

# Confirmation Reflections 2020

July 25, 2020 4 Av 5780

“It is a Tree of Life to those who hold fast to it”



## Temple Ahavat Shalom

Rebecca Hoffman, Rabbi

Kenneth B. Cohen, D. Mus., Cantor

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## 2020 Confirmation Speeches

### Lucas Kinzler

Good evening, if you don't know me, my name is Lucas Kinzler. I am a part of the TAS Confirmation class of 2020. During my time with the Confirmation class I got closer with everyone in it. This class has increased my pride in being Jewish. Earlier this year I got the opportunity to visit Washington DC on the "L'Taken trip." I made so many memories on this trip, from going to sleep at 4 AM, then falling asleep during morning services, to going to see many museums and memorials. I believe that this trip is a must for people who attend TAS. This trip has brought me closer to my classmates as well to the Jewish community. I got the chance to meet people from Texas, Connecticut, New York, and many more that all took pride in being Jewish. Everyone there was so polite and nice and welcoming to everyone including the staff.

There are many problems in the world but if money were no issue, one problem I would fix in our society is the way people look at each other. People need to start to understand that everyone has, or can have, different beliefs in the world. We must accept that the color of someone's skin or what religion they practice does not give someone else the right to discriminate against them. This is the problem that I would fix if money was no issue. I believe that this could help increase the peace in America because we would be treating people with respect and being open and understanding of different cultures.

This year was probably one of my favorite years of any at TAS. This year has brought me closer to the Jewish community because I learned more about the world and Jewish practices and ideas. I would also like to share my favorite moment at Temple Ahavat Shalom. My favorite time at TAS was on Wednesdays and Sundays when we would go to the music teacher Robbo. He always put a smile on everyone's face when he would play his music and sing to us, and we would all join in. I want to thank everyone who helped put this trip together including you, Rabbi Samansky. Thank you for being amazing and helpful and caring throughout the times in the 2020 Confirmation class. Lastly, I want to thank my classmates, you're funny, caring, and loving and I want to thank you for the memories that you gave me. We had an amazing time together. Thank you.

### Odessa Miller-Espinoza

My name is Odessa, and this day has been a long time coming. Rabbi Dalia asked me to think of a world issue that we would want to repair, and after some thought I realized what I would like to fix, the lines in the supermarket. Healthcare in America is "hella" expensive. The cost of bringing a child into this world can be up to 35k, which is insane. By the time your child is born, they've spent their college fund. This issue is especially important to me because I believe that we have a right to a healthy life and healthcare is a key factor in staying alive. It is honestly appalling that we live in a country built on the ideas of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but those who run the country don't offer us free or reduced cost healthcare so we can properly care for ourselves. No individual or family should have to fear the cost of their healthcare nor should they have to choose between their health or basic needs. If we had free

healthcare, we would be overall happier and healthier. When a doctor recommends you get tested for an issue, you could actually do it, instead of waiting until you feel sick or in pain. People with medical issues could get treated right away rather than wait until it gets worse and harder to treat.

Two years ago, a friend of mine had really bad stomach pains, but his parents refused to take him to the doctor because of the cost. A few days passed and the pain only got worse so he asked again and his father agreed but said if it turned out to be nothing, he was going to take his computer. They went, and it turned out his appendix was rupturing. If they had waited any longer, he wouldn't be here, and he wouldn't have graduated with me last month. Some might see this as negligence on his father's side, but it's truly a failure of our healthcare system. In the end what could've been a 3-day hospital stay turned into a complicated surgery and a two-week hospital stay. His parents shouldn't have had to feel the need to wait so long, and they shouldn't have had to spend thousands to save their son. This situation could have easily been avoided if we had free, or even cheaper, reliable healthcare.

So, as I've mentioned earlier, I've been coming to TAS for 15 years, and while I have many stories, there is one in particular I'd like to share. I met a boy named Riley when we were in 2nd grade (I think Esther was our teacher). To this day we are still great friends, he is my oldest friend, and he was my first crush. I don't know what it was about his long blonde hair that draped over one eye, but 7-year-old me was heart-struck. This story isn't about that though, no this story is about the old vending machine. For those of you who have no clue what I'm talking about here's some context: in the small yard next to the youth lounge is a big black cage that used to house a vending machine that dispensed soda, though they took it out a couple years ago, so now it's just a big empty cage that just sits there. long story short we would reset the machine because it wouldn't work half the time and we got it to malfunction and dispense 4 sodas for only a dollar.

## William Rosen

Throughout this year in Confirmation I learned about many different topics and how they relate to us as Jews. These topics have changed and enhanced my identity as a Jew. The topic that stood out the most and enhanced my Jewish identity was Judaism's view of God at the personal level. What I learned was that Judaism doesn't care about how you view or characterize God, so long as you believe that God exists. This means your view of God could be an entity with no characterization, a judge sitting on a throne in heaven, or even something Lovecraftian. It doesn't matter how you view God, just that you believe in God. My personal view that I developed during this lesson is that God is an omnipresent and omniscient entity who doesn't necessarily have a true characterization or moral alignment because if God is everything and humanity is made in God's image, then God encompasses every characterization and beliefs of everyone simultaneously.

As Jews, we have an obligation to *L'Taken*, or repair, the world. Given unlimited funds and resources, one thing I would want to repair in the world is improving trust and capability in the sciences and its applications. This means both improving the trust and funding to STEM and its wider applications as well as improving the general scientific

literacy of the average person. This would repair the world by allowing more people to understand complex events, allow more resources to both research and finding solutions to many different problems, and would reduce general misinformation. This could be done in part through more effective and more integrated use of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum in general education, allowing for more complete general understanding and the expanding of opportunities for individuals to pursue the full spectrum of STEM and its broader counterpart STEAM.

Throughout my 11 years here at TAS, I've made many memories through a variety of activities and events. One of the most memorable among these activities and events was the Purim Shpiel in 2018. The Purim Shpiel made itself memorable through the writing process, the last-minute changes, the cast of amazing actors, and the general experience of trying to put on the show. As a cast, we wrote the entire show from start to finish and made creative decisions for the show. My own role was that of a tech support person that Esther calls in one scene, and an ensemble cast member for the rest of the show. The process may have felt like a dumpster fire at times, but it still was one of the most memorable and enjoyable times I had here at TAS.

## Jake Silverman

Throughout the year I have come to really enjoy Confirmation at our Temple. My Confirmation class has gone through amazing experiences over the years, and I feel like we have morphed into a small family. I've come to love going to class every other Tuesday to see my friends, talk about important Jewish values, the importance of our holidays, and develop reasoning behind our traditions. It's provided me with great insight and has helped me develop my Jewish identity. Even though we sometimes mess around or maybe seem off task, (Sorry Rabbi), I trust that my friends and I have gotten an insightful experience here at temple. We have reasoned together, made jokes, laughed, had fun, and we've even gone across the country to DC, which was an amazing experience for all of us. I'm very happy that I've stuck it out and committed to becoming a Confirmation student here at Temple.

In DC I was given the opportunity to speak in front of Congressman Brad Sherman about the importance of understanding Climate Change's impacts on society and what we have to do in order to slow down Carbon Emissions. However, we are already on track to making this plea into reality, so I believe another cause that will benefit everyone in America would be providing free healthcare to every citizen. It should be a right for people to afford the treatment one needs to survive in our prospering country, and they shouldn't feel scared to get the help they need in fear that they won't be able to pay their hospital bills. Especially in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, I believe that the spread of the virus could have decreased sooner if more people had the ability to receive free tests, treatments, and care for this illness, along with other medical needs.

However, we are still living in a pandemic that has greatly affected our lives. We have time now to care for ourselves and reflect on the great experiences we have made before the Quarantine plagued our society. I often look back on our group's time in DC where we made the mistake of staying up 36 hours on the first day of the trip. Even

though we may have regretted it the next few days, it was super fun while it lasted, and we all made unforgettable memories that I will forever cherish. I can't wait for what is to come and I hope that my birthright trip to Israel will match my time in DC.

## David Solomon

Hello TAS community my name is David Solomon, as you know today is a big day for all of us up here. This is something I and my classmates, have worked really hard to achieve. As you may know, we as Jews have the obligation to L'Taken which means to help positively change the world. And if I were given unlimited funds, a problem that I would fix is Animal Cruelty. Animals are a big part of my life and I just love being around animals. I have seen how cruel some people are to their pets on TV and on commercials from the ASPCA and when I have visited local animal shelters. I never want to see cruelty happen, whether it is my friend or my dog. I would focus on ending cruelty to animals and to prevent it in the first place. My plan is to create a national law that requires anyone who adopts an animal, to be screened and approved, and they must make a commitment to the animal, and if they don't, some action would be taken. Additionally, I would set up organizations around the US that can care for animals that have been through cruelty and nurse them back to health, and help prevent other animals from experiencing cruelty. If you can't care for your animal, bring them to one of the established safe facilities so the animal isn't neglected. Animals are very precious and help people through tough times. Seeing an animal being treated without love is something that breaks my heart. If I were able to have these unlimited funds, I would want to be able to eliminate this mistreatment of animals.

I also want to share some fond memories of TAS. Religious School at TAS has been an amazing time and it is crazy that it is nearing the end. It doesn't feel like I have been here since third grade. One of my most favorite memories is back in 7th grade when I went to all my friends' Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. It was so fun being with friends, dancing all night long, eating food, and reading from the Torah. My favorite Bar/Bat Mitzvah had to have been mine, personally because I was able to read the Torah and got to experience it with all of my friends and family. I felt really nervous when I was reading the Torah and thought that if I messed up, my Bar Mitzvah would be ruined. I felt like I was going to be sick standing up there about to read the Torah. I feel I did well and had an amazing time. It is something that I will not forget. I have enjoyed reading the Torah so much, I have had the honor of reading Torah during the High Holy Days and today for our Confirmation Service. I will also never forget this important day, as I confirm my commitment to Judaism.

## Giovanni Uvalle

Being 16 and having been at this temple for 5 years, I have really felt connected here and I have learned many things throughout my time. Through the years I've learned the real meaning of Judaism and ways our world must be repaired. Throughout this year especially I have felt more connected to Judaism because I now feel like I have an obligation to change the world, even if it is in the smallest manner like giving money to someone in need. I feel like no matter how big or small you are giving to the

world, it is important as you are taking one step more to make the world, and someone else's life, better. We as Jews must come together to change the world and even if you are not Jewish, making the world a better place is important as it will benefit people living in the world today and in future generations. For example, before my Confirmation class I did not feel close to God and I didn't see religion as anything but myths and stories. Now I see Judaism as a reason for people to come together and for everyone to feel connected. Life is about learning and I have learned a lot as a 16-year-old and I feel I must do certain things to help the world and the lives of others. I think it is necessary that we take care of our world and we help people in need who do not have enough money, food, or clothes, etc. There is always a problem in this world, and there is also always a solution, and that solution can start with you. I feel like people should not fight over religion as there are bigger problems at hand. We were put on this Earth to thrive and live but instead we live for ourselves and fight with one another, and we fight to have the most money.

This class has made me closer to a lot of things like my friends, my religion, and my family. This class has helped me grow as I have changed a lot throughout the year. My favorite TAS memory was going to Washington DC with all of my friends because it felt like we were a family and we all connected, and it was so much fun. My favorite part about DC was going to all the historic landmarks as everyone in our class had fun and bonded. I also liked having the dinners at the hotel because all the kids from around the country were there and we all connected. It is one of my favorite memories and will last forever as I'm never going to forget being with all my friends on a trip where I got to have fun and meet new people.