

Dear NFTY-MAR,

During my freshman year, I was inadvertently pulled into social action and have never looked back. The place: my school. The time: hours after the official school walkouts in support of gun control. The occasion: my school had not allowed us to walk out, for the sake of an admissions event happening that day. At the time, I was in Spanish class. When an email began circulating around the school that there was going to be a walkout, against the wishes of our administration, the first thing I thought about was getting out of Spanish. Of course, I left class immediately. As I sat around the center of my school's campus, however, something incredible began to happen. With every orange ribbon I pinned to the shirts of my classmates, or every call to Capitol Hill made, I felt more and more like I was part of something larger, something far, far more important than myself. Through this small act of rebellion, I was able to voice frustration on a larger scale, one that actually possessed the capability of creating change. I want every person in NFTY-MAR, whether they've had a moment like this or not, to feel that they are part of a larger *kehillah kedoshah*, one committed to values such as *tikkun olam*. **With this goal in mind, I declare my candidacy for the 2020-2021 NFTY-MAR Social Action Vice President.**

After my run-in with social action at school, I joined the Student Diversity Board to continue making change within the school environment. Years later, I now sit on the board and run a club, Mental Health Awareness Club, as well as being a ranking member of the diversity and inclusion committee within the junior class. **These roles, as well as my role as Inclusion Chair on Cabinet this year, have given me the skills to effectively communicate, collaborate, and lead.** I take great pride in my developed ability to talk to adults, something that is specifically vital in a role such as SAVP that is relevant to NFTY as a whole, yet also spends a great deal of time working with outside organizations. As a general board member, I plan to use these skills to collaborate with the other members of the board so that we can have the most successful year possible. I hope that my pride in being a team player will show through as the entire board works to create success within MAR. But I have specific goals that relate directly to social action for the upcoming year, as well.

**The first is a commitment to relevant social action.** This means reaching out to TYGs to find local issues in their areas, or sending out a survey before the start of the school year asking MARites what they want to focus on. I can be a capable force in the region and everyone can do what I want to do, but social action is far more engaging when members relate on a personal level. Both of the measures listed would help improve the relevance of social action programming. Especially when an event may only have a few hours budgeted for a social action program, it is important that the community is as engaged as possible. An additional measure to increase relevance of social action within the region is expanding the task force structure that was implemented this year. Through allowing MAR-ites to submit their own ideas for a task force and lead the way, the region will open itself up to programming led by people who truly have a passion for a specific topic. With more engaged and energized leaders, the entire region will follow.

**A second goal is accessibility.** One of the main focuses of social action within NFTY is to provide an inclusive environment where everybody feels comfortable. As the Inclusion Chair this year, I was able to experience firsthand how important this is. As new members come into the region, I saw how valuable the power of inclusion could be in creating lasting memories within MAR, and how providing accommodations at events made our space so much more welcoming. But accessibility within MAR reaches beyond this definition.

**Next year, I would ensure that all social action content is even more accessible than it is now.** This means several things. First, I will expand my newsletter program from this year to cover the wide range of social action topics at events and around the region. When a topic or activity is completed at a regional event, I will send out materials afterwards so that interested participants can follow up with an organization, learn more about a cause, or simply spread the news to their friends who didn't attend the event. This is another point. Although MAR events are incredible, the timing makes it difficult for people to attend every event in the year. However, this should not be a barrier to social action that can be completed at home. With the proper resources sent out, action turns from a single conversation to an ongoing dialogue. I will also work to ensure smaller TYGs receive resources from the region so that they can run programs at their temples, especially if they were particularly successful on a regional level. Every member of MAR will have the chance to get materials from any social action program through a dropbox open throughout the year. This will encourage all members to participate in action not just at events but in their daily lives.

I have learned an incredible amount on Cabinet this year. The most important thing is that there is a fine line between participant and leader, yet one that needs to be upheld. On Board next year, I would emphasize my role not just as a leader, but a friend and NFTY-ite. I plan to manage this balance by attempting to be as available as possible to the region. Whether this means always talking to new people on the bus to an event, or forgoing my group of friends to talk to new NFTY-ites I've never met, I will always try to reach out to people. This way, even when I am leading, I still feel like a peer and equal, which is core to the idea of social action.

NFTY-MAR, it is my incredible honor to run for Regional Board and I would be so blessed to serve as your next Social Action Vice President.

All my love,

Ilene