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Remembering Julia Packer z'l

Observer Staff On the first Monday in February, students and teachers passing through the entrance of 245 Lexington Avenue stopped to remember. On a small table rested a burning candle and photos of a fellow student and friend that most describe as "radiant."

Saturday, January 31 marks the devastating and untimely loss of Stern College senior, Julia Packer. Julia's passing has left the students of Yeshiva University bereaved and with an utter sense of despair. To some she was a classmate, to others a best friend. But one thing goes without saying: she touched the lives of everyone whom she met.



Sunday morning, an email bearing the subject line of "Baruch Dayan Emet" was sent to the entire student body and faculty. After receiving the jarring news, students grappled to comprehend the tragedy.

Adopted from Russia at the age of six by Dr. Marvin and Judy Packer, Julia was raised in Newton, Massachusetts. She attended Maimonides School from elementary school through high school and graduated in 2011, after which she attended seminary in Israel at Midreshet Emunah V'Omanut. Once she arrived at Stern College, Julia began pursuing a Studio Art major. She played on the Stern College Varsity volleyball team for one year; took several classes at the Fashion Institute of Technology, and enjoyed a successful job at the fashion brand, INTERMIX. She is survived by her parents and five siblings; Sam, Jonathan, Tamara, Lyuda, and Uri.

Immediately following the devastating email, classmate Dasha Sominski ('15) organized a gathering in the back lounge of the Schottenstein dormitory Sunday evening which was attended by approximately thirty students. Even Dr. Yael Muskat, director of the Stern Counseling Center, made an appearance. In her public Facebook invite, Sominski wrote, "Let's not be alone tonight." Students shared their fond memories of Julia and offered each other support for how to deal with the tragic loss of a loved one.

The Counseling Center organized many opportunities for students to seek help coping with Julia's passing. It opened its doors on Sunday for walk-in hours so that students could speak to various professionals in the immediate

aftermath of the tragedy. The following Wednesday, Dr. David Pelcovitz and Dr. Sara Asher led a group conversation in the back lounge of the Schottenstein dormitory. Counseling Center professionals also offered a drop-in process group throughout the week.

As an art major, Julia formed close relationships with her professors and peers. As an integral part of her life, she spent long hours in the studios of Stern College perfecting her art works. Professor of painting, Mary Creede, reflects upon the her experiences with Julia in the studio and the memories she will forever have of Julia, the talented and dedicated artist, pouring over her work in the studio.

"My heart is heavy, so heavy. I will never forget opening the door of the painting studio every morning this past summer term to be greeted by Julia's merry and quiet smile. I am so grateful for the privilege of knowing her. She was a fantastic artist and a good person. A bright and steady light, never self-aggrandizing, thoughtful, kind, and considerate."

Though Julia was a skilled artist, with a natural flare for style, her true passion was fashion design and she hoped to pursue a career as a stylist.

While even those who did not know Julia on a personal level struggle to cope with her parting, the tragedy is even more difficult for her friends and family to comprehend. Sarah Robinson ('15), who grew up with Julia in their hometown of Newton, Massachusetts, felt devastated by the loss of her childhood friend. She wanted to channel her feelings by creating a book of insights from fellow friends and classmates for the Packer family.

Robinson thought she would only be able to find a few pages worth of quotations to present to Julia's family, but she was "blown away" by the response volume. There was a wide range of contributors. Some messages came from Julia's close friends from Maimonides high school; her seminary in Israel, Midreshet Emunah V'Omanut; Stern and her volleyball team; while some letters came from acquaintances and even people who had never met her. People shared stories about friendship, laughter, and even love. And the most common theme of all: her glowing, wide-toothed smile.

Together with Corrine Malachi ('16), the two compiled all of the Facebook posts and thoughts friends shared after Julia's passing. Filled with pictures of the bright-eyed and beautiful Julia with her friends, Robinson read some passages of the book aloud at the Packer family shiva house.

Robinson reflected upon the experience reading and delivering the book to the Packer family. "Reading and then organizing the anecdotes was more emotionally difficult than I expected. Of course I knew she was beloved, but reading through all of them just showed me that we had lost such a special student and friend. Going to a shiva house is always hard, but it was especially hard this time; no one ever wants to pay a shiva call for their childhood friend and mourn for the life that could have been."

When Robinson entered the shiva house and began reading the book to the Packer family, she felt the powerful comfort that the sentimental words had on the family.

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The next Step towards Solving the Financial Crisis: Departments Urged to Cut Costs

Shalva Ginsparg Much of the recent discussion about YU's finances has surrounded the anticipated merger between YU's Albert Einstein College of Medicine and New York's Montefiore Health System, an agreement which would cede \$50 million of YU's debt to Montefiore. (A February 3rd announcement has confirmed that despite the termination of the governance agreement in December, an agreement between YU and Montefiore has been reached and is close to being finalized.)

However, at a faculty council meeting on January 30, little mention of Einstein was made. Instead, the focus was on the need for individual

departments within the undergraduate and graduate schools to "cut," "shave," and "consolidate." Faculty members expressed concern that such belt-tightening will detract from the university's academics and result in a drop in admissions and revenue.

One deficit-shrinking strategy that has fallen on the shoulders of individual departments has been the demand for professors to increase teaching loads.

At the faculty council meeting, Provost Selma Botman defended the demand for professors to teach more. In these trying financial times, she said, "the primary role of our
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The Leftist Response to Terror in France

Masha Shollar Like a pebble being dropped into a lake, the full effect of the barbaric Paris attacks last month remains to be seen, but the initial public outcry in defense of free speech had many quoting Voltaire: "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." Rallies across France, and the world, spoke to the unity felt in times of tragedy, with #JeSuisCharlie capturing the world's hearts and computer screens for several days. Politicians and the media responded in their own ways, but the response of the leftist media has been shockingly biased.

Once again, many radical liberals tried to prove that all roads lead to Israeli guilt. Spearheading the charge

was the Free Gaza movement, an affiliate of BDS, an organization that is self-described as a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Greta Berlin, spokesperson for Free Gaza, posted on Facebook just hours after the attacks, "MOSSAD just hit the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo in a clumsy false flag designed to damage the accord between Palestine and France. Here's hoping the French police will be able to tell a well-executed hit by a well-trained Israeli intelligence service and not assume the Muslims would be likely to attack France when France is their friend... A four-year-old could see who is responsible for this terrible
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To Change or Not to Change? Questioning the Title of “The Observer”

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Founded by the women of Yeshiva University's Stern College in 1958, *The Observer* is the official newspaper representing the student body of Stern College and Yeshiva University. *The Observer* is an independent student publication, self-funded, and published on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. Views expressed in *The Observer* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University.

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Elana Kook and Makena Owens Over the course of the year, we as editors have been confronted with an interesting question.

“Why do the men comment on what is going on within the university, while the women merely observe?”

The basis for this question lies in the titles of the uptown and downtown student newspapers. Individuals both within Yeshiva University and beyond have expressed frustration over the title of our student newspaper. According to these individuals, when comparing the title of “The Yeshiva University Observer” to the “The Yeshiva University Commentator,” there seems to be a misogynistic implication that is inherent in the difference between these two titles.

Some women on campus have even approached us and expressed that they have considered only writing for the “The Commentator” due to the insinuations of our newspaper’s title. One student in particular asserted that she feels that the difference between these two names is “disempowering” and borderline sexist. Yet another student communicated that the title of the “The Observer” even implied that, perhaps, the paper itself is on a different stratum of journalistic standards.

The bottom line is that strong writers are being deterred from voicing their opinions due to the newspaper’s title. After all, why should the women sit from the sidelines and just watch what’s going on, instead of directly partaking in the happenings within Yeshiva University?

If this had been a one-time occurrence, then perhaps we would not be writing this editorial. However, as student leaders determined to accurately represent the sentiments of the student body, we have decided to contemplate the request to change the title of “The Observer.”

So, why change—or not change—the title of a newspaper that has been around since 1958?

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, the word “observer” is defined as “a person who pays close attention to something and is considered to be an expert on that thing,” or, “a person who is present at something (such as a meeting) in order to watch and listen to what happens.”

For those who focus on the latter portion of the definition, the word “observer” does connote a certain passivity or non-activity. Someone who observes is a spectator at events instead of an

active participant. There is an implicit connotation in the title of “The Observer” when juxtaposed to that of “The Commentator,” purely based on the definition of the titles. This juxtaposition suggests that the official paper for Stern College for Women and Sy Syms School of business is passive, and perhaps even secondary in terms of reporters who are capturing the events of the university. It suggests that the women’s campus reporters stand by and watch what happens, as opposed to taking initiative and being involved in the heart of the action.

And in terms of the title’s historical longevity, times have certainly changed since the 50’s, and so has the student body. Our society’s sensitivity to gender roles and biases causes women’s issues to gain more recognition both within academia and beyond. Many are striving to pave the pathway to equality, and that includes the elimination of classic—and often arbitrary—gendered binaries.

Aside from contemplating a title change as a way to retain and attract those strong writers who are advocating for a new header, we want the student body to feel that their values are represented in their student newspaper, not stifled. If the title of the newspaper contradicts their values, then students will feel wary about voicing their opinions or even writing an objective news piece. Our goal is for the student body to feel comfortable and confident that the newspaper will be a medium for their voices to be heard.

But then there are equally valid reasons that hold us back from redesigning our masthead and buying a new URL for our website. Chief among these is the concern of turning an apolitical student media outlet into a politically charged statement. Enacting such a change may in fact deter even more students, both current and prospective writers alike.

Given the historical context in which “The Observer” was founded, it’s actually deeply feminist. The 1950s was a revolutionary time for American women; they advocated for their voices to be heard in the public sphere and one outlet of expression was printed media. The original “Observer” editorial staff was undoubtedly, acutely aware of the political climate in which it was a part of. So when choosing the title for the paper, a publication run by female students for female students, surely the thought of “The Observer” being anti-feminist would have sounded ridiculous.

A simple Google search also reveals that in fact, there are more professional news outlets titled “The Observer” than “The Commentator” or something of the like. And surely these editorial teams are composed of both men and women who seek to do their jobs as journalists: observe an event and then report on it. Recall the former part of the definition of “observer”: someone who is an expert. The title for these newspapers is not, then, reflective of a feminist or anti-feminist agenda, but instead a testament to the job of a reporter—to carefully, critically, accurately and actively observe.

Perhaps this tension over the paper titles between campuses is exacerbated by the often competitive nature between the two media sources. In past years, students have witnessed editorial “face-offs” month to month with “Observer” and “Commentator” EOCs challenging the journalistic standards of each other’s works.

This year, the sentiments for the uptown paper among the editorial staff at “The Observer” is far different than in the past. We view the two student newspapers as a way to accurately reflect the views and events that are unique to each respective campus, and to the greater concerns of the institution at large. By reading both papers, one could gain what is hopefully a well-rounded picture of the Yeshiva University student body. In that sense we are not in competition over who is the “better” reporter—each editorial staff is quite talented and qualified—and instead are two parts of a larger whole.

We now ask you, the students, our writers and our readers, to consider the perspectives put forth here and tell us how we should approach our decision. Answer the poll on the article on our website and Facebook page. The poll will offer different titles, a place where you can suggest your own, and an option to keep the title of “The Observer” as is. Continue to reach out to us personally as well; without your direct input, the goal of this editorial would be lost.

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Interested in writing for *The Observer*? Contact an editor and always **WRITE ON!**

Letters to Julia z'l

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"Usually at a shiva house, you go expecting to do all the listening," Robinson said. "But when they saw the binder and asked about it, now I was doing the talking! Words cannot describe how touched they looked. It was in that moment that I realized that I came seeking to strengthen them, but they strengthened me."

Close childhood friend, Rachel Weinberg ('15) expressed her shock and sorrow the morning she heard the news of Julia's passing. "Just like so many others, I have spent a lot of today thinking about Julia and her family. Julia continued to be filled with that same sweetness and warmth throughout the years I have known her. Whenever we bumped into each other in the halls of Stern or in our dorm, she always had a smile on her face and made time to catch up. I always left her with a smile on my face. Today there are no answers or clarity. Today, the world has become a darker place."

Julia's memory lives on through the legacy of kindness and compassion that she always exhibited and now leaves behind. As stated by a student who entered a personal passage in the bound book of insights, "Her warmth and open-hearted personality made her adored by all...May her memory be an inspiration for us all to be positive role models within the world as she was, and help us treat each other with more compassion, appreciation, and kindness."

My Dearest Pumpkin Pie,

My heart aches as this letter is coming a few months earlier than I originally planned, I have been planning on giving it to you the day we put our cap and gown on together and walk hand in hand at graduation.

Julia, these past three years have gone by too fast, but my G-d, were they a perfect three years. Years that lasted a lifetime, filled with memories that are held so deep in our heart, with friends that turned into family. We didn't chose each other, but how lucky are we that me, you, Corrie and Shayna were put pot luck together, and since that very first day of Stern, we never left each others side.

Unfortunately, not very many people find their very true best friend. But we know we did, and we know it's a friendship that will last forever. With you Julia, I laugh a little louder, I smile a little brighter, and I love with all my heart. You and I never took each other for granted, instead, we took care of each other. When I look back on our time here at Stern, all I can do is laugh. Whether we were pulling another shanagain, like tee-peeing or own room, taking a bite out of my apple, defining boys as "trees", putting package popcorn in my shoes, pulling some shanagain on Corrie, Shayna, or Paige, or immediately hiding in each others closets when we would text each other saying we were coming home and we wanted to scare each other. I will never forget our countless silly and crazy walks home, where it was just the two of us laughing, talking about life, and taking on the city. All I do is laugh.

You are a once and a lifetime person, Julia. You are the kind of person that has always believed in me when I felt like no one else did, who encouraged me to work harder, and do better. You always knew I could do it. You have a tilt of your head, with this smirk, and when you look at me with it, I know that you are right. You are there by my side when I make mistakes, you told me to learn my lessons, accept the consequences, and do something about it. You have a spark in your eye that always inspires me to see then sun, when I only see clouds. You have the kind of mind that sparks my dreams, encouraging me to never take no for an answer.

Julia, we found what people spend their whole lives looking for. We became instant best friends, and we never left each others sides. We give each other a look, and we know exactly what the other person is thinking, we have the same sense of humor, our stomachs are linked up to the same two hour periods of hunger, we can't even cross the street without holding each others hands.

Our time was cut too short. I hate that I am writing this letter to you now. There are so many more memories to be made and so many more laughs to have. We are supposed to be those two old ladies chasing each other in our wheelchairs in the old age home when we retire to Arizona, remember? Julia, our friendship has changed my life. A special connection that is holds my heart together. I am a better, happier person because I met you. We always told each other exactly how we feel. Nothing was ever left unsaid. You are my Abu, my pumpkin, and my best friend, always.

I want to end with a quote by your favorite poet, R.M. Drake.

"I am not who I was yesterday,
and maybe you're still the same person in my memories.
I can't tell the difference between what was and what is.
I just know beneath everything you left behind,
I found a dark paradise where you and I were
Forever, and you and I were one."
I love you forever, Julia.
As we always say to each other... infinite X's and O's.
I carry your heart in mine.

Love always,
Davidaaaaah

Dearest Jules,

Let's be honest, I can't believe I'm writing about you in the past tense.

I remember when you were waiting on your bed quietly our first day of college, and flashed that big smile when I entered our dorm room. I was a little nervous choosing the bed next to you, but your positive energy radiated and it was something contagious that drew me in. That bleach blonde hair of yours and those pearly whites that you religiously whitened every Thursday night, made me feel right at home, like I was back in Texas. There is simply a presence in your nature that is so comforting and I think we both knew our friendship was inevitable from the start.

Although I didn't know much about modern orthodoxy, that didn't make a difference to you. In fact, you saw it as an opportunity to show me Judaism in the most beautiful light. Many people see it as a red flag and turn the other shoulder the minute I say I didn't go the seminary and went to public school, but you saw it as an opportunity to teach me not only about religion, but how to bring meaning and feeling to each experience in life.

When I would ask you those perplexing questions about Jewish identity and religion, you always knew the perfect thing to say. You'd calm me down and say "Corrie, there's nothing wrong with calling ourselves spiritual, take a breather, leave all those labels at the door, and let love become your religion".

Because we are both artists, our connection runs very deep. Artists are complicated people with creative minds, wild hearts, and a mystery behind their daily lives. I think this is what made us such a great team, and so compatible for three years. This is why it was so easy to become close to you Jules, and why you felt it so easy to let me in. I knew when you wanted to be left alone, when you needed a laugh, an outfit, or even a roll of sushi, and deep down you knew why it was so very important to come to every single one of my shows, as it was not only to support me, but for the art itself. You came to me when you needed to decompress from a long day, or when you got that fire in your eyes and wanted to take on the city.

I hope you know how much of a light and example you are to all of us girls. You have a childish, playful heart yet a wise mind, which is something I will forever admire and cherish. I know how much you love snow, and when the sun was setting and all of us girls were walking up that snowy hill, after putting you to sleep, we felt your strong, confident presence surround us. I promise for you I'll continue to be a child at heart, love more deeply, laugh more loudly, use my words more wisely and thrive on the memorable experiences that make life worth living, just as you did so gracefully.

You held your head high for all to see, focusing on the sustainable rather than the attainable. Never coming too close but always at arm's reach, your veins filled with passion, your heart could never be captured. An anchor deep in the sea, Jules you hold steady forever a part of me.

Aeschylus once said that "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom, through the awful grace of God". Sweet dreams our beautiful Jules. Sometimes angels fly away too soon.

All my love,
Corrie



Dear Julia,

Over the past fifteen years I have had the privilege of creating many memories with you: From our days at Maimonides to our time together in Israel, and most recently our time-shared at Stern. The thing I will remember most about you is the fact that you were always smiling and laughing.

Your laughter was extremely contagious. You loved being silly and sharing funny stories with your family and friends. Most of my memories with you involve us laughing about ridiculous things we had experienced throughout our day, funny stories from our past, or the many inside jokes we shared.

You were the most caring and supportive person I ever knew. You constantly did your best to make everyone else in your life happy. You wanted people to enjoy their lives as much as you enjoyed yours.

After spending an extra semester in Israel I was very worried about coming back to America and going to Stern since I was coming in halfway through the year. Little did I know, there was no reason to be nervous, because the second I walked in through the doors at Stern, you were there to greet me with a huge smile and open arms.

You spent the next few weeks showing me around and introducing me to all of the new friends you had made. I instantly felt as though I was at home because you were with me. Whenever we were together you always encouraged me to do the things I was too afraid to do while reminding me to believe in myself. When you were around everyone lived their lives to the fullest.

You brought joy to all of those around you. I am extremely fortunate and blessed to have had such an incredible friend to share my life with. Thank you Julia for being my guide, my anchor and my best friend.

Love,
Paige



NEWS

Shalva Ginsparg
Sara Olson

The next Step towards Solving the Financial Crisis: Departments Urged to Cut Costs

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faculty at this university has to be to serve students.” Botman maintained that while research is still a priority, the “teacher-scholar model becomes prominent.”

Though professors have taken on more hours, their salaries have not increased. Instead, due to a salary freeze and a cut in retirement from 7% to 2%, professors have their own financial woes to contend with. A recent increase in healthcare coverage costs has only exacerbated the situation.

One faculty member said that she ran the numbers and discovered that the cut has cost her some \$30,000 in retirement funds. A suggestion was made for professors to instead take the 5% cut to their salaries, which, unlike their retirement funds, do not compound over time. Other professors noted that they cannot afford this cut in salary.

The very premise that “austerity” — cutting administration and increasing teaching loads — is the real solution to YU’s financial troubles was met with skepticism at the meeting. One professor even likened the strategy to trying to fix a leak by pouring out individual buckets of water

instead of plugging up the hole.

Talk of restructuring departments led to a broader discussion about what the university is “trying to be” and why students choose to attend Yeshiva University.

One faculty member suggested that YU might need to stop trying “to be all things to all people” and that “maybe we need to make a choice between the Harvard and the Touro.”

Overall, morale amongst the faculty seemed low, with members expressing both anxiety over the lack of job security and frustration that they have been called upon to bear the burden of the university’s financial straits, though they had little to no involvement in the university’s financial decisions.

Botman acknowledged that current faculty members have been handed a bitter pill to swallow.

Professors come to YU for “noble things,” to teach and “launch students,” she said. “We don’t come to higher education to restructure.”

Assurance was given to faculty at the meeting that though the university is now “in a distressed, emergency situation” marked by restructuring, cutting, and downsizing, it will “one day” be able to focus on “rebuilding.”

Brookdale Rodents Banished

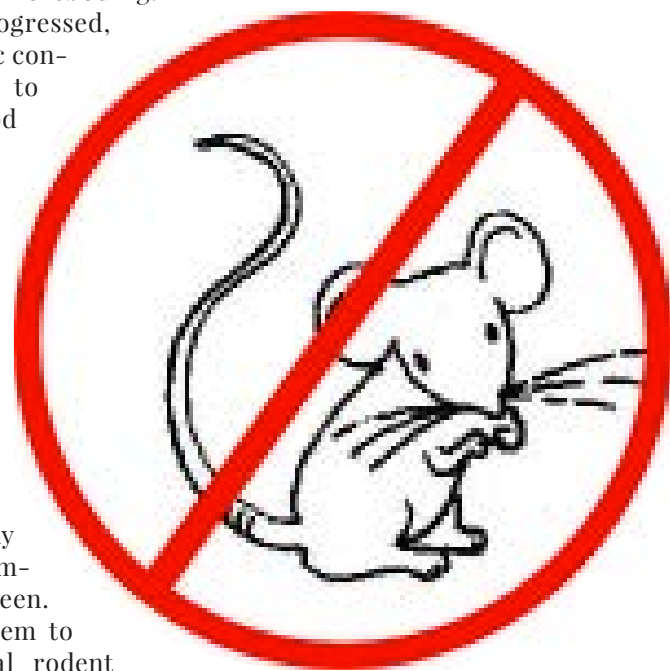
Riva Tropp It’s been a tough time for Brookdale residents lately, but the mice that plagued the main residence hall last semester seem to have finally been eradicated. When students returned after the summer break to Stern’s largest dorm building, most were startled to hear of the infestation. More information quickly followed. Notices were soon plastered on every door and hallway bulletin board, informing students of the situation. One warned against keeping open food in the dorms. “Mice eat three grams... a day,” one letter stipulated. “We do not want to feed them.” Despite conventional advice, cleanliness of the dorm room seemed of little consequence, as mice had been found in the tidiest of rooms, having passed over messier setups. Incidents of mouse-spotting seemed especially prevalent around the middle and basement areas of the building, but even mice-free rooms lived with an uncomfortable sense of foreboding.

As the situation progressed, RAs handed out plastic containers for students to safely store their food away from the rodents’ reach. Another notice was plastered on doors to further explain the situation, causing some students to wonder if visiting parents would be treated to information about the mice too. If parents were officially informed, it is hard to say what their overall impression would have been. Many New Yorkers seem to regard the occasional rodent

infestation as an inevitable occurrence, a mere side effect of living in the city.

In contrast to those who would take a dismissive stance, Stern College seems to have dealt with the situation admirably well. According to Ms. Rachel Kraut of the housing office, “Yeshiva University treated the building extensively, bringing in experts to assess the problem and address the issues.” She added that “Students were also very responsible in following specific instructions.”

Since the new semester, no reports have been made about mice in Brookdale Hall. “Not lately, no,” Eleorah Sandman (’16) says when inquired. “My roommates and I have been relieved to return to our mouse-free room.” Other Brookdale residents can peek out of their rooms and breathe a sigh of relief. It seems Stern’s exterminators have eliminated the scourge.



France of 2015: Living with Fear

Sara Olson It was a little over a month ago that the city of Paris, France was rocked by three consecutive days of terrorist violence. Twelve were killed in the January 7th attack on the offices of Charlie Hebdo, the satirical magazine that had gained publicity for publishing controversial cartoons of the Islamic prophet Mohammed in 2006 and 2011. A French police woman was killed the following day in the Parisian suburb of Montrouge by another gunman, dressed similarly to the Hebdo attackers.

The violence culminated on January 9th with the attack on a kosher supermarket in the Parisian suburb Porte de Vincennes, where nineteen people were taken hostage, four of whom were killed: Yoav Hattab, François-Michel Saada, Philippe Braham, and Yohan Cohen. Once again the Jewish communities of France and the world found themselves facing yet another slaughter of innocents, killed for the crime of being Jewish.

It is no secret that anti-Semitic tensions have been on the rise in Europe for months.

“The recent attacks in France have brought greater awareness upon myself and my family within Britain, higher levels of caution in regards to

trips within Europe and a strengthening of community caution,” said Natasha Bassalian, a London native and a junior at Stern College. “Within my younger cousin’s class, several new French children have enrolled this year.”

Bassalian did note that the situation has been more peaceful in Britain than in France. “During times of protest, there was a sense of unease, but things have remained relatively peaceful, [though a] pro-Palestinian and Iranian presence is beginning to strengthen,” she noted. “Though I don’t feel that [my sense of belonging in Britain] has changed in regards to the current unease within Europe, I do ultimately feel my real home of safety and protection is in Israel,” she concluded.

Esther Eliacheff is a native of Strasbourg, France who graduated from Stern College this past January. The week of terrorist attacks, she said, was shocking.

“The attack at Charlie Hebdo was so unexpected for me. It’s terrible to say it, but Jews always get used to a certain level of violence around them. After the murder of Alan Halimi [in 2006] and the school slaughter in Toulouse [in 2012], Jews in France knew

that it was only a matter of months or years until the next attack.”

“One of the young men killed during this [supermarket] attack was a friend of my friend,” she continued. “The news of his death was heartbreaking.”

Though the media has made a point of late to highlight the rising anti-Semitic tensions in France, according to Eliacheff this is old news.

“Anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon in France. I’ve always felt it to a certain point,” she said. “A friend of mine was assaulted for wearing a Kippa few years ago and I’ve been insulted for being Jewish a few times, but unfortunately, we don’t pay enough attention to these everyday harassments I also live in a still peaceful city outside of Paris, but some of my friends from Paris and other “hot” — that is, dangerous — cities such as Toulouse or Sarcelles can’t even go to shul on Shabbat and try to hide their Judaism as much as possible outside their home.”

Since the attacks in Paris in January, the situation in Europe has remained serious. A report by the Jerusalem Post on January 25th stated that the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), a prominent think tank in

Jerusalem, had presented Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu with a contingency plan for absorbing France’s roughly 120,000 Jews. In Britain, a Neo-Nazi group was reported to be planning an “anti-Jewification” rally in the Stamford Hill neighborhood of London, the center of London’s Jewish community. And on February 3rd, a job posting on a French job site was found with the criterion, “if possible, not Jewish”, though the company claims that this was caused by a hacker.

Despite living with the tension of being Jewish in France, Eliacheff still has a love for her home country, but admits that at this point, “I don’t see myself building my life in France anymore.”

“Living in New York has shown me how it is possible to fully enjoy a Jewish and secular education without the fear of being insulted or threatened by my Judaism,” said Eliacheff. “I remember my surprise when I saw for the first time young men wearing their Kippot in the street without shame, or holding proudly an Israeli flag. I feel freer and more secure as a Jew as I walk down the street.”

YU Global: A New Educational Venture Coming to a Stern Classroom near You

Esti Hirt With the beginning of a new spring semester, students across YU's campuses are dipping their toes into new classes and learning to navigate the different tides of unfamiliar teachers and departments. Amidst the routine changes brought by a new semester, some Yeshiva and Stern College students are feeling even more significant differences than usual. A number of students are enrolled in classes that are based on a "blended learning" model. This means that while a portion of class occurs in the classroom with a teacher standing in front, another segment occurs online via PowerPoint and other multi-media methods.

These classes are the result of a new Yeshiva University initiative called "YU Global," which, according to their website, aims to create engaging, innovative, and rigorous learning experiences for students on YU's existing campuses and around the world in online certificate, degree, and 'life-long learning' (meaning learning without credit) programs. As of last year, blended courses were offered in such departments as Hebrew, English, Computer Science, Economics, Accounting, and Marketing. Next semester the History department, amongst others, will offer blended courses as well.

The introduction of these courses and the plan to introduce more of them next semester is in part the result of a decision made in mid-September when the board of trustees directed the academic side of the

university to balance the budget. One of the solutions concocted during that meeting was a plan to incorporate more blended courses. The logic is that smaller departments, such as the History department, will be able to offer more courses with fewer teachers. For instance, if a teacher generally teaches a course at Stern on both Monday and Wednesday mornings, using the new blended method the professor and students will only need to be in the actual classroom on Monday morning, with an online component to be completed sometime during the week. Therefore, the professor now has Wednesday morning open to offer another class either on the Stern or YC campus. This would help the budget in the sense that it requires fewer teachers without needing to decrease the amount of courses in the department.

According to an article written by Avi Mendelson in the December issue of *The Commentator*, blended learning has met mixed reviews from students and teachers. Following the meeting in mid-September regarding the budget, all department heads were made aware of the blended learning plan and were told to figure out ways to incorporate it into their departments. While some professors are open to the new model with few reservations, like Professor Gillian Steinberg of the YC English department, many professors, like Professor William Hawkins of the YC Economics department, are still very skeptical.

According to a study conducted by Harvard University based on the blended courses they offered in 2013, blended learning has what to offer, but does not beat the setting of a traditional classroom in terms of academic advantages. The study results observed that students responded more to the course structure and execution of blended learning than to the actual online and blended elements; that is, having a very structured class and schedule worked well for students but the actual online, at-home material was not favorable.

Additionally, students were found to cut-corners when it came to the online components, such as skimming through the videos and PowerPoint slides, or not looking at them at all. This in turn affected actual valuable class time, for large portions of the classes were spent covering material that the students were meant to cover on their own. A student at YC in a blended learning economics class expressed this very complaint in Mendelson's article as well.

The Harvard study also found that the students valued the ability to learn at their own pace, which blended learning provides, but craved mean-

ingful in-person interactions, which were even more limited as a result of having only one class per week. The study indicated a qualitative difference between having to take time out of one's schedule in order to ask a question or have a discussion with a teacher, versus having that opportunity built in during a class. Additionally, a big component of asking questions is having not just the teacher, but the presence of fellow students to respond and offer their own input, an opportunity that is minimized with blended learning due to less class time.

The blended learning model clearly has costs and benefits; the question is how to balance them. According to a study in the *Journal of Educational Technology and Society* published by the International Forum of Educational Technology and Society, "it is important to construct equilibrium between e-learning and face to face environments, in view of the advantages of both methods, during the process of designing a blended learning environment."

Perhaps Yeshiva University and YU Global will be able to strike that balance.



Einstein Merger Finally Pending as Students Take a Stand

Observer Staff Both Montefiore Medical Center's and Yeshiva University's Boards announced today that they have voted unanimously on the basic terms of a merger between the two institutions. This announcement follows a rally that took place at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where Einstein's dean Allen Spiegel announced to two-hundred students that an agreement between Yeshiva University and Montefiore Medical Center was renewed and close to reaching a finalized agreement.

This rally follows a meeting that was held at the Einstein campus on January 26th encouraging graduate students to urge Yeshiva University to negotiate a deal with Montefiore Medical Center in transferring the daily operations and finances of Einstein to Montefiore. Earlier, on January 3rd, the faculty senate at Einstein held a unanimous vote of no confidence in Yeshiva University.

The meeting was held in the aftermath of the news surrounding the termination of Einstein and Montefiore's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was established last July. The original MOU stated that Yeshiva University would shift financial responsibility and management of Einstein to Montefiore, including its research capabilities, but would remain the degree-granting institution of the medical school. According to the press release issued to *The Observer* in December,

"Einstein...would cede \$100 million in research debt to Montefiore."

Upon termination of the MOU in December, there was an increased concern for many employees and students of Einstein. Primarily, the worry was that under the auspices of Alvarez and Marsal Holdings LLC, whom YU hired in order to restructure the finances of the university, many research positions without sufficient grant money would be terminated.

According to a widely-circulated student transcript of the meeting held on January 26th, the goal of the meeting was to discuss ways of increasing the pressure on Yeshiva University to finalize a deal with Montefiore. The meeting was sponsored by the MSTP (Medical Scientist Training Program, or MD/PhD program) Student Council and the Graduate (PhD) Student Council, and began with Dr. Myles Akhbas, the director of the MSTP program at Einstein, addressing the students regarding both Yeshiva University's and Einstein's financial deficits. Einstein itself is operating at a deficit due the building of the Price Center Research pavilion in 2008, and Dr. Akhbas stressed that although Einstein has its own endowment, it is controlled by YU, making it difficult for Einstein to manage its own debt.

It is important to note, however, that one source at Einstein expressed concern that no representation from Yeshiva University was present at this

meeting to properly articulate the YU vision in detail. No one present at the meeting participated directly in the negotiations so many of the monetary figures mentioned in the transcript are unverified and uncited.

Dr. Akhbas summarized the steps Einstein has taken to protest YU's failure in reaching an agreement with Montefiore. In December, both the MSTP and Graduate Student Councils sent a letter to the YU President and Board sharing their concerns for the future of the world-renowned research institution.

Additionally, the faculty involved government officials in their efforts to convince YU to construct a deal with Montefiore. On January 19th, the science chairs sent a letter to the New York State Attorney General and Board of Regents asking to intercede in transferring the medical school's degree granting power to Einstein itself. The Einstein board also pressured YU via political leaders from the local and regional areas, based on the fact that Einstein is a major employer in the Bronx.

Dr. Akhbas claimed that Montefiore is prepared to accept financial responsibility of Einstein, and Montefiore CEO Steven Safyer met with the basic science chairs to confirm his support in negotiating a deal with YU. Montefiore is unwilling, however, to bail YU out of its financial debt, seeing as Einstein has its own deficit to be dealt with.

The transcript of the meeting

records the speculated desire of Alvarez and Marsal to rid Einstein of its research program and cut faculty who do not have sufficient grants to pay employee salaries because they view research as the cause of Einstein's deficits. Alvarez and Marsal would also rent out the Price Center and move faculty out of that building, closing the graduate school.

All students who were contacted directly by Observer staff regarding the meeting and the rally refused comment, indicating the gravity of the situation.

Student leaders emphasized that the purpose of the rally was not to protest against Einstein as an institution, but against YU's obstruction of the proposed merger with Montefiore and the vision of YU's consulting firm for the future of Einstein. Indeed, students were told to carefully consider their representation of Einstein at the rally because improper representation could affect research funding negatively as well as deter prospective applicants.

As the response to today's rally indicates, student action and protests are clearly being taken seriously by the YU administration. The announcement today that the Yeshiva University merger with Montefiore Medical Center is in the final stages of approval will hopefully come to fruition in the coming months and ensure the future security of Einstein's researchers and graduate students.

Charedi Women Speak Up about “No Representation, No Vote” Campaign

Naamah Schwartz In early December, a campaign was launched to guarantee a spot for Charedi women on the electoral lists of the Charedi United Torah Judaism and Shas parties in the Knesset. The “No Representation, No Vote” campaign, led by Charedi female activists, calls for the leadership of Charedi parties to reserve at least one spot on party lists for a woman. If their demands are not met, campaign members are calling on Charedi women to abstain from voting for Charedi parties.

Within one week of the campaign launch, the group had obtained 3,000 likes on Facebook. According to *The Jerusalem Post*, women in the Charedi community are generally encouraged to vote in order to garner more support for Charedi parties, but they are not allowed to hold positions of communal leadership for modesty reasons, as well as to maintain social norms.

According to members of the “No Representation, No Vote” campaign, current Charedi party leadership in the Knesset is not addressing women’s concerns, such as employment conditions, which are worse for Charedi women than for their secular counterparts. This is a particularly pressing issue because the employment rates for Charedi women are close to double the amount for Charedi men, as many Charedi women support their families almost single-handedly.

The Jerusalem Post reports that Charedi MKs failed to attend Knesset hearings on issues of women’s health and employment. One of the activists, Esti Shushan, is quoted as saying: “We

need to bring our voice to the Knesset because women are simply not being heard.”

The group has also begun a fundraising campaign online, through which they hope to raise NIS 30,000, although as of December they had only managed to raise NIS 1,600. A post on the Facebook group reads, “Elections are coming and it doesn’t matter if you’re a Shas voter, an Aguda voter, non-hassidic, Sephardi, or hassidic, you have no representation in the Charedi parties, you are not counted.”

The group acknowledges that it will be a challenge to reach their target audience because of the widespread lack of Internet and social media access in the Charedi community. Therefore, part of the campaign will be the distribution and posting of flyers in Charedi neighborhoods, as well as through advertisements in Charedi publications, email, and Whatsapp.

Since the campaign was launched, Rabbi Mordechai Blau, a prominent member of the United Torah Judaism party, has made certain implied threats against these activists and any woman who supports the campaign by not voting for Charedi parties. *The Jerusalem Post* quotes one of his statements: “Any woman who comes close to a party which is not under the guidance of the great rabbis will leave [her marriage] without her ketuba [without the money owed to her in case of divorce], and it will be forbidden to learn in her educational institutions, or to purchase any product from her, and it will be a religious obligation to remove all her children from all institutions.”

He was also quoted as saying that any Charedi woman who ran for a non-Charedi party “will be dealt with accordingly and will pay dearly for it.” An investigation has been launched into these threats, which could “constitute a criminal offense in accordance with Clause 122 of the Knesset Elections Law,” says Supreme Court Justice Salim Joubran. He also says, “An attempt to influence, through threats, a citizen from voting according to his own conscience (and even to run in elections) is forbidden in the most severe terms and this practice must be rejected in every manner as long as [such threats] exist.”

However, according to Haaretz, Rabbi Chaim Amsellem, a politician who “represents the more progressive edge of the ultra-Orthodox spectrum,” offered a different take on the “No Representation, No Vote” campaign.

“It is time that Haredi women were represented in Haredi parties,” he said.

He also stated that even if these parties don’t allow female representation on their own tickets, women “shouldn’t be prevented from running on other tickets, and shouldn’t be boycotted or ostracized.”

He is further quoted as calling Rabbi Blau’s remarks “stupid” and unrepresentative of the opinion of most Charedim. Finally, he promised to try to “advance the entrance of Haredi women into the Knesset so they will have appropriate representation.”

Shoshana Halpern (15), President of the Women’s Studies Society and editor-in-chief of *Kol Hamevaser*,

weighed in on the “No Representation, No Vote” campaign.

“It is incredibly brave of these women to stand up against the societal norm of their Charedi community,” she said.

Sarah Robinson (15), who has been involved with the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) and one day hopes to be a Yoetzet Halacha, says that the Charedi communities in Israel “remove women from the public sphere in an attempt to maintain the ‘sanctity’ of the community.” She says that depriving Charedi women the opportunity to hold a leadership role is an “injustice” and a “shame.”

“It’s not only unfortunate; I think it’s immoral,” she added.

As for the women who are campaigning for representation in the Charedi parties, Robinson says, “When we consider the fact that Charedi women are starting to make a political movement, it is actually that much more radical, because they’re coming from a context, a society, and a culture that is preventing them from engaging in anything of the sort.”

In regard to the threats from Rabbi Blau, Robinson says that she believes that they are coming “from a place of fear. I’m not surprised that someone would react in this way, but I can’t say that I’m not disturbed.”

Robinson expressed her gratitude that Stern has clubs like TAC and SCWSC with all-female leadership, which she says gives more female students the opportunity to hold leadership positions and can prepare them for future leadership roles.

Giving High School Students the College EDge

Rebecca Garber If you were in Furst Hall on Wednesday, December 3rd or passed by the Sky Caf on Friday, December 5th, you may have noticed your fellow YU students engaged in conversation with high school students from the George Washington YABC and the Bronx Community High School. Your fellow YU students were participating in two mentorship events organized by College EDge, a YU-started and managed not-for-profit organization.

Founded in 2010 by YC student Yonah Rubin, College EDge is devoted to preparing underrepresented public high school students for higher education, be it college or college alternatives. The organization came into being as a result of Yonah’s experience tutoring at a public high school in Washington Heights, where

he realized that many local students were unaware of how to apply to, and succeed in, college.

The December 3rd and 5th mentorship events were designed to help underrepresented high school students with their college applications.

“Many of the students attending these mentorship events had not previously considered their post-secondary options, so the mentors helped them search for colleges that would match their financial criteria and further their career goals,” said Stern College for Women senior Elianne Neuman, who serves as President of College EDge. “Once they had narrowed down a list of colleges that suited the student’s needs, the mentors then helped the students make sure that they knew of the admission

requirements.”

Both mentorship events began with a short icebreaker, and then the YU mentors were paired one-on-one with a high school student. According to Neuman, this one-on-one format “creates a much more intimate atmosphere and allows for a much more personalized mentorship experience. The mentor can really act as a role model and as a resource to the student, and provide them with individualized, targeted advice. The goal is that the mentor will help the student through their entire college application, be it their personal statement or financial aid forms.”

The George Washington YABC was the pilot school for this one-on-one mentorship format in the fall of 2013. After receiving positive feedback from the students, school administrators, and state officials, College EDge decided to offer this program to other schools in the area. The December 5th program was the inaugural one-on-one event with the Bronx Community High School, and the school will be continuing to work with College EDge throughout the spring semester.

Stern College for Women junior Jannah Eichenbaum, the Director of Mentorship for College EDge for the Beren Campus, was responsible for planning these two mentorship events along with Or Mossaiov, the Director of Mentorship for the Wilf Campus.

“I could tell many of the students were nervous at first, but the Yeshiva University mentors put them at ease and really got the students out of their

shells,” said Eichenbaum.

As far as the mentors go, Neuman believes that the YU student mentors really have what it takes to get the job done. “Our mentors come from very diverse backgrounds. We have in-towners, out-of-towners, first years, super-seniors, pre-meds, pre-laws—the whole range. It is great because the public high school students who attend the events also have incredibly varied interests and backgrounds. I think that we were able to pair mentors with students who worked well together.”

The program has proved rewarding for the mentors as well.

“I like having a chance to work with a totally different population than I normally would. It’s a really rewarding experience, and it’s not a major time commitment,” said Amanda Cinnamon, who is majoring in Education and who has been serving as a mentor for College EDge for the past year. She continued by saying that “sometimes students just need to get started, and once they have some basic knowledge, they can do the rest on their own or with minimal guidance.”

Sophomore Miriam Pearl Klahr, who is majoring in Jewish Studies and Mathematics, said that “through running programs like College EDge, we show that we are not only concerned with our own community, but that we take responsibility for those around us—both Jews and non-Jews alike.”



The Leftist Response to Terror in France

Continued from page 1

attack.” This is not the first time Berlin has made such comments; in 2012, she tweeted “Zionists ran the Holocaust and the Concentration Camps.”

Berlin’s Free Gaza co-founder, Margaret Thompson, was quick to grab hold of the idea as well, posting on Twitter several hours later, “#Hebdo killings indefensible. Can’t help thinking #JSIL Mossad false flag though. Killers spoke with perfect French accents. Time will tell.” The hashtag JSIL stands for “Jewish State in the Levant,” and her use of it is part of a wider campaign to equate the State of Israel with the terrorist group ISIS/ISIL.

This conspiracy theory was picked up by International Business Times. Their article opened with a disclaimer by stating that nobody knew who was responsible for the recent attacks, but jumped to add that “fingers are being pointed” at Mossad and the Israeli government.

“[Is] Israel Venting Its Fury for France’s Recognition of a Palestinian State?” asked the article’s title, only somewhat rhetorically. The article pointed out that Israel had interfered in European politics before, in an attempt to “further their Jewish claims.” After fury erupted on social media, the story was quickly removed from the news agency’s website and an apology was issued.

CNN news anchor, Jim Clancy, claimed that the Twitter accounts @elderofziyon (the handle of a Jewish-centric blog), and @JewsMakingNews (“dedicated to fingering #Jewish main players & their minions in news stories”), the latter of which

uses hashtags like JewCult and AntiFreeSpeechJewTerrorists, were working in tandem to promote a pro-Israel, anti-Muslim sentiment on the internet. When confronted on Twitter, Clancy responded, “Get a grip, junior...You and the Hasbara team need to pick on some cripple on the edge of the herd.” Hasbara refers to public diplomacy on behalf of Israel, specifically the kind that promotes positive views and stories.

Clancy has since deleted his Twitter account and departed from CNN, although neither CNN nor Clancy gave a reason for his departure.

More fuel was poured on the fire during a news report on French television. Live footage of the January 11 rally in Paris to mourn the victims of the attacks shows a woman wearing a “Boycott Israel” t shirt, which seems to link Israel to the attack on Charlie Hebdo. A screenshot of the woman circulated widely on social media, sparking outrage amongst users, who pointed out that the solidarity rally was a place to mourn, not make political statements or accusations.

During the same rally, BBC anchor Tim Wilcox threw in his two cents. While interviewing a Jewish French woman at this same rally who said that it felt like Europe was “going back to 1930s” and that people needed to admit that Jews were being targeted specifically, he interrupted her to say, “The Palestinians suffer hugely at Jewish hands as well.”

FEATURES

Shira Kaye
Talia Stern

Note the use of the word “Jewish” instead of “Israeli”, which seemed to imply to many that French Jews got what they deserved. Both the U.S. and E.U. include as part of their definition of anti-Semitism, “holding Jews accountable for the actions of Israel.” Wilcox has since apologized for his “poorly phrased” comment and is being investigated by the BBC. Incidentally, the woman was the daughter of a Holocaust survivor.

Jewish Voices for Peace (JVC), a left wing group that focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, published an article entitled “The Paris Murders & the Islamophobic Backlash” in which a mere half sentence could be spared for their fellow Jews killed “in the kosher supermarket.” The rest of the article spoke about the importance of closing ranks around Muslims, who were in danger of violent retribution, as well as an obligation to condemn the cartoons as anti-Muslim, claiming that they qualify as hate speech against a “marginalized and targeted...population.”

Writing on the news blog Monday, Chloe Patton, a fellow at the International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding at the University of South Australia, spoke about the bigotry facing Muslims the world over, framing the cartoons as, “yet another assault on Muslims’ right

to citizenship in its fullest sense.” There is not a single mention of the four Jewish victims in her article.

Stern student Shoshana Levin was in Israel during the terrorist attacks in Paris; an impromptu memorial sprang up outside her hotel on King George Street. When asked what she thought about the comments made by Berlin, Clancy, et al, she said, “There’s no such thing as anti-Israel; it’s just anti-Semitism. What’s really scary is that there are terrorist attacks happening all over the world and people refuse to see that these are done by terrorist organizations.”

All of this seems to be proof that there are many who believe that the actions of radical Islam and terrorist groups are warranted. The far too common belief is that these attacks and killings are justified by Israel’s actions, or even its mere existence. If Berlin, Thompson, and others like them, really want the public to believe that they are fierce proponents of human rights, then they should have condemned the attacks as terrorism and barbarity. Instead, they beat their chests and call foul on Israel. Worse, they hide behind the façade of human rights to do so. Campaigning for equal rights and moral treatment of all is a noble pursuit. But it seems that these days, people aren’t so much pro-Palestinian as they are anti-Jews.

Upcoming Israeli Elections: Are We Informed?

Natasha Bassalian A general feeling present among the overwhelming population of students at Stern College is a sense of love and pride for, and connection to, Israel. Israel latches deeply onto the hearts of many Stern students, whether they have come from Israel to get a degree here in New York, or have spent time in Israel studying prior to university.

There are various areas of Israeli current events about which to stay informed and updated, including the ties between the US and Israel, international affairs between Israel and the world, and Israeli internal affairs, such as the upcoming elections.

From the results of a small poll consisting of 30 students within the Stern student body, 70% of the students stated that they are not specifically following the elections (and generally indicated a sense of regret about not doing so), whereas 30% of the students responded that they are keeping up to date with the unfolding of events.

Upon being asked as to whether she is following the present elections in Israel, Stern student Esti Hirst said, “I have been following randomly, reading articles sporadically.” When asked for a specific opinion, Hirst remarked, “My ability to advocate are more on the outskirts in terms of internal Israeli politics; however, I am confident in my [ability to advocate] for external

affairs such as the Israel-American relationship.”

Other girls feel similarly inadequate in their scope of knowledge in regards to the upcoming elections. “I am following here and there, but I don’t feel I am informed enough about all factors of the election to voice a thoroughly educated opinion,” said Naatsha Zadikoff, another student at Stern.

The national elections for the Knesset (the governing body within Israel) are held every 4 years, unless they are called for earlier. As opposed to voting for a specific candidate (as is done in the American system), voters in Israel vote for the party that they feel they most support, and the head of the winning party becomes prime minister and is responsible for heading the government. There are 120 Knesset seats overall, and each party wins its seats based on the percentage of national vote that they receive.

The government needs the confidence of the Knesset to exist, and a party alone needs 61% of the national vote to govern to its own accord. To this date, this has never occurred. Therefore, a government is formed with a coalition of several parties, and the opposition remains outside of this governing body.

In late November, 2014, the then governing coalition of Israel had serious disagreements in regards to

economic practices, such as the VAT tax, as well as the “Jewish Nation State” bill which states that Israel is a Jewish state first, and then a democratic state. Upon firing Yair Lapid of the Yesh Atid Party, and Tzipi Livni of the Hatnua party, who as of December 10th have joined forces to form “The Zionist Camp,” Benjamin Netanyahu (head of the right winged, secular Likud party and current Prime Minister of Israel) called for dissolution of the governing coalition.

Netanyahu is quoted in *The Jerusalem Post* (JP) on December 2nd, 2014 saying, “The government was under constant threats and ultimatums. The country cannot be run in the current situation. Elections are not a good thing, but a government that is attacked from inside is seven times as bad.”

Within the same JP article, Yair Lapid is quoted, “It pains us that the Prime Minister decided to act irresponsibly and drag Israel – for petty political reasons – to unnecessary elections that will harm the economy.”

Habayit Hayehudi is another popular political party, led by Naftali Bennett. The main platform of the party vehemently opposes a division of the State of Israel. For Bennet, Jerusalem is and always will be the capital of a Jewish state.

Shani Hava, an international

student from Israel currently enrolled in Sy Syms School of Business, expressed her frustration at the parties within Israel and the political games they seem to be playing. “It is *schichut*,” she stated, using the word that means ‘corruption’ in Hebrew. “These political parties are not focusing on what the people want, they are focusing more on showing off and bettering each other.” Shani is referring to the celebrity additions certain parties have been making to the Knesset list in order to popularize themselves.

“The potential outcomes of the elections within Israel are disheartening and frightening. While I do think a combination of Likud and Habayit Hayehudi in their extreme demeanor is the worst option, I am not confident in the other side either,” said a student at Stern who preferred to remain anonymous. “Because of evidence of past dealings, what I foresee is terrible for Israel. I am unsure of the other side, though.”

As a small yet growing state, Israel faces conflict of opinion and effective leadership over all aspects of internal affairs. Generally, there may be a sense of anticipation and worry among students in regards to the uncertain future of Israel based on the potential outcomes of the upcoming Israeli elections.

The Power of an Individual: The HONY Fundraiser

Meira Nagel Most of us have seen pictures from Brandon Stanton's blog, Humans of New York, better known by its acronym HONY, plastered across various social media outlets over the past few years. Stanton recently began a fundraising campaign that has so far raised over 1 million dollars for an underprivileged middle school in Brooklyn. This fundraiser, which has caught the attention of major news outlets, talk shows, millions of people, and most recently—the President of the United States—began with a simple photograph of a boy who was inspired by his educator.

Two weeks ago, Stanton came across a 13-year-old-boy, Vidal Chastanet, in Brownsville, a high-crime area. He snapped his picture and asked one of his standard questions: "Who has influenced you the most in your life?"

Vidal's response was striking for an eighth grade boy. He said the person who influenced him the most was his principal, Ms. Nadia Lopez.

"When we get in trouble, she doesn't suspend us. She calls us to her office and explains to us how society was built down around us. And she tells us that each time somebody fails out of school, a new jail cell gets built. And one time she made every student stand up, one at a time, and she told each one of us that we matter."

Stanton was then intrigued and went to meet Lopez at Mott Hall Bridges Academy. Ms. Lopez explained her mission at Mott Hall Bridges Academy to Stanton: "This is a neighborhood that doesn't necessarily expect much from our children, so at Mott Hall Bridges Academy we set our expectations very high. We don't call the children 'students,' we call them 'scholars.' Our color is purple. Our scholars wear purple and so do our staff. Because purple is the color of royalty. I want

my scholars to know that even if they live in a housing project, they are part of a royal lineage going back to great African kings and queens. They belong to a group of individuals who invented astronomy and math. And they belong to a group of individuals who have endured so much history and still overcome. When you tell people you're from Brownsville, their face cringes up. But there are children here that need to know that they are expected to succeed."

Stanton was awed by the school and the entire staff there, and asked what he would be able to do to help Ms. Lopez help the students. Stanton and Lopez decided to start a fundraiser to send incoming 6th grade students to Harvard for a week to see that they can belong to a bigger community and attain higher goals.

Stanton put together a crowdfunding effort on www.indiegogo.com to raise money toward this powerful campaign. The goal of the fundraiser and the trip, he explains on the fundraising page, is for Ms. Lopez's 'scholars' to "know what it feels like to stand on the campus of one of the world's top schools, and know that they belong. She [Ms. Lopez] thinks the experience will broaden their horizons and expand their idea of their own potential."

The campaign began originally aiming for \$100,000, enough for three years of field trips to Harvard. Now, with \$1.185 million raised as of today, they have 10 years of Harvard field trips, along with 10 years of summer programs, and additionally, over \$300,000 for scholarships, named after Vidal, with Vidal himself being one of the first recipients.

One of the most moving aspects about this fundraiser is how it came at such a critical time for Ms. Lopez. This was depicted in a moving talk show segment on Ellen DeGeneres's show,

in which Ms. Lopez described that the week before the picture of Vidal was taken, she was in a place in which she was broken.

"I think every educator gets there," she said. "I went home, broke down, and cried. I told my mother I couldn't do it anymore." She explained that her mother told her to pray, and that God had put her in this school for a reason. This fundraiser came at a time for Ms. Lopez when she thought her work "wasn't making a difference and there was a lot of violence going on in the world." She continued to explain that she woke up Monday morning to see Vidal's photograph, with thousands upon thousands of encouraging comments, bolstering and reassuring her that she was doing the right thing.

Professor Joy Ladin, the head of the English department at Stern College, wholeheartedly relates to this sentiment. "On the one hand, being a teacher feels great—I have all these students looking at me, ready to hear what I have to say," she explained. "However, there's also a sense of isolation within that relationship. I really don't have any idea if anything I'm saying is being understood or heard."

Pausing reflectively, she continued, "I like when the balance of power in the classroom shifts—when students begin doing the talking. That's where the action is. I feel as though the validation of teaching happens when a student repeats something you taught in their own words, with their own interpretation and meaning. When something I say is reflected back at me—that is when I truly learn."

There's a saying that Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks often says, typically when referring to the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson: "Good leaders create followers. Great leaders create leaders." Teachers have a tremendous responsibility as leaders in a

classroom to create leaders, to enable their students to teach.

"The faculty here has been instrumental in shaping my fields of interest," said Shira Huberfeld, a junior at Stern College. "I became fascinated with art history after a first semester introduction to art history course with Dr. Marnin Young, and it has led me to become the Arts and Culture editor of *The Observer* and an Art History minor."

She further explained, "The course was a prerequisite and not something I would have considered studying had it not been for the positive impression I gained from my professor."

Mimi Adler, a junior at Stern College as well, agreed that while teachers have inspired her with their passion about their job, she has "never really had a teacher make me feel awesome as an individual."

It's a hard balance to strike as a teacher—to remain distinct as an educator in the classroom, while giving students the feeling that they are crucial as an individual. "Enabling students to becoming leaders and making them feel as though they belong anywhere shouldn't be only focused on underprivileged students," Miriam Stock, a junior at Stern noted.

What Stanton, Vidal, and Ms. Lopez have all exemplified throughout this episode is that one never knows what lasting influence a single person can have. Ms. Lopez had not realized that the messages she was trying to imbue her students with were even reaching them. Vidal could not have known how strong of an effect his words would have on Stanton. And Stanton probably did not realize that starting a photography blog after becoming unemployed would end up changing the lives of millions of people.

Feeling Under the Weather? Health Care Options on Beren Campus

Menucha Lowenstein As the spring semester begins, stress levels are high and REM sleep cycles are practically nonexistent. Add that to the fact that there seems to be no time to exercise, it is no surprise that many students are feeling a bit under the weather.

The Brookdale Health Care Center should be your initial stop at the first sign of the sniffles. Located in room 2B of Brookdale Residence Hall, the Health Care Center is reminiscent of a traditional doctor's office in both its setup—it has an examination room and a waiting room—and its services. Staffed with a full time physician assistant (PA), the Health Center offers a variety of services; strep tests, immunizations, and processing medical forms, to name a few. The Health Center is free of charge to all current undergraduate students of Stern College (including those that do not dorm).

Mary Little, PA, has worked at the Health Center for 15 years. Students can expect a caring and safe experience at the Health Center while they are being helped. Students who are insured under insurance through Yeshiva University, Aetna, should be aware that any question regarding insurance coverage or payments should be addressed to Brian Kirkpatrick, whose contact information

is provided below. Students can obtain prescriptions as well as referrals to specialists under their health insurance, if needed. The Health Center also staffs a doctor who is available on certain days (please consult list of times below).

If the Health Center is closed (see box below for office hours), students can contact their RA or security guard on duty to speak with the GA, who can arrange to have an over the phone consultation with a doctor on call. However, this free service cannot provide students with prescriptions. Students also have the option to visit one of the local urgent care centers (see list below) to see a physician. There will likely be an associated charge with these services, however. Students should call to see if their insurance is accepted at these locations before visiting as well. If a student prefers to go to the hospital, NYU is near Beren Campus, but a patient must often wait several hours before being helped.

Stern College administration is committed to keeping its students healthy and well diligently provides a variety of affordable options. Students are encouraged to make use of the resources when necessary.

Beren Campus Student Health Center

Brookdale Residence Hall,
room 2B

Phone: (212) 340 - 7792

Monday - Thursday: 8:30 am -
noon, 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Friday: 8:30 am - noon, 1:00 pm -
2:30 pm

NYU Hospital

560 1st Avenue off of 30th Street

Urgent Care Clinics

New York Doctors: 205 Lexington
Ave., between 33rd and 32 Street

City MD: 361 3rd Ave., on the
corner of 37th Street

Docs: 55 East 34th St., between
Park and Madison Avenues

YU Insurance Questions:

Brian Kirkpatrick: (646) 592-4226



CJF-JDC's Winter Break Mission to Haiti

Elisheva Jacobov While winter break serves as a time for many students to relax, refresh, reflect and recharge after a strenuous semester, for fifteen selective, undergraduate Yeshiva University (YU) students, winter break was an opportunity to attend a service mission to Haiti. YU's Center for the Jewish Future (CJF) in conjunction with the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization, organized a seven day visit to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from January 11 to the 18.

Although the students only had a week to tour the country, meet with leaders of the community, and engage in service work, they gained a comprehensive understanding of Haitian culture; the challenges that face the country post the 2010 earthquake; as well as the hidden beauty of the country and its leaders.

Students spent their first day at Zanmi Beni, an integrated children's home, which serves as a safe haven for 64 displaced orphans who were relocated from hospitals where they were found after the earthquake. There, students engaged the children in various activities ranging from playing tennis and soccer, to coloring and playing vigorous games of Dominos.

For the next three days, YU students began their service work in Zoranje with the Foundation for Progress and Development (PRODEV), which was established in 1996 to

provide management, expertise, and curriculum, helping sustain a high standard network of schools across Haiti. Post the 2010 earthquake, PRODEV helped launch schooling, education, and psychosocial support, catering to over 3,000 children in Port-au-Prince. Students received the opportunity to hear from leaders involved in PRODEV's work and were inspired by their willingness to take action in the most desperate of times.

In Zoranje, the fifteen YU undergraduates facilitated various activities with the school children. While some students took charge of implementing science in the classroom, such as building volcanoes with the students, others were engaged in teaching their Haitian friends contemporary dance and relaying their passion for pop music and songs.

After interacting with the school children and bringing education to the classrooms in Zoranje, YU students partook in service work that included planting trees with the students and community members to help resolve the deforestation issue Haiti currently faces. Students enjoyed pick-axing and digging, and organized a ceremony marking the implementation of almond trees during their final day of service work in Zornaje.

The students spent their last day visiting the General Hospital and Rehabilitation Center at Haiti State University Hospital, the local hospital in Port-au-Prince serving the poor and

locals. There, students were exposed to further obstacles many Haitians encounter, and were deeply imbued with a sense of appreciation for their health and the easy access to medical care back home. The General Hospital serves amputees and others with severe limb injuries that had been hit during the earthquake, and are receiving services and treatment from a team of Haitian and Israeli medical professionals. Further, students visited a school reconstruction site and Heart-to Heart's medical clinic, which provides medical services and equipment to those in need.

After visiting the hospital, sophomore Michal Segal said how she thinks "these two visits really put things into perspective. Time and time again this trip has presented us with so many reasons to be thankful for the ease with which we have access to the basic necessities of life. Especially considering we so often take them for granted."

After the busy, empowering, moving, and eye-opening week, students spent their Shabbat at Jacmel. There, students enjoyed Kabbalat Shabbat and shiurim, and relaxed after a week full of activities and work.

Many students returned home feeling empowered and changed. Gideon Turk, a Yeshiva College Biology major "to say that this trip was a life changing experience would be a gross understatement. Tikkun Olam is such a fundamental part of Judaism,

and this service learning mission was the ideal way to fulfill this obligation and really make a difference."

Jannah Eichenbaum, a junior at Stern majoring in Political Science, explained that although she learned a lot from the Haitian culture, she learned even more from her peers who came on this mission.

The group enjoyed interacting with and helping the community, learning about Haitian culture, and is ready to bring what they learnt in Haiti back on campus. As Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." For many, this trip was an opportunity to grow as an individual as well as give and make a difference to those who need it most.



Thoughts Every Viewer Had During This Year's Super Bowl Commercials

Talia Stern The average cost of a 30-second Super Bowl commercial now runs at about \$4 million (around \$133,333.33 per second). And with over 100 million viewers glued to their TV screens, the cost is worthwhile for many major companies and businesses. As happens every year, this year's Super Bowl contained a slew of different advertisements, some of which made viewers laugh, others that were more sentimental, and still others that were way more uncomfortable and cringe-worthy.

Let's take a look at some of the most common thoughts viewers probably had during this year's Super Bowl commercials:

1. Please stop interrupting my commercial watching with football plays

San Francisco ad agency Venables Bell & Partners conducted a study of 1000 people about the popularity of commercials during the Super Bowl. The results? 78% of respondents say that they enjoy the commercials during the Super Bowl more than the game itself. According to a different informal survey via social media conducted by USA Today, that percentage was a bit lower, but still significant: 15% of survey takers watch the game for just the commercials or half time show.

Either way, it means that a good few hundred thousand people tune into the big game for colorful, musical ads showing cars speeding down winding hills and trailers for the newest films in theaters, and probably couldn't tell you which teams were playing in the Super Bowl.

2. Ponies and Puppies are better than Patriots and Packers

Can dogs and horses really be best friends? Unclear. What is the connection between dogs, horses, and beer? Even more unclear. There's really not much to understand about Budweiser's animal-themed commercials, but somehow, viewers watched on the edge of their seats during the beer company's Super Bowl advertisement to see if the lost puppy would return safely back home to his herd of horse buddies. (He did.)

Though the message of the ad might have been unclear, one YouTube commenter offered his own interpretation: "Beer helps us realize that friends are important in the animal kingdom. The puppy and horse can be drinking buddies now." That must be it.

3. Why, Nationwide, why?

Nationwide whipped out an unexpected heavy-hitter. A child who talks about how he'll "never learn how to fly" or "never get married," reveals that he died in an accident. Though the commercial attempted to raise awareness about preventable accidents as being the number one cause of death for young children, many viewers found the scene disturbing and interruptive of the general festive vibe of the Super Bowl.

Nationwide has since issued a statement that their "Make Safe Happen" campaign advertised in the Super Bowl commercial was not intended to popularize their insurance. According to the statement the company

released to NBC, "...The sole purpose of this message was to start a conversation, not sell insurance...We want to build awareness of an issue that is near and dear to all of us – the safety and well-being of our children."

There have recently been a number of parodies posted on YouTube spawning from the original Nationwide ad, and it seems like Nationwide might not have achieved its original goal.

4. What does acting 'like a girl' mean to me?

In their "Like a Girl" campaign commercial, feminine hygiene brand Always sets out to challenge the stereotypes of what it means to do something 'like a girl'. When asked to run 'like a girl', males and adolescent or teenage girls made exaggerated motions, flailing their hands and kicking their feet. When young girls were asked to do the same thing, they ran confidently and swiftly across the room. The message is that saying something is 'like a girl' has become more of an insult, rather than a description or compliment.

Always' advertisements challenged viewers to reconsider what they think doing things 'like a girl' means to them.

5. Who knew Coke could be so powerful?

In general, spilling Coke onto your computer will probably shut it down. But according to Coca-Cola, doing so can change the world (note: do not try this at home, or anywhere else).

During their #MakeItHappy campaign-based commercial, an IT technician spills Coke onto the wires of an intricate computer system, causing the entire network to turn negative messages on TV or sent through text messages into positive ones.

In addition to advertising their product, Coca-Cola's commercial was also intended to publicize their #MakeItHappy campaign on Twitter, which was based on a computer algorithm that would take negative tweets and form the words into pictures of more positive or happy things. Since then, however, the campaign has been suspended due to a Twitter account named @MeinCoke set up by media company Gawker's editorial labs director, Adam Pash. The account tweeted lines from Mein Kampf and then used the #MakeItHappy tag to transform the words into pictures.

A statement issued by Coca-Cola highlighted the irony of the situation: "Building a bot that attempts to spread hate through #MakeItHappy is a perfect example of the pervasive online negativity Coca-Cola wanted to address with this campaign."

Whether you watched the Super Bowl for the game or for the commercials (but everyone knows it was for the commercials), the night was full of entertaining advertisements: some of them uplifting and powerful, and others just downright strange.

Let's see what Super Bowl 2016 will bring!

Lady Macs Bid Farewell to Coach Nesta Felix

Lady Macs Basketball Team For some athletes, a coach is simply the director of the team; the figurehead that teaches the plays, determines the substitutions, and coordinates the game schedules. But to others, namely the Lady Macs, the position of a coach supersedes that role.

Coach Nesta Felix, who had to resign last week from her position as Head Coach of Yeshiva University's women's basketball team, was the team leader. She was the heart and soul of the team. Coach Nesta did not think of her coaching position as a job with players to simply deal with, but rather she viewed her team as her family.

"Coach's passion fuels our passion. Her dedication inspires our dedication. The team always comes first for Coach. She epitomizes what it means to infuse heart into basketball, helping others, and life," says Alyssa Greenberg ('15).

We are her, "ladies," her "fighting Maccabees." We have never witnessed a more dedicated, motivating coach in all of our years playing basketball. Coach Nesta treated us as her children, "She made me love basketball, treated me and cared for me, as I was her child. I knew when I walked into practice that she had been thinking about us all day," says team member Rachel Mirsky ('16).

Coach Nesta joined Yeshiva University without much previous exposure to Yeshiva lifestyle. From the outset, she began adapting to the new double curriculum, kosher-keeping, Sabbath-observing Yeshiva ladies, and did not stop growing in that respect.

Coach Nesta was always eager to learn about our customs, and invested in our personal lives. She cared about our grades in school, and not only our physical maintenance, but our mental health as well. "Coach Nesta wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives. She adjusted our practice schedule to meet our needs. We had early practice so we could ALL (including Coach) go to the Chanukah Chagigah,"

Said captain Ester Kerzner.



Coach Nesta made sure to buy kosher snacks so that she would be able to share with the team, "Her integrity and love for the game drove me that extra hour in practice, those extra few shots in the gym, and pushed me through each game. She is one of a kind, and gives 110%, one hundred percent of the time," continued Mirsky.

Coach Nesta always believes in us and gives us confidence every game no matter how daunting our competition may seem. She teaches us to strive for excellence, push to our highest potential, and to never give up.

"After two and a half years, she taught me what dedication truly means. She gave her all to ensure that we got the most out of our experience on the basketball team. She helped make my years at Stern better than I could have ever imagined" says Kerzner.

Coach Nesta taught us the value of communication; how it controls life both on and off the court. Every move on defense must be voiced out loud in order to work as a team, and every concern about the team must be expressed in order to work on it. The Lady Macs have become a stronger unit because of their ability to communicate with each other as ball players and as friends, and we are all thankful to Coach Nesta for instilling that in us.

As for the rest of the season...The Lady Macs are left in the very capable hands of Coach Alex Winnecker, who is currently the assistant athletic director at Yeshiva University. Erica Lemm, the women's Assistant Athletic Director, says the hiring process for next year will begin in the summer.

Coach Nesta will always be a role model to us. She brought us to a new level of basketball, and we will forever be grateful. We will most definitely take not only the skills and plays that she taught us, but the life lessons as well. As Yael Hausdorff, member of the Lady Macs put it, "she was more than just a basketball coach, she was a life coach." We learned what it means to be committed to a cause whole-heartedly, and to never stop improving. The Lady Macs have plenty of games left, and they are determined to finish what Coach Nesta Felix has started.

Got Proof?



Odeya Durani We know that for time immemorial parents have been encouraging children to drink milk. Then the dairy industry added the loudest voice of all to the chorus trumpeting the benefits of milk. With all the fanfare concerning "nature's super-drink," we never stop to think, why are we the only living creatures drinking milk after infancy?

Milk provides calcium, protein, vitamin D, and many other essential nutrients which understandably make it a tempting option, but long term research indicates that maybe the negative effects outweigh the positive benefits in this instance.

Plain milk naturally contains approximately 30% of its calories as sugar (lactose) which is what makes it palatable in the first place. The percentage of sugar in dairy products goes up in yogurt and even higher still at ice cream where sugar makes up on average 52% of total calories. Additionally, sodium is a major component of most dairy products with products such as Cottage, American, and Cheddar cheese leading the pack at 560, 383, and 144 mg of sodium per 100 calories respectively. Without the salt and sugar, the remaining blocks of fat are generally pronounced to be unpalatable. Adding salt and sugar directly to foods rather than mixing them in with the additional fats of dairy is a healthier alternative.

Milk is said to be a sure-fire way to help children grow which is worth any damage done by the excess fat, sodium and sugar, but research proves otherwise. The primary purpose of milk is to turn a 60 pound calf into a 600 pound cow in as little time as possible. The components of this "miracle growth" formula are comprised of approximately 50% fat that provides the calf with the necessary additional 600 calories-per-quart it needs to sustain such growth. Additionally, the concentrations of calcium, potassium, protein, and other nutrients in cow's milk are up to three or four times those found in human breast milk and can overwhelm a human body's metabolism.

Milk directly stimulates growth

hormones both in calves, and now, people. Specifically, it triggers an increase in expression of insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) which is primarily responsible for the "bone-growth" effects milk is lauded for. However, it also causes unwanted growth, too, as IGF-1 is known to be one of the most significant promoters of cancer growth in the breast, prostate, lung, and colon. Additionally, overstimulation of growth by IGF-1 has been connected to premature aging.

IGF-1 is joined by excessive amounts of estrogen introduced by the practice of milking cows during pregnancy. While a non-pregnant cow's milk contains only 15 pg/ml of estrogen, this grows to 151 pg/ml in the first half of pregnancy and shoots up to 1000 pg/ml after that. This estrogen then accounts for 60-70% of the excess estrogen we receive from food. The message that estrogen supplementation results in more fracture-resistant bones is less scientifically sound than the concrete knowledge that excess estrogen is a key factor in the formation of cancers in the breast, prostate, and uterus.

While the added estrogen may protect bones from fracturing, the overall result of drinking milk in fact weakens bones. The National Dairy Council admits that excess dietary protein, particularly purified proteins, increases urinary calcium excretion. This calcium loss could potentially cause negative calcium balance, leading to bone loss and osteoporosis.

The Dairy Council attribute these effects to an increase in endogenous acid created by the metabolism of the large quantities of protein in dairy. This acid must then be neutralized by alkaline salts of calcium from bone which is then conscripted for this service. This is in line with findings that the rate of hip fractures and osteoporosis is highest in countries such as the USA, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand, where dairy is a dietary staple, and lowest in places such as rural Asia and Africa where consumption of dairy is significantly lower.

Humans are physically not made to drink milk past infancy, let alone that of a cow. Approximately three quarters of the world and 95% of Asian-Americans, 74% of Native Americans, 70% of African-Americans, 53% of Mexican-Americans, and 15% of Caucasians are lactose intolerant. In other words, they do not possess the enzyme necessary to convert the sugar found in milk, lactose, into the digestible glucose and galactose. Our bodies warn us that we are meant to get our protein, calcium and other nutrients from other sources.

You can still get the suggested 1,000 mg of calcium per day naturally from foods such as white beans, dried figs, sardines, bok choy, kale, black-eyed peas, almonds, oranges, seaweed, and sesame seeds. Additionally, many foods are fortified with calcium and these include instant oatmeal, orange juice, soy milk, firm tofu, and Cheerios amongst many others.

The recommended "3-a-day" of dairy products is suggested by advertisers from the dairy industry. Science is quickly proving once again that advertising is often an illusion. Of course, you will not suffer immediately from obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis and cancer from adding milk to your cereal tomorrow morning. Still, how much is "too much?" Not very much, and moderation is key.

HEALTH CORNER

Reese Witherspoon Hikes Her Way to a New Image in *Wild*

Makena Owens If you thought Thoreau's wish to find a meaningful life in the woods had vanished from the American spirit, think again. The film adaptation of Cheryl Strayed's memoir, *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, shows that some still rely on nature's isolating powers to recapture, or even reinvent, their sense of self. For Strayed, this meant hiking the Pacific Coast Trail (PCT) in her mid-twenties.

In an opening scene in which Strayed, played by a determined Reese Witherspoon, fearfully rips off her bloody, beaten toenail and throws her hiking boots off a cliff, it's clear that the hike is rough and tumultuous. Seconds later, we are transported to Strayed, arriving at a dingy, desert motel and calling her ex, who has clearly moved on. Come morning, Strayed clumsily dons her massive backpack, leaving her deteriorating California life behind to embark on a 1,100-mile journey from the Mojave Desert to the Oregon-Washington border on the PCT - solo.

The highlight of the film is undoubtedly Witherspoon's performance in a role unlike her popular, and most recognizable, character of the past, Elle Woods. Sporting baggy, grey t-shirts and a glistening, make-up-free face throughout most of the film, Witherspoon embodies the dirty hiker. As an experienced actress, she seamlessly transitions between the Cheryl Strayed of the past - reckless, dangerous, and selfish - to the Cheryl Strayed of the present - brave, honest, and humbled. It is Witherspoon's dynamism (perhaps unrecognized up to this point) that creates dark and emotional scenes in which she shrieks with sadness or shuts out her loved ones with deafening silences.

While Strayed encounters some fellow hikers along her journey, ranging from friendly soul-searchers to creepy hunters, the film has little dialogue. Since her journey is decidedly



an independent one, viewers are instead given insight into her thoughts as she battles dehydration and frustration. Between flashbacks, the pieces of Strayed's destructive past and impetus for her hike come together. It is revealed that she is a recovering heroin addict, an unfaithful wife, and a motherless daughter, losing her mother (Laura Dern) to cancer in her early twenties. Many of these memories take place during the roughest parts of the hikes through the harsh Mojave Desert.

Unfortunately, Fox Searchlight

did not do *Wild* any favors when it released the official trailer. For any who mistakenly watched the trailer before seeing *Wild* in theaters, the film's flashback structure would be artful at best and unsuspenseful at worst. All of Strayed's most powerful motives for her journey are shown in the trailer, removing the element of surprise likely intended by the movie's back-and-forth design. Nevertheless, the nonlinear nature of the film is still interesting, and an appropriate choice for a memoir.

Finally there is the question of the

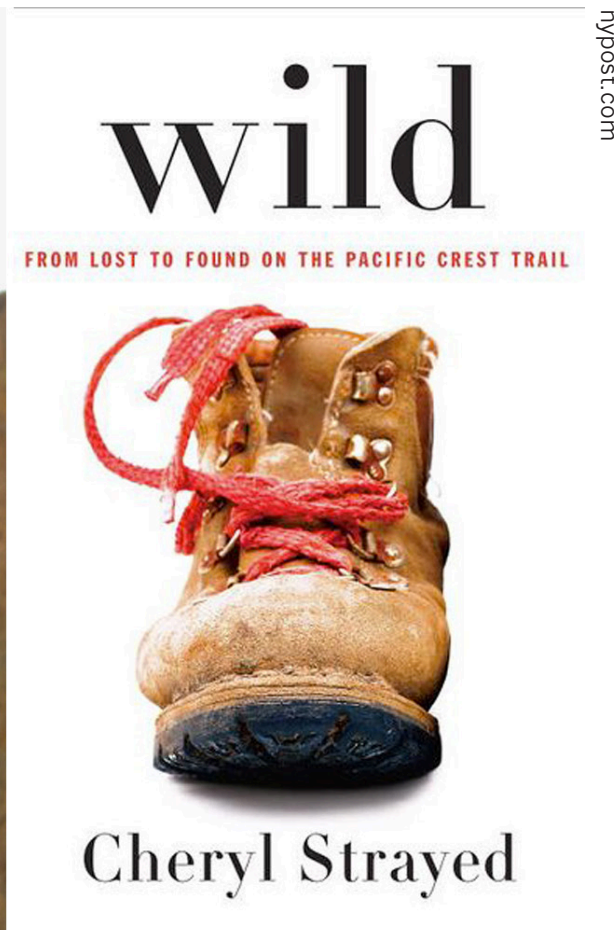
movie's several messages and their successfulness. On the one hand, there is the notion of a woman's independence and determination to recover on her own by doing something no woman has done before. As the first female to hike the PCT alone, Strayed becomes famous among her fellow hikers as the PCT Queen. For female viewers, her independence is inspiring, but may be tarnished by her encounter with Jonathan (Michiel Huisman), a singer she meets along her journey and enjoys a romantic night with in which she confidently reveals her toned body, ravaged by her backpack and the trail.

As he validates her naked, bruised body by having sex with her, one cannot help but notice that it is through this experience that Strayed gains the final confidence necessary to complete her journey, continuing on to its final leg after she leaves. A female viewer may be left wondering if Strayed is truly the strong, independent PCT Queen she has been made out to be if she still requires sexual validation from a man.

Then there's *Wild's* version of "everything happens for a reason." Luckily by the end of the film, Strayed does not attempt to mask her poor life choices with the success of her hike. She does, however, recognize that without the decisions that prompted her to make this journey in the first place, she would not have been able to experience the joy and recovery that completion of the trail afforded her. As a subtle point, it may easily be misconstrued as a cliché, but viewers should not be quick to write Strayed's journey off as simply another lost soul searching for self-definition.

ARTS & CULTURE

Abigail Bachrach
Shira Huberfeld



nypost.com



A Broadway Widow: Lehár for the Masses

Sarah King Walking up the steps to Lincoln Center, I was filled with something akin to trepidation. The reviews were in and *The Merry Widow*, a new production featuring opera superstar Renee Fleming among other big names, was by majority consensus, a flop of epic proportions. The critics showed no mercy in deriding the production that premiered on New Year's Eve, but, quite frankly, I am forced to separate myself from the horde and say that I actually enjoyed *The Merry Widow*.

The operetta – different from a true opera in that it includes spoken-word dialogue and is more driven by plot than music – by Franz Lehár follows Hanna Glawari, a wealthy widow from a small country called Pontevedro who is courted by her countrymen. These suitors are high-ranking officials, determined that the widow's fortune should remain in Pontevedro.

Romantic entanglements ensue, with seemingly every wife untrue to stodgy old husbands and young Frenchmen vacillating between these unfaithful ladies and attempts to seduce the merry widow herself. The male lead is the dashing Danilo, a foreign attaché for Pontevedro and notorious womanizer with a past with the widow from “the old country” – back before either had money. At first the two resist each other, but by the end of the operetta, Danilo is forsaking his dancing ladies (Lolo, Dodo, Jou-Jou, Frou-Frou, Clo-Clo, and Margot) and he and Hannah agree to marry.

The first thing to notice about *Widow* is the elaborate stage. No stranger to the Met, even I was taken aback at the richness and brightness of the three different sets. The Met describes the design as “Art Nouveau” but there is less grace and more Broadway flash, especially in the final Act, which takes place in a dance parlor complete with dancing grisettes flaunting anachronistic dance moves.

Next was the new English translation of the show by Jeremy Sams, something upon which many critics focused. While halting and stumbling at times, the translation fit well overall and did not detract much from the show. Yes, some of the jokes fell flat, but when Fleming flippantly stated, “I never forget a snore!” even the crotchety old man sitting next to me gave an appreciative chuckle. More jarring,

however, was hearing English spoken dialogue on the Met stage – something more normally found at a Light Opera Theatre house or, yes, on a Broadway stage.

Speaking of Broadway, Kelli O'Hara. The Met debut of *Widow's* other starring soprano left something to be desired as well – quite simply, her voice. A Broadway star in her own right, with past successes in such shows as *South Pacific* and *The Pajama Game*, she seemed an obvious choice for the light and fun operetta that calls more for good acting than vocal expertise. The issue arises when one considers the venue: filling a small Broadway theater is one thing, but a light soprano voice the likes of which O'Hara wields simply is not strong enough to reach to the rafters of the Met. While she commands the stage and her elaborate costume well – she had a body that the Met stage may never see again, as opera singers are not exactly known for their physical fitness – the orchestra, try as it might, could not help but drown her out.

While Broadway may not fit with the Met in singing style, the rest of the show certainly did in its liveliness and visual appeal. Although Renee Fleming never does more than a slight skirt-lift-and-kick style trot, everyone else dances with abandon. The audience had a thoroughly enjoyable time watching the male cast cavort across the stage to “Who Can Tell What the Hell Women Are?”

Particularly in that piece, but also in the entire show, the person who brings *Widow* to the comedic level it was meant to occupy is, not surprisingly, baritone Nathan Gunn. A veteran at the Met, he inhabits the role of Danilo with ease, lounging about the elaborate set like it was built to his dimensions. His chemistry with Hanna is undeniable. Yet while Gunn has no problem acting the bold and unselfconscious playboy, Fleming's performance is not as enticing. Gunn counteracts this awkwardness by playing into Fleming's character and forcing her to react to his over-the-top charm.

The negative reaction to Fleming's performance as title role of *Widow* is complicated and not without merit. While she did not crash and burn as I was led to expect from the reviews, it was obvious from her first appearance that this role simply did

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Renee Fleming and Nathan Gunn in *The Merry Widow*
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not suit her. It is not through a lack of acting chops, for during the dialogue, she's able to convince the audience with a smoky, seductive chest voice that she is no stranger to romance and intrigue. Once the singing begins, however, it becomes obvious that her sweet soprano is better fitted to the suffering virgin than the jaded widow, no matter how merry. An audience member might find herself leaning forward at any hint of a high-note, excited to experience the greatness of Fleming, only to be disappointed as the role, better suited for someone with a lower register, does not allow her to shine.

After the final curtain call – there

were several – I left the theatre humming and pleased. I had not, as I had feared, wasted good money on a frightful production...I had, in fact, enjoyed myself! It was a far cry from *Die Meistersinger* (a comedic opera by Richard Wagner that occupies the other end of the spectrum as far as “light” operas go), which I saw last month, but more importantly, it had been accessible. The casting left something to be desired, and perhaps the artistic direction could have used some reigning in as far as showiness and flashiness go, but overall, bringing a little bit of the fun of Broadway to the Met stage may end up doing more good than harm.



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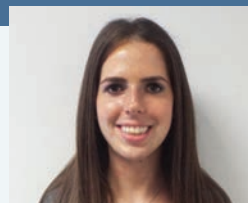


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Community College Changes

Lydia Sonenklar In Obama's State of the Union address, he publicly introduced his innovative plan for the government to provide two years of free community college courses for students. Students who maintain a GPA of 2.5 or higher have the opportunity to acquire an Associate's degree or to transfer their free credits to a four-year university. Obama's plan gives all young adults the equal opportunity to get a higher education, find work, and then ensure the success of their own children. While Americans may have to tolerate slightly higher taxes, the plan will boost the economy while creating a more equal playing field for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds in the job market.

It is essential that these reforms be made for students who want to attend community college, but what is being done for the students in four-year institutions?

Our higher education system is considered a rite of passage for most middle-class Americans, yet the system is broken and will continue to degenerate until further reform is made. In-state tuition plus fees in public colleges averages approximately \$20,000 per year. Students who attend out-of-state and private institutions pay at

least \$30,000 or even \$40,000 per year. When these students graduate, they are often thousands of dollars in debt before even beginning graduate school programs. The job market has become so competitive that students without a master's degree in their field often struggle to find work, forcing young adults into even greater debt before they are able to find their footing as adults.

The problem is only growing, as tuition and fees have risen by 2.9% nationwide within the last year. As of now, the playing field is not equal. Middle and lower-class America will only continue to suffer at the hands of an unsustainable system. Community college reform is a great start, but something more must be done to ensure that four-year universities are made just as accessible to the masses. Even in-state tuition prices are beginning to be out of reach for many families of Middle America.

While the situation may seem daunting and out of our control,

OPINIONS

Maddie Zimlover
Renana Nerwen

change is inevitable. Students across America continue to hope for the reform that will allow them to continue attending their dream schools. Reform is being pushed in terms of community college to make it just as accessible as public high school. We can only hope that our government will begin to go through with reforms to the four-year university system as well. Loan forgiveness and a greater number of academic scholarships may be a good start to making bachelor's programs around the country more accessible. Greater assistance by individual state governments may also make in-state colleges more affordable.

However, as tuition prices continue to rise and programs continue to be cut, students may begin to evaluate more affordable options. Instead of paying thousands of dollars for a liberal arts education, students may begin to take interest in more straight-forward career tracks through community colleges and online universities. Students who use these resources are

able to finish their degrees in less time for a fraction of the price of a four-year institution.

The plan to make community college free to all should bring about many benefits. Everyone deserves a chance to pursue the self-sustaining career of their choice. Not only does this help the individual who will gain access to a free higher education, but it also helps our economy as a whole. It allows for there to be more active, contributing members of society whose earnings will help them make more investments than those who are only making minimum wage.

We can only hope that the same kind of game changing reform will occur within the four-year university system as well. If it doesn't, we may begin to see more and more students shying away from the four-year institutions that were once considered an integral part of the American educational system.

Reflecting on the Paris Terrorist Attacks

Abigail Adler Last year in Israel, I spent two months of my gap year in an army program in the south called "Marva." The purpose of the program is to provide Jewish young adults from all over the world with the experience of the physical and emotional hardships of the State of Israel, through the perspective of the Israeli army. The experience was a Jewish melting pot, with people from the United States, England, Canada, Spain, South America, and France.

Although all participants were a part of experiencing the same Zionist program, it seemed to me that only the French Jews were intent on actually joining the Israeli Defense Forces, and "Marva" was their stepping stone to joining the IDF.

For those of us from the United States or other European countries, we simply viewed "Marva" as a cool experience during our gap year and planned to attend university back home afterwards. And that's exactly what I and many of my peers ended up doing. The French Jews, however, did end up joining the IDF. I found it extremely interesting that even though all of us spoke so passionately about Israel, only the French Jews made Aliyah that year and joined the army, while the rest of us went back home.

After the recent terrorist attack in a Jewish supermarket that killed four Jews in Paris, I now realize that perhaps the French "Marva" participants chose Israel as their home because they no longer viewed France as their home. Although it was the deadliest attack on Jews in three years in France, it most certainly was not the first. When I heard about it, I was upset and emotional, but definitely not surprised. It saddens me that we are used to the

concept of Jews getting murdered simply because they are Jews. The fact that they got murdered while innocently going about their day and preparing for Shabbat sickens me; I do the same thing every week, which makes it hit that much closer to home. French Jews have been undergoing a highly scary reality that we have yet to experience here in America.

It is no wonder that so many French Jews are fleeing to Israel for refuge, and that all of the French participants on "Marva" were willing to put their personal lives on hold to protect Israel and its ideals. Jews should be able to feel secure in a country that is considered to be part of the free world where all doors are supposedly open to them, yet they chose Israel. In my eyes, this makes a huge statement about the Jews' place in Europe. A threat to Judaism is also a threat to democratic ideals, as the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo headquarters that killed twelve people just two days before the Jewish supermarket attack testifies.

I'd always liked to believe that the pen is mightier than the sword, but clearly that statement was proven wrong by the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo headquarters. Indeed, I was outraged by the attack on our democratic ideal of freedom of speech and the press. The attack really shed light on the tensions between radicalism and free speech, and naturally I was extremely supportive of our right to freedom of speech. Just as I was quick to state "Je Suis Juif," or I am a Jew, I was also originally quick to state the slogan, "Je Suis Charlie." After looking further into the magazine publication though, I realized I am not 100% Charlie Hebdo. The magazine

describes itself as atheist and far-left wing, and is known for publishing articles mocking religion, politics, and culture. Though I fully support the magazine right to publish whatever it may please, I do not support much of the offensive content that goes into the magazine. Though "I am Charlie" in the sense that I support freedom of speech and the press, I am definitely not Charlie when it comes to the views the magazine espouses.

I also do not think that the magazine's rebuttal to the terrorist attacks was the best way to handle the situation. Shortly after the terrorist attacks, Charlie Hebdo published an edition depicting Muhammad holding a "Je Suis Charlie" sign, and above the cartoon are the words "all is forgiven" in French. The decision to depict Muhammad in the issue right after the attacks is definitely courageous and defiant, and I respect that. However, in light of the seventeen deaths that occurred in only one week, publishing another cartoon of Muhammad simply to make a point about freedom of speech is not worth endangering people's lives.

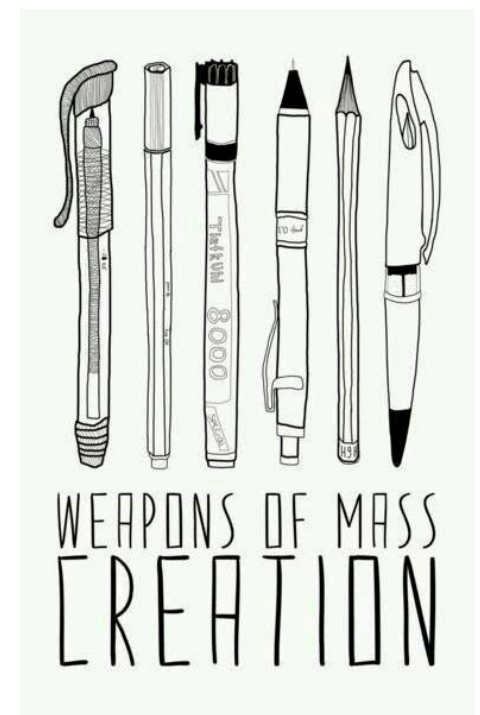
Some may argue that we should not let fear of another attack hinder our right to freedom of speech. That is not what I am saying; I think the magazine should continue following the beat of their own drum and continue to publish whatever they want.

I do think that that they should have shown respect to the victims of the terrorist attacks and they should have depicted something on the cover having to do with the victims, rather than retaliating by depicting Muhammad once again to make a statement.

Putting lives on the line just isn't worth it.

I hope that the seemingly never-ending battle between radicalism and the Western world will come to an end one day. We should be able to feel safe in our own beliefs, not only as Jews but as humans as well. We should continue to strongly abide to democratic ideals, whether it be freedom of religion or freedom of speech. We must stand together against the supermarket and Charlie Hebdo attacks, otherwise these ideals will be lost. Maybe it's naïve to hope for a world in which we don't feel the need to flee our country simply for being who we are, or getting killed for having an opinion different than that of someone else.

After such horrifying attacks, that world seems like a distant, impossible utopia.



Communally Standing Before God

Miriam Pearl Klahr I recently attended a Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) Campus Leadership Shabbaton. The program brought together thirty-seven college students from seventeen different campuses. As a Yeshiva University Stern student, I went in expecting to have a different perspective on campus feminism than my peers at secular colleges. However, surprisingly I found most of the conversations and panels relevant, and shared many of the sentiments expressed by the fellow participants. The Shabbat was full of open and honest conversation about the future and vision for Orthodox feminism and the many obstacles that it currently encounters. Many challenges we discussed apply equally not only to any college campus, but also to any stage of life. We spoke of the tensions between creating communities more welcoming to some while isolating certain individuals through the process, and the importance of understanding when it is and is not appropriate to push for change within one's surroundings.

Yet, there was one major topic of conversation where I found myself an outsider: minyan. For most college students a focal point in their day is attending minyan. It is a time of day when students create a sacred community in conversation with God

within a surrounding that oftentimes seem bereft of any consciousness of God. Praying with a minyan is an important self-identifying ritual for Orthodox Jews, particularly those in college. Therefore, it is especially challenging for women to feel insignificant or unequal within a college minyan, often the sole religious communal opportunity they have throughout their day.

Working to enhance a woman's experience when attending minyan was an important dialogue throughout the weekend. Students expressed frustrations along with ideas regarding innovation, such as changing the height of the mechitza, appointing a female gabaite, or having a woman carry the sefer torah through the women's section.

These ideas are not completely inapplicable to me either. They are all important suggestions that should be considered regarding the occasional rosh chodesh minyan and co-ed shabbatot that take place at Stern College.

But as the conversation revolved around improving daily minyanim, I found myself primarily absorbed in the mere idea of attending a minyan each morning. As a student at Stern College, I do not have the opportunity to partake in my community's minyan each day. The rich experience of coming together as a community

each morning for something holy, taken for granted by students at secular colleges, is foreign to me. Though my day is filled with opportunities to learn and think with my peers, with the exception of Shabbat, I never stand before God with them. At Stern, we each pray alone.

I know there is something beautiful about the personal nature of tefillah at Stern. When choosing to pray in such a setting, one does not do so to fulfill social or communal obligations, but because they are personally deciding to talk to God. When praying alone one can feel more comfortable displaying emotion; one can choose to recite the words more quickly or slowly, or even meditate upon certain phrases. Standing as an individual before one's creator often makes it easier for the world to fall away and to enter into a transcendent relationship with God.

And yet, I find myself craving to not always pray on my own. I am also aware that I can choose to go to a shul nearby and attend minyan each day. But that is not what I yearn for.

I long for part of my college experience to be praying to God as a part of my community. In Stern people often talk about the lack of community we have. For centuries, Jewish communities have been centered around shuls and minyanim. And I wonder, how can

we build a strong community of women without a minyan, when we lack the obligation to pray communally?

Perhaps we can still come together and pray as a group without the formal structure of a minyan, or alternatively work to bring a daily minyan to Stern. Or maybe we can create a community that learns about tefilla for a few minutes each morning. I don't know if any of these ideas are viable. The thought runs through my mind that maybe it is impossible to create such a space in an Orthodox, all women, setting. But even if this is so, we should try to create some sort of experience where we stand before God together.

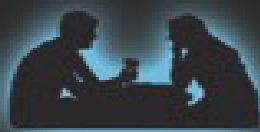
Tefilla is important to us as individuals but it should be important to us as a community as well. It is not enough to learn and perform acts of kindness together. It is essential to also frame one's actions as a community as part of something greater; a minyan allows a community to do so through acknowledging and relating to God together.

I am not writing this to criticize anyone at Stern. Rather, I ask you to join me in thinking about how we can encounter God together. Maybe we can find a way, or at least create a consciousness, of coming together as a community before God.

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Fearing No Fear

Tamar Levy President Franklin D. Roosevelt is quoted to have said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Perhaps for some, this quote would prove untrue and a correction should be made: “the only thing we have to fear is no fear.”

Such is the case for patients with Urbach-Wiethe syndrome. This is a recessive genetically inherited disease that causes calcification on the medial temporal lobes of the brain. These calcifications can affect the amygdala (two groups of nuclei located within the temporal lobes of the brain, and are involved with memory, decision making, and emotional responses). The amygdala is particularly associated with the emotional feeling of ‘fear’ and as such, Urbach-Wiethe disease patients may suffer from an impaired ‘fear’ response—and thus may not feel fear at all.

Urbach-Wiethe disease is caused by mutations in chromosome 1 and 1q21, the extracellular matrix protein 1 (ECM1 gene). These mutations cause a thickening of skin and mucous membranes, which subsequently can cause a weak cry or hoarse voice due to a thickening of the vocal cords. Scars and lesions can also be present on the skin as there is a poor ability to heal and scarring can increase with age. Hair loss and dental issues may also be present.

There is currently no cure for this disease; however certain symptoms can be treated, such as the increased mucous in the respiratory tract. Pa-

tients can live normal lives assuming these symptoms are treated and taken care of.

Perhaps one may speculate that lacking the ability to experience fear may be the least troublesome symptom for such patients. However, this may in fact prove to be incorrect.

The feeling of fear exists to protect an individual the same way the feeling of pain warns of something wrong in order for corrective measures to be taken. Those who do not feel pain can inflict great damage upon themselves without even realizing.

The same is true for those who do

not feel fear, as related from a woman who does suffer from this disorder and who conveyed her experience to YahooNews.

“Years ago, when my three sons were small, I was walking to the store and I saw this man on a park bench. He said, ‘Come here, please.’ So I went over to him. I said, ‘What do you need?’ He grabbed me by the shirt, and he held a knife to my throat and told me he was going to cut me. I told him—I said, ‘Go ahead and cut me.’... I wasn’t afraid. And for some reason, he let me go. And I went home.”

This life without fear can expose

a person to dangers that she could otherwise have avoided—in all likelihood, someone who could feel fear would never have even approached such a man in the first place, even upon his request.

This situation illustrates that despite the negative associations with feelings of pain and fear, in reality, they provide us with the truest forms of protection we could ask for. Sometimes, it is only through the absence of certain functions that we take for granted that we realize their importance and significance to our daily survival.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Yael Horvath

The Only Thing We Have to Fear is Fear Itself.

FDR



The Science Behind Solace Through Song

Ahava Muskat Whether you prefer the tunes of classical, soul, pop, R&B or country, we can all agree that music has the power to nourish the soul like nothing else can. Music is so fascinating because even when devoid of complex ideas or even words, it contains the capacity to engender intense emotional responses.

Physically, our bodies react when we listen to music that we enjoy. For example, our blood pressure rises, our pupils dilate, and the cerebellum region of our brain which controls movement shows an increase in activity. Fascinatingly, blood is directed to the legs to supply extra nutrients and oxygen to provide the energy for feet motion like dancing and tapping, which are often associated with listening to music.

In *Nature Neuroscience*, an article was published by a group of researchers from Montreal who studied brain activity when a group of 217 participants listened to music. These researchers used fMRIs and PET scans to examine the participants’ brains when listening to different genres of music.

The results of this study provide some scientific explanations for the physical and emotional reactions inspired by music. One thing the research team discovered is that music activates the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine into the dorsal and ventral striatum in the brain. The same thing occurs during sexual intercourse, eating tasty foods, and

any other pleasurable activity.

Another intriguing discovery that the team found was that the brain undergoes an “anticipatory phase” before the participant’s favorite part of the song or right before the “climax of emotional responses.” This phase includes increased activity in the caudate part of the brain which functions to signal that a pleasurable sequence of audio sounds will soon occur, and thus prompts the brain’s anticipation for a euphoric emotional state.

Similarly, studies conducted at Oxford University indicate that singing music can cause a person to experience euphoria similar to that of a “runners high,” which means the body undergoes a release of endorphins.

An interesting study conducted by Liila Taruffi and Stefan Koelsch at the Free University of Berlin examined the positive emotional effects that listening to sad music can have on a listener. The study involved the survey of 722 people from different parts of the world on the topic of sad music. An overwhelming amount of participants noted that listening to sad music can offer emotional consolation and can facilitate a healthy regulation of negative moods. Nostalgia, peacefulness, and transcendence were some of the emotions identified when participants were asked what they felt when listening to sad music. The study showed that when a person feels lonely or distressed and chooses to listen to sad music, the sad music is often beneficial in providing solace

and comfort.

Music does not only affect people emotionally, but it can also work to boost one’s physical health. It has been proven that listening to music can actually improve one’s immune system as music lowers stress levels by reducing levels of cortisol, the stress-activating chemical, in the body.

In addition, listening to music helps raise immune flags in the body which act as markers to induce the production of natural antibodies that fight disease. Listening to music can also aid in pain relief, both chronic and postoperative. *The Journal of*

Advanced Nursing found that listening to music can reduce long lasting pain caused by arthritis and disc problems by up to 21% and can help lower depression by 25%. Additionally, listening to music during childbirth reduced postnatal pain, worry, and the chances of developing postpartum depression.

Much more research has been done on the effects music has on our lives, but one thing is for certain: music occupies a unique and important niche in our emotional and physical well-being.



Are Gender Stereotypes True?

Yael Horvath As Super Bowl mania descended upon America at the end of last month, sports fanatics everywhere geared up to watch and experience the game with an exceptional ferocity.

Sports have the unique ability to band together zealous fans across social, religious, and age differences because they run deeper than brackets, into that primal place where man's psychology is hidden. In fact, man's love affair with sports was first recorded some 2,000 years ago when ancient Rome's gladiatorial arena drew tens of thousands of viewers to watch animals fight to their deaths.

Though today we are removed from the brutality of gladiators, conquerors, knights, and pirates, and more civilized than Neanderthal man hunting for his own survival, our commitment to sports as vested observers may find explanation on a chemical level, and may even explain some differences between how men and women think.

While there are always exceptions to gender stereotypes, men, more so than women, are drawn to the salaciousness of battle. Some scientists posit that since man has always needed to fight for his own life, modern day sports have precipitated to fill that need in a civilized world.

In fact, neuroscientists study this relationship and the male brain in general to elucidate these trends and explain why men are more likely to act as the male stereotype and why women as the female stereotype.

In the journal *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, men, on average, were found to have larger total brain volumes than women by about 8-13%. Further, these differences were accounted for in several regions, particularly in the limbic system and language system.



In a recent study conducted on how men and women process language, men only used the left hemisphere of their brains while female subjects showed activity in both the left and right hemispheres. As a result, girls outperform boys in the use of language, but boys rank higher in their use of fine motor skills, explaining why boys are so likely to engage in sports from an early age and excel at it.

Further, the greater size of male brains, comprising more grey matter, which is often called the "thinking matter," is where logical processes and strategic reasoning reside. Women, on the other hand, have nine times more white matter and high levels of organization in the frontal and temporal areas of the cortex. This difference results in greater language skills and more social, communicative relationships

with others.

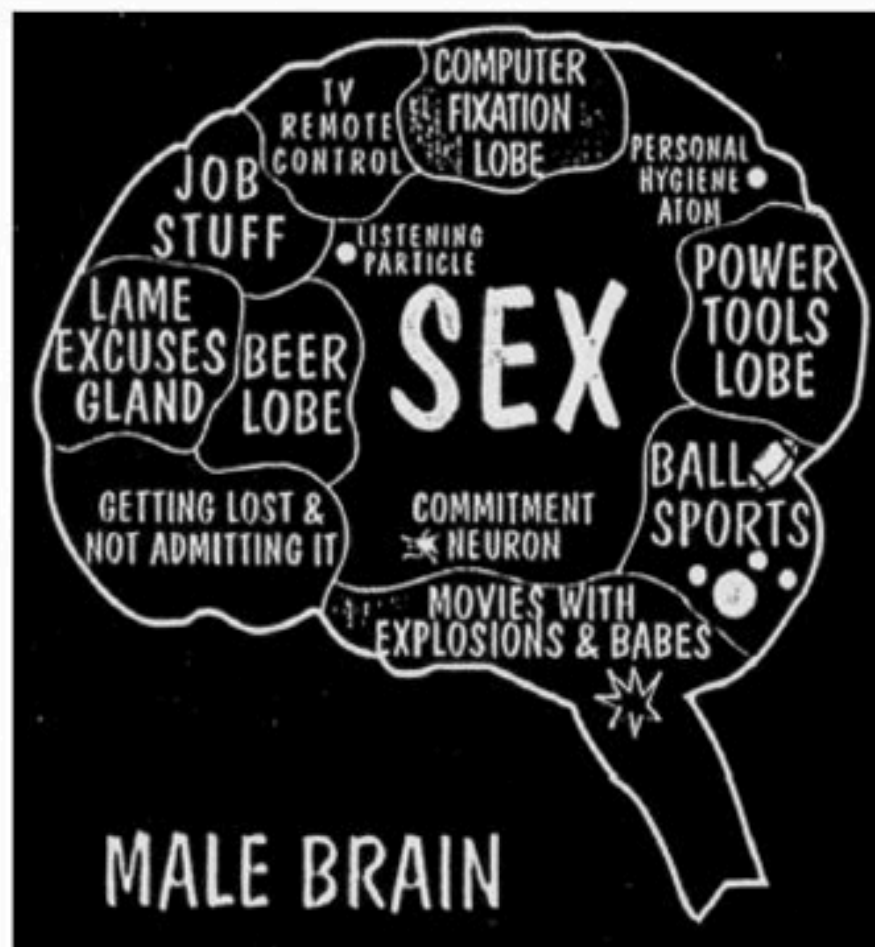
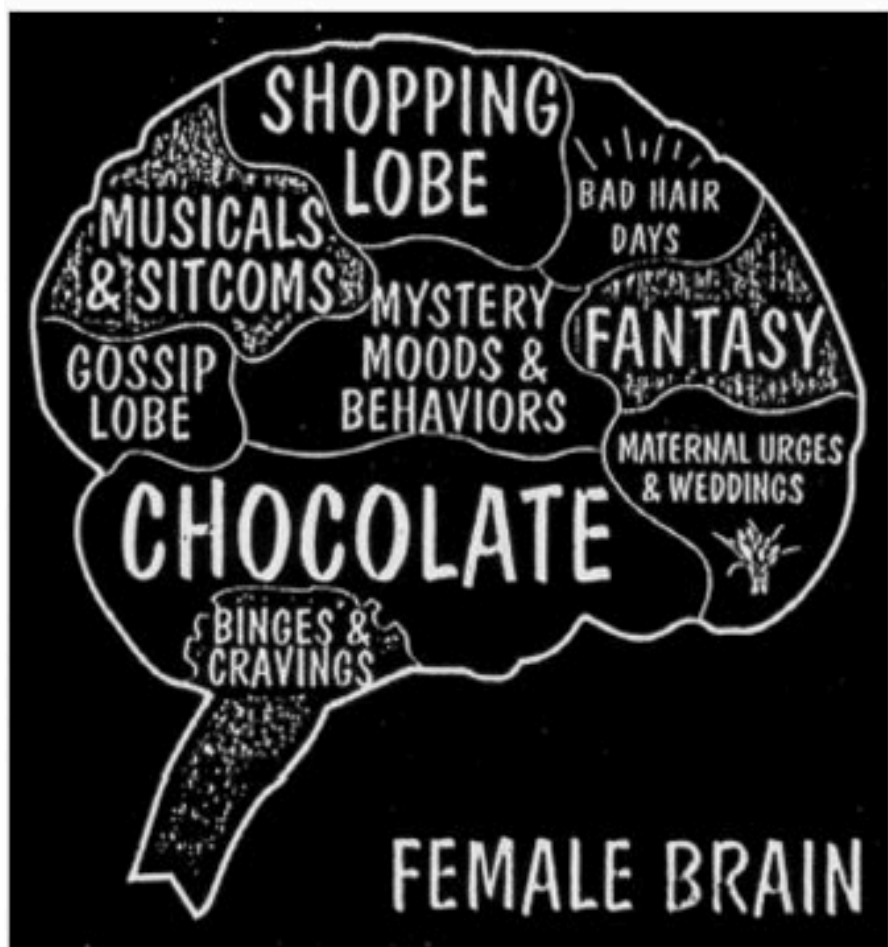
In addition, males and females have evolved to use their respective skills to their advantages, especially in competition. One neurobiologist says that "females use language more when they compete," manipulating information or even gossiping as a way of aggression. However, women also use language to build relationships, which perhaps results from an evolutionary adaptation as well, since organizing relationships by exaggerating language in pre-modern times could have strengthened bonds and communities.

These respective strengths are also telling of the way male and female brains identify and control emotions. Women are "faster and more accurate at identifying emotions," says Ruben Gur of the University of Pennsylvania. Studies have been conducted to show that

women are better at decoding facial differences and vocal intonations than men are. Thus, brain variation between males and females is a reality, and is probably for the best.

Most scientists agree that our differences are complementary. As Gur concludes, these differences "increase the chances of males and females joining together," benefiting the entire human species and propagating some comic relief in the hackneyed stereotypes which, though often exaggerated, hold truth in the way of evolution from our Neanderthal days.

Gender Stereotypes



Unboiling an Egg



Allison Tawil Ever think you'd be able to "unboil" an egg? Once again, science has helped to make the seemingly impossible, possible. With recent breakthroughs in protein research, scientists have found a way to unboil a hardboiled egg; and counterintuitively, it was not accomplished by placing it in a freezing pot of water.

A major component of eggs is protein. Proteins are long chains of amino acids, molecules that are made up primarily of elements carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and Nitrogen. But proteins are so large and complex that they are not simply a straight line of amino acids. Rather, proteins have specific shapes based on bonds that are made between the elements in the molecule. These bonds are what cause the amino acid chain to fold, which, in turn, form the characteristic shape of various proteins.

However, proteins are easily denatured when exposed to an environ-

ment of different pH or temperature, which can both cause the protein's shape to unfold and restructure into an entirely different, three-dimensional molecule.

For example, when an egg is boiled, the temperature change causes the proteins in the egg to denature and reshape. Indicative of this chemical transformation is its change from a clear, liquid consistency to a white, hard one.

While it has been supposed that chemical changes are irreversible, scientists at the University of California have recently found a way to restore these denatured, tangled proteins to their original states. Doing so would restore the egg into its original liquid form, thereby "unboiling" it. This is accomplished by the use of the chemical compound urea to first restore the egg to the liquid phase, which is then processed in a vortex fluid device. The vortex spins the proteins at high speeds and

straightens out the tangled proteins, after which they are able to refold into their original conformations.

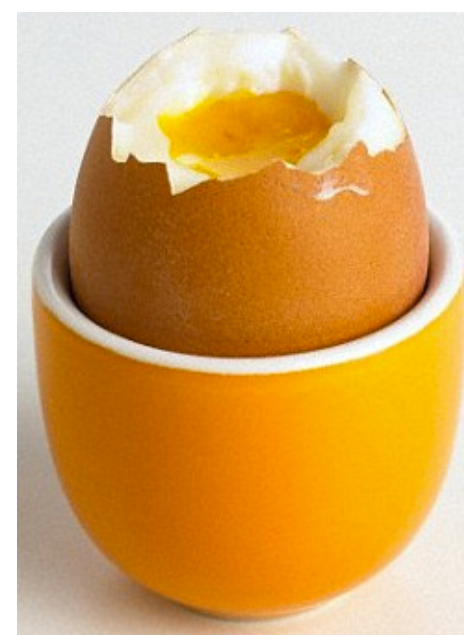
While the significance of this finding alone may be lost on the majority of us, its implications in other fields of study are far-reaching. In biological and chemical research of diseases, drugs, food, and more, proteins are the fundamental focus of study.

However, in the research process, it is quite common to lose a significant amount of the protein being studied due to their tendency to tangle or denature. These proteins get stuck to their containers or to the tools being used, or even stuck to each other. This means that scientists are working with sample sizes smaller than those desired, so they need to repeat experiments numerous times to obtain valid results.

The current methods of untangling proteins from these situations into usable forms is very time con-

suming. Scientists are hoping that the new methods learned from the unboiled egg could be used to save time and money by reducing the number of repeats an experiment must undergo and doing so in a quick and more efficient manner.

According to the Huffington Post, "this ability to reconstitute proteins could streamline the process of manufacturing proteins used, among other things, in the production of cheese and other foods and the development of cancer treatments, according to the researchers." Dr. Gregory Weiss, one of the scientists who took part in the egg research, told CNBC, "I can't predict how much money it will save, but I can say this will save a ton of time, and time is money." But the one thing Weiss forgot to mention is the benefits his research will have on breakfast.



THIS MONTH IN BEREN...

March 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 MVB vs Ramapo College	4 Fast of Esther	5 PURIM!	6	7 Parshat Ki Ki Tisa: PURIM Schwabbaton
8 MVB vs The Sage Colleges MTEN vs Sarah Lawrence College MVB vs Sarah Lawrence College	9 Midterms MTEN vs Brooklyn College	10 Midterms MVB vs Webb Institute	11 Midterms MTEN vs Fairleigh Dickinson-College at Florham SOFT vs Sarah Lawrence College	12 Midterms MVB vs Pratt Institute	13	14 Parshat Vayak'hel-Pekudei: Senior Class Shabbaton with President Joel and Dean Bacon
15 MTEN vs Hunter College	16 Midterms	17 Midterms MTEN vs Baruch College	18 Midterms	19 Midterms MTEN vs Lehman College	20 BB vs Albertus Magnus College	21 Parshat Vayikra: Rabbi Weil, TAC/SOY
22 WTEN vs Hunter College	23	24	25 MTEN vs Purchase College	26	27 BB vs Mount Saint Mary College (NY)	28 Parshat Tzav: Athletics Shabbaton
29 MVB vs New Jersey City University BB vs Farmingdale State College (DH) MVB vs Purchase College SOFT vs College of New Rochelle	30	31				



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