

Hello everyone,

My name is Alec Hufford. I am a Senior at Rye High School, the current President of COSY, the Community Synagogue Youth Group, and was an intern at the synagogue this summer. As Interns, we were able to collaborate as a team to help further the educational, communal, and spiritual missions of Community Synagogue of Rye. It was an extremely educational and fulfilling experience that gave me new insight on how a Spiritual center is run.

During one of the internship's many professional development sessions, I was asked by the Director of Jewish Family Life, Rich Abrams, what the most critical Jewish event in my life was up to this point. The instructor, as well as the other interns, had generally cliché answers: their *bar mitzvah*, their confirmation, even someone's *bris* was mentioned.

To me the answer was clear, but wasn't very normal. The most important Jewish event in my life wasn't spiritual or religious, it was political. It was my trip to the Religious Action Center during my sophomore year as part of my experience in Confirmation Class with Rabbi Gropper.

I went, along with my confirmation class to Washington D.C., I spent the weekend learning about the Reform Movement's view on many political and human rights issues, such as the acceptance of the LGBT community, gun control, and nuclear proliferation. I learned that Reform Judaism has a stance on almost all political and social issues and generally attempts to foster equality and the general wellbeing of all Americans. On the Monday of that long weekend, I visited Nita Lowey's office to advocate for the Congressional discretionary budget to include unemployment benefits. I spoke in depth on my grandfather who dedicated his life to help many young adults whose families had fallen under the poverty line. He worked in what Time Magazine called "the worst Ghetto in the country" to steer impoverished children away from crime. His consistent belief in equality of opportunity and outcome had led me to support the government having a safety net for families in need.

Reflections from our Senior Youth Group President - 5774

Through my participation at the Rac's L'Taken Seminar, learning about domestic and international human rights issues, I realized that Judaism is not completely separate from the secular world. Judaism is not separate from my secular life. Judaism affects politics, science, education, and culture. My daily life is affected by Judaism. I can be a Jew and an American.

These learnings continue to motivate me to help educate and inspire both my peers and mentors, within the Synagogue community, as well as my school community, to give people the tools and resources to be God's partner in healing the world

As a human, values from Judaism and values from my patriotism came together to unite my core beliefs and mold me into the person I am today. I am an American, I am a Jew, and I can make change.

Thank you