

NFTY-MAR,

When I was the drummer for a musical at my school, my Deaf Sign Language teacher wanted to come watch a performance. I worked hard to convince the music director of the show that a Sign Language interpreter was necessary. She feared it would interfere with the lighting, but after much deliberation, she finally allowed one. After the show, she called me over to thank me for helping her realize the importance of accessibility and that, “when everyone can enjoy the show, it helps out every person involved.” Even the smallest forms of advocacy can spark progress towards a paradigm shift; we are taught “Gam zu l'tova. This too is for the good.”

**It is with optimism that I acknowledge moments like these along with the opportunity NFTY gives teens to directly impact a community they are apart of; and declare my candidacy for the 2019-2020 NFTY-MAR Social Action Vice President.**

Through serving as TRSTY’s SAVP, TRSTY President, NFTY-MAR Inclusion Chair, an alumni of the URJ Kutz Camp’s Action and Advocacy immersive, an alumni of the L’Taken Social Justice Seminar, a member of the NFTY Inclusion and Racial Justice Task Forces, and a speaker on Capitol Hill for Jewish Disability Advocacy Day, I have seen firsthand how the Jewish youth voice can have an impact in shaping a more just community. If elected to serve as your SAVP, I will harness these experiences to help bring our voice into the fray in the following ways:

1. **Fitting MAR’s regional social action focus into the whole.** While aligning MAR’s social justice themes with NFTY North American themes, we will utilize the tools from NFTY’s Cabinet task forces such as the touchstone text bank and the verified programs. Additionally, we will help promote social action within the TYGs of MAR. At sub regional leadership days, we will run more nuanced programs on specific topics to expand themes already explored at regional events.
2. **We will work to improve our own community before pushing for outward change.** We will have programs to explore the diversity within our own Reform Jewish community in order to raise a better understanding of each other. We will be on the forefront of the NFTY Gibush initiatives, with a big focus on inclusion within MAR. We must continue to push for better sexual violence prevention awareness among MARites, improved recycling and food waste prevention initiatives at events, more teen civic engagement, and a heightened sensibility around inclusive terminology.
3. **Social action for the individual.** By working with MARites individually or in small groups, we will write programs to bring less mainstream social justice topics into the light. Many participants are particularly passionate about specific topics, that when brought into the region, can offer a new social justice experience for participants. Everyone will have the opportunity to educate others on what they are passionate about.

NFTY has shaped my passionate, inclusive, excited desire to help others pursue social action and find ways to better the world around them. Join me to continue this initiative.

-Lee