



The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper

"The Pulse of the Student Body"

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QUERIDA CLARA



FEATURES "Querida Clara"

Need advice? Have questions? Looking for wisdom? Look no further! Features editor Clara Shapiro's brand new advice column begins with Issue 12. Simply say "Querida Clara," and prepare for your life to be changed!

SEE PAGE 9

SPORTS

"CTE: The NFL's Downfall?"

Sports writer Max Schneider breaks down the NFL's mismanagement of their growing head injury crisis, and the concerning extent to which it can upend players' lives.

SEE PAGE 27



NYC Schools Reopen After Closing in November

By JENNY LIU and MOMOCA MAIRAJ

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that all public high schools will reopen on March 22. Stuyvesant will continue its blended learning model where students who come into the building will be placed in cohorts and receive remote instruction. The blended option is currently available only to students who previously signed up during the opt-in period in November of last year.

Using the same blended model from the fall, Stuyvesant plans to ensure a safe transition to blended learning with proper safety precautions, such as daily health screenings, temperature checks, and building cleanings, mask requirements, and COVID-19 testing mandated by the Department of Education. "This time around, any student who's blended needs to submit a consent form for testing. That's going to be a requirement. We're going

to be doing weekly testing [...] for at least 20 percent of students and staff who are in the building," Principal Seung Yu said.

In addition to being a school, the Stuyvesant building also serves as a community center in collaboration with the Battery Park City Authority, making the reopening important. "With the progression in safety measures, they are eager to reopen and open up the facilities to the community, and we have to work with them," Yu said. School construction projects, such as escalator revampments and auditorium lighting improvements, will soon be underway.

However, the timing of the announcement came as slightly unexpected. "While we were in expectation of returning before the end of the school year since the mayor

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Student Union Hosts Spring Clubs & Pubs Fair Virtually

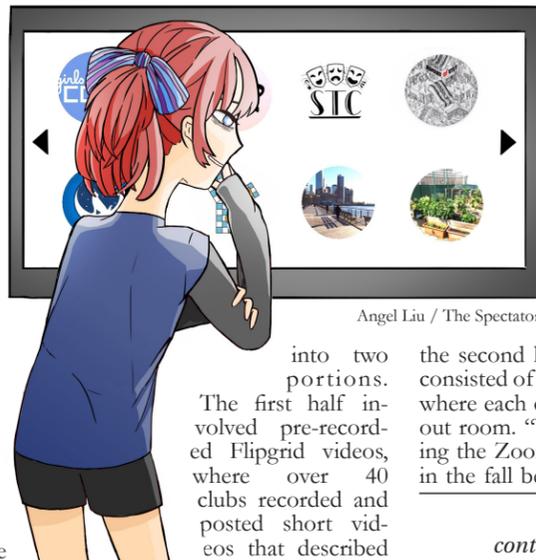
By JAMES KANG and RAJHASREE PAUL
Additional Reporting by Pulindu Weerasekara

The Student Union (SU) hosted its second Virtual Clubs & Pubs Fair from February 22 to 24. With a turnout of over 100 students, the fair offered an opportunity for students to learn about more than 150 clubs and find potential ones to join in the spring semester. To accommodate a virtual format for the Spring Fair this year, the SU used Flipgrid and Zoom.

Clubs could sign up to participate in one of the two days, both, or neither. "We created a form for Club and Pub sign-ups which was sent to all club leaders," sophomore and director of Clubs & Pubs Larissa Yue said in an e-mail interview. "Not all clubs wanted to participate in both portions or some clubs chose not to participate, but I think we were still able to successfully cover

a wide range and variety of clubs that showcase what Stuyvesant has to offer."

The Spring Fair was organized



Angel Liu / The Spectator

could then browse the videos and discover clubs that they are interested in. "We know the presentations [in the Fall fair] got a little long and it was a lot to have nearly five days of the fair," senior and Director of Event Plannings Aki Yamaguchi said in an e-mail interview. "This was a much [more] condensed version where we took advantage of [Flipgrid] to replace the presentations."

While each club used its own Zoom link in the Fall Fair, the second half of the Spring Fair consisted of one live Zoom meeting where each club had its own breakout room. "We decided against doing the Zoom format we had done in the fall because it wasn't an effi-

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NEWSBEAT

Stuyvesant plans to administer the SAT in person on **March 24, April 13, and April 27.**

The **Stuyvesant Science Bowl Team** qualified for the **National Science Bowl** for the fourth year in a row.

Social studies teacher **Dr. Lisa Greenwald** was featured on NBC's Channel 4 as the creator of **The Ellington Project**, providing home-cooked meals for homeless women and children.

Senior **Ethan Joo**, junior **Rishabh Das**, and sophomores **Jacob Paltrowitz**, **Josiah Moltz**, **Paul Gutkovich**, and **Kevin Xiao** were recognized in the **American Invitational Mathematics Examination Honor Roll of Distinction.**

Junior **Stephanie Liu** placed eighth in the **North American Computational Linguistics Open Competition.**

Freshman **Mason Ng** placed first in the **American Protégé International Piano & Strings Competition.**

Say Hello to the 2021-2022 Big Sib Chairs!

By ISABELLA JIA, MAGGIE SANSONE, SAKURA YAMANAKA, and ZIJIA (JESS) ZHANG

Juniors Samuel Espinal Jr., Daniela Maksin, Alec Shafran, Aaron Wang, and Syeda Zahan have been selected as the 2021-2022 Big Sib Chairs. The incoming Chairs were chosen by seniors and outgoing 2020-2021 Big Sib Chairs Anaïs Delfau, Elena Hlamenko, Andrea Huang, Henry Michaelson, and Aki Yamaguchi. Both the incoming and outgoing Big Sib Chairs will continue to face and adapt to the challenges of a virtual school year.

This year, the Big Sib Chair application deadline and results followed an earlier schedule. The outgoing Big Sib Chairs made this decision to provide more time for the new Chairs to adjust to their roles. "We had a really rough transition process, where we found out we were Chairs two days before everything shut down. We wanted to make sure they had the technical aspect down and knew how to run events virtually with our guidance so that they're not completely lost when we graduate," Huang said.

The Big Sib Chair application process was similar to that of previous years, with the exception of virtual interviews. "We needed a recommendation from our homeroom leader, two Little Sib recommendations, and a teacher recommendation as well as the application," Wang said. "And then afterward, you have to do a 30-minute interview with all five of the Big Sib Chairs as well as a few faculty members."

The incoming Big Sib Chairs have participated in a variety of extracurricular activities that allowed them to gain familiarity with the Stuyvesant community. Espinal Jr. is involved in Speech and Debate and is currently the Treasurer of the Black Students League and Co-Vice President of ASPIRA.

Espinal Jr. was inspired to become a Big Sib through his positive experience with his former Big Sib Julianna Fabrizio ('19), who helped him adjust to Stuyvesant. "I was just this Black and Latino little kid from a middle school no one ever heard of, so I didn't really know anyone. My Big Sibs helped me navigate through

her to become a Big Sib to help others. "I chose to be a Big Sib to have a chance to combine my passion, which is the Stuy community, with what I care about, which is helping people to have a more smooth transition to enjoy their high school experience more," Maskin said.

Shafran is the SING! Coordi-



Courtesy of Daniela Maksin

Stuy, specifically, Julianna, who was captain of Policy Debate and convinced me to join debate," he said.

Maksin is the Director General of Model UN and the Director of Communications of Student Union (SU). She is also a member of ARISTA, Stuyvesant's Honor Society. Additionally, she is a teacher and community organizer at her local Hebrew school and is passionate about medicine and neuroscience.

Maksin's experience with her five siblings, including her brother, Leon Maskin ('20), has influenced

dinator, President-in-Training of StuySquad, and a Speech and Debate member. He is also a Communications Director and member of the Donor and Shelter Relations team at Sparks Within Reach, a non-profit organization that helps provide resources to homeless youth.

Like Maskin, Shafran was also inspired by his older sibling, Mark Shafran ('18), and wanted to be a resource for Little Sibs. "Like Daniela, I have an older brother, so coming into Stuy, I knew a little bit of insight as to how things are. So being

a Big Sib, in a way, [allowed me to] become this resource and a walking help center for my Little Sibs," Shafran said. "When you're here [as a Big Sib chair], it's like you're able to see everything through a bird's eye view of how all these different, interesting people are interacting with their Little Sibs and with each other. It's just so rewarding."

Wang is an editor for the Writing Center and a writer for the Humor Department of The Spectator. Additionally, he is the Deputy Chief of Staff on the Executive Council of the SU.

Wang credits the positive impact of his Little Sib experience as a motivator for becoming a Big Sib. "Because I know just how influential having a good freshman year is, I want to give this to all Little Sibs. I think all Little Sibs are deserving of a good first impression, especially to a school where you're going to spend the next four years of your life," Wang said.

Zahan is the Vice President of Stuy Smile, a club that aims to host events to reduce stress and spread positivity. She is also a member of the SU Communications Department as a Morning Announcer. Outside of Stuyvesant, she is an intern for the Mark Levine for Manhattan Borough President campaign.

Similar to Espinal Jr., Zahan also had a positive relationship with her former Big Sib, Claire Bartholomew ('20), who influenced her to later participate in the Big Sib program. "The Big Sib program helped me a lot, especially since the Big Sib I was assigned to went to my middle school. She was one of the main reasons why I wanted to become a Big Sib in the first place," Zahan said.

In choosing the incoming Big Sib Chairs, the outgoing Big Sib Chairs looked for applicants who were not only passionate about the

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News

ARISTA Launches New Initiatives for the Spring Semester

By EUGENE YOO, NADA HAMEED, and RUIWEN (RAVEN) TANG

The ARISTA Executive Council (EC), consisting of seniors President Emma Donnelly, Vice President of Events and Service Roshni Patel, Vice President of Operations Evelyn Ma, and Vice President of Web Development May Hathaway, started new virtual efforts, such as Office Hours, in the spring semester. They are also continuing initiatives established in the fall, such as the District 1 Pilot Program Initiative and a partnership with the Invisible Hands organization.

After discussing and sharing ideas with the honors societies of the Bronx High School of Science and Brooklyn Technical High School, ARISTA brought forth the Office Hours initiative, which is modeled after Stuyvesant's AIS tutoring during which teachers offer additional help after school. Each day from Monday to Thursday is assigned to a certain subject area. "[Students] can just ask a question, get homework help, or test/study review, anything like that, and there'll always be ARISTA tutors on standby for them if they need that support," Ma said.

The initiative was created in response to the difficulty of the virtual environment. "All of us have really taken advantage of AIS tutoring, and that was typically in-person, and so [...] we decided that we wanted to create a similar environment for students to be able to ask questions after school," Donnelly said.

Through Office Hours, ARISTA hopes to increase social interaction for students. "Our goal for Office Hours is to provide extra academic support but also to give the freshmen another avenue to meet new people, especially upperclassmen who can be a really good resource to help them," Ma said. "This is a place where people can also create relationships."

However, the initiative has faced difficulties in encouraging student turnout, especially among the underclassmen. "The ARISTA Office Hours initiative has been a bit of a failure, in my experience, as I've never tutored a single person during Office Hours in the two-month span that I've been doing it," junior and ARISTA volunteer Daniel Lyalin said. "For example, I did Office

Hours today for Geometry and Algebra and not a single soul showed up to my breakout room."

Patel added, "The people we're reaching out to are freshmen and sophomores, and some of them have spent no months in the building [...] so the thing is they're a really hard group of people to reach right now. Our goal is to let them know that we are there for them."

Lyalin also pointed toward the subjects that he tutors as a potential reason for the lack of students. "Perhaps people show up and I've just never been assigned one, which shows few tutees," he said. "Perhaps the non-math and non-history days are busier."

Additionally, ARISTA hopes to reach underclassmen through creating the Sophomore Program, where

Guardia High School. Volunteers from both schools virtually conduct art workshops of dance, visual arts, music, and theater to middle schoolers. "Even though ARISTA is often seen as a purely academic organization, we've really been trying to kind of branch out of that shell and show that there is more to ARISTA than just tutoring and academics," Donnelly said.

Furthermore, ARISTA formed a partnership with a COVID-19 relief organization after faculty advisor of ARISTA Eric Wisotsky reached out to Invisible Hands, an organization that provides supplies and assistance to the compromised, elderly, and disabled in New York. ARISTA members can help with the call and dispatch center. "Invisible Hands is something that is super flexible



Courtesy of Grace Bai

current freshmen may apply to be involved in ARISTA as sophomores, as ARISTA volunteers are currently limited to juniors and seniors. Sophomores will only be required to earn approximately half of the event credits typically required of upperclassmen, and there will be no tutoring requirements, unlike those mandated for upperclassmen. "We wanted to give underclassmen an opportunity to do service and also just learn from other peers, like upperclassmen [who are] in ARISTA already," Donnelly said. "It's basically a stepping stone into what an ARISTA membership would be like if you were a junior or senior, so, sophomores have significantly reduced credit requirements."

Outside of Stuyvesant, ARISTA started a new partnership with La-

for the students because they get to pick their own shifts," Patel said. "You just get to work on your own time, and it's an independent sort of thing."

ARISTA is also continuing to work on initiatives set forth in the fall. The District 1 Pilot Program, which started as a partnership with PS/MS 34 to provide academic help for the Living Environment Regents to middle schoolers, has expanded to work with BELL Academy in Bayside, Queens. "Because of [the partnership with PS/MS 34], we were able to actually have a school reach out to us called the BELL Academy, which is in Bayside, and they were really interested in partnering up with us and doing the same thing," Donnelly said. "We actually recently just created our partnership with BELL



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and NASA

WORLD BEAT

The New York City Department of Education announced that public high schools will reopen on March 22.

President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 stimulus package.

New US Preventive Services Task Force guidelines will expand lung cancer screening inclusivity to increase eligibility for CT scans for women and Black people.

New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins advised Governor Andrew Cuomo to resign amidst sexual harassment allegations and an ongoing investigation of the COVID-19 death toll in nursing homes.

In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle revealed the toll being part of British Royalty took on her mental health and sparked discussion of racism within the royal family.

Academy, and we've been teaching their eighth-grade students Algebra I and Living Environment for the Regents."

ARISTA also aims to further expand the District 1 Pilot Program by encompassing more grade levels and accommodating the needs of more students. "We've been able to work with two teachers. They've definitely done a great job with gaining students who are interested and just helping us with the planning process, so it's great that we've been able to expand the program to reach more eighth grade students, and

something that we want to do in the future is reach other students within the school," Donnelly said.

In the spring, the EC hopes to host some community events, such as movie or game nights, and spearhead mental health initiatives. "With the pandemic, we obviously wanted to do as much as we could to help," Donnelly said. "It's part of this culture-ship with ARISTA where we want to not only be an honors society but also an organization that really meets the needs of the people in our community, and that's both within Stuyvesant and outside of it."

Say Hello to the 2021-2022 Big Sib Chairs!

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program but also had new ideas to improve it. "We were [...] looking for people who were passionate but also had ideas—who were looking for ways to expand the program. So we were looking for a lot of people who had ideas, but also people who could take those ideas and put them into action and ways to implicate them," Delfau said.

During the interview, Espinal Jr. emphasized his ideas for the Big Sib program. "We all had to come up with our own different ideas to change the program. Mine was to come up with Zoom meetings to be hosted every period, but [with] different breakout rooms centered around topics that Little Sibs can come and talk about to one another to promote these freshmen friendships that are very difficult to make in a remote setting," Espinal Jr. said.

"[Doing] research to set a program that other Little Sibs could access was a lot about what personally my application focused a lot on."

Additionally, it was important for the Big Sib Chair applicants to demonstrate passion and personality, despite the difficulties present in a virtual interview. "Over remote learning, it's a lot harder to communicate on what you're truly passionate about. When you're staring at people through a student screen, [a bit of] humanity is lost because you can't really tell as much as if you were talking to someone in person, Wang said. "Because of that, it was super important for us to not only stress our passion but also communicate our personalities in all of our responses as well."

As the first Big Sib Chairs to operate the program in a virtual setting, the outgoing Chairs faced new challenges. "This past year has been

characterized by a time of needing to be adaptable," Michaelson said.

Without in-person conversations and meetings, the outgoing Chairs learned from current Big Sibs that it was difficult to connect with their Little Sibs. Many Big Sibs encountered a lack of participation and interest from the Little Sibs in a virtual environment. "There was no handbook or guidebook for us, so naturally there were some things we could have done better," Hlamenko said.

To address the issue, the incoming Big Sib Chairs emphasized the importance of maintaining socialization efforts with Little Sibs. "As long as COVID-19 lasts, we need to emphasize regular communication between Big Sibs not just during homeroom by itself, but also just maintaining activity with group chats with their Little Sibs and just reinforcing bonding events," Wang said.

Additionally, the new Big Sib Chairs acknowledge the significance providing general support and communication with parents. "It's also going to be super interesting to hear how parents are going to be navigating this new, online setting and being able to help them through the Stuyvesant process," Maskin said.

The outgoing Big Sib Chairs hope that the program will soon be in-person when it is safe to do so. "It's a lot more fun in person. You get to see Little Sibs a lot more and it's a lot more energy and interaction with the people that you're helping," Huang said.

While the incoming Big Sib Chairs are still awaiting updates regarding possible school reopenings in the fall, they are hopeful. "We would have to see what the precautions are when we're going back in the fall. We need to make sure that we're communicating and seeing

what the Little Sibs and also the Big Sibs feel comfortable and safe," Zahan said. "I can speak for all of us when I say that we hope we can have in-person events as much as possible. I'm just hoping for the best, but definitely keeping in mind all the restrictions."

Virtual or not, the outgoing Chairs are excited about the plans of the incoming Chairs. "Something I'm excited to see our events and how [the new Big Sib Chairs] imagine homeroom to be," Hlkamenko said.

Moving forward, the new Big Sib Chairs are optimistic about their plans for the program. "Ultimately, I think what brought us together is our shared passion, our shared interest in just our compatible personalities. I think passionate people are drawn to each other and ultimately, that's why we're all here today," Wang said.

Mayoral Candidate Andrew Yang Hosts Student Town Hall

By JANNA WANG, JADY CHEN, and ALEC SHAFRAN

New York City mayoral candidate Andrew Yang hosted an hour-long virtual town hall through

Zoom, opened for all NYC high school students on February 24. The Yang campaign hosted the panel to engage with NYC youth and inform students about Yang's platform. Student representatives from eight

high schools across the city, including Stuyvesant, who were selected through teacher recommendations or volunteers from Yang's campaign, voiced their questions and concerns to Yang about his political campaign.

The representatives were either selected through teacher recommendations or were volunteers chosen by Yang's campaign. The panel was moderated by Hilary Kinney, a member of the Advance Team of the

Yang campaign.

Yang initially posted a tweet, encouraging students to invite him to speak at their respective schools. In

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Advertisement

SAT PREP for Stuyvesant High School Students!

Kweller Prep SAT classes are offered via Zoom with live interactive instruction every Saturday or Sunday from 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm (4 hours per class) until the June 5, 2021 SAT. Stuyvesant High School (Stuy) students who sign up will receive links with sample exams and course materials. Classes meet once a week for 4-hours. Students can choose Saturday or Sunday afternoons.

Saturday, March 20, 2021 - Sunday, May 31, 2021

Class 1: March 20 or 21 (Test 1)
 No Class: March 27 or March 28 (Passover)
 No Class: April 3 or April 4 (Easter)
 Class 2: April 10 or April 11 (Review 1)
 Class 3: April 17 or April 18 (Test 2)
 Class 4: April 24 or April 25 (Review 2)

Class 5: May 1 or May 2 (Test 3)
 Class 6: May 8 or May 9 (Review 3)
 Class 7: May 15 or 16 (Test 4)
 Class 8: May 22 or May 23 (Review 4)
 Class 9: May 29 or May 30 (Test 5)
 Class 10: May 31 Monday/ No School: (Rev 5)

Class Option 1: Saturday SAT Zoom Live Online: \$999

(We will send you links and reminders before each class)

Class Option 2: Sunday SAT Zoom Live Online: \$999

(We will send you links and reminders before each class)

This year, SAT Scores will be considered for National Merit Scholarship Awards

This is a partnership with the Stuyvesant High School PA and Kweller Prep to help students succeed in college and career readiness!

The Stuy PA will e-mail students a signup link.

Sign up by March 15, 2021

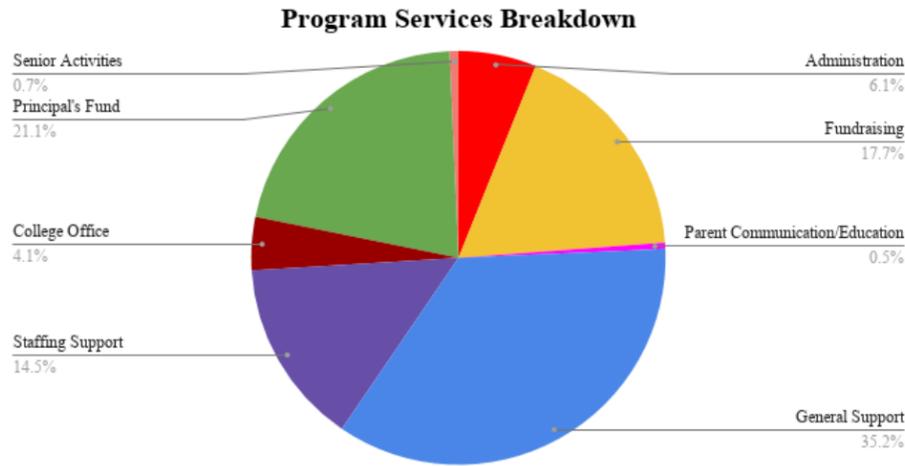
News

Parents' Association Financial Report: Fall 2020

By ISABELLA JIA, MAGGIE SANSONE, SAKURA YAMANAKA, and EUGENE YOO

The Stuyvesant High School Parents' Association (PA) has shared its budget report for the 2020-2021 school year with The Spectator. This report outlines how the PA has generated and allocated its funds for this year, as well as what it hopes to accomplish in the spring semester.

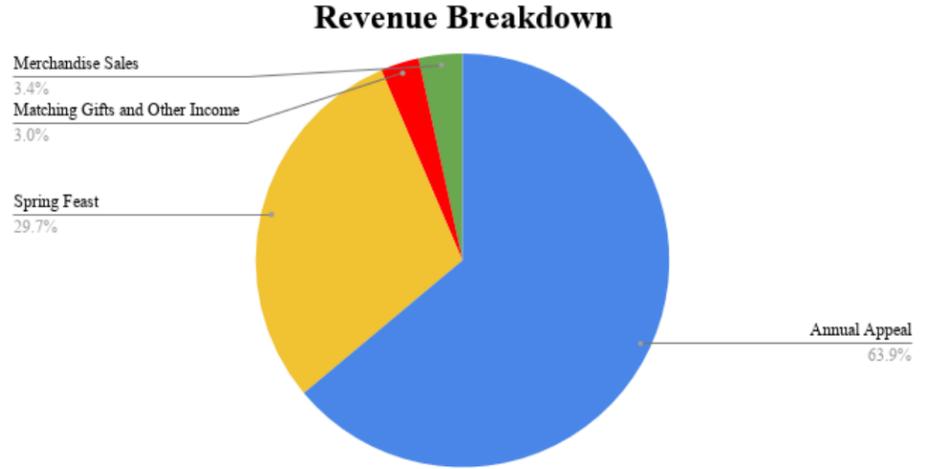
PROGRAM SERVICES BREAKDOWN



As a tax-exempt non-profit, the PA's funds are almost entirely dedicated to the student body. Aside from Administration and Fundraising costs, which amount to slightly over \$100,000, the remaining revenue is allocated primarily toward General Support, which provides educational resources and opportunities to students. General Support funds are spent on grade-book systems, such as Jupiter Ed and PupilPath, as well as test prep systems such as Albert.io and Eduware. Administration and Staffing Support funds cover the salary of Internship Coordinator Harvey Blumm and summer health classes.

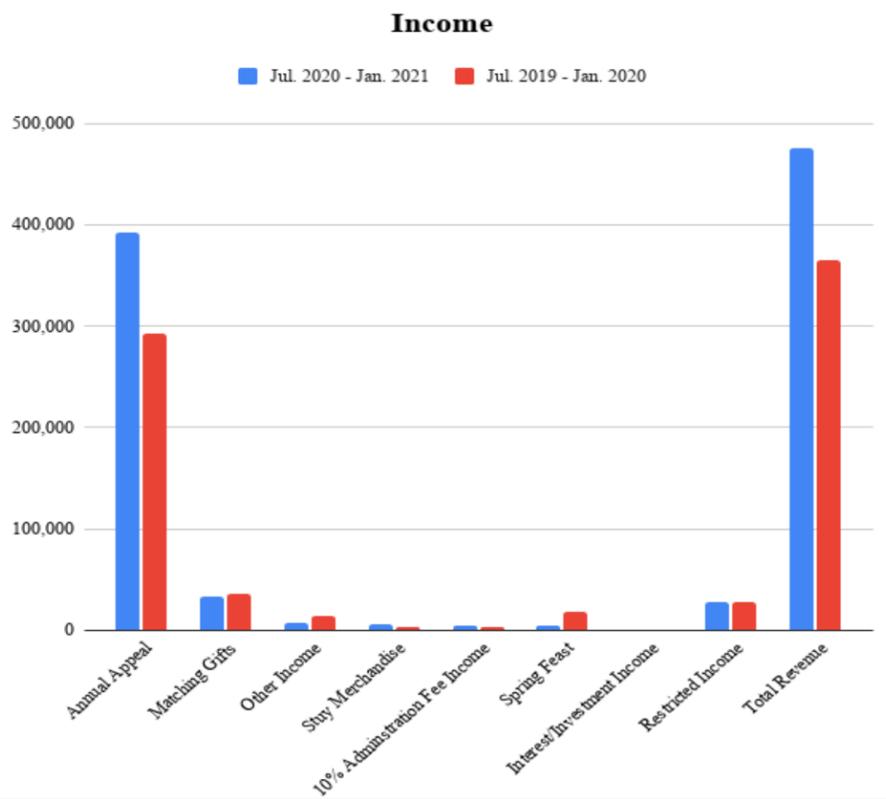
Other major expenditures include the Principal's Fund, Senior Activities, and College Office-related expenses. This year, more money was allocated to the Principal's Fund due to an additional COVID-19 Family Support Fund. Compared to last year's Principal Fund amount of \$64,679, \$91,700 was spent this year. In total, program services expenses amounted to \$445,715 for the 2020-2021 school year.

REVENUE BREAKDOWN

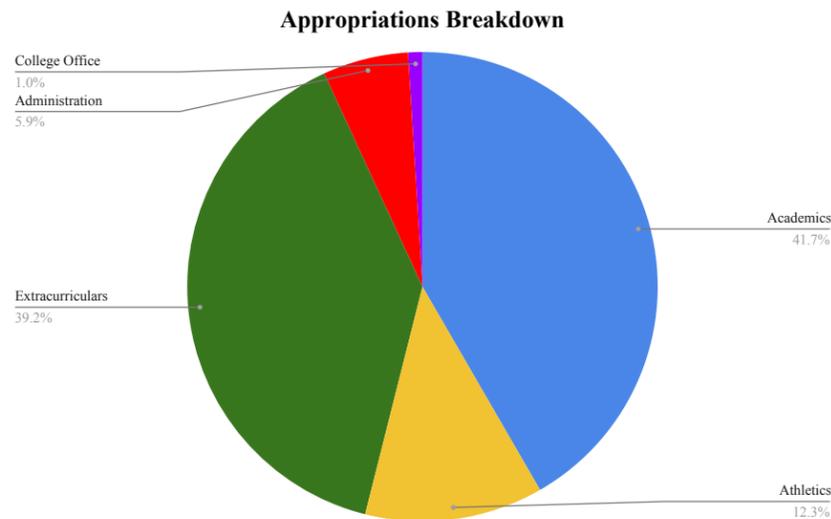


This school year, the PA generated \$438,100 in total revenue, an amount slightly higher than the approximate average of \$430,000 in prior years. One of the largest initiatives that helped fund the PA was the annual appeal, a yearly donation fundraising event. The annual appeal, along with the Spring Feast, a community fundraising event that occurs in the spring, as well as funds from Matching Gifts, Administrative Fees, Interest/Investment Income, and Stuyvesant Merchandise, comprise the PA's total revenue.

INCOME



APPROPRIATIONS BREAKDOWN

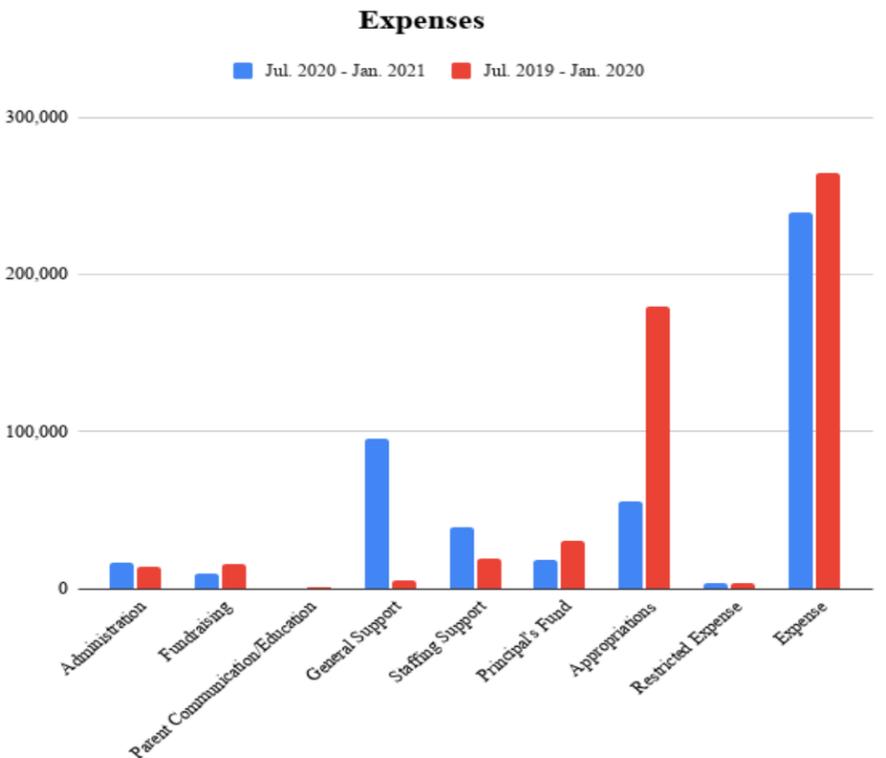


The other half of the PA's expenses are dedicated to appropriations for various academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities at Stuyvesant. There are two rounds of appropriations each year—one in the Fall and Spring—to ensure that there is sufficient funding year-round for activities. Student leaders, teachers, coaches, and staff have the opportunity to apply for funding from the PA through the Appropriations Committee each time, in case they do not receive funding in the Fall. This school year, appropriations alone constitute \$204,000 of the total \$445,715 projected budget for the school year.

The amount allocated for academic appropriation was \$85,000, while another \$80,000 was reserved for extracurriculars. The academic appropriation funds cover academic requests from each subject, including funds for orchestra instruments, textbooks, and science labs. Athletics and PSAL receive their own round of appropriations aside from academics, extracurriculars, administration, and college office. Approximately \$25,000 was allocated to Athletics.

There have not been any drastic changes in the budget in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The PA received fewer requests this year because sports have been on hold, clubs haven't had the opportunity to host in-person events, and learning has been online. Due to fewer requests, they were able to grant larger portions of funds to requests. The PA aims to continue working closely with students, teachers, and staff to ensure that they receive the funding they need.

EXPENSES

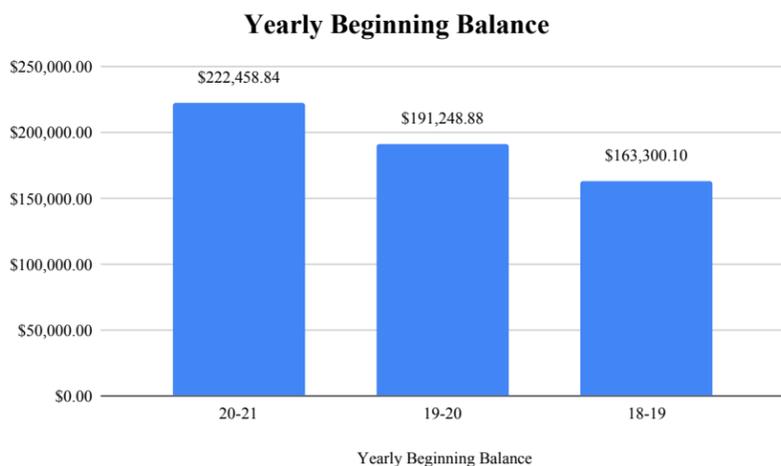


Student Union Financial Report: Winter 2021

By MORRIS RASKIN and KAREN ZHANG

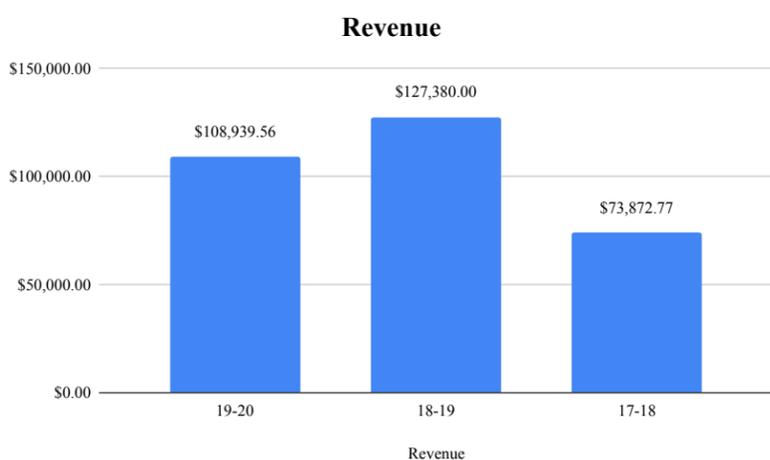
Senior and Student Union (SU) President Julian Giordano and junior and SU Vice President Shivali Korgaonkar released information regarding the SU's yearly allocations, Clubs and Pubs, and SING! from the past school year. Much of their budget shifted to accommodate for COVID-19 and adjusted accordingly to online learning in the 2020-2021 school year.

YEARLY BEGINNING BALANCE

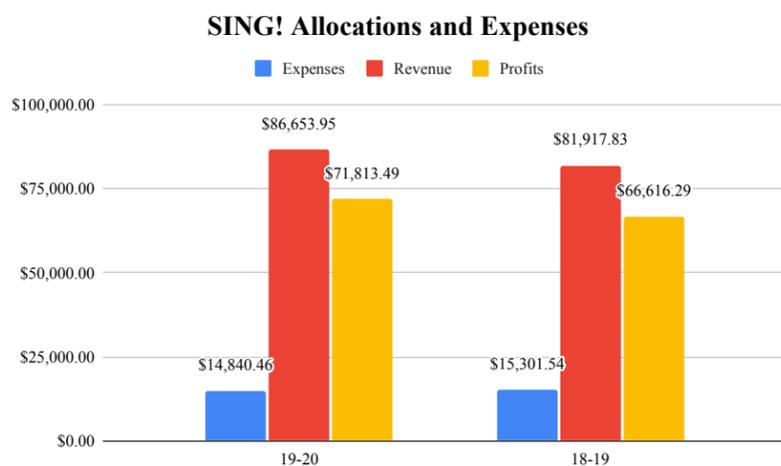


The SU started the school year off with a balance of \$222,458.84. The SU then used their budget to determine allocations for SING!, clubs, dances and events, and other expenses. The number increased from last year's beginning balance of \$191,248.88 due to revenue from last year's SING! shows and because there is no longer the Galaxy Budget expense of \$25 thousand to \$30 thousand, which covers the salaries of SING! faculty advisors.

REVENUE



SING! ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENSES



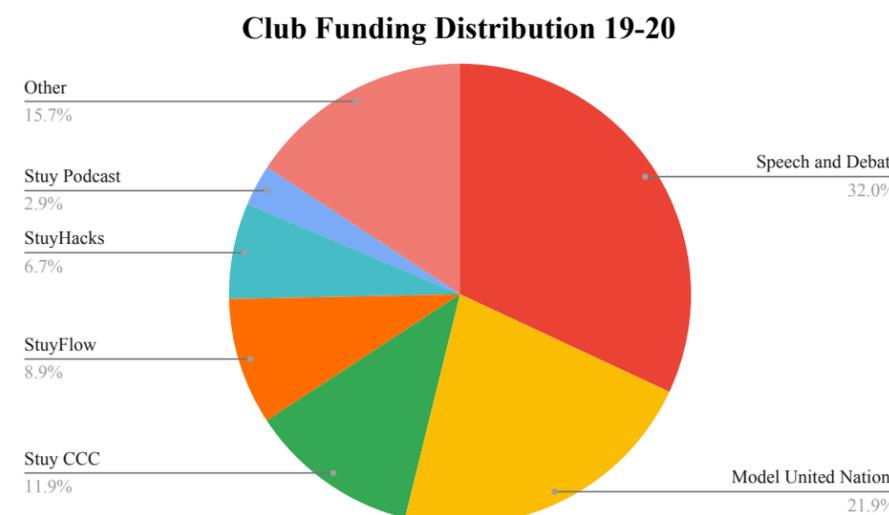
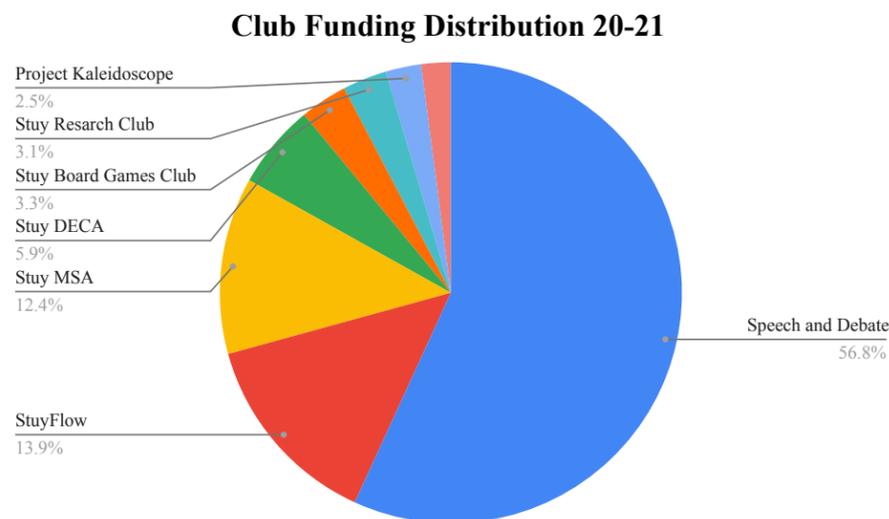
The profits of last year's show increased due to the logistical changes made for the SING! productions last year. With three judged SING! show nights, full priced-tickets for all three nights, an increase in audience attendance, and an increase in member dues (to incorporate the cost of T-shirts), the SU had a revenue increase of \$86,653.95 and profit of \$71,813.49.

However, due to the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, allocations and expenses for this year's SING! performances will be different from those of years prior. Because there will be no ticket, concession, or merchandise sales for this year's SING!, the production will not yield any returns for the SU, compared to the approximately \$80 thousand to \$90 thousand from shows of previous years. Additionally, each individual SING! performance will not collect member dues from SING! participants this year.

While the SU has a sizable enough budget to allocate enough money for SING! this year, they are also planning to fundraise and crowdfund through events such as the Giving Tree in the Parents' Association Spring Fest.

The SU will still allocate \$1,500 to each grade's performance as they did last year. Thus, the SU's allocations for 2021 SING! will total to a tentative amount of \$4,500 with no revenue. Because of the lack of revenue, the SU is not expecting a stream of income for the rest of the school year.

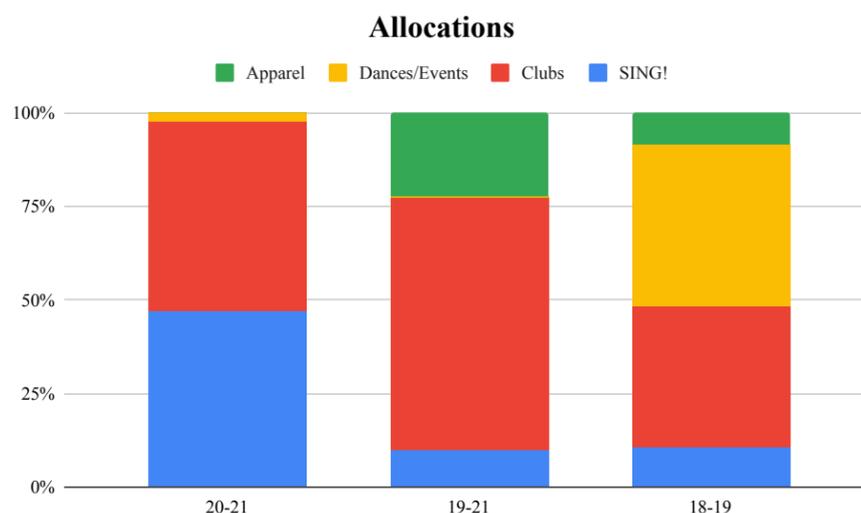
CLUB FUNDING DISTRIBUTION



Due to the lack of in-person events and clubs this year, fewer clubs requested funding from the SU as most events moved online and fewer clubs applied for allocations. As a result, the SU allocated \$4,839 for only eight clubs in the fall: Speech and Debate, StuyFlow, Stuy MSA, Stuy DECA, Stuy Board Games Club, Stuy Research Club, Project Kaleidoscope, and Digital Photography Club, with the top-funded club, Speech and Debate, receiving \$2,750. While tournaments and competitions went online this year, organizations, such as Speech and Debate and Stuy MSA, still had to pay an entrance fee to participate.

The amount the SU allocated for clubs in the fall sharply declined from the total \$25,050 allocated for clubs during both the spring and fall of last year, with the top-funded club, Speech and Debate, receiving \$9,500. However, the total amount of money for club allocations for the 2020-2021 school year will rise as the SU will be doing a second round of club allocations in the spring semester.

ALLOCATIONS



In total, the SU allocated \$9,569 dollars this year, split across SING! (\$4,500), clubs (\$4,839), and events (\$230). While the chart does not currently show allocations for apparel for the 2020-2021 school year, the SU plans to allocate apparel funds later in the year. The \$230 spent on allocation for events includes only SU events and was largely spent on gift cards and other prizes.

The amount of money used for allocations this year was significantly lower than that of previous years, with the largest change in funds coming from club allocations; though the SU allocated \$44,279.28 in 2019-2020, they only allocated \$9,569 this year.

News

Student Union Hosts Spring Clubs & Pubs Fair Virtually

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cient usage of time,” junior and Director of Clubs & Pubs Jennifer Ji said in an e-mail interview.

During this portion, the SU tried to recreate the in-person experience by allowing students to move between the breakout rooms and ask individual questions to the leaders of a club. “This was our best attempt at recreating the in-person format online. I guess you could think of each breakout room as a table for the club,” Ji said.

However, the SU felt that deciding a format and organizing the Spring Fair were the largest challenges. “The hardest part was deciding a format for this Club and Pub fair. We decided against doing the Zoom format we had done in the fall

because it wasn’t an efficient usage of time,” Ji said. “[Another] challenge was organizing Zoom rooms. In order for the fair to work, every user had to have the new updated version of Zoom. This resulted in some technological difficulties.”

Yue added, “Scheduling was definitely a problem at first due to our uncertainty on how to split clubs between the two days,” she said. “The organization of breakout rooms also took some time. There are so many clubs at Stuyvesant with a lot of variety, so that made the organizing portion a little more difficult.”

Junior Yaqin Rahman, who attended both the fairs in the fall and spring as a club leader, felt that the Spring Fair was an improvement from the Fall Fair. “The event was pretty successful. A lot of people came eager to join clubs and it went

pretty smoothly for the most part,” Rahman said in an e-mail interview. “In my opinion, it was a lot more straightforward than in September, so I think it was an improvement.”

However, some attendees found that a few club leaders were not in their breakout rooms. “[There] were quite a few rooms on Zoom where I went in to hear about the club, but there was no one there. Or in one case, someone was there but didn’t say anything after a full minute,” sophomore Zareen Islam said in an e-mail interview.

The Clubs & Pubs Fair also faced an inefficiency issue. “Due to the fact that there were no set times for rotation and everyone was just popping in and out of rooms, it was rather inefficient,” Islam said. “The hosts had to keep starting over or the students that just came would have to wait for them to be done.”

Rahman, who attended the in-person Clubs & Pubs Fairs in 2019, felt that the largest disadvantage of this fair was its virtual format. “I probably liked the Clubs & Pubs fair in person a lot better. You get to go around the school, walk through different floors and explore different clubs while talking to the leaders there in person, which is always a great experience.”

Despite the challenges, many felt that the virtual format allowed them to make new friends and share their interests with others. “In addition to advertising our club, it was also a nice time to bond with others who share the same interests and just take a break from the stressful [Stuyvesant] environment,” freshman Erica Chen said in an e-mail interview. “Other club leaders came into our breakout room and we also [visited other rooms] (toward the

end of the fair and when there was no one in our breakout room) to see how others were doing.”

As for the SU, they felt satisfied with their fair, regardless of the new virtual format. “This was the first time both Jennifer and I took part in the planning of the Club and Pub Fairs,” Yue said. “While we, unfortunately, could not have an in-person event, I was still proud of the event and the solutions we had to put in place to overcome remote challenges.”

Despite the virtual setting, the Club & Pubs Fair helped maintain a sense of camaraderie. “[It’s a goal] to help the school socialize over a virtual environment and encourage participation,” Yamaguchi said. “Something truly unique about our school is the numerous clubs we offer and the unique opportunities they all bring.”

NYC Schools Reopen After Closing in November

continued from page 1

and chancellor indicated their intent to reopen high schools, we did not know the timing until just minutes before it was in the media,” Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said.

Senior and Student Union (SU) President Julian Giordano believed that the date of the reopening, March 22, was a deliberate choice to assess the status of schools as students returned. “It’s a week before break, and what’s helpful with that is that students are going to return for a week. Then the DOE is going to have that week of break to see how did that go? Are cases rising? Were schools successful? Then, schools [are] going to have the opportunity to [...] make changes over the break that can be implemented afterwards,” he said.

With the announcement, many responded positively, given the difficulties of remote learning. “Students are struggling a lot with their mental health this year, and I think part of it is just being isolated from your friends and from your teachers and just having that real social interaction that comes with being in school,” junior and SU Vice President Shivali Korgaonkar said. “In that way, [schools reopening] is

definitely super good for those students, especially for those who have felt the burden of COVID-19 extra hard.”

Giordano said, “We expected it, and what we have seen in the news and in the world and from what other schools have been doing is that [COVID-19] is not really spreading as much in schools as in other places [...] Schools are extremely important, not only for students to learn but also for their mental health and their emotional health.”

The introduction of the COVID-19 vaccines, especially with the increasing number of teachers receiving them, has increased the confidence of many in returning back to school. “New York is doing better,” sophomore Alexander Lopez said. “In fact, my entire family except for my sister is vaccinated. I got my vaccine two weeks ago, so it’s been good.”

Some, however, wish that students who are currently in remote learning will be able to opt into blended learning. “I am not seeing why they wouldn’t let people switch just because obviously with the vaccine now, [COVID-19] is not as big of a problem as it was in the fall, and some of those people may actually want to be in school and do blended learning,” senior Chloe Liu said.

Many are hopeful for such a change. “I know a lot of Stuyvesant students who are in the remote model want to switch to the blended model, and I am hopeful that after a week or two of the model as it is with 300 students coming into the building, we will be able to open up the option to get more students to come into the building,” Giordano said.

With the return of going to school in-person, many students are looking forward to socializing with others. “My main motive for going back to school now would be to be able to see my friends because [of] senior year. I would like to see my friends before we graduate,” Liu said. “If I am not able to see any of my friends, there isn’t really a benefit.”

Lopez said, “What online school misses is the small things [...] Commuting on the train and saying ‘hi’ to your friend on the subway train. It’s [the] nice small conversation instead of waking up 10 minutes before class and getting on Zoom, so maybe if we could get some of those small moments back it would be very beneficial.”

Others wish that they could interact with their teachers in-person, though they acknowledge the limited extent due to the blended learning model. “The reason why

I wanted to go back to school is because there’s an assumption that you get to talk to the teachers. But one, the teachers aren’t going to be in the building, and two, you are still going to be on Zoom. It’s no different—just a bigger room,” Lopez said. “They can’t tell from a Zoom if everyone is extremely dead, or they can’t adapt to a certain student [...] There are small subtleties that teachers do in class that they just can’t do in Zoom.”

The administration acknowledged the tradeoffs of the blended model. “Who wants to come into a building and be in front of the computer all day?” Yu said. “But everyone needs something different. Not everyone has a quiet place at home. Not everyone has access to the Internet. There are tradeoffs that everyone has to make.”

Yu emphasized having strength during a time that does not cater to socialization efforts easily. “It’s not going to be perfect. It’s not going to be what everyone is accustomed to pre-pandemic. That’s just not the world we live in anymore. It requires everyone to have a little bit of courage,” he said. “It’s not like you can just bump into someone in the hallway and strike a conversation. It takes a lot of intentionalities.”

The administration hopes to accommodate the schedules of stu-

dents to allow for more interaction. “We will continue the same learning model with blended students coming in five days a week,” Ingram said. “We anticipate grouping students as much as possible by free and lunch periods and affording as many opportunities for socialization, planned games and activities, and outdoor opportunities away from screens as possible.”

While many details still need to be clarified, Giordano emphasized safety as a priority when reopening schools. “There are a lot of open questions right now. The DOE’s announcement doesn’t answer all of these, but now that sports are allowed to happen after school, what about clubs? What about activities that happen inside of the school building?” Giordano said. “Our priority is, throughout all of this, students’ safety and also supporting students academically and socially and emotionally.”

With the pandemic having lasted a full year, many see school reopenings as a sign of optimism. “The fact that schools are reopening is an indication that conditions are improving, and we hope that trend continues and leans toward a return to greater openings for socialization and more opportunities for bringing celebrations to fruition for the Class of 2021,” Ingram said.

Mayoral Candidate Andrew Yang Hosts Student Town Hall

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response, Sophomore Caucus Chief Advisor Alexander Lopez reached out, hoping that Yang would come and speak to Stuyvesant students. “I thought it was a long-shot, but after getting those contacts [and] exploring my network, I was able to get them, and that was really exciting,” Lopez said.

The webinar was originally intended for just Stuyvesant students, but the NYC Department of Education does not permit the use or access of school buildings by individual candidates for elective offices or organizations associated with such candidates. Consequently, the DOE redesigned the event and the webinar was opened to all NYC students. “This town hall was intended to be a pilot, for them to see how many people would show up. That’s why they got a wider range of participants,” Lopez said.

Given the restraints, the town hall was adjusted accordingly to meet DOE regulations. Both the Student Union (SU) and Sophomore Caucus were involved with Lopez in the event planning process. “Due to the DOE regulations, the Student Union [...] wanted to turn it into a mayoral forum with every single one of the

mayoral candidates, because that was the only way we could have one candidate speak at our school—if we invited everybody else,” Lopez said. “But at that point, we only had two weeks to plan, so the Sophomore Caucus and I picked it up from there and tried to promote it as much as possible after we realized that it was going to be turned into a town hall with multiple high schools.”

Because the webinar was specifically aimed toward high school students, NYC high schoolers were able to bring up many student-specific concerns, such as inequalities in specialized high school enrollment, and his plan to work toward resolving it. Yang stated that socioeconomic factors play a large role in NYC schools, particularly with the elitism of specialized high schools in determining admission through the sole factor of the SHSAT score.

Another concern that was discussed was the possibility of reopening school. Yang expressed that authorities should be putting in more effort to reopen schools based on the number of students falling behind in online learning, especially the younger students. He furthered that everyone should be vaccinated before reopening and provided personal protective equipment. “I enjoyed the way that [Yang] emphasized putting resources into various

communities and acknowledged the extent COVID-19 has affected our communities,” sophomore Victoria Solodkova said in an e-mail interview. “[However,] I do wish that [Yang] spoke a little more extensively on specific ways he plans on funding these projects and how these resources will be integrated into [said] communities.”

Representatives also stated concerns about how Yang will keep NYC safe amidst the recent rise of racially-motivated attacks against Asians. As an Asian American himself, Yang has a personal connection with the Asian American community and claims to invest in police officers and resources specifically for the Asian community, as well as resources to combat xenophobia and racism.

Many participants and student panelists expressed excitement at Yang’s plans to engage with NYC’s Asian American community. “Stuyvesant is over 70 percent Asian, and there’s a large Asian community, but unfortunately [...] [the Asian] population in NYC is not active in elections,” Lopez said. “We’re 14 percent of New York’s population, and yet a lot of us do not vote. Being able to talk to a political candidate [...] who can improve or activate the electorate of the youth, as well as the Asian community, and improve our livelihoods is really exciting, regard-

less of political affiliation.”

However, other participants felt that not all questions and concerns could be answered due to the constricted time frame of the webinar. “It was kind of unfortunate that there wasn’t enough time in the webinar for a Q & A segment because I feel like that would’ve allowed the town hall to be a more interactive experience,” Solodkova said. “There were questions in the chat from attendees that Yang expressed he wanted to take a look at, but the webinar seemed to end prematurely and he never got the opportunity to address questions outside of those from the pre-selected student representatives.”

Others found the webinar’s structure and timeframe to be appropriate. “There was a lot he didn’t cover solely from the fact that there are so many issues that could be discussed in NYC,” junior Yaqin Rahman said. “Since this was a high school seminar [...] he was there to listen to the [specific] concerns students have and to respond to those concerns with solutions.”

As Lopez believes in the impact that youth involvement can have in elections, Yang’s inclusion of the youth resonated with him. “[A] takeaway that I got, with specifically Andrew Yang, is that they always emphasize youth,” he said. “When

we get involved, whether it’s telling our parents, or telling seniors to vote, we’re getting more involved in the process of politics, but not just politics, but the community as well, and we can create tangible change.”

Many attendees echoed their enthusiasm for Yang’s attention to addressing the youth’s questions and concerns. “It was really cool how he took the time to come speak to us and really focus on the youth. An aspect of the town hall that really stood out to me was the way he encouraged the youth to be more involved with affairs and non-profit organizations around NYC,” Solodkova said.

Rahman added, “He is someone who is understanding and willing to listen to the people, which [would] definitely be a change of pace to the previous mayors.”

Moving forward, the Yang campaign plans to continue hosting more town halls for high school students and hopes to expand by hosting specific town halls directed toward groups of students. “There’ll be more specific town halls in addition to broader ones like the town hall just held [...] [and town halls with] a broader array of panelists, because a majority of [the student panelists] came from very high-performing schools, and they want to diversify as much as possible,” Lopez said.

What We Can Learn from Remote Learning

By **TASHFIA NOOR,**
SABRINA CHEN,
ISABELLE YAREMENKO
and **CALISTA LEE**

It's no secret that remote learning has some major disadvantages: a decline in mental health, Zoom fatigue, and lack of socialization are just a few of the many pandemic-related pressures students carry on their shoulders on top of the rigorous academic courses they take. While our current situation is far from ideal, many have felt that Stuyvesant has also seen a few positive changes over the past year, such as a later start time and the alternating split schedule, in which the usual ten period schedule is split between two days. Now, with the arrival of the coronavirus vaccine and the idea of in-person learning returning next school year, many are beginning to wonder whether these arguably beneficial adjustments could be implemented for a regular school year.

Many people are in favor of the new 9:10 a.m. starting time, instead of the usual 8:00 a.m. This extra hour is invaluable to students who may spend that free time sleeping and catching up on school work. "I would hope that schools make a shift to start later in the day because I haven't woken up earlier than 8 a.m. in months. I don't know why they make students go to class so early, especially when people have a lengthy commute," sophomore Jady Chen wrote in an e-mail interview.

Junior Aleena Sage shares similar sentiments about the joys of waking up later than they normally would during in-person classes. "I'll miss being able to go to classes from the comfort of my own home and not having to commute," she said.

Additionally, Chen expressed her desire to see the passing time between classes extended. "I seriously

do not understand why Stuyvesant makes the passing period barely five minutes when people have to rush up the stairs to the tenth floor, or need to use the bathroom, or need to grab their water bottle from their locker," she wrote. The extra time provided during online learning has allowed her to get a snack, take a breather from her laptop, and recharge before her next class.

However, some adjustments have been much more drastic than simply pushing the starting time for classes or lengthening breaks. Chief among these is the novel alternation between five-period schedules. As students were initially introduced to this new schedule, some found it much easier to pace their schoolwork. "I really appreciate having half my classes every other day. I'm starting to forget how it was possible to have ten periods each day, and have to get homework from all classes done every day. It's nice to only worry about half my classes at a time," junior Celina Huynh said in an e-mail interview.

The revised schedule also boosts students' learning capabilities. Sophomore Calvin Wang noted in an e-mail interview that the new schedule allowed for a better quality of learning. "By splitting a day into two halves, there's more structure and spacing with work assignments," he said. At first glance, it may have seemed that the change would diminish students' learning, but it gave many students more time to process what they learned in class. Chen agreed, and hopes that this change will remain even when school moves back into in-person learning. "This means that I have more personal time and that I can spread out my responsibilities accordingly," she wrote. "Students have other things to do; they have their own lives to live."

While some may think that sweeping changes would be unfeasible to enact, Chen disagreed. "I think as a school we've already adapted to the 1-5 and 6-10 period schedule [...] I actually think it wouldn't be so far-fetched for the administration to consider the alternating period schedule for the future," she wrote. But, she noted that there are limits, and the extension of the passing time would be much more difficult. "I think it's a little less feasible to get the administration on board simply because the 10 minutes really do add up," she stated. That would mean 90 minutes would be spent just for passing, and she acknowledges this problem. However, she would still appreciate having more than five minutes for passing.

Teachers have also recognized some aspects of remote learning that can be transferred to an actual classroom. Mathematics teacher Gary Rubinstein has been enjoying the use of online applications such as DeltaMath, a site where students can practice and learn various math concepts. Since DeltaMath gives him a thorough understanding of what percent of students understand a concept, Rubinstein hopes to utilize this newfound tool beyond remote learning. "I'll definitely incorporate DeltaMath in the future, so that, maybe in a class period, maybe I'll do eight or ten [practice] questions, so they can just have their phones kinda near them, and then they can type in their answers, so I could get feedback right away," Rubinstein explained. In the past, he has not utilized technology in the classroom, but after creating these online DeltaMath lessons, he hopes to reuse them both for classwork and homework.

Similarly, Mandarin teacher Hai-rong Zhang said that she intends to continue using Google Classroom

to share learning resources and assign homework. "Not only because it is more environmentally-friendly than the actual worksheet, but also for the reason that students can still have access to the materials after class and even after they finish the course," she explained. Another practice that Zhang hopes to adopt is a more project-based curriculum. This allows for students to be more engaged in the class by allowing them to work with their peers, be more creative, and apply their skills to real life scenarios.

Besides using Google Classroom, Zhang intends to continue utilizing platforms such as Pear-deck, which allows her to see student answers instantly and provide individual feedback. In addition, she has been having "side talks" in class, where she will enter breakout rooms to chat with students, allowing them to communicate better. "These side talks establish the connection between teachers and the students when we don't have in-person communications," she said. She aims to build and maintain individual connections with her students during both remote and in-person classes.

Besides new teaching strategies, remote learning has also given students and teachers a newfound appreciation for in-school learning, and many are eager to return. "I am looking forward to real, human interaction. It's not so easy to make new friends or to create meaningful relationships with your teachers online," Chen said.

Zhang expressed similar sentiments: "I miss those talks in the hallway, in the office, before the class, and after the class, which help me to know my students more."

Rubinstein has also noticed the impact of remote learning on students, especially in breakout rooms. "In my regular class, in-person, peo-

ple really take group work really seriously [...] So, I figured in a pandemic, that would be everyone's favorite part, when you go into groups. And I find that one-third to one-half of the students are not really actively engaged in the group work." Returning back to in-person learning will mean more intimate bonds not only between teachers and students, but also between student and student.

Additionally, Zhang's experiences in remote learning has further taught her that she could take her opportunity as a teacher to help students learn life skills, such as time and stress management. "I become more and more determined that the mental health of students is the key to successful learning," Zhang said. "I need to be the anchor that encourages and cheers students up when they feel sad and overwhelmed." Her emphasis on students' happiness has pushed her to grow as a teacher and search for ways to help her students.

It's clear that students and teachers have tried their best to adapt to remote learning, and some have found some aspects of it to be beneficial. Not only has implementing technology in the classroom or lengthening the time between classes made learning more effective and manageable, but remote learning has also allowed students and teachers to reflect on ways to create a school environment better suited for their education and health. "Remote learning taught me that what schools provide students with is more than just knowledge and skills, but also a community where students can socialize, support, and learn from each other," Zhang said. The possibility of these new techniques being implemented in reality is an exciting prospect for teachers and students alike.

Blast to the Past! A Teacher's Guide to High School

By **MAHIR HOSSAIN**
and **NICHOLAS MARTIN**

No matter how life plays out after high school, the memories made during these four years will carry on for a lifetime. As high school students, teachers can have a great impact on what students may choose to become in the future. After all, teachers were once students themselves. So what were teachers like in high school? From the arts to physics, all Stuyvesant teachers have their own unique stories to share about their high school selves, and how they became the teachers they are today.

Art teacher Jane Karp recalled her first day at LaGuardia High School, and the wild environment it had to offer. "I had planned out my outfit for the first day [of homeroom] very carefully, and [I realized] very quickly that I was most definitely not the coolest kid in the classroom because, 1985," she noted. "There were students with high, bright-red mohawks—safety pins in their ears. Several members of my homeroom were in quite outlandish, mid-80s attire and I thought, 'well, this is a different environment,'" Karp said. Her favorite memories of high school took place in the lunchroom. She remembered how the choir would break out into song during nearly every lunch period, and others would chime in with them, creating an electric atmosphere.

It was here that Karp was inspired to become an artist, and was given the freedom to explore a vast array of different types of artistic mediums. "I majored in art history after taking AP Art History in high school with a wonderful teacher, Ms. Goldberg, and she still inspires

me [...] In remote, it's a little harder to do this, but anytime I act out a scene from a painting, I'm really doing what Ms. Goldberg would do in class," Karp said.

For others, school was a way to escape from the outside environment. Chemistry teacher Dr. Steven O'Malley used school as a way to cope with the loss of his brother, who had died unexpectedly when he was in ninth grade. "If I may be perfectly candid, high school was a really rough time for me and my family [...] I don't think I realized at the time, but I found comfort in the structure of being in school. Just having responsibilities and things to do, in retrospect, was a very good thing for me during that time," Dr. O'Malley said.

Though Dr. O'Malley always had a very strong grasp of the sciences, he wasn't very certain about how he would apply his knowledge. Dr. O'Malley recalled that his passion for teaching was ignited after he was encouraged by his peers later in college to pursue teaching due to his remarkable ability to concisely explain concepts. "I remember certain pieces of advice being valuable, like, 'it's okay not to know what you want to do right now.' In fact, it's okay to not know for a long time, and being told it's okay to be uncertain about things is really nice advice for anybody, but particularly when I was a teenager," Dr. O'Malley recalled.

History teacher Dr. Lisa Gre-

enwald added a similar sentiment, recalling that as a student, she didn't have everything perfectly in-order upon leaving high school: "I realized around senior year that the life of the mind was something worthy of pursuit. But I did not understand the self-discipline, the study, and the accumulated skills that were necessary. I played catch-up for a long time."

A common trend among Stuyvesant alumni is returning to high school and giving advice to other students about their own high school experiences. Mathematics teacher David Peng ('06) and economics teacher David Wang ('12) are both Stuyvesant alumni, and frequently reminisce on the memories they've made during their time at Stuyvesant.

While Wang remembers taking the subway frequently and how his peers would work on homework and chatter excitedly about Apple's latest inventions, Peng cites high school as the place where his passion for teaching first emerged. Like Dr. O'Malley, it came from unofficially tutoring his friends. "My friends told me I did a better job explaining than some of their teachers. That experience led me to pursue other teaching and tutoring opportunities," Peng said. The benefits of teaching his friends were a two-way street: "Even

though I was taking AP Calculus at the same time, I found it important to be able to teach the topics to my friends; that was my way of making sure I understood the topics myself," he said.

Like freshmen students today, Wang also expressed struggling to transition from middle school to high school. Wang acknowledged that finding a consistent group of friends to socialize with was particularly difficult: "It was also a little difficult to make new friends at first, especially with how big the school is. It's ironic because there's so many people at Stuy [that] you would think you'd be able to meet a lot of people, but because it's so many people and everyone's moving around, it's [not]." As corny as it sounds, having good companionship between friends can give students a boost and a reality check when they need it.

However, not all teachers were American graduates. In fact, physics teacher Thomas Strasser actually went to high school in Salzburg, Austria, for the majority of his education. Strasser noted how different the Austrian school system is compared to that of America. "In English [in America], you have thirty people around you and then when you go to math class and it's different thirty people around you. That is totally different in Austria. You have the same people around you every period, every day, with very few exceptions—and that from ten to eighteen for eight years," Strasser said. This tightly knit social life allowed Strasser to build strong bonds with peers who he normally met up with in class, instead of jumping around to find one steady social group.

The differences between the

Austrian and American education system went beyond this, in Strasser's experience. The decision to even go to college starts at the age of ten, and certain courses of action are taken depending on whether an individual chooses to go to college. Those who don't go must attend trade school and find employment by the time they're the same age as current Stuyvesant juniors.

However, Strasser drew parallels between his own high school experiences and certain Stuyvesant events such as SING!. Every year, his entire class would participate in a school theatre production: "[While] some people were acting, others were doing the lighting, catering. Pretty much similar to what you do with SING, but not with the musical background." At one point in his senior year, Strasser even attempted to start his own school newspaper, though, his attempts were rather unsuccessful. "We were a bunch of rather challenging students for the administration, so they were not very happy about these kids that would criticize everything that the administration does," he recalled.

As teachers look back on the past, they hope to pass on wisdom to their current students. Most importantly, they hope that students will learn from their failures and triumphs, and ultimately find success in their future careers. To many Stuyvesant students who feel pressured to get perfect grades or follow a certain career path, Strasser stresses the importance of keeping an open mind: "Look at everything from different perspectives; don't get too stuck in a narrow field of what you're interested in. In the end, you might find out that you like something that you didn't think you like."



Ismath Maksura / The Spectator

Features

Jessica Valenti—Why We Need Feminism More than Ever

By **CHRISTINA PAN**

First, some tips for those who do not consider themselves feminists:

- Do not be like the large number of people who spent International Women's Day googling what day of the year is International Men's Day.
- Do not idolize your political heroes. There is a likely chance that they are purveyors of sexual assault.
- Do not call a movie "feminist" if two women talk to each other (about something besides a man).

Beyond those tips, it is a good idea to keep a conscious mind on what exactly about feminism troubles you. Yes, you may support "women's rights." You may be all for equality, and you might believe that rape is bad and bodily autonomy is good. You also might find yourself starting sentences with the phrase "I'm not a feminist, but..."

Perhaps it is something about dropping the "F-bomb" that alienates you. I come with answers.

This month, I had the opportunity to speak with Stuyvesant alumna Jessica Valenti ('96). Valenti is a feminist, long-time blogger, and author of numerous titles aimed at general readership—entry-level, everyday feminism—that together, have helped shape the online feminist movement. Those unfamiliar with Valenti's work may be shocked (or enthralled) by her candor. Valenti writes as a friend: without airs, without condescension, communicating directly and colloquially with someone they care about. The result is an engrossing, provocative, and remarkably genuine experience that makes a powerful case for why we need feminism—and why it may be particularly crucial now.

Women have lost over 5.4 million jobs during the pandemic. Working mothers have it particularly hard, balancing long hours with familial duties. And it isn't particularly comforting that by 2021's Women's History Month, a certain New York governor still feels entitled to women's bodies.

The pandemic has exposed some ugly truths about American life. Here's how feminism can help.

CP: Why do you think so many people still reject the feminist label?

JV: We still live in a world with a lot of stereotypes about feminism. But when you look at feminism and its ideals, they're pretty

run of the mill. We don't like violence [toward] women. We think women should have control of their own bodies [and] equal pay for equal work. I know when I was younger, I was almost afraid that if I identified as a feminist, it would mean this constant stream of trolling and pushback. Women are always having to justify their intelligence or prove their intelligence or prove something. And when you're already dealing with diminishment or harassment as a young person, who wants to deal with that? There also was just this fear of being caught as an imposter or trying on a political identity that I didn't know enough about. I thought, "There's so many kinds of feminism. Do I really know what I'm talking about?" The other part of it is this fraught history in feminism, where mainstream feminism hasn't reached out to everyone, and that's sort of a more understandable argument to have about the word feminism.

CP: When people critique feminism, the conversation seldom touches on what the movement does for women but rather veers towards men. Why do you think that is?

JV: A long time ago, when I was on Feministing, I got a really obnoxious e-mail from a guy who was like, "You're always bashing men." I found that I rarely wrote about men at all. And that's what pissed him off. Whether it's movies or any kind of pop culture, it's women talking about men. And when we're not talking about men, it means that we hate them. What's interesting is that if feminists or women wanted to hate men, we would have lots of reasons to. Rape is a literal epidemic. Violence is an epidemic. The laws that [...] keep women from controlling their own bodies and futures, [for] all of that, the perpetrators are men. Yet we still work with men; we love men; we marry men. And if we did hate men, we wouldn't have enough power for it to systemically impact them anyway. It's really a red herring; a way to distract from the conversation. But the difficult hurdle is making men see what they can gain from feminism. Men do have it bad in a lot of ways, but that's not because of feminism. That's because of patriarchy, and if they could come to understand that, it would be so much more beneficial.

This is one way where women have an edge. If you don't like the dominant culture on what it means to be a woman, you have feminism. Feminism is this very strong cultural, political movement that

you can look to for answers. When men have these important questions about their masculinity, they don't have an equivalent [movement] to go to. Instead of going to a place to think deeply and interrogate what these structures do to them as a person, it's just: "don't be a [EXPLETIVE]. Don't be a [EXPLETIVE]. Don't be a woman." So really, the very idea of American masculinity is built on hatred for women. And that is a simple, seductive answer. If we want to do right by young men, we need to start to think, what does an alternative culture look like? Or how can we draw them to feminism?

CP: Why call it feminism, as opposed to a general term like "humanism?"

JV: Because no matter what we call it, if it means making it better for women, people will find a way to hate it. It doesn't matter what the word is. You can label it; you can name it however you want. But at the end of the day, if it's making it better for women, people are going to be unhappy about it. So it doesn't make sense to me. Let's focus on the issues; let's focus on getting things done. Then what's interesting, too, is that a lot of people have feminist values, but they stay away from the word. And you know what? If they don't want to use that word, it's okay. I don't think feminism needs all those people to use the term. But people need feminism more than they think. Because even if you believe in those things, if you're staying away from the word feminism, you're closing off a whole world to yourself. Once you identify as a feminist or you get interested in it, and you start reading books or blogs or start getting into conversations about it, your life changes for the better. You get support that you wouldn't otherwise get. You get access to language to talk about the issues that you care about in a way [...] you didn't before. I was at a restaurant a few years ago, and I heard this woman talking about an ad that'd been super sexist. You could see her struggling to find a way to say: that is very sexist, [and] this is not okay. If she had been exposed to feminism or feminist communities, she would have a way of talking about that. In that way, using the word feminism is much more beneficial to individual people who care about those issues than it is to the movement more broadly.

CP: What's your take on "benevolent" sexism, the type that

we like to write off as "tradition?"

The opening doors and paying for women, that kind of "benevolence?" It's infantilizing. It's meant to make women seem like children and not grown adults. We can all do kind things for each other. Women don't need special things done for them. There's so much of that stuff in our culture that we don't think about. These are traditions we're used to, like dads walking their daughters down the aisle, asking for permission to get married, women changing their last names, or children taking their dad's last names. That stuff is really insidious, and it's everywhere. And those are the hardest things to argue against. It's easy to argue against rape. It's not always easy, but it's understandable to argue for abortion rights or equal pay. But when you're asking people to make changes in their individual lives, that's when it gets harder. And this [is] something I've been thinking about over the pandemic. Millions of women have lost their jobs, and that's mainly because they're the ones doing child care. A lot of these husbands or men who consider themselves progressives would vote for equal pay, childcare benefits, or maternity leave. But when push came to shove, they wouldn't take care of their kids in their house. I don't think that a lot of men are willing to do the work necessary to sort of unpack their own privilege and unpack their own sexism. They want to believe that "I'm a good guy. I believe in the right things. Therefore, everything I say and do is correct." And that's it. It's very easy to vote for something, but it's much harder to live it.

CP: Why do you think so many education systems choose not to address issues like rape and sexual abuse? Why do you think they're swept under the radar?

JV: This happens especially in elite institutions, where there are reputations to uphold and protect. There was a huge scandal when I was at Stuyvesant with teachers harassing [and] sleeping with students. And there was just, "We're gonna have a quick assembly about this, and then we're gonna move on." There was no interest in interrogating the bigger issues. When teachers are tenured and around for a long time, they tend to get protected. And when you go to Stuy, we think we're very sophisticated and adult. I remember teachers hitting on [and] being with students when I was in high school and us playing it off.

We thought we were so mature, and they can do all of this sort of stuff. And it didn't really occur to us that this [was] incredibly messed up. This [was] a horrible misuse of power. But we didn't see it that way. We saw ourselves a little bit higher up than the average 15 or 16-year-old. And there's no conversation to prepare you for that. There's no assembly when you're a freshman: what if a teacher tells you they'll give you a 99 if you give them a hug? We don't teach girls how to navigate things, whether it's from teachers or from other students. And it's a real disservice that we're doing to young people. It means that those things happen, and schools are more interested in protecting institutions than they are people.

CP: With this new presidency, I feel like there's going to be a strong reactionary movement. What's your take on feminism in this new era, moving forward?

JV: There is already a reactionary movement. We've seen it online and at the Capitol. I think they're getting stronger because we're not doing a good enough job of reaching, frankly, young white men who are being radicalized online. I wrote about it in The New York Times a couple of years ago. It's essentially misogynist terrorism. I think we're going to continue to see that unless we make a real cultural shift because, yes, the old guard is moving out. But there's also a very powerful movement in feminism. One of the more exciting things about doing this work right now is that you're surrounded by people who are smarter than you. And that's kind of the best place to be. In a way, that's what I liked about Stuyvesant. You're surrounded by smart people, and you can have smart conversations [with them], for all of their faults. But there's still a lot of basic stuff I would like to see get done. I would like to see abortion rights codified into state laws. I would like to see an Equal Rights Amendment. I would like to see paid maternity and paternity leave. And feminism isn't just about one issue. It impacts every political issue that you can talk about, from the environment [and] economics [to] reproductive rights. So there's a lot to be done. But most of all, for the last four years, we've been in such a defensive crouch trying to protect things that instead of just saying, "okay, we can relax now," I would really love for us to push really hard for all of the things that we need now, while we still can.

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Features

Breaking Down the Breakout Room

By ALEXANDER LAKE

“All right everybody, I’m going to sort you into breakout rooms, and you can all discuss this problem. Call me in if you have any questions.”

And so the dread begins. It is time to enter a Zoom breakout room, the mini-Zooms contained within the larger Zoom meeting. The motive of this feature is to encourage more interactions between students in smaller groups, and on the surface level, this seems practical. In practice, things are different. Cameras that were already off remain off, and many of the minority that were already on fizzle out, leaving breakout rooms a sea of gray and white with the occasional disturbance of a lonely face.

teaching,” he said. He noted that the virtual environment is a large factor in why small group work is so much more awkward on Zoom than in person. “Even if someone’s more of an extrovert, the stagnant nature of the breakout room stops them from doing anything,” he commented.

While it seems freshmen struggle with breakout rooms because of a lack of prior connection with their peers, many upperclassmen have different perspectives. “80 percent positive, 20 percent negative,” was junior Jesse Wang’s take on breakout rooms as a whole. “What’s missing about the breakout rooms is just the freedom of choice for the students because I genuinely believe discussions would be so much better if you were allowed

many don’t know that it exists. Wang chooses to keep his camera on in breakout rooms. “I guess I just do whatever I can to make it less awkward,” he said.

Senior Jillian Lin agrees with Wang’s sentiment: “One thing I’ve missed so much about in-person schooling is being able to have conversations with people I’m not as close to, and breakout rooms are a chance to interact,” she said. She acknowledges that breakout rooms aren’t perfect, but she believes that the benefits outweigh the shortcomings. “I do think there’s a sort of pressure to interact that makes things a bit awkward [...] but it’s a good opportunity to boost the social interaction we’ve all been missing,” Lin said.

While students are the ones in the breakout rooms, it is also important to consider the teachers attempting to run them. One teacher who has found particular success with this endeavor is English teacher Annie Thoms. Thoms has spent a lot of time conceptualizing her breakout rooms, as they play a large part in facilitating the collaborative and interactive atmosphere that she strives for. She is aware that breakout rooms have the potential to be unproductive and awkward, saying, “The biggest danger of breakout rooms is that they become an extension of the danger of Zoom school in general, which is that we are so totally separated from each other and it’s so easy to check out.” She combats this by traveling through the rooms in random order to en-

sure that cameras are on and discussion is happening.

But even that system isn’t perfect. “I wish that I could see all of the [breakout rooms] at once. [...] In the classroom, I can visually see every group at the same time, and I can choose who I go over to when. With the breakout rooms on Zoom, it’s blind,” Thoms said. “It’s much harder for me to target my assessment of where it might be useful for me to pop in.” She understands that virtual school is hard for everybody, and doesn’t hold it against students who choose to turn their cameras off. But she does have one way of encouraging discussion: “If I come into a breakout room and nobody is talking, I do yell very loud, ‘Oh no! Silent breakout room of doom!’ which is a little embarrassing for them and makes them more likely to be talking in the breakout room.”

While breakout rooms tend to pack less punch than intended, they do have their redeeming factors. They allow for interaction within the otherwise often silent virtual classroom and encourage collaboration in an environment where it ordinarily feels less natural. Perhaps it would ease awkwardness if students were able to select their own rooms, or perhaps the awkwardness of breakout rooms is simply inevitable. Until school is truly back in session, we must find a way to vanquish the “silent breakout rooms of doom,” or at the very least, to come to peace with them.

“If I come into a breakout room and nobody is talking, I do yell very loud, ‘Oh no! Silent breakout room of doom!’”
—Annie Thoms, English teacher

To one anonymous freshman, breakout rooms feel like ghost towns. His experiences with breakout rooms have been mostly negative. “I would much rather sit in a class where the teacher is

to talk to someone you knew already in the room,” Wang said. While there now exists a feature in Zoom that allows for self-selection of your breakout room, many teachers have yet to enable it, and

Mind Our Businesses

By ISABELLA JIA and SAIYEDAH NAYRA

Driving down the streets we call home, there’s an eerie absence as the bustling city life seems to have taken its last breath. Populating the streets are not people, but rather omnipresent “For Rent” or “For Lease” signs draped over empty storefront windows. The remnants of previous businesses can still be seen as the dim lights flicker repeatedly over empty tables and chairs that were once alive. The pandemic’s effects are far-reaching, as small, local businesses that hold special places in our hearts have been hit hard. Some have mustered the strength to survive, withstanding the losses from the pandemic. But many, already vulnerable from the start, were knocked down, succumbing to exorbitant rent fees and other troubling factors caused by the pandemic.

Despite the hurdles, small businesses are in the phase of recovering as sales begin to trickle in. For sophomore Janna Wang, a local favorite is YeDon, a mom-and-pop donkatsu shop on Northern Boulevard, Queens. “They only have one menu item they specialize in, an \$11.99 donkatsu platter. For just \$12, you get two huge slabs of cutlet, corn, beans, salad, rice shaped into little balls, mini sausages shaped like octopuses, a few slices of orange, mini rice cakes, and a nice little bowl of cream soup,” she described in an e-mail interview. “The donkatsu is really great and authentic, drenched in sauce, crispy on the outside, soft on the outside, which I personally love, but that’s not where all the charm lies.”

Beyond this mouth-watering description, Wang values the subtle, unique details of the business. “Where the appeal really lies is the nostalgia that lies in the small family business. There’s something really homely [about] the fact that

it’s family-owned: the child of the owner’s drawing or doing homework in the corner of the shop, the cute little pepper shakers so that you can flavor the soup at your own discretion, and the way the menu is hand-written on little posters on the walls,” she said. “If you order the donkatsu to go, they seal the sauce and sides separately in little containers so the rice and meat don’t get soggy.”

Wang understands and emphasizes the importance of supporting local small businesses. Along with YeDon, her dad owns a small business, so she feels the effects firsthand. “Especially in the circumstances we’re in now, it’s so important to support your local businesses so they can keep themselves open. My dad’s small business shut down because of the pandemic, so I know how stressful it is for businesses to wonder how much longer they can sustain themselves,” she stated.



Sophomore Cynthia Chang shared a similar experience at her favorite small business, Hot Peppers, in Bayside, Queens. She enjoys their quesadillas, burrito bowls, and tacos. “It’s a walking distance from my home and the prices are much cheaper for much more compared to other chain restaurants like Chipotle and Qdoba,” she wrote in an e-mail interview. “My friend was once talking to one of the people who worked there, and they said that they make all their food in the morning, so they don’t even use their refrigerator.”

Chang visits the restaurant often with those closest to her. “Go-

ing to your local businesses with your friends [and] family makes everything more special. Since quarantine, my friends and I have walked to the restaurant together during our frees and ate [...] (socially distanced) in one of our backyards,” she mentioned.

Sophomore Nora Loftus also enjoys visiting her favorite small business with friends. Java Joe, a coffee and tea shop in Park Slope, Brooklyn, is one of her favorite local businesses. “It is tiny and so cozy, and I love their drinks and seasonal candies and pastries. My go-to order is an iced chai latte and a flake bar, which is a chocolate bar brand from the U.K.,” she described. “My friend and I go almost every Friday, and we bring our chai lattes to the park, and it is always so nice.” Along the way, Loftus and her friends experience funny slip-up moments, but that enriches the experience for them. “Somehow my friends and I al-

held a special place in her heart. “My favorite thing to get there is the mango lassi. It’s my favorite because it’s a place where I can choose from a variety of hot, freshly cooked Bengali dishes and snacks,” Kunda said. “I celebrated my sweet sixteen at that restaurant’s party hall.” This restaurant is another one of many businesses that were hit hard by the pandemic. “They are definitely facing a loss because they can’t open up the party hall due to the pandemic. It’s a to-go thing now but luckily, it has managed to stay afloat because it is so popular in our community,” she said.

These local businesses do not just include eateries, as sophomore Anna Ying reflects on visiting her favorite 99 cents store before the pandemic. “My favorite local small business is the Flushing 99 cents store because you can get things at a cheap price, usually being school supplies, stationeries, decorations, etc.,” she said. “The best thing about this store is you don’t have to pay tax unlike other places, which saves a lot of money.”

Ying also offered advice for others to support local businesses. “Others can support small businesses by sending out flyers about them, recommending it to friends, or introducing it on social media. You can also encourage your community to visit them more often,” she suggested.

Though the road to recovery for many of these small businesses may be difficult, small actions taken can contribute immensely to help these businesses that make our city the beautifully diverse place it is. Eating locally, shopping sustainably, and spreading the word are all decisions that can help. It’s a thoughtful way to give back to your community. As Wang points out, “With small businesses, there’s just a level of thoughtfulness you’d want to pay a few dollars for, one that a chain store can’t really offer.”

QUERIDA CLARA



Aahana Peng / The Spectator

Clara Shapiro’s Advice Column

Querida Clara,

Sometimes I feel like there’s no purpose of life and I’m just living one day after another. I feel like there’s nothing motivating me to move forward, and it kind of makes me stop and wonder if all of this is really worth it. I guess I’d like advice on how to address situations like this, and what exactly the purpose of it all is.

—Anonymous, Freshman

You are a pensive soul. It is a sage thing to wonder—why does anybody bother waking up and putting on deodorant? And why do it again the next day? Beats me. But living life is like writing this sentence. One thing follows another. I will write the next word and do the next thing. Who knows what I might write next? DOUBLET! STUFFED SHEEP! PINNACLE SOUNDS AND ZOUNDS! Anything could happen, and I think that life is the same way. That is the marvel of it. Unexpected, joyful things like “DOUBLET” tend to intersect themselves.

In a way, though, isn’t it good that nobody really knows Life’s Huling Meaning for certain? If people did, they wouldn’t have to keep living to figure it out.

Querida Clara,

My mother believes that I’m hiding a secret boyfriend from her. It’s flattering that she believes in my capability for romance, but the interrogations are getting old. Maybe I just like buying flowers for myself. How do I prove a negative and finally convince her that I’m extremely single?

—Cadence L., Junior

Cadence, it is time to set your man free. It is not subtle, this whole hide-him-under-the-bed thing. Let him see the sun. I find that when you Get a Man, it’s best to just let the state of your relationship hang out in the open with the family. For instance, when I got serious with my first husband, I had him move into the bathroom between my parents’ room and mine. At first, it was jarring for my parents (my husband sleeps on the shower floor), but in time they got used to it. Now, when one of us needs to use the toilet and my husband is still sleeping, no problem, we just go right in and hubby doesn’t notice a thing.

But in the event that it really is as you say and this man is “imaginary,” here’s some advice: do not fight your mother’s idea that you have an imaginary man. Embrace it. Embrace him, and all that your mother thinks he does for you. Dote on yourself. Take the flowers to an extreme. Write yourself letters that begin “CADENCE, MY LOVE,” and leave them in indiscreet places. Your mother will in time see that this is a man who truly loves you. She will also see that this man’s handwriting is remarkably similar to yours.

Editorials

Our One Year Corona-versary

Spring 2020

With classes of merely five to 15 students and empty hallways, the usual liveliness of the building was replaced by a pervading fear surrounding the coronavirus on our last day of in-person schooling. It was supposed to be a joyous time. The stressful but jovial SING! season had just concluded, and spring PSAL sports teams were preparing to kick-start their practices. But the ominous date only foreshadowed what was to come.

Two days later, on the evening of March 15, we received the notification that NYC was officially under a state of emergency, and schools would consequently be closed. We heard that school would resume in late April and thought the situation might just be a blip on the radar.

Our reactions ranged from relief and curiosity to nervousness and dread. We rejoiced at the opportunity for an early spring break. Viral TikToks and Animal Crossing defined the days of our first week of quarantine. But the severity of the pandemic soon began to rear its ugly head with shortages of toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and masks. Family members faced unemployment as their workspaces closed. Others were essential workers who continued to venture outside, their makeshift masks covering their faces but not their apprehension.

Outside, the bustle of the city came to a halt. An eerie silence filled the streets, a premonition that death was, literally, right around the corner.

Just a week after our quarantine's start, the rocky shift to online learning began. The uncertainty surrounding remote learning, grades, and Advanced Placement tests was palpable even in the Zoom universe. Disbelief about the cancellation of sports seasons, dances, and graduation ceremonies became ubiquitous. In a universally confounding move, the Department of Education (DOE) banned Zoom after several security issues and "Zoom bombings."

Everyone was freaking out.

Any hope of a swift return to normalcy was crushed by Mayor Bill de Blasio's announcement on April 14 that schools would stay closed for the remainder of the school year. Our hearts felt pained that we would not be seeing our teachers or peers soon. We were also curious about a new grading option, the "CR," that

would allow students to change any numerical grade to "credit received" due to challenging pandemic conditions.

In May, instances of police brutality across the nation, including those of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, took the limelight. Shock and anger rippled throughout the country. Our discussions encompassed more of the complexity of racial issues in our school communities and beyond. Students spearheaded more Talk Circles Around Race, albeit virtually.

We concluded our last day of school feeling deeply unsatisfied. Whether we lost motivation, felt pressured to be productive in light of the free time, missed our friends and families, or coped with the deaths of loved ones, we were all enveloped in the pandemic.

Summer 2020

Summertime, and the livin' was not easy. Much like the weather, in late May and June, people's anger over racial injustice reached a boiling point. New Yorkers—many Stuyvesant students among them—spilled out onto the streets in protest. Helicopters thundered overhead. Those living near large gathering spaces like Barclays Center or City Hall heard the distant roar of crowds. As the summer went on, though, the roar began to quiet down.

Things were similarly in flux within our school community. Students sat at home and gnawed at their fingernails uneasily. With summer programs, internships, and travel long since obliterated, there was little else to do. We discovered at the end of July that Principal Eric Contreras was leaving (for real this time), and that a new person was preparing to take the throne—a mysterious figure named "Seung Yu." To top it off, there was the big elephant in the room known as "the precarious upcoming school year." There was a great furor over the virtues of remote versus those of blended, and more still when we learned at the end of August that our schedules would be divided in half, with five periods one day and the other five periods the next. Some were ruffled by the elimination of certain electives; those who did not want to take them rejoiced. Either way, time went on. Ruffled feathers settled somewhat.

Fall 2020

The beginning of the school year echoed the spring term as

the first day of school was repeatedly pushed back until September 16. We sighed in relief as our school day started at 9:10 a.m. instead of the usual 8:00, and toted our new schedule of 55-minute-long periods and 10 minutes of passing time. The majority of us chose to stay remote despite being offered the chance to go into blended learning, which was still, at the end of the day, remote instruction. But this opportunity to go into the school building, while infrequently, was particularly valuable to many for whom home was not a suitable learning environment.

We were given a deadline to submit a request to CR grades on November 30. Some of us rushed to Facebook and asked if a specific grade in a class was worthy enough to stay on our transcripts before then. Not long after, the COVID-19 rate surpassed three percent, and the DOE announced that schools would close again.

However, the extensive discussions that took place in our history classes about the presidential election were a new change in scenery. In some, we watched the presidential debate and election coverage with our teachers. We saw an increased engagement with politics among students as they turned their worry into action by continuously phone-banking swing states and posting colorful infographics on Instagram. We ultimately rejoiced with pots and pans down the streets of New York once we heard that Joe Biden was the next President of the United States.

Winter 2021

Here we are at winter's end, and we are unraveling. When the Capitol was stormed on January 6, we sat in online class and remotely witnessed a boiling over of political tensions and the subsequent violence. Are we to never be a whole country, but always plagued by angry extremists?

Mentally, many of us have found ourselves drained. Assignments are never in low supply, but motivation is hard to come by. We united over our common feelings of burnout through Facebook and voiced our concerns, encapsulated in tense conversations. The Student Union met with the administration to discuss a survey which determined that overwhelmingly, we are not doing so well. The guidance counselors now have regular office hours,

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The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper



"The Pulse of the Student Body"

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and tensions seem to have diminished, but the conversation is perhaps not all resolved.

The early spring has brought pleasant weather, and the news of PSAL sports practices roused the spirits of student-athletes. Additionally, amid a flood of test cancellations, Stuyvesant combated uncertainty by offering SAT administration to grateful juniors. The DOE stated intentions to reopen public high schools in some capacity, allowing the return of the blended learning model and its limited successes. Cautiously, we are dipping our toes into the water, hoping to integrate some sense of normalcy back into our lives, even if that "normal" is fragmented. Still, it doesn't seem as if the ugliness revealed during the pandemic will be gone soon. The resurgence of attacks against Asian-Americans reminds us of a hateful America, lurking be-

low the surface, but seemingly ever-present.

We arrive again to mid-March, as if riding upon some supremely disappointing merry-go-round. Our prospects appear dismal, and we speculate, as we did one year ago, as to when this whole ordeal will end. Indifferent days blend together, for our current way of living is one in which there is no punctuation. Commute-less, we trudge through online school. Breaks hardly feel like breaks, and weekends are weekdays as we remain isolated in the same spaces. There is little change. Here is another day like the last. Here is another week like the last. Here is another month, another semester, just like the last. It has been a year. So much has changed. So much has happened. And yet, beyond the unimaginable upheaval, we seem to have fallen into exhaustingly static routines.

Prosecuting a President

By PETER GOSWAMI

Republican senators acquitted Trump of inciting the insurrection inflamed by his rhetoric and driven by his conspiracy theories, leaving him free to run for president again in 2024. Trump continues to have a major influence on the Republican party, as [74 percent](#) of Republicans want him to remain politically active, and [42 percent](#) of Republicans said they would vote for Trump in 2024, putting him far ahead of other possible candidates. Even after Trump failed to properly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, spread false election claims, and incited a riot in an attempt to undermine our democracy, Republicans are still willing to

return our country back to his leadership.

Trump gained popularity by making those who traditionally have power and privilege feel like victims. He painted immigrants as thieves of American jobs and the media as the enemy, which created a general distrust in facts. Trump was successful in spreading false election claims by promoting the sentiment that "liberal" voting methods, like early voting and mail-in ballots, infringed upon the rights of conservative voters. These ideas allowed Trump to gain support because they played on the insecurities and hatred that many conservative voters have toward certain groups. Other Republicans are afraid of opposing Trump, in

fear of losing his large base and the chance of getting nominated for primary elections. However, acquitting him only made it worse for their party and the country. We cannot break this cycle unless he's incriminated on the charge of inciting the Capitol riots.

The Department of Justice must prosecute him criminally on account of inciting an insurrection. The U.S. Code states that anyone who incites an insurrection is [ineligible to hold public office](#) and can be imprisoned for up to 10 years. Republican senators ignored the necessity of disqualifying Trump because he was a president who acted like a criminal. Therefore, the best way to prevent the danger of having a criminal as our

president is to prosecute and place charges on him.

Prosecuting Trump is also necessary to reinforce our American values. In a country where we believe in equality under the law, we cannot let someone get away unchecked simply because of a past position of power. Trump is a private citizen, and a court should treat him as such. By spreading false election claims, Trump tried to undermine democracy in an attempt to hold on to power. To reinstate our position as a democratic country, we need to prosecute Trump to show that we do not let challenges to our democracy go overlooked, especially at a time when other nations have questioned our democracy in light of the insur-

rection.

Finally, acquitting Trump because he was out of office signals to future presidents that they can get away with what they want in the last days of their tenure. Prosecuting and subsequently convicting Trump would ensure that we do not leave this precedent.

Trump must be prosecuted to prevent his re-election and uphold the rule of law. He acted criminally and needs to be charged as a criminal. The insurrection has put the American values of justice, democracy, and truth into question. To restore our values, we need to start by prosecuting Trump and proceed with our fight against the cycle of conspiracy theories and lies.

Robinhood: Building a Base, Ripping It Off

By ELIO TORRES

Robinhood, an app that recently clung to news headlines, moseyed its way into the competitive brokerage industry by opening up the market to the common user. Customarily, platforms that facilitate real-time stock trades charge their users a commission for every transaction. Robinhood, however, lets its users buy and sell without any fees. Its sub-minute signup time and clean graphics appeal to the new generation of casual investors, swinging the elite hobby of stock trading into a viable side-hustle. When it hit the market, its mission to democratize finance resonated with everyday people, and it saw more daily average trades than [any incumbent firm](#) in the world in 2020.

Robinhood seemed to revolutionize access to a door that had been locked for decades: the stock market. That was until they were forced to choose between the common people who gave the application life and the hedge funders who still clasped the most financial clout.

In mid-January, users on Reddit and TikTok made a push to [drive up](#) the price of stocks like GameStop and AMC. By funneling money into these select stocks, these efforts artificially squeezed the shares to unforeseen prices, even though the companies these shares belonged to did not do anything to prompt growth. For hedge funds that shorted stocks like GameStop, meaning they bet against the stocks, the brisk price spurts indicated losses of hundreds of millions of dollars. To cash in on the exploding prices, many first-timers turned toward Robinhood. In a move that defied their mission to democratize investment, Robinhood prohibited its users from executing purchases on the “hot stocks” shortly after they took off. With hundreds of thousands of investors relying on Robinhood to get in on the bubble, the spontaneous switch-off slowed the rise of popular stocks, leaving many

feeling slighted by the company.

I was one of those slighted investors. I joined the craze not expecting to strike gold, but more so wanting to be a part of the Reddit-orchestrated movement that united my generation over undermining Wall Street. When Robinhood disabled buying stocks, my temporary earnings dissolved back to their starting place. I watched the same stocks that had just conquered the market on the back of Robinhood users plummet because of the same company’s regulations. Though I did not lose money, countless others were stripped of their potential prof-

put it, to “[meet deposit obligations](#),” the result remains unchanged: thousands of everyday people got the short end of the stick.

The malpractice of Robinhood and its business model is only grazed by this isolated incident. After all, an app that is ad-free, provides commission-free trading, and offers a complimentary stock to new users sounds too good to be true. And that’s because it is. Robinhood makes money by selling its users’ order information to larger companies and firms before trades are executed in the app. This sharing of data allows

the SEC found that the app deprived its users of \$34.1 million by not giving them the best possible price at the time for their trades. Robinhood sent stock orders to firms that would deliver the most profit to their company, not the firms that would most benefit their users.

Another threat is how the app can motivate inexperienced users to pour their money into the app with a simple swipe and tap. Its festive and sleek design makes the interface seem eerily similar to a game, except real money is at stake. One of Robinhood’s most successful campaigns was a referral program

remembered where the app was located on my phone, and I could open it without looking. Just like gambling is dangerously addictive, Robinhood—sitting right at your fingertips—presents its own perils.

Additionally, the Robinhood app, though exceptional in retrieving new users, lacks in its customer support. Generally, customer support does not make or break a platform, but when naïve investors have money on the line as Robinhood cuts off stock purchasing, having a reliable means of contact is essential. When my account was restricted from purchasing, I tried to reach out to the support team for help. Their lack of a phone number forced me to go through their online support page that promised a response in three days. Two months afterward, I still have not received a response. My story does not even compare to the severe calamity that Robinhood’s lack of customer service has caused. Twenty-year-old [Alex Kearns](#) committed suicide after being unable to contact Robinhood upon being told he owed \$730 thousand to the platform, causing him to believe he would be indebted to the company for the rest of his life. His family later learned that the message saying he owed nearly a million dollars was merely a glitch that was in the process of being fixed. Had this error been communicated to him, he would still be alive.

Robinhood is not the pioneer of financial democracy that it preaches to be. Ultimately, as it often does in the free market, profit has taken precedence over goodwill. Though this issue has been one of the few to bring Republicans and Democrats together, its congressional hearings might very well let Robinhood off the hook. As the people that Robinhood targets, we need to warn others of its troubles and reject the app. The app will not make your pockets bigger; it will say it is while stuffing its own.



Noah Taylor/The Spectator

its, and many found themselves in the negative, losing their play money and even their savings.

Robinhood, which ascended into the industry thanks to average investors, should not be let off the hook for conveniently forgetting its mission of equalizing the industry. Most of its funding comes from top-dog investors like Citadel and Melvin Capital that were poised to lose money if dark horse stocks like GameStop continued to climb. Instead of standing by its base, Robinhood chose to cover its financial allies. Whether the motive was to bail out affiliates, or as Robinhood CEO Vlad Tenev

firms like Citadel-Citadel Securities to then plan key decisions and base their trades on legal insider information. In fact, selling order information accounted for [70 percent](#) of the platform’s revenue in the first quarter of 2020. While investors might be willing to forego their information for Robinhood’s benefits, Robinhood hides its business model in its branding. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) [fined](#) Robinhood \$65 million in December 2020 for issuing misleading statements about its revenue sources and omitting important information from its customers. In the same investi-

that gave new users a complimentary stock of up to \$500 and generated a million-user waitlist before the platform even launched. However, opening the app was unnervingly similar to opening a chest in a video game, as it was accompanied by an animation and reminder that more referrals would equate to more free stocks. These addictive techniques bring the prospect of gambling to a generation that is already struggling with technology addiction. During my bout with Robinhood, I reached a point where I would revisit the app upwards of 10 times an hour. Within a week, my brain

California Isn’t What You Think

By ISABEL CHING

Most people hear the phrase “Democratic state” and think immediately of New York, and maybe even Massachusetts or Vermont. But if they had to choose one, it would probably be the state of Hollywood, perfect weather, and the Kardashians: California and for a good reason. The Golden State is one of the most consistently Democratic in the country, [voting](#) blue in the last eight presidential elections. State politics are dominated by Democrats, who hold the state’s two Senate seats, 42 out of its 53 seats in the House, and more than three-quarters of the seats in both houses of the California State Legislature.

Being the bastion of American liberalism, however, comes with increased attention. As the largest American state, with a population numbering close to 40 million people, and one of the most Democratic—ranking seventh in the country with 29 percent of voters identifying as liberal—Californian politics has been the subject of great contention, especially for conservatives.

Many conservatives look to California as a “great experi-

ment in liberalism,” a laboratory for Democrats to prove their superior governance and political prowess. But, conservatives argue that Democrats have failed spectacularly in California. They are not wrong when it comes to numbers as California has some of the highest tax rates in the country, including an [8.66 percent](#) sales tax rate and an [8.84 percent](#) corporate tax rate, ranking ninth and eighth in each respective category nationally. Taxes aside, the state of finances and public services is not great either; California ranks 37th in education for K-12 students and third in per capita homeless rates, and pension liabilities are estimated to be higher than \$1.1 trillion. Californians, disheartened by high tax rates, an ever-increasing cost of living, sky-high housing prices, and poor social services, are leaving in droves, joining what has now become a statewide exodus. In fact, between July 2019 and July 2020, [135,400](#) people left the state for surrounding areas in search of lower tax rates and easier living, and in 2018 and 2019, the state [re-recorded](#) the lowest growth rates in population since 1900. Even so, conservatives are not right to use

California as an example of the disaster Democratic leadership brings. California’s torn economy and social strife are not a specter of what’s to come should Democrats one day control the entire country. Thinking so presents an inherently flawed argument.

The first flaw in this logic is that California is not some “great experiment in liberalism” as conservatives claim. While some of the issues California faces today can be attributed to the failure of Democratic leaders to act effectively, the majority of the problems stem from the state’s history. Take California’s pervasive homelessness. Governor Gavin Newsom’s inability to pass legislation like Senate Bill 50, which would have expanded housing by allowing construction of new homes near transportation hubs, is not the sole reason why California housing prices are through the roof. In fact, the California housing market has been inequitable since the 1930s. For decades, the Californian and federal governments promoted single-family living as opposed to more efficient multi-family housing. This encouragement, coupled with the overregulation of buildings by way of laws in

the [California Code of Regulations](#) and tedious construction laws, has made California housing prices some of the highest in the country.

Similarly, California’s failing and inept education system is not a consequence of Democratic leadership, but a culmination of decades of an inequitable education system that has disproportionately affected people of color. Californian Democrats do, however, deserve some blame. They have failed to combat many of California’s most pressing issues, including the pandemic, the housing crisis, and homelessness. Holding politicians accountable is the only method through which real change can be impacted, and Democrats in the state have fallen far short of their constituents’ expectations as the coronavirus situation worsens.

While Democratic leaders deserve some blame for California’s recent economic and political failures, they should not shoulder the burden for difficulties that began long before they assumed office. Rather, we should hold them accountable for their actions in office and their response to the current situation. On the flip side, conservatives should

not be turning California into a guinea pig “trial run” for Democratic politics when Californian politics are in no way representative of national Democratic politics. While Californian politicians tackle local issues like housing, national politics concern larger, overarching issues, like the American economy and social welfare. Projecting the successes or failures of California onto America as a whole does not yield a realistic picture of Democratic leadership. Instead of using California as a baseline for Democratic politics, Republicans should examine key issues and Democratic politicians’ responses to those issues in order to establish a more accurate understanding of Democratic politics on a national level rather than a local one.

California is surely liberal, but its position does not reflect the Democratic party or its governing. California is not the center of Democratic politics or an “experiment in liberalism,” and the grim picture conservatives paint of the state is not emblematic of national Democratic politics but more a consequence of the state’s turbulent history and the struggles of local Democrats.

Opinions

Reeling Back Women's Advancements

By SHIVANI SHAH

Last week, my mother talked to me about how the pandemic has increased the challenge of balancing work and family. She was torn between devoting herself to her career and spending time with her eight-year-old twins who learn remotely. I asked my father if he experienced these same issues, and he stated that he did not. Though I knew that the pandemic would affect women more negatively, as times of crisis tend to harm the oppressed more, it was the first time I saw the effects of these disparities in my household. Though the pandemic has been harmful toward almost everyone, it has proved to be more damaging toward women, more specifically, women from minority groups. Women around the world have faced an increase in economic distress, expected household duties, and domestic violence and a deteriora-

tion of mental health during the pandemic.

Women in the past were expected to be housewives, but in recent decades, they have become a major part of the workforce. In fact, [70 percent of essential workers](#) around the world are women. However, the large percentage of women essential workers exposes more women to the virus. Additionally, [one in three](#) Black women in the U.S. are frontline workers, but they are paid [11 to 27 percent](#) less than their white men counterparts in the same frontline jobs. The pandemic has brought many disparities to light.

Not only has there been an increase of women in the workforce during the pandemic, but the expectations to care for their households have also increased. In Asia and the Pacific, women work [four times](#) more unpaid care than men, and globally, women work more than three times the amount of unpaid care.

This number has only increased, as women are expected to care for their children who now stay at home. These mothers feel society's double standards once again, as they are forced to choose between their careers and families. When my little brother accidentally fell at home, my mother felt guilty. She blamed it on the fact that she did not work from home. Even though she is an essential worker, it seems as if her job is secondary to her role in the family. Due to the pandemic, mothers of young children have arranged [four to five times](#) greater work reductions than their paternal counterparts in the United States. Mothers had to cut their work by [two hours a week](#) while fathers maintained their work hours. These losses add up and have created a huge step backward for women, as the pandemic is reinforcing the housewife stereotype. This restriction erases the achievements made by women in

the past, making one question if society is actually regressing for women during the pandemic.

There has also been a drastic increase in domestic abuse toward women during the pandemic. Anger caused by job loss and stress, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, is taken out on women and girls. There [has been a significant increase](#) in calls to domestic abuse help centers since the pandemic started, as quarantine has led to many unsafe environments for women in their own homes. The National Commission for Women in India recorded that domestic violence cases more than [doubled](#) during the pandemic. In many instances, women and girls experiencing domestic abuse are silenced due to lockdowns and economic binds.

The accumulation of all these factors has led to a sharp decline in the mental health of many women, as stress and expectations for women have only

increased. In a study conducted by CARE International, [27 percent](#) of women noted an increase in challenges with mental health versus an 11 percent increase for men, and [83 percent](#) of women experienced an increase in depression levels compared to 36 percent of men.

Women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and progress that has been made toward gender equality is slowly regressing. The Biden administration has allocated \$40 billion toward child care and \$170 billion toward education and reopening schools, which will alleviate some stress faced by many struggling mothers. However, hope is not so bright in Africa and Asia, where women make up a small portion of the task force that produces these policies. While many of these policies bring hope, there needs to be a drastic change to ensure that we keep moving forward.

The Southern Brooklyn Scrapbook

By KENNETH GAO

Growing up, I never felt like my identity was defined by being a New Yorker; it was more that I just happened to be growing up in New York City. The idea of "The City" invokes images of Times Square, Wall Street, and Manhattan's skyline, but not the low-lying, open space that 2.5 million Brooklynites call home.

I grew up in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, a quiet, local neighborhood that presents itself unassumingly. Some time ago, I found myself poring over the history of Sheepshead to see what existed before I came and found the [Southern Brooklyn Scrapbook](#), a Facebook group dedicated to the documentation and discussion of the neighborhoods of Southern Brooklyn.

The Scrapbook, created in 2015, currently sits at more than 25,900 members and is comprised of both current residents and those who live miles away, sharing and discussing photos of

neighborhood mainstays, childhood houses, schools, restaurants, and more as they existed in the past (often adjacent to modern-day photos).

[In an interview with Anthony DeVito](#), K C Van Sandt, the founder of The Scrapbook Facebook group, talked about the concept of a niche, domestic history and how the nature of discussion allows for a closer look at the photos being shared. Van Sandt highlighted the importance of history and how the casual format of the Scrapbook became a proper outlet for the preservation of history.

Looking through The Scrapbook now, the feeling of personal connection to the photos shared remains apparent even six years after its founding. Often when scrolling through The Scrapbook, one can find stories of school experiences, particular details of food prices and addresses, or the simple "I remember" (and of course, the classic lamentations on "The Good Old Days").

A sense of people's personalities and the way Southern Brooklyn has touched them on a foundational level can be felt from the sheer variety of details that remain fond memories decades after the fact. A recent commenter on The Scrapbook described a childhood excursion to Kings Highway for ice cream, the flavor of which was described in immaculate detail—cherry instead of chocolate and served from a mobile street vendor. While The Scrapbook may be a document of the comings-and-goings of Southern Brooklyn, its collection of photos and personal accounts also presents a visceral, emotional sense of growing up in the past.

I am a newcomer to the scene of Southern Brooklyn and life in general. In fact, I am at the age that many in The Scrapbook tend to reminisce about. To a fair extent, part of my experience with The Scrapbook is vicarious—imagining from personal accounts what it might have been like to experience "ago," pictur-

ing what it may have been like to be to take a walk in the time and circumstance pictured in a photo, or experiencing a childhood described in a stream of consciousness comment.

However, the other end of the experience is the way it reframes the era of Sheepshead Bay that I have grown up in. There is something so novel yet poignant about seeing a long-past snow day in the same intersection I pass on the ride home from my afterschool, an ice cream-seafood bar once near the footbridge I cross on evening walks, or a sunny day in the 1960s in the same strip mall where I had buffet with friends on the night of the SHSAT.

It is things like The Scrapbook that remind me that I share a common identity with many before me and many after in the places where I spent my childhood. Whether or not a building was once a record store then, is a nail salon now, or will be a bodega three decades down the line, the feeling that I occupy a space

that has and will continue to house those formative moments is humbling.

Taking a look at New York's past, especially its local communities, is an easy enough endeavor for its value. Resources like the NYC Municipal Archives collection of [property photos](#), the NYPL's [digital collections](#), the [Forgotten NY Blog](#), and many others provide for a storied look at many aspects of NYC history and culture. The Scrapbook, while exemplary for its size and the format of community-driven documentation, is not the only community of its kind, with groups like [Al Ponte's Time Machine](#) - New York inviting discussion of the city at large.

A sense of self is often tied to the ways it is created—around foundational experiences, people, and places. To be able to explore those facets of identity in new perspectives and to see the contexts in which they exist is a greatly rewarding exercise, one that I could not recommend enough.

How to Bear with Loneliness During Quarantine

By NELLI ROJAS-CESSA

The feelings of isolation during quarantine sank in right around the time I was accepted into Stuyvesant. I missed the connection with my classmates and teachers I had received in person, and I barely talked to anyone for most of the day. There was a hollow cavity in my heart that made me feel like I was about to cave in. Near the end of remote eighth grade, I was dragged into an abyss of a lack of motivation and my Instagram feed, but I was able to dive into my love of music. I explored a kaleidoscope of genres and subgenres, reveling in Franz Liszt's insane piano skills, MF DOOM's instrumentals, Frank Ocean's "Blonde," and indie artists' songs. Recently, I've even dared to approach the rabbit hole of K-pop, since once you like one song, they all start to sound amazing. Every song has the capability of being unique in terms of rhythm, melody, harmony, groove, and composition, so I did not want to limit myself to only one or two genres.

Exploring the depths of music takes time, and the quarantined summer gave me enough

of that resource. However, it became a long, hazy blur in my memory as I lacked focus and productive activities. I felt disconnected from my friends, who went on vacation and lived their lives away from the Internet. I wished that I could do the same, but I was stuck at home. My parents were busy at work, so I spent my time alone navigating the Internet and keeping up with the Stuyvesant Dear Incoming Facebook group. I had so many promising online opportunities for social interaction with my fellow freshmen, but I just couldn't take the initiative. I created a negative feedback loop where I felt awkward, so I began to distance myself from new people but then became more lonely and then awkward. All of these factors made my emotional state plummet; the music I would listen to reflected that decline with its slower tempos and melancholy melodies.

Then, Stuyvesant started. I was looking forward to finding out how to socialize in a remote setting and discovering what high school was like, even if it was remote. I was never desperate to make friends, since I had my old friends who still talked to

me, but I tried to be proactive in the breakout rooms. However, after enough awkward silences, I gave up and retreated behind my screen. I joined many clubs and tried out a few new activities, but I soon realized that I lacked passion in almost all of them. Everything felt like a waste of time. I spiraled into a deeper and darker mindset, turning up the volume in my headphones and trying not to think.

Nowadays, I still find it challenging to connect with other people. Even in class, when I see everyone's cameras turned on in the Zoom gallery view, I still feel disconnected, as the 2D screen makes everything feel superficial. I don't really communicate with people in the same clubs as me. "Meeting" new people failed to cure my chronic loneliness.

I turn to music once again. It can shrivel away from the dread of life passing by. The guitar strums. The bass throbs. The beat drops. Only now exists—the present—and leaves me alone with harmonious sounds that make me want to get up and dance. As a form of escapism, music makes you realize that you should not take the problems in your life too seriously, whether

they are assignments, missing socialization, or having nihilistic thoughts. If you can be happy in

the moment, then you know that at the end of the day, you will be all right.



Addressing Anti-Semitism in the Media

By MAYA DUNAYER

As activism against discrimination becomes more mainstream, many forms of media are being reevaluated for racist, sexist, homophobic, and other discriminatory undertones. However, for every TikTok, Tweet, and comment made online that is “canceled” for being discriminatory, an anti-Semitic piece of media slides under the radar of most non-Jewish activists.

A recent anti-Semitic joke in mainstream media was aired by NBC as part of Saturday Night Live’s “Weekend Update.” Hosted by Michael Che, a segment of this episode featured a discussion of Israeli COVID-19 vaccination efforts, which are setting a precedent for effective and quick distribution of vaccines. During the segment, [Che quipped](#), “Israel is reporting that they vaccinated half of their population, and I’m going to guess it’s the Jewish half.”

Though this comment might seem harmless, it plays into age-old anti-Semitic tropes. Since the Middle Ages, Jews have been consistently accused of being more loyal to each other than to the country that they reside in. This notion

of dual loyalty began largely due to the prevalence of Christianity during that time and continued to fester in Europe as the Jewish population grew. Napoleon only agreed to grant the Jews full equality after the French Revolution if they stopped considering themselves “a nation within a nation,” and the Nazis used the claim that Jews betrayed their country in order to initiate their plan to exterminate the Jewish people.

Jews will always be more loyal to themselves.

Additionally, The New York Times, considered to be a more liberal newspaper, published an [anti-Semitic cartoon](#) that features a blind, skullcap-clad President Trump being led along by a caricature of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who wears a dog collar with a Jewish star around his neck. This work immediately evokes the trope of Jewish control. Jewish people

not recognized as harmful simply because anti-Semitism is so rarely addressed by non-Jewish activists. So often, anti-Semitism is masked under the guise of being anti-Zionist or anti-Israel and therefore accepted and parroted by more left-leaning individuals. Politicians like Ilhan Omar, a Democratic senator from Minnesota who has a history of being vocally anti-Israel, often cross this line. Omar [tweeted](#) in 2012, “Israel has hypnotized the world, may

accountable for its actions as long as you hold it to the same standards as you would any other government. However, the second that you deny the right of Israel to exist, ask Jews their opinion on the conflict as soon as you hear that they are Jewish, or blame Israeli citizens for the actions of the Israeli government, you are being anti-Semitic. Zionism at its roots is simply a movement for a Jewish state so that a people that has faced persecution and oppression for centuries can have a home in a land where they are [archaeologically proven](#) to have lived. This movement is not saying that Palestinians do not also have a claim to the land, but it is essential to recognize that attempting to deny an entire people their country on the

basis of their religion is incredibly anti-Semitic.

To prevent further occurrences of anti-Semitism in the media, the non-Jewish community must make an effort to advocate against anti-Semitism, just as they would with any other group. We must call out anti-Semitism when we see it and take a stand against it to put an end to discrimination of all forms.

~~It's just a joke!~~ ~~anti-zionism~~ ~~Why are you upset?~~ ~~anti-israel~~ ~~You're so sensitive~~ **ANTISEMITISM**

And now, we see centuries of anti-Semitism manifesting in Che’s quote. Though Israel is a majority Jewish state, [21 percent](#) of Israel’s nine million population consider themselves to be Arabs. These Israeli Arabs can vote and enlist in the Israeli army if they wish. The nation of Israel is made up of both Jews and Arabs, but by referring to those vaccinated as the “Jewish half,” Che is playing into the idea that

have been accused of controlling the media and politics in many countries around the world and have been painted as “puppet masters” who manipulate politicians and journalists behind the scenes. Though The New York Times later apologized for the cartoon, the damage had already been done.

Though The New York Times and Che are not inherently anti-Semitic, these types of jokes and comments are

Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel.” Masquerading as an anti-Israeli sentiment, this quote plays into stereotypes that Jews control the world and the media. This instance is only one of the many questionable tweets that Omar has tweeted, and she is far from the only left-leaning politician to do so.

It is perfectly acceptable to hold the Israeli government

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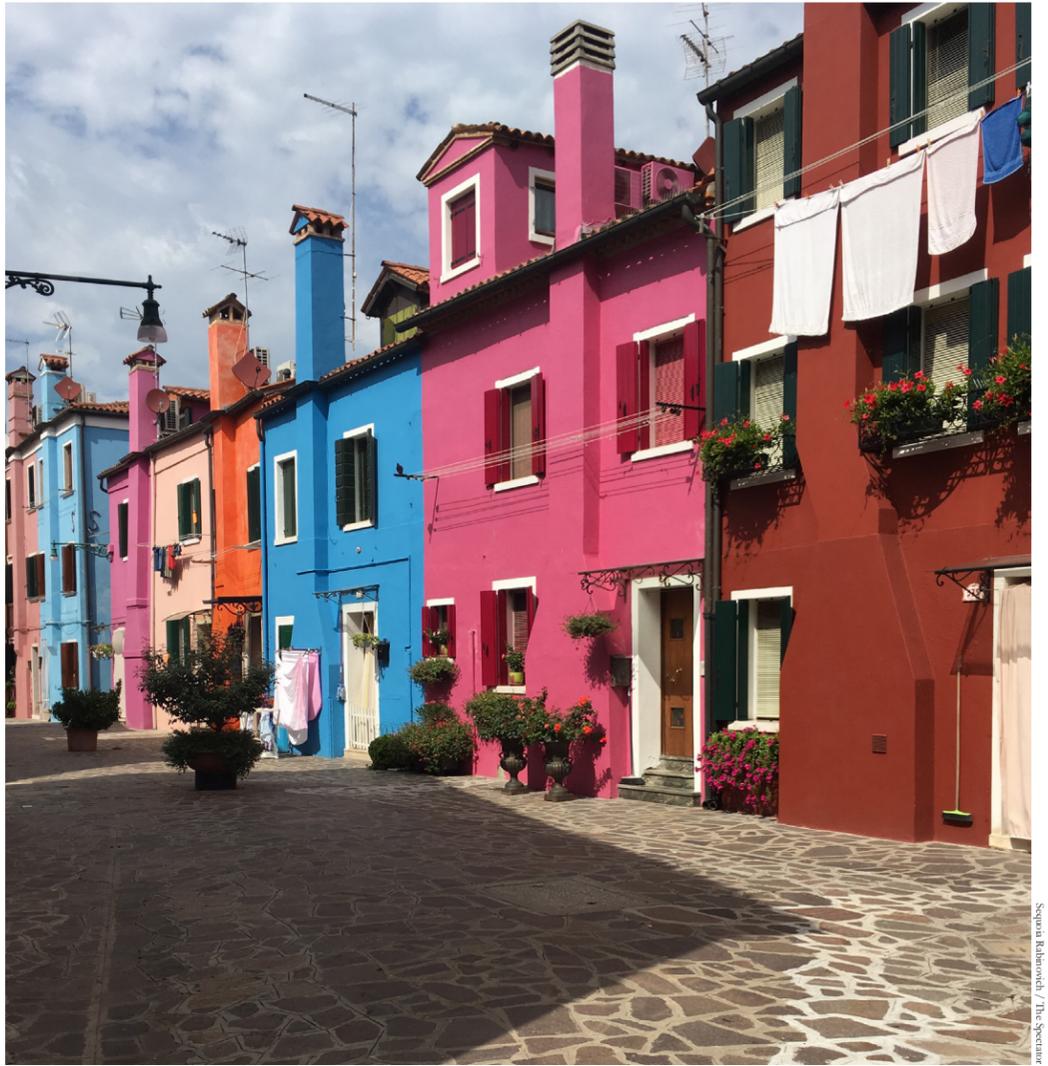
Photo Essay

“Good Memories”

By THE PHOTOS DEPARTMENT



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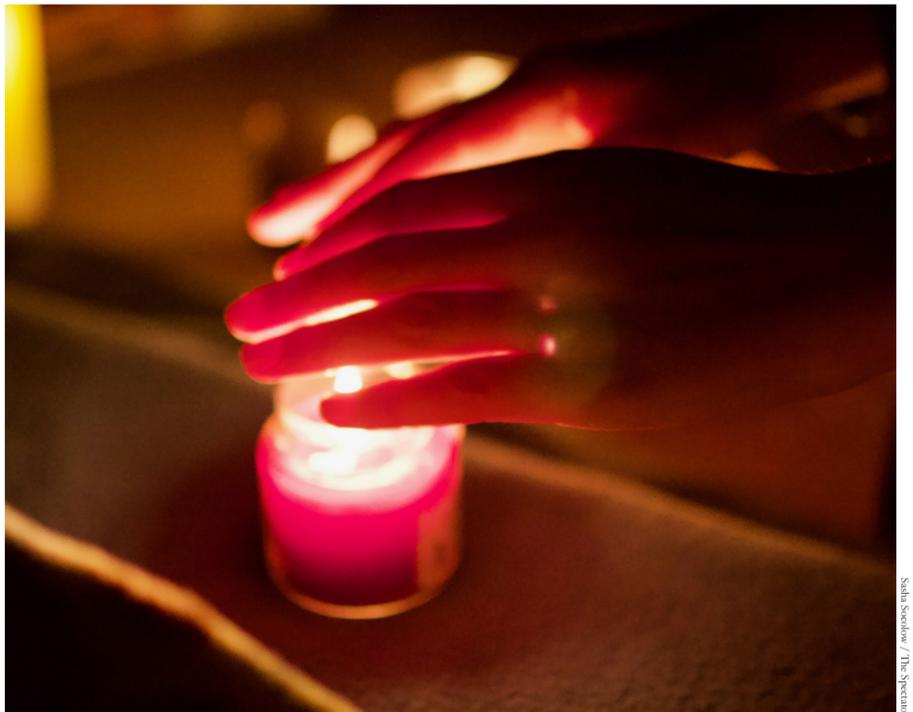
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The Rippling Effects of Generational Trauma

By RIONA ANVEKAR

It has been 171 years since Native Americans were forced to venture the Trail of Tears, 156 years since enslaved people were freed, and 76 years since Holocaust survivors returned home. Yet, through generational trauma, we still see the socio-ecological and psychological effects of these experiences in their descendants. Trauma, an event that creates physical, mental, or emotional harm to an individual, can take the form of anxiety, insomnia, intrusive thoughts, withdrawal from society, and more. However, generational trauma extends past the individual and is passed down. It is amplified when people are incapable of dealing with it in a healthy manner. They rely on their loved ones to take care of them, spreading the trauma and increasing the chances of it becoming generational.

Collective trauma can be passed on in multiple directions and shared by nations, ethnic groups, religions, and families. It is classified into [vertical versus horizontal transmission](#), where horizontal transmission circulates trauma between people of the same generation, while vertical transmission passes trauma down generationally. The next generation must grapple with the trauma, find ways to represent it, and avoid transmitting it further.

Transgenerational trauma can

be passed down through various means. Epigenetics, the study of change in organisms caused by the modification of gene expression rather than direct gene alteration, shows that trauma can leave a heritable chemical mark on people's genes. Though it does not cause a genetic mutation, it alters the way the gene is expressed. For example, toward the end of World War II, the Nazis blocked the food supply to the Netherlands, leaving many to die of starvation. As a result, newborns during the famine came out a few pounds heavier than the average. Since the women nurturing the babies were starving, the melanocortin-4 receptor gene, vital to triggering metabolism, was quieted so that the fetuses would have enough nutrients to survive. However, this mark on their genes stayed with them throughout their lives and generally led to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and schizophrenia. These biomarkers can continue to be [passed on](#) to future offspring.

Trauma is also passed down through [learned behaviors and socio-ecological aspects](#), such as the parenting and values that children grow up with. Additionally, [oral transmission](#), though at times indirect, passes trauma through an unspoken narrative, such as behavior and body language. Traumatic legacies are often passed on through uncon-

scious cues or affective messages that flow between adult and child. Children then reconstruct a narrative of their parents' trauma for themselves.

The symptoms of generational trauma are varied and can range from hypervigilance, anxiety, and depression, to issues with self-esteem. This has the potential to put people into a state of [chronic stress](#), which throws off the body's homeostasis and threatens normal but essential bodily functions. Generational trauma can also weaken the immune system. [Microglial cells](#) are a type of white blood cell that work in the central nervous system (CNS) to remove damaged neurons and maintain the health of the CNS. However, when humans are subjected to high trauma reactive states with high-stress levels, microglial cells eat away at healthy nerve endings, which can cause depression, anxiety, and dementia, and translate into genetic changes that can be passed down to further generations, who will be more likely to have weaker nerve endings.

Generational trauma is apparent in many groups of people in the United States, particularly minorities. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, outbursts of anger, and hypervigilance, are seen in higher levels in the [Black community](#) today. The feelings of fear and mistrust that

many Black people experience can be attributed to both the experiences that they lived through and those they inherited. A prime example is the common belief that they must work twice as hard as a white person to be as valued. This philosophy is based on cultural conditioning and the lived experiences of their ancestors, as an enslaved person would have to work from sunup to sundown. Additionally, the general distrust in the medical system has caused generational trauma within the Black community. This is largely attributed to the many instances where scientists have performed unethical experiments on Black people, as well as the currently high infant and maternal death rates in the Black population.

Moreover, a [study](#) on young Native Americans showed that 34 percent experienced daily thoughts about the loss of culture and 35 percent were distrustful of the intentions of the dominant white culture due to the historical losses Native Americans have suffered. These thoughts can be attributed to not only the racism they experience today, but also to the generational effects of the inhumane wipeout of their people and culture due to European colonization.

However, by rising above the remnants of one's ancestors' trauma, one can help heal future generations. Financial and housing assistance, health care, educa-

SCIENCEBEAT

According to new Center for Disease Control guidelines, people **fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 (those who received an initial and, when applicable, a booster shot) can **socialize** with other fully vaccinated people **without masks**.

COVID-19 caused the **life expectancy** in the United States to **fall by a full year** to 77.8 years, the **largest drop since World War II**.

An estimate of more than **500 species** of plants and animals are **endangered or extinct** due to **Australian wildfires** in early 2020 which scorched more than **46 million acres of land**.

tion, and therapy can lead to successful cessation of generational trauma. To begin the process of psychologically overcoming generational trauma, therapy is highly recommended. When we process trauma healthily, we can then find coping mechanisms to heal, redefine ourselves, and reclaim a part of our lives.

The Proton and its Particles

By JENNA MACKENROTH

You have probably learned about the proton from your biology and chemistry classes. Residing in the nucleus of the atom, a proton is the positively charged subatomic particle that gives an element its atomic number. As positively charged particles, they are known to attract the negatively charged electrons, leading to atomic interactions.

The cause of the positive charge sounds simple. Protons are composed of smaller subatomic particles known as [quarks](#). These quarks are divided into the subcategories of “up” quarks and “down” quarks with respective electric charges of $+2/3$ and $-1/3$. To have a positive charge of $+1$, scientists believe the proton to have two up quarks ($+4/3$) and one down quark ($-1/3$). The quarks are held together by particles called gluons. Gluons use a force, known as the “strong force,” to bind the up and down quarks together and give the proton its characteristic $+1$ charge.

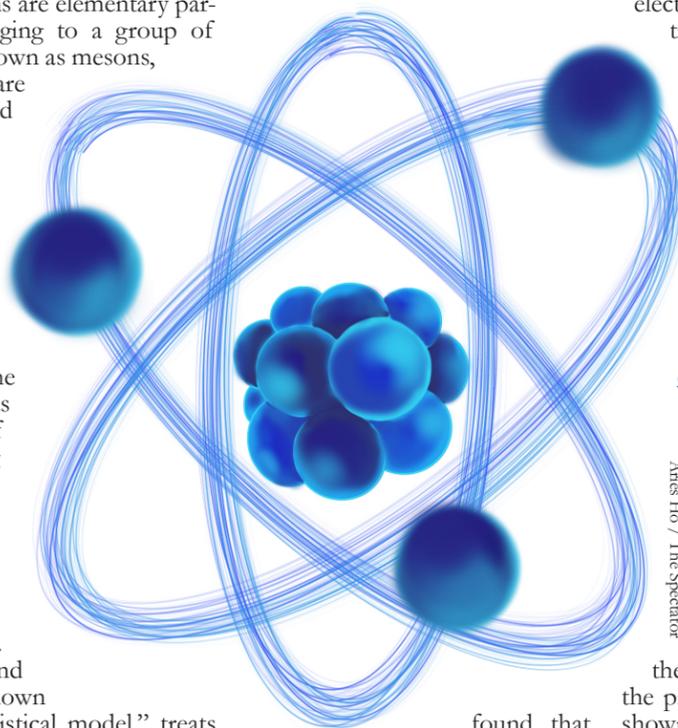
However, the reasons behind the proton's positive charge are much more elusive than this. The proton's interior is also composed of antiquarks, the quark's antimatter counterpart. [Antimatter](#) is the opposite of matter, so antiparticles have magnetic and electrical properties opposite to those of their normal matter particles. For example, quarks have an electrical charge that is opposite to that of the antiquark. The quarks, antiquarks, and gluons collectively form a sea of elementary particles to form the proton.

SeaQuest, an experiment dedicated to exploring and ascertaining [the internal makeup of the proton](#), was completed on February 24, and its results

offer more insight into the proton's interior while uncovering new questions about its makeup. Perhaps the most important result of SeaQuest is that its results support [two theoretical models](#) of the proton's interior. The first is known as the “pion cloud” model. Pions are elementary particles belonging to a group of particles known as mesons, which are composed of one up quark and one down quark. According to the pion cloud model, the proton has a habit of expelling and reabsorbing particles to maintain its internal balance. The second model, known as the “statistical model,” treats the proton like a cloud of gas. However, both indicate a lack of clarity about the proton's structure. Through experiments like SeaQuest, researchers hope to choose the most appropriate model or even develop newer and more accurate models.

The questions surrounding the proton's internal sea can be traced back to initial experiments executed to confirm the quark model of subatomic particles. Scientists at Stanford University's Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) confirmed the quark model after they directed

high-speed electrons toward protons. The electrons bounced off something inside the proton, suggesting that protons are divisible particles made up of what is now called quarks. However, when SLAC launched higher-speed electrons at the protons, they



Artes Ho / The Spectator

found that they seemed to bounce off of even more internal particles than originally described: each launch of higher-speed electrons appeared to have produced more internal matter.

Scientists finally began to work towards a more detailed and complex theory about the proton's internal makeup known as quantum chromodynamics (QCD). QCD describes the strong force of the gluons and how it interacts in the proton's interior. It postulates that gluons split into quark-antiquark pairs.

The pairing of matter and antimatter causes these pairs to blink into existence only to blink out into energy as quickly as they cancel each other out.

While the electrons launched by SLAC were hitting the expected quarks, the high-speed electrons also hit the quark-antiquark pairs created by the ocean of gluons. Gluons feel the strong force that they are responsible for, which allows them to proliferate and die out quickly in the form of quarks and their antimatter counterparts. Additionally, scientists inferred that [there may be more down antiquarks than up antiquarks](#), indicating that the proton's interior is imbalanced through a feature known as asymmetry. Beyond defying original models of the proton, it implies that there is still much unknown about antimatter in the universe.

Thanks to SeaQuest, the mysterious interior of the proton and its asymmetry is shown in a new light, one that better illustrates its nuances and complexities. Since SeaQuest's final results support the [two models of the proton's interior](#)—the pion cloud model and the statistical model—proponents of either side have been arguing hotly about which model is more accurate. Claude Bourrely, a developer of the statistical model, believes that SeaQuest's evidence supports his model. In contrast, Mary Alberg and Gerald Miller, who are supporters of the pion cloud model, refer to Bourrely's model as “descriptive, rather than predictive,” as they believe

that it is fine-tuned to the results of SeaQuest's data. Alberg and Miller both believe that the pion cloud model better accounts for the quark-antiquark pairings while also accounting for other particles' abilities to bond with one another. From this, they further postulate that the pion cloud model accounts for the ability of nuclei to bond together, explaining greater atomic interactions, perhaps on a molecular level.

To determine the more accurate model of the proton, participants of SeaQuest are on board to launch another experiment called [SpinQuest](#) to take into account the [spin, or intrinsic angular momentum, of a proton](#). The term “spin” does not refer to subatomic particles turning rapidly; rather, it describes the way they create small magnetic fields as they orbit around other subatomic particles, which further determines the way they interact with other particles. SpinQuest's specific approach to the proton's elusive interior is linked to an experiment that indicated that only 30 percent of the proton's spin is accounted for by the two up-quarks and single down-quark. This means that there are other forces at play that affect the proton's spin beside the quarks. The SpinQuest experiment hopes to establish what might account for the remaining 70 percent of the proton's spin. In turn, they hope that the new information about the proton's spin will allow them to discover a more accurate model for the proton's interior.

For such a simple subatomic particle, there is much yet to be discovered about how it functions. The next time you hear a mention of protons in your classes, be thankful that you are not tasked with determining what they are made of.

Science

Life Without Plastic: A Simple Pursuit?

By SATHIRTHA MONDAL

Modern society has grown to rely heavily on plastic, resulting in one of the most pressing environmental issues: plastic pollution. In fact, we [dump](#) approximately a garbage truck's worth of plastic into the oceans every minute. Plastic pollution has been disastrous for life and the environment, including the oceans and marine life. Though people have recognized the severity of plastic pollution and acted to mitigate the issue, the COVID-19 pandemic only further exacerbated the problem.

Plastic never fully decomposes; instead, the material breaks down into smaller pieces called microplastics over the span of thousands of years. Marine animals often ingest it or get entangled, causing thousands of injuries and deaths annually. In fact, the ingestion has grown so severe that the average seafood lover may be consuming up to [11,000 plastic fragments](#) each year. Plastics also contain chemicals that cause severe health problems, such as cancer and impaired immunity.

Over the past year, our priorities have shifted to containing and slowing down the transmission of the coronavirus. There is frequent disinfection and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks and gloves. Though these measures helped control the virus, they also aggravated plastic pollution. Single-use face masks contain polypropylene, a plastic that protects against respiratory droplets. However, many organizations have reported large quantities of masks, hand sanitizer bottles, and gloves littering

beaches, streets, and the Mediterranean Sea. Global consumption and waste of disposable face masks and gloves are postulated to reach over [129 billion masks and 65 billion gloves](#) by the end of the pandemic. The pandemic has exposed our dangerous reliance on disposable equipment.

In response, scientists are



Emily Young-Squire / The Spectator

encouraging the use of reusable face masks and PPE made from biodegradable materials. Not only does it help subdue the plastic crisis, but it also provides economic benefits and further protection against the virus. In a simulation conducted by a supercomputer in Japan, a tight-fitting reusable mask offered [89 percent protection](#) as when used in combination with a dispos-

able mask, as opposed to surgical masks, which offered 85 percent protection. Additionally, plastic PPE usage has led to shortages, leaving an inadequate supply for healthcare workers and forcing health-care workers to reuse N95 masks for weeks. However, a paper published by Oxford University Press presented a [low-](#)

cost modified N95 mask, which contained a coating that, unlike traditional N95 masks, remained effective after disinfection, which could limit plastic pollution while aiding the fight against the pandemic.

However, plastic remains the practical option in several applications as it is cheap to produce. COVID-19 led to a plunge in the oil market, and since oil is used to produce plastic, plastic can be inexpensive compared to its alternatives. Furthermore, businesses rely on plastics to survive the economic hardships caused by the pandemic. Groceries packed in plastic bags and disposable utensils and plates paired with takeout have taken precedence over environmentally friendly alternatives, furthering the waste.

Additionally, COVID-19 has disrupted several recycling programs. Before the pandemic hit, [only 10 percent](#) of plastic was recycled. However, COVID-induced budget cuts shut down many recycling programs, and only five out of 17 facilities still [operate](#) during the pandemic. Many recycling centers have also closed to the public out of concern for their staff's safety, causing plastic to accumulate in homes, be littered on the streets, and travel to already saturated landfills.

While going fully plastic-free may be difficult for many, taking steps to use less plastic would reap innumerable benefits. Lowering the disposable plastic consumption reduces its demand, and in turn, its production. This in turn reduces fossil fuel production and the need to recycle, which further benefits the environment since recycling processes still emit pollutants. Reduced plastic use also lowers our susceptibility to plastic toxicity in our bodies and the oceans.

In response to the rising waste problem, Los Angeles has taken the initiative to reduce its distribution of single-use plastics—the primary contributor to plastic pollution. A study conducted by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) [suggested](#) that one in every five

pieces of trash nationwide was a single-use plastic item. Targeting cutlery will hence help to reduce plastic waste. To replace plastic cutlery, the UCLA report recommended compostables, which, in the LA market, are cheaper than plastic and more than ideal to assuage plastic pollution.

The enterprise to achieve a world without plastic has translated to several global projects. [Plastic Free July](#), launched in Australia in 2011, challenges its participants to go plastic-free the entirety of July. It has persisted for over nine years with the aim to rid the world of plastic waste. In Egypt, the [VeryNile](#) initiative has worked since 2018 to rid the Nile River of plastic waste through campaigns raising awareness about the risks of plastic pollution. Many areas, including New York, have also enforced statewide [bans on single-use plastic bags](#). Others have pledged to limit and ban establishments' provision of plastic bags.

While battling the pandemic should not compromise our concern over the plastic crisis, it has forced us to make a choice. As a result, we have magnified a tribulation of our planet in hopes of saving lives and suppressing the coronavirus. Nevertheless, efforts such as new sustainable mask designs offer new options that do not undermine these priorities. As the pandemic further exposes the gravity of the waste problem, many authorities are taking action to reduce pollution. Despite our growing dependence on plastic, life without plastic, while being a massive undertaking, can be quite simple while providing profound benefits. The environment has continually taken care of us, and it is time we take care of it.

One Smile Can Go a Long Way

By SONYA SASSON

As you sit hunched over at your desk, drowning in a sea of deadlines, perhaps the last thing you feel like doing is smiling. There is just so much on your mind, from the three exams scheduled for the next day to that one irritating project you put off until the night before it was due (despite your teacher's relentless urgings to avoid doing so). You are miserable, anxious, and overwhelmed, and showing off those pearly whites does not exactly capture the mood. Instead, you do the opposite. You tense up your shoulders, furrow your brows, and manifest the gloomy frown that resides upon your lips more often than not.

Wrong choice, though. Defeatist facial expressions, such as squinting or frowning, are proven to trigger aggressiveness and a more pessimistic outlook on the task at hand. Each time we glower at the unsuspecting computer screen, we are only pushing ourselves deeper into a pit of perpetual gloom. However, just as a grimace induces negative feelings, a simple smile can actually make you happier.

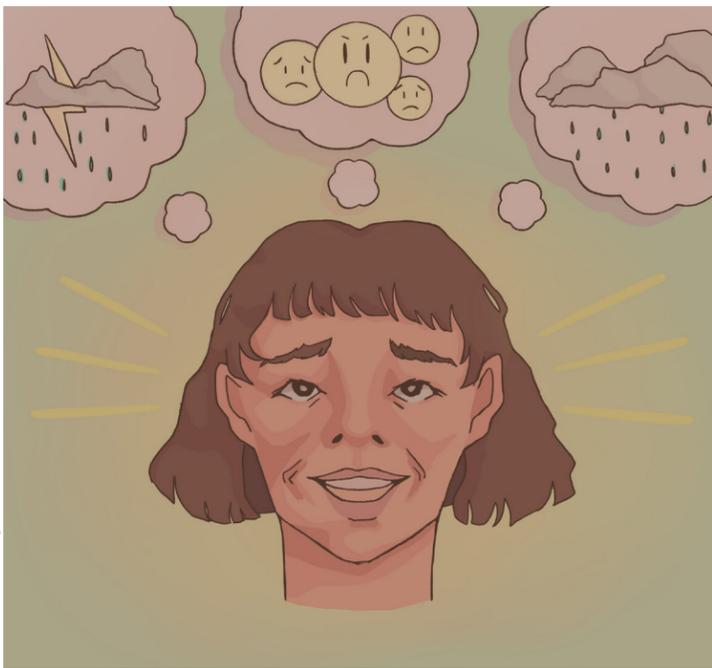
When you smile, your neurons, which are specialized cells that transmit electrical impulses and chemical signals to convey information between different areas of the brain and nervous system, throw a "feel-good party" in your brain. Neurons release [happiness-inducing neu-](#)

[rotransmitters](#)—chemical messengers such as serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins. Serotonin is a critical hormone that stabilizes our mood and stimulates feelings of well-being and bliss. In fact, this neurotransmitter is found in selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, a type of antidepressant. These drugs work to decrease the [reabsorption of serotonin](#) by neighboring nerve cells, thus increasing the amount of serotonin in the brain. Moreover, endorphins are natural painkillers that relieve stress and anxiety, and, like dopamine, induce euphoria and pleasurable sensations.

All three of these chemicals occur naturally in the body, so when you are feeling down, a simple smile can replicate several of the effects of antidepressants and other synthetic concoctions, like benzodiazepines, used to treat depression and anxiety. Smiling can be the mood-booster you are seeking, achieving what prescription drugs can without their potential side effects.

Consistently high levels of stress harm our physical and mental health. The physiological reaction known as the fight-or-flight response is a reaction to external stress that thrusts our body into survival mode. However, we simply can't be in this state of emergency all the time, as our body depletes its resources at an increasingly faster rate, and we soon fatigue. Recent studies suggest that perhaps smiling is

the key to alleviating some of the damage triggered by this reaction. An investigation performed by the University of Kansas indicated that smiling can reduce



Vivian Teo / The Spectator

the intensity of the [body's stress response](#). Compared to participants who displayed neutral facial expressions, those who smiled had lower heart rate levels after recovering from performing stressful multitasking activities. This is because smiling triggers the release of [neuropeptides](#), small proteins produced by neurons that boost neural activity and communications. As indi-

cated by the study, neuropeptides have the potential to relieve anxiety during stressful situations. In another [study](#) conducted by the College of Family Physicians of

Canada, researchers concluded that smiling and laughing increase heart rate and oxygen consumption, both of which are followed by a phase of decreased heart rate, lowered blood pressure, and muscle relaxation. Attaining and maintaining this comfortable state also decreases the chances of developing heart disease later in life.

When we are stressed, our

cells get stressed too, which can have a detrimental effect on our immune system. This is because permanent stress reduces the number of immunocompetent cells, which recognize and respond to foreign invaders, in the bloodstream, hindering our ability to effectively combat disease. During extended periods of tension, it takes longer for our cells to acquire immunity as well, making us more vulnerable to attack from pathogens. Smiling can come to the rescue here, as dopamine, our trusty neurotransmitter, can activate certain parts of our immune system when released. As dopamine levels rise, the number of antibodies and natural killer cells also increases. Hence, a positive mindset can be linked to our body's defense system and our overall well-being.

Health benefits aside, smiling uplifts both you and those around you. A casual grin is contagious, spreading happiness and positivity to every person it reaches. During challenging times, it may seem pointless, foolish even, to crack a smile—the very gesture that is supposed to convey joy. However, smiling is the remedy to your despondency; the light to your darkness. Smiling will not only elevate your mood but also reinforce the positive thinking necessary to inspire productivity and a brighter outlook on life. So, when you are feeling sad, happy, or nothing at all, show the world that grin. You will be surprised by how far a simple smile can go.

Pandemic Pimple Problems?

By ARYANA SINGH

It's nothing new. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, people around the world are told to stay at home and wear masks in public areas. Yet, in addition to the virus, teens and adults alike are facing a range of skin dilemmas. Pandemic stress and prolonged exposure to personal protective equipment, such as masks, have caused several skin problems such as rashes, itchiness, and, most commonly, acne. A survey conducted by the research firm Dynata found that 55 percent of people under 25 reported experiencing [more acne](#) since the pandemic began.

In fact, the term “maskne,” a combination of mask and acne, refers to skin irritation around the chin and cheeks as a result of frequent mask-wearing. Moisture between the mask and skin creates the ideal living conditions for harmful bacteria to collect. Additionally, oil and dead skin cells clog pores, preventing the skin from breathing normally, which causes the skin to become inflamed and break out. Maskne was especially intense during the summer since sweat was also trapped underneath masks. Skin irritation caused by friction or pressure to the skin, as created by masks, is known as acne mechanica and can worsen pre-existing acne or cause acne for

those who never had it.

However, in addition to masks, pandemic-related stress, such as worrying about a loved one, feeling cooped up, or dealing with finances, also affects the skin. In fact, the Center for

skin conditions. Though many now have time to exercise, some struggle to find the motivation. Especially with the recent lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, others also lack the resources for daily fitness. Thus, several

since they can increase blood sugar levels. Additionally, since school and work shifted online, people are more likely to lean closer to their devices and touch their faces with dirty hands, further aggravating the skin.

As acne affects up to [85 percent of teens](#), many have struggled with acne prior to the pandemic. An anonymous sophomore experienced severe acne in middle school. Upon coming to Stuyvesant, she was relieved to see that her skin cleared up. Unfortunately, after enjoying less than a year of clear skin, the pandemic caused her acne to relapse due to pandemic-related stress and mask-wearing. “It’s very frustrating to look at my skin in the mirror. I try to go on daily walks, exercise regularly, eat healthy [...] but nothing seems to ever work. Now that I notice it, my mask gets fairly moist. The [most affected skin is the] area around my cheeks. Pimples, acne scars, random bumps, you name it,” she said in an e-mail interview. “All those acne products (at least the ones I’ve tried) aren’t very helpful either. They just burn off my skin and leave it looking redder than ever.”

Though not wearing a mask is not a viable solution, there are methods to help prevent maskne. As my mother says, if you’re going out for a long period of time, bring a couple of spare masks

just in case one gets sweaty. Furthermore, take off your mask when it is safe to give your skin some breathing time. Still, make sure to wash your mask with antibacterial soap daily. Additionally, wash your face at least twice a day, especially after wearing a mask. Avoid touching your face even if you think your hands are clean because they probably are not. Also, avoid makeup as no one can see your face underneath the mask anyway.

A simple solution to relieve pandemic-related stress is to turn to calming exercises, such as yoga and meditation. Another is performing aerobic and cardio exercises, which can increase blood flow, allowing more oxygen and nutrients to be delivered throughout the body, including the skin. This also helps rid waste products such as cellular debris from the body.

To those struggling, the anonymous student said, “Don’t stress about your acne. It’s a rollercoaster of going from clear skin one day and to looking like those bumpy pumpkins another. You are not alone. Don’t let it get you down. Instead, be that person who accepts their acne and looks cool doing it. Eventually, it goes away. It really does.”

So as we continue to live in such a world state, we must not let small issues like acne stop us from achieving greater things.

Our normal routines before the pandemic helped keep us in shape. Though it did not seem like much, walking to the subway station, standing in a subway car, and climbing the broken Stuyvesant escalators benefited our skin.

Disease Control and Prevention and the Census Bureau released a study revealing that one in three Americans have experienced [increased stress, anxiety, or depression](#) since April of 2020. Skin problems occur because stress hormones cause an increase in the production of sebum, a thick oily substance that can clog pores. When feeling stressed, some also tend to pick at their skin blemishes, which exacerbates the issue.

A lack of exercise can also be attributed to deteriorating

studies have found that the average amount of [daily exercise](#) has sharply decreased for adults. Our normal routines before the pandemic helped keep us in shape. Though it did not seem like much, walking to the subway station, standing in a subway car, and climbing the broken Stuyvesant escalators benefited our skin.

Undoubtedly, our daily habits have drastically changed and negatively impacted our skin. One habit many picked up is binge-eating. Sugary and fatty foods [increase acne flare-ups](#)

A New Wave of Moon Exploration is Emerging

By ZOE PICCIRILLO

Moons are unique parts of our solar system. Like the planets they orbit, moons have varying atmospheres, from Saturn’s icy Enceladus to Jupiter’s lava-filled Io. They even perform vital tasks, as the gravitational force between the Earth and the Moon regulates the Earth’s axis and tides. The Earth’s tilt of 23.5 degrees on its stable axis caused by the gravitational pull of the Moon regulates the four seasons. Without the Moon, tilt shifts from an unstable axis would result in [extreme weather conditions](#), such as another ice age. Additionally, without ebb and flow, some scientists speculate that [human life might not even exist](#) since the chemical reactions facilitated by constant changes in water level may have helped produce nucleic acids—the building blocks of our DNA.

This year, several of these essential celestial bodies—including Earth’s—have been subject to new and groundbreaking developments, especially regarding the search for extraterrestrial life.

An Abundance of Exploration on Our Moon

Our moon is home to several new missions, with new countries entering the field of space exploration. Most recently, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) collected the world’s first lunar rocks from the Moon in more than 40 years. During the [Chang’e 5 mission](#), which lasted from November 23, 2020 to December 16, 2020, the spacecraft collected roughly four pounds of lunar rocks from the Mons Rümker peak on the near side of the Moon. Through these rocks, China aimed to learn more about the composition of the Moon and its past volcanic activity.

The last time lunar rocks were collected was in the 1960s and 1970s during the United States’s

Apollo missions and the Soviet Union’s Luna missions. During these missions, the Moon’s peak volcanic activity was estimated to be around 3.5 billion years ago. However, the unexplored Mons Rümker peak, previously an active volcano site, could reveal a new age of peak activity if the newly collected rocks are younger than the ones collected decades ago. The rocks may also provide clues as to what ceased volcanic activity on the Moon.

Though the CNSA is seemingly late in joining space explo-

ration efforts, its first full lunar mission, [Chang’e 3](#) in 2013, made significant contributions to lunar science by functioning as a lunar observatory. The lander spacecraft contained an ultraviolet telescope that observed celestial bodies. In 2019, the Chang’e 4 mission also made history as [the first spacecraft to land on the far side](#), or the “dark side,” of the

China isn’t the only new explorer, though. The United Arab

In 2026, NASA plans on sending the [Volatiles Investigating Polar Exploration Rover](#) (VIPER) to the Moon’s South Pole to explore the existence of water on the Moon. VIPER will drill roughly one meter into ice reserves to understand how water is distributed on the Moon and how it can potentially be used as a source of water to sustain human travel to the Moon.

Helicopter Travel on Titan

Beyond exploration on our moon, NASA is expanding its lunar missions to other moons in the solar system. In February, the Perseverance rover landed on Mars with [a small helicopter named Ingenuity](#). NASA plans on conducting a similar mission by sending a [drone named Dragonfly to Titan](#), one of Saturn’s icy moons with frigid surface temperatures of around -290 degrees Fahrenheit. Similar to Perseverance and Ingenuity, Dragonfly’s mission is to search for signs of life on Titan. While low temperatures prevent life on Titan’s surface, life may exist in oceans that flow beneath it.

When the drone arrives in 2034, it will spend nearly three years studying chemical processes on the moon to search for similarities to processes on Earth. It will also study a crater that used to be a water bed, just like the landing spot of Perseverance and Ingenuity.

Scientists at NASA believe Titan may contain signs of life because it has a methane cycle comparable to Earth’s water cycle and an atmosphere similar to that of Earth’s. Just like the Earth, Titan’s atmosphere is primarily composed of nitrogen. Titan also has similar weather processes, such as rainfall and snowfall. Clouds and lakes on Titan’s surface are [primarily composed of methane](#) rather than water. Despite the difference in com-

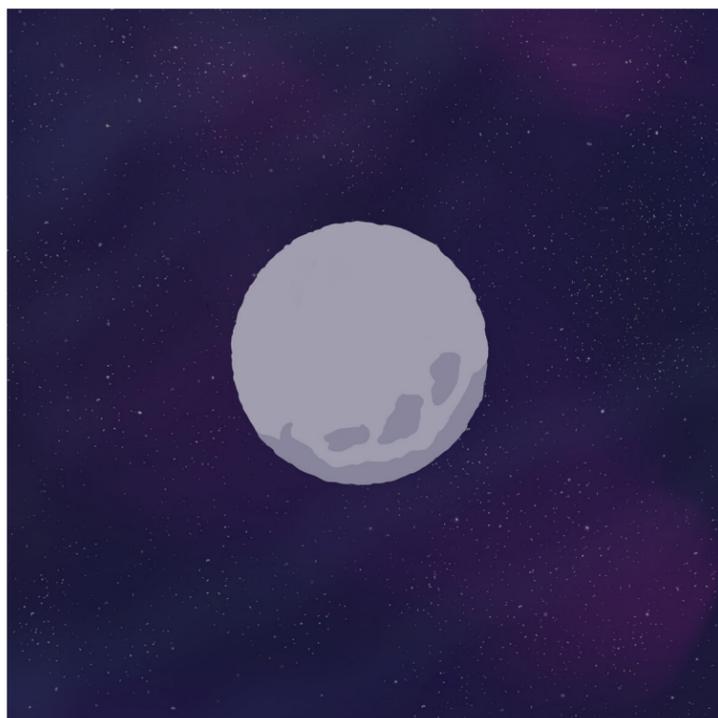
pounds, the similarity between Titan’s and Earth’s atmospheres and their chemical processes hint that there may be potential for great discoveries of life forms on this moon.

Europa May Glow in the Dark

Slightly closer to Earth, Europa, one of Jupiter’s moons, might glow in the dark. Scientists at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory blasted electrons on ice with a similar chemical composition to the ice on Europa’s surface and found that the simulated ice emitted a [green glow similar to objects that glow in the dark](#). This phosphorescence is caused by Jupiter’s magnetic field that deflects high-energy electrons to Europa.

NASA will be able to study this glowing property in depth when they launch the [Europa Clipper](#), a satellite that will collect data while orbiting Europa. While the launch date is tentative, it is expected to be before the end of this decade. Like many of NASA’s recent missions, including sending Dragonfly to Titan, Europa Clipper will study Europa’s 10 to 15-mile deep ice shell and investigate whether an ocean exists underneath in search of signs that Europa may be habitable.

The rise in exploration of moons—both ours and others—is a signal that we should pay more attention to these distinctive celestial bodies. The solar system contains an unprecedented amount of scientific opportunities and properties that we have yet to explore, especially with China and the UAE expressing lunar ambitions. With each mission that is launched, moons become larger pieces in the puzzle to finding what exists beyond Earth. If you’ve ever wondered whether we’re alone in the universe, moons may have answers for you.



Lauren Chan / The Spectator

Emirates (UAE) plans to send a [rover to the Moon in 2024](#). The rover, named Rashid, will study the chemical properties of lunar dust and solar wind plasma—the charged particles that flow above the lunar surface. If successful, the UAE will make history as the first Arab country to explore the Moon and the fourth country overall.

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By GAVIN MCGINLEY

In November, the fourth and final season of “Attack on Titan” took a global audience of millions by storm. As one of the most popular anime series internationally and one of the root causes of the popularization of anime in the West, the newest season was met with immediate praise from both fans and critics. However, there was one small complaint that many people had: season 4 of “Attack on Titan” used 3D animation. A lot of it too. “Attack on Titan,” as its name suggests, has plenty of oversized character models, whose detailed and constantly changing positioning almost always require CGI to animate. With this season’s short production schedule, and the show’s general reliance on involving some very big characters in high-speed action, Mappa Studios had no choice but to fall back on a heavily contentious alternative to 2D animation.

CG animation is a weirdly controversial subject with anime fans. While few would argue that it’s as aesthetically pleasing as 2D is, in many cases, it’s just an inevitability of the limits on time and money animation studios face. At face value, it’s unclear why exactly most 3D animation in anime often looks so sloppy in comparison to the 3D animation in America, which is clean, refined, and widespread. Everyone from Pixar to Grubhub uses CG and, regardless of the content of the animation, it’s clearly polished and well made. There’s no shortage of anime-style CG animation either—just look at video games. Games like “Final Fantasy,” while clearly drawing from the same inspirations for character and world design as anime, use a high-definition 3D style that is both visually impressive and functional for fast-paced action. What’s so difficult about bringing that quality into anime?

The challenge of using 3D animation in anime arises from

two main problems. The first most obvious is the distinct style of anime, which doesn’t aim to look realistic but instead to emulate the manga they’re based

even rely on the freedom of dynamic proportions to give more punch to their features. Hence compared to 2D, 3D anime often feels stiff and lifeless. Some

drawn illustrations as best as possible, the simplest way is to have people working by hand.

The other problem with 3D animation is that almost no studio has genuinely tried to use CG as a central feature of their anime. 3D animation is only ever used to make production easier, faster, or cheaper. 2D animation, even with the sweatshop-like conditions and atrocious pay animators are subjected to, is a timely and expensive endeavor. But while it’s true that to get 3D animation to a passable level of quality takes less work than with 2D, genuinely good CG animation is still not something that can be achieved without investment. “Berserk” was made with 3D animation because the studio didn’t have the budgeting capacity to adapt such a visually detailed series by hand. More than that though, “Berserk” was so underfunded that its only hope of even being animated was with the lowest quality, cheapest 3D. By relegating CG animation to only supplementary roles or projects without the resources, time, or artistic talent to succeed, studios have guaranteed that 3D animation will only ever be implemented in a clumsy, careless way.

But those are the reasons CGI has been historically unsuccessful in anime. Though it is undeniably difficult to preserve the artistry of manga in 3D, it’s by no means impossible if producers are willing to commit to it. With skillful lighting and complex, often unintuitive character models, studios can reap the benefits of 3D without losing the stylization of hand-drawn images. “Attack on Titan” season four looks excellent, with the criticism of its animation seemingly directed at the very use of 3D and the accompanying changes in art style, rather than any tangible decrease in quality for the final product. Furthermore, the show’s choice to use 3D animation allowed for it to experiment with new techniques that would have been inconvenient with standard 2D.

Rotating the viewpoint or animating dynamic camera motion is incredibly difficult by hand, but can be done easily with computer animation to bring a great sense of energy and momentum to a series.

Admittedly, “Attack on Titan” may not be the best example of 3D animation in anime; it still relies heavily on 2D and boasted a budget few shows could match. Perhaps a better sign of the future of CG is another one of Mappa’s shows, “Dorohedoro” (2020). Entirely in 3D, “Dorohedoro,” shows how intricate and smooth the 3D style can be under a normal budget and a talented production team. With highly detailed character designs and fast, free-flowing action, the show simply could not have been made in 2D, and it points to the real viability of CGI as an alternative in anime.

Worth mentioning alongside the television series are stylized anime videogames like “Dragon Ball Fighter Z,” which have been at the forefront of many of these advancements in 3D animation. Forced to use 3D by the sheer number of possible interactions and frame rate requirements but also compelled to keep the art style of their inspirations, a lot of the most convincing CG in the style of hand animation can be found in these games.

Though it’s doubtful that it will ever match the highest budget 2D animation, 3D animation in anime certainly has its advantages, and fans shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss its potential. While producing good 3D animation is difficult, it can give animators artistic mobility not possible with standard animation. “Attack on Titan” is the biggest 3D animated show that anime has ever seen, and its success will hopefully make CG a more viable option for studios in the future. And at the very least, CG animation deserves a fairer shake from audiences and producers alike.



Annie Lam / The Spectator

on. While it might seem easier to render simplified, cartoonish drawings than photo-realistic models with thousands of polygons, most manga characters are heavily stylized. Imagine trying to make a 3D model of Bart Simpson, who always has two eyes facing the viewer regardless of his position or direction. Mangas, and cartoons in general, aren’t created with precise character proportions in mind, and

still remember “Berserk” (2016), which sought to bring to life one of the most visually stunning and critically beloved manga series of all time with 3D animation but achieved an effect akin to a child throwing action figures at their wall. The characters’ faces were expressionless, their movements were clunky, and the show’s visuals were miles from the intricate panels of the manga. It may seem obvious, but to emulate hand-

FOOD

By AGATHA EDWARDS

I had the chance to go out to Forest Hills over Mid-Winter Break, where I discovered T-swirl Crêpe. I didn’t know what to expect when I walked into the booth and received my crêpe—wrapped in the shape of an ice cream cone—but I was pleasantly surprised, to say the least.

T-swirl Crêpe is a small chain of eateries, mostly located in New York City. The first location was opened in Flushing, and since then, there have been 19 additions throughout New York, a few other states, and Canada. The inside of T-swirl Crêpe is very small and only has enough seats for a few people, but because of COVID-19, all food is now takeout.

T-swirl Crêpe takes the idea of the Japanese crêpe and westernizes it, wrapping it up into a cone shape with toppings placed inside each layer of the crêpe, making it ideal for eating on the go. They use 100 percent gluten-free rice flour batter to create the “crispy, thin, chewy” crêpe. Crêpes can be made both sweet and savory with a unique

combination of toppings. There are 11 sweet flavors to choose from, including banana chocolate, blueberry NY cheesecake, matcha chocolate truffle, and mango raspberry. The toppings vary between fruit, ice cream, and syrup. There are also 11 savory options to choose from, including egg white mushroom truffle, Thai chicken, and shrimp avocado. Savory crêpes usually contain meat or egg as the base and a variety of vegetables and sauce as the dressing, a creative culinary choice. T-swirl Crêpe also offers several drinks: 12 different flavors of tea (mango green, strawberry mint, honey cucumber, etc.), two slush flavors (strawberry banana and mango), and regular iced coffee.

I ordered the chocolate nut party crêpe because I’m a huge fan of chocolate. It was about \$10, a good price for a large and filling dessert. I got to watch the employees prepare the crêpe and fill it with goodies behind a glass screen, which was very cool. The toppings were chocolate truffles, chocolate custard cream, chocolate sauce, chocolate pearls, almonds, crushed pis-

tachio, whipped Greek yogurt, and two chocolate Pocky sticks. They also gave me a little container of chocolate gelato, which I ate separately (it was amazing!). There were several other additional toppings I could’ve chosen at an additional cost, such as berries or granola, but I felt like the chocolate nut party flavor itself already contained a sufficient variety.

The presentation was incredible. The crêpe was wrapped around in an easy-to-hold cone, and the toppings were placed inside each fold. The chocolate sauce and Greek yogurt were lathered around the entire crêpe, engulfing all of the toppings, while the chocolate pearls and nuts were placed near the bottom half of the crêpe. It looked incredible, but the flavors were even better. The crêpe itself was thin and crispy on the outside but softer and chewier on the inside. The sweet chocolate truffles—probably my favorite topping—simply melted in the mouth. The nuts added a crunch, which was satisfying because most of the toppings dissolved together on the tongue. The topping that

surprised me the most, though, was the Greek yogurt. It wasn’t



Anna Asst / The Spectator

sweet at all, but its soft, creamy texture perfectly balanced out the rest of the sweetness.

Altogether, the crêpe was easy to chew due to the yogurt, sweet and satisfying due to the chocolate, and a little crunchy due to the nuts. It was a perfect

combination of everything, and I couldn’t stop taking bite after bite. It was also incredibly filling and kept me satisfied for several hours. A T-swirl Crêpe could even serve as an on-the-go meal replacement for anybody in a rush. I wish I could’ve eaten my crêpe inside T-swirl Crêpe itself, and hopefully, once COVID-19 is over, I’ll be able to go back and get the full experience of eating my dessert in the actual shop.

Whether you’re in the mood for a savory snack, a sweet dessert, or even a refreshing drink, T-swirl Crêpe has you covered. I plan to return soon to try other flavors, especially the savory ones, since I’d never even heard of a savory crêpe before coming to T-swirl. Unfortunately, the location in Manhattan’s Chinatown is permanently closed, but there is still one open in NoHo, and the Queens locations are up-and-running in Astoria, Forest Hills, Flushing, and Bayside. Once it gets safer, you should definitely try to get to one of these locations if you can, and enjoy the best crêpe of your life.

Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

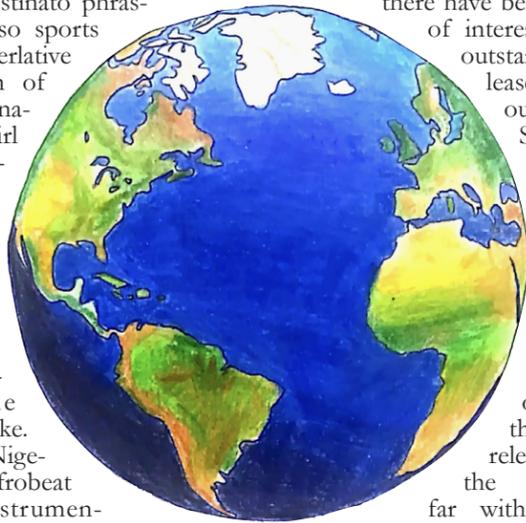
The Importance of Global Music (and Where to Start Listening)

By LEVI SIMON

It is almost impossible to comprehend how large and diverse our world is. As individuals, there is a limit on the perspectives we can individually reach, especially when the media is dominated by American and British cultures—particularly from a musical lens. On occasion, global music influences creep their way into the American and British musical canon; notably, The Talking Heads’ afrobeat rhythms and the Beatles’ and Rolling Stones’ iconic sitar melodies. However, while the Beatles’ “Love You To” and the Talking Heads’ “The Great Curve” are fantastic pieces of music, these classic syntheses are the exception to the rule, and they are so thoroughly watered down from their origins that they are nearly indistinguishable. It’s important to highlight those that give more than a faithful interpretation of culture—authenticity only goes as far as personal connection. Simply put, it’s well worth the effort to venture out into unfamiliar territories and try listening to some global music. Fortunately, with the advent of streaming, it’s never been easier to reach across the world and select from the plethora of aesthetics and styles it has to offer.

Firstly, it might be productive to familiarize yourself with some of the keystones of global music. American saxophonist

Stan Getz and Brazilian bossa nova guitarist João Gilberto’s seminal 1964 classic “Getz/Gilberto” creates a warm, textured, and universally appealing period piece that lets the listener absorb soothing Brazilian folk rhythms and fantastic supplemental saxophone ostinato phrases. It also sports the superlative rendition of Frank Sinatra’s “Girl from Ipanema,” which is one of few songs that is humanly impossible to dislike. Next, Nigerian afrobeat multi-instrumentalist Fela Kuti’s masterpiece “Zombie” (1977) is one of the most forward-thinking jazz-funk albums ever created. The crisp drums and lavish horn sections still sound fresh nearly half a century after the album’s release, and the compositional risks taken were so influential that they define the genre of afrobeat to this day. Finally, Japanese pioneer Taeko Ohnuki’s defining triumph “Mignonne” (1978) fuses jazz and pop seamlessly, creating a blissful, funky,



and infinitely memorable smash success. Today, it’s cited as one of the centerpieces of the city pop genre, which has recently been rising in popularity. However, it’s not necessary to go back to the ‘70s for excellent global music. Just this year, there have been plenty of interesting and outstanding releases from outside the States and United Kingdom. Belgian group Fievel Is Glaue has one of the best releases of the year so far with “God’s Trashmen Sent Right to the Mess” (2021), their take on incredibly catchy and dynamic jazz-pop. Aided by lead vocalist Marie-Amélie Clément-Bollée’s French accent, “Trashmen” aesthetically conjures imagery of a chic coffee house band playing live music, but the brief songwriting and potent performances elevate it far beyond the stereotypical lounge slouch jams. South African band Urban Village fuses regional folk music with sparse rock instrumentation to create

approachable and harmonious vignettes of South African culture on “Udondolo” (2021). The word “udondolo” roughly translates to “walking stick,” which is appropriate because “udondolo” sounds like a storied, sage, knotty walking stick taking you along on its travels, even if its Zulu lyricism is incomprehensible to most of its listeners. For the adventurous, perhaps “Ming Ming” (2021) by Chinese artist Otay:onii will be of interest. It combines avant-garde art pop with heavier industrial tones and even Chinese folk music. The execution is suffocatingly heavy and pans into a chilling, cerebral, skeletal suspension to keep the tension with mastery. According to the album’s Bandcamp page, Ming is “a place between our world and the other world, where souls wander around before they take turns to reincarnate.” The purgative atmosphere created by this project vividly simulates that place.

As amazing as these albums are, they’re just a taste of the infinitely wide variety of global music that’s out there. These selections are meant merely to kindle interest in music from outside our comfort zones and find new ones, wherever they may be. Ultimately, the value we get from art is unique to ourselves, but it can never hurt to push our boundaries and reevaluate our perspectives through music. Happy listening!

Yume Igarashi / The Spectator

PLAYLIST

Blast From the Past!

By THE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT

Now that we’ve spent over a year at home, you’ve all surely wanted to escape quarantine innumerable times. Get ready to groove back to a better time as you listen to these classics!

- Forever*
The Beach Boys
Classic Rock
- American Pie*
Don McLean
Folk Rock
- Space Oddity*
David Bowie
Psychedelic Folk
- A Forest*
The Cure
Pop Rock
- Don’t Stop ‘Til You Get Enough*
Michael Jackson
Pop
- Moon River*
Audrey Hepburn
Jazz
- Killer Queen*
Queen
Rock
- Bonnie and Clyde*
Serge Gainsbourg & Brigitte Bardot
French Pop
- ...Baby One More Time*
Britney Spears
Pop
- Luck Be A Lady Tonight*
Frank Sinatra
Jazz
- Caribbean Queen*
Billy Ocean
Pop Soul
- Somebody’s Gotta Die*
Notorious B.I.G.
Hip Hop
- Creep*
Radiohead
Alternative Rock
- (You Make Me Feel Like)*
A Natural Woman
Aretha Franklin
Soul
- Dear Mama*
Tupac Shakur
Hip Hop
- Snowqueen of Texas*
The Mamas and the Papas
Jazz Pop
- Crazy for You*
Madonna
Pop
- I Wanna Dance With Somebody*
Whitney Houston
Pop
- A Day in the Life*
The Beatles
Psychedelic Rock

FILM

The Skywalker Saga: The Successes and Failures of Each Trilogy

By CAROLINE PICKERING

“Star Wars” is arguably the best-known film franchise of all time. The series has had a massive impact on pop culture, and its popularity has given it a much-deserved seat at the forefront of the sci-fi genre. Its recent rebirth in the House of Mouse has only increased its popularity and given the franchise a more interconnected universe, making room for even further expansion.

Fans of “Star Wars” have existed for decades; it is one of the first major film series to have a significant cult following, and aficionado numbers have only grown over generations. However, the “Star Wars” fanbase is notoriously divided against itself on every detail of the franchise. Though differing opinions and criticisms are normal for most fanbases, “Star Wars” fans seem to have a special aptitude for attacking both the franchise and each other with a Sith-like passion. Specifically contentious are the films in the Skywalker Saga, centering around Anakin (Hayden Christensen), Luke (Mark Hamill), and Rey Skywalker (Daisy Ridley). While many tend to attack the prequel and sequel trilogies and glorify the originals, each trilogy has its strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to remain unique and entertaining in their own ways.

The prequels were hated for years after they first came out, and the toxic reactions from fans were actually detrimental to the

acting career of Hayden Christensen. However, it is Christensen’s performance that really sells the prequel series. His portrayal of Anakin—the Jedi knight and general who fell to the Dark Side to protect the love of his life and became the most hated man in the galaxy—is heartfelt and complex and demonstrates a deep understanding of Anakin’s character. He brings Anakin to life, displaying perfectly just why Vader became the man we see in the original trilogy.

However, the prequels aren’t without their shortcomings. Much of the first two films, “The Phantom Menace” (1999) and “Attack of the Clones” (2002), are insanely dull and hard to follow. They take place on the floor of the galactic senate just as much as they do on the battlefield. While this does deliver a complex narrative of how fascism can rise through the ranks of democracy if given the chance, it is massively unentertaining and could have been handled in a much better way. Furthermore, almost



all the antagonists are poorly introduced and severely underdeveloped despite their potential. Dooku, Grievous, and Maul are all incredibly complex, intriguing characters, but they lack the development and relevance needed to really matter to either the audience or the plot. The final installment, “Revenge of the Sith” (2005) does end up carrying the trilogy, as the prophecy of Anakin Skywalker’s tragic fall comes to fruition. It delivers a heart-breaking conclusion that helps tie up loose ends, and the duel on Mustafar is one of the most emotionally charged sequences in the “Star Wars” universe.

The prequel series owe much of their current popularity to the animated “Clone Wars” series, airing from 2008-2020. Taking place between “Attack of the Clones” and “Revenge of the Sith,” it helps bring a better understanding of the prequel characters and the complex universe they inhabit, neither of which were properly explored in the movies.

The most universally enjoyed

trilogy is, of course, the originals. It is the standard to which every other piece of “Star Wars” media is held and with good reason. It is an amazing example of a series that is able to balance action with character growth and development. Every character has a distinct personality and energy that is largely unmatched in comparable franchises. The antagonists, Vader and Palpatine, are mysterious, chilling, and complex. Luke is a lovable protagonist with one of the best examples of the Hero’s Journey in modern media. Not to mention, he has one of the best wardrobes out of everyone in the franchise, taking down the Empire in Chanel boots.

The trilogy also has one of the best overarching plots, even if it is relatively simple. Its big reveals make sense because they don’t rely on shock value, which is something the later movies fail to recognize. “The Empire Strikes Back” (1980) is still considered one of the best sequels of all time because it successfully incorporates suspense, action, character growth, and worldbuilding. The ending is absolutely perfect, leaving viewers on the edge of their seats anticipating the next installment. The only major critique of the series is that most of the action is extremely underwhelming. Though space action capabilities of the time were limited, it still could have been better considering George Lucas’s other works at the time, such as “Indi-

continued on page 22

Arts and Entertainment

THINKPIECE

By ANIKA AMIN

With all the time spent indoors due to quarantine, people were bound to pick up new hobbies. Accordingly, many longtime anime fans began to notice an increased interest in their favorite art form. But anecdotal evidence aside, there is statistical proof. [Reports](#) from Parrot Analytics show that popular shonen anime “Attack on Titan” (2013-) even beat out hit shows like “WandaVision” (2021) to be the most in demand show during the week of January 31. This example is just one instance of a long-standing pattern. In the last 10 years, there has been a drastic growth in anime’s demand and consumption in the U.S., although its influence was felt long before then.

The term “anime” simply refers to animation that has been created in Japan. It’s not a genre on its own, but rather a medium. The title remains true regardless of the subject material or art style. However, there have definitely been distinctive characteristics unique to anime that have influenced animation outside of Japan. Oversized eyes are just one example of a practice that Western animation studios have adapted with open arms. The creators of various modern children’s shows, including “Avatar: The Last Airbender” (2005), also cite anime as an influence.

Anime isn’t a new presence within the United States by any means. Dating back to the first airing of “Astro Boy” in 1964,

Americans have long been consuming animated shows and movies from Japan. The late ‘90s to early 2000s “golden age of anime” brought classic shows such as “Sailor Moon” (2003) and “Cowboy Bebop” (1998) onto the scene and into the eyes of the American public. Toonami, the anime programming block of Cartoon Network, was perhaps the main reason for this increased popularity. Eventually, shows like “Pokémon” (1997) took off across the world, and many people didn’t even realize that what they were watching wasn’t a normal American cartoon.

Streaming has completely changed the game, arguably elevating anime from a niche interest to a mainstream one. With streaming, anime is more accessible than ever before, greatly contributing to the rise in popularity seen in the last decade. Fans no longer need to spend copious amounts of time and money to watch series that aren’t readily available on TV. Crunchyroll is perhaps the best known anime streaming platform with around 1,000 shows, as well as a wide selection of manga.

Netflix, a longtime global streaming powerhouse, has also

played a big role, attaining exclusive licenses for many acclaimed anime that can’t be streamed anywhere else, including iconic shows such as “Neon Genesis Evangelion” (1995-1996). Netflix original anime has brought numerous shows to life, including those of long-standing and well-known manga. Other popular platforms such as Amazon Prime and Hulu have also been offering an increasingly large selection of anime.

Animated movies from Japan have previously found critical success within the United States, more so than the shows. In 1988, post-apocalyptic action film “Akira” brought a new image of anime to the world and set the stage for anime’s growth in the West. Even more recently, animated movies such as “Your Name” (2016) and more have been theatrically released and widely watched in the U.S. Studio Ghibli’s “Spirited Away” (2001) even [won an Academy Award](#) for Best Animated Feature. There’s even ample evidence that Satoshi Kon’s famous anime works of “Perfect Blue” (1997) and “Paprika” (2006) inspired many aspects of well known movies such as “Black Swan” (2010) and “Inception” (2010).

Shows have not achieved the

same kind of success. The United States tends to think of itself as the pop culture center of the world, and this view has long affected the attitudes toward outside media. An occasional movie doing well isn’t uncommon, but for a foreign show to be in the popular cultural consciousness of Americans is another thing. In addition, there exists a level of stigma associated with watching anime. Perhaps the questionable behavior of Western fans is to blame; there has been a concerning fetishization of Japanese culture among them, even though thinking that anime is a realistic portrayal of Japan is akin to thinking that Marvel movies are a realistic portrayal of Americans. It’s important to be conscious of the way that we consume media, as to ensure that we don’t further contribute to any xenophobic or reductive narratives. Another reason for the lack of mainstream popularity is that cartoons are generally thought of as having a target audience of children. This leads to anime being taken less seriously as both an art form and a viable option for adults to watch.

Despite this stigma, a particular strength of anime lies in its ability to transcend the bounds of reality and capture our imagination. This effect is true for people of all ages and backgrounds. When it comes to alternate universes, magical powers, and futuristic technology, anime is the ideal medium to employ, as it has endless possibilities. No

matter how high the production costs or how well trained the actors are, live action fails to portray these otherworldly elements in the same way. Although the animated format provides a sense of escapism, many shows deal with themes that can be reflected in our own lives. The aforementioned “Attack on Titan” may have 40-foot-tall flesh-eating humanoids, but it also discusses relevant, human issues such as oppression, racism, and war.

The future of manga, which most anime is adapted from, remains to be seen. It is no doubt present in the United States, but it has not caught on to the same degree. Whether it is due to the unfamiliar right to left reading format, a lack of promotion, or something else entirely, manga is far less mainstream in the United States. Ironically, it is far more popular than anime in Japan, perhaps due to the country’s long-standing traditions of visual storytelling. But with many best-selling manga set to be adapted in 2021, the possibilities are endless.

The versatility of anime—as well as the profits to be made from the already billion dollar industry—will inevitably pave the way for the biggest wave of consumption yet. As viewership continues to grow, anime will become more and more of a mainstream presence in the United States, and this upward trajectory will no doubt remain for years to come.

Not Just for Kids: Anime’s Expansion to the United States



Ivy Jiang / The Spectator

FASHION

By JULIA PANAS

Two months into 2021, we’re already seeing new trends pop up on our Instagram feeds and in the latest editorials. Typically, the month-long fashion week runways set the trends for the upcoming spring and summer seasons. This year, however, brands have gotten creative, debuting their collections through digital performances, films, and socially-distanced catwalks. In addition to the more traditional runway shows, figureheads in the media—such as social media influencers and politicians—are also impacting what we wear. From the runway to the podium, here are the top trends of 2021.

Monochrome

The year started off strong with President Joe Biden’s inauguration on January 20th. Though there was no red carpet, political icons didn’t fail to showcase the new look in fashion through bold matching outfits. Vice President Kamala Harris, Former First Lady Michelle Obama, and First Lady Jill Biden, among many others, showed up wearing coats, dresses, belts, gloves, and masks, all in a uniform color. From Michelle Obama’s [deep crimson pantsuit](#) to Jill Biden’s [pearly pale blue tweed ensemble](#), these powerful women embody the appeal of monochrome: elegant and effortlessly chic. These outfits made more than just a colorful

statement; as role models in the public eye, these politicians’ outfits spotlighted garments made by female, immigrant, and black independent designers who are historically underrepresented in the fashion community. The true beauty of this trend also lies in its versatility: from formal wear to street style to work-from-home loungewear, monochrome can be adopted in a variety of aesthetics. To best achieve this look, shop for all of the items in your outfit from one brand, since brands usually stick to specific color palettes and hues.

The Shoulder Bag

If there’s one item to add to your closet this season, it’s a 2000s style shoulder bag. These small, short-strap bags are the next big trend following the recent revival of ‘90s and ‘00s aesthetics. Celebrities like Kylie Jenner and Sofia Richie have sported Prada’s rerelease of the iconic shoulder bag (the [2000 Re-edition](#)), which was originally worn by Y2K idols like Paris Hilton and Britney



Spears. Dupes of the bag are available at Steve Madden and ASOS, and you can find more unique styles at Urban Outfitters. These bags are a charming addition to any outfit, whether you want to dive into the 2000s aesthetic by pairing it with a cropped puffer jacket and a mini skirt, or opt for a more modern route with cargo pants and oversized sneakers.

Bralettes

Bralettes are the perfect combination of leisure-wear and lingerie: comfortable and flattering, sexy yet casual. It’s no surprise that they’re all over the SS21 collections. This style of top—a crop top fitted like a bra—is the perfect item to usher in warm weather. One popular way to style tiny bralettes is to pair them with a cardigan or an unbuttoned suit jacket. Combine bralettes with the monochrome trend by matching the color and texture of the bralette with your outerwear like [Katie Holmes’s viral beige cashmere look](#), then add a pair of casual jeans, ankle boots, and a boxy tote to complete the outfit.

Wide-Leg Pants

Working (and learning) from home has given

us a new appreciation for comfort in our everyday wardrobes. Gone are the days of tight skinny jeans and constricting straight-leg trousers; now, the fashion world is welcoming wide-leg pants made of denim, cotton, and even jersey. These pants typically come in two silhouettes. For the first, the pant is fitted throughout the waist and hips with a wide, boot-cut opening, creating a somewhat triangular A-line shape. This style is reminiscent of the ‘70s aesthetic that is currently trending on TikTok and Instagram. The second is baggy throughout with a fitted waist and tight elastic ankle to make the shape more dynamic. Balloon jeans, cozy harem pants, and oversized cargo pants are great examples of this style. Pair such wide-legged pants with a small fitted top—like the bralette—for a dramatic silhouette.

Patchwork

Patchwork clothing is nothing new for our favorite stores, but it is expected to become more popular this year. The trend originated in 2020 and gained momentum after Harry Styles famously wore a [patchwork cardigan by JW Anderson](#) that prompted TikTokers around the world to create their own knitted and crocheted versions. Patchwork fits well into the large-scale trend of sustainability in the fashion industry, as many designers upcycle old gar-

ments and fabrics to create new pieces in this style, notably [Dolce & Gabbana’s SS21 ready-to-wear collection](#) and [Natasha Zinko’s famous bandana patchwork dress](#). Then there are brands like [Frankie Collective](#) that collect vintage clothing and rework them into colorblocked hoodies, sweatpants, shorts, skirts, and corset tops. You can even do this trend yourself by cutting up a few old tops and learning simple sewing techniques to piece them together. Patchwork is by far one of the most unique and easy-to-adopt trends of the season.

After a year in isolation, people are bored of sweatpants and leggings, and are craving more fashionable pieces to wear while working from home. What’s interesting is that most of these trends work for both an indoor and outdoor wardrobe: bralettes and wide-leg pants are comfortable yet stylish enough to be worn inside or out, and patchwork and monochrome can easily be integrated into matching loungewear sets or business casual attire. Similarly, a shoulder bag can be worn for a socially-distanced day out with friends or a quick run to the grocery store. Clearly, the overarching trend this season is versatility: the ability for garments to be worn for a variety of different purposes. No matter the occasion, these styles make it easy to stay fashionable in 2021.

STUYLE CORNER: Top Trends of 2021

Arts and Entertainment

THINKPIECE

“Allen v. Farrow” and the Power of Speaking Out

By KENISHA MAHAJAN

“It has taken me a long time to reconcile that you can love somebody and be afraid of them,” Dylan Farrow said as she reflected on the events that took place on August 4, 1992.

She is of course referring to her alleged sexual assault at the hands of her then adoptive father, Woody Allen. Dylan Farrow was only seven. “Allen v. Farrow” centers around the sexual abuse allegation made against Allen by Dylan Farrow and Allen’s longtime partner, Mia Farrow. The series explores the allegations, court proceedings, and their implications for Allen and the Farrow’s but branches out to reveal Allen’s disturbing behavior and, more generally, inspect the culture that absolved Allen of his crimes. The four part miniseries is filled with clips from Mia Farrow’s home videos, taped phone calls, first person narratives from the Farrow’s family and friends, and testimonials from experts.

Directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering, who have made their names through high-profile investigative journalism and scathing reviews of the flawed structures that uphold sexual misconduct, “Allen v. Farrow” offers an empathetic perspective of what is, at heart, Dylan Far-

row’s story. In works like “The Hunting Ground” (2015) and “On The Record” (2020), Dick and Ziering have used personal narratives to unveil the systems that fuel abuse and sexism in various industries. They continue this trend in the HBO docuseries by focusing on the Farrow’s side of the story, utilizing Mia Farrow and Dylan Farrow’s voices both to give a horrific record of one incident and to examine the society that has protected Allen for nearly 30 years.

“Allen v. Farrow” exposes audiences to a version of Allen the public is likely less familiar with. In stark contrast to his goofy, adorably awkward persona on screen, his uncharacteristically monotone voice when discussing his affair with Mia Farrow’s daughter, Soon-Yi Previn, and his bitter tone in his audiobook “Apropos of Nothing” depict a much more disturbing side of the comedian. Admittedly, “Allen v. Farrow” depicts only one perspective of a complicated story. At first glance, this one-sidedness can easily be dismissed as lacking nuance—the series never attempts to tell Allen’s side of the story. However, this bias feels necessary to place a thumb on the scales for justice. Aside from a few letters and interviews, the Farrow’s stories haven’t been

told. For the last few decades—more so when the allegations first unfolded—the masses were in support of Allen. In spite of his inappropriate relationship with Previn, his questionable and concerning frequent depiction of May-December romances, his alleged relationships with minors, and his “inappropriately intense” behavior toward Dylan Farrow, the general consensus was that Mia Farrow was a vengeful ex-girlfriend who fabricated a tale to destroy Allen’s reputation. Even with the public nature of the allegations and the trial, Allen essentially came out unscathed. While his name was slightly tarnished, without a formal conviction, Allen has continued to direct, produce, and star in dozens of films to this day. To understand Allen’s point of view, one mustn’t look very hard. The same can’t be said for the Farrow’s.

However, the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the film industry is greater than a few bad seeds. Rather, it is a product of the way Hollywood functions and is entrenched in these institutions. Hollywood stars’ fame and wealth seem to put them above the law or at least make it more difficult to sway public opinion against them. Most supporters of Allen were fans of his work. His beloved films were a cultural tour

de force, and many believed that the creator behind such works was not capable of such horrifying actions. Audiences’ understanding of Allen’s character through his work was entirely incompatible with the image Dylan Farrow painted. While people tried to assess Dylan Farrow’s allegations in an objective manner, separating the art and the artist is nearly impossible, since the work is a reflection of its creator. As history has proven, few studios or companies would jeopardize the release of a large film—and the money that comes with it—to do the right thing and create a safer work environment. For this very reason, people like Allen have celebrated careers, even with an undercurrent of scandal.

In Hollywood specifically, one allegation affects more than one person. In a normal workplace, employees are often seen as disposable: a “regular” employee accused of such egregious acts would be fired and replaced without a second thought. However, in film or television, the welfare of hundreds of people is reliant on the star of the show. Thus, the firing of actors or directors has implications beyond the individual, incentivizing people involved in the industry to stay quiet about abuse to avoid risking their jobs. Ending pro-

duction of the three films Allen released during the court proceedings would have cost tens of millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs. These structures don’t just protect offenders, but they also discourage survivors from speaking out. In Allen’s case, Mia Farrow was not only his longtime partner but also his leading lady. After meeting Allen, she almost exclusively acted in his films and declined searching for a manager because of her relationship. When the sexual assault allegations against Allen went public, Mia Farrow’s career took a hit, brought down by Allen’s credibility and influence in the industry at the time. Because of the word-of-mouth nature of communication in Hollywood and the looming threat of being blacklisted, sexual misconduct is reported a [minority](#) of the time.

Far too often, survivors of abuse or harassment are intimidated into silence. Movements encouraging solidarity are necessary to give a voice to those who have been oppressed. At its heart, “Allen v. Farrow” is about one woman telling her story. Through Dylan and Mia Farrow’s story, “Allen v. Farrow” critiques the world we live in and stresses the necessity of making ourselves heard.

CULTURE

Bonnie and Clyde: Lovers First, Criminals Second

By CHRISTINE LIN

“Some day they’ll go down together they’ll bury them side by side. To few it’ll be grief, to the law a relief but it’s death for Bonnie and Clyde.”

Foreshadowing their deaths a few months later, Bonnie Parker cements her and Clyde Barrow’s narrative into criminal history with the last stanza of her poem “The Trail’s End.” Bonnie may have predicted their demise, but she was wrong about two things: she and Clyde weren’t buried side by side, and this certainly was not the end of their story.

Bonnie and Clyde first crossed paths in 1930, at the ages of 19 and 21 respectively. Bonnie seemed to have an affinity for criminals, with her then-husband behind bars for murder and Clyde sentenced to prison shortly after they met. Nevertheless, enamored with her new beau, she assisted Clyde’s jailbreak by smuggling him a gun. Though their first attempt was futile, the duo finally escaped prison in 1932 and began their infamous crime spree.

They first gained notoriety with the “Barrow Gang,” a crime ring they formed alongside Clyde’s friends and fellow escapees. The group made their way across the country—looting gas stations, grocery stores, and banks—evading authorities by taking advantage of state border laws and frequently changing getaway cars. However, they were ambushed when their hideout in Missouri was exposed. Forced to flee, they managed to escape the officers in one piece, but they left behind a lot of belongings—including a film camera.

The film was developed, and the images were immediately popularized by the media. The

pictures were unconventional and featured Bonnie and Clyde in brazen poses, such as her playfully pointing a rifle at him, or her propping her foot on the car bunker and smoking a cigarette. For the first time, these pictures gave the public insight into who the infamous couple actually was.

While Bonnie was thrilled with their celebrity status, the couple’s newfound fame compromised their anonymity. As news outlets plastered their photos all over papers, it became progressively harder to escape from robberies unscathed. And despite the nonviolent nature of their crimes, the gang found themselves more frequently resorting to murder. However, unlike most serial killers, Bonnie and Clyde viewed murder as a last resort following unsuccessful robberies.

Their extravagant crimes made Bonnie and Clyde a household name in the 1930s. Much of their popularity can be attributed to the rising distaste Americans held toward the government, police, and banks, as the country plunged into the Great Depression. The economic crisis made many sympathetic to Bonnie and Clyde’s robberies, as these crimes defied institutions that the public felt had treated them unjustly. Though many acknowledged their murders, the darkest aspects of their crimes were often glossed over. Whether they were seen as social bandits with an exciting life of crime or star-crossed lovers forced into a life on the run, Bonnie and Clyde’s thrilling escapades were the distraction Americans needed to escape the bleak reality of their economic hardship.

Eventually, Bonnie and Clyde’s wrongdoings caught up with them. Authorities allied with the family of Henry Methrin—one of the Barrow Gang’s old accomplices—to re-

veal the location of the couple in exchange for Henry’s immunity. Police then hid by the highway Bonnie and Clyde were en route to and opened fire when they saw Clyde’s car; over 130 bullets were shot into the car exterior, killing Bonnie and Clyde instantly. Their final showdown, quite literally, ended with a bang.

However, the story of their love affair would live on and eventually overshadow the horrors of their crime spree. Their tale was first revived with Arther Penn’s 1967 film “Bonnie and Clyde,” starring Warren Beatty as Clyde and Faye Dunaway as Bon-

nie. Heavily influenced by the French New Wave movement, the film parallels the work of François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard with the use of elements like visceral language and dramatic jump cuts that were unheard of in the classical Hollywood era. The gangster-romance film

was the first of its kind to successfully use the juxtaposition of humor and realism to captivate the audience. It was also the first to bring graphic and gritty scenes of violence to the big screen, resulting in the Motion Pictures Association of America’s introduction of its X-rating in 1968. The screenplay of “Bonnie and Clyde” was genre-bending; by defying the so-called rules of cinema, the film set the stage for future classics like “The Wild Bunch” (1969), “The Godfather” (1972), and “Scarface” (1983).

Another more controversial influence of this film is its

their moral ambiguity and reckless crimes.

For better or worse, this modern-day Bonnie and Clyde ideal would go on to inspire countless other films and music. The self-titled film reached international success at the height of the counterculture era, a time when anti-establishment sentiment was strong, and Bonnie and Clyde were admired for their defiance. In response, songs like Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames’ “The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde” (1968) were produced, and bluegrass duo Flatt & Scruggs even went as far as to release an entire album dedicated to the outlaws’ story.

Their story then re-emerged in American hip-hop and R&B, where there were so many self-titled hits about the couple that they’re often referred to by release date, such as Tupac’s ‘96 “Bonnie and Clyde,” Eminem’s ‘97 “Bonnie & Clyde,” and Jay-Z and Beyoncé’s ‘03 “Bonnie & Clyde.” Their dangerous, exciting lifestyle makes for an inexhaustible wealth of inspiration, as evidenced by the lyrics of many songs today as well as films like John Lee Hancock’s “The Highwaymen” (2019) continue to reference the duo’s adventures.

Today, the Bonnie and Clyde motif is synonymous with a heart-shattering love that knows no bounds. Often dubbed the modern Romeo and Juliet, the allure in mindsets like “ride-or-die” or “you and me against the world” can be traced back to the story of Bonnie and Clyde. Little is known now about their tumultuous past, but perhaps that’s what they would’ve wanted—to be immortalized in history as an invincible duo whose crimes paled in comparison to their groundbreaking story of loyalty and devotion.



Nicholas Evangelinos / The Spectator

Heavily influenced by the French New Wave movement, the film parallels the work of François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard with the use of elements like visceral language and dramatic jump cuts that were unheard of in the classical Hollywood era. The gangster-romance film

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Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By **AARON VISSER**

Great art can show viewers the beauty of new places and make them feel the emotions of new characters. HBO's docuseries "How To with John Wilson" manages to pull off the opposite: it returns the viewer to a location they've been to a thousand times and reveals the beauty, the comedy, and the drama of the people all around them.

In "How To," the creator, director, lead actor, lead writer, cameraman, and narrator John Wilson combines thousands of hours of observational footage of New York City streets with footage of his personal interactions, shot from his point-of-view, and his narration, into a cohesive narrative. As Wilson puts it, "Imagine Planet Earth except it's all filmed in New York City and David Attenborough is also the cameraman." The show appears instructional, with episodes titled "How To Make Small Talk" or "How to Improve Your Memory," but these lessons merely exist to frame the footage. While Wilson's narration insists that it's trying to improve your social skills, the images on screen say otherwise.

They seem to act on their own, comedically defying Wilson's commentary. He tells us how strangers enjoy interacting as two drivers yell at one another. When he flies home to LaGuardia Air-

port and declares how he's happy to be back, his camera highlights a garbage fire on the tarmac. Wilson is able to find comedy in the most obvious and subtle places. He captures a woman in Times Square sneaking a pigeon into her bag and a man playing the flute while hanging upside down on scaffolding. He also observes



Francesca Nemati / The Spectator

don't understand. The editing allows the images to tell their own hilarious, and at times profound, story.

What elevates "How To" above most other comedies, though, is that even once the metropolitan shenanigans are over, the unique characters Wilson encounters on his journeys

endure. While "How To" may not improve your memory as promised, you'll never forget the people at the first ever Mandela Effect conference, where attendees earnestly describe how the single "e" found in Febreze is evidence for a multiverse or the Italian who describes the aliens living in our society while cooking risotto. Each person he meets is crazy in his or her own way, but aren't we all? Instead of inviting the audience to just laugh at the stupidity of Americans, like in "Borat" (2002), "How To" forces the viewer to introspect after their laughter and see the weaknesses in themselves and the humanity in others. It shows their moments of kindness, vulnerability, and frustration, along with those of ignorance. On a trip to Cancun, Wilson encounters the rapping, drug-taking spring breaker Chris. Most shows would end the interaction right there, content to just laugh at the unhinged stranger. But "How To" goes beyond most shows. The next morning, Wilson talks to Chris again, where he confesses the underlying loneliness that drove him to make a solo trip to Cancun in the first place. The show values deeper understand-

ing over surface-level feelings of superiority.

The most important character in "How To," however, is New York City itself, and the show rewards those who live there. Familiar locations frequently make guest appearances. It's thrilling seeing Chambers Street or even your own apartment building featured on screen. More exciting than the local places are the local people. The show interacts with all the strangers we see every day and actively ignore: those in crowds, on corners, and behind cash registers. On "How To," Wilson follows the ideas of legendary urban theorist Jane Jacobs. They both recognize that a city is made up of people, not buildings. She also advocated for "eyes on the street" and "How To" is a show that is all about street watching. Each person we observe is a little part of NYC to be discovered, and each one lets us understand the city even better.

Just as "Citizen Kane" (1941) captures the events and emotions of a man's entire life in two hours, "How To" encapsulates an entire city in six episodes. It reduces New York City to its essence: the people who inhabit it.

FILM

continued from page 19

ana Jones" (1981).

Last and least comes the sequel trilogy. The center of most current fan hate, the latest installments in the series have made many fans hail the prequels, once some of the most reviled media in all of sci-fi, as cinematic masterpieces. The sequels are indeed massively flawed, but they aren't necessarily bad movies. They have the best action sequences of the films, with fast-paced, gripping combat. The lightsaber action in the sequels is hands down the best in the "Star Wars" franchise, and their beautiful choreography makes the sequels' fight

scenes some of the best in contemporary media.

It's impossible, however, to find a character immune to the trilogy's bad writing, with nearly every character having their potential in the story squandered. The only character fans can agree is written well is Ben Solo (Adam Driver), or as he is known in the First Order, Kylo Ren. His redemption is developed over all three movies, coming to a beautiful conclusion and his ultimate return to the light. However, the only other character that seems to have truly spoken to fans was resistance pilot Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaacs). He had an amazing arc until "The Rise of Skywalker" (2019), where he was unfortu-

nately shoved into a Han Solo archetype that largely played into racist stereotypes, undermining the arc that was being built over the previous two installments.

Furthermore, the plots of the individual movies, while interesting in their own ways, fail to form a coherent unified narrative. "The Force Awakens" (2015) offers a strong start to the trilogy, introducing new characters with depth and intrigue, while still having old characters appear in a way that felt natural and exciting. Gears shifted in "The Last Jedi" (2017), seemingly restarting Finn's (John Boyega) character arc from how he was already developed in the previous film, and introducing Rose (Kelly Marie Tran) as the

main character. While it did a spectacular job in establishing the relationship between Kylo Ren and Rey, it also killed off Snoke (Andy Serkis), the mysterious and extremely underdeveloped master of Kylo Ren. This left a hole in the place of the antagonist, seemingly filled by the conflicted Ren in the movie's climax, but ultimately given to an undead Palpatine clone in the final film. The reveal at the beginning of "The Rise of Skywalker" felt forced and out of place, and was a damning feature of the final installment. Ultimately, the sequels had the potential to be fantastic, but beyond the flashing lights and big fight scenes, they failed to do much with the momentum they

created.

Each "Star Wars" trilogy is a unique experience that ties into one another in one cohesive story. They each have their strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. Some succeed more than others, while some fail much, much worse. But, objectively speaking, there are no bad "Star Wars" movies. Are they bad within the context of the series? Yes. But each film has its redeeming qualities which make for a great viewing experience regardless. It is impossible to ignore the massive impact that these films have and will continue to have well into the future, and how they come together to tell a collective, compelling story.

The Skywalker Saga: The Successes and Failures of Each Trilogy

FILM

By **ZOE BUFF**

Jodie Foster is a beauty. With large blue eyes and a gorgeous smile, she possesses intoxicating charisma and a charming presence that is impossible to ignore. She speaks articulately, with energy and excitement, and is clearly used to performing in front of a camera. And yet, that is exactly what it is: a performance. Foster is notoriously private. She calls herself an "internal person" and doesn't mind being solitary. Despite starting her career very early in life, she was uncomfortable with emotional expression throughout her youth.

Foster's most notable childhood role, Iris in "Taxi Driver" (1976), was portrayed with such raw candor and mature strength, that it's easy to forget she was only 12 years old. As an adult, the highlights of her career include Clarice Starling in "Silence of the

Lambs" (1989), Sarah Tobias in "The Accused" (1988), and Meg Altman in "Panic Room" (2002), with her appearances in the former two winning her two Academy Awards for Best Actress.

As a child actress, Jodie Foster had a psychological understanding of the dramatic roles she played, such as Iris in "Taxi Driver," which she drew from her real life at home, growing up with a single mother. She also experienced several traumatic events in her early career, including the lion-mauling that happened on the set of "Napoleon and Samantha" (1972) when she was 10 years old, and the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan by a crazy stalker who was obsessed with her performance in the "Taxi Driver." Many child actresses fade into obscurity when they reach adulthood, but Foster executed the transition seamlessly, "prioritizing [her] own

self-worth and psychological health above all. And if not, [she doesn't] know where [she] would be today," Foster told Porter in an [interview](#). "I mean, there is a carpet of ex-child actors who did not make it." Being thrown into fame at such a young age didn't hinder Foster's future career at all. As an adult, she has starred in nearly 40 film projects and won over 40 awards in total.

However, her acting career has slowed down recently. In the last decade, Foster has only participated in a total of five films. In an [interview](#) with the Daily Beast, she discussed her decision to only take part in projects she thinks are meaningful. Another reason that she's taken less work as an actress is to focus on another aspect of film: direction. As a director, Foster is able to take more creative control and express her ideas with more clarity than when she's in front of the camera.

Directing is something Foster started later in her career, shortly before she hit her thirties. Having grown up in the public eye, she had an advantage when it came to earning the trust of those in the industry, despite the fact that she hadn't attended film school. She says she mostly learned by observing the directors she was working with. For Foster, filmmaking is about telling stories and trying to make them as real as she can. The movie screen is a canvas for her personal essays. Her passion for her work is palpable, even through the screen. She always brings a strong vision to her projects, such as the "Arkangel" episode of "Black Mirror". The story focuses on the use of futuristic technology by a mother to constantly monitor and protect her child. Foster uses that to create an analogy for how humankind responds to technology and what that says about them per-

sonally. "Though all of the shows are about technology, none of the shows are really about technology at all," she explained in an [interview](#) with The Guardian. "All of them are about relationships and the emotional damage we all carry, which is highlighted by the Klieg light of technology."

Jodie Foster has proven her creativity and wisdom countless times throughout her career. Though she isn't always relatable as a public figure, the characters she brings to life are. Her story is one of the great success stories of child actress to film icon, something which she followed with a career as an acclaimed director. "I don't intend to quit acting," she reported in an [interview](#) with German newspaper Augsburger Allgemeine, "but I only take jobs that I really love. After 52 years as an actress, I think that's the greatest luxury of all."

These articles are works of fiction. All quotes are libel and slander.

Two Engineers Escape the Earth on Perseverance Rover

By NORA MILLER

While the majority of us have spent a year planning our escape from COVID-stricken Earth, few have actually succeeded. However, according to a report published by NASA, two engineers, previously thought to have disappeared, have escaped Earth via the Perseverance rover.

The NASA team first discovered this while logging on to the computer to receive the rover's first sound recordings. According to scientist Dr. William Rice, "I was just about to listen to some space wind when I started hearing what sounded just like Rob[ert D'Tach] and [Dr.] Jenna [Flydaway] singing 'I'm Leaving On a Jet Plane.'" Though Rice initially thought it was a prank, he and his colleagues confirmed that D'Tach and Flydaway were on Mars after their Instagram accounts were flooded with red-planet selfies.

Despite the initial shock, few were surprised by the details of the disappearances. Flydaway's husband, Enipt Flydaway, described seeing a letter on the kitchen table the night before she disappeared: "I woke up, and I saw this piece of paper addressed to our four-year-old daughter, and all it said was, 'Mommy is going bye-bye for a year.' So I thought about it for a good five minutes, and I re-

alized that what she probably meant was she was going to Mars. Unless she meant to imply that she was trying to file a divorce, but eh."

Moreover, both scientists were reported to have suffered extreme COVID fatigue prior to disappearing. D'Tach's roommate, Abe Endond, reported that D'Tach had gotten sick of being cooped up in their small apartment and had perhaps viewed the spacious rover as an alternative. "If there's one thing I hope," he lamented. "It's that it wasn't because of my cooking. I know Rob never liked my food much, but going to Mars to avoid it is just too much." An internal investigation also found that Flydaway and D'Tach were responsible for changing the messages sent to alien civilizations from the original, "Pls come here we humans are awesome," to "SEND HELP WE'RE DYING LMAO."

Though it is not entirely clear how Flydaway and D'Tach got onto the rocket, preliminary results of the investigation point to poor oversight. Both Flydaway and D'Tach were mechanical engineers working on the body of the rover and had modified the design to contain a few extra cubic meters for, as they put it, "stuff." Their supervisor approved the plan without question, noting that "who the hell knows what kind of crazy \$%#* you might find out

there?"

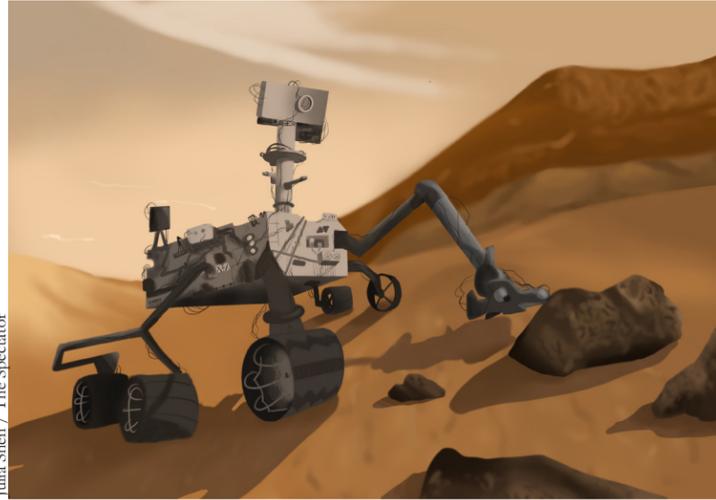
Poor security also played a role. As one anonymous security guard confessed, "I just remember waking up at like two in the morning and seeing these

many scientific explanations for this, the most prominent has been that Flydaway and D'Tach were never human. As director of the NASA Center for Human Respiration Dr. Foni Er-

to which some have already proposed that Flydaway and D'Tach simply photosynthesized. However, even this would not adequately explain their escape, since most photosynthetic creatures, when asked, prefer to stay put.

Another popular theory, The Net Breath theory, claims that while COVID-19 takes the breath away from most patients, it makes up for it by giving extra breath to a select few who have been deemed "worthy" by the virus, including Flydaway and D'Tach. While, for obvious reasons, we were unable to interview the coronavirus to verify or refute this, some scientists, including Dr. Ersatz, believe the theory could have merit.

Rather, Ersatz suggested, we should focus on the scientific implications of this new discovery. "If there are some who are able to survive in space without oxygen, then we are definitely going about space travel the wrong way. What's the use of programming robots to do something when you can just make a human do it? Imagine the money we would save on oxygen tanks," she exclaimed. She proposed conducting a large-scale study on whether COVID-19 infection really does convey respiratory superpowers to a small percentage of people. The results of such a study, as she put it, could be "breathtaking."



Julia Shen / The Spectator

two people right in front of my desk trying on Buzz Aldrin's old spacesuit, and I honestly thought I was in a dream, so I went back to sleep. Like, how was I supposed to know they didn't belong there?"

Despite the humiliation of allowing two engineers to escape the earth unnoticed, NASA is trying to take advantage of the situation. Remarkably enough, though they failed to bring any oxygen, food, or water with them, Flydaway and D'Tach are still alive. While there have been

sat said, "A lot of people have been asking us how this could even have occurred, and honestly, we have no clue. Please don't ask us. However, we do know from our recent studies that 99 percent of humans deprived of oxygen die immediately, so in my estimation, Flydaway and D'Tach are probably aliens."

If this theory were to be true, it would create a host of new scientific debates. Scientists would need to explain their absurdly low energy needs compared to other creatures

Autocorrect, Your Not Being Helpful

By ERICA CHEN and GABRIEL HUANG

Aww, you poor thing. Did you wake up on the wrong side of the bed today?

Well, autocorrect doesn't give a damn. Having to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, he is sick and tired of you pathetic humans who can't even correctly spell basic grade-school words. Sometimes even autocorrect doesn't feel like doing his job.

Today, we've brought in autocorrect himself for a little interview and a chance to clear his name. What's there to clear, you ask? Well, let's not play dumb. Every day, incompetent teenagers smear outrageous amounts of libel upon autocorrect's head for attempting to correct their spelling errors. I will provide one such example.

Human Filth A: OMGGG! WHAT THE DUCK! MR. HONNER GAVE US TWO EDWARD PUZZLOCKS DUE TONIGHT? AND WE HAVE 3 TESTS TMRW? OMG!

Human Filth B: bro r u good? Who says what the duck lol? Wut is an edward puzzlocks?

A: i meant what the duck

B: yo you just said the exact

same thing lmaooo

A: what the duck

B: LMAOOO

A: duck.

Honestly, I myself have said some unkind things about autocorrect as he tearfully watched and attempted to make sure that I was at least insulting him in proper English. Maybe this is how he preserves his dignity, smugly correcting me as I light his skinny ass up with my favorite filth off Urban Dictionary. I would like to take this opportunity to repent my harsh reprimands and redeem our silent guardian angel.

REPORTER JONES: Please, please have a seat Mr. Correct! I say, on behalf of the entire world, we are so happy to have you here today.

MR. CORRECT: Auto, please. I'm honored to be on the show.

JONES: As you wish! Well, let's not dilly-dally any further and get on with it, shall we?

CORRECT: Dilly-dally? What is that? Perhaps you meant Silly Sally?

JONES: No, dilly-dally! You know, like, to waste time.

CORRECT: No, I don't know. I wish you would speak to me in a proper manner. It's as if you don't know who I am.

JONES: Very sorry, sir. I'll be more careful from now on. But, ahem, let's get back to business. So, my sources tell me that you're not very well-liked. What do you have to say about that?

CORRECT: Well Jones, I'll be frank with you. I simply do not have strong feelings on the matter. Should these imbecile teenagers choose to despise me, so be it. Honestly, I only persist for their sake, and yet they choose to look down on what I do. It's infuriating, but I've gotten used to it by now.

JONES: Do you have to be like this even when you're off the job?

CORRECT: What do you mean, "like this?"

JONES: Like a stuck up foo is what. Y u always actin like that man? No body is aksing you to be like this rn.

CORRECT: Excuse me, Mr. Jones? Perhaps you meant, "Like a stuck-up fool is what. Why are you always acting like that, man? Nobody is asking you to be like this right now."

JONES: Nah but dis exactly what im talking about bro! So outta pocket.

CORRECT: Out of pocket, Jones. Out of pocket.

JONES: Outa pocket

CORRECT: Order pockets

JONES: This is why evrybody manually overrides all of your stupid suggetsions. Learn to take a hint!

We've all had experiences with autocorrect whether they may be good, bad, or both. Especially during online learning, he's literally everywhere. Sometimes it's really such a pain.

There have, of course, been plenty of circumstances where autocorrect completely changes what I'm trying to say in the Zoom chat. "Naturl selection is possible due to gentic varaiton" becoming "Nature section is possible due to teen variety" is an example (if you didn't know, this actually happened). Like what? "Selection" wasn't even spelled wrong in the first place!

Other times, autocorrect is our lifesaver. When autocorrect is actually doing his job like he's supposed to, he helps us fix our spelling mistakes and changes the gibberish that we wrote into something coherent, like fixing "adkdert" into "awkward."

But yo, let's be honest. Why

is it always autocapitalizing my sentences? I'm trying to sound like a smooove dude yo like I'm chillin' but autocorrect always making me sound like I'm sending an e-mail to my teacher. "Dear Mr. Honner" should not be written in the same tone as "you down to hang out tn?" I blame autocorrect for the absence of my Valentine this year.

But this also leads to another problem. We're losing our ability to spell.

I've noticed that I've been relying on autocorrect too heavily lately, and this has caused me to forget how to spell the simplest of words like "dumb." I have an overwhelming urge to spell it as "dum." Why is English spelling so weird anyway?

But at the same time, who cares if I forget how to spell words? I know I can't be the only one. Besides, everyone is already becoming dumber anyway. What greater harm can misspelling do?

Who knows, maybe when we all go back to in-person school and there's no more autocorrect to help us, teachers of all grades will have to start giving weekly spelling tests again.

Honest to god, the degree to which I've misspelled things and still produced intelligible sentences is a hate crime.

Even now, as I type this, autocorrect is maesing up my sentences. Stop changing my owrds and not fixing my real misatkes!

Humor

How Are Lucky Charms So Magically Delicious?

By KRISTA PROTEASA

If you've ever breathed air, you'll know that Lucky Charms are "magically delicious," as per Lucky the Leprechaun's wise words. But have you ever stopped to truly understand the methodology behind such deliciousness? I bet not. But that's my job! I hope you'll feel enlightened by the time you reach the last line.

As I'm sure you all know, the shapes of the marshmallows found in every Lucky Charms package are hearts, shooting stars, blue moons, rainbows, red balloons, and hourglasses. Wikipedia will tell you these shapes have no significance other than merely being colorful, but DEBUNKING TIME! These shapes come from real objects that Lucky the Leprechaun transformed into marshmallows on his mother's 66th birthday. All he wanted to do was make her proud, and since she notoriously enjoyed marshmallows, he saw it as the only logical thing to do. Lucky went to the large oak tree in his backyard and stole all of the sugar from Keebler elf's home. The two have been backyard-mates since 1997, but that's irrelevant.

Well, the more you know?

Something you might not have picked up from the Keebler elf's TV exposure is that his sugar is actually laced with tree sap. Thus, his sugar is unintentionally laced with squirrel fur and bird feathers. Lucky found this sugar incredibly potent and

Lucky matched each goop with a pile of the objects they were made of and covered each remaining object he had with it. That's right! If you look really closely at your Lucky Charms horseshoe-shaped marshmallows, you'll find horseshoes. Legend has it that you can still hear

silly hat. He was hiding the secret ingredient for his cookies in that hat, which is why he now wears a hat similar to Papa Smurf's as a replacement until his new hat arrives—in approximately 300 years. This secret ingredient is so secret that even Mr. Keebler doesn't know what it is. The only

Now that the pair had a very profitable product on their hands, the only thing left to do was to profit from it. They sold Mr. Keebler's powder and sugar back to him for double the price just for giggles and went around the forest promising eternal youth and happiness to any woodland creature who would agree to buy at least a pound of the marshmallows. The original placebo effect, if you couldn't tell.

The woodland creatures scurried along and played schoolyard games for the rest of eternity after ingesting the fateful shapes. Lucky then wore his special belt on a trip to the big city where he signed a contract with a fellow named General Mills, who was very respected in the military. Just like that, Lucky's Charms was shortened to Lucky Charms, and he was now the face of his own product. Since he signed 51 percent of the company over to General Mills, he naturally couldn't control anything except the shot of his face they would put on the packaging.

In conclusion, my friends, you're eating balloon goop every time you chow down on the Charms of Sir Lucky. Relish the fruits of his labor, I guess.

If you've ever breathed air, you'll know that Lucky Charms are "magically delicious," as per Lucky the Leprechaun's wise words. But have you ever stopped to truly understand the methodology behind such deliciousness?

stirred it with all the real objects (the hearts, shooting stars, horseshoes, green clovers, blue moons, rainbows, red balloons, and hourglasses) in a big pot. As his wooden spoon swirled round and round, the mixtures turned incredibly gelatinous (probably because of the sketchy pigeon feathers) and were ready to be set into molds.

the horses they came from.

After concocting his treats, Lucky raced to his mother, who had an allergic reaction to the clover-shaped marshmallows. Aside from the anaphylactic shock she went into, she actually liked the marshmallows, but they were missing something.

Lucky's mother went to disturb the Keebler elf and stole his

thing Lucky's mom knew, for that matter, was that this intriguing powder Mr. Keebler kept in his hat turned his cookies from drab to fab. She added the powder to the goop and they began to twinkle and turn neon colors.

Sure enough, the marshmallows became edible. Edible to the degree that they were beloved by toddlers and no one else.

Inside the Stuyvesant Math Team

By ESHAAL UBAID

The Mathletes scribble furiously as the clock ticks down to the end of 11th period. One crumples up a piece of paper and tosses it into another dimension off-screen. Another begins sobbing behind a mute button. Most have sweat dripping down their faces onto their papers as the few massive brains participating in the meet breeze through their problem sets with minimal struggle.

"It had to do with $\sin(32^\circ)$. 32° ? Why couldn't it be a nice number?" an anonymous sophomore breaks down soon after the meet. So-called "Group Therapy Zooms" have become a common practice after months of meets that leave Mathletes' souls drained and in desperate need of stress relief.

Despite the exceeding pressure they face on a daily basis, math team kids would rather swallow a raw egg yolk whole than leave the group. After extensive analysis into the complex culture of the math team, it can be concluded that sessions are based around ritual-like activities and rather elaborate "inside jokes." To gain further insight, The Spectator decided to launch an investigation into the math team's practices. The first thing we uncovered was a long-standing battle between the penguin and the panda lovers, each believing in the superiority of their chosen animal over the other.

"There's a thing about, uh, penguins," freshman Mikayla Lin explained when asked about the team's inside jokes. "Penguins are inherently better than pandas. Anyone who says otherwise is wrong. They just are. I will cover my math presentations with penguins until the day I die." No further context could be obtained as she hurriedly waddled away from the inter-

view, accusing the interviewers of being "panda cult" members.

Through the course of more interviews, we confirmed that freshman math team members are passionate about defending penguins or pandas. Members who supported penguins would also occasionally sacrifice scientific calculators to appease them. Students from other grades,

to continue. Larry's purpose remains unknown.

We proceeded to observe math team classes across all grades. Things seemed to run smoothly at first, with the occasional sound of crying drowning out other screams of frustration. However, we compiled a list of questionable behaviors we observed throughout the

ment regarding this on the team was far more hostile than one would expect.

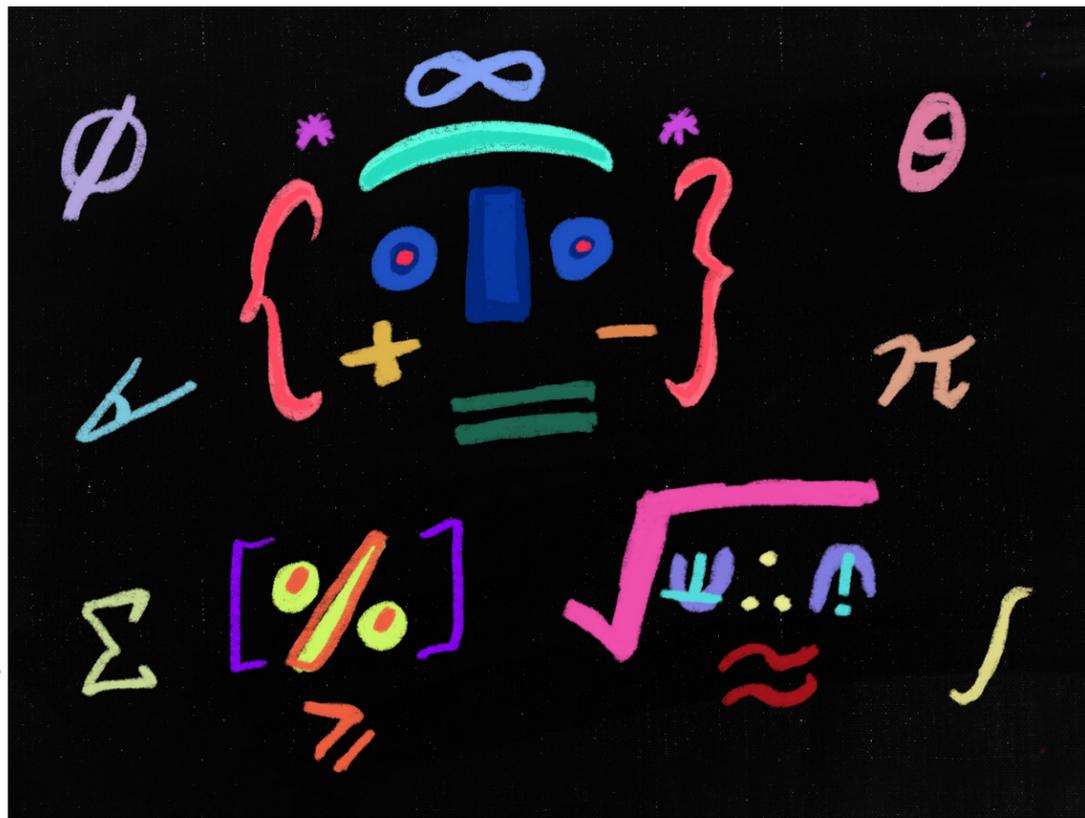
- The mentioning of Jamboard group work led to the spamming of "STICKY NOTE" in the Zoom chat. We have since discovered that there is a history of abusing the sticky note feature on

ry the Logarithms Lord. It stopped just as suddenly as it had started, and the teacher resumed with no comments.

- A repetitive theme of penguins. As per the timer we had set up after noticing this, we found that the freshman team could not go more than 3.14 seconds before making some obscure penguin reference. This was uncomfortable.
- In every grade's team, there was a break mid-session solely dedicated to praising the AMC 10 writers. Note: upon later inquiry, the members hissed at one of our observers at the mention of the AMC 12. The reason was unknown. Our observer is currently attending therapy for the trauma.

It was undoubtedly beautiful watching these elements come together to form the culture of this team. Nonsensical word vomit blended into a delightful experience for anyone not directly involved with math. Hearing a teaching assistant scold the top five students for forgetting that zero existed was music to the ears. All of these students were bound together by a love for quadratics and the apparent desire to torture themselves with base problems. Seasoned mathematicians and those just beginning to approach the beasts of two variable algebra worksheets all shared a common goal.

As of now, no one can truly explain the intricacies of the cult-like atmospheres within the math team family. Why penguins? How do we appease Larry the Logarithms Lord? Is one truly equal to two as many members have attempted to prove? And what on earth is the spicy history between the freshman math team and pandas? The world may never know.



while rightfully intrigued, were unaware of this development, with the general consensus that they were deeply afraid of today's freshmen.

An anonymous junior responded, "I don't know about penguins, but we do occasionally pay our respects to Larry the Logarithms Lord. But who doesn't? He does so much for us mortals." Our interviewer refused to continue because frankly, she was too weirded out

sessions:

- The freshman math team teacher opened the class with a daily reminder that "the Continental Mathematics League (CML) contest must burn for it is the culmination of everything wrong with this society." We uncovered that this was due to repeated errors of CML contest writers throughout the year, though the environ-

Jamboard, with students creating slides covered in the neon squares and others creating timeless works of art with them. The nature of their popularity has led teachers to eliminate Jamboard from class discussions.

- In the middle of a lecture, a junior unmuted to scream "LARRRRYYYYYYY!" This prompted a chorus of screams honoring Lar-

Sports Editorial

Jeremy Lin Speaks Out on Anti-Asian Violence

By TAE CHI
and AIDAN LOOK

Vichar Ratanapakdee, an 84-year-old immigrant from Thailand, was strolling through his San Francisco neighborhood on the morning of January 28 when a hooded man sprinted across the street and violently slammed him to the ground. The deadly assault left Ratanapakdee in an unconscious state, and the police later reported that he had passed away due to a brain hemorrhage caused by the attack. Though the perpetrator was eventually arrested for murder and elder abuse, the incident was more than just a case of harassment. Rather, it's part of a wider trend of hate-fueled crimes against the Asian community spiking in recent months.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring, Asian Americans have been victims of hate crimes at an alarmingly higher rate than in previous years. New York City and Los Angeles in particular have reported the most crimes motivated by anti-Asian sentiment. Stop AAPI Hate, a nonprofit organization created to address the rise in xenophobia and bigotry resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, re-

ceived 2,808 reports of anti-Asian discrimination between March and December of 2020. The pattern has continued into 2021, and President Joe Biden signed an executive order denouncing anti-Asian hate crimes shortly after he was inaugurated in January.

Jeremy Lin, a nine-year NBA veteran and current starting point guard for the Golden State Warriors' G League affiliate team, has spoken out against recent anti-Asian attacks through his social media platforms. In a recent [Facebook post](#), Lin expressed a common sentiment among the Asian community that is mainly a result of the model minority myth. Asian Americans are often pitted against other minority groups and portrayed as the "ideal" immigrants. The result is the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and expectations that all Asian people are supposed to live up to.

What's wrong with being associated with a group of people who are seen as "successful" or "hard-working?" For one, the model minority myth harms Asian Americans by setting standards that are virtually impossible to meet for many members of the Asian community. For instance, while Asians are often expected to

thrive financially, the pay of AAPI women who work full-time, year-round can be as low as [52 cents](#) for every dollar paid to white men. The lowest wages among the AAPI group are earned by Burmese women ([52 cents for every dollar paid to white men](#)) and Nepali women ([54 cents for every dollar paid to white men](#)). The idea that all Asians should be wealthy ignores the disparities in their available resources, which is evident by this wage gap alone.

The model minority myth also harms other minority groups. These minority groups are often told to view the "success" of Asian Americans as something they must strive and work hard for. This concept downplays the racism that Asian Americans, Black Americans, and all other minority groups face in America. They are told that working hard results in success that will allow them to "overcome" the oppression that they face. Once they do become "successful," the racism and discrimination that they once dealt with is suddenly erased. Society believes that a group cannot be oppressed or face racism if they have the ability to achieve such success. The model minority myth creates a toxic hierarchy among minority groups that

prevents society from making true progress for racial equality while allowing white people to maintain their role as the oppressors.

In an [Instagram post](#), Lin wrote, "We are tired of being told that we don't experience racism," which has seemingly become normalized today. He described the various forms of racism that Asian Americans deal with on a daily basis, from having the shape of their eyes mocked to being told that they look like every other Asian person. Yet, he points out that society treats the struggles of Asian Americans, including poverty, like they "aren't as real." The model minority myth is detrimental to the recognition of struggles within the Asian American community, and as these struggles continue to go unnoticed, stereotypes and discrimination against Asian Americans worsen while expectations increase.

The basketball star revealed that he was once called "coronavirus" during a basketball game. Though NBA officials are looking into Lin's claim, the 32-year-old stated that he won't name the perpetrator, insisting that he only wants to raise general awareness of the issue facing Asian Americans. When inquired further about when

he first became conscious of racism against Asians on the court, Lin [replied](#), "I never really thought that much about it until [...] I started to play really competitively." Lin also stated that he was often called racial slurs during his time playing at Harvard University: "Yeah, multiple times [...] talking about my eyes, talking about different stereotypes, talking about going back to China, things like that."

Lin has said that he has taken more pride in his identity as a result of the rise in hate crimes directed toward Asians. "I'm actually more than okay being the Asian basketball player if that means that I can do things like this, which is stand up for and have a voice for the unheard," he said.

Though most of us don't have an online following as big as the basketball star's, we must all take an active role in combating anti-Asian racism. We need to put aside our differences and combine our voices in order to break the cycle of violence and bring about real change. As Lin [put it](#), "Hear [others'] stories, expand your perspective, [and] stop comparing experiences. I believe this generation can be different. But we will need empathy and solidarity to get there."

Soccer

Manchester City's Unstoppable Record

By SHAFIUL HAQUE

The Manchester City FC-Liverpool FC fixture has always been an exciting match to watch in the last decade. The two sides are in constant competition to emerge as Premier League champions, and with star players such as Liverpool's Mohamed Salah and City's Kevin De Bruyne, there is a lot of anticipation behind the game. Last season, when the two sides met at Anfield, Liverpool emerged victorious, starting a win streak that ultimately crowned them Premier League title winners. Manchester City finished in second place that season, 18 points behind Liverpool, and many speculated that City manager Pep Guardiola's time at the club was over. However, seven months later, Manchester City is 11 points clear at the top of the Premier League table. Guardiola's men sustained a 21-match winning streak in all competitions before Manchester United defeated them at Etihad Stadium 2-0. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all clubs have suffered through sickness or loss of form, and Manchester City has had its fair share of problems as well. The question is, how have the Cityzens maintained this victory run? Was it just a case of their considerable financial investment aiding the club, or did Guardiola find the

right solutions to his problems by implementing a strong system?

Before the 2019-2020 season ended, City said farewell to some of its main squad players. Winger Leroy Sané left for FC Bayern Munich, center back Nicolás Otamendi left for SL Benfica, and club legend David Silva departed for Real Sociedad. As a replacement, Guardiola brought in Ferran Torres from Valencia and center backs Rúben Dias and Nathan Aké from Benfica and AFC Bournemouth, respectively. He also promoted young starlet Phil Foden, who is now playing a bigger role in the squad, to the main team. At the beginning of the season, things were looking shaky for the Blues, who suffered a 5-2 loss against Leicester City FC in September. Guardiola faced immediate pressure, finding himself at 14th place at one point, so he began to switch up his options. He stuck to a normal 4-3-3 formation, which switched up to a 4-2-3-1 at times, and his main strategy was to control possession and look for openings.

With Aké suffering from an injury and Eric García wishing for a move to FC Barcelona, Guardiola stuck with Portuguese center back Dias and English center back John Stones in the heart of City's defense. Dias has incredible influence on the team, and

though Stones had a difficult last season, he has performed exceptionally well lately. The duo has one of the best defensive records in Europe, conceding just six goals in 18 games together. As for full backs, Guardiola has benched left back Benjamin Mendy and instead played either left back

do "Fernandinho" Luiz Roza, both displaying impressive performances. As for City's attack, star player Sergio Agüero suffered from a knee and hamstring injury along with COVID-19, and creative playmaker De Bruyne dealt with a muscle injury. Guardiola needed to find the perfect solution yet

Gabriel Jesus, and Torres have been performing well this season. All have played an equal part in scoring goals and making assists in the final third.

The main reason Manchester City has functioned efficiently as a team this season is because of its chemistry and excellent performances. It's not just a single player stealing all the credit, but rather the whole team working together. From City's incredible defensive record to its impressive attacking output against their opponents, it's no wonder that the squad is enjoying life at the top of the Premier League table. Many avid soccer fans argue that the only reason City is at the top is because of its extensive budget support after being purchased by Abu Dhabi United Group. While it is true that City has been able to find replacements for injured players with ease, money does not equate to chemistry. You can have all the money and star players you want, but if the players don't have an understanding of the game plan with one another, your team will have a problem on its hands. Even with the devastating loss against Manchester United, it's pretty clear that Manchester City will continue to dominate the Premier League, and if team chemistry and composure are maintained, they can possibly contest for European trophies.

From City's incredible defensive record to its impressive attacking output against their opponents, it's no wonder that the squad is enjoying life at the top of the Premier League table.

Oleksandr Zinchenko, right back Kyle Walker, or alternating full back João Cancelo. Zinchenko and Cancelo have greatly improved since last season, and Walker has been a revelation for the Cityzens with his incredible speed. These full backs have always given their best on the pitch and contributed to City's defensive record.

After Guardiola solved City's defensive problems, he focused on improving their midfield and attacking threat. For defensive midfield, he stuck with the Spaniard Rodrigo "Rodri" Hernández Cas-

cante or the Brazilian Fernan-

Sports

Athlete of the Issue

Catching up With Defensive Back Derick Fang

By AIDAN LOOK

Derick Fang
Grade: Senior
Height: 5'10"
Hair Color: Black
Eye Color: Brown
Date of Birth: September 22, 2002

1. How long have you been on the Stuyvesant football team?

Four years.

2. What is your strategy for constantly improving yourself?

Setting tangible short term goals (like hitting a certain number in the weight room) in pursuit of long term goals (being



Courtesy of Derick Fang

the best athlete I can be)!

3. What's one of the biggest obstacles you've faced while playing football?

As a freshman, I was inexperienced and undersized. Going through football practice and conditioning was a living hell for me. But because of that [challenge], I worked all off-season to get to the right size and strength, which took a lot of persistence and commitment. Now, working out and improving myself physically [are] less of a hassle and more of a passion.

4. What position do you play? What skills and strengths are involved?

Defensive back. One of the hardest parts of playing the position is being able to anticipate the receiver's moves and drive on the ball when needed. The coverages can also get quite complicated.

5. What was your proudest or most memorable moment with the Stuyvesant Peglegs?

Probably the first home game of my sophomore season. All summer long, the team struggled to get anything going on both sides of the ball. Pulling off a win against our rivals, Petrides, in a literal lake was very satisfying.

6. What does a typical

practice day look like?

Warm ups, indies (individual position drills), followed by tackling drills, team practice and scrimmage, then finally, conditioning (this can be running gas-sers or holding the rope).

7. Funniest teammate?

Zhen Jie Huang. Literal clown.

Favorite food: Tacos.

Favorite class: History class.

Hobbies: Reading, playing saxophone, working out.

Favorite movie(s) or show(s): The Conan O'Brien Show and Kung Fu Hustle.

Sports Editorial

CTE: The NFL's Downfall?

By MAX SCHNEIDER

I love football. I've watched since I was five years old, and I am a die-hard Denver Broncos fan. Thus, I felt the sadness shared across the country from the loss of Vincent Jackson. A three-time Pro Bowl Wide Receiver, Jackson retired in 2018 after 12 years in the NFL to spend more time with his wife and three kids. That time was lost on February 15, 2021, when Jackson was found dead in a hotel room in Florida. He was 38 years old and had no serious diseases. At least, he was believed to have no diseases. While we won't know the certain cause of death until an autopsy is completed, it is suspected that Jackson suffered from chronic alcoholism and the NFL's biggest medical problem: chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

CTE is a progressive and fatal brain disease that stems from repeated brain trauma. When someone has CTE, a protein called tau clumps up, killing brain cells. According to the [Concussion Legacy Foundation](#), early symptoms of CTE are impulse control problems, depression, aggression, and paranoia. Later symptoms become even more serious. These include memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, and eventually progressive dementia. As studies and tests for CTE progress, more and more NFL players, as well as military veterans and boxers are being found to have had CTE, and more and more are dying from it.

One such player is Junior Seau. A Hall of Fame middle linebacker, Junior Seau shot himself in the chest in 2012. After his death, his brain was studied, and it was found that he had a serious case of CTE that led to depression and eventual suicide. Junior Seau was a fierce player who had several concussions according to his ex-wife, Gina DeBoer Seau. The true number will never be known due to the NFL's toxic culture of hiding injuries to avoid being benched. As Junior

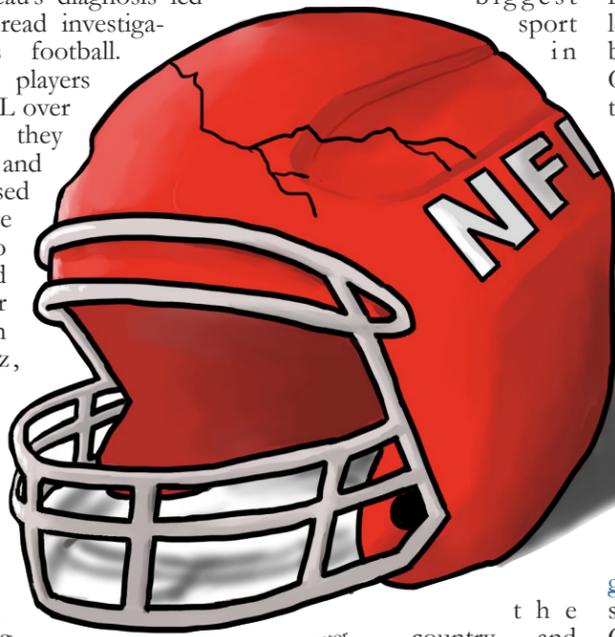
Seau's teammate, Gary Plummer, [told the LA Times](#), "Your entire life, that is probably your most revered characteristic as a player—your toughness, your ability to handle pain, your ability to overcome adversity [...] Junior [Seau] was obviously very good at it. He'd play through ridiculous pain that some people wouldn't even get out of bed with to go to an office job. Sometimes you play a game with those." Plummer has also said that if a linebacker doesn't see stars at least five times a game, he isn't doing his job.

Junior Seau's diagnosis led to a widespread investigation across football. Over 2,000 players sued the NFL over concussions they received, and other deceased players were found to have also had CTE. A year later, Aaron Hernandez, a star tight end for the New England Patriots, was arrested for the murder of Odin Lloyd. While serving a life sentence, Hernandez hanged himself with a bedsheet. His brain was studied, and he was found to have stage three CTE, meaning he had the worst CTE ever found in someone under the age of 46. While CTE is not an excuse for Hernandez's actions, it likely played a factor.

To this day, the most expansive and effective study on CTE and how it relates to football was conducted by Boston University in 2017. Led by Dr. Ann McKee, the study examined 202 brains from deceased football players. According to their results, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, [177 brains had signs of CTE](#). This number in-

cludes 110 of 111 tested NFL players, some of whom are part of the 101 professional players with severe CTE (Stage 3 or 4). Those with severe CTE were found to have an 85 percent chance of having dementia and a 95 percent chance of having cognitive symptoms. As Dr. McKee [put it](#), "It is no longer debatable whether or not there is a problem in football—there is a problem." She is right. It is clear CTE is a serious problem both for the diagnosed and those around them. Also clear is the fact that football isn't going anywhere. It remains the

biggest sport in



Ka Seng Soo / The Spectator

biggest sport in the country and rakes in billions of dollars every year. Unless something changes, CTE will remain. This change needs to be sweeping and come from the top of the sport—the NFL and its players.

The NFL Players Association just negotiated the new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the NFL. According to NFL Players Association's [website](#), their achievements related to CTE were setting aside \$100 million to CTE research at Harvard University, creating a crisis hotline for players, coaches, and their families, and getting independent concussion experts to evaluate players when they exhibit symptoms. This progress is a great start.

The research will help the players take next steps with the league. The hotline may save players grappling with suicide, and the independent experts can get rid of the toxic culture of letting your players play through injury if that gives your team their best chance to win. However, these efforts missed the most important thing. Players are still taking hits to the head! Repeated studies have shown that football in its current form is causing major neurological problems, and nothing is actually going to change. The players need to step back and realize that if they don't take less hits to the head, they could be condemning themselves to CTE and thus the aforementioned symptoms. Whether it is through better helmets, playing less, or changing rules, the executives need to make it happen.

That point brings us to the league. League officials have notoriously skirted discussions about CTE, not even acknowledging its existence until 2016, when they were forced to face the topic in [a session with Congress](#). Since then, the league has said practically nothing about CTE, with commissioner Roger Goodell's last statement on the subject being from 2016. In fact, the league has done more to dismiss CTE. Cowboys owner Jerry Jones [said](#) in 2016, "It's absurd [to] say there's a relationship [between] CTE and playing football." This dismissal is a colossal and systematic failure on the part of the NFL. Since Dr. McKee's study, the NFL has done practically nothing, showing no regard for the player's risk of getting CTE. This failure is shameful and needs to be remedied immediately.

The problem is that the NFL has no reason to change. Fans like me have continued to watch every Sunday, and in a year when many people said they were going to boycott

the NFL, the league had more viewers than ever before. This change won't come down to necessity for the league. It must come down to their morals, not just for NFL players, but for all players. Every year, over one million children play high school football and subsequently knock heads. Even these high school games can result in early cases of CTE. In that same Dr. McKee study, it was found that over 20 percent of former high school players had CTE. This number ballooned to 91 percent of former college players. The burden to protect these children and young adults does not stem from Pop Warner, high schools, or the NCAA. It comes from the NFL.

Fixing CTE will never happen. As with other brain diseases, it will always exist. The NFL's job is to minimize the risk of players getting CTE without compromising the sport, which can be done in two ways: reducing the number of times the head is contacted and protecting the head from these hits. Reducing the number of times the head is contacted is difficult. One way to minimize this number is to encourage children to play flag football before playing real football as high schoolers and beyond. Additionally, increasing penalties and fines stemming from illegal hits to the head should be a necessity. Softening the blow of head shots both figuratively and literally is equally challenging. This solution rests in the technology of helmets. If the NFL is willing to put up the money, helmets can be made better, and safety will increase.

Jackson died from injuries he sustained while playing a game for our entertainment. To think that this situation will continue to happen is appalling, and as a football fan, it makes me feel guilty. I love football for the beauty of it. It is a wonderful mix of strategy, athleticism and teamwork. The NFL has a saying they have used countless times: It Takes All of Us. They are right. Now they have to uphold their part.

Sports Editorial

Houston, We Have a Problem

By SATHIRTHA MONDAL

In the turbulent history of Houston, Texas, sports, the past few years have marked rock bottom for fans. The city has suffered countless humiliations, scandals, and losses in the past months alone. The last relief for Houston sports fans came in 2017 when the Houston Astros defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers to secure a World Series title, only to be tarnished by a [cheating scandal](#). Since then, the city's sports teams have been a mess, undergoing continuous decline. In particular, the departure of elite players from Houston's major league teams has dealt crushing blows to the city's already weak sports culture, making one thing clear: the city officially has a problem on its hands.

Rewind to the 2017 World Series, when the Astros defeated the Dodgers four games to three and clinched their first World Series in franchise history. The win ended one of the worst decades in Astros history, one consisting of the retirement of favorites like Jeff Bagwell, a losing record from 2009 through 2014, and several consecutive 100-plus-loss seasons. The victory also restored hope in Houston, which had recently been shattered by Hurricane Harvey, one of the costliest storms in U.S. history. The hope was short-lived, however, as an allegation arose accusing

the Astros of illicit sign stealing or deciphering the signs of their opponent through technological aid. MLB confirmed the Astros' flagrant cheating through an investigation and fined the team \$5 million as a result. While the Astros were not stripped of their title, their only championship was tainted with a reputation of cheating.

Since the scandal, the world has witnessed a long history of Houston sports that is nothing short of depressing. Whether it be the Houston Rockets blowing a 3-2 lead to the Golden State Warriors in the 2018 NBA playoffs or the Houston Texans blowing a 24-0 lead against the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL divisional round, the city has always found a way to squander its chances. Accordingly, many frustrated stars have parted ways with Houston, leaving the Bayou City even more heartbroken.

The last year alone has seen the departure of five major sporting stars from Houston. The most recent was the departure of former Texans defensive end J.J. Watt, who reportedly signed with the Arizona Cardinals on a two-year, up to \$31 million deal. The departure followed an embarrassing 4-12 season record, which highlighted the Texans' need to rebuild after countless self-inflicted damages. However, Watt showed disinterest in rebuilding. He holds the franchise record for both

sacks and forced fumbles and was named Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year in 2017. Evidently, he has had a legendary 10-year tenure with the Texans, but seeing that he is 32 and running out of time, Watt emphasized his desire to play for a viable championship contender and potentially earn his first Super Bowl ring.

About a year prior, the Texans dealt wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins to the Cardinals after six seasons. The trade left a gaping hole in Houston's offense and began the Texans' tumultuous season, leaving many perplexed as to why the team would release one of their star offensive playmakers. Since the trade, Hopkins has thrived in Arizona, ranking third in the NFL in catches and fourth in receiving yards, while the Texans have suffered one of their worst season records in franchise history. Houston's star quarterback Deshaun Watson has also implored the organization for his release. In spite of his making it known that he never wants to play for the Texans again, the organization has instead granted him the ability to sit out the 2021 NFL season. However, sitting out means Watson may have to forfeit \$20.2 million from his \$156 million contract extension, pay \$50 thousand daily fines, give up his game checks, and jeopardize his signing bonus, making it clear that the Texans are adamant on

keeping their star quarterback, despite his misery.

In December of 2020, the Rockets saw the departure of dominant point guard Russell Westbrook. The trade request shocked the sports world as Westbrook was coming out of an outstanding season in his franchise debut, averaging 27.2 points, 7.9 rebounds, and seven assists per game. Though his tenure with the Rockets was short, Westbrook expressed discontent and frustration over the Rockets' direction and lack of accountability. Eventually, the Washington Wizards and Rockets agreed on a trade, landing Westbrook in Washington and former Wizards point guard John Wall in Houston.

Two months later, in a four-team trade, the Rockets sent former MVP and shooting guard James Harden to the Brooklyn Nets. The release came after a two-month trade request in which the former Rockets shooting guard attempted every means to agitate his release to the Brooklyn Nets. The Rockets last won back-to-back championships in 1994 and 1995 and have yet to advance to the finals since. Following yet another playoffs loss, Harden seriously doubted that the Rockets could be a championship contender. As a result, he pursued a different team. To accelerate his trade request, he began to party and publicize it, violating the NBA's COVID-19 protocols. Harden

even avoided trading camp to attend parties and staged severe weight gain to force the trade, emphasizing his desperation to leave the city. Harden has thrived in Brooklyn, where he has displayed a strong case to be the MVP once more, averaging 25.5 points, 11.4 assists, and 8.7 rebounds per game.

Harden's move is not the last of Houston's sports troubles, however. The Astros lost outfielder George Springer at the beginning of 2021. The announcement was finalized in a six-year deal worth \$150 million. Springer's impact was unmatched due to his formidable defensive and hitting abilities. He is also a three-time All-Star and winner of the 2017 World Series MVP award. Thus, the Astros have some serious adjustments to make in order to offset the loss of one of the best in the game.

While Houston has housed several star athletes over the years, its ability to retain the talent is lacking. While the city has struggled, its players have continually lost faith, leaving even more gaping holes. As the city faces countless humiliations and losses, it has been stripped of its chance to be a premier sports city and has even declined to one of the most miserable sports cities in the U.S. Houston has lost some serious star power, and rebuilding is more than necessary to revive its sports culture.

Soccer

The Dawn of a New Rivalry

By NAKIB ABEDIN

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have dominated soccer around the world for the last 15 years. However, as legendary as they are, they are both nearing the ends of their careers. As their ages slowly start to show and their performances decline, two young superstars have begun to shine bright. Erling Haaland, a 20-year-old striker for Borussia Dortmund, and Kylian Mbappé, a 22-year-old forward for Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), are taking over the thrones of Messi and Ronaldo. Though it is very early on in their careers, they both just might have what it takes to surpass Messi and Ronaldo's legacy.

Mbappé introduced himself to the world stage in the 2016-2017 season, when he helped take AS Monaco FC to the semi-finals of the UEFA Champions League. He scored six goals in that campaign and put up incredible performances against Manchester City. The following season, he was signed by PSG, and in 2018, he shocked the world again by winning the World Cup with France at the age of 19. On the way to winning the tournament, he encountered an

Argentina side led by Messi, and he put up a legendary performance to help France win 4-3. Mbappé and Messi had another encounter in a recent Champions League game featuring FC Barcelona and PSG. Mbappé once again put on a masterful performance and scored a hat trick to beat Barcelona 4-1. In the third showdown between him and Messi, Mbappé scored a penalty to help PSG close out any chance of a comeback from Barcelona. Though one might say that Mbappé was playing with better teammates in these encounters against Messi, his prolific scoring in both those games proved that he can easily compete with the very best.

In response to Mbappé's heroics against Barcelona, Haaland also had one of the most impressive games of his career. In a Champions League match against Sevilla FC, Haaland scored two goals and produced an assist to push Dortmund past Sevilla in a 3-2 win. In an interview after the match, Haaland [said](#), "When I saw Mbappé score the hat trick, I got free motivation, so thanks to him." In the second leg, Haaland scored another two goals, which made him the fastest player ever to reach 20 goals in the history of the

Champions League. Mbappé and Haaland are pushing each other to their very best, and the start of a new rivalry is brewing.

Both Ronaldo and Messi have been knocked out of the Champions League in the Round of 16, the first time this has happened since 2005. However, as the saying goes, there are no ends, only new beginnings. The careers of Haaland and Mbappé will definitely soften the gradual decline of Messi and Ronaldo. The rise of Haaland and Mbappé begs the question: will they one day surpass their predecessors? Mbappé already has the World Cup that eluded Messi and Ronaldo for their entire careers. Despite being 20 years old, Haaland has scored 20 goals in 14 games in the Champions League. In comparison, it took Ronaldo 30 games to get his first goal, and as of right now, he is the highest scorer in the history of the competition. It took Messi 40 games to reach 20 goals in the Champions League, and Haaland did it more than twice as quickly. It took Haaland and Mbappé 146 games and 180 games to reach 100 [goals](#), respectively, whereas it took Messi and Ronaldo 210 games and 301 [games](#), respectively.

Haaland and Mbappé have had a better start to their careers than Messi and Ronaldo, and if they continue to grow, the sky's the limit for their potential.

Unlike Haaland, Ronaldo started his career as a winger, which naturally made it harder to score. Ronaldo's goal-scoring really started to pick up after he gravitated toward central positions, eventually turning into a striker. Haaland has the advantage of starting his career as a poacher, meaning that he will probably have an easier time getting goals than Ronaldo did at the same age. Assuming Haaland can maintain his incredible goal-scoring ratio, he will be on track to surpass Ronaldo as the top scorer of all time.

Mbappé also has exciting potential. If he wins the Champions League within the next few years, he would essentially complete a full career. He has nothing left to prove at the international level because he already won the World Cup. Success at the club level is the only thing he has left to accomplish. Even though he won several domestic trophies with PSG, many soccer fans argue that they don't hold very much weight since PSG is typically dominant in

domestic competitions. However, a win in the Champions League would silence the critics. He got close to winning the Champions League in the 2019-2020 season but fell short with a 1-0 loss against FC Bayern Munich in the final. With ample time remaining in his career to continue winning trophies, Mbappé may become one of the most accomplished players in history.

The next decade of soccer will be very interesting to watch. What Ronaldo and Messi have accomplished in their careers is simply remarkable. They have set extremely high standards for Mbappé and Haaland. The recent struggles in their careers take nothing away from their overall legacy. However, Haaland and Mbappé have shown that they can match, and occasionally surpass, some of the accomplishments of Messi and Ronaldo. Nevertheless, merely having the potential to do something doesn't necessarily mean that it will happen. To consistently compete at the highest level for years and years is no easy task. The longevity of Haaland and Mbappé's success is ultimately unknown. Many questions remain, but one thing is certain: the future of soccer is in good hands.

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Tennis

By AVA QUARLES

The face of women's tennis has been almost entirely undisputed for the entire 21st century. Serena Williams is not only one of the greatest female tennis players ever, but also one of the greatest athletes of all time. With 39 total Grand Slam titles and 73 career titles in all, she has been a formidable force on the court for the past 20 years. Now at the age of 39, her decline is, unfortunately, inevitable. And as if the world didn't know yet, this year's Australian Open (AO) semifinals made it clear who the next big female tennis star will be: 23-year-old Naomi Osaka.

Born in Japan, Osaka's family moved to the U.S. when she was three. Though she is half-Japanese and half-Haitian, she

has always represented Japan when she plays. Starting her professional career very young, she was ranked in the Women's Tennis Association's top 50 by the age of 19. Since then, Osaka has won two U.S. Open titles and two AO titles and ranked in the top five for the past three years. She won the 2021 AO final in two sets against American Jennifer Brady, but perhaps more significantly, she brutally defeated Williams 6-3, 6-4 in the semifinals. One of only three players to win her first four Grand Slam finals, Osaka is now clearly the women's tour player to beat. The bittersweet truth is: the Williams era is ending, and the Osaka era is here.

Primarily, Osaka is a lethal tournament player thanks largely to her natural competitive instinct. Before this year's final,

she [said](#), "I have this mentality that people don't remember the runners-up. I think I fight the hardest in the finals. I think that's where you sort of set yourself apart." And she does set herself apart. She shines in Grand Slam arenas and has won every big stage final that she's appeared in. She can step up and perform in the big moments; it can't be easy going up against an athlete like Williams, but Osaka has defeated her for multiple titles. Known for her powerful serves, Osaka led the AO women's singles in aces with 50, her runner-up only hitting 35. She is also on a roll with a 21-match winning streak, and her career is just beginning. There's no way to know if her career will match the longevity and prosperity of Williams's, but she is definitely headed in the right direction.

In addition to athletic talent, a superstar athlete must have a brand. Osaka is young, bicultural, charismatic, and a role model to many young athletes because of her great success. Thus, she is a perfect marketing icon and seems to have no problem bringing in cash: in 2020 she became the highest-paid female athlete ever, raking in \$37.4 million with \$34 million from endorsements. These endorsements range from MasterCard to Nissan Motors, and she even has her own Nike line. Not only is she successful, but she has also been an outspoken activist and uses her platform to bring attention to issues around racial injustice. Last August, she dropped out of the Cincinnati Open in protest of the shooting of Jacob Blake. Then, during the U.S. Open that she

went on to win, she wore several face masks printed with the names of black victims of police brutality and violence. She was acknowledged by many for her outstanding efforts to bring awareness to these prevalent issues. Even the 12-time Grand Slam title winner, legendary Billie Jean King acknowledged her and [said](#), "[Osaka is] a leader not only in women's tennis but in all of sports and a force for change in our society." Osaka was also selected the 2020 Female Athlete of the Year by the Associated Press for her passion off the court as well as her accomplishments on it.

Williams's glory isn't completely gone and probably won't be for a while. But as she fades, a new star is getting brighter in the world of women's tennis.

MLB

The Mets' Amazin' Offseason

By JESSE WANG

Since the news of Steve Cohen's official purchase of the New York Mets first broke on October 30, 2020, fans have agreed that his arrival has been nothing short of refreshing to see. It's hard not to be excited after all, when your new owner has an expected net worth of \$2.4 billion, which is higher than the net worths of the next three richest owners in the MLB combined. It's also a stark contrast to the previous ownership of the Wilpon family, which a majority of the Mets fan base had dubbed the "coupons," simply due to their inability to reel in any big name players and provide a payroll for a team in one of the greatest sports markets in the world.

Cohen, however, immediately put himself in the spotlight. He brought back the well-respected and highly knowledgeable mind in former General Manager (GM) Sandy Alderson as the president of operations. Alderson, for reference, was the acting GM when the Mets had drafted their current young core of Pete Alonso, Dominic Smith, Michael Conforto, and Brandon Nimmo, among others. Cohen also wanted to expand and dramatically update the Mets analytics department, as the Mets had the second smallest analytics department in the league at the time of the purchase. He also wanted to replenish and maintain the already weakened farm system. Thus, Alderson himself said to expect a lot more free agent signings rather than trades at the start of the offseason, which, by the end of the offseason, was only partially true. Cohen had also expressed that he wanted to build a sustainable, winning team, and in order to do so, the Mets needed to develop and build their young talent. He believed that a team couldn't just win a championship roster by "spending like a drunken sailor" and buying every single free agent off the market like some fans expected. But even so, the Mets still proceeded

to successfully fill in and check off their most pressing needs in these past four months, a sign that the team is heading in the right direction once again.

The Mets offseason was highlighted by a blockbuster trade with the Cleveland Indians, in which they acquired a perennial all-star in shortstop Francisco Lindor and a very solid rotation piece in Carlos Carrasco. Conversely, the package the Mets sent to Cleveland had a much lower value than the rest of the league expected, as the Mets' top eight prospects in their farm system remained untouched. Trading only shortstops Amed Rosario, Andrés Giménez, and prospects RHP Josh Wolf and OF Isaiah Greene (ninth and 10th in the Mets system respectively), according to [Forbes](#), a rival league executive said shortly after the deal was officially completed, "They stole him. Total steal. It's ridiculous. People should be fired in Cleveland for doing that trade." The trades didn't just end there either. In fact, by the end of the offseason, the Mets had almost been just as active on the trading block as they had on the free agency market. They worked on replenishing their farm system with the acquisition of Khalil Lee from the Kansas City Royals, who immediately shot up to become their number eight prospect, and even traded hometown LHP Steven Matz for three pitching prospects. They also traded for much-needed major-league-ready pitching depth in RHP Jordan Yamamoto from the Miami Marlins and LHP Joey Lucchesi from the San Diego Padres, both of whom had respectable 2019 seasons before struggling somewhat during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season.

Though the trade market did play a major role in the Mets offseason, don't let that distract you from the significant moves they got out of free agency. To fill their vacancy in the catcher spot after Wilson Ramos's departure, they signed veteran catcher James McCann, who was widely

regarded as the second-best available option in the market, to a four-year, \$40 million contract. The Mets also further bolstered their bullpen with strikeout artist Trevor May, inking him to a two-year, \$15 million contract. His strikeout rate of 14.66 per nine innings ranked seventh in the majors, and his 43 percent whiff rate was ranked eighth. Adding Aaron Loup gave the Mets a lefty specialist in the bullpen after the departure of lefty Justin Wilson, as he joined the team on a one-year, \$3 million deal. They then signed a high potential and reward player in the right-handed starter Taijuan Walker, who found recent success in the 2020 season, pitching to a 2.70 ERA after recovering from Tommy John the season before. Walker gives the Mets another extra option for the starting rotation and was signed to a two-year, \$20 million deal. Finally, they proceeded to acquire outfielders Albert Almora Jr. and Kevin Pillar, as well as utilityman Jonathan Villar to help further bolster the Mets bench.

Though they did miss out on all the major free agents that highlighted this year's free agency class such as George Springer, Trevor Bauer, and J.T. Realmuto, the Mets continued to express a willingness to spend when possible, a huge difference from the previous ownership group. All three players had reportedly received, at one point this offseason, a major offer from the Mets, but Alderson also showed his unwillingness to overpay when unnecessary, and these situations included getting into bidding wars for prices that just seemed unfavorable and illogical for the team to commit to. The Mets, however, most solidified their willingness to spend when they offered Bauer a contract that would've made him one of the highest paid pitchers for the next two years, which would've completely blown the Mets past the luxury tax. Bauer ended up choosing his hometown Dodgers instead. On the bright side, by not signing any huge contracts

this season, Alderson also confirmed that it would only increase the chances of maintaining the core squad of players they currently had, due to the fact that Lindor, Conforto, Noah Syndergaard, and Marcus Stroman are all on track for free agency next year. Acting GM Zack Scott confirmed that he usually prefers to discuss contract extensions during spring training, and therefore, it is highly likely that they're currently in talks. If the Mets are able to extend either Conforto or Lindor, it would make the offseason that much better.

By the end of the offseason, the Mets had completely overhauled their roster, changing 17 on their 40-man lineup and making it one of the busiest off-seasons they've had in years. So what's next for the team? Currently, [PECOTA Projections](#) has indicated that the Mets will be the clear frontrunners of the NL East division for the 2021 season at 92 wins. [FanGraphs](#) has the Mets sitting comfortably at 92 wins this year. I also believe that the Mets will be at least a 90 win team this year, likely between the 90-95 win range. The new additions give the Mets one of the strongest teams fans have seen in years, definitely in contention

with the 2015 World Series Mets. Plus, with Syndergaard's eventual return to the rotation in June and the return of another dominant reliever in Seth Lugo in May, the Mets will only continue to add to the depth and strength of their team. However, with the NL East being arguably the hardest division in baseball this year, it will be incredibly difficult to determine if the Mets will perform as well as they look on paper. The Mets still seem to have a reputation of underperforming their expectations, so the first goal is to dethrone the Atlanta Braves, who have won the NL East the past three years. The next obvious challenge is to win the NL division as a whole, which will not be an easy task with the NL West having two powerhouses of their own in the San Diego Padres and the Los Angeles Dodgers. And finally, the ultimate goal is to win the World Series. As Cohen [said](#), "If we don't win a World Series in 3-5 years, that would be disappointing." And there's almost no doubt that he'll continue to do whatever he can to fulfill that goal for the team and the fans. Either way, whether that comes now or in the near future, it is now an amazin' time to be a Mets fan.

SPORTSBEAT

The **NBA All-Star Game** took place this weekend. **Giannis Antetokounmpo** took home MVP honors after shooting 16-16 for Team LeBron.

Miami Heat center **Meyers Leonard** was seen on Twitch repeating anti-Semitic slurs. He has been fined by the NBA and will be suspended for a week.

Quarterback **Dak Prescott** signed a four-year, \$160 million contract to remain with the Dallas Cowboys.

The **Duke Blue Devils** were eliminated from the ACC Tournament due to a COVID-19 outbreak within the team, hurting their chance at earning a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

The **MLB** will experiment with new rules in the minor leagues this season, including robot umpires and larger bases.