

Writer, producer creates projects based on 1902 kosher boycott



Jeff Mustard at engineering board providing direction to voice talent/singers of "Boycott: A NYC 1902 Hip-Hop Musical." (Courtesy)

When writer, producer and director Jeff Mustard of Delray Beach saw a framed article of the 1902 kosher meat boycott at a restaurant more than three years ago, he was inspired to create a television series based on the event.

This boycott of New York City kosher butchers was in response to a coordinated increase of the price of meat from 12 to 18 cents a pound. There were protests and riots throughout the Lower East Side led mostly by women that resulted in the lowering of the price of meat down to 14 cents a pound.

Despite the event being 118 years ago, Mustard – who is also the founder of the motorcycle riding club King David Bikers – feels this story of immigrants and immigration, women's rights, equal pay, labor issues, patriarchy, bigotry and racism are familiar and similar in today's world. He spent three years researching this event and wrote a television series pilot script for a limited historical fiction series of six one-hour episodes that he currently hopes to produce and have it picked up by cable or streaming platforms.

In early 2019, Mustard had what he describes a late night epiphany when he felt the series could also work as a stage musical inspired by "Hamilton." He wrote lyrics to six hip hop songs for an album called "Boycott: A NYC 1902 Hip-Hop Musical," which is now available on [Amazon Music](#). This album in which he wrote and produced is considered by him to be a proof of concept of what his version of a potential historical hip hop musical could be.

"When I had the epiphany that this should become a musical, I spent a month and half to two months just wrestling on how to commence the music or musical writing process," Mustard said. "I've been a writer and producer in film and TV for all of my adult life, but I've never written lyrics to a song, and I've never produced music before."

Mustard continued, "I felt that this is ideally suited as a musical stage play."

"The best way to prove that is to write some music and produce something that looks and sounds like that. I spent more than a couple of months learning

about and reading about writing and pouring music for stage plays." Mustard found a cast of South Florida actors to sing the music. One of the voice actors/performers for this album is Avi Hoffman, who has performed in Jewish

and Yiddish production throughout his career. He performs various characters and roles in four of the six compositions, and considered this experience as a unique one.



Actor/singer Avi Hoffman records music for "Boycott: A NYC 1902 Hip-Hop Musical." (Courtesy)

"I've been involved in the world of Jewish culture all my life. I started in Yiddish theater when I was 10 years old, which was 52 years ago. I have been in many different versions, adaptations and interpretations in the world of Jewish history, society and culture, but I had never done anything like this before." Hoffman continued, "To turn this story of social justice history from the turn of the century in New York into a hip hop 'Hamilton'-style presentation was something that I had never encountered." "It was a big challenge to make it seem authentic." As historical authenticity was important to Mustard in telling this story, he wanted to get the attention of a

Jewish academic/historian interested in his work for advice. He was able to meet Dr. (PhD) Michael Feldberg, executive director of the George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom, who served as his historical advisor, in an email. "I think it's great that Jeff stumbled on to this story and recognized there's a real opportunity to bring to a broad audience, both Jews and non-Jews alike, what both he and I think was a remarkable, memorable movement that should be better known," Feldberg said. Visit [Facebook.com/boycott1902](https://www.facebook.com/boycott1902) or boycott1902.com/ for more information or to view videos and musical clips of the songs.



By SERGIO CARMONA
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL | JUN 05, 2020 | 2:30 PM

