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every place against BDS, in order to educate about the State of Israel. We have a deep commitment to this topic. The war against the lies spread about the settlements in Judea and Samaria in particular, and the State of Israel in general, must cease."

'This is another step on the path towards beating the lies of the BDS. We thank Bruce Blakeman, our dear friend and the head of Nassau County in New York, who brought about this visit and has helped us greatly. He also passed a law in his county against the Ben & Jerrys company, which called to boycott Judea and Samaria."

Blakeman emphasized, "Samaria is an Israeli success story, and I call on everyone to come here. Whoever has not yet visited the area must see the area and its security importance up close. Samaria must continue to build as much as possible, and the U.S. needs to support that."

Congressmember Anthony D'Esposito slammed the Biden administration's moves to pressure Israel to reduce construction in Jewish settlements: "Biden's policy to demand a cessation of building in settlements is flawed. I think that what we see here is a weak administration. Joe Biden is weak in his foreign policy, Biden's advisers in the field of foreign policy hold anti-Israel opinions, and we need to deal with this situation by inviting administration officials to visit here, so that they can see how much things have changed in the past few years."

"I call on the members of the Senate to come to Samaria in order to understand what exactly we are talking about. The best way to understand the history and the present of this place is to visit it. I will bring the picture which I saw and became familiar with here, to the U.S., and I hope that this will help us advance a different policy than what the administration practices today."

NY State Senator Patricia Canzoneri Fitzpatrick noted that due to U.S. pressure, there have sometimes been delays in construction of school buildings in Samaria, and there are some children who learn in caravans for many years.

"I am a mother of four children and I would not be willing to suffer what the children in Judea and Samaria's settlements suffer," she said. "Learning takes place in horrible temporary structures. Every child deserves proper education. I oppose the policy which refuses to allow Israel to build, and we will continue and raise awareness of this issue."

RNC Committeeman Joe Cairo concluded: "People must come here in order to understand the reality. It's important to preserve this area as it is today, and not pass it to other hands. Every child deserves a proper education, proper schools and preschools, and the children in the Judea and Samaria settlements are no different than any other child in the world when it comes to this." *(Israel National News)* ■

Civinomics: Why Civic Education?

By Audi Hecht

Can you envision something whose value skyrocketed overnight? Let's imagine it's a stock you own or a business about to go public. Now, think of Zoom during the pandemic—it went from an unheard of platform to a global phenomenon rethinking approaches to work impacting real estate, life-work balance, and organizational paradigms, to name a few.

Consider that there was an investment in education that could do the following: increase public civility, encourage respectful and productive dialogue regardless of opposing views and opinions, inspire our youth to become confident and contributing members of society looking toward the past and future with reverence and hope.

Imagine a world where the unity of national pride and caring for others fused patriotism and humanitarianism. Picture our media as vehicles of transparent access to information for all. Consider a generation eager to build on the progress of our 'Home of the Brave.' Envision vibrant social media platforms filled with young minds engaging in discussion about the merits of policies, exploring intellectual ideas, and ideating solutions. Creating idyllic visions can serve both as the roadmaps and standards for short and long term progress, and fuel our energies for the impact we seek to have on our communities.

Why Civic Education? As educational priorities have evolved, there has been a shift towards preparing students for careers in fields like computer science, engineering, and other STEM disciplines. This has often resulted in relegating the humanities to the background. As a result, our culture is contending with the long-term consequences of placing vocational aspirations over curricular elements that encourage critical thinking about both oneself and the world, and fostering the development of qualities that bring out the best in humanity. Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivas offer natural avenues for nurturing these values through religious studies and ethical exploration. Civic education can facilitate the connection between shared national values and religious ones fostering a comprehensive sense of identity by enabling students to tap into the reservoirs of foundational ideals that inspire them, motivating them to incorporate these ideals into their self-perception as purpose-driven and influential individuals.

Fortifying a Civic Identity as Jewish Americans. Some may wonder what aspects of civic belonging and connection can resonate with students at Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivas? Our national and religious mission alignment is rich and expansive. The United States of America is a nation founded on a palette of Judeo-Christian principles while having protections to safeguard religious liberties from potential government infringement. The First Amendment's Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses stand as testaments to its commitment to preserving religious liberties. This ensures that individuals can practice their faith freely, without the presence of a government established or preferred religion that contrasts with over 40 percent of the world's countries, as revealed by a 2017 Pew Study on government-endorsed religion. This does not imply that faith plays a less central role in the fabric of our nation.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, related: "The founding of this nation was predicated on a belief in G-d. People fled from other countries and came here to serve G-d as they saw fit, without persecution and hindrance. They arrived with the trust and faith that G-d would guide them and they relied on Him completely. This demonstrates that the country was built on a faith in a G-d who is not somewhere in the "Seventh Heaven"..... Any debate concerning the Constitution, whether it supports such an education or not, cannot presume that it was written in a way that contradicts the entire reason the Pilgrims fled to the United States and upon which they based their lives."

Massachusetts Bay Colony's founder, John Winthrop, articulated this vision for America as a 'City Upon a Hill', a model society, echoing the Prophet Isaiah's directive to be a 'Light Unto the Nations'. While the United States has not been without its flaws and challenges, its foundational principles and commitment toward progress teem with values that uplift and include, aspiring to extend Abraham Lincoln's vision of "malice toward none and charity toward all' to all its citizens and those seeking a better future here from around the world.

Unique Civic Education Opportunity for Jewish Day Schools on Long Island. Civic Spirit provides educators and school leaders with individualized support to implement comprehensive civic education in their school communities. Founded by Rabbi Robert Hirt and Virginia Bayer in 2016, Civic Spirit is dedicated to working with religious schools to cultivate student connection to our country's founding values and institutions, to empower them to become influential in their communal landscape, and to increase knowledge of foundational American texts and ideas. We pride ourselves in offering non-partisan, comprehensive civic education opportunities for educators and students. Our Summer Institutes welcome educators from across the country and continue to offer an exceptional civic education learning experience.

The Long Island Educators Cohort is a new addition to Civic Spirit's suite of programs, aimed at fostering collaboration between neighboring schools and the opportunity to reflect as a communal cohort on shared goals and challenges in the civic education space. The fellowship launches with a two-day Winter Institute on **December 3-4** with scholars and practitioners in civics education and will introduce strategies for implementing schools' visions for civic education that reflect their respective missions. In addition, educators will receive: coaching during the school-year, virtual professional develop-

ment workshops tailored to the cohort's interests, guidance for implementing a civics project at your school, timely support for navigating the 2024 Election, and follow-up Spring Institute on **March 6**. We invite lower, middle, and high school educators and school leaders who teach or support social studies, history, government, humanities, Judaic studies, and student life to apply. We encourage multiple representatives from a school to apply so that they can collaborate as a team.

Dedicated educators grapple with time constraints, limited resources, teaching a dual curriculum, and setting priorities in their already robust academic programs. The beauty of civic education is that it can manifest vibrantly in elements of existing curricula across disciplines. Our work helps educators in multiple content areas, and in schools with unique missions, unearth the many promising moments for inspirational civic enrichment.

As Marcel Proust aptly stated, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

For more information about this exceptional opportunity for your school visit *CivicSpirit.org/long-island-educators-cohort* or contact Audi Hecht, director of education and innovation at Civic Spirit at *audi@civicspirit.org*. ■

A New School Year, A New Approach To Tuition Affordability

By Dr. Lea E. Goldstein and Raz Levin

This upcoming school year, children from across Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island will be leaving public school and instead attending a New York Jewish day school—many for the first time. And in Rochester, families from across New York, and even some from other states, have been moving there specifically to attend Jewish day school this fall.

The reason for the sudden influx: several months ago, our two schools—Brandeis Hebrew Academy in Lawrence and Derech HaTorah in Rochester—announced we would each, independently, be lowering tuition, making the dream of an affordable Jewish education a reality for dozens of families.

Year after year, as tuition has continued to rise, we have witnessed families struggling to cover the cost of a Jewish education, with some even moving to states with better affordability options. Others are being priced out entirely, reluctantly asking for larger scholarships or sending their children to public school instead. As educators, we understood the loss here, the value that a Jewish education plays in a child's life, and the ripple effect it has on the Jewish community as a whole. That's why, we, along with our fellow parents and community members, took it upon ourselves to find a solution to this tuition crisis, lowering the cost for the first time ever.

Of course, lowering tuition is no easy feat when trying to compete with rising costs, teacher shortages, and inflation, all while trying to remain competitive and provide the highest-quality education available. However, a few purposeful actions allowed us to make this change:

Firstly, tap into any government funding or grants available. We work closely with organizations like Teach NYS, a project of the OU that advocates for government funding and resources, to help us secure thousands of dollars in extremely useful funding, helping subsidize various school improvement and safety needs. For example, both our schools recently received valuable funding from the state for STEM teacher reimbursement, elevating the quality of our STEM offerings for our students. This has helped us mitigate costs and improve quality, all without raising overhead.

Next, try to make wise choices regarding school spending. On a regular basis we remind ourselves and our staff what matters the most—the education of the students. We spend countless hours dissecting our school finances, trying to see how we can support our current and prospective parents who have made it clear that the cost of living, in addition to private school tuition, is becoming more difficult to balance. We strive to be a partner in alleviating these costs, not adding to the burden.

Finally, take action. States like Florida and Pennsylvania have made huge strides in making tuition affordable through scholarships. However, as we continue to fight and advocate for those same offerings here, we realized we needed to act. In our case, we took this bold move and lowered tuition. In both our schools, this move has come back to benefit us as well—in addition to bringing in new students, we are attracting families to our areas specifically because of school affordability. Some families are even taking this opportunity to pay it forward—using their newfound savings to increase their donations to our schools.

Our hope is that schools everywhere take the steps needed to make Jewish day school and yeshivas an inclusive environment available to anyone seeking a rigorous dual curriculum for their children. Whether it's a child who is now given the gift of a formal Jewish education, or a parent who now has a few thousand extra dollars to pro-

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