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## Third Alleged Yeshiva U. Abuser Accused of Preying on Boys in Dorms and Apartment

**By Paul Berger** July 12, 2013    boca raton synagogue



Boca Raton’s Jewish community is reeling after Richard Andron emerged as the latest alleged abuser in a widening sex abuse scandal tied to Yeshiva University.

Until now, only Rabbis George Finkelstein and Macy Gordon, both former staff members of Y.U.’s Manhattan high school for boys, have been named in a series of articles in the Forward.

Now, Andron, 67, a former youth volunteer who now lives in Florida, has been accused of abuse, along with Finkelstein and Gordon, in a lawsuit filed July 8 in U.S. District Court in White Plains, N.Y. by 19 former high school students.

The suit alleges that during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Andron, then in his thirties, was “allowed to roam the halls” of Y.U.’s high school dormitory, even though he had nothing to do with the school. The suit cites three men — a Y.U. college student and two Y.U. high school students — who say Andron invited them to stay over at his apartment where he attempted to touch or did touch their genitals.

The suit alleges that Y.U. staff either knew, or ought to have known, that Andron was a threat to children, but they allowed him access to boys anyway.

The Boca Raton Synagogue, where Andron has been a member for decades, sent an email to congregants July 9 telling them that the “the accused person had withdrawn his membership at BRS and agreed not to come to the BRS campus, or attend any BRS event in the future, whether on or off campus.

“Be advised that there have been no allegations we are aware of that any improper conduct occurred within the past thirty years, or in our community.”

Andron’s case cuts broadly across the Modern Orthodox community. According to several interviews conducted by the Forward, Andron was also heavily involved with the Modern Orthodox youth organization, the National Council of Synagogue Youth. The Forward has spoken to two men who are not involved with the Y.U. lawsuit, who say that they were abused by Andron after meeting him through NCSY, the international youth movement of the Orthodox Union.

One of those men told the Forward that he warned NCSY about Andron during the late 1970s, but the man whom he made the report to, the group’s regional director, Baruch Lanner, did not report Andron to police or impede Andron’s access to boys. (Decades later, Lanner was embroiled in a scandal of his own after being accused of sex abuse and child endangerment of two girls. In 2002, he was sentenced to a seven-year prison term.)

Dave Raben, a Miami attorney who specializes in criminal defense and who identified himself as representing Andron, did not respond to requests for comment about the allegations against Andron.

According to several interviews with men who were youths at the time, Andron was a regular at teen events in the Modern Orthodox community during the 1970s and early 1980s. Andron was particularly well known as a practitioner of tora dojo, a Jewish-inspired twist on karate that was created and developed at Y.U.

A man has told the Forward that between the ages of 13 and 16 he often stayed at Andron's apartment on the Upper West Side, so that he could be closer to a local tora dojo class. During that three-year period, the man said he was regularly abused by Andron, who was then about 30 years old.

The man, who wishes to remain anonymous, said that during the early months he stayed at Andron's apartment, Andron would touch the boy's penis while he was asleep. During the months that followed, Andron convinced the boy to watch him masturbate and to let him demonstrate on the boy how to masturbate.

"I told him this was not really right," the man, who is now 50, recalled, "and [Andron] would convince me this was what I had to do to have a healthy relationship with women."

When the boy finally realized, at the age of 16, that he had been abused, he told his parents. He said they instructed him to confront Andron, alone, and that since Andron was a martial arts expert he should do so in a Manhattan synagogue.

“I said, ‘What about going to the police?’” the man recalled. “[My parents] said, ‘No, no, no, we are not going to the police.’”

One December, during the late 1970s, he confronted Andron. “I said, ‘You abused me, you sexually assaulted me and you are a child molester and I don’t want you coming near me and my family,’” the man said.

He continued: “[Andron] got angry, like a jilted lover. I said, ‘If you come near me again and touch me again, I will kill you, so don’t even think about coming near me.’”

The boys’ parents told him he also had to warn Lanner, the NCSY regional director, about Andron. At the time, Lanner was infamous among Modern Orthodox youth for his habit of kneeling boys in the crotch and for taking teenage girls for long Sabbath walks in the woods.

The man said he described in detail to Lanner what had happened to him but that Lanner did not remove Andron from his involvement with NCSY.

An Orthodox Union spokesman, Mayer Fertig, confirmed that Andron was involved in NCSY “to the best of our knowledge in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s.”

Fertig said that NCSY “today is altogether different from the one of that era” and that “difficult, painful lessons” from that period had been learned. He directed the Forward to a 14-page Conduct, Policy and Behavioral Standards Manual which pledges that “NCSY’s commitment to the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of all NCSY professionals, volunteers, and NCSY’ers is non-negotiable.”

“NCSY and the Orthodox Union stand by those words and today go to great effort to enforce a policy of zero tolerance for any inappropriate activity,” Fertig said.

Several months ago, the Forward attempted to reach Lanner at his home in New Jersey to ask about Andron. Lanner’s wife, Sarah, said that because of a “serious medical condition he cannot comment or have discussions at this time.” A subsequent attempt to reach Lanner was unsuccessful.

Another man who met Andron through NCSY said Andron often had groups of boys over to his apartment. He said Andron would take them to a pornographic bakery, in Manhattan, that sold baked goods in the shape of genitalia.

“My parents would never let me go to his house because they were concerned” that a single man would hang out so often with boys, the man, now 48, said. But because Andron showed boys such a good time, he begged his parents to let him go to Andron’s home.

One New Year’s Eve, during the late 1970s, he said his parents relented and he and a handful of boys spent the night at Andron’s one-bedroom apartment. At the end of the night, Andron asked which of the boys would like to sleep in one of two twin beds in his bedroom.

“I said, ‘I’ll sleep on the bed,’” the man recalled. “And one other guy said something...[that] insinuated, ‘You are in for it,’”

The man, who is now a physician, said he realized that something bad was about to happen to him, but it seemed too late to back out. He said that the following morning Andron locked the bedroom door, approached the boy’s bed and offered to show him a technique that would help him stop laughing if he was tickled.

“He proceeds to stroke my stomach, but they were long strokes, so his arm was stroking my genitals, trying to give me an erection,” the man said. “I just wanted it all to be over and, eventually, [it] was over and that was it.” He said that he did not inform his parents about what happened.

Andron is named in the multi-party lawsuit against Y.U. because former students say they believe

Y.U. staff ought to have known he posed a threat.

The suit says that Andron was a “personal friend” of Finkelstein, an administrator at Y.U.’s high school. Andron “frequently notified Finkelstein that boys who had slept over at Andron’s apartment would be late or absent for classes at [the school],” the suit says. “Finkelstein thus knew, excused, condoned, and facilitated Andron’s sexual abuse of numerous [high school] students.”

One of the high school students who says that he was abused by Andron and who is a plaintiff in the lawsuit, told the Forward that Andron “would sit with [the boys] and talk to them. I didn’t think it was too weird because I was a kid and he befriended me.”

The man, who is now 45 and living in Tel Aviv, said Andron invited him to stay over at Andron’s apartment one Sabbath around 1983. When the high school student arrived, he said Andron showed him into a bedroom and gave him a stack of Playboy magazines.

After leaving the boy alone for a while, Andron returned to the room and proceeded to touch the boy’s penis, according to the former student. “This was really my first sexual experience of skin to skin contact,” the man said. “This has stayed with me for years.”

The suit also alleges that Richard Ehrlich and Elan Adler, described as “senior residence hall



officials” at Y.U., knew that Andron visited the dormitory and entered boys’ dorm rooms.

Adler, a director of Y.U.’s school dormitory from 1981 to 1986, told the Forward in an email several months ago that he recalled Andron’s name but not his face. Adler said there “was simply no way of restricting access to the high school dormitory.”

He added: “In terms of Ricky, it didn’t seem suspicious for him or anyone to come and visit any of the boys. Sometimes kids had visitors from their home neighborhoods who were on campus who took the boys for dinner or a movie, there were no red flags.”

Adler also said that “any expectation on my part or that of any of the counselors was unrealistic, given that the building had no security, no guard, no access code..... It was unreasonable to expect that we could have monitored who was coming in. There was simply no way to do that.”

Ehrlich did not respond to several requests for a response, July 11.

Andron moved to Florida during the mid 1980s. In 1986, he told the Palm Beach Post that he left New York because his boss at a “major oil company” where he worked would not allow him to leave early on Fridays for the Sabbath. By now, Andron had a wife, Sue.

The Androns were among the earliest families to build up the [Boca Raton Synagogue](#), an

Orthodox congregation that today has more than 700 families.

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Paul Berger has been a staff writer at the Forward since 2011, covering crime and healthcare issues, such as sex abuse, circumcision, and fraud. He is a fluent Russian speaker and has reported from Russia and Ukraine. He also likes digging into [historicalmysteries](#).

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