

Chabad House stands with Hillel against bigotry

COMMENTARY

RABBI YOSEF CARLEBACH

We are Chabad House at Rutgers University, and I am writing in reference to the controversial article written by Colleen Jolly and printed in your opinions section. While this article was not directly aimed at Chabad House, but rather its sister organization, the Rutgers Hillel, we feel the obligation to respond due to its underlying implications of bigotry and anti-Semitism.

As a sister organization that is still in the process of finalizing the touches on our own new building, Chabad House recognizes and supports Hillel and their endeavor to expand and build right here on the University grounds. We both welcome the influx of Jewish students that has grown very positively in the last decades. The presence of the large Jewish population on campus demands and needs both of our organizations to continue to grow. After all, we are both part of the reason why Rutgers has benefited from such a large population of Jewish students, which did not exist years prior.

We feel that Jolly and those that chose to print this article do not congregate among the vast majority of decent men and women here at the University. Otherwise, such an ignorant and factually deficient article would never have been printed. Of course, it is important to mention that the original founders of The Daily Targum were Jewish and in fact, the word "Targum" has a Jewish source.

Chabad House has been a constant and determined presence on the Rutgers campus since 1978. We, too, were able to build up our institution solely through private donations and not a penny was received from the University. In fact, we feel that the University has respected our religion and has supported our presence here for 35 years.

We have participated in many community events, and we are proud of our daily involvement on this campus. We have never felt any discomfort in deal-

ing or working alongside the University on any level. We invite all students of all religious persuasions to identify with Chabad House, and in fact have been visited by many students of all religions and persuasions. Just last year, when the University shut down for several days during Hurricane Sandy, our building remained

"Normally, our policy is to accentuate the positive on campus, but it has now come to the point that we need to address this matter."

the only open facility on the College Avenue campus and was visited by more than 1,000 students of

all backgrounds and religions.

Recently, however, we have noticed an increase in the level of anti-Semitism often masked as anti-Israel activities here on campus. Actually, a perfect example is Jolly's opinion article that we are referring to which seemed to overflow with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel sentiment.

Normally, our policy is to accentuate the positive on campus, but it has now come to the point that we need to ad-

dress this matter. Therefore, we strongly take exception to the article both in its content and its spirit.

I, as executive director and founding rabbi of Chabad House at Rutgers, and now traveling abroad in Israel, have been contacted by reporters from the world-renowned Jerusalem Post, and other members of the media here in Israel, to respond to this controversy. We should all be aware that this is no longer contained within the confines of the Rutgers campus and that many concerned citizens in our great state, country and indeed world, may be watching the University and what transpires here. This has become an unfortunate example of how fast and far anti-Semitism can spread, and thus we must work diligently to stop it at its very source.

Chabad House, with its campus Rabbis Baruch Goodman and Shaya Shagalow, stand together with Hillel and we fully support their efforts both in the endeavor of their new building and in standing up against this attack.

Rabbi Yosef Carlebach is the executive director and founder of the Chabad House Jewish Student Center at Rutgers University.