

## 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](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