

Since graduating from Schechter in 2014 I have been involved in politics and social justice - both here and during my years in Europe. Recently my experiences have been...interesting to say the least. While our nation is divided, I believe there is far more that unites us than divides us.

When demands for equality broke out this year, millions of Americans joined in the fight and marched for justice. When people were losing their jobs and incomes, food banks stayed open through donations and ensured that fellow Americans did not go hungry. People didn't turn away but instead turned towards the problem and looked for solutions and ways to help.

I know that's what I've been doing. For a while, I've been working on a campaign for a man running for state assembly. I can say that the district he is running to represent has problems I had never encountered. Instead of scaring me or thinking it would be too much to work with or handle, it enticed me because it reminded me of the call to action that Schechter instilled in all of us. We can't run away from problems our community and neighbors are facing, we have to join in and help. How many of us participated in clubs that sought to promote positive change? Kesher, Tzibor, SADD, GSA and countless others. Looking back, tikkun olam, tzedakah are values that have always been part of my life and I'll venture to bet part of yours as well.

In Proverbs there is a quote, "He who withholds what is due to the poor affronts his Maker; he who shows pity for the needy honors Him," (*Mishle 14:31*). I find this quote to truly represent a key value that I hold for humanity and try to use it as a guiding principle in my work. My parents, Judaism and Schechter all gave me a strong understanding of what social justice is and why it matters; and today, in a polarized and hectic world, we see those values coming to fruition. Young people are out demanding racial justice, the youth vote participation has skyrocketed, people have become more engaged in the electorates and are seeking out ways to help the world. The year 2020 might have thrown us for a loop but when I see bits of good in the world, it reminds me of that call to action from Schechter. To see the values that were taught to all of us coming through on the main stage certainly gives me hope that there can be justice and that tomorrow will be a better day.

Gregory Slade (SSLI '14) is currently living in Manhattan and works for a political non-profit while continuing to be actively involved in community work and political campaigns.