynist statement is in fact conveying just the opposite.

Biden is trying and failing to appeal to the "woke" mob. Let's not forget Biden's own history of racially questionable acts. In 1991, during the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, Biden argued with him on the Senate floor and voted against his becoming a Supreme Court justice. Suddenly Biden is such an advocate of African American rights? If so, then why did he try to prevent Clarence Thomas from being confirmed?

In addition to this, Biden has also made extremely offensive and racist remarks over the years. In 2006, Biden said that "You can't go to a 7-Eleven or a Dunkin Donuts unless you have a slight Indian accent." And in 2008 he called Obama, "the

first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean." In more recent years, Biden has continued to expose himself for what he really is. In 2019, Biden said that "Poor kids are just as bright as white kids," and in 2020, Biden said that if an African American is having trouble deciding whether to vote for him or Trump, then "You ain't Black." So I hope that we all see through Biden's little charade here.

Using race and gender as eligibility criteria is part of the larger issue of affirmative action. The lawsuit that is being brought against Harvard for discriminating against Asian Americans during admission processes is a clear example of this. As Dr. Ben Carson said, if Biden is able to use the description of "Black woman" to pick a nominee for the Supreme Court, "then who else can do it in the future using the criteria that they want, and completely ignoring all the progress that's been made?" It is a dangerous precedent to put into place.

We would feel rightly outraged if Biden had only permitted a white male to be nominated. Similarly, we should feel

just as outraged by this. As Chief Justice Roberts famously said, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to

stop discriminating on the basis of race." It is time to end identity politics.



Justice Stephen Breyer announcing his retirement alongside President Joe Biden

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