

NFTY,

*“Hold your breath, make a wish, count to three.”*

In the sixth grade, I got my first taste of NFTY. The event was Willy Wonka-themed, and my experiences there defied all expectation. The event had been so intentional and catered toward showing us what awaited us as we grew older. I can remember sitting at the back of the room, watching as the present TOR regional board stood on stage and simply lit up the room by sharing how their involvement in this movement changed each of their lives. I remember sitting there thinking at twelve years old: I cannot wait to be them. When I finally had the opportunity to be a part of something that was more than just pure imagination--it was *immediate salvation*. All at once, I was exposed to a movement that champions the pursuit of justice, entrusts the freedom to discover one's personal relationship to their spirituality, and, above all, creates space for anyone that needs a place to belong. **With that being said, it is with vigilant consideration, ardent conviction, and respect for the movement that has empowered me endlessly, that I, Hannah Bender, declare my candidacy for the position of NFTY Programming Vice President 5779-5780.** *“Come with me and you'll be in a world of pure imagination.”*

Programming is the cornerstone of any NFTY event. In order to create better event experiences that include more programmers, sustain programming on the TYG level, and take away the stigma of programming being complicated, we need to improve how we prepare current and future NFTYites to program. **We must create comprehensive programming resources that trickle down to reach NFTYites on all levels of our movement.** Programming can often seem more daunting than is actually is, but given the proper support everyone can be a PVP. *“If you want to view paradise, simply look around and view it.”*

The Programming Bank - by its function - *should* be an immense resource for NFTYites in their programming endeavors; however, the Programming Bank has been left neglected for far too long, inhibiting its intended usefulness. The Programming Bank at its current state lacks vital infrastructure and attention that would allow it to succeed. Verified Programming was a project started this year in remediation, but with NFTY Convention, it has not had the room to make a big impact. As the incoming board will be serving during on a Veida year, it would **allow for time to be devoted to revitalizing the Programming Bank** by building on the work started in Verified Programs, restructuring how the Bank is maintained and outsourced, and updating it to reflect the current issues and initiatives of NFTY presently and in the future. *“Anything you want to, do it.”*

NFTY is heavily social action-based. This is a vastly empowering form of programming for countless NFTYites. In virtue of the community we have, we do not always have the diversity to accurately program on the wide birth of social issues we would like. Organizational Partnerships would equip these programmers with the proper tools and experiences to program collaboratively and deliberately. **We must continue to elevate our social awareness by developing long standing Educational Coalitions** that will allow us to foster more meaningful programming for participants. *“Want to change the world? There's nothing to it.”*

Through my tenure as a two-term regional board member, a three year Inclusion Task Force member, a URJ Biennial Presenter, and a Kutz alum, I know that I have gained immeasurable experience in multiple levels of URJ programming. In reflecting on why I have devoted so much of my time into our movement, I have concluded that it is because, even though we are in the last leg of our adolescence, NFTY encourages us to dream-- then gives us the tools to attain our dreams. *“There is no life I know to compare with pure imagination.”*

B'ahava,

Hannah Bender