

RUTGERS HILLEL WELCOMES CHANGES AT *THE DAILY TARGUM*

The following letter was sent to Rutgers Hillel by *The Daily Targum* Board of Trustees, in response to Hillel's request for action following a recent anti-Semitic commentary published in the Targum. Although the Targum has no plans to publish this letter, they have given Hillel permission to share it with the community at large. It is both an apology and an affirmation of Hillel's position and requests for change at the Targum, and it is deeply appreciated.

THE TARGUM APOLOGIZES

Mr. Getraer and Ms. Lubow,

Let me start by saying we are deeply sorry. It was antisemitic, it was inaccurate and it never should have run in the paper. The response the students published in the Targum was meant as an apology to Hillel and the Rutgers community at large, but please accept this as our personal apology. As soon as the Board of Trustees was made aware of Ms. Jolly's letter to the editor, we promptly had the students remove it from The Daily Targum's website. We asked that the comments section remain online so that the community could continue to react.

The Daily Targum is an independent, student-run publication. The board is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the paper, but serves as an advisory group the students can turn to when they need assistance. In addition to the managing editor, editor-in-chief, business manager and marketing manager, the board consists of four alumni members, our comptroller and a Rutgers faculty member, staff member and student representatives.

After removing Ms. Jolly's letter from the website, the board also instructed the editor-in-chief to issue an apology and to correct some of the inaccuracies stated in her opinions piece. After learning of Ms. Jolly's letter and because of various issues over the past year — including but not limited to the editing of letters submitted by Hillel representatives, inaccuracies in opinions pieces related to Israel and Palestine, and issues of imbalance being raised — the board has taken the unusual step of requiring the editor-in-chief to submit all letters and commentary on this topic to the board for approval before they can be published. While we do not like to insert ourselves into the editorial process, we understand that there is a long history of problems here and we want you to know that we are taking steps to address them.

In direct response to your requests, please accept our apology to Rutgers Hillel and the entire Jewish community. As stated above the board is now working directly with the student editors to regulate what does and does not appear on our opinions page. The students work very hard to produce a paper five days each week while still maintaining a full course load. But they are students and they make mistakes. They have apologized for those mistakes and are working with the board to make sure this does not happen again. The editorial board is in the process of transitioning to new leadership. The current editors will be leaving in less than two weeks and a new group will be taking over. The board is exploring

professional training with media industry experts. Once we decide on a program, all editors will be required to attend. We hope that you understand we cannot allow Hillel — or any other group on campus — to be involved in crafting this training.

We hope that you will accept our apology and understand that we are working to remedy this situation.

Sincerely,

The Daily Targum Board of Trustees

RUTGERS HILLEL RESPONDS

Rutgers Hillel is gratified to receive a mature and thoughtful response from *The Daily Targum* Board of Trustees, which demonstrates that leadership of the Targum understands the seriousness of this issue and is determined to change the culture and operation of our campus paper for the better.

The Targum response clearly and directly acknowledges the anti-Semitism of the commentary by Ms. Jolly, as well as the responsibility of the Targum editorial board in publishing it. It is a personal apology to Hillel and the entire Jewish community that doesn't try to hide or deflect criticism, and that is welcome and appreciated.

We especially appreciate the candor with which the Targum Board acknowledges the Targum's pattern of bias in coverage of the Jewish community and Israel. This has been an ongoing source of pain and frustration for many students and other members of the Rutgers community.

We welcome their decision to take unprecedented action to change the culture of the Targum. We are hopeful that by providing student editors with additional training and by supervising opinion and editorial pieces that deal with the Jewish community and/or Israel, such bigotry and bias will be prevented in the future.

We do understand that the Targum editors are students, that they have an extremely demanding job, and that they are often inexperienced. But they also have a extremely powerful communications platform in their hands, one that represents our state university, and with that comes an obligation to understand and use that platform responsibly. It is gratifying that *The Daily Targum* Board of Trustees is now taking action to educate student journalists so that they can fulfill this obligation in the future, for the greater good of our entire university community.

Rutgers Hillel

Rutgers Hillel Responds To *The Daily Targum*

To the Governing Board and Editorial Staff of *The Daily Targum*:

We are embarrassed for you. We are embarrassed that you disgraced yourselves and the entire Rutgers community last Thursday, publishing the commentary in your Opinion section entitled "Can Hillel's

funding be put to better use elsewhere?” by Ms. Colleen Jolly. (While the Targum has removed the piece, it can be found at <http://jakebinstein.com/activism/daily-targum-bias/can-hillels-funding-be-put-to-better-use-colleen-jolly>)

We are embarrassed for you because you chose to publish a commentary that was of such poor writing and such impoverished thought, that its incoherence almost overshadowed its gross bigotry. Almost.

But we are also embarrassed for you because, after publishing such a rambling, offensive screed, your editorial response demonstrated precious little understanding of what you had actually done. http://www.dailytargum.com/opinion/columnists/content-will-be-more-carefully-chosen-in-the-future/article_c6ba9db4-86fc-11e3-82bb-001a4bcf6878.html

You state that “Looking back, moments in this piece relay discriminatory undertones.” Looking back? It is hard to believe you could only discern the bigotry of the piece in retrospect. Moments? Undertones? The entire piece is based on the repugnant, antisemitic assumption that there is something unfair and nefarious about Jews and money, and that a visible Jewish presence on campus is alienating and suspicious. Remove those prejudiced assumptions and there is nothing left.

The Targum defamed Rutgers Hillel, one of Rutgers’ oldest campus organizations, and vilified the entire Jewish community, one of the largest minority communities on campus, with antisemitic stereotypes and prejudice. That is what requires an apology.

Your editorial states that “The piece was originally published it (sic) for a number reasons — The Daily Targum does not practice censorship and hopes to create conversation about issues on campus.” Aside from demonstrating that you don’t proofread even your own work, what does this possibly mean? You do not practice censorship? So you publish anything anyone submits, without review? Knowing numerous pieces submitted by Hillel leaders that have been edited or rejected – censored? – we know that is not true. And exactly what conversation about Hillel and Jews were you trying to create?

Not only does the entire piece trade in anti-Jewish prejudice, but also in ignorance of basic facts which any competent, unbiased editor should have caught. But being competent and unbiased are not The Targum’s strengths, are they?

To your credit, you do acknowledge factual errors, and your apology came in relation to some of these. We feel an obligation to set the record straight regarding other falsehoods of the piece:

For the record, every penny to be used for the new Rutgers Hillel building has been raised through private donations. No university or government funds are involved and every penny will be used as directed by the donors, as is our legal obligation.

For the record, Rutgers-New Brunswick has the second largest Jewish undergraduate population in America, with over 6,000 Jewish undergraduates. Rutgers is the only Hillel among the twenty largest that does not already have a state of the art, purpose-built facility.

For the record, Hillel is open to all Rutgers students, and many non-Jewish students take part in our events, including Friday Night Shabbat dinners, our annual award-winning Days Without Hate program, and our Center for Israel Engagement. Last year Hillel raised more money for Dance Marathon than any other non-fraternity or sorority organization. For ten years Hillel has sent students on alternative spring break trips to help needy non-Jewish communities in such places as Central America, the Gulf Coast, and tornado-ravaged Oklahoma.

Activities such as these expose the question asked in The Targum's commentary – "does the Jewish nature" of Hillel "make you feel welcome?" – for what it is: an underhanded attempt at painting Jews as unwelcome and alien at Rutgers. Such a question comes from a place of prejudice that all people of goodwill must reject.

We do not entirely blame the author, whose education has failed her so miserably that she cannot even articulate her own prejudice beyond the most elemental tropes of 'Jews and money.' Ms. Jolly's commentary was approved by your Opinions editor, under the responsibility of your Editor-in-Chief, under what passes for the guidance of your Governing Board. The problem clearly runs deeper than a guest commentator.

The deeper issue is the culture of *The Daily Targum* itself, a culture that approved this perpetuation of anti-Jewish stereotypes and the delegitimization of Hillel.

The issue goes far beyond just ensuring that "Content will be more carefully chosen in the future." Only you, the leadership of *The Daily Targum*, can take action to change the culture of our campus newspaper. Only you can take action to correct the antisemitic bigotry that you published.

Given the size of the Jewish community at Rutgers and in New Jersey; given the overwhelming importance that Rutgers' culture places on diversity and common purpose at one of America's most racially, ethnically, religiously and economically diverse universities; and given the embarrassment that you brought on our entire university, we ask the following:

- We request that you apologize to Rutgers Hillel and the entire Jewish community specifically.
- We request that an investigation be done to determine how such a piece could have been published.
- We request that those found responsible are removed from any Targum positions, now or in the future.
- We request that everyone on the Targum staff, now and in the future, be required to participate in training, to be developed with Hillel, to understand, recognize and avoid antisemitism and other forms of vile prejudice.

These are the steps necessary to correct the bigotry you disseminated, the hurt you have caused, and the disgrace that you brought to our university.

If you are ready to take these necessary steps, Hillel stands ready to help you rebuild your culture and your reputation, for the good of our university and our Rutgers community.

Sincerely,

Andrew Getraer
Executive Director, Rutgers Hillel

Ariel Lubow '14
President, Rutgers Hillel Student Board