

Seminar addresses safety concerns

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In response to student safety concerns, the Undergraduate Student Government co-sponsored with Peers Advocating Wellness Services to create a self-defense seminar that was held on Dec. 8. The event was led by Peter Flores, an officer in Baruch's Department of Public Safety.

In an interview, USG Representative Senator Andrew Windsor explained that he got the idea for a self-defense seminar when students began worrying for their safety post-election. He did not think that the safety pin campaign was enough, so he approached several people about the idea of creating a self-defense seminar.

"I was just thinking to myself—discussion is great, you know, if people want to back up their words with actions," Windsor said. "I'm just responding to the demands of our constituents, the demands of the student body. They said they were worried and they feared for their safety, so I was like, 'Sure. You need to know how to protect yourself in life.'"

As Windsor explained, he originally planned for the seminars to start in the Spring 2017 semester. However, an attack on a Muslim Baruch student that took place on Dec. 1 prompted him to "fast-track" the event to the end of this semester.

"I felt like if people were worried—and now we actually had a situation on our hands—we should be supplying students with ways to defend themselves. Not only because of the election, but anything else," Windsor said.

For the purpose of the event, all chairs were pushed back against the walls.

Flores also insisted that the



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Flores taught attendees how to use martial arts techniques for self-defense.

door be kept open to allow passersby to walk into the room more freely. In an interview, Flores, who joined Baruch in 2012, explained that learning martial arts is a family tradition. At the age of 14, he began training Goju-Ryu Karate under several teachers, including his father. His father, in turn, was trained by Flores' uncle.

"I believe that everyone has the right to learn self-defense. Not only do I want people to be safe at Baruch, I want everyone to make it here and home safely," Flores said. "Since I cannot educate the ignorant, I choose to teach people how to protect themselves better."

Flores began the seminar by introducing some of the methods for escaping a simple arm grab. He asked the students to bend their arms at the elbows and look at the palms of their hands as if they were looking at a mirror. Then, the students were asked to turn their palms out toward the attacker and push outward, so that the attacker's body would be forced to fall one way and the victim could escape the other way.

Later, he moved on to escaping

a "Frankenstein choke" and escaping a rear naked choke.

For the first one, the defendant was asked to push down on one of the attacker's forearms while lifting the other one with a hand movement that resembled holding up a serving platter.

That way, the victim could create a clear path to escape. While the techniques presented by Flores were meant purely for self-defense, Flores admitted that the streets may require more aggressive defensive tactics.

Flores presented different ways in which one could immobilize the attacker by kicking him or her on the side of the knee. Later, he taught ways in which a defendant could hit the attacker with their elbow without having to break his or her defense. He noted that, if possible, one should aim for the jaw as it is a bigger target than the nose. A broken jaw also hurts more than a broken nose and takes longer to recover from.

"I don't want safe spaces. I want safe environments," Flores said at the end of the seminar. "Don't put us in cubbies."