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Congressman Espaillat Shows Partnership with YU on Neighborhood Walking Tour

Ailin Elyasi
Junior News Editor

On Sunday March 25th, Congressman Espaillat invited YU students and faculty to the second leg of his Washington Heights public walking tour, where he stopped at four neighborhood sites to advocate for a renovated 181st street subway station and affordable housing for Washington Heights residents.

Continuing his committed partnership to the Manhattan area he represents, which includes all of YU's Wilf campus, Congressman Espaillat tried to form personal relationships with both the YU and Washington Heights communities through the walk. The walk is just another example of the congressman's growing and consistent alliance with YU and his effort to partner with YU in order to improve the Washington Heights community, as shown by his talks with YU students and his leadership on YU-related matters

like renovating the 181st subway station. "Yeshiva University is an epicenter of education in the Jewish community, both in the United States and around the world," Espaillat told the *The Commentator*. "I

look forward to working with President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman to further Yeshiva University's mission as an educational



institution and a strong partner in our diverse upper Manhattan community."

The walking tour started with the congressman stopping at three potential locations where he would like to fit

affordable, fixed rent housing units. Congressman Espaillat explained that both Inwood and Washington Heights are subject

to raise the rents for current tenants. The raised rents could be an unbearable expense for some residents, which include YU students and alumni currently residing in Washington Heights. Fortunately, Espaillat says "a combination of privately owned locations, non-for-profits, and city and state owned locations want to develop affordable housing locations." The congressman has located fourteen sites in Washington Heights that could be used for rent controlled, affordable housing and is pushing the city to open 5,000 units of affordable housing in the Washington Heights and Inwood communities.

The walking tour concluded at the 181st street subway station, which was the subject of the letter to the governor that President Ari Berman co-signed with Congressman Espaillat. "The subway station is

not as accessible the way it should be in difficult conditions. We want to see [this subway

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YU Cardozo Law School Jumps 9 Places in US News Rankings For Second Year in a Row

Sarah Casteel
Senior News Editor

Yeshiva University's Cardozo School of Law rose 9 places in the U.S. News and World Report Law School 2019 rankings, jumping to number 56 out of 144 ranked schools. The U.S. News and World Report rankings for the 2019 Best Graduate Schools, including law schools, were announced on March 20th. The school has been on a steep upward trend in these rankings in the past three years, seeing it rise a total of 19 places since 2015.

Cardozo reports what has led it to merit this increase in status, beginning with Dean Melanie Leslie's "aggressive five-year strategy for growth" which was implemented just two and a half years ago. The school cites the plan's many accomplishments, including a "top-to-bottom rebuilding of our career services office, with outstanding results."

As a result of this remodeling, Cardozo was named one of the top 40 law schools in the country for placing graduates in so-called "gold standard" jobs in 2017. Additionally, 80% of the class of 2017 landed full-time jobs that

require a JD or bar passage. The school's improvements in the area of placing students post-graduation is significant, as it has become harder in recent years for law students to obtain jobs immediately after graduation. The school's successes in this area also include being ranked 37th in the nation for placing graduates in full-time jobs at law firms with over 100 attorneys, and is also ranked 11th in the country for placing students in public interest jobs as public defenders, prosecutors and government jobs. The wide range of career opportunities available to and obtained by Cardozo graduates is a clear indication of the success of the program's rebuilding of the career services office.

In addition to this, the school has also began developing and improving other crucial areas. For example, Cardozo expanded curricular offerings in legal-market growth areas, including STEM industries; media, arts, entertainment, sports and fashion, and commercial real estate. The depth and breadth of this

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French Students At Stern Talk About What It Is Really Like to Be a Jew In—and From—France

Mindy Schwartz
Editor in Chief

YU students come from all walks of life, from all over the country, and even from all over the globe. It is not rare to hear foreign languages spoken in the halls—students calling family members or speaking amongst themselves in Spanish, Russian, or French. French speakers in particular seem to be on the rise, not just at Stern, but in New York City as a whole.

France, the country with the third largest Jewish population in the world, has seen a rapid drainage of its Jewish population in recent years, with Jews primarily moving to Israel and America. In 2000 there were 555,000 Jews in France; today there are only 500,000. This massive migration has been credited to the fact that it is now considered unsafe by many to publicly show one's Jewishness in France. The danger of wearing a kippah in the street is only one expression of the larger sense of fear amongst the Jewish population. There have been a number of highly publicized anti-semitic attacks in France which have created and perpetuated this fear amongst French Jews, and indeed in Jews throughout the world. In January 2018 alone

an eight year old boy was beaten to the ground outside of his Jewish day school in Sarcelles, a 15 year old girl wearing a Jewish school uniform was slashed across the face, and two kosher markets in Paris were set aflame only weeks after swastikas were painted on both stores. Last year, two Jewish brothers were attacked in a Paris suburb with a hacksaw, and a 65 year old Orthodox woman was found dead outside of her apartment just after neighbors claimed to hear the words "Allahu akbar" shouted by the murder. More well known still is the murder of four Jewish customers held hostage in a Kosher supermarket in Paris by an Islamist Jihadist, which took place four years ago. And just this past March, 85 year old Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll was murdered in her home in what authorities are calling an anti-semitic hate crime.

Everything that is unfolding in France can seem very foreign—and alarming—to most Stern students, the majority of whom are used to living openly and proudly as Jews in America, without the fear of

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The Observer: Reclaiming Our Name

Mindy Schwartz
Editor in Chief

THE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER OF STERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN,
 SY SYMS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, AND YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

For a number of years, many have quietly grumbled about the implied sexism in the titles of our university's two student newspapers. The complaint goes something like: why do the men at our school comment, while the women simply observe? While the name of the traditionally male newspaper, "The Commentator", connotes activity, the name of the traditionally female newspaper, "The Observer", connotes passivity. Taken together the names could imply that while men at YU jump into the ring to comment on the news and take charge of the stories on campus, the women of our university sit on the sidelines quietly observing, too timid and reserved to get involved.

This issue of our paper's name bubbled to the surface in 2015, sparking a small controversy. The then editors of The Observer took to an editorial to describe how numerous students had approached them over the year to express their dismay with the sexism implied by the two newspaper names, some even going so far as to say that the passive implication of this paper's title deterred them from writing for it at all. While the editors defended the merits of "The Observer" as a name for this paper, they also recognized the significant minority of students, many of whom were aspiring student journalists, who felt that it was time to get rid of it in favor of something more reflective of women's ability to take charge. In the end of their editorial they included a poll, allowing Stern students to vote for either one of three new names for the paper, or for the name to stay the same. In the end, no change was made, as the vote came out in favor of keeping "The Observer" as the name of the paper.

While I think there is merit to the concerns expressed by students over the implications of observing in relation to commenting, I must admit that I am glad that the name of our paper was not changed. Not just because this paper has a proud history of over 60 years, to which its name is intrinsically linked, but also because I think those who accuse our paper's name of implying passivity have missed the greater, positive implication of our name.

The connotation of observing is certainly far less active than the "take charge" connotation of commenting, but to observe is not an entirely passive act. Instead, it implies actively surveying and intellectually engaging with what one sees. One who observes does not just passively watch or record what is in front of her, but rather internalizes and thoughtfully considers what she sees, instead of simply rushing to pass judgement on it.

Stereotypically, it is considered a "male" trait to actively take charge of a situation and act on quick instinct, while it is considered a "female" trait to restrain oneself and think things through a bit more before engaging in a situation. We are often led to believe, either by a certain brand of feminism or by society at large, that there is something inherently better about stereotypically "male" traits than stereotypical "female" traits. But to my view, the restraint and active looking implied by "observing" are more critical to quality journalism than a willingness to actively take charge of a situation implied by "commentating".

Observing, really internalizing and thinking about what is in front of you before rushing to comment on it, breeds more nuanced and authentic reporting. While journalists cannot sit and ponder their stories for days on end before writing, there is a lot of value to taking the opportunity to look for a little bit longer, to turn a story on its side and see it from a different angle. By actively examining a story in this way one is able to see the complexity within it. And once we can see the complexity in a story, we can,

hopefully, report it with nuance, which is, of course, our ultimate goal.

This is not to say that the names of each newspaper are actually indicative of the character of their journalism. Both newspapers have shown they are capable of observing, of actively looking and delivering nuanced reporting. While "observing" may lie on the "female" side of the stereotypical gender divide, it should be—and I believe it is—valued and practiced by both male and female journalists at our school and at large.

This debate over the merits of observing and commenting reminds us to avoid the impulse to write off stereotypically "female" traits as negative or deficient, simply because they are "female", as I believe many students did when it came to our paper's name. Just because observing may sound more passive, and thus more stereotypically "female" than commenting, does not mean that it is inherently worse. Nor does it mean that all "female" traits are inherently better, just simply that we should evaluate every situation on its merits and not reflexively assume that "male" always equals better.

Feminism has freed many women from the cage of the "ideal woman", the woman who was the perfect, loving, nurturing mother, who sacrificed of herself for her husband and children, who was supportive but never assertive, charming and clever but never too smart as to threaten. But even as it rid us of these shackles, we should recognize that not all of the traits of that "ideal woman" were bad. To the contrary, it is good to nurture those we care for and be open to the emotions of love. It is good to be self-sacrificing, when the moment is right, and not to only think of oneself. And while it may be bad to be only a support, without an identity of one's own, it is good to be supportive of those we care about.

Certain schools of feminist thought have sought to eliminate these traits wholesale; for women to lay aside the "ideal woman" in favor of the "ideal man"—to be only assertive, powerful, a leader. I find this tactic problematic because it entirely overlooks the positive elements in what were once stereotypically "female" traits. Breaking down the traditional gender divide should not mean that all women should be pushed to the "male" side, while the "female" side is forgotten, devalued, or even mocked. Rather it should mean that men and women can more comfortably and authentically inhabit the whole range of traits that exist, whether they were once considered "male" or "female". Instead of exclusively lauding the traits of the "ideal man" we would do better to encourage men to take up traits that have long been considered "female", and to appreciate their value. If women should try to be more assertive, more confident, more powerful, than why should men not try to be more nurturing, more self-sacrificing, and more supportive?

Criticisms of our paper's name assume that "The Observer", when compared to "The Commentator", sounds more passive, and that this greater passivity is inherently bad. But not all things that are more passive are inherently worse than their more active counterparts. When it comes to journalism the more passive act of observing is, in my eyes, more laudable, as it implies greater thoughtfulness and purposeful restraint before rushing to pass judgement. I encourage and challenge all our school's student journalists to take inspiration from our paper's name and commit themselves to really observing.

The Yeshiva University
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Congressman Espaillat Shows Partnership with YU on Neighborhood Walking Tour

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station] opened up, and a nice transportation hub opened up for local residents and people from the Bronx.” The congressman especially condemned the elevators as cramped and as inadequate exits from the station.

Director of YU’s Government affairs, Jon Greenfield, added “as President Berman points out

in his letter [to the governor], millions of commuters pass through 181st street every year. These are YU faculty, students, and staff, as well as countless local families who face the kinds of delays and breakdowns that lengthen an already unbearable commute. We’re proud to stand with Congressman Espaillat in calling for improvements to this vital transportation hub, and

ensuring the Washington Heights community has the transportation network it deserves.”

Congressman Espaillat has proved himself to be a committed partner with YU in the mission to improve the 181st street subway station and improve the Washington Heights community in general.

YU Cardozo Law School Jumps 9 Places in US News Rankings For Second Year in a Row

CARDOZO LAW

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

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additional curriculum gives students the opportunity to find more opportunities post-graduation, as well as giving the school stronger qualifications for a

well-rounded and quality law school education. To supplement the new curriculum, Cardozo has also hired “brilliant new professors who combine scholarly accomplishments and practical experience.” The school also

focused on expanding their “already extensive” real-world experience opportunities for students, including 12 in-house clinics taught by full-time faculty members

and numerous field clinics overseen by practicing attorneys. All of these additions have given the school a boost in the quality of its education and resources, and are responsible for the school’s drastic bump in the Law School rankings in recent years.

As Cardozo’s five-year strategy is only halfway to completion, there are sure to be many more positive results to be announced, hopefully leading to a continuing upward growth in rankings.

College Republicans and YAF Bring Conservative Political Commentator Michael Knowles To Speak About Politics and Comedy

Ailin Elyasi and Kira Paley

Junior News Editor and Senior Opinions Editor

When YU Republicans board member, Sarah Casteel, SCW ‘19, responded to Michael Knowles’ tweet about recording a few podcasts in New York by asking him to meet the conservative community at YU, he enthusiastically agreed to come speak, even with a discounted speaking fee. The event, which was hosted by YU College Republicans and the YU chapter of the Young America’s Foundation (YAF), took place in Belfer hall on Monday, March 26th. About eighty students came to Wilf campus’ Belfer Hall to hear Michael Knowles, a conservative political commentator, speak about “Why The Right Is Funnier Than The Left.”

Michael Knowles made a name for himself after writing a number one bestselling book named *Reasons to Vote for Democrats: A Comprehensive Guide*. The satirical book, which contains 256 blank pages, became Amazon’s #1 best seller after coming out. *Reasons to Vote for Democrats* and Knowles rose to fame after President Donald Trump took to twitter to endorse the satire as “a great book for your reading enjoyment.” Posters promoting the event have accordingly referred to Knowles as “presidentially endorsed!”

While widely successful, he satirical book is not

“Comedy violates the sacred, and the Left doesn’t have anything sacred.”

Knowles’ only accomplishment. Knowles graduated Yale University in 2012 with a B.A. in history and began pursuing an acting career which garnered relative success. In 2016, Knowles joined *The Daily Wire*, the political news and commentary website started by Ben Shapiro. He is now managing editor of *The Daily Wire* and has his own podcast called “*The Michael Knowles Show*,” which discusses cultural and political issues through a conservative lens.

Alyssa Wruble, SCW ‘19, Co-President of the YU College Republicans, explained the motivation for bringing Knowles to campus. “He’s a young, up and coming figure in conservative politics. So we thought he would be an interesting and entertaining guy to bring to campus.”

At the event Knowles spoke about the lack of a sense of humor that exists on the left side of the political spectrum, calling out late night show host Jimmy Kimmel for “spending the majority of his program crying instead of telling jokes...On the [political] right, there is a comedic exuberance, all the way up to our president.”

Knowles also discussed social media platforms and websites like Google and Youtube, and their tendency to attempt to suppress right-wing political conversation.

In regards to the claim in title of his talk—why the right is supposedly funnier than the left— Knowles said, “Comedy violates the sacred, and the Left doesn’t have any sacred. It violates standards; if the Left didn’t have double standards, they would have no standards at all...The left, now more than ever, has a highly distorted and warped view of the world. Comedy requires, first and foremost, that one accept the tragic fact of life.”

After the speech, the attendees had the opportunity to ask Knowles questions. About ten students asked questions, ranging from topics like gun control to left-wing late night television show hosts.

Rachel Zakharov, SCW ‘19, asked, “In addition to the fake news, many media outlets that you mentioned, [such as] Google and YouTube, are “burying” conservative/Republican ideas. How can we combat this and promote these ideas and get the real truth out there?” Later, Zakharov said, “I felt my question was relevant to a specific part in his speech, due to the recent ‘burial’ of conservative/Republican ideas. I was looking to see his perspective on ways of combating some of the inaccurate



information about Republican/conservative ideas that is often portrayed in media outlets and how we can get the real truth out there.”

Though perhaps not as monumental or controversial as YAF’s Ben Shapiro lecture of December 2016 or even Dennis Prager’s speech this past semester, overall, the event was considered successful. Wruble asserted that “the event was successful and an interesting take on the interaction between culture and politics.” Nolan Edmonson, YC ‘20, Co-President of the YU College Republicans, expressed a similar sentiment. “I don’t think he was planning on giving a scholarly lecture on the values of conservatism. Just a lighthearted and witty evening poking fun at those things which divide conservatives and liberals. And to that end I think it was successful.”

SHEM Hosts Yom Hashoah Commemoration Event: We Live On

Rachel Zakharov

On Wednesday night, April 11th, the Student Holocaust Education Movement (SHEM) commemorated Yom Hashoah by organizing their annual event memorializing the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust. The event featured twin Holocaust survivors, Bernard and Henry Schanzer, and University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter.

The theme of the event this year was “We Live On”; the Jewish nation endured a tragedy that caused the loss of six million lives, but at the end of it we survived and we continue to live on. As Henry Schanzer said, “Our family and our people have risen from the ashes.” The Schanzer brothers told the audience their story of how they survived the war. They hid in a farm, concealing their Jewish identity for the majority of the war. After the war, they were reunited with their mother and sister, “A mother and her three children.” This year they celebrated their 72nd anniversary in the United States. In their closing remarks, they asked: how can we avenge the murder of six million lives? They answered that even though the Nazis inflicted great harm on us, the best revenge is to live on. “You are our hope,” Bernard Schanzer said, and he continued that we must have the courage to stand up to evil and to use our voices to say “never again.”

Their speech was followed with a video by students that showed descendants of Holocaust survivors, including students, expressing their own feelings about the survivors in their family. A few character traits

of parents or grandparents that were praised in the video were positivity and the passion in their hearts to maintain their Jewish identities. “We are very proud to have been able to incorporate students into the program through the presentations and having them talk about their grandparents,” said Co-President of the Shem Board, Yosef Sklar (YC ‘19).

Rav J.J. Schacter expressed his awe for the survivors and discussed the impact the Shoah has on future generations through the lens of a the child of a liberator. He emphasized the importance of maintaining faith in God under questionable circumstances. He explained how we were not spared to forget who we are. “Our presence speaks volumes to the commitment of the eternity of the Jewish people,” which resonated with the theme, “We Live On.”

At the conclusion of the program students were left inspired by the powerful messages that were conveyed. A student Elka Weisenberg (SCW ‘20) said, “It was a powerful message to hear twin brothers. To have seen a family coming out of the

Holocaust thriving gave me an appreciation for Klal Yisroel.”



Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik Named 2018 Canterbury Medalist for Commitment to Religious Freedom

Shira Krinsky

Staff Writer

Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik has recently been named the 2018 Canterbury Medalist for his commitment to religious freedom, and particularly his beliefs and the actions that he has taken to ensure religious liberty for people of all faiths and backgrounds. Soloveichik currently serves as the director of Yeshiva University’s Zahava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought. He is also the rabbi at Congregation Shearith Israel on the Upper West Side.

The Canterbury Medal is awarded each year by Becket, a non-profit institution whose mission is to defend the free expression of all faiths. They work to advance their mission primarily through litigation, but they also focus on public opinion and school settings. Every year they honor a person who they feel personally lives out their mission and who has an unfailing commitment to religious freedom with the Canterbury Medal.

Becket feels that Soloveichik has lived up to their ideals of religious liberty. He works to strengthen interfaith relations in America, and alongside with leaders of other American religious communities, he has advocated to protect religious education and to strengthen individual religious identities. He is a strong believer in strengthening personal faith while being an active participant in the world at large. Soloveichik explained that “sacrificing the exclusive nature of religious truth in the name of dialogue would help neither Jews nor Christians,” and that “in seeking the moral betterment of man, specific religious beliefs...serve to unite rather than divide us.”

Soloveichik is proud to be the recipient of the 2018 Canterbury Medal. “Religious liberty lies at the very heart of the American idea, and the Becket Fund advances the cause of religious liberty more effectively than any other organization in America,” he stated. “It is an extraordinary honor to receive the Canterbury Medal, and so humbling to follow the distinguished medalists that the Becket Fund has honored.”

The Canterbury Award takes its name from a historical fight for religious liberty. Thomas Becket—for whom



the non-profit is named—was named the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, but soon found himself in a series of fights with King Henry II. The king attempted many times to limit the church’s liberties, which Becket repeatedly fought against them. The king in frustration asked, “Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?” Two of the king’s knights then immediately rode to Becket’s church, the Canterbury Cathedral, and demanded that he listen to the king’s demands. Becket refused and was killed by the knights in front of his own church altar in 1170. He was soon after declared a martyr and a saint by the Church.

The medal is engraved with the words “For the Courage and Defense of Religious Liberty.” Past recipients of this honor include Nobel Peace Laureate and

Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, Cuban poet and former political prisoner Armando Valladares, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus Carl Anderson, New York Times best-selling author and radio host Eric Metaxas, Harvard Law Professor Mary Ann Glendon, President Dallin H. Oaks of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Rabbi Dr. Jonathon Sacks.

Yeshiva University feel that award is a well-deserved one for Soloveichik. “Yeshiva University is proud of Rabbi Soloveichik’s work in defense of religious liberty, reminding us that tolerance and differences can be a source of deeper, mutual understanding between people of good will throughout the world,” said Dr. Selma Botman, provost and vice president of academic affairs at YU.

Administration Responds to Klein@9 Policy Controversy

Mindy Schwartz
Editor in Chief

Yeshiva University administration has finally responded to the controversy caused by their decision to forbid women from giving divrei Torah at the Klein@9 student minyan.

After Stern Student Lilly Gelman, at the request of the minyan's organizers, gave a dvar Torah at the minyan on Shabbat of December 16th the administration responded by prohibiting women from speaking at the minyan, or any minyan on the YU campus. Gelman's article about her experience gained massive attention on campus and across social media and led to a wider conversation about the way YU views the women of its undergraduate school. After over a month of silence, which Stern student Miriam Pearl Klahr criticized in The Observer's March editorial, the administration has finally responded the backlash to its Klein@9 decision.

Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel told The Observer that "In light of student feedback, we have decided to review our policies with respect to the Klein@9 minyan and Shabbat services at YU. Klein@9 has been conceptualized as one of the yeshiva minyanim, and so had followed the typical practice of minyanim in batei midrash at men's yeshivot in which presenters of divrei torah in the sanctuary are men. Starting next semester, we will add a student-run YU community minyan in a new, soon to be determined venue in which—like minyanim in YU communities across the world—women and men alike may deliver divrei torah after services."

With this response the administration hopes to meet the nuanced needs of the community, giving a space for an all-male, "yeshiva-like" environment while also making room for female students who would like to be part of the YU community in Washington Heights.

Nissel ended his statement by noting optimistically that "We look forward to continuing to work with students to formulate meaningful programming at Yeshiva University."

Student organizers of the Klein@9 minyan, including the male student councils, criticized the

the university for not allowing them to have leadership on the issue of women giving divrei Torah at Klein@9, which was in fact their own student initiative. "We call upon the Yeshiva University administration, from RIETS and the Office of the President to the Office of Student Life, to support our student-run minyan's right to determine its own communal practices, and to support YU students aiming to become the future leaders of the Jewish community," the students said in their statement.

Gelman shared her reflections on the administration's response with The Observer. "The announcement of the new minyan on the Wilf campus welcoming female speakers reflects a step towards a YU community that is truly welcoming to its female members," she said. "I'm thankful for the decision and for any members of the YU staff and administration who worked towards making this a reality. Since the publication of the article, I have received endless encouragement from friends, peers, and even complete strangers; this change would never have happened without this support from the greater Jewish community. While this may have started as my battle, the victory belongs to anyone looking to make YU a place which nurtures the religious and spiritual lives of all its students."

On the administration's plan for a new community minyan that will welcome female speakers, Gelman said that she "look[s] forward to seeing the university's plans for this new initiative come to fruition, and hope[s] that this can be the momentum we need to create a tolerant space within the already existing minyanim on campus."



administration's response to the issue in a joint public statement released shortly after the response was made public, calling it both "counterproductive" and "indicative of a larger issue." The students criticized

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French Students At Stern Talk About What It Is Really Like to Be a Jew In—and From—France



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constant attack. In order to better understand this situation, and separate reality from media sensationalism, The Observer sat down with two Stern students from France who agreed to share their experiences with the student body.

In explaining the situation in France, Hanna Chicheportiche, a Paris native and senior majoring in political science, emphasized first and foremost that “the media always over-exaggerates” and that France is not a terrible place where anti-semitic attacks “are systemic and happen everyday.” When students find out she is from France, Chicheportiche said that she gets two opposite reactions: “They ask why I left, because there is just a lack of general knowledge about what is going on in the world around you, including in France—classic American [attitude]—and they don’t seem to know [about the antisemitism].” Or, “they will be very overdramatic, they think I would go in the street [in France] and get killed.”

Chicheportiche finds both reactions problematic in their own way. Of course people should educate themselves about what is going on in the world, including in France, but, in her experience, those who think they know what is going on by keeping up with media coverage end up with a distorted view of what is going on in France. “In France it is mostly individual attacks like getting mugged or being insulted in the street because you are Jewish, but it is nothing like Baghdad—and people have to realize that,” explained Chicheportiche.

Another Stern student from Paris, who wished to remain anonymous, described a similar over-dramatized reaction when she would tell fellow students where she is from. “I think everyone is aware [of what is going on in France], but they think it is worse than it really is,” she said. “It is bad in France for Jews because you can’t practice the way you wish you could, but it is not that bad.”

Students often ask her if it is safe in France. “They think that France is very dangerous—that you can’t go out at night, that you can’t go to shul. But we can do those things.” Still she clarified that while it “is not as terrible as they think” in France, “Jews do have to be careful. It

can be dangerous to be a Jew in France, but if you don’t show off and don’t say to everyone that you are a Jew—don’t wear a kippah for example—then you are safe.”

The student explained that “she never had any personal issues [with anti-semitism or anti-semitic attacks]” and that her neighborhood in Paris was very safe and that these experiences likely slant her take on the issues in some way. “Everyone has a different opinion [about the situation in France] based on where you live, if you have gotten mugged, or so many different cases. But my family—while we have heard about other people—we have never had any problems ourselves.” For her, the attacks in France are not any “more striking than [those] in other European countries,” even though the media tends to exaggerate the situation in France.

While both students have a similar take on the media’s portrayal of France, they differed in how their friends and families in France were reacting to the situation. Chicheportiche said that while she plans to go to law school in America and “probably stay here long term” and her family “really support[s]” her, “they are probably not going to leave France.” On the other hand, she noted that almost all her friends from her Chabad school have made aliyah, “mostly because of the environment in France.” “I think something like three percent of my friends stayed in France,” she said. “Young people are moving out at much higher rates.”

The anonymous student, however, described almost the exact opposite experience. “My family is thinking about moving to Israel, but once again it is not as bad [in France] as people think it is. You just have to be cautious and careful, and [my family] would feel better in a country where they could be proud to be Jewish, and could wear a kippah.”

Meanwhile, most of her Jewish friends from her public school say that they “they love France and wouldn’t want to leave. They just want things to get better in France.”

Still she conceded that most young people who leave France for schooling say that they do not want “to go back [to France] and live there [long term].” However she noted that while the media hypes up the fear aspect as the primary reason for the mass exodus of

Jews from France, she thinks that the most people leave for “economic reasons.” “People make more money in America, and there are more opportunities in America.” She also pointed out that she has heard of many people who do leave France for anti-semitic reasons and move to Israel, only to “realize that life is not that easy and the economy in Israel is hard and so they usually go back to France.”

Both students expressed that leaving the antagonistic environment for Jews in France was at least part of their motivation for coming to Stern. Chicheportiche said that she when chose Stern, “There were personal reasons as well, but part of the reason is because I didn’t want to be in France anymore.”

The anonymous student said that she came to the U.S. with her best friend and “one of our main motivations to come was that Jews are so free in America”—unlike in France. She said that when she came to the U.S., “I felt a big difference. Even though I never had problems with anti-semitism in France, in America Jews are more free. You can wear whatever you want, you can practice however you want. It is known in France that in America you are more free to practice [the way] you want to be and they have the reputation of accepting everyone the way they are. [This does not just apply to] Jews, but to Muslims too. And [it also does not just apply to] religion, but [in general] people are less judgemental, and you feel you can be the way you are.”

Even with these positive associations with America, she says that she stills “feel[s] really attached to French culture. I love everything about America but [when it comes to] my identity, first I am a Jew and then I am French. The culture is where I grew up, it is all my friends and family.”

She also spoke about her experience as a foreign student at Stern. While she always wanted to go to Stern, she actually began college at Touro because “when I came [to America] my level of English wasn’t so great and in Touro they were helping students a lot more with language, while in Stern is more independent. You have to do well more by yourself [at Stern] so you need a very high level of English. So I thought it was better to go to Touro and see how I was feeling and then transfer if I could,” which she was eventually able to do.

When asked about how YU students can educate themselves better about what is happening in France, Chicheportiche took on a more pragmatic tone. “It wouldn’t change anything if people know about it [since] there is nothing American Jews can do about it. It would be nice if they knew because it is important to know what is going on around you, [but] there is nothing they can do [to fix the situation],” which both students credited to the rise of Radical Islamist terrorists. While the anonymous student agreed that there isn’t anything YU students could do to fix things in France, she did insist that a nuanced education was important so that they aren’t misled by the media. “We don’t want [other students] to have the wrong idea that when you go to France you are going to a crazy country where a lot of bad things happen. We just want them to be aware that you have to be cautious.” Her recommendation: “You can on vacation there, but don’t move there to raise a family [because] it is not the best place to live.” But she is quick to add, “Still is it not as terrible as people tend to think.”

New Initiative Displaying Student Artwork on Beren Campus

Leah Klahr
Senior Features Editor

This semester, the walls of the Stern college campus have come alive with the powerful and expressive artwork of Stern students. The project was initiated by Dean Nissel, who explained to The Observer, “The concept is mentioned in YU’s strategic plan, which states that [the administration] will ‘enhance the campus and local environments by showcasing student artwork.’

When the third-floor lounge of the 245 Stern building was redesigned this year, Dean Nissel reached out to Mary Creede, SCW art instructor, about decorating the lounge and other campus spaces with student artwork. “I’ve always informally put up student artwork—mostly

on the sixth and seventh floors of 215,” Creede stated. She explained that Dean Nissel’s initiative gave her the “green light,” as well as the funds, to formally install students’ artwork throughout the campus. Together with Studio Assistant, Shira Feen (SCW ‘18), Creede inspected different spaces throughout the campus, and selected the art pieces that best fit those spaces. Feen explained that the process included considerations like wall space, color-scheme, the general mood of the location, and whether the artwork would remain “safe” in that location.

The display of student artwork on campus empowers

students to see their environment through the eyes of their peers. For example, paintings and drawings in which art students have captured Stern students eating meals in the cafeteria, have been installed in the Le Bistro Cafeteria. Similarly, the third-floor student lounge is decorated by drawings from Aviva Childress’ (SCW ‘17) Senior Exit Project, called “Subway Musician Portrait Series.” Childress shared with The Observer that the idea behind this project was “to seek out a demographic of people in our daily environment who were paid little-to-no-attention. I wanted to draw

continued on page 7

New Initiative Displaying Student Artwork on Beren Campus



continued from page 6:

attention to, illustrate, and beautify these ‘unsung heroes,’ these people who play roles in our everyday lives while we scarcely spare them a glance.” The placement of these drawings in the student lounge enables students to see and “pay attention” to these “unsung heroes.”

In response to the question of what drew her to donate her senior art project to the Beren campus, Childress explained, “My time at Stern was pivotal in my journey to where I am today, and for that I am eternally grateful. Donating my senior project, the culmination of my years of study, for a couple of years to Stern, felt like a natural expression of my gratitude.”

Racheli Schechter (SCW ‘17), whose senior exit

project called “A Visual of the Jewish People” has been installed in the Beit Midrash, shared with The Observer that she wanted her artwork to serve a purpose, instead of “just sitting around in closed boxes.” Shechter explained that the piece represents important points of Jewish history, including both the bad and the good. Shechter added that she was delighted with the placement of the piece in the Beit Midrash. “I think that [the location] really represents what the piece is all about,” she stated.

Though multiple pieces have been installed throughout the campus, Creede and Feen are working on ongoing projects, like decorating the Brookdale lounge with students’ graphic design posters. Feen added that she is looking forward to selecting more artwork for

this project from the Stern student art show at the end of the semester. Expressing her enthusiasm for the project, Feen shared, “I think it’s really cool that we’re putting up student artwork around the school because hardly anyone even comes to visit the eighth floor (art floor) of the Sy Syms building, and the student work is amazing.”

“I see this as a win: win: win,” stated Dean Nissel; “A win for students to have their artwork prominently displayed, a win for the SCW art department to showcase the quality and diversity of the art which students produced in their courses, and a win for YU, in beautifying the campus.”

YCDS’s Harvey: The Comedy That Explores the Tragedy of Society

Elka Wiesenberg

Junior Opinions Editor

The lights dim in the Schottenstein Theatre, but the warm glow of the fireplace (and some stage lighting) invites you into the home of a wealthy family in the 1940s. You have entered the world of Harvey, a play written in 1944 by Mary Chase—the fourth woman to get a Pulitzer, in 1945, but only the second to have her work reenacted by YCDS, the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society.

Why was Mary Chase zocheh (worthy) to have the honor of her words being brought to life at Yeshiva College? According to YCDS director Lin Snider, besides for the factors of content, character, costume expenses, and set difficulties, what’s important about a play is its message. An audience member wants to laugh—and believe me, you’ll roll—but also to come out of a play with a deeper meaning to think about. And something to talk about with the date you wanted to impress, of course.

Harvey, like anything worth going to in the Heights, opens with a party. Vernon Dowd (Lavai Malamut-Salvaggio) is desperate to marry off his son Marvin (Herschel Seigel) to an eligible bachelorette. He pulls out all the stops for an elaborate party, inviting the singer Mr. Tewkesbury (Jonathan Roytenberg) and the highest of society, “Uncle” Oliver Chauvenet (Efraim Shacter), in the hopes of impressing someone rich with a single daughter. (Sounds a lot like the shidduch system, if you ask me.)

The only obstacle in Vernon’s social-climbing agenda: his brother Elwood. Elwood Dowd (YCDS President David Cutler) is as sweet as a five-year-old, and has the innocent manners and lack of social acuteness of one too. In contrast to his flamboyant brother Vernon and appearance-obsessed nephew Marvin, Elwood scarcely notices what others think of him. Elwood bounces around, introducing himself with a grand bow, a calling card, and a genuine smile, all the while accompanied by his best friend and constant companion Harvey.

Harvey is a six-foot-one-and-a-half white pooka (nope, still have no clue what that means). You would think that a towering rabbit would be the first thing that everyone notices in a room, much like an elephant. But as with an elephant in a room, if people see Harvey, they certainly give no indication of such. The only exception, of course, is Elwood, who beams as he introduces his best friend to his brother’s high society friends. There

goes any chance of Marvin’s shidduch. Crazy breeds crazy, and no one wants to contaminate their family bloodlines with anyone from Elwood’s gene pool.

Vernon decides to take action after he and Marvin have a panic attack as an aftermath of the party disaster. It’s time to commit the delusional Elwood to an institution.

The set changes, and we are now introduced to a new set of characters. Let me interrupt the plot to discuss the set. The set, actually, interrupts the plot, so just going with that flow. In an interesting stylistic choice, set designer Zvi Teitelbaum explained that in an original draft of Harvey, curtains were used to transition from the mansion to the mental institution, and this is what he based his set off of. Instead of having two separate sides of the stage for the two locations, there are 2.5 minutes between each one, while curtains are pulled up and down.

The sets themselves are beautiful. The mansion’s brick fireplace, old bookshelves, and finely upholstered furniture set the tone for a family that is respectable and wants to keep it that way. The mental institution is gray and almost bleak, with a giant Rorschach ink test reminding you of exactly what setting you find yourself locked in.

And what situation do we find ourselves in? Meet the illustrious Dr. Chumley’s team: the heart behind the asylum walls, Mr. Calvin (Matthew Silkin); the muscles of the operation, Mr. Wilson (Gavriel Guttman); and the second-in-command brains, Dr. Lyman Sanderson (Matthew Shilat).

Hilarity ensues when a miscommunication between the institution’s staff, coupled with Sanderson’s unwarranted self-confidence in his own abilities, causes Vernon to end up in the nuthouse while Elwood walks free, Harvey at his side as he flounces into the mental institution, invites the staff to drinks, and leaves happily. Dr. Julian Chumley (Yaakov Siev) himself gets involved with the case when a call to Vernon’s lawyer, Judge Omar Gaffney (Michael Caplan) confirms the mix-up. There is a wild chase while the staff hunts down Elwood, who in the meantime enjoys a pleasant chat with Chumley’s brother Bradley (Donny Fuchs) and searches for Harvey, who has gone missing.

The biggest moral dilemma is introduced with the question of injecting Elwood with Chumley’s Formula 977. (Drumroll and flashing lights, please. No, I’m not joking.) This formula will make Elwood stop seeing

Harvey, solving many issues for the other characters. However, taxi driver E.J. Lofgren (Zvi Teitelbaum) informs us that the formula changes people; they change from the happy-go-lucky Elwoods of the world to normal people. People with impatience and short tempers and all the traits that make the world go round. Elwood is willing to take the formula, sacrificing his best friend, for the sake of his brother’s happiness. But will the other characters be able to go through with it?

Harvey brings to the spotlight many questions about humanity. What makes us “normal?” Who defines “reality?” What do we do when those we love for their individuality are not accepted by society for it?

One way to track the development of this question is through Chumley’s personal struggles regarding Elwood and Harvey. Siev’s character, he interprets, is a systematic person, a machine. Elwood and Harvey, though, cause “cracks to form” in the calculated doctor’s mind, as he begins to question his beliefs and his priorities. He hesitates to decide regarding the formula because he is trying to find a balance between maintaining his image as the world’s greatest psychiatrist and following his moral compass.

Harvey epitomizes important lessons regarding people who are different. In Cutler’s words, “Don’t throw people away. Work with them.”

In addition to its Halachic stamp of approval from Rabbi Yosef Blau, Harvey definitely deserves a gold star. The show is full of energy and comedic blows while punching you in the gut with empathy and insight. And as Cutler pointed out to me, YCDS has put a lot of effort into this show: “Set, rehearsals, acting, marketing; it’s a giant organism comprised of different parts.” Special shoutout to Stage Manager Chaviva Freedman here—I have now seen her in action, and it is scary how much she and Assistant Stage Manager Elazar Krausz do. Same goes to the entire lighting/sound/set/props/costumes/graphics/marketing teams. The amount of work that has come together in a cohesive and enjoyable show is overwhelming.

The very only thing that YCDS’s Harvey is “lacking” is...“a three-handed assistant technical director.” (Benjy Kleiner, unfortunately two-handed assistant technical director.) Until someone that different is on set, though, I’d say this show was as unique as it gets—in the very best way.



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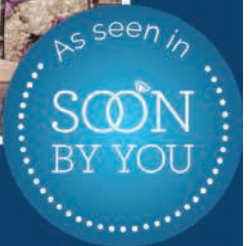
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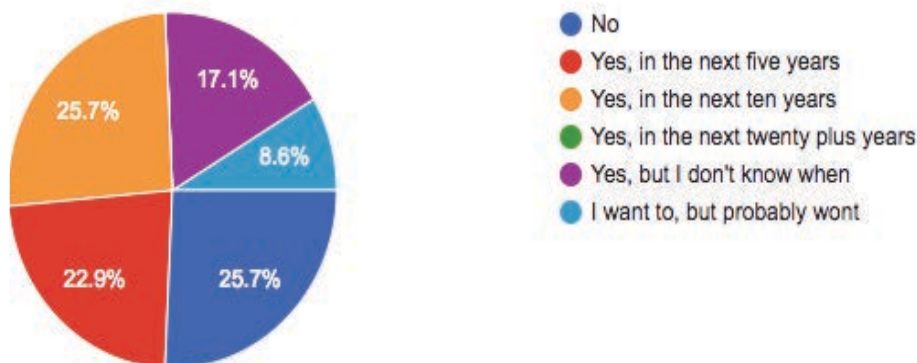
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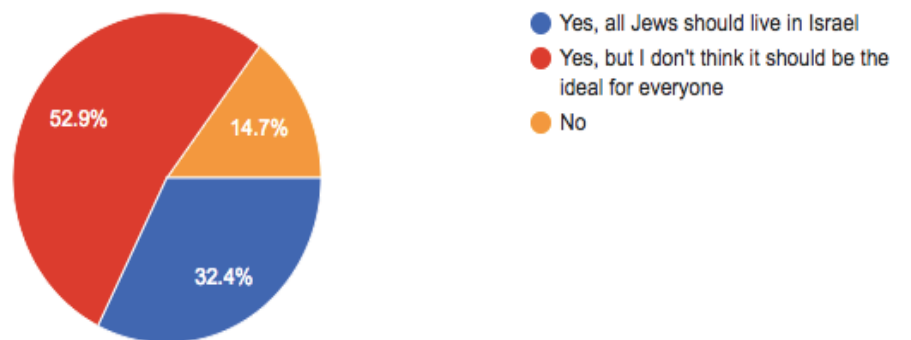
STERN COLLEGE STUDENTS AND ALIYAH

The Observer will be including a poll in our paper each month so readers can see what their fellow students think about what's new at Stern

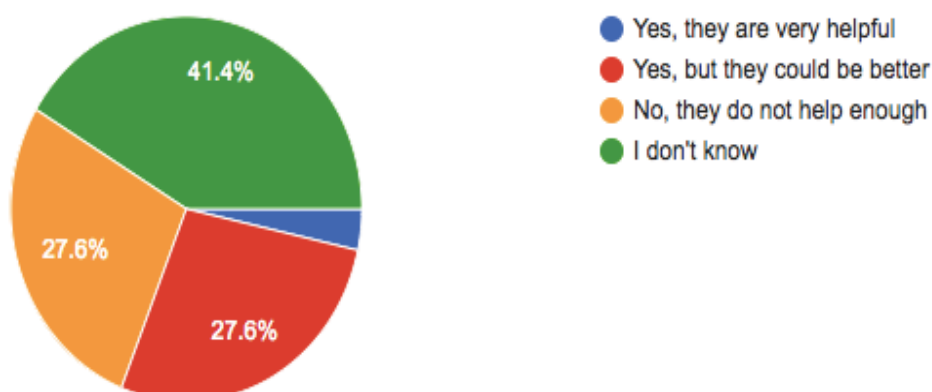
Do you plan to make Aliyah?



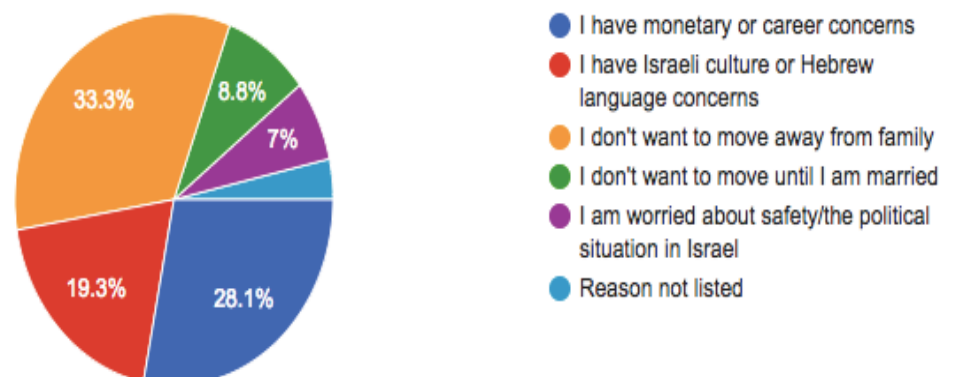
Do you think of making Aliyah as an ideal, even if you won't be able to do it yourself?



If you plan to make Aliyah post college, do you think YU and the career center help prepare you well for having a career in Israel?



If you do not plan to make Aliyah or plan to delay it, what is the primary reason?



What do you think YU should know about students who want to make Aliyah?

“There are many students who would benefit from joint programs with Israeli institutions and more summer internship opportunities in Israel.”

“I think they really need to have more of a background on graduate school options and career options”

“The career center discouraged me from making Aliyah from a career standpoint.”

“I think YU should have more exchange student/internship in Israel opportunities if they would like to encourage Aliyah as an institution.”

“Providing any kind of support or advice would be nice”

The Observer wants to know what you think! Look out on our facebook page to be a part of the May poll.



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An Exclusive Interview with Jewish Community Watch Co-Founder Meyer Seewald

Sarah Casteel
Senior News Editor



JCW

PREVENT | EDUCATE | HEAL

As a follow-up to my previous article highlighting the work of Jewish Community Watch (JCW), I wanted to get a more in-depth and personal account behind the founding and operations of the organization. I interviewed Meyer Seewald, who co-founded the organization in 2011, to learn more.

Sarah Casteel: Tell us a little about yourself.

Meyer Seewald: I was born in Crown Heights to a large family of 12 siblings. When I was about 11, I was molested for the first time in camp by my counselor. Then a year or so later another boy in yeshiva touched me inappropriately. Until I founded JCW, I never really talked about any of it. The sexual abuse had a big impact on me, and I struggled a lot as a teenager. Founding and running JCW has definitely redefined my life. I am now happily married and have an amazing son, and that has definitely given my work a strong added layer of purpose. I want to make sure the world is safer for him and all of our children.

SC: What is the mission of JCW?

MS: JCW's mission is to rid our community of child sexual abuse (CSA). To that end, we provide support for survivors, educate parents and schools, and investigate and expose abusers within the Orthodox community.

SC: What inspired you and your brother to start what became JCW, and how did it come about?

MS: When I was 16, my best friend passed away in my arms. His father created a program to support "at-risk" teenagers in his son's memory, called "Keshet Ben-Tzion" (the Bridge of Ben-Tzion). A couple years later, one of my friends told me that my late friend's father, who I was extremely close to, had molested him. I can't really describe how shocked I was. I started asking around, calling people who knew him from all over. I found out that he had a history of molesting children for years, and it had been covered up and he had been moved from another city. The program he had created in his son-my best friend's-memory, was for him to groom and molest the vulnerable boys he was supposedly helping. I was beyond devastated and I knew I needed to do something, so my brother and I set up a blog page with his name and picture on it, warning the community that they should keep their children away from him. Kids started reaching out to me from the community, telling me about the people who had molested them, asking me to warn the community about them. That page ultimately became what is now the Wall of Shame, and that became Jewish Community Watch. I never could have imagined in a million years that in warning the community about this person, this would one day become an international movement.

SC: What hardships or roadblocks did you have in creating this movement?

MS: Every step has been a challenge. We've been threatened many times, called to Din Torahs, criticized online and in the media. The list goes on. But we are not going anywhere and the tide is slowly turning.

Educating the community has made a big impact, people used to only think about the abusers, and how the exposure affected them and their families. I believe as people understand more and more what kind of effect CSA has on victims, their priorities change.

SC: What is your purpose with the "Wall of Shame?" In your perspective, does it accomplish those goals?

MS: The first and primary focus of the wall of shame is to warn the community about people who pose a potential risk to their children. The second focus, and the reason for the name, was to shift the burden of shame which survivors have always carried on their backs, and so often has held us back from getting help and support. Victims have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of; they are NOT the ones who did something wrong, that is all the abuser's burden to carry.

I definitely believe the Wall of Shame accomplishes those goals. We have been contacted by parents who found out that their child was being groomed by someone on the Wall of Shame, or that they were having a guest in their house who was on the Wall. Once an abuser told me that if JCW was around years ago he would never have acted out and hurt children, out of fear of being exposed. There is no question that the wall of shame has saved lives.

SC: Is JCW still only focused on child abuse?

MS: That is our focus, yes. We do obviously get a lot of reports about abusers targeting adults, and especially young vulnerable adults. While we don't full[y] get involved with those cases unless they involved minors, we will always do our best to support the victims in guiding them to the right address for support, and toward therapy or reporting.

SC: What methods do you use to involve the wider Jewish community in these issues?

MS: We have 10,000 people on our mailing lists and almost 20,000 followers on social media. We have produced dozens of videos which have been viewed close to a million times. We organized about 30 events which have been attended by thousands of people. Thank God we are very well known in the wider Jewish community and we have established a level of trust and credibility. We continue to make efforts to reach even more of the community, and those without internet. It is always so motivating when a survivor tells us how shocked and empowered they were to hear about us, that we exist, that they're not alone and that there's a place they can turn to and connect with others who have experienced some of the same struggles as them.

SC: Do you have support from many rabbis and community leaders? What do they do?

MS: There are many rabbis who support us behind the scenes, and who we have worked with on various cases. Unfortunately most rabbis are still hesitant to publicly support us, but we see that this is slowly changing as well. And thankfully, we are blessed to have Rabbi Elchonon Tauber from LA and Rabbi Yosef Blau from New York on our boards, who we consult with very

regularly and are a constant support.

I believe that as more rabbanim are ready to take a stand against this epidemic in our community they will publicly stand with victims and will no longer be afraid of the backlash.

SC: What kind of pushback do you get, if any?

MS: We definitely still get pushback. Often, it is from people close to someone who has been accused of abuse, his friends and family will be very angry. We often hear the line "I am usually a big fan of your work but here, in this case..." People don't understand that when it's someone you know, it's always hard to believe. That's the reality, but that doesn't make it any less important to believe and support the alleged victim. In fact, victims need even more support when their abuser is someone widely respected in the community!

Another new complaint we have started getting is from people who are upset that we don't work fast enough, expose abusers fast enough. Of course we still need to follow our process when it comes to exposures, and that can be long and is very involved, but it's great that people are demanding more.

SC: How do you deal with halacha in terms of publicly shaming people and other issues you may come up with?

MS: We consult with respected rabbis, and address these issues. But overall, the halachic advice that we have received is that warning the community in these cases is absolutely l'toel. If someone was going around putting non-kosher food in our children's yeshiva snacks, do you think people would wait around and ask if it is OK to warn people? How much more so with a child molester, which is a matter of pikuach nefesh.

SC: What are your future goals for JCW?

MS: We have many, thank God. We are working towards setting up satellite offices in a few locations around the world, aside from our current offices in Miami, Brooklyn, and Israel, as well as bringing on additional staff in our current locations. We're setting up some new additional support groups, and we have some really exciting programs and initiatives in the works to help us better track offenders who move to new cities, positions and communities, and collaborations with a few organizations that we are hopeful will be important steps in protecting children in the communities.

As always, it was a pleasure to be in touch with Meyer and to learn about the incredible work he is doing to heal and protect victims of childhood sexual abuse in the Orthodox community. Yeshiva University students and other readers are encouraged to learn more about the Jewish Community Watch organization, to like its Facebook page, and to consider taking advantage of the various available volunteer opportunities. Victims of childhood sexual abuse, or those supporting such victims, are encouraged to reach out to JCW for support and resources.

Letter from the President of the Israel Club's Desk

Tali Greenberg

After returning from my year in Israel, the question that always came up while catching up with friends or making polite conversation with adults was “What are you up to? How’s Stern?” Until about a year ago, I would answer with something along the lines of “It’s going well,” and would try hard not to have to go into more detail. My first semester at Stern was difficult for me and while I was doing fine enough, I would not have said it was good. I found myself frustrated with my life at Stern College because I felt that nothing had changed. I had just gone to Jewish day school for 12 years and nothing about the education I was receiving in Stern was revolutionary or interesting. Because of the small nature of classes in Stern, classroom dynamics felt similar to those I had experienced in high school. As I was taking mostly intro courses, there was not much in the material to really intrigue me. This caused me to feel intellectually trapped.

Another aspect of my frustration was social. When I first came to Stern, I had this notion that everyone already had their place, their group of friends from before and that these groups were exclusive. I felt that the seminary you went to or being a true freshman decided for you who your group of friends would be in Stern and there was no way to get past those clearly defined lines. Now, I was very close with many girls from my seminary and high school and really did find my community amongst those girls at Stern. However, this led me to believe that the only people like me at Stern were those people who went through the same exact pre-college experiences as me. Whether those imaginary lines between social circles were really there or not, I did not have the courage to branch out and meet other, new people outside those lines. This contributed to my frustration that nothing had changed for me and that nothing at Stern was new or exciting.

The only thing that gave me a glimmer of hope

during my first semester was my Intro to Computer Science course. I had never learned anything about coding before and I was genuinely interested in learning more. By the end of my first semester, I fell in love with Computer Science and declared it as my major. Choosing this major has transformed my experience at Stern. Taking more advanced classes in the major that I loved engaged me intellectually while in the classroom and continued to push me out of my comfort zone outside the classroom. When it came to classes, I learned that while taking easy A’s might be what is good for my GPA, taking more advanced classes, even outside of my major, is what will make me happy.

My new major also brought me into a wonderful new community, beyond of those social lines that had prevented me from branching out during my first semester. The Computer Science cohort is small enough that I know almost every other major. Because of the size, everyone my year takes the same classes at the same time, allowing us to develop a community through shared academic experiences. My new major allowed me to meet many new girls at Stern, breaking down those barriers that had kept me back before. Unlike what I had assumed, the people I met were in fact like me; we had the same intellectual and religious values even though we did not come from the same seminary, high school, or hometown. I also met people that were different from me and do not necessarily value the same things. However, our mutual passion for learning Computer Science brought us together in a new type of friendship that has really allowed me grow.

Not only did my new academic direction improve my experience at Stern, my involvement in extracurriculars did as well. At the end of my second semester on campus, I was asked by the outgoing Israel Club presidents to take on the role for the following year. Like my major, being a part of the Israel Club my

first year also helped me make connections with people I otherwise wouldn’t have met. It pushed me branch out to others, whether it was meeting people at events or working on committees. I realized how important the Israel Club was to me personally, not only because I believe deeply in the mission of the club itself, but also because it transformed my personal experience at YU. I was truly honored and privileged to take on the role as president. My time as president not only allowed me to further my relationships with new friends, it also gave me a newfound appreciation for the institution I am a part of. Taking on a leadership position showed me that I was involved in something greater than my own personal college experience; I was able to be a part of a group of people in YU who work tirelessly to benefit their peers. It allowed me to understand that not only do I have my community of high school and seminary friends, or the community of those who share my major, but also I am part of a bigger community that works on behalf of YU students.

To those of you searching for a community of your own at Stern, do not allow imaginary lines stop you from crossing over into untrod territory. Stern may be small, but there are many surprising places to find a sense of belonging. Allow yourself to explore the things you are passionate about and find places where that manifests itself in the many facets of YU. Put yourself out there by asking someone you don’t know in your major to study with you or go to an event where you don’t necessarily know anyone. Breathe a breath of fresh air into your college experience by challenging yourself to do something new or different—by stepping outside of your pre-defined lines.

So if you asked me today, “How’s Stern?” I would answer “Thank God, it is really great,” with a smile on my face because I know I would be telling you the truth.



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To join our team contact us at mindy.schwartz@mail.yu.edu

Global Friendships at Yeshiva University's First Kosher Lunar New Year Celebration

Gabriella Shankman

When my friend texted me about a “Kosher Lunar New Year” party in Yagoda Commons, I immediately dropped my studying in the library and sped over to the Sy Syms building—there was no way I was turning down this opportunity!

I was excited to see how this New Year celebration would fare with the Lunar New Year that I experienced when I was younger. Fond childhood memories emerged, as I remembered when my parents took me downtown to watch the New Year festival and parade that made its way through the streets of Little Italy and Chinatown. The streets were littered with confetti. Red and gold streamers were hung from anywhere that could display anything. There were dancing dragons with expressive, flapping mouths, and restaurants would hand out little red envelopes. There was singing and dancing and cheering—a vibrant and exciting celebration for parade participants and onlookers alike.

The Yagoda Commons party room was decked with red and gold streamers adorning the walls, gold table toppers and generous amount of confetti everywhere. I even saw the same little red envelopes! Yeshiva University Chinese graduate students, teachers, administrators and Stern College undergraduate students were all intermingling. It was a jovial scene.

I saw my friend in conversation with one of the Chinese graduate students, and went over to join them. I was excited to interact with him, as I've seen many of the graduate students around the buildings before, but I've never had the opportunity to really converse. He was telling us about getting a degree in law at Cardozo. We talked about our similarities in curriculum, what each of us were studying, and comparing the amount of languages we spoke.

Plentiful amounts of food trays were brought out, with an abundance of kosher Chinese food for everyone. A great big thanks to the staff from the Office for International Students and Scholars: Tia Younginger, Jen Golden and Betty Kam for organizing this wonderful event! As we all took our share of food, we sat down to enjoy the program. I and my fellow Stern undergraduate students made an effort to sit down at tables with the Chinese graduate students—we really wanted to know more about them and their programs.

I, like many of my Stern friends, came into Yeshiva University completely unaware that our school's graduate programs host so many international students. My friend is a math major at Stern College, and some of her undergraduate degree classes overlap with these graduate degree programs, so she has had the opportunity to get to know some of her international classmates. She introduced us to a few of her classmates. We told them how to count in Hebrew and they taught us how to count in Chinese. We asked them how the American take on Chinese food compared with the food they ate at home. We talked about the differences between celebrating New Year in America and celebrating New Year in China. As we spoke about holiday celebrations, we also mentioned the upcoming Purim party festivities, and even extended invitations for them to join us. Conversation flowed easily as we gradually got to know each other better and better.

During the meal, a student got up to speak about what the Lunar New Year meant to him. Eric, whose Chinese name is Haogong, recounted what it was like growing up in China and celebrating with his friends and family—receiving money in red envelopes, lighting fireworks, and eating lots of dumplings. He expressed how he was happy to have shared this experience with everyone at Yeshiva University. Eric's speech was followed by a musical performance.

Ms. Zhuojingwen Tian, a student at Cardozo Law School, took the stage and played an ancient Chinese instrument called the Gu Zheng, otherwise known as the Chinese Zither. She apologized in advance for her performance's lack of quality, as she hadn't practiced in a long time. Yet when she began playing, it was the most beautiful and performance any of us had ever heard. The name of the piece was called “Fight Against Typhoon”, and Jingwen described that the piece depicts how human beings are courageous and bravely fight against natural disaster to survive. It was a delightful experience! The music transported us straight to China.

Although the party was concluding, I was curious about what the Chinese international students thought about the event. I tracked down Eric Zhou, the student who gave the speech. I learned that Eric is getting his Masters in Accounting and is in his first year of graduate

Quantitative Economics. He told me that his favorite part about the party was interacting with the Stern students and listening to the Gu Zheng performance. He expressed his wish for the Chinese students and the Stern students to better understand each other's cultures. “When that happens,” he said, “we can combine ideas together.” Lance has seen the impact of this firsthand in the classroom where there are both Stern women and international students. Like Eric, Lance agreed that there should be more joint events, like participating in one another's cultural and holiday celebrations.

Sophia Blumenstrauch, a political science student at Stern College, also attended the New Year party. She is the founder of Stern College's public speaking club and has already made an effort extending the invitation to the international graduate students. She said, “The public speaking club could really help the international

students learn English, and I think it could also provide an opportunity for the Stern undergraduate students to learn Chinese. The learning is bidirectional.” Sophia also noted that this could create a great opportunity for both students to learn about each other's cultures in a friendly environment.

We have just come back from Passover vacation, most of us having spent a meaningful seder with family and friends, going around the table and sharing Divrei Torah and age-old stories. But why keep the fun and meaning to ourselves? Having a pre-Passover seder would be a great opportunity for the Stern College students to share the beauty of Orthodox Judaism and significance of the holiday with others. The international students would be able to learn and interact with us, just as we did with the Kosher Lunar New Year party.

Another initiative that many Stern College students and international graduate students expressed that they would like to start is a language learning program. This can be in the form of a formal program,

or something more fun, like an international cafe, where we meet to discuss and learn Chinese and teach English over tea and other treats.

Are you interested in taking part in a pre-Passover seder next year with the international graduate students and your fellow Yeshiva University and Stern College students? Are you keen on taking a study break to learn Chinese in an international cafe—chit chatting over tea and snacks? Please send all of your thoughts and ideas to Gabriella Shankman at gshankma@mail.yu.edu, Hanna Chicheportiche at hchichep@mail.yu.edu, or Mrs. Tina Lin at tina.lin@yu.edu! We would love to launch this initiative for the coming school year.

As a graduating Stern student, I regret not reaching out to the international community earlier. Speaking with graduate students and realizing that we have many interests in common has only made me realize how much the undergraduate Stern College community is missing out in potential friendships and bonds. I hope that we can work together in building bridges between Stern College undergraduate students and Yeshiva University international students to expand our knowledge and impact our campus and the world in a positive way through friendship and increased cultural understanding. Will you join in this effort?



school at Yeshiva University. Eric enjoyed listening to the Gu Zheng performance, but he especially liked how the American students were able to be exposed to traditional Chinese musical arts. “There are different cultural backgrounds between you and I...but maybe events like this will allow us to not only celebrate...but also to expand our relationships with other people,” he said. We discussed ways to build intercultural bridges, and in addition to celebrating different holidays together, we came up with an idea to tutor each other in a language exchange program. This program would allow for Stern students to help Chinese students practice their English, and the Chinese students could teach the Stern students Chinese. Eric told me that many of his graduate program peers lived in China for their whole lives. He explained how hard it was for them to integrate into the local community, as the cultural norms are vastly different. Eric also expressed how some of his peers have said that they wished to speak and connect with many of the Stern students, but a major language barrier exists. He believes that having more opportunities to practice English would help eliminate this barrier.

I also spoke with Lance Wu. Lance, whose Chinese name is Qi, is getting his Masters Degree in

Better Safe Than Sorry: The Inadequacy of Stern's Active Shooter Training

Kira Paley

Senior Opinions Editor

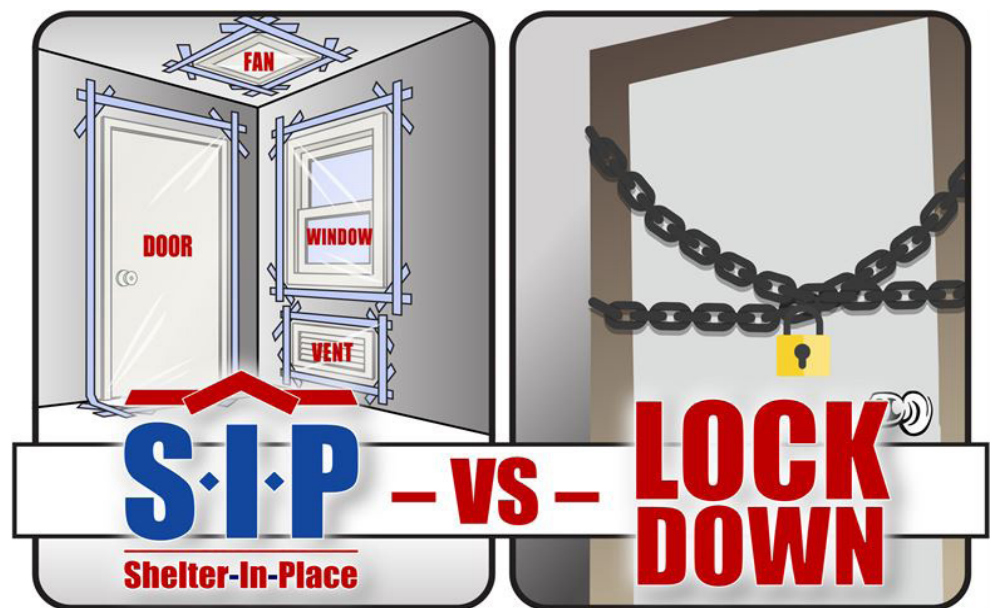
When I attended orientation before beginning classes at Stern my first semester, in August 2016, I regarded the active shooter training session as the most important hour of the entire weekend. Since the shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in December 2012, as a student I have been paranoid about a shooting taking place at my school and therefore have always taken active shooter training gravely seriously. Back in high school, I would become frustrated with my classmates when they would giggle and send Snapchats during lockdown as I huddled in the corner imagining the lockdown drill was real.

I was equally disenchanted, though, with the active shooter training, or lack thereof, at Stern. Though technically mandatory, the room was only half-full and some of my friends asked me to sign them in so they did not have to go. Even worse, as I watched the generic video meant to "train" us regarding what to do in the event of an active shooter on campus, the students that actually did show up were chatting, on their phones, and making fun of the video. The training seemed more like an attempt to satisfy orientation requirements than an attempt to ensure students' safety in the event of an emergency. And it wasn't just the active shooter training session that was lazy; I remember being shown another generic, watered-down, cheesy video about sexual consent in what was probably the school's fulfilling of training their students in sexual consent.

Nonetheless, I fixed my eyes to the screen and attempted to take the session as seriously as I possibly could. But in retrospect, I now realize how dismaying not only the students' attitude about the training was, but also the quality of the training in general. There

were security personnel present, and I vaguely remember them speaking about general campus safety procedures. The actual training in terms of what to do if there was an active shooter in the building was limited to the video that was shown, however, and though the video was informative, it was generic and not specific to the Beren campus. I suppose that the "run, hide, fight" principle can be applied to any building or campus, but nonetheless specific training tailored to our buildings and campuses, and specifically created for YU would be useful and is necessary.

After that, and in my almost four semesters as a YU student, there has been little to no further training for students in active shooter procedure. Sure, each classroom has a poster delineating the procedure, but if there were an actual shooter in the building, I speculate that there would be so much chaos and fear that reading a poster would not be peoples' first instinct. Since I started YU in 2016, there has not been a single lockdown drill. Granted, it is doubtful that there is a time when all of the students and faculty are on



campus so that a lockdown drill would train everyone. Nonetheless, a Beren campus lockdown drill during a weekday morning or early afternoon could guarantee that at least a few hundred students and faculty would benefit from a lockdown drill.

I do not know enough about the security department at YU to criticize them or speculate how well equipped they are to deal with an active shooter. My purpose is to criticize the way students at YU, specifically on the Beren campus, are trained, or rather not trained, in what to do in the event of an active shooter on campus. I also urge my fellow students to regard serious issues like active shooter training with the utmost of gravity.

Poland Blame Bill

Tania Bohbot

On December 18th, 1998, the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance-Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation was passed. This act made it illegal to deny the crimes that the Nazi regime committed against the Polish people during World War II. This was done in order to assure that the Nazi death and concentration camps would be remembered as being German and not Polish.

Twenty years later, this doctrine has come to be heavily criticized as the Polish senate gathered to amend article 55a in the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. Article 55a states the following:

"1. Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich, as specified in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal enclosed to the International agreement for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis, signed in London on 8 August 1945 (Polish Journal of Laws of 1947, item 367), or for other felonies that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes, or whoever otherwise grossly diminishes the responsibility of the true perpetrators of said crimes – shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to 3 years. The sentence shall be made public.

2. If the act specified in clause 1 is committed unintentionally, the perpetrator shall be liable to a fine or a restriction of liberty.

3. No offence is committed if the criminal act specified in clauses 1 and 2 is committed in the course of the one's artistic or academic activity."

Article 55a is a danger to free speech and to the memory of the Shoah. Article 55a prohibits any reference to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Chelmno, or any other death camp, as well as concentration camps, from being called Polish camps. Any reference to Poland holding any responsibility in the Holocaust is punishable by law and the punishment is "a fine or imprisonment for up to 3 years." This article is nothing but an insult and an attempt to deny the past and part

that the Polish people played during the time that they were controlled by the Nazi regime. There may have been righteous gentiles, helping Jewish people and anyone else who needed to escape or hide, but they cannot erase the Anti-Semitism that was and still is prevalent in Polish society and the part that the Polish people played in perpetuating the Holocaust.



On February 1st, 2018, the Polish senate gathered and amended this article with 57 votes to 23 with two abstentions. Article 55a was signed by Polish President, Andrzej Duda, which ultimately denies Poland's part in the Holocaust. This article has been criticized by many as an attempt to rewrite history. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stated, "One cannot change history and the Holocaust cannot be denied." He is not alone in his statement. Although the camps were controlled by the Nazis and had Polish prisoners, Polish people were not reluctant or free from blame in the tragedy that took place throughout the country.

When Poland was invaded by the Nazi regime on

October 1st, 1939, the majority of Polish people were not righteous gentiles. They turned in their Jewish neighbors and lived out their lives in silence as the tragedy only worsened. Even before and after the Holocaust, Jewish people were forced to run from their homes as the Polish people were constantly terrorizing the Jews and causing pogroms. If we can ignore the part that the Polish people played, then what else can we start to ignore?

The Nazi regime may have invaded Europe, but the German people were not alone in the terror they plagued over the Jewish people and anyone else who did not fit the definition of a perfect Aryan. Any person who was homosexual, socialist, communist, mentally or physically disabled, or not of ancient Aryan descent and against the Nazi regime ideal was imprisoned with the intent of being murdered. The Milice (French police) rounded Jews days before they needed to, the St. Louis, a boat with a 1,000 German Jewish refugees, was denied by every country—including the United States, and Stalin was originally on the side of Hitler. These are things that cannot and should not, be denied.

Not only does article 55a allow the Polish people to deny the part they played in the Shoah, but it is a major infringement on free speech. Upon their deathbeds, Holocaust survivors are revealing their Jewish heritage to their Christian raised children. After the Shoah ended, pogroms took place throughout Poland, causing many Polish Jews to live out their lives as Christians, and not

tell their children of their Jewish Heritage. Now, as they tell their children and grandchildren of their true heritage, a vibrant Jewish community is slowly growing in the city of Krakow. Nevertheless, how can a Jewish community feel safe enough to grow when on top of the apparent Anti-Semitism in Poland, the government is also trying to deny its heinous past. History is taught in order to learn from the past so that we can assure that it is not repeated; now an entire country is refusing to admit their wrongdoings. With this mindset in place the phrase "never again" has no meaning. "Never again" cannot be assured when a government is refusing to remember its past.

Yeshiva University UNDERGRADUATES can take courses at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

Classes are open to students either within the BA/MA Program or as upper-class undergraduates taking graduate courses with permission.

CLASS SCHEDULE FOR FALL 2018

MONDAY

2:50 PM

Rynhold: JPH 6880 Themes in 20th-Century Jewish Philosophy

Tsadik: JHI 5335 Jews in the Lands of Islam I

4:50 PM

Carlebach: JHI 5410 Jews in Modern Europe, Social and Intellectual History: 1760–1900

Rynhold: JPH 5011 Survey of Medieval Jewish Philosophy

6:50 PM

Fine: JHI 6220 Talmudic Archaeology

7:00 PM

Koller: BIB 5203 Biblical Hebrew

TUESDAY

2:50 PM

Hurvitz: TAS 5872 Introduction to the Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

Dauber: JPH 5350 Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

4:50 PM

Cohen: BIB 6094 French Medieval Biblical Exegesis

Elman: TAS 7554 Middle Persian Context of the Babylonian Talmud

Gurock: JHI 5571 American Jewish History: 1654-1881

6:50 PM

Hurvitz: TAS 7821 Textual Development of Mishnah and Talmud

Olson: JHI 6541 Austro-Hungarian Jewry, 1772–1916

WEDNESDAY

2:50 PM

Tsadik: JHI 7600 Reading Modern Arabic Sources on Jews and Judaism

Berger: JHI 5321 Medieval Jewish History: Christian Europe

4:50 PM

Eichler: BIB 7350 Biblical Historiography

Leiman: JHI 6410 Emden-Eibeschutz Controversy

6:50 PM

Eichler: BIB 5115 Introduction to Biblical Studies II

Karlip: JHI 5441 The Jews of Eastern Europe: 1914-89

THURSDAY

2:50 PM

Dauber: JPH 6715 Sefer ha-Bahir

Hidary: JHI Midrash in Historical Context. [New course]

4:50 PM

Kanarfogel: JHI 5345 The History of the Tosafists and their Literary Corpus

Rynhold: JPH 6874 The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

6:50 PM

Perelis: JHI 6384 Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain

Elman: TAS 5801 Introduction to Tannaitic Literature

Language

Tsadik: SEM 5111 Arabic I Monday and Wednesday 4:40–5:55 pm.

Does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course.



Yeshiva University
BERNARD REVEL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF JEWISH STUDIES

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For information on taking a Revel course outside the framework of the BA/MA Program, please contact Rona Steinerman, Revel Director of Admissions, at steinerm@yu.edu

From the Wilf Student Leadership: A Response to the Recent Statement

The Klein@9 Board & Wilf Campus Student Council Presidents

The Dean of Students recently put out a statement alleging that Klein@9 “has been conceptualized as one of the yeshiva minyanim, and so had followed the typical practice of minyanim in batei midrash at men’s yeshivot ... Starting next semester, we will add a student-run YU community minyan.”

This statement is counterproductive and indicative of a larger issue.

The founders of the minyan explicitly envisioned for Klein@9 to be a student minyan which would provide a different experience than the existing Glueck yeshiva minyan and efficient Rubin minyan. We billed ourselves as a “Student-run, Undergrad, Community minyan,” which would serve both the population of the yeshiva and larger community, and we still envision Klein@9 along those lines today. As a student-created minyan, the students have always been and will continue to be solely responsible for the practices and programming of the minyan in shaping the religious experience that they desire. We categorically reject the implication that Klein@9 is merely another yeshiva minyan run by the institution, and are distraught by the announcement of a second “student-run YU community minyan” that did not consider any student input or consensus. This decision will further divide our community and is not a solution that the student body desires.

We believe that, within the framework of halakhah, our community needs to decide what our norms and practices should be. This requires conversation between all of our community members, from both sides of the mechitzah. Every community has its disagreements regarding how the spirit of halakhah and Jewish values are expressed in practice. It is vital that these struggles are dealt with communally, by those who are involved with our community day to day, Shabbat to Shabbat. We invite those voices involved and dedicated to our community to share their desires and needs so that we can shape our shared religious experience. We

believe that together, we can chart our Jewish practice with inspiration from our teachers and with the values that have been imparted to us throughout our Jewish education. To us, having students take a leadership role in building a community is a value—not an inconvenience.

In practice, what this means is that the students should be the primary decision-makers in student policy and programming, with guidance from YU institutional officers, Student Life staff, and religious leadership. This is a far cry from the current state where the administration rarely engages in dialogue with students or even elected student representatives when making policy decisions. Instead, as is the case with the newly announced “student-run YU community minyan,” policy is handed down to students in a top-down system that does not reflect the will of the student body or the spirit of what student government should be. It is not only the women who have been silenced, it is the entire student body’s collective voice that has gone unheard.

While we certainly appreciate the importance of established halakhic parameters set by our authorities, the chosen path within those parameters must be left to the students. We, the students, must have the freedom to grapple with and chart our own communal norms. If YU institutional officers, Student Life staff, and religious leadership will not trust inter-student dialogue and community building, then for what reason should our future communities invest the very same trust in YU? While we regret that we did not speak out before about administrative interference in the instance of the Klein@9 minyan, we are speaking out now, and we apologize to those that were angered and disappointed by our silence. It is for this reason that we are releasing the following statement.

**

We call upon the Yeshiva University administration, from RIETS and the Office of the President to the Office

of Student Life, to support our student-run minyan’s right to determine its own communal practices, and to support YU students aiming to become the future leaders of the Jewish community. Rather than usurp and diminish its student leaders’ authority, the administration should act as a guiding affiliate to student programming and decisions across the University, engaging in dialogue with the student body. For Yeshiva University to be relevant to the Jewish community, it must start by supporting its current students. If we are to be leaders, or at least engaged members of our Jewish communities, then we must start grappling with these issues within our own YU community and be responsible for our own actions.

The Klein@9 Board

Aryeh Laufer, Co-Founder, Klein@9

Dovid Simpser, Co-Founder, Klein@9

Samuel Gelman, Board Member, Klein@9 & SOY IBC Representative

Noah Marlowe, Board Member, Klein@9 & SOY VP

Wilf Presidents

Dovid Simpser, SOY President

Zach Sterman, YSU President

Eitan Lipsky, YCSA President

Joshua Zirman, Syms President

Klein@9 Mission Statement:

Klein@9 was created in December 2016 by elected student SOY representatives for the student body as a means to build a warm Shabbos community on campus, create more space for student leadership, and create a meaningful religious shabbos experience. We are deeply grateful to the many students who have invested in our community since Klein@9’s inception, and have helped make some of these goals a reality. We are committed to these three pillars, and hope that future student leaders will uphold this vision through the continuation and creation of new initiatives to further these goals.

The Outlier

Rachel Zakharov

The issue of Klein@9 (that is, the issue of women being able to give divrei Torah at a YU minyan) is indicative of a greater problem, one that has always been there, an outlier, in the way YU defines the role of women in its community. The controversy shows

“The response to a female student sharing a dvar torah at the student-run Klein@9 minyan demonstrates that there is an underlying issue in the role women play in YU’s Modern Orthodoxy”

the division that exists in the YU community and the hesitation among the leaders of the YU administration to acknowledge the voices of female students on the Wilf campus.

YU has a diverse student body whose backgrounds range from over fifteen different countries. We each have our own unique customs and parameters of what is and isn’t acceptable in Modern Orthodoxy. Therefore, it is difficult to construct a guideline that establishes what the norms and practices should be, so the norms are often determined by the status quo. The current status quo stands on the pedestals of a tradition that is rooted in maintaining a separation between the Wilf and Beren campuses.

Since the diversity of the student body at YU is so vast, the one factor that links us is our Jewish identity. However, at an institution where we are not the minority there is less of an incentive to get involved in Jewish student life. On other college campuses like NYU and Columbia, Jewish students are a minority and they have a strong desire to contribute to the Jewish communities in their universities. Regardless, even at YU, Shabbat contributes to a prospering Jewish life, and Shabbat minyanim play a crucial factor.

The response to a female student sharing a dvar torah at the student-run Klein@9 minyan demonstrates that there is an underlying issue in the role women play in YU’s Modern Orthodoxy, where women are encouraged to play active roles in a society. The decision by the YU Roshei Yeshiva to ban women from speaking at the bima contradicts the values that are inherent in Modern Orthodoxy, which include the encouragement of women to play a more active role in the community. This problem is presented as an outlier, even though it has actually been evident and pressing for a long time but just set to the side. It demonstrates the dichotomy between the men and women in the community that contributes to the split between the campuses.

We have come a long way in fostering a sense of



community for the students, especially for those on the Beren campus. However, the approach presented by the administration, which is to create a new minyan to address one specific need, will not remedy the debate we continue to have regarding the role of women in the community. Adding another minyan that will specifically be distinguished for allowing women to speak at the bima will further divide students at the Wilf and Beren campuses. It will contribute further to the separation because it will create a choice and that choice will create a further rift.

At the end of the day, the ends cannot justify the means because Yeshiva University will always have the challenge of providing leadership not only for the Modern Orthodox community, but also for the American Jewish community as a whole. And as Abraham Lincoln famously said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand”—and most certainly cannot lead.

Does Social Media Make Us Dumber?

Elka Wiesenberg
Junior Opinions Editor

I'm Sorry, But My Attention Span Is Too Short To—Haha, check out this meme.

Wait, what was I saying? Sorry, I was scrolling through my Insta feed while doing this. Oh, right, social media. That's what I wanted to discuss here.

A discussion has been circulating the media for several months: Do smartphones and social media have a negative impact on our lives? We've reached a point in society where smartphones are basically extensions of ourselves. I'd sooner leave the house without my left arm than my iPhone, if the former weren't attached to my body.

It's becoming increasingly harder to have a conversation with a friend, family member, or significant other that doesn't involve at least one screen glowing in someone's face. Boredom during business meetings is now alleviated by simply tuning out with technology. And forget trying to run a classroom without the subtle or not-so-subtle tapping of students' fingers as they scroll through social media throughout every lecture.

Despite all the distraction, life goes on. For the most part, we must have gotten pretty good at multitasking; relationships are still developed, workplaces are still run, and classes are still passed sometimes, even with the distraction of social media. So is the ever-presence of smartphones, and all the apps downloaded onto them, really that bad?

My high school had a policy that all cell phones needed to be handed into the front office before the first bell rang each morning, and they were collected as students filed out at the end of each day. Individual wooden jail cells were built for each girl's phone, labeled neatly with her name, and few dared to violate the routinely enforced cell phone rules.

Even without the availability of social media, I was always an easily-distracted student. When my classes got boring, I would take out a special notebook and just write. Over the course of high school, with my phone safely jailed away from 8:15 AM to 5:22 PM, I completed an entire novel, got halfway through seven more, and started countless others.

I used boredom to fuel my creativity.

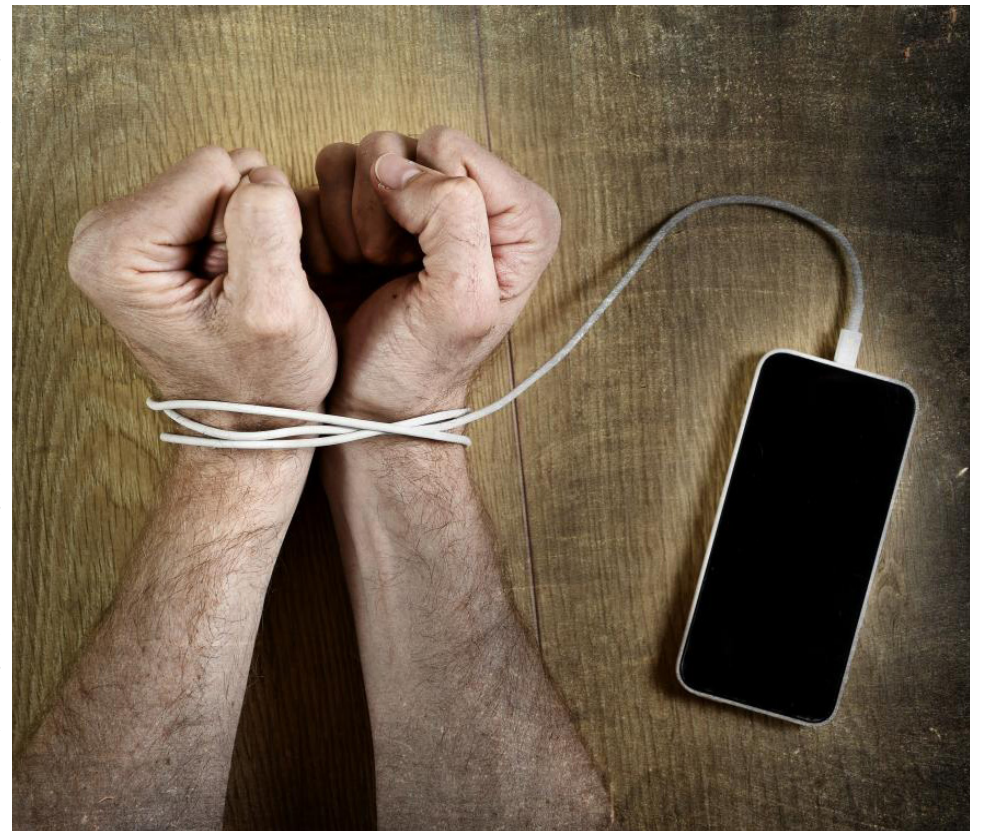
Because writing was all-consuming, however, I knew that I could only focus on one thing at a time. I didn't pretend I was paying attention in class while I was writing; I knew that one or the other held the whole of my notice.

In college, my cell phone usage is now up to my own discretion. Last year, I was studying abroad where I wasn't allowed a laptop in class, and it was a struggle to keep my phone in my bag. Now, with my laptop open in most classes for text sources and note-taking, the concept of school without social media doesn't stand a chance.

While I'm trying to focus in class, my eyes drift to the tantalizing tab open to Twitter. When I'm out with my friends, I feel the constant buzzing of new Snapchats. When I sit down to do my homework, one hand curls around my phone, ready to be torn from my studies by texts and Whatsapps.

I'm not paying attention, and I'm not even being creatively productive while I "multitask" through my day. Nothing is getting done.

Studies show a strong correlation between increased screen time and diminished attention. A 2011 article by Perri Klass for the New York Times, discusses the possible effects of the stimulants from playing video games and watching TV on attention deficiency. These studies are published routinely, but people rarely take them seriously.



What can we do to decrease our screen time and increase our productivity?

A friend of mine recently told me that she turned off all social media notifications, so that her phone doesn't ping to demand her attention throughout the day. This way, she only checks her apps when she has time, after the day's work is done. Though I definitely have too much FOMO to attain this level of self-control, it is an excellent idea for keeping virtual and IRL worlds separate.

I'm still trying to find my own perfect solution to this much-discussed problem of spending too much time on social media. For now though, I think that continuing this discussion is important, so that we don't forget that it is a problem, whether or not we like to admit it to ourselves.

Finding My Roots: A Female in Journalism

Chaviva Freedman

When I declared my major as Journalism at the end of my sophomore year, I have to admit - I struggled with the decision. I had two years worth of Business and Management courses under my belt and it scared me to uproot and completely change my plans with just one signature on a piece of paper. As I am about to graduate college, I am struggling to find various females who were famous for their careers in journalism to give me some sort of reassurance that this was the right decision for me.

I started my research by looking at the two characters that everyone knows for their writing skills: Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex and the City* and Rory Gilmore from *Gilmore Girls*. No one can deny that these two television series lend themselves to being heavily binge-watched on Netflix (trust me on this—the minute you mention *Gilmore Girls* to my friends, it becomes a war of Team Jess vs. Team Dean vs. Team Logan), and that the characters took pride in the articles or columns they "slaved" over to write. But are they the best role models for this lucrative field? Carrie literally wrote her articles at the end of each episode after some important event happened (usually of the love kind—hence the name of the television show) to have other women commiserate with her "terrible" life. The woman owned her own apartment, had endless pairs of Manolo Blahniks and Chanel shoes in her closet, and essentially could get any man she wanted—how could that be the worst thing to ever happen to a woman?

Don't even get me started on Rory Gilmore. She suffered from the same issue as Carrie, but worse—she let every guy she dated influence her actions (which is why Jess was perfect for her in the end—just my opinion) and by the time we see her in the revival, *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, we see her career in a rut, while she complains about every single dilemma

in her life. That's not a person to look up to. I know that the writers of the show had a method with the way they wrote her character, but couldn't she at least have some sort of backbone and really pursue her original dream of becoming the next Christiane Amanpour, or in today's times, the next Rachel Maddow? It was so disappointing to watch, leading me to further doubt my original decision.

After taking time to look at these popular forms of television, I then looked at two obscure and now-defunct television shows: *Good Girls Revolt* and *The Newsroom*. The former, lasting only one season on Amazon Prime, depicted a group of young women in a 1960's newsroom, protesting (led by Patti Robinson, portrayed by Genevieve Angelson) to get recognition as writers while striving to receive equal pay. It was a show that intrigued me the minute I saw billboards for it in September of 2016. The character development for each of the women was one of growth. Each woman recognized her worth and by the end of the series, they all had the guts to stand up to their male bullies and make names for themselves. (If you have never seen the show before, I truly recommend you watch it—it will be worth it).

The Newsroom is a show that I found a true love for, so much so that all my friends laugh at how much I talk about this show. Created by Aaron Sorkin (yes—the same one who created the beloved *The West Wing*), the show details a group of journalists and television producers overhauling the 8:00 PM news in the midst of a rough political climate. During its three seasons on HBO, the characters went through the real-life events of a presidential election, a military coup, and a marathon bombing amongst other national moments. Throughout the show, I always found Mackenzie McHale, portrayed by Emily Mortimer, to be one of the fiercest female

characters I had seen on television in a while. She never let her personal life affect her first true love—the news. She led her team with authority and made sure that there was integrity and truth behind each news report.

As I continue to write this piece, I consider the women I admire with their commitment to journalism and the bylines they've received over their careers. During my time as an intern at *ELLE Magazine* (that's another story for another time—you can read that anecdote here), I remember always seeing the Chief Content Officer of Hearst Magazines, Joanna Coles, everywhere I went. She is one of those women with an aura that screams, "Respect me for my thoughts while I go and change the world with my words." Her aura was so potent that whenever she stepped into the elevator, people would part like the Red Sea just to give her the space she deserved. Described by the *New York Times* as "one of the most powerful people in media," Coles is so powerful in the field that she not only executive produces one of the newest television shows, *The Bold Type* (another show that I highly recommend), but she sits on the board of directors at Snapchat and on the board of the Women Entrepreneurs New York City. The fact that this UK-native has been able to make such strides since arriving in the States in 1997 both dumbfounds me and further fuels the fire within me that maybe this was the right decision for me.

So what's in store for me as graduation approaches closer and closer? I truly don't know. But maybe this newfound fire that I am finding as I complete this piece will help the next girl who can't decide whether this field is right for her. Until then, I'm going to cross my fingers, find myself through my words, and see where that takes me in the next phase of life.

Returning Home

Rachel Leonek

Once a year, I wake up early on a Shabbos morning, earlier than I generally do. I put on my sturdiest walking shoes in anticipation of the long trek ahead of me. I walk a mile further than my two-mile journey to my current place of worship and venture down the familiar road that brings me to a building where I spent nearly every Sabbath for approximately sixteen years. I return home to my former Conservative synagogue and experience a nostalgic trip down memory lane.

It is never easy for me to go back to my former synagogue, the traditional Conservative “temple,” which I grew up attending. So many memories—both positive and negative—flood my consciousness along the three-mile walk each year. But I rationalize it to myself, telling myself that this isn’t a trip for my own sake. I go every year, when my mother recites a haftarah the week before my grandmother’s yahrzeit, remembering the woman who was a third parent to me. This is my way of showing *kivud eim* to my mother and honoring my grandmother’s memory.

As I begin my walk and pass by the local non-denominational church, my religious transformation flashes before my eyes. I envision my earliest memories in pre-school in the synagogue’s basement with Mrs. Kroll and Mrs. Dolberg. I was constantly chosen as the teacher’s assistant, especially when we discussed Judaism, as my parents and grandparents were proud cultural Conservative Jews. I was more knowledgeable than the other children since I went to shul each week with my mother and grandmother, my family kept kosher and had Friday night dinner each week, and after nearly losing my thumb at five years old, I went to Junior Congregation each Shabbat morning because the instructor was the EMT who saved my finger. In the traditional synagogue where my preschool was, there was no partition between men and women. Men were called to the Torah and led most synagogue services while women read Prayers for the State and for the Israeli Defense Forces; it was the Conservative movement of old.

As I edge closer and cross between the two *eruvim*, I remember my days in my local Solomon Schechter, the educational arm of the Conservative movement. Throughout my days in elementary and middle school, I was taught modern Hebrew, the weekly Torah portion, Jewish role models from the Bible, the Conservative movement’s renditions of the Shacharit prayers, and all of the twelve tribes. I learned what Shabbat and *kashrut* were in more detail, even if most people didn’t really care about either or follow them at home. I was one of the top students in my Judaic Studies classes, and was the person my other classmates consulted with questions before exams. I participated in the United Synagogue Youth’s pre-Kadima and Kadima programs for students in fourth through eighth grades, and was the youngest member in my temple’s choir. All of my friends were halachically Jewish—either with two Jewish parents or a mixed marriage with a Jewish mother. And while my family did not keep Shabbos, the Sabbath was delineated as a family time and I did not hang out with friends until it was over. I never questioned anything I was taught by my parents or teachers because I thought if it was being taught in a school or at home, it must be completely and undeniably true. I was taught by my teachers and mentors that we were following the correct interpretation of Judaism and that anything more was too extreme and anything less was not enough.

I approach the overpass over the highway, marking the middle of my trek, both physically (to the synagogue) and metaphorically (in my religious journey). Shortly after I entered high school, my grandmother passed away and my world came crashing down. My grandmother had been my religious pillar and the world seemed like it could not exist without her. While my academic career continued, I was reeling inside. But something changed about my education as well; as I got older, the material I was learning in school became more controversial and harder for me to believe. I was taught the documentary hypothesis, which claimed G-d was not the sole author of the Torah. I was introduced to Gemara, but through an academic lens that had no appreciation for the oral tradition. Egalitarianism was forced down my throat, even if I wanted a more traditional Jewish lifestyle. This egalitarianism was very apparent, both in school, where women could *lein Torah*, wear a tallit, tefillin or

kippa if they wanted to, and in shul, where women were now able to read the haftarah and its blessings, as well as open and close the ark during the service. And as my pain grew from missing my grandmother, my resentment grew towards religion—both because of my grandmother’s absence and because what I was being taught seemed to me like heresy. I began to despise Judaism and would act out by attending parties on Friday nights, no longer going to synagogue on Shabbat mornings. I was hanging out with sketchy friends as I became skeptical of what my teachers were teaching me in school and my grades began to drop. I no longer remained in USY either. But

I was hurting and angry, so I paid no mind to any of this at the time.

As I cross the largest intersection on my walk, I am met with my own crossroad that I faced about six years ago in the spring of 2012. I was a shell of myself and unhappy. It was the end of my sophomore year and I was due to take my SATs with my suffering grades. I turned to an observant friend, who mentioned in passing the concept of *Kol Isha*. I remember clear as day when I asked one of my rabbis what the concept was, and to my dismay, received the answer: “We don’t follow that concept here.” There was no explanation, not any previous mention of this law in the classroom. Even though my school did not enforce the observance of Shabbat or *kashrut*, we still learned it in detail, so why not this? I felt lied to and deceived. What other things had they failed to disclose to me? My questions and frustration led me to a Bible teacher, who suggested I search outside of the Conservative movement for answers. This suggestion both surprised and scared me, as I had never thoroughly explored Judaism outside the Conservative movement and was hesitant to do so. But that summer, I took her suggestion and began to do a lot of research, which showed me many contradictions and problems with Conservative Judaism. This ultimately led me to the Orthodox synagogue one mile down the road.

It’s been six years since I began that journey, and as I approach the wide steps leading up to the synagogue, butterflies form in my stomach. It’s been six years filled with both happiness and strife, from countless conflicts with various members of my immediate and extended family over religion to successes in my learning and my growth in *Yiddishkeit*. I was fortunate enough, by the grace of G-d, to spend an incredible and inspirational year in Jerusalem, Israel, but I also unfortunately lost my paternal grandmother, from whom I was estranged. It has been the wildest ride of my life and it has certainly left me questioning many times. But each year, as I enter my former home once again, I am reminded of the decision I made to leave and why it was the correct decision for me.

At the beginning of my nearly three hour stay, I daven in the lobby of the building and enter the sanctuary during the Torah reading. I receive several stares from the 40-something people present in the room—some friendly and some coarse, judging and unwelcoming, but I pay no attention, as I am there for my mother. I join her and my sister in the pews and proudly smile as she recites the beautiful haftarah. I stay the remainder of the service and am received warmly by those sitting with my mother; all of them welcoming me back as if I had never left. After the service, I follow the crowd into the social hall and catch up with a few people before *mincha*, where my mother gives her mother’s name for the *Kel Maleh*.

Towards the end of the service, I overhear one



woman ask my mother what she will be doing once the shul closes. Closing? I ask my mother and to my dismay, my mother informs me that a week prior, the synagogue had called for a meeting and decided that after sixty-five years, a dwindling membership, and no new affiliates in several years, the synagogue would be closing in the June of next year. I am shocked and overwhelmed by my many mixed emotions. I am extremely sad to hear that my childhood home is closing, but I also feel a small—very small—sense of relief knowing that I will no longer need to return to a place where many of the members judge me for leaving the movement and not continuing the synagogue for future generations. It was the same small sense of relief that I felt when my local “kosher” deli (the type of kosher establishment that is open on Shabbos and sells the questionable Hebrew National brand) closed while I was in Israel. While I would certainly miss the deli and the memories that came with it, it was no longer a place where I could be, or felt welcomed at, when I returned.

It is nearly one o’clock as I leave the building with my mother. She turns to the left and heads down the ramp to the back parking lot to get her car as I walk down the stairs and begin my walk home. I am left reminiscing about the many memories I have growing up in this building, the place I called home for nearly sixteen years. But with the closing of this building and house of prayer comes an even more prominent reality for me: the closing of my childhood, and more importantly, the end of the Conservative Movement.

For the last few decades, Conservative Judaism and the institutional United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism have been losing people (to Reform Judaism on the left, Orthodoxy on the right or those who have become completely unaffiliated). There are many who no longer call the Conservative Movement their home. The traditional Conservative of old is dwindling and the USCJ tries to find innovative ways to keep their members by moving more towards egalitarianism with women in more public, as well as pulpit, roles. In recent years, the Conservative Movement has also been accepting individuals with at least one Jewish parent—whether mother or father—as Jewish, even if they are not halachically Jewish. This new generation of pseudo-Jews is passing as Jewish and, since my graduation from Schechter in 2014, has been accepted into many Schechter schools across the country without any questions or queries.

It’s very weird returning to my old home. On the one hand, there are many welcoming old faces who I know deeply care about me and my family. On the other hand, I feel judged by piercing eyes that are filled with contempt and the belief that I think I am “holier than Thou.” While I am filled with sadness about the fact that my childhood home is closing, I am left to wonder what would have been if I had stayed as I walk all the way home.

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