



The Spectator

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HUMOR On Caffeine Sources

Are you a sleep-deprived, red-eyed Stuyvesant student? Yes. Read along as senior and humor writer Emily Chen evaluates the best sources of caffeine to get you out of bed and to, well, your desk five feet away.

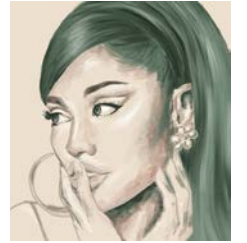
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ariana Grande Switches To Sultry R&B On "Positions"

A&E writers Samira Esha, Lianne Ohayon, and Levi Simon review Ariana Grande's fifth studio album "Positions," a step away from her pop bubblegum roots toward a more mature and sensual R&B style.

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Administration Alters Freshman Math and Science Course Placement

By JADY CHEN, JAMES LEE, MAGGIE SANSONE, and JANNA WANG

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic altering how schools operate this year, the Stuyvesant administration has made changes regarding the math and science classes offered to the class of 2024. Both the Enriched Geometry and Geometry-Algebra courses, separate from the standard freshmen geometry course, are not offered this year. The administration has also used SHSAT scores to determine students' Advanced Placement (AP) science class placement rather than the Living Environment Regents examination scores as in past years.

Typically, incoming freshmen take a placement exam to evaluate their appropriate math class during Camp Stuy in June. Depending on their performance, students are eligible for Geometry-Algebra, Geometry, Enriched Geometry, or Algebra 2/Trigonometry, and may qualify for math team.

The Camp Stuy placement exam was not administered this year, however, as a result of complications raised by the pandemic. "Because we could not hold Camp Stuy in June, we were unable to administer a [math] placement

exam to incoming freshmen. The second part of the placement exam is used to determine both honors and math team placement; without it, we had no way to determine who should be programmed for the honors classes," Assistant Principal of Math Eric Smith said in an e-mail interview.

Teachers and administrators initially brainstormed alternative methods to determine students' math courses. "I proposed using math scores from the SHSAT [to] place the top-scoring students [into] the Enriched Geometry class. I, however, discovered that [the] SHSAT math score is a poor predictor of placement exam score based on prior data. We had no Regents grades because all Regents were waived in June, and we had no middle school grades because middle school used MT/N/NX grades as a final grade in place of a numerical grade," math teacher David Peng said in an e-mail interview. "We had no choice but to remove Enriched Geometry."

In substitution of a placement exam, freshmen and their families were instead asked to complete a math survey form, in which they answered questions about their experience in math and submitted a copy of their final 8th grade

transcript. "Incoming families fill[ed] out a form on our incoming portal on Talos specifically for biology and math (and other departments) to submit their preferences/choices and give their background information," Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said in an e-mail interview.

Peng expressed his disappointment that the math department was unable to provide either course this year, citing the unique benefits of each. "Enriched Geometry covers a great deal of additional topics in Geometry that just aren't taught in any other non-Problem Solving class, and the Geometry & Algebra course really helps those freshmen reinforce concepts from Algebra I that are needed in geometry and beyond," he said. With the dual Geometry-Algebra course cut, freshmen ineligible for Geometry (because they did not learn the material for Algebra I in middle school) are taking Algebra I.

Some students feel indifferent about the change. "I'm currently taking Geometry," freshman Allen Fertidos said in an e-mail interview. "This was expected since I took Algebra 1 in 8th grade [...]"

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FRESHMAN CAUCUS ENDORSEMENTS (PAGE 4)



The Cissé-Mikhalseky ticket.



The Zhang-Olkhovenko ticket.



The Patel-Deng ticket.

Sasha Secorow / The Spectator

Courtesy of Unique Zhang and Alisey Olkhovenko

Sasha Secorow / The Spectator

NEWSBEAT

The **Goethe-Institut**, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the study of the German language, hosted a **virtual Career Day** for Stuyvesant students on November 5 and 6.

Freshmen Caucus candidates currently campaigning for office participated in the **Freshmen Caucus debate** on November 9 and 10. The **election** is scheduled for **November 16**.

Parent-teacher conferences are being held virtually on November 12 and 13.

November 15 is the last day for students to opt into **Blended Learning** for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Students in grades 10-12 will be allowed into school for locker clean-outs and textbook drop-offs from **November 16 to 25**.

DOE Implements New Policy for Opting into Blended Learning

By LEXI CHEN, FAHIMA MIAJEE, and SAKURA YAMANAKA with additional reporting by SAAD GHAFFOULI

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor Richard Carranza announced on October 26 that the period from November 2 to 15 would be the only opportunity for families to opt into blended learning for the 2020 to 2021 school year. This announcement follows the DOE's initial statement that families may opt into blended learning quarterly at predetermined times during the school year, the first of which being in November.

The decision was made to allow more time for schools to prepare for the number of blended students that would be in school throughout the year beforehand. According to a tweet from Carranza's Twitter page on October 26, "[it] is a change to our original approach, based on two important lessons learned: we need to give families more time to be aware of the chance to change their preference, and it can take time for schools to program their students and staff, and we want to make sure they have it."

Currently, students who are in blended learning are split into pods and come into school on their

designated pod's days. Students work in assigned areas around the school, such as the theater or the gym, and receive the same remote instruction from their teachers as their remote peers. Despite the change in the opt-in period, Stuyvesant's exception model will stay the same. "We never intended on changing programming based on numbers of blended learners because our exception model was based on fully remote instruction for the length of circumstances surrounding the need for cohort-based attendance at school," Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said in an e-mail interview.

As students choose to opt into blended learning, the administration will have to prepare accordingly for the number of students that will be in the building on a given day. "[Principal Seung] Yu and the administration must base the number of days offered for blended learners to come to the building and the number of pods on our number of blended learners," Ingram said. "If blended learners do not come in on the days they are assigned, there will be more spaces open than necessary, more faculty supervising than necessary, and less interaction afforded to our students."

The administration, however, felt that the new policy was abrupt, as they had originally planned for quarterly opt-in periods. "It defi-

nately has its issues because [we are] trying to keep track of students who are choosing blended versus remote and then again, trying to configure our space," Yu said. "We had originally [gone] with the plan that this was going to be done on a quarterly basis. A lot of it was also contingent upon us getting information about when those would happen and when the window would happen and then when they would get started again. So I think if anything, I just want a decision to be made so that we can then plan accordingly as opposed to constant shifts."

Many students were frustrated by the change as they had hoped

to switch to blended learning during the original quarterly periods throughout the year. "I don't agree with the new decision regarding blended learning, for people like me who hoped to switch back when things started to normalize, it was pretty discouraging knowing that this is the one and only chance," sophomore Isabella Chow said in an e-mail interview.

Senior Raisa Amin added in an e-mail interview, "I decided on remote learning for the fall because it was the safest option for me and my family, as there is less risk of infection with decreased travel and in-

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News

Administration Alters Freshman Math and Science Course Placement

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I don't think anybody would be too disappointed seeing as [Enriched Geometry] isn't something we desperately waited for."

Other students, however, are displeased with the removal of Enriched Geometry. "I originally was hoping to possibly take Honors Geometry, because I heard it was easier to stay in the Honors track if you do take it, and [I] like math, so it was kind of disappointing that they didn't have it this year," freshman Amanda

exam] or wanted more practice could go, and their extra involvement would boost their likelihood to be on the team," Cisse said.

Senior Math Team members organized Zoom classes for potential candidates to review solutions, learn new topics, and take practice contests throughout the month of August. "Students who attended were evaluated holistically based on attendance, participation, completion of problem sets, and how they performed on the tryouts," Peng said.

Along with reworking math

the math survey, the SHSAT was the primary metric. "The freshman AP bio program has been very successful the last two years, [...] and so the school wanted to see the program continue," Biology teacher Marissa Maggio said in an e-mail interview. There was simply not any other option on which to base their placement into freshman AP."

Students had to have taken and passed the Living Environment Regents class, however, in order to be considered for an AP science class. "I originally did want to take either [...] AP Biology or AP Environmental Science," Cisse, who is enrolled in Honors Modern Biology, said. "I personally am not in an AP Science course right now, but I think I probably would have, had my middle school offered a regents science class."

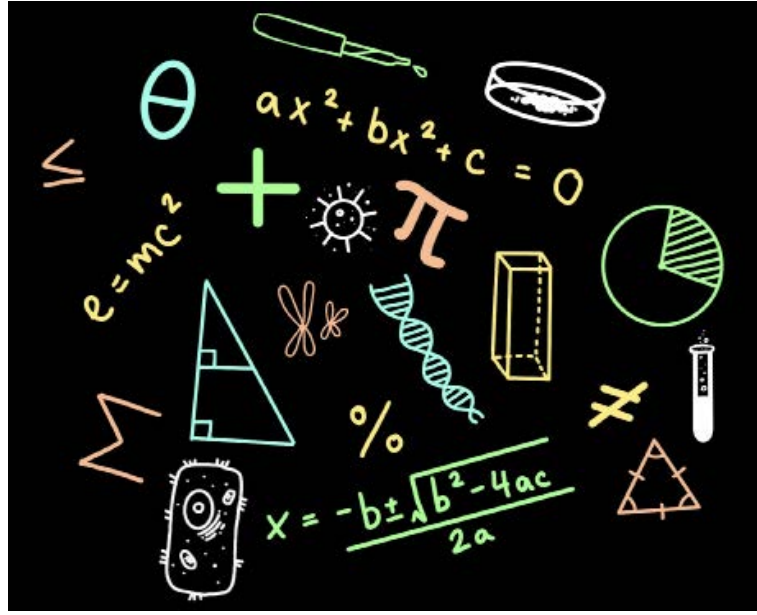
The decision to use SHSAT scores put students who participate in the Discovery program—an initiative directed toward students who scored within a certain range below the cutoff score on the SHSAT and are from a low-income household and school, allowing them to gain entry into specialized high schools—at a disadvantage. "I got into Stuyvesant through the Discovery program. Students in this program often get scores ranging from 470 to 500, which is most likely not enough to [qualify for] an AP class. This new decision totally disregard[s] these kids," Fertidos, who is taking Honors Modern Biology, said.

Non-Discovery students were also frustrated by the lottery system of course placement. "I did not get my first choice science class, AP Biology, but was placed into AP Environmental Science instead," freshman Hellen Luo said in an e-mail interview. "[Yet] students who scored lower on the SHSAT were scheduled to take AP Biology, which was also their first choice science class."

Similar to how students' SHSAT scores have little correlation to their performance on the math placement exam, some students have doubted whether or not the scores have any correlation to preparedness for an AP science course. "At first, I regretted not taking AP Bio seeing as everyone [else was] taking it, but

classes, the administration had to come up with a new method to determine freshmen AP science placement. During a normal year, incoming students take the Living Environment Regents exam in June if they are enrolled in Living Environment in middle school. Placement in freshmen AP science classes—AP Biology and AP Environmental Science—is usually determined by Regents score. Students not enrolled in an AP science course take Honors Modern Biology.

Former Principal Eric Contreras and Assistant Principal of Biology Elizabeth Fong, along with the AP science freshman teachers, came up with a solution to the dilemma posed by the lack of Regents last summer: SHSAT scores. While students indicated their top choice science classes via a science survey on the same Talos portal as



Sophie Paget / The Spectator

Cisse said in an e-mail interview.

Still, students will have the opportunity of entering the honors track for their sophomore year. "Placement into honors courses is based on teacher recommendation, so it shouldn't make much of a difference when planning for Honors Algebra 2 next year," Smith said.

Though the administration was unable to host the Camp Stuy placement exam which usually determines math team, students are still able to participate in the team. About two hundred students interested in math team attended Zoom call tryouts and took a placement exam on Google Forms.

Regardless of their performance on the exam, all of the students who showed up to tryouts were invited to a four-week summer session to prepare them for the course. "Students who felt like they did not do well [on the



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and NASA

WORLDBEAT

Joe Biden won the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and will serve as the **46th President of the United States**.

Kamala Harris is the first woman and first woman of color to become vice president.

Jeopardy! host Alex Trebek died from pancreatic cancer on November 8, 2020.

The United States reported **more than 160,000 COVID cases** on November 12, passing the previous record of the **most cases reported in a day, 100,000 COVID cases**, on November 4.

U.S. employers added 638,000 jobs in October, making the unemployment rate decrease from 7.9 percent in September to 6.9 percent in October.

then I started to see so many complaints and [people who] dropped out of the class," Fertidos said.

Teachers anticipated incoming students' struggling with the faced-paced nature of the class. "I did foresee that there may be issues with the pace and the difficulty of the content in the remote world, which is why I set up a tutoring program between former AP Bio kids and the current group. There are currently a group of 50+ sophomores and juniors working with the current freshmen," Maggio said. "I have three sections of AP, and it is running well. The change has not had an impact that I have noticed, and students are performing on par with students from the previous two years."

Freshmen AP science course placement in the coming years will depend on whether the Regent exams are administered. "We plan to

use the data from this year to see how useful SHSAT scores are in placing students to determine if this will continue to be a factor that is included for placement of future incoming freshmen," Maggio said.

On the whole, faculty is uncertain about how Stuyvesant will proceed with future placement exams. "The hope is that these changes will only last this school year, with the hope that a placement exam can be given for the next incoming freshmen class. Given the current climate, it's hard to predict what will happen next month, let alone next school year," Peng said.

The administration, however, remains optimistic about the recent alterations to freshmen courses. "I have full confidence in the [...] teachers that they will be able to challenge students in their classes," Smith said. "Deep breaths. It's all going to work out."

DOE Implements New Policy for Opting into Blended Learning

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teraction with others. But if there's a vaccine, or it becomes safer, I would [have] consider[ed] switching next semester, since it is my last year here, and I'm still hoping we have a chance to do some senior activities/traditions in-person."

Others were confused by why the change was made. "The new decision regarding blended learning sort of confuses me. I don't see why we shouldn't be able to opt in and out of blended learning outside of that small window of time," sophomore Lara Ongan said in an e-mail interview.

Amin echoed that sentiment. "There's just been so much change, and I think the DOE is trying to lessen the amount of change we experience and create a set plan for the rest of the school year," she said. "[B]ut with this situation, we can't really predict what will happen, and it's hard to be prepared for an ever-changing situation."

Many also felt frustrated by the change and its effect on not only Stuyvesant, but on public schools across New York City. "I find this



Emily Young Square / The Spectator

especially concerning for the elementary and middle school students who might really need blended learning to succeed but whose families just aren't comfortable enrolling them in it now. Above all, I'm once again disappointed by the lack of communication and advance notice on the part of the

DOE," senior Julian Giordano said.

In addition, the administration felt that the DOE had provided little opportunity for schools to provide their input regarding the change. "I think it's important to hear from the field and for those working in the schools to see what may or may not be working and

[...] or what are the issues that are being presented so that we could have some input [...] particularly when decisions are being changed fairly, fairly quickly," Yu said. "[It's] asking schools to have to make adjustments as quickly as they can while also communicating it out, because, again, it's hard for schools to communicate out [the] rationale for why these windows are changing or any of the other decisions, particularly if we haven't been apart of providing any input in that."

Nonetheless, the administration is continuing to adapt to the changes and support its students and families. "Our goal at the school is to provide the best experience we think possible for all our students, regardless of if students are in the building or at home. We just want to be as upfront about what we can and can't do, as well as understanding that there are limitations," Yu said. "We have to continue to evolve, particularly under the circumstances, and I hope, and I know that the school community recognizes that, but we are doing the very best we can to make sure that this is a positive experience."

Stuyvesant Conducts Mock 2020 Presidential Election

Stuyvesant's social studies department conducted a Mock 2020 Presidential Election, surveying the student body about which candidate they support. A total of 1,762 students voted—23 percent were freshmen, 27.2 percent were sophomores, 24.9 percent were juniors, and 24.9 percent were seniors. An overwhelming 1,454 students supported Democratic candidate Joe Biden, with 173 students for Republican candidate Donald Trump, 45 students for Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins, 47 students for Independence Party candidate Brock Pierce, and 43 students for Libertarian Party candidate Jo Jorgensen.

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Endorsements: Freshman Caucus

This year sees an outstanding 16 tickets run for Freshman Caucus. Due to the high number of candidates, many of whom present impressive campaigns, as well as the mere two months of remote experience freshmen had on which to base their platforms, The Spectator is endorsing three tickets that we believe would be well suited to support the freshman class.

AMANDA CISSÉ & MARGARET MIKHALEVSKY

Cissé and Mikhalevsky present an impressive campaign. Both are very composed, articulate, and mature and have a strong understanding of Stuyvesant's student-government structure. Regarding policy, Cissé and Mikhalevsky have put together a solid set of unique policies, most notably their Academic Sites Catalog (ASC). After learning that many previous caucuses have tried—and failed—to require that teachers use standardized grading platforms, Cissé-Mikhalevsky has come up with an alternative solution: the Freshman Caucus would compile a list of the sites that each teacher uses, complete with links.

In addition, Cissé and Mikhalevsky are especially aware of racial tensions at Stuyvesant and plan on taking steps to address them. Some of these ideas are fairly ambitious,



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

such as planning on working with the Senior Caucus to diversify English curricula, while others are more

realistic, such as compiling a media recommendation list. While these policies are fairly creative, others are

CAMPAIGN:

The Cissé-Mikhalevsky ticket has a Facebook page and an Instagram account dedicated to their campaign where they have posted introductions and insight into their platform.

PLATFORM:

The ticket presents many concrete policies, including Zoom events and study halls. Some of their other goals may be ambitious and extend beyond their serving time if elected, but are plausible through their determination and willingness to make them happen.

more common, such as game nights and study halls. And some other policies seem to go beyond the realm of Freshman Caucus, such as their planned collaboration to serve as advertisers for StuyPrep, an SHSAT tutoring service. Finally, perhaps the weakest part of the Cissé-Mikhalevsky ticket is their dynamic: they met each other at Stuyvesant and did not yet seem completely famil-

iar with each other. This weakness is likely exacerbated by Zoom, though.

Overall, the Cissé-Mikhalevsky ticket is extraordinarily impressive: both Cissé and Mikhalevsky are confident and communicative, and especially considering their short time at Stuyvesant, the ticket presents impressive policies. Thus, The Spectator is endorsing Cissé-Mikhalevsky for Freshman Caucus.

UNIQUE ZHANG & ALEKSEY OLKHOVENKO



Courtesy of Unique Zhang

The Zhang-Olkhovenko ticket brings excitement, maturity, and focus to their campaign, demonstrated by their detailed platform, dynamic relationship, and experienced mindset. Their platform boasts several ideas, which include a class group chat center, where all links to group chats would be compiled, and a club and extracurricular schedule that would help minimize overlap in club meeting times and thus allow students to be actively involved in multiple activities. Like many other candidates, Olkhovenko-Zhang hopes to enforce more of Stuyvesant's regulations in remote learning, like the homework policy. The only aspect of the Zhang-Olkhovenko ticket with a hint of impracticality

was teacher game nights, in which students would be able to play Among Us, Kahoot, and Scribble.io with their teachers.

Both Zhang and Olkhovenko have strong experience with leadership from middle school. Olkhovenko helped lead Christa McAuliffe's Kiwanis Club, while Zhang participated in a student government program. This is apparent in their approach to Freshman Caucus as well as their heightened understanding of its operations. Zhang and Olkhovenko are already aware of the limitations they have as freshman leaders and students, though they are still ambitious and eager to do the best they can. They have extensive plans and a clear idea

CAMPAIGN:

The ticket has a great rapport given their history and friendship from middle school. They both exude passion, excitement, and composure in their campaign for Freshman Caucus, with a clear idea of the work they'd like to accomplish.

PLATFORM:

Zhang and Olkhovenko's platform, centered around their three Cs—Compassion, Communication, Community—is unique and actionable, with specific policies that can mostly address various issues among the freshman class.

of which initiatives they'd want to prioritize.

Most notably, the duo has a great rapport and a seamless, balanced dynamic that stemmed from their prior relationship from middle

school. The Spectator believes that, if elected, this duo would hit the ground running as Freshman Caucus co-Presidents and support their class to the best of their abilities, and is thus endorsing this ticket.

YASHNA PATEL & JEANICE DENG

Yashna Patel and Jeanice Deng are promising candidates for Freshman Caucus. They are both well-versed in leadership, and both said that their experience had taught them valuable skills in communication and important lessons about reaching out and connecting with others.

What truly defines the Patel-Deng ticket is their combination of ambition and self-awareness. They made it clear that they are well aware of the limitations that come with Freshman Caucus, and their policies are geared accordingly toward achievability. For example, Patel-Deng proposes student art showcases on social media, optional Zoom study halls during free periods, and a "Sports Social Media Wall," where student-athletes can replicate the "team experience" that they would receive in normal circumstances. Their emphasis on creating friendships between the freshmen class is evident, and the majority of these socially focused policies seem perfectly feasible without the help of



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

the administration.

Though they focus on policies that are achievable, their platform is also rather ambitious. Patel-Deng plans on working to tackle bigger problems regarding the relationship between students and the administration. One of their proposed poli-

cies is to ensure more transparency on the administration's part when it comes to course admission and rejections. They also propose eliminating the use of the SHSAT to place freshmen into classes, arguing that it disadvantages students who got into Stuyvesant via the Discovery Pro-

CAMPAIGN:

Patel-Deng has active Instagram and Facebook accounts, posting various "Meet the team" content. They also have an open "Communication Form" through which they take feedback with which to improve their platform.

PLATFORM:

The pair is well aware of the limitations that are inherent to Freshman Caucus, and their platform reflects that reality—many of their proposals do not require more than cursory assistance from the administration. That's not to say that their platform is devoid of ambition, though—they also include several bigger target accomplishments, including a change in the way freshmen are seeded into classes.

Furthermore, they recognize that not all students are comfortable with their cameras on, and they promise to attempt to change that requirement. In their interview, they stated that there are other alternatives to prove student engagement rather than having students show their presence on video, like active participation. Patel and Deng both realize that changes made would affect students for years to come, and

they hope to set the precedent for future Freshman Caucuses.

Patel-Deng's motto, "For the people," has held true throughout their proposed policies and their ideology shown in their interview. The pair truly has valuable ideas for creating and fighting for the best freshman experience possible, while also recognizing the extent of their reach. The Spectator endorses this ticket.

WILLIAM TANG & ESHAAL UBAID

Hailing from Hunter Middle School, Tang and Ubaid make up a fairly realistic ticket in the Freshman Caucus election. While their middle school did not offer many leadership opportunities, Tang and Ubaid were able to garner some relevant Freshman Caucus-related experience throughout their time at Hunter. Complementing each other's strengths and playing to their weaknesses, Tang participated in more concrete student government councils and organizations while Ubaid focused more on cultural clubs, though both lack especially relevant leadership experience.

The ticket has established its

platform through a social media presence consisting of an Instagram account and Facebook page with a considerable following. They also used their official website to efficiently outline their policies and provide links and resources that put their values of transparency and accessibility into practice. These collective platforms reflected balanced chemistry between the candidates and strong dedication that only grew clearer from their interview.

Though a majority of their policies aren't necessarily novel and extrapolate on systems already in place (i.e. expanded Study Guide sharing programs, Freshman Game Nights,



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

CAMPAIGN:

Tang and Ubaid have a tangible drive and chemistry that will likely provide for a dependable and grounded Caucus, should the duo be elected.

PLATFORM:

Focused primarily on effective communication, the Tang-Ubaid ticket is running on a solid platform that trades groundbreaking concepts for achievable goals.

etc.), the Tang-Ubaid platform has considered and adjusted to the limitations of Freshman Caucus to propose ideas that have a sense of reliability and feasibility.

The most enticing part of the ticket, however, is likely the pair's

chemistry and can-do attitudes. With a focused cohesion and a clear drive to benefit the freshman class, the Tang-Ubaid team is a reliable yet not groundbreaking Freshman Caucus duo.

Endorsements: Freshman Caucus

CHLOE TOM & KAITLIN TAN

CAMPAIGN:

Tom and Tan have an affable demeanor and affect, including clear personal chemistry.

PLATFORM:

While the Tom-Tan platform is fairly light on substance, it demonstrates a clear understanding of the Freshman Caucus's role at Stuyvesant.

If elected, Tom and Tan would serve their class well. They share a genuine enthusiasm for the job they're seeking—that is, they're

not just running for the title—and they have a good sense of what they'd actually be doing on it. As co-presidents, they would host events

to promote cultural and LGBTQ+ acceptance, and they would create a channel for students to reach out to the administration if confronted with bigotry or other discomfort while using their role to help victims themselves, though they recognized that they would be constrained in any punitive measures.

They would also create video game-playing events. While many Caucus candidates in the age of COVID-19 put forward similar ideas, they demonstrated a keen awareness

of why exactly such events are helpful, proposing community-building games that force players to interact with one another, such as Among Us and Spyfall.

Their platform, despite its assets, is quite light: it consists of three pages, only two of which are about policies, and in 14-point font size to boot. For this reason, The Spectator chooses to endorse other candidates instead. But we have confidence that, should they win, they will be successful.



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

IVY HUANG & EMMA KWAN

Huang and Kwan's platform is focused on connecting with their fellow freshmen, emphasizing the common struggles they are going through during quarantine. Though they have a similar vision for improving the freshman experience as their opponents, Huang and Kwan make an effort to show sympathy for their fellow classmates. They have some event ideas such as game and movie nights as well as chat sessions over Zoom for specific interests. Many clubs, however, already host such events. Some novel policies include late-night study support groups, which, albeit a nice concept, might promote unhealthy work be-



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

CAMPAIGN:

Huang and Kwan have an Instagram page but lack a Facebook page. In general, they have not taken advantage of the opportunity social media provides to promote themselves.

PLATFORM:

Huang and Kwan's platform is focused on their relatability to their peers, emphasizing the common struggles they are going through this year. Most of the policies they detail revolve around holding events for students to bond with teachers and one another.

havior. Some of their other unique proposals include having every teacher make introduction videos on Flipgrid or having days dedicated to student-teacher bonding, but it is unclear as to how much of an im-

pact this will have on the freshmen body. Overall, their platform has good intentions, but their policies are neither the most practical nor innovative. The Spectator will not be endorsing the Huang-Kwan ticket.

JANICE LEE & RICHARD YOM

The Lee-Yom platform, which begins with an enthusiastic "HELLO PARTY PEEPS!!!", emphasizes inclusivity and transparency among the freshmen student body. Though their policies are creative—and the duo emphasizes how realistic their ideas are—many seem overly ambitious. The enthusiasm and adaptability are there, but the necessary coordination and strategy are largely absent.

The pair's ideas circle largely around community-building ideas including Monthly Contests, Game Nights, Student Union (SU) Olympics, and Teacher Olympics. Freshmen would be able to connect both with each other and with the administration and the SU in a friendly environment through games. They also wish to introduce weekly emotional health check-ins via Google Forms or BuzzFeed quizzes, which is a considerate, if unoriginal, initiative. Policies such as these seem to be modeled after previous SU activities, which demonstrates a useful awareness. Other proposals such as implementing freshmen ID cards (students would be allowed to submit photos of their choosing) and an in-person Cultural Food Appreciation Day seem less thought-out and unfeasible. To its credit, the ticket acknowledged the bold nature of these ideas and clarified they would focus

primarily on their community-based events.

There is a friendly and respectful dynamic between Lee and Yom, who have known each other for six years. Though Lee seems to dominate, this makes sense, as she is running for president with Yom as vice president. The duo carries an air of diffidence, however, which, coupled with a shallow understanding of the execution of their policies, does not make them the most promising candidates for Freshman Caucus. The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

CAMPAIGN:

The Lee-Yom ticket has a well-organized Instagram account and Facebook account to promote their platform with a substantial following on both, with the pair posting significantly more on Instagram. They are also hosting a movie night on November 13, a unique initiative to promote their candidacy.

PLATFORM:

Though the candidates' ideas are inventive and intend to foster community, the ticket's platform lacks planning regarding the implementation of these ideas.

AHARNISH DEV & JULIAN HUANG

The Dev-Huang ticket stands out for its impressive record: Dev and Huang both have extensive experience that could prove to be helpful in potentially governing the freshman class. Dev served as the president of the National Junior Honor Society in middle school, plays several instruments, and was the president of his elementary school. Huang was a member of his middle school's student government, debate team, math team, mentored younger students, and plays baseball and the piano. The two candidates, who met at Stuyvesant, share a plethora of previous leadership experience that will translate well into leading the Freshman Caucus.

Despite its strong record, Dev-Huang ticket suffers from inconsistent, mediocre efforts to engage with freshmen. The Dev-Huang ticket's online presence consists of a Facebook page and an Instagram account, both of which contain various informative and creative posts. Both social media pages, however, only feature posts from the second week of November, showing no evidence of online campaigning during the early stages of the election.

The Dev-Huang ticket also falls short in its unrealistic platform. Aside from sending e-mail reminders and surveys and organizing game nights, the Dev-Huang ticket does not

propose any unique initiatives. Other policies, such as holding a Cultural Food Day and Cosplay Convention, partnering with unity groups to host fundraisers and drives, establishing a peer-tutoring and college access program, and promoting performing arts clubs, are extremely vague and infeasible.

Overall, the Dev-Huang's strong record does not compensate for its lack of a thorough platform and consistent campaign effort. For this reason, The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

CAMPAIGN:

The Dev-Huang ticket has a solid, if unremarkable, campaign presence. They have Facebook and Instagram accounts with the standard "Meet the Candidates," "Meet the Team," and platform posts. They were a little late to get started, though, as all of the posts are from the second week of November.

PLATFORM:

Though the Dev-Huang ticket certainly filled the check marks for their record and campaign, their platform lacks the concrete goals required.

ASHLEY YANG & SHELDON LIU

PLATFORM:

The Yang-Liu ticket is focused on four ideas: community building, mental health awareness, working with upper caucuses, and remote learning assistance. While its plans are well-intentioned, they are neither specific nor unique, and it's unclear how the ticket would actually carry out its ideas.

CAMPAIGN:

The pair have an Instagram account, but there aren't any posts, and they have no Facebook page.

The Yang-Liu ticket is very focused on community-building activities for the student body. Such events include bonding events on Zoom—where the Caucus would pair students based on interests and hobbies and allow them to socialize—or gaming tournaments. Their mental health awareness policies also lack both specificity and feasibility. For example, while it aims to

host "events on handling stress and other pressures related to school," it's unclear as to what events they would hold or how they'd advertise them to the student body. They also plan to have "no homework nights." The ticket additionally aims to work with upper caucuses to "amplify freshman voices and problems to be addressed/remedied by upperclassmen/caucus," which isn't specific.

Finally, the ticket has well-intentioned policies for remote learning assistance; it plans to work toward a designated eating time for students as well as a weekly survey to gauge the average amount of homework time for each class. While it's clear that the two have a good idea of the grievances of the freshman class, they lack a specific plan to address those grievances.

KYLE H. CHAN & NELLI ROJAS-CESSA

The Chan-Rojas-Cessa ticket is composed of two Christa McAuliffe Middle School graduates who are longtime friends and work very well together. While neither have much experience in student government, both have a strong record of leadership in middle school. Chan and Rojas-Cessa have experience in event planning, including organizing dances, and candy grams, all of which are traditional Freshman Caucus events. Chan is also a youth ambassador for New York City Road Runners, providing him

with more background in organizing events, and Rojas-Cessa was co-captain of her middle school girls' basketball team, on which she learned the importance of teamwork.

Chan and Rojas-Cessa's ideas for the Freshman Caucus are nothing incredible, but they are feasible. Their plan of virtual study sessions, in which students are matched with classmates, seems like a helpful way for freshmen to get to know each other. They also look to institute gaming tournaments with prizes



Francesca Nemati / The Spectator

CAMPAIGN:

The Chan-Rojas-Cessa ticket has an Instagram account, a Facebook page, and a solid website. However, they haven't used them to advertise their campaign much thus far.

PLATFORM:

Their platform has solid ideas, though nothing astonishing. There isn't much in terms of administrative changes, though the candidates do seem to possess the willingness to get everything done.

and commentators for livestreams, but the gaming events are nothing new, and the aspect of hiring commentators seems unrealistic. Chan

and Rojas-Cessa have the drive to accomplish all their goals, but a lack of administrative plans doesn't help their case.

Endorsements: Freshman Caucus

SARAH DIAZ & MAYA PULAWSKA

Though well-intentioned, the Diaz-Pulawska ticket falls short in presenting creative policies, presenting valid concerns of the student body but underdeveloped solutions to combat them. The duo seems to direct their attention primarily on bonding activities and mental health, which are crucial components to a successful freshman year. Their idea for weekly meditation, however, feels unlikely, while their social nights and Zoom calls are common among all the candidates. Moreover, their platform lacks information on how they plan to achieve their goals. The



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

PLATFORM:

Diaz and Pulawska are very focused on fostering connections among the freshmen class. They plan to organize group bonding calls based on common interests and study Zooms for those who are struggling. Most of their ideas, however, don't expand past bonding sessions.

CAMPAIGN:

Diaz and Pulawska have an Instagram account for their campaign, but they have only posted once.

pen pal program they propose, for example, accurately identifies a need for communication and interaction across cultures but does not explain

how they will overcome the difficulties that come with running an international program. The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

REBECCA BAO & ERICA CHEN

The Bao-Chen campaign focuses on three values: self-representation, self-exploration, and self-expression. In the era of remote learning, the two want to create an atmosphere for their grade to be themselves, show themselves, and know themselves. While they try to implement this by uniting the freshman class through activi-

ties like movie nights, their platform is unoriginal and unrealistic.

Their policy regarding webinars to host influential people is overly ambitious, with no solid plan for execution. They aim high, hoping to host a variety of speakers ranging from Mark Zuckerberg to Emma Watson in order to expose freshmen to different career fields.

We, however, doubt that these guest speakers will be attainable. In addition, their idea for a grade-wide project-based competition that guarantees extra credit for the top submissions is too dependent upon the SU and teachers, making the success of this idea contingent on the teachers' willingness to provide monthly extra credit.

CAMPAIGN:

They maintain a website and an Instagram account but have little engagement from their peers.

PLATFORM:

Bao and Chen's policies tackle very few areas and are overly ambitious.

Bao and Chen's goal to unify their grade is commendable, but due to their lack of experience and

superficial platform, The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

ANIKET ROY & JOSEPH DISOMMA

The main point of the Roy-Disomma campaign is that, in their own words, their "whole platform is generally based on [them] being realistic and knowing [their] limits." To prove this point, Roy-Disomma claims that their policies will not be extravagant but will instead be realistic and achievable. Most importantly, the policies will focus on helping students strike a balance between school and relaxation. While this proposal sounds promising, Roy-Disomma fails to provide any specific policies besides "lecture hall" events, in which freshmen can bond with upperclassmen (these sound strikingly similar to the goal of the Big Sibz program). Beyond that, the Roy-

CAMPAIGN:

To our knowledge, the Roy-Disomma ticket did not campaign via social media or any other means.

PLATFORM:

The Roy-Disomma ticket emphasizes realism but fails to name many specific policies they hope to effect.

Disomma campaign does not provide much other information. The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

SOHAM MUKHERJEE & TARA SURI

If elected, Mukherjee and Suri pledge to listen to the freshman class's interests and serve them accordingly. They used a Google Form to poll their grade and determined that the top concerns of the student body were homework and stress, which aligns with their promise to cater their leadership to the needs of their grade. However, they, don't offer much in the way of concrete policy other than virtual get-togethers such as multiplayer games, so it's questionable what they would pursue once elected. While their desire to serve their grade is admirable, they seem to lean on this in lieu of solid plans of action.

CAMPAIGN:

Mukherjee and Suri have an Instagram page dedicated to their campaign and have posted an infographic on their personal Facebook accounts. Their campaign, however, does not have a Facebook page, and they haven't used social media to provide much insight into their platform.

PLATFORM:

Mukherjee and Suri's platform emphasizes communication with the student body.

CAROLINE HON & ANGELA LIN

Though Hon and Lin's platform for The Spectator is short, it includes some achievable goals. Their emphasis on centralizing information and conveying the expectations of the freshman class to their peers is important. They plan to foster communication with and among their freshman peers but do not flesh out these plans to the extent that other tickets did. In addition, their emphasis on encouraging participation during class discussion is not in line with the purpose and aims of a Freshman Caucus. Though they hope to engage their peers in bonding events like movie and



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

CAMPAIGN:

The pair have a clear idea of the needs of their freshman class, though they lack specificity with goals and certain objectives.

PLATFORM:

The Hon-Lin ticket has a brief platform that, while containing a general focus and idea, does not have any concrete plans other than bonding events and communication.

game nights, common ideas during this election, they lack any specific plans for how they would engage and support their grade aside from relaying freshman concerns and hosting social events. Finally, despite saying they would place inclusivity, diversity, and equity at the

forefront of their ticket, they do not provide any detailed plan for how they would do so. Overall, it is unclear what specific action items Hon and Lin hope to pursue to support their grade, and for this, The Spectator does not endorse this ticket.

ELIZA OPPENHEIMER & CARTER LIM

The Oppenheimer-Lim ticket centers around fostering a community among the freshman class while under remote settings. Though their intentions are in the right place, many of their policies are underdeveloped and lack a thorough plan as to how they would bring their policy to fruition.

Many of Oppenheimer and Lim's ideas focus on student engagement. Should there be a low student turnout, though, their policies will fall short. More specifically, the ticket's primary focus is hosting speed-dating-esque five-minute meetings, aimed at having freshmen get to know each other. Both candidates, however, lacked a specific plan in how they would garner participation from their grade. Though reasonable to expect given their



Zoe Oppenheimer / The Spectator

CAMPAIGN:

The Oppenheimer-Lim platform has an Instagram account, a Facebook account, and a well-organized website. They, however, have minimally used their social media accounts to advertise their platform.

PLATFORM:

Though their platform has feasible ideas, most are only surface-level. It is difficult to tell whether the candidates have the drive to make their ideas a reality.

currently existing programs at Stuyvesant. For example, they propose ideas similar to the existing Pen Pal program and ARISTA tutoring. A few of their ideas are quite viable, including holiday-themed Instagram posts, food art contests, and "secret snowflake" (similar to Secret Santa). Other policies, however, are less realistic, like forming partnerships with gyms and muse-

ums, which is already difficult for a Freshman Caucus to do, but more so given the current circumstances.

While Oppenheimer and Lim have prior experience working together, they seem to lack chemistry throughout the interview and had minimal enthusiasm for their campaign and policies. Therefore, The Spectator will not be endorsing this ticket.

mere two months of attendance so far, they seem to be unaware of cur-

Features

Amy Coney Barrett's Confirmation—Aim to Bear It?

By ISABEL CHING

When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a revered feminist icon and champion of justice, died on September 18 from pancreatic cancer just a few weeks before Election Day, chaos erupted across the country. Defying political precedent, Republicans seized the opportunity to install another conservative-leaning justice on the Supreme Court: Amy Coney Barrett (ACB). Barrett's Catholic faith, conservative ideals, and overall background made her the perfect fit for Republicans and angered Democrats. While Barrett has found support among staunch right-wing Americans, many others have objected to her confirmation just eight days before election day, finding the confirmation process and the candidate herself to be a betrayal of democratic ideals.

For history teacher David Hanna, it is not Barrett's devout Catholic faith or political experience (or lack thereof, as proclaimed by many Democratic leaders) that is so troubling—it is the circumstances of her confirmation. David Hanna cited the precedent established after Justice Antonin Scalia's death in February of 2016, eight months before the presidential election. He explained in an e-mail interview: "Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell blocked President Obama's appointee, [Merrick] Garland, from getting a confirmation hearing. He's widely respected and almost certainly would've received some bipartisan support. What McConnell did was unconstitutional and had no precedent in U.S. history." David Hanna elaborated, "[McConnell's] argument then was that in an election year, the voters should decide who would appoint someone to fill that vacancy. This fall, with only one month to go before an election, he did a full 180-degree turn and said President Trump's appointee should be confirmed. This is the

height of hypocrisy." He went on to clarify his stance about Barrett herself: "For me, the problem is not her; it is what McConnell did."

Sophomore Ameer Alnasser seconded this idea: "Amy Coney Barrett represents our failures [in] politics. Everything is maneuvered to help the conservatives: the gerrymandering, electoral college, voter suppression [...] I believe ACB's views will give conservatives more room to become more partisan than they already are."

Junior Anika Amin is particularly troubled by the double standard between the prospective appointments of Garland and Barrett. "It's ridiculous that the Republicans completely went against their OWN precedent and didn't let the next president appoint the justice for the vacant seat," she said in an e-mail interview. Amin finds the enormous political ramifications of Barrett's confirmation concerning as well: "The fact that the fate of our country and so many important legal protections are under threat due to the appointment of ONE person really just goes to show how badly structured and outdated the institution of the Supreme Court is." For Amin, these legal protections include the right to abortion, a subject which has been at the forefront of this battle for the Supreme Court. Though Justice Barrett has not explicitly stated her views on abortion and, during her confirmation hearings, adhered to the "Ginsburg Rule," her previous rulings and Catholic faith have led many to assume that she does not support abortion and that she may, along with her fellow conservative justices, try to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Though Amin doubts the landmark *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned because of its strong legal precedent, she believes Barrett's controversial views have larger implications. "Abortion rights are so much more than simply the right to an abortion or not—they represent an issue with health care and the right to auton-

omy for so many women and other people," she said.

Amin's stance on abortion rights is not shared by all, however. In fact, for the far right, it is actually Barrett's views on abortion that have garnered so much support. Pro-lifers, who argue that life begins at conception and that aborting a child is murder, find Barrett's faith and conservative values to be the embodiment of Republican ideals and the perfect replacement for a judge known by many as a champion of abortion rights. An anonymous student (referred to as Anonymous) disclosed their views on abortion in an e-mail interview: "Abortion is not a human right or a necessity but a privilege. Nowhere in the stems of morality is it justified to take the life of a baby, especially [one with a beating heart], for the inconvenience and the decisions of the mother (with few exceptions)."

It is not just Barrett's views on abortion that have gained her so much support. For many, it is her shining success in a legal world still dominated by men and her ability to raise a family at the same time that is so impressive. Anonymous explained that Barrett's confirmation not only empowered them as a conservative but ought to empower all women in America. "I am also quite confused [about] why 'feminists' don't feel the same. If it was about women supporting and empowering other women, then [Barrett] is the pinnacle example of success in the United States. She has an undeniable record, [is] an outstanding academic, and [is] a mother of an unbelievable seven children," Anonymous said.

Junior Silvia Hanna seconded the views of Anonymous, saying, "To me, Justice Amy Coney Barrett is a prime example of female empowerment [...] One of the main reasons many women feel desperate to get an abortion, for example, is because they feel like becoming a mother will be a stumbling block in their education and success, but

Justice Amy Coney Barrett offers huge encouragement for mothers and expecting mothers in this nation." This empowerment and encouragement have had a tangible impact on Silvia Hanna's own life as well: "At one point, I myself [had] vowed not to marry or have children out of the same fear: if I have a family of my own, I won't be able to chase my dreams and accomplish the goals I desire to achieve." She continued, "Justice Barrett's confirmation has completely changed my perspective and has liberated me of this fear. She is the pride of women everywhere and destroys many stereotypes about women's role in society and the family."

Despite Silvia Hanna and Anonymous's claims that Justice Barrett empowers women and stands for the right to life, Barrett has also been the subject of criticism, much of which revolves around her Catholic faith and time spent with The People of Praise, an insular and deeply religious conservative Catholic community which rejects openly gay men and women and embraces traditional gender norms. Democrats find her close ties to Catholicism alarming, especially since Supreme Court judges are supposed to adhere to the idea that church and state should remain separate.

Junior Olivia Tedesco is worried by Barrett's potential blurring of the boundaries between church and state. "Amy Coney Barrett pushes her own religious ideals into her government practices and infringes on people's freedom to determine their own principles on their religion or lack thereof," she said in an e-mail interview.

But to Silvia Hanna, it is discriminatory to object to somebody's holding public office on the basis of religion. She elaborated on the intersection between justice and faith: "Every judge and [j]ustice has their own beliefs and moral values; it would be completely unnatural not to. However,

when someone becomes a judge, they are not required to abandon any beliefs and values they have but rather set them aside and put the Constitution above all else in the context of the courtroom."

An anonymous freshman agreed. "I think that her religion, although possibly influencing her interpretation of the [C]onstitution, will not fully take over her rulings. As we see with judges like Roberts, the court often centralizes and depolarizes justices, moving them [toward] the center," they said. They continued on to voice their opinion on key principles governing American democracy: "On separation of church and state, I feel like this is a key pillar of our democracy, but [it] cannot be, like most things, taken to the extreme, and Amy Coney Barrett is able to deliver this balance."

Justice Barrett's views and faith aside, there are larger factors at play here. Barrett's confirmation means that the Republicans now hold a 6-3 majority in the court, something which could impact the results of the election should there fail to be a peaceful transfer of power.

Right now, nobody can know for sure what impact Barrett's appointment will have on the judicial system and America as a whole. Some worry that Barrett will intervene on the side of Trump if he chooses to contest the election on the basis of "voter fraud" before January 20. Some worry that she will upend *Roe v. Wade*. But David Hanna reminds us that, right now, all of this is just speculation. "But these are hypotheticals," he said. "And people can surprise you. When Earl Warren was appointed Chief Justice by President Eisenhower, he thought he was getting a reliably center-right guy, and then Warren proceeded to preside over one of the most progressive Courts in American history. So who knows?"

You've Got a (Furry) Friend in Me

By ELLEN PEHLIVANIAN

You spent all afternoon (well, not really, it was sort of a last-minute ditch effort) making a slideshow listing all the pros and cons of getting a dog or cat, only to later convince yourself that your parents' recommendation to simply "get a fish—they're much easier to take care of" is starting to sound better. If that description gave you unexpected flashbacks, then you'll know the feeling of disappointment when your parents refuse to get you that pet you fought so hard for. However, with the rise of COVID-19, many parents have given in to these efforts to get a pet, to the bliss of their children. Meanwhile, other students have had to deal with problems arising from their existing pets.

Junior Jasmine Wang had to handle some conflicts with her pet parakeets during her time in quarantine. "A few years ago, I bought a pair of birds, and I thought they were both males, but one of them turned out to be female. They then started nesting, and then, they just laid eggs, and then the eggs hatched, and then all of a sudden I had six parakeets," she began. Wang eventually gave away the two parent parakeets and ended up with only four of the six original birds.

However, a new unexpected

issue arose with two of her four remaining parakeets. "One of my parakeets, Angel, is a female, and the other one, Pistachio Jr., is a male, and recently I noticed they've been kissing each other and feeding each other, grooming each other, and I was like: 'They're gonna have kids,'" Wang explained. She didn't have the space or ability to raise more parakeets if the two eggs hatched, so she realized it would be better to give them away to another friend. "Right now, I'm looking forward to separating them and having to stop any more of that from happening," she jokingly concluded. Wang ended up making a Facebook post asking if anyone was willing to adopt Angel and Pistachio Jr., writing, "Parakeets don't do well alone, which is why unless you already have a bird, I'd ask you to adopt two." Luckily, the two parakeets ended up being adopted by someone and are thriving in their new home.

While Wang had to deal with problems arising from her existing pets, junior Christopher Liu added a new dog to his household over quarantine and has been learning how to raise him for the past few months. "His name is Hugo, and today was just his five-month birthday. He's a labradoodle, but he's three quarters Poodle and only one quarter Labrador, so he's smaller," Liu excitedly ex-

plained, adding, "He lost his first tooth yesterday, too!"

As far as taking care of Hugo given the circumstances of COVID-19, Liu described that it's easier and more pleasant than it would have been normally. "It's not too bad, and all in all, it's actually kind of easier," he admitted. "The vet and groomers are still open, so he got his shots and everything just fine." Moreover, taking care of Hugo has also helped Liu cope with quarantine. "The only thing is that he likes to steal the masks and run around the apartment with them," he jokingly recalled. Liu concluded that quarantine has allowed Hugo to live more freely, explaining, "Since everyone's at home, it's not like he's spending hours in a crate while everyone else is at work or school during the day."

Similar to Liu, sophomore Ella Chan added two puppies to her home in August. However, the reasoning behind it was very tragic and touching. "During quarantine, my grandmother passed away from cancer, and so we wanted to get the dogs for the family just to cheer us up," she described. Chan went on to explain the process of actually getting her dogs, stating, "We originally only got one Australian Shepherd from a breeder up in Pennsylvania, and coincidentally, my dad's boss also

got a female Australian Shepherd for his girlfriend. She didn't want it though, so then my dad's boss gave it away to my dad for free."

When asked to describe her two puppies, Chan enthusiastically began, "One of the dogs—his name is Whiskey—is a boy, and he's black,

white, and a tan color [...] He's an Australian Shepherd, and we got him when he was eight weeks old." She explained that Whiskey is very clumsy and often jumps off the couch and smacks into the coffee table. Chan then introduced Whiskey's younger sibling, describing her as small yet aggressive, but nonetheless adorable. "The other one, her name is Brandy. She's



Afra Mahmud / The Spectator

about a month younger than Whiskey, so she's 12 weeks old." Similar to Whiskey, Brandy is made up of "wacky colors," which include gray, white, black, and tan.

However, Chan admitted that

it's hard to take care of her two young puppies, especially given the current circumstances. In contrast with Liu's positive experience with Hugo, Chan finds that her puppies can be very hard to deal with, especially with the start of the school year and the continuation of quarantine. "The amount of times they poop all day in my room is scary," she joked. "I recently threw out my carpet because of it." She also mentioned the struggle of letting the puppies outside in the midst of quarantine. "Walking them is really hard too because I can't really bring them to the park, and they're a little too young, so we usually play in the backyard, but they don't really know how to play," she added, before eagerly beginning another adorable anecdote of the two.

The sentiment of these stories truly shows that in hard times, your pets, or simply others you care about, can help pull you up and stay afloat. For Liu, taking care of his dog helps him take a break from his work. "Walking Hugo is actually pretty nice because it's an excuse to get out of the house," he explained. Like Liu, many Stuyvesant students have been able to find mental and physical escape through their pets, both new and old.

Features

Gabbing With Gomes

The Newest Addition to Stuyvesant's Social Studies Department

By CATHERINE CHING

As the first marking period has come to an end, Stuyvesant students have gotten to know and love new faculty member Sheldon Gomes as their Global Studies, Government, or Economics teacher. Though his love for history is unparalleled, he exercises many other passions and has even explored other career options before becoming an educator. Here is a dive into Gomes's unique life and the message he hopes to impart to his students.

While growing up in Albany, New York, Gomes was unsure of what his future would hold. At first, the idea of becoming a teacher did not even cross his mind. It wasn't until he was a high school sophomore when he started to consider the idea of teaching. Gomes, a student of Mrs. Miller at the time, recalled his standout Global Studies teacher. "[She was] a middle-aged white woman [who] just had energy like I've never seen before. She made learning fun. Every day she's in class, and she's joking, she's laughing, and she's dancing," he said. "It was basically a performance." It was at that point that Gomes decided that if he ever was to teach, he would have to teach social studies.

Gomes was first introduced to teaching when he worked as a hallway assistant at a residential center in Westchester, New York. There, he was exposed to a learning environment where at-risk teenagers from all across New

York City were sent to school. As time went on, he became increasingly concerned about the lack of diversity. "Many of the teachers did not look like the students. There were no black men and very few women of color," he explained. Gomes, a person of color from Guyana, experienced firsthand what it was like to have no educators with whom he could relate at school. "It would be beneficial if [the person] standing in front of the class [was someone

who] could share some of their stories, some of their struggles," Gomes said. From that experience, Gomes knew he wanted to make an impact in the academic world and embarked on his path to officially become a teacher. In 2007, he obtained a position as a teaching assistant and eventually worked his way up the ranks to become a certified teacher.

Gomes started educating at George Washington High School, where he was both a social studies

teacher and a dean. Remote instruction proved to be a difficult transition for Gomes and his students for many reasons. "Those students come from a variety of backgrounds and challenges, so getting them on camera proved to be very difficult," Gomes said. However, after his reassignment to Stuyvesant this year due to budget cuts at George Washington High School, he emphasized the stark contrast between the two learning environments. Gomes described how Stuyvesant students were ready to turn on cameras, deeply engage in conversation, and participate. Some students arrived to class early to casually talk and ask questions and stayed after to continue their thoughts. "Today I talked to some kids about the NBA finals and what I think is going to happen. So they're always asking me questions, and I feel that being transparent is very beneficial to my relationship with my students," Gomes said.

During the first five minutes of Gomes's remote classroom, students translate the meaning of a daily quote and put their responses into the chat while bopping their heads to music. In fact, Gomes is a strong believer of the message behind quotes. One of his favorite quotes is "If you don't know your past, you'll never know your future." Gomes described how the past represents the many challenges and motivations of life that shape the comforts of the future. He hopes that the younger generation will

become more aware of the discussions and changes in history that allow them to be where they are today.

Gomes finds passion in areas outside of history and education. He has been a licensed minister for four years and regards his faith as an important part of his identity. He also loves sports and has coached basketball, track and field, volleyball, and cheerleading. At one point, Gomes was a performing artist, and he wrote and performed his own music. Gomes's passion for music comes from the universal message of music and how it transcends all barriers. He still exercises his love for music by playing a wide variety of songs for his class every day. On top of that, Gomes wrote a book called "Love in Education," in which he narrates the emotional and often challenging stories of his years as an educator.

Gomes hopes to spread the message of love to his students. The words "I love you," Gomes has found, aren't heard that much at home. When students feel safe at school, with an educator who has a healthy amount of love and respect for them, their environment changes. "I believe that love is a word that belongs in the world across academic institutions, not just in the high school level but all levels. I love my students, I love what I do, and I don't find it inappropriate to tell my kids that 'I love you, I want the best for you, and I want you to succeed,'" Gomes said.



Courtesy of Sheldon Gomes

Friendship at Stuyvesant: Stories of Origin

By DEXTER WELLS

Many Stuyvesant students will surely agree that attending this school would be almost intolerable without the friends that they have made. Stuyvesant is well known for its academic rigor and competitive atmosphere—so much so that the multitude of opportunities for social engagement is often overshadowed. Surprisingly enough, Stuyvesant students are not robotic scholars devoid of desire for social interaction. Indeed, they do have friends, and they find them in a variety of places.

The primary and most obvious setting for meeting new people at Stuyvesant is, of course, the classroom. "You meet your best friends through your worst teachers," claims junior Asa Muhammad. There may be some truth to this statement, but unpleasant class experiences are only one route to bond with a peer.

Junior Krista Proteasa met her first close friends at Stuyvesant in her freshman year classes, and though some of those connections aren't very strong anymore, one person has remained a close friend. Proteasa credits seating arrangements and luck for that friendship. "We were in a group together by our teacher's wishes, and we started bonding in the group that we made for the one project. Then, we found out we shared the same lunch period, which is where most of the bond-strengthening happened. [...] Now, we [don't] have to talk about school-related things, but we [can] talk [to] each other as humans and just connect," Proteasa said.

Junior Ashley Tian met one of her good friends in her drafting class the fall semester of her sophomore year. She vaguely recognized him

among a class full of upperclassmen and chose to sit next to him, though she found him intimidating. In time, she realized he was not, in fact, intimidating, and they bonded over loaves of Whole Foods sourdough.

Clubs and other extracurricular activities are also prime modes of social introduction at Stuyvesant. Sophomore Isabella Chow was introduced to some of her close friends the summer before her freshman year at auditions for Stuy Legacy. When she arrived at tryouts, she was vaguely familiar with some of the people there through Facebook or Instagram, and the group started talking and spending time together throughout that week of auditions. "We all got really close during that week," Chow said. "And while some of the friendships didn't work, it was pretty cool."

Proteasa made some of her closest friends on the girls' fencing team. "When I first joined the team, I was intimidated by everyone, and I just felt very nervous," she said. "[However,] we could all relate in our late-night subway struggles and any muscle soreness from the previous day [...] We could gossip about teachers and just let loose during practice," Proteasa continued. Her closest friends at Stuyvesant are the three other girls on the team that are also currently juniors because as freshmen, they shared the same experiences and naturally tended toward their own "little freshmen bubble."

Sophomore Anisa Gao made her best friends during freshman year by pulling what can only be described as a prolonged prank. She shrouded herself in mystery and spoke as little as possible with the sole purpose of confusing her classmates. When the

second semester began, she made a sudden effort to talk as much as she could in order to stun her peers. However, when remote learning began, the jig was up, and she found herself in need of help with geometry from two classmates. Eventually, she grew very close with these two, assisted by FaceTime and cat photos. "I still don't believe it was possible for me, obnoxious and creepy, to make such wonderful friends," Gao said.

Senior Grace Cantarella wasn't close with her present best friend until the beginning of her sophomore year, even though the two of them had both known of each other. "We had two classes together but never really spoke all that much until she sent me the longest, kindest, most heartfelt birthday message I've ever received," Cantarella said.

"We would go for weeks at a time without talking or seeing each other, but each time we did, it was like we never missed a beat and always picked up right where we left off."

—Grace Cantarella, senior

"I was caught completely off guard by it, but in a good way—it showed me the type of person she was, and I instantly knew we were going to get closer eventually." During the spring of their sophomore year, they bonded over their shared anxieties of tests, college, and the future, and became best friends. "I think we realized that we were honestly the same person. Our personalities clicked beyond perfectly, we were always there to

make each other laugh and to hold each other up when we were down," she recalled.

This year's freshman class has experienced unique conditions due to the pandemic that has prevented many of the more traditional routes to making friends. Freshman Chloe Tom came to Stuyvesant already knowing a few people from middle school and elsewhere, but she has managed to make new friends remotely as well, despite the limitations. "It's a lot easier when the teachers put you into breakout rooms so you can actually talk to people," Tom said. "Most of the time, I asked classmates for their social media, and then we were able to talk more through group chats and DMs."

Freshman Lesley Lo has had a great deal of difficulty befriending

other students from her classes, but she has a number of friends who she met in an Instagram group chat that she was added to in May. "Surprisingly, the group chat is still alive, and we all talk a lot even if we don't have classes together," Lo said.

Freshman Erica Chen made friends from similar group chats over the summer but has also managed to befriend some of her classmates. Namely, she's gotten to know her lab

partners in AP Biology very well. Ultimately, however, Chen thinks that social media has made more contributions to her social life at Stuyvesant than breakout rooms, which she finds awkward.

In our present era, in which COVID-19 has created circumstances that would have been unimaginable just a year ago, students have had to adjust accordingly to maintain their friendships. Senior Mitchel Fogel has a very tight-knit friend group that he stays in touch with through a group chat and FaceTime calls on an almost daily basis. Chow has also relied on texting and FaceTiming. In addition, the occasional friend group meetups are feasible but infrequent. Though the pandemic has tested some friendships, it may have strengthened others. Tian explained that she wasn't particularly close with one of her now closest friends until quarantine started, and they began to have deep late-night conversations. Cantarella was nervous at the prospect of drifting away from her best friend but found that the opposite happened. "We would go for weeks at a time without talking or seeing each other, but each time we did, it was like we never missed a beat and always picked up right where we left off," she said.

In the face of such adversity presented by the coronavirus pandemic, Stuyvesant students have exhibited resilience in keeping one of the most important elements of the Stuyvesant experience alive: the bonds. Not those studied in chemistry classes, but the ones that life at Stuyvesant would be unimaginable without—the friendships.

Features

The Impostors Among Us Take Over Stuyvesant

By ANGELA CAI

The lights flicker and the power goes out. Just as you get a bearing on your surroundings, an orange blur dances across the screen and strikes. BAM! In a blink of an eye, you're dead, mercilessly decapitated.

If this game sounds familiar, it's probably because millions of teenagers across the nation are playing it. Since quarantine began, the game Among Us has quickly spread and captured the attention of YouTube stars, streamers, and Stuyvesant students alike.

Senior Iris Lin learned of the game from Instagram. "Among Us sort of appeared out of nowhere. Next thing I know, everyone's stories were filled with Among Us screenshots and everyone was posting fan-art," she said.

The premise of the game is simple: players work to complete a list of tasks while up to three undercover impostors among them sabotage the tasks and try to kill the entire crew. The impostor(s) win if they manage to kill the crew before all the tasks are finished, but the crew wins if they correctly identify and eject the impostor(s) out of the ship. Additionally, impostors possess extra abilities such as having access to vents that

allow them to travel to other rooms instantly, also known as "venting."

Though this might sound too similar to other games such as Mafia, freshman Freda Dong argues that Among Us is a new and improved version of the idea with a twist. "Among Us is just Mafia, but in space," she said. "A futuristic spaceship hijacked by aliens? Sign me up!"

Iris Lin believes that the simplicity and accessibility of the game are what make it so addictive. "Anyone can download the app and understand the rules," she said. Since the game allows players to play almost anywhere, friends look to Among Us to bridge the gap of quarantine loneliness. "Since quarantine, I have not been able to hang out with my friends as often as I'd like to, so Among Us is a way for us to talk and laugh at each other," Iris Lin said.

Junior Aidan Look agrees: "The accusations, gathering of evidence, arguing with friends, and finding creative ways to get out of situations after being accused [make] the game addicting. I feel like being able to interact with friends is what makes the game special."

Though some friendships are fortified through playing Among Us, others can be broken just as quickly when a friend literally stabs you in

the back. Dong described a game in which her friend Karen was the impostor and refused to kill her. However, in the next round, Dong was the impostor and immediately killed Karen. "Karen should've known friendships don't exist in Among Us," she said.

Junior George Lin especially finds delight in turning friends against each other and uses the game as an

As Among Us continued to gain traction, a Stuyvesant Among Us Discord server was created. After recruiting nearly 200 members in the Stuyvesant Facebook group, the admins eventually launched a successful Discord server, equipped with channels for introductions, a server guide, and multiple gaming subgroups.

Junior Katherine Lake became a moderator after her friend saw the

am not involved in that aspect, I can clearly see the stress it's caused most admins and the other mods."

Since the game only allows people to type out conversations, the Discord server grants players the opportunity to communicate over voice chat. "When we catch someone venting and someone calls the emergency meeting, we sing the goodbye song," Dong said. The Among Us "goodbye song" refers to the song "Goodbye to A World" by Porter Robinson, which is sung after players are ejected out of the ship and into space.

While some celebrate Among Us through memes and fanart, Iris Lin decided to take a different route by dressing up as an Among Us avatar for Halloween. She stuck a "dum" post-it note—an Among Us avatar accessory—on her forehead and set her virtual background as a screenshot from Among Us. "I received a lot of compliments and saw a lot of smiles on my amazing costume. It was cool to see a game connect so many students together," she said.

But in a game where the line between friend and foe runs thin and trust is short in supply, be careful about the company you keep. Who knows what head-rolling surprises your friends have waiting for you right around the vents?

"The accusations, gathering of evidence, arguing with friends, and finding creative ways to get out of situations after being accused [make] the game addicting. I feel like being able to interact with friends is what makes the game special."

—Aidan Look, junior

opportunity to hone his lying abilities. Lin recounts a game where he managed to kill everyone except Junior Caucus Co-Presidents Cynthia Tan and Elio Torres. After getting Tan to trust him, George Lin then accused Torres of being the impostor and managed to convince Tan to vote Torres off. "Guess their bond as [p]residents [wasn't] strong enough," George Lin said jokingly.

potential of an Among Us group in the Stuyvesant community and asked her to help structure and advertise the server. Though advertising the server was easy enough, the biggest challenge the admins faced was in the actual execution of creating it. "Forming the Discord server was a lot of work," Lake said. "The server admins actually had to teach themselves most of the mechanics, and though I

Wang's Back and Better Than Ever

By MORRIS RASKIN

After just two years of teaching at Stuyvesant, Advanced Placement Microeconomics teacher David Wang can now boast nearly six years within the building. In 2008, Wang arrived at the school for his first classes as an incoming freshman, starting his journey through Stuyvesant, filled with twists, turns, and a few lucky coincidences along the way.

Throughout his time at Stuyvesant, the extent to which Wang's experiences mirror those of a current student is uncanny. For starters, there's a good chance that you've shared a teacher with Wang. "Shoutout to Ms. Garcia, Mr. Nieves, Ms. Goldberg, Ms. Bernstein, Ms. Shamazov, Ms. Manning, Mr. Jaishankar, Mr. Rubenstein, Ms. Weinwurm, Ms. Daves, Ms. Paik, Dr. O'Malley, Ms. Arora, and Ms. Moore," he recalled.

Like many graduating seniors, Wang didn't have his life mapped out when it came time for his graduation

in 2012. "I still wasn't sure what I wanted to study in college or what career path I wanted to pursue," he said. Wang switched majors, paths, and even colleges several times before deciding to pursue a future in education and settling in at Queens College. He cites Stuyvesant as playing a role in this decision, saying, "Having many teachers who were so passionate [in] their field of study and [in] working with students helped seed the idea in my mind that this [path] may be what I wanted to do with my life." Wang also realized that regardless of whether he enjoyed a subject himself, he enjoyed teaching it, a fact that he discovered about himself while working as a tutor/teaching assistant at a community college. After a "traumatic experience" with an upper-level math teacher, Wang's future in social studies teaching was set.

However, after his formal education was complete, it was time for Wang to start paying it forward. "Ever since I first considered em-

barking on a career in education, I had envisioned one day returning to Stuy as a teacher," Wang said. The teacher reached out to Kerry Trainor, a former teacher of his who was still at Stuyvesant in 2018, nearly six years after his graduation, and inquired about openings in the school. Trainor agreed to give Wang a student-teaching role for his AP World History classes, officially kick-starting the young teacher's foray into the other side of Stuyvesant education. "My experience as a student teacher that term further affirmed my wish to return to Stuy as a teacher one day," Wang recalled.

After a brief intermission spent teaching at a small high school in Queens for the 2019-2020 academic year, Assistant Principal of Social Studies Jennifer Suri tipped Wang off to a job opening back at Stuyvesant. "The opening came when [social studies teacher Kerry] Trainor, the teacher I had student-taught for, moved to California, so it's an inter-

esting coincidence that I ended up taking over for the teacher I student-taught for," Wang recalled.

Over a year later, Wang is back for year two of teaching at Stuyvesant High School, and year six overall within the community. He has managed to switch subjects for the year, taking on AP Microeconomics for the duration of the 2020-2021 academic calendar. Like all of us, Wang has experienced much greater shifts than switching subjects in the past months. "Many times as I walk through the hallways, it feels like I'm the only person in the building. The constant emptiness of these halls has actually made me nostalgic for the good old days of being packed like sardines in the stairways between periods," Wang remarked.

The abrupt switch to remote learning has come as something of a shock to Wang and has presented a unique set of challenges for the relatively new teacher. However, Wang is optimistic about the upcoming

school year. "I hope that despite these difficult circumstances, I will be able to create a classroom environment that allows students to form meaningful connections with me and with each other," he said.

Wang's unique experience on both sides of the Stuyvesant population has given him special insight into how best to create those meaningful connections. "Being a Stuy student can be pretty stressful even without the new challenges involved with navigating remote learning," Wang said. "So I want to do what I can to make my classes as stress-free and enjoyable as possible."

Ultimately, only two years into his Stuyvesant teaching career, Wang is just getting started. He concluded with a nostalgic comparison that I, for one, have never heard of before: "The Stuy building is like Hogwarts. I've been in this building as a student and teacher for almost six years now, and I'm still discovering rooms and corners that I didn't know existed."

A Virtual Reality

By AMANDA BRUCCULERI and RACHEL VILDMAN

The typical weekday for a high schooler has changed drastically due to COVID-19. Instead of running to catch the train, students rush out of bed to log in to their Zoom meetings. Hanging out with friends has been replaced with watching Netflix or scrolling endlessly through social media. Our lives have become largely online as we increasingly rely on screens on a daily basis. From a survey taken in the Dear Incoming Class of '23 Facebook group, 260 out of 274 students said they spend over 10 hours on their screens for school-related tasks, including Zoom classes, homework, and extracurriculars.

Most students start their days by sitting in front of a computer screen. "I get up five minutes before class, make the bottom half of my bed because that's the part that shows on my camera, and then join my first

Zoom," senior Sunny Bok said.

Once the day starts, students attend up to five Zoom meetings that usually last 55 minutes each. "I have three classes a day with 10-minute breaks, and all of my teachers go live," junior Naya Mukul said.



The school day lasts from 9:10 a.m. to 2:25 p.m. for most students, making their days packed with virtual learning. "I spend an average of four hours on Zoom every day," Bok stated.

But learning from a screen all day can make it difficult for students

to stay focused. "It's hard paying attention to hours of Zoom meetings every day. I'd much rather be learning in a school setting because it would be easier to stay engaged and focused," Mukul said.

Screen time does not end when the school day does. "Most of my homework is done online, and I spend around four to five hours doing it after school," sophomore August Li described.

Fortunately, not all teachers give homework virtually. "Most of my homework is written, scanned, and put up online, except for classes like gym where homework is just a form, and for band, [in which] I need to record myself playing my flute," Bok stated.

Extracurriculars normally conducted in person after school have also been replaced with virtual alternatives, with even performance-based activities such as StuySquad moving online. Because of this change, after-school activities add a

significant amount of screen time to the average Stuyvesant student's day. "My extracurricular meetings for the day can last until 8:00 p.m.," Mukul said.

All this screen time does not come without consequences. Many students have noticed some of the not-so-great side effects of spending eight or more hours on a device. Junior Tamzid Tapan shared, "I've been having the weirdest migraines; normally, my head doesn't hurt, but recently it's been getting pretty bad." Mukul shared a similar experience of increased headaches since school went virtual.

Bok additionally described her more severe side effects saying, "My eyes get watery, and once after I woke up and rubbed my eyes, my eyes stayed blurry for a good 20 minutes. I thought I lost my vision."

To cope with the strain of required Zoom classes and virtual completion of homework, many students find themselves turning to

physical exercise. Junior Jacky Chen explained, "I spend a little time exercising to cope with the screen time."

Mukul tries to exercise as well, but also mentioned an item that helps her handle the long hours online. "Blue light glasses help with the screen time," Mukul shared.

Reducing procrastination is also something students are turning to in hopes of lessening screen time. "Procrastination means more time staring at a screen, which equals [to] more headaches," Tapan reasoned. "The more I cut out procrastination, the more [time I have] to do things that don't involve looking at a screen."

While there are many upsides of virtual school, the added screen time is certainly not a bonus. This is not ideal for anyone, but students are making the most of our current reality. As Mukul pointed out, "Finding something to look forward to every day, even if it's something small, has really helped me manage, especially when the days start to feel the same."

Editorials

Adapting to the New Political Norm

While the election was a breath of relief and cause for celebration for supporters of President-elect Joe Biden, the anxiety and drawn-out nature of the election also shed light on the political dynamic that has developed since President Trump's slim 2016 victory. While polls and projections were forecasting a victory for Biden in many swing states, and even a possible Blue wave, the reality was much, much closer, with the election hanging in the hands of four states. In light of Trump's poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the past four tumultuous years as a

about the political makeup of our student body, not realizing that more conservatives exist at Stuyvesant than some students think. Moreover, many non-conservative, first- and second-generation students come from immigrant households, with parents who voted for Trump in 2016 or 2020.

The bubble is a valuable concept to further our understanding of our skewed views. However, it most commonly manifests itself in the vaguely-defined notion that only by popping the bubble can liberals understand Trump's base. That only through this knowledge

to the evolving dynamic of the Republican Party, as well as its impact on the Democratic Party. We do not address the concerns or arguments of Trump supporters, some of which may be legitimate, nor do we engage in reasoned debate with pro-Trump Americans.

Not only has our traditional understanding of politics changed, but the tools with which we understand them have also evolved. Nowhere is this shift more clear than with polling. Contrary to popular belief, polling has historically been a good predictor of election results. But politics have changed dramatically to the point where polling, once a reliable measure of gauging the public's political views, can no longer effectively do so, as was made apparent in the polling discrepancies of this election. The tools we have now are no longer useful in navigating our current political climate, and similarly, our current mindsets need to be changed.

As we approach voting age and begin to engage politically, it is our responsibility to be attuned to the changing political environment and adapt our mindsets accordingly. By categorizing all Trump supporters under a radical, pro-life, QAnon-supporting umbrella, we impose yet another bubble that limits our ability to have nuanced conversation. Given that our current climate has seen record voter turnout from young adults, we must be cognizant of the assumptions we make and avoid confining ourselves to the dangerous implications of the bubble. It is important to note that we are not calling for reconciliation nor political unity in America. Rather, without this crucial understanding, we risk repeating the mistakes that led to Trump's rise yet again.

As Stuyvesant students, it makes sense that we lack a full understanding of Trumpism. According to the mock election conducted by the social studies department, only 10 percent of 1,762 students said they would vote for Trump if they could, representative of the “liberal” bubble at Stuyvesant.

whole, it was alarming for many to see not only that ten million more Americans voted for Trump this November than in 2016 but also that almost half of the country still believes in his ability to run our nation effectively.

As Stuyvesant students, it makes sense that we lack a full understanding of Trumpism. According to the mock election conducted by the social studies department, only 10 percent of 1,762 students said they would vote for Trump if they could, representative of the “liberal” bubble at Stuyvesant. With this statistic, however, we often make generalizations

can they achieve triumphant unity and a much-sought-after end to polarization. But what we should take away from the idea of the bubble is not that the bubble prevents unity and reconciliation in our country, but instead that this bubble limits our qualitative, descriptive understanding of why people support Trump. Trump's slogan—Make America Great Again—has fired up people from across the country and sparked a new movement that seems almost separate from the pre-2016 mainstream Republican party. Without a more sophisticated grasp of Trump's appeal, we remain complacent

The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper



“The Pulse of the Student Body”

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FOR THE RECORD

The Features article in issue 4, “Spooky Season: Stuyvesant Edition,” was written by Susannah Ahn and Mim Parvin.

Being Thrifty: Is It Too Much?

By ISABEL CHING

I never used to thrift. The thought of already worn clothes touching my skin made me anxious, itchy. I laughed when people told me used clothes were often better than new ones. Why would anybody want a roughed up, old jacket when they could have a new one delivered right to their doorstep? It sounded absurd, but my friends laughed and told me I just had to “get into it.”

I had a consumerist mindset—an outlook that has plagued Americans for generations. This perspective on the market has its roots in the 19th century. From the introduction of the loom during the Industrial Revolution to outsourcing production to cheap labor in third world countries, mass-produced clothing became increasingly affordable for everyone. Gone were the days of resewing dresses or wearing hand-me-down clothing—the large majority of people could now buy mass-produced goods at reasonable prices. Having new clothing became a sign of wealth, a measure of social status. Wearing the latest dress to a party signified power,

and fashion became an outlet for the new manufacturing elite. This prevalence of new clothing soon changed. Not everybody could always afford to keep up with the latest fashion trends, especially when recessions and depressions hit. Christian ministries looking to fund their outreach programs seized the untapped economic potential of the secondhand market, and thus, the Salvation Army was born. Thrift stores, including the famed Goodwill established in 1902, began to see huge success during wartime and economic recessions, with peak business occurring during the Great Depression, World War II, and more recently, the Great Recession of 2008.

So what has changed then? Why has modern thrifting garnered so much criticism? Has the basic concept behind thrifting, that used clothes can find a home other than a landfill, become antiquated? Why do people harbor such resentment toward thrifters?

For most critics, it's because thrifting isn't “ethical.” They argue that thrifting deprives low-income communities of the ability to buy clothing cheaply because thrifters, who can

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The Thrift Store Is Not Your Playground

By ELIO TORRES

I took the first weekend of October to do some much-needed restructuring of my closet. I figured it was time to do away with the uniforms from the school I no longer attended and the clothes that have gone unworn since I grew out of them. After striking down three-quarters of my wardrobe, I was left with a recycling bag full of nothing

but druff and scrapings from my childhood. Rather than throwing out my clothing, I contemplated traversing the neighborhood, dropping off my old clothes at friends' houses to make sure they reached an owner who I knew could make use out of them. A brief Internet search led me to my local Salvation Army instead, where they were accepting all-day drop-offs and were committed to principles like grassroots services and disaster relief. I dropped off my clothing, expecting it to reach the open arms of the homeless and the needy. But thrifting has now been revived as a fashion fad, and I fear that my clothes might end up in a YouTube or TikTok thrifting haul—not the shopping carts of those who rely on secondhand clothing to scrape by.

Sporting upcycled and affordable thrifted clothing, once a stigmatized mark of poverty, is now a mark of style and urban sophistication. Step foot into a curated thrift

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Being Thrifty: Is It Too Much?

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presumably afford new clothes, are purchasing used clothes instead. They are, in short, “unethical” consumers and gentrifiers. Thrifting is nothing more than a “fad” in the critics’ eyes, a trend that high fashion retailers have ushered in to appear sustainable and earth-friendly to modern audiences, while still selling trendy, one-of-a-kind clothing.

These critics might have a point if well-heeled consumers were emptying thrift shops of their stock. However, this idea is not the reality for the majority of thrift stores in dense urban centers like New York City. In fact, right now, as a result of widespread pandemic spring cleaning, most American thrift stores are literally drowning in tons of secondhand items. By one estimate, as much as 75 percent of merchandise doesn’t sell, though overstock is dependent on location. Thrifting critics thus have little to worry about—there is more than enough to go around.

It is also important to differentiate between nonprofit and for-profit thrift stores. Many thrift stores, especially large chains like Goodwill and Salvation Army, are nonprofits. For every dollar that the Salvation Army and Goodwill receive, 82 cents and 85 cents, respectively, are put back into social service programs like crisis assistance, family shelters, and housing support. Goodwill funded \$5.3 billion worth of charitable assistance and the Salvation Army helped over 30 million Americans in 2018 alone. In this sense, thrifting has bound capitalism and charity together, since the charity depends on consumption.

For-profit thrift stores have emerged as a result of newfound interest in unique “vintage” clothing items and increased celebrity support for thrifting. For-profit stores operate similarly to other clothing retailers, with the major difference being, of course, that the clothes are used. Usually far more expensive than their non-profit counterparts, with more curated and sometimes even couture collections, these stores are for-profit businesses that still retain some aspects of their nonprofit cousins.

But buying new clothing also has a price, and not just the one on the tag. Some say that there is no ethical consumption under capitalism; no matter where clothes are bought, somebody or something is harmed in the process. In America, most clothing sold is produced in third-world countries, where labor is much cheaper because of weak worker protection laws. By that logic, is spending \$100 at Reformation, a company which prides itself on upcycling textiles and producing sustainably, significantly better than paying \$10 at Shein, a company which has been rumored to use child labor to maintain its very low prices? Maybe. But there is no perfect option when it comes to buying clothing.

When shopping concerns the environment, thrifting is indisputably the best option. When consumers buy used clothes instead of new ones,

all of the labor, time, and energy that go into manufacturing new clothes are saved. These are no small savings. In America alone, 10.5 million tons of clothing a year go into landfills. New clothing is often made from nylon and polyester, which keeps prices affordable for consumers while still making profit for the producer. These synthetic materials, which comprise 60 percent of clothes worldwide, take anywhere from 20 to 200 years to break down in landfills—far longer than the clothes are actually worn. Globally, four percent of worldwide waste, around 92 tons annually, comes directly from textile and apparel sectors. Buying thrifted clothing ensures that no new resources are consumed. If more consumers moved from fast fashion to thrifted clothing, the circular economy that would result would be an improvement over the “disposable clothing” many currently favor.

To be fair to the critics, thrifting should be done in moderation. People should only buy exactly what they need and be mindful of how much stock the stores have to keep resources circulating. The thrifting market only functions when people buy for themselves, rather than buying out thrift stores to sell clothing at higher prices through online resellers. Thrifting does not support gentrification or discrimination—in fact, it reduces waste and the use of resources. Thrifting is simply reselling used items and should be like buying new clothes, just a step further along in the process. Thrifting is a cycle that relies on consumers themselves, a mechanism that will function only if each part works together in unison.

The criticisms voiced by those who oppose thrifting only highlight the need to change the way the clothing industry works: fast fashion is sustained by unfair and sometimes inhumane labor practices and has detrimental environmental impacts. Thrifters are not systematically dismantling and undermining institutions designed to serve the underserved and provide affordable goods—rather, they are helping those very institutions thrive in an industry dominated by unsustainable fast fashion companies.

In the words of my father, “thrifting is simply elevated bargaining that doesn’t hurt anyone.” Listen to him.

The Thrift Store Is Not Your Playground

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store or an outlet drop-off thrift site and you will see the same scene: millennials and members of Generation Z clamoring over inimitable acid-wash jeans and embroidered graphic tees. A 2019 ThredUp resale report concluded that one in three Gen Zers will participate in the secondhand industry in the next five years. Thrifting appeals to younger crowds because it operates much like a scavenger hunt. In any given thrift store, there are a few items of clothing that will impress peers and draw attention, but you need to put in the time and effort to find them; it is as much of an experience as it is a means of shopping. I must admit, I have participated in this fad. Much of my closet was once lined up on the suspended hangers of Beacon’s Closet, and it’s not because I couldn’t afford the newer, department store counterparts. While my and many other thrifters’ intentions are pure, the result of our participation in the thrift industry has had destructive impacts on shoppers—typically low-income individuals—who can only afford donated and upcycled clothing.

When a thrift store lands on the radar of younger shoppers, not only is popular and seasonal clothing bought up, leaving few options for the impoverished, but the cost of the clothing gets driven up in the process. In a report by State Press’s Kiera Riley, the prices of items at larger thrift stores like Goodwill have consistently increased and are now based on an item’s original retail value, not a fixed price. The rise in price in response to an increase in demand has contributed to the gentrification of the entire thrifting industry, which has stimulated even more demand; the cycle is self-perpetuating. Lake Sheffield, a Columbia college student of the class of 2024, noted that a lusty thrifting economy and increased demand have led to price hikes at

local Goodwills and have caused these stores to “run out of clothing much sooner [in the year], especially the nicer pieces of clothing.” I visited a Salvation Army this summer in Astoria and the racks were almost completely empty; the only T-shirts left were recycled from school field trips and local events. A lofty winter jacket might be just another one of the pieces on your coat rack, but to the unfortunate, it might be the only item of clothing they can afford to get through the winter.

Moreover, the thrifting industry is not the golden solution to fast fashion that Instagram graphics preach it to be. While the concept of recycling clothing is, in theory, far more sustainable than its fast fashion counterpart, in practice, large thrift stores like Goodwill send thousands of pounds of clothing to landfills anyway. The clothing that does not sell within their weekly rotation or that is deemed unfit to sell run the risk of being relegated to the outlet store, or even landfills and incinerators. According to Stacie Morell, a former employee of Goodwill, the well-known thrift store has a garbage bill into the millions of dollars every single month.

Another risk of the popularity of thrifting among Gen Zers and young adults is the practice of reselling. One of the largest online vintage and thrift stores is Depop. Young entrepreneurs can purchase goods and clothing for exceptionally affordable prices from outlets like the Goodwill bins—blue thrifting bins that are not sorted and just contain raw donations—and then they can resell them on Depop for well beyond the asking price. Now that wearing thrifted clothing is a widespread trend, Depop users are willing to pay laughable prices for products that could have been bought for a handful of change at outlet bins, so long as they’re dubbed unique and fashionable. While normal thrifters might buy a few pieces a month, Depoppers are buying hundreds of pieces and wiping the shelves clean, leaving the people who really need the clothing high and dry.

It is easy to buy into the buzz about thrifting, especially in a media world riddled with infographics degrading the fast fashion industry, but recognize that your participation in the industry—even on a small scale—feeds into the narrative that your fashion needs come before human need. Take better care of the clothes that you do own, and if you can afford retail prices, please just stick to them.



Eleanor Chin / The Spectator

Opinions

Give Us the Chance to Choose: The DOE's New Blended Learning Policy

By MAYA DUNAYER

Ever since NYC public schools closed on March 13, the Department of Education (DOE) and the Stuyvesant community have been struggling with a multitude of issues that have changed the nature of learning during this pandemic. From the DOE's banning of Zoom due to security concerns to rethinking the grading system, our administration and the DOE have been working hard to provide students with the best learning experience possible. However, this fall, the administration has been faced with the challenge of giving those who choose to learn in person for a few days a week the same Stuyvesant learning experience. The Stuyvesant administration has met this challenge well, instituting new safety measures and procedures in order to keep students in the blended learning model safe and healthy. Despite all of that effort, however, the DOE has thrown a new curveball at our community by only allowing students to switch to the blended learning model during a two week window that closes November 15.

The original blended learning model was meant to have multiple points throughout the year when students could opt into blended learning, though a blended learning student could switch to remote whenever they so chose. This system created the perfect balance be-

tween giving the administration adequate time to place new blended learning students into cohorts and giving students the opportunity to choose the blended learning model when-

ment more conducive to learning. However, commute time, as well as safety of the student's commute, are factors that may deter a student from opting in. The beauty of the previous sys-

tem was that students did not have to make one choice for the entire school year. They could choose to stay home for a few months and potentially switch to a blended learning model once the COVID-19 situation improved. Nothing is certain in this new reality that we are living in, and no one knows how the next few months will go. It is possible that the COVID-19 situation will vastly improve, and more students will feel comfortable returning to the building. On the flipside, it is possible that we will be hit with a second wave of COVID-19, and many students will

prefer to stay at home. Flexibility is essential in order to allow students to feel comfortable with their decisions, and allowing them to change their decision in a month or two is key to making students as comfortable as possible this school year. Under the DOE's new policy, however, this flexibility is lost. To ask students to choose one model for the rest of this school year is simply inconsiderate of the gravity of this decision. Though the DOE's new plan is understandable, its costs ultimately outweigh its benefits. Under the DOE's new plan, school administrators will not need to go through the process of adding students to cohorts when they opt into the blended model. As making programming changes and scheduling classes is a difficult and lengthy process, not having to do this process multiple times during the year might be easier on the administrative end. However, this increase in efficiency does not outweigh the added flexibility students gained under the old plan. A majority of the Stuyvesant population has chosen to stay remote, and assuming our current COVID-19 situation continues, it is unlikely that a large influx of students will want to switch to blended learning at any point in the school year. Having a few dates in the school year where students could switch, as was the previous plan, would allow administrators to add new students

into cohorts without too much disruption. This slight inconvenience to the school administrators is largely outweighed by the increased flexibility and peace of mind that come with allowing students to switch.

It is clear that the DOE must revise their new plan in order to allow students to switch to remote learning at a few key points during the school year. This is a hard year for everyone, with many new and unexpected challenges. It is essential that the DOE accommodate students during this difficult time and allow us to have the freedom to choose. Through this change, the DOE will be able to give peace of mind to students who already have enough on their minds without having to choose a plan for the rest of their school year. In short, it is absolutely essential to revert to the old plan, and the DOE should make this change as soon as possible. In the meantime, however, students should adapt to the new model by choosing the blended model if they have any interest in returning to the school building this year. As you can always switch back to remote, giving yourself the option now is the best decision with the current DOE policy. Though it is a tough year for everyone, the DOE and the student body need to communicate and work together to find the best solution and give students the most flexibility possible.

The DOE's new plan to only allow students to opt into blended learning during the first two weeks of November does not take into account the importance of such a decision and takes away much of the flexibility that the previous model offered.

ever they felt safe enough to do so. The DOE's new plan to only allow students to opt into blended learning during the first two weeks of November does not take into account the importance of such a decision and takes away much of the flexibility that the previous model offered.

Choosing to opt into the blended learning model is definitely not an easy decision. There are many factors that go into a student's choice to make this switch. A student may have a difficult home life or a hard time focusing at home, making the school environ-

ment was that students did not have to make one choice for the entire school year. They could choose to stay home for a few months and potentially switch to a blended learning model once the COVID-19 situation improved. Nothing is certain in this new reality that we are living in, and no one knows how the next few months will go. It is possible that the COVID-19 situation will vastly improve, and more students will feel comfortable returning to the building. On the flipside, it is possible that we will be hit with a second wave of COVID-19, and many students will

Section 230 in the Age of Technology

By LAUREN CHIN

Editor's note: this piece was written before the 2020 presidential election took place. Even at time of editing, the final result of that election is still uncertain.

How many times have you seen something on the Internet that you wish you hadn't? Whether it be a cruel comment, racist imagery, or something physically disgusting, it is incredibly and unfortunately easy to find all sorts of repulsive content out there. But who should take responsibility for such posts? Should it be the users who post them or the websites that host them?

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act is a part of the United States's internet legislation, protecting websites from lawsuits when users make illegal posts. The idea behind the law is that, in the United States, citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech. If websites like Facebook and Twitter were required to take responsibility for their users' posts and words, that liability would inevitably mean more censorship would occur as companies removed hateful messages and illegal images.

Unfortunately for Section 230's proponents, though, both major presidential candidates seem to support its repeal.

The Democratic candidate, former Vice President Joe Biden, believes that Section 230's allowing information to spread unrestricted increases the amount of misinformation in the world. Therefore, he argues that repealing the law is

necessary to increase the overall education of the American public.

His opponent, President Donald Trump, agrees. The President tweeted on October 28: "So much has been learned in the last two weeks about how corrupt our Media is, and now Big Tech, maybe even worse. Repeal Section 230!" His vendetta against Section 230 seems to stem from Twitter's frequent fact-checks and censorship of his posts, which he views as a method of generating fake news.

So now we have the two major arguments against Section 230. But is either situation as dramatic as politicians would like us to believe?

Biden's belief in the spread of misinformation incorrectly conflates our freedom of speech and Section 230.

Section 230 only eliminates the responsibility that companies have for illegal content, not all posts in general. Misinformation is just as likely to spread, even without Section 230.

Alongside President Trump, certain Republicans claim that Section 230 allows companies to unnecessarily censor and sideline right-wing voices. Yet reports have proven the opposite; if anything, it's

progressive voices that are quieted. Furthermore, it seems pretty reasonable to assume that Section 230 allows for greater freedom of speech, since companies don't have to be worried about legal action based on what their users are saying.

In fact, tech companies

even minor offenses should Section 230 be repealed. Furthermore, it'll be increasingly difficult for companies to monitor the millions of posts made each day: either they'll be forced to create an excess of restrictions, or they'll leave themselves open to dozens of potential lawsuits.

change means that websites must take responsibility for crimes related to sex trafficking that occur on their platform. Specifically, however, this amendment is aimed at websites that have been used as hubs for illegal sexual encounters. It has little effect on sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Regardless of the impacts of this amendment, it is clearly a step in the right direction. After all, the goal of policymakers is to change Section 230 in order to protect the people. Future changes can aid in preventing illegal sales and activity from occurring on public platforms all across the Internet. There's no need to remove it altogether, forcing unfortunate users to take the brunt of the decision when social media companies increase moderation.

For now, it seems that amendments to this controversial bit of legislature may be the best case scenario. The truth is, Section 230 is an outdated law, considering how it was passed in 1996, far before anyone knew how dominant the Internet would be in daily life. Yet for the sake of the Internet's millions of users, it shouldn't be repealed completely.

The Trump administration has already made several attempts for reform. An amendment was made in April 2018 that made criminal charges of sex trafficking fall outside of the domain of Section 230. That



Opinions

Lockdowns Should Not Come With Economic Catastrophe

By JOHN GROSSMAN

Most of America should not be open right now. The U.S. has just broken its own record for reported cases of COVID-19 in one day, and 36 states have positivity rates of over five percent. Despite this situation, states are not imposing the stringent lockdowns that are often necessary to control the pandemic. This virus will not vanish into thin air. America requires swift and persistent action and a proactive leadership. If we don't act now, tens of thousands of Americans will join the 240,000 we have already lost.

Lockdowns are best when they are brief but strict. They can buy valuable time for hospitals and health care workers to prepare for a possible increase in infections and reduce case numbers. When the pandemic is spiraling out of control, shutting down hair salons, workplaces, schools, gyms, or any other nonessential public spaces can give the government the time and the tools they need to get a handle on the situation.

Lockdowns have even proved effective here in America. While New York's response to COVID-19 was flawed, it was largely successful in curbing the virus. Since an initial onslaught of cases in the spring, New York has kept its case numbers and positivity rate relatively low. Nearly everything was closed for a few months, and cases in the state dipped to a manageable level. New York's response should not be copied in full, but lockdowns similar to it should be the standard for the rest of the nation.

While they are effective in combating COVID-19, these

lockdowns are terrible for the economy. Sixty percent of business closures due to the pandemic are now permanent, and unemployment still hovers around seven percent. With the fate of a second stimulus bill uncertain, proposing lockdowns in many states seems irresponsible. This recession

the pandemic needs to be a balancing act of saving lives and mitigating the economic fallout, but those two things seem impossible to do at once.

In reality, we don't have to choose between public health

Nicholas Evangelinos / The Spectator

instituted programs that pay between 75 to 90 percent of workers' wages as long as they are not laid off and help cover business expenses like rent. These programs are not cheap, (Denmark may spend up to 13 percent of their gross domestic product on theirs) but they

provide security when people need it most.

An

ing guidelines. Once the region is open again, there can be more infrequent supplemental payments to make up for a dip in customers. This would help keep workers afloat and prevent towns from being permanently altered by empty storefronts.

Measures like paying wages and covering rent for small businesses are expensive but temporary, while a recession and unemployment can drag on for years and leave the country permanently changed. The U.S. could easily adopt a similar program. The necessary increase in the deficit should not be the reason thousands of Americans die and millions of Americans lose their jobs. At the end of the day, regular people do not feel the effects of the deficit. We should pay off our debts as a nation in the long run, but it would be irresponsible to worry about government spending during a pandemic. We have the power to prevent economic catastrophe and thousands of deaths, but we are currently choosing not to.

Ultimately, we have been offered a false choice by our leaders. We do not have to choose between stringent lockdowns and the economy. We know that short and strict lockdowns can decimate COVID-19, and we know that countries can spend money to make sure that people and businesses aren't left to drown. The modern American legacy cannot be one of a botched pandemic response and a hands-off approach to economic recovery. Americans deserve safety and security in these times. We need to be devoted to stomping out COVID-19 and keeping the economy alive, no matter the cost.



sion could turn into a depression, and millions of Americans will be out of work and in poverty. This sole narrative has dominated President Trump's response to COVID-19. He has claimed that the country must reopen, even if people die. An effective response to

and the economy. People can still stay home and be employed while businesses are closed; it's just incredibly expensive. Countries like Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands have

American version of these programs does not have to be on the same scale. Wages should only be paid in areas that are locked down, and when reopening comes, the government should give businesses stipends to cover the cost of reconfiguring their spaces to follow social distanc-

End the Parentification of Your Daughters

By AYA AIRYYES

A few days ago, as I scrolled through Reddit, I came across a post in a community called "AITA" ("Am I The [EXPLETIVE]"), where people post descriptions of situations for which they are unsure if they're in the wrong. Titled "AITA for needing my daughter to help," it detailed a man who, after his wife died, began relying on his 16-year-old daughter to take care of her two younger brothers. She gave up everything important to her—soccer, her art program, prom—to become essentially another parent to her siblings. He was even prepared to disallow her from going to a college out of state because she'd be, in his mind, "abandoning her family." This post infuriated me more than many of the other messed up things I've seen on the Internet. My heart broke for this girl, who was all but forced to miss her adolescence.

This is in fact a form of abuse called parentification. The word was coined in the 1960s to describe the process of role reversal in which a child is forced to assume a parental role to their siblings or actual parents.

Parentification can play out in several ways. First, there is emotional parentification, in which the child is made to

feel responsible for the mental well-being of his or her family. Second, there is instrumental parentification, in which the child is made to take on the bulk of the household's physical tasks. The girl from the Reddit post, for example, suffered from both: her father, in telling her she was abandoning her family and implying that she alone was responsible for their well-being, was practicing emotional parentification; her being forced to stay at home to take care of her brothers is, through and through, instrumental parentification.

The plethora of negative effects associated with parentification includes anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Parentified children are likely to grow up not knowing how to prioritize their own needs. Furthermore, as a form of chronic childhood abuse, parentification can cause complex post-traumatic stress disorder.

All too often, it is the eldest daughter who suffers from the burden of parentification. This stems from the sexist and patriarchal idea that it is a woman's duty to take care of her family and that this responsibility should come before anything else, including all that is important to her. It propagates the idea, too: girls who experience parentification are more likely

to enter relationships with people who need to be taken care of, further cementing the idea that women should be the ones taking care of others. And from these sexist structures emerge problems for everyone: it's not just women who suffer from parentification—boys who grow up in families responsibility-free thanks to parenti-

expected to be the responsible one; I was never off the hook. I was the mediator during my cousins' frequent fights, and if I was involved in the conflict, I was expected to ignore my feelings and just apologize, regardless of whether or not I was actually in the wrong. If there were only two of something (cookies, presents, whatever

started getting frequent stomach aches from the stress.

Though my life wasn't ruined the way this girl's was or even really affected to a large extent (I only ever saw my cousins once or twice a year), it makes me wonder how common this situation is and how many girls have been negatively affected by parentification. It's a problem and a cycle that needs to end.

But that's easier said than done—the patriarchal entitlement to a daughter's emotional and physical labor is built into many cultures, and it's extremely difficult to dismantle. It's hard to find just one solution to this systemic problem, but if we wish to end this form of abuse, efforts must start in the household. Rather than accepting as a universal truth the belief that the daughter must be the one to sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice to care for their family members, households must urge sons and daughters to equally share these responsibilities. Parentification needs to be treated like the form of abuse that it is; teachers and counselors who suspect a student is suffering from parentification should intervene as best as possible. At school and at home, girls need to be taught their worth as people—not just as caretakers.

Girls who experience parentification are more likely to enter relationships with people who need to be taken care of, further cementing the idea that women should be the ones taking care of others.

fied sisters often struggle to be functional adults.

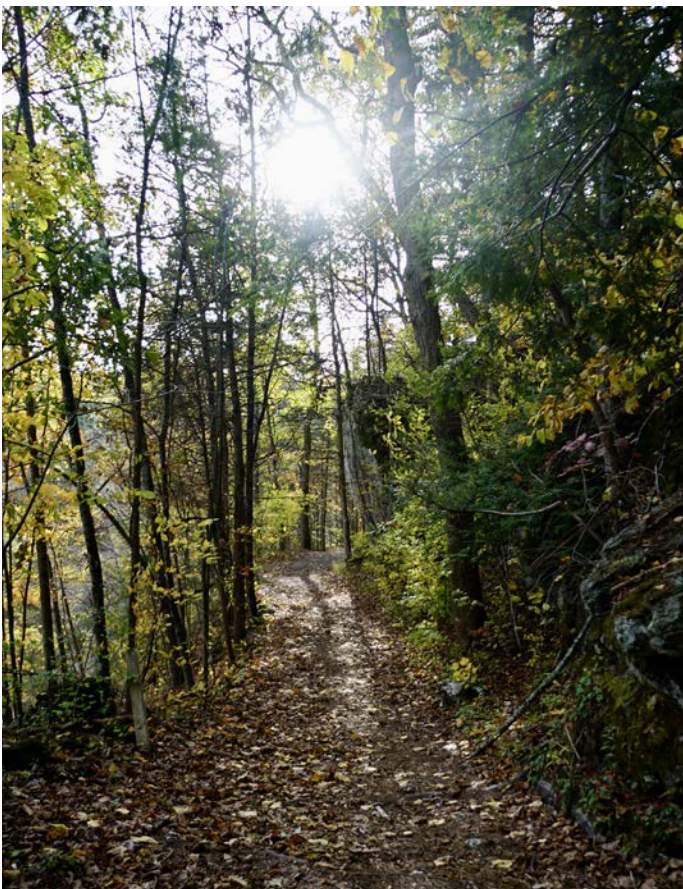
Though not at all to the extent of the abuse of the daughter from the Reddit post, I experienced a mild form of parentification with my cousins when I was younger. Despite being older by only seven months than my (male, might I add) cousins, I was always

else), I was expected to be the one to relinquish mine so my cousins could be happy. I love my cousins and the time we spend together very much—it's not their fault in the slightest—but my mental health suffered from the emotional parentification I experienced and the excess responsibility I was given. At one point, I

Photo Essay

Autumn Stills

By ZOE OPPENHEIMER AND FRANCESCA NEMATI



A 3D-Printed Antidote

By **SONYA SASSON**

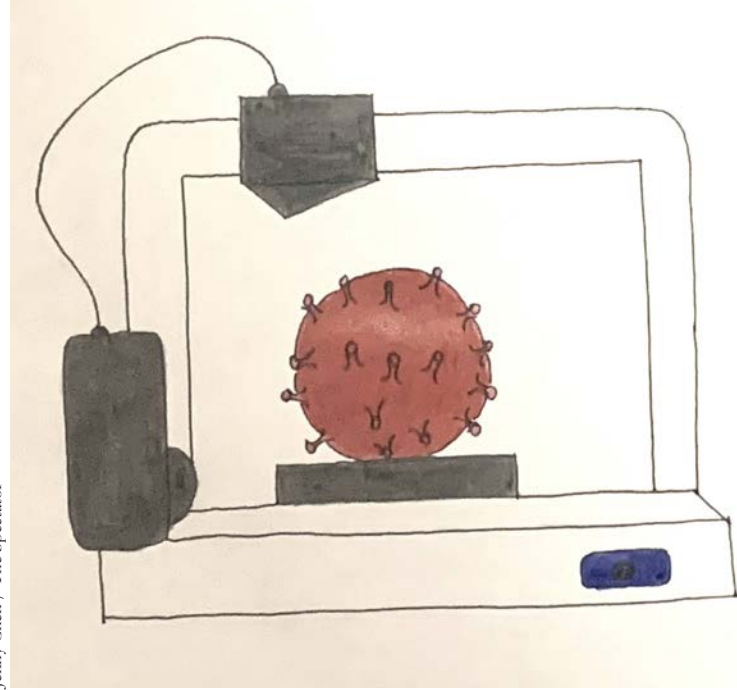
The first case of COVID-19 in the U.S. was confirmed on January 20, 2020. In a matter of weeks, the virus spread from coast to coast, affecting businesses, schools, and most notably, hospitals. One of the first observations made by medical workers and politicians alike was that our country was vastly underprepared to fight this disease; before long, doctors and nurses announced that they needed more ventilators to fight a virus just 100 nanometers in diameter. They needed more masks, more gloves, and more goggles. And the sad truth was, no matter how many millions of supplies were ordered, hospitals needed them within their walls way faster than these companies could crank them out.

This is where 3D-printing entered the picture. During the early stages of the pandemic, scientists utilized this fascinating technology to replenish depleted medical supplies, from face masks to ventilators. The switch from mechanical production to 3D-printing provided several advantages, especially the fact that a 3D-printed ventilator takes only a few hours to print and costs much less than the standard \$50,000 mechanical ones. 3D-printing also helped researchers analyze COVID-19's effects on our organs and tissues, as they could inject the live virus into artificial tissues and observe the outcome. Pretty soon, scientists began to wonder whether these printers could join other industries in the race for anti-viral treatments and perhaps a cure.

The task of 3D-printing involves a series of well-structured steps. First, a digital image of the desired print is created through computer-aided design (CAD). The CAD process is familiar to the students at Stuyvesant who have access to 3D printers

through drafting classes or extracurriculars like the Robotics Team and Science Olympiad. Technology professor and Head Coach of the Robotics Team Joseph Blay explained how preparation is just as key to developing the finished product as its physical printing. "The student prepares their part in a processing program unique

the printing of aeronautical or mechanical objects, the 3D-printing of biosynthetics involves using specific biodegradable materials. These "biomaterials" are natural or synthetic substances that work with biological systems to repair, replace, and augment organs or tissues. Biomaterials can be chemically classified into four categories:



Jenny Chen / The Spectator

to the printer company," Blay stated. "They check to make sure that the part is scaled properly and will print properly." Once the printer receives the information it needs to begin printing (through a USB or direct connection with the computer), it utilizes an "additive manufacturing" technique, in which materials are layered on top of each other to create the digitized image in 3D.

While the fundamental techniques mentioned by Blay remain constant, industrial 3D-printing is significantly different from the printing of biosynthetics. Unlike

metals (orthopedic implants), ceramics (bioactive implants), polymers (dental implants, prostheses), and composites (orthopedic implants, dental fillings, and internal catheters). The compatibility of these materials with living tissue makes them ideal for mimicking the various processes that occur in the human body, specifically in response to disease.

Prellis Bio Inc., located in San Francisco, CA, decided to take an approach similar to the one used to study the reproduction of the Zika virus in 2017. This process involved equipping the body with

the most important weapon it needs to fight disease: antibodies. Antibodies are already used as a treatment in FDA-certified plasma transfusions, but this process is tedious and there are not enough donors to treat the infected. While effective, existing treatments are using crucial time that can no longer afford to be wasted.

Utilizing the Prellis Externalized Human Immune System (EHIS) technology, scientists at Prellis Bio 3D-printed a complete, fully functioning human immune system furnished with biosynthetic lymph nodes capable of producing COVID-19-targeting antibodies. In other words, when injected with a coronavirus vaccine-like cocktail, 960 of these artificial lymph nodes generated virus-specific antibodies. What is perhaps most astounding about this outcome is that scientists were able to successfully replicate these critical antibodies without the need for a living host.

But as with anything involving genetic material, mutations are always present in coronavirus particles. Prellis Bio plans to address these mutations by using their EHIS technology to produce "antibody libraries" that can adeptly recognize any mutations on the molecular level and combat COVID-19 appropriately. Prellis Founder and CEO Melanie Matheu, PhD states, "Novel mutations are being found in SARS-CoV-2 across the globe. It's likely that these mutations will impact vaccine and therapeutic antibody efficacy. With our rapid antibody development platform, we can move as quickly as the virus is changing, and we're planning to get ahead of it."

Matheu's remarks stress the drawbacks regarding the potency of plasma transfusions and potential vaccines: these treatments can only release antibodies to a

SCIENCEBEAT

A new study suggests that the average temperature of gases in the universe is **10 times higher now** than 10 billion years ago. This is compelling evidence for the theory that the universe is **getting hotter**.

The **Mars 2020 Spacecraft**, carrying the Perseverance Rover, is now **more than halfway** to Mars. It's scheduled to land in **February 2021**.

The **Virgin Hyperloop** completed its first test with human passengers, traveling at just over **100 mph**. The goal in the next few years is to carry 28 people at up to 670 mph.

restricted number of mutated virus particles at a given time. On the other hand, 3D-printed lymph nodes can rapidly propagate various antibodies upon request. How this fundamental idea could affect future vaccine production, however, is a question that researchers have yet to answer.

Though more experimentation is necessary to solidify these preliminary findings, the combination of modern technology and the standard knowledge of how our immune system functions is already generating miraculous results, giving hope to researchers during this arduous battle against COVID-19.

Technology That Feels

By **OSCAR WANG**

Pick up a pencil and note the first sensation that comes to mind. You may notice its temperature, weight, and texture as you hold it between your fingers. Now, gently press the tip of the pencil against one of your fingers; you should immediately feel the change in texture. Continue experimenting with different levels of pressure, taking note of the level of discomfort you feel at varying pressures. At what point does this mundane experience become painful?

It may be difficult to pinpoint the exact moment touch becomes pain because two mechanisms are at play during this experiment. Our brains process touch and pain through low-threshold mechanoreceptors (LTMRs) and nociceptors, respectively. Just as the name implies, LTMRs can translate weak mechanical pressure into electrical signals to be processed by the brain. Nociceptors, or high-threshold mechanoreceptors, only activate when stronger pressure is administered (other nociceptors can also process thermal and chemical stimuli). Thus, the job of a nociceptor is to send a pain signal to the brain when a stimulus causes tissue damage. As such, pain allows us to avoid serious damage to our bodies.

Recall yourself picking up that pencil. If you imagined how it felt to hold the pencil and press the tip on your finger, you will be able to imagine that sharp sensation. While this may seem like a trivial thought for most, those who have replaced their lost limbs with a prosthesis

may never experience the same sensation you just felt. Though amputees understand what it means for something to be round, rigid, or sharp, mass-produced prostheses currently do not transmit touch or pain signals to the brain. However, results from recent studies suggest otherwise.

In 2018, researchers at Johns Hopkins University implemented a sensory system in a modified prosthesis to mimic the cellular response pathway in our bodies. The prosthesis has a top layer called the e-dermis, a play on the word "epidermis," the top layer of our skin. The e-dermis is laced with pressure sensors, including ones that act like nociceptors near the surface and mechanoreceptors below. When the hand prosthesis touches an object, the sensors transmit an electrical signal to the nerves at the site of amputation, allowing the brain to perceive "pain" and the shape of various objects.

The e-dermis technology may redefine prostheses from cosmetic or functional augmentations to treatments for phantom pain, a perception of feeling in a body part that is no longer there. This occurs as a result of decreased blood flow and nerve activity in the amputated area. While amputation removes the neurons that transmit information from the limb, it keeps the receiving end intact. As a result, the inactive neurons in the brain continue to receive signals from other sources. Prosthetic limbs that provide sensory feedback can increase the neuron activity and blood flow from the amputated area, decreasing the likelihood of

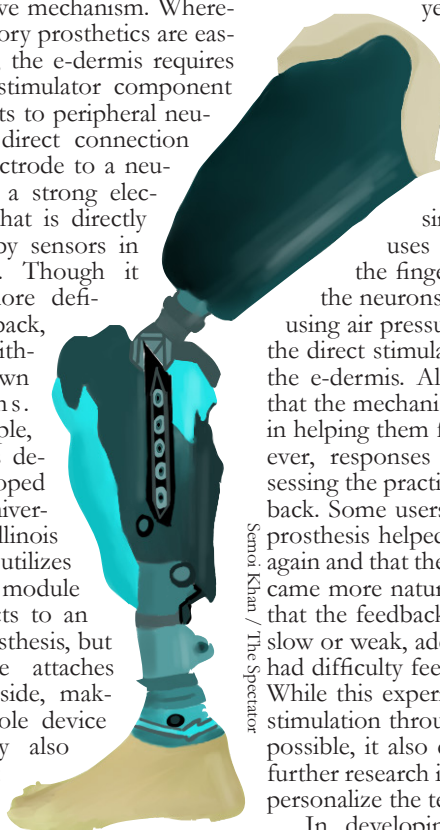
phantom pain. Though the success of this treatment is not yet verified by experiments, experience with sensory prosthetics has generally been positive.

The e-dermis provides strong sensory feedback at the cost of a more invasive mechanism. Whereas non-sensory prosthetics are easily attached, the e-dermis requires a separate stimulator component that connects to peripheral neurons. This direct connection from an electrode to a neuron creates a strong electric signal that is directly controlled by sensors in the fingers. Though it provides more definite feedback, it is not without its own limitations. For example, an e-dermis device developed by the University of Illinois researchers utilizes an external module that connects to an existing prosthesis, but the module attaches on the outside, making the whole device bulky. They also found that sweat impaired the effectiveness of the module, making it inefficient. In addition, the e-dermis is only capable of tactile sensations and lacks the ability to provide feedback on heat. Furthermore, the signal that the e-dermis trans-

mits is far slower and less acute than that of a neuron. These limitations translate to major differences between simulated pain and actual pain.

In one study published by *Frontiers in Neuroscience* this year, amputees who were instructed to use a prosthesis over four weeks reported some positive results. The prosthesis is a simple device that uses sensory bulbs at the fingertips to stimulate the neurons in the upper arm using air pressure, as opposed to the direct stimulation approach of the e-dermis. All testers reported that the mechanism was successful in helping them feel objects. However, responses varied when assessing the practicality of the feedback. Some users claimed that the prosthesis helped them feel whole again and that their movements became more natural. Others argued that the feedback delivery was too slow or weak, adding that they still had difficulty feeling small objects. While this experiment proves that stimulation through a prosthesis is possible, it also demonstrates that further research is needed to better personalize the technology.

In developing sensory prosthetic technologies, researchers must keep in mind the ethics of forcibly inducing pain. While it's true that humans require the sense of pain to survive, prosthetic limbs do not bleed. As a result, critics argue that the idea of adding sensory



Senouf Khan / The Spectator

capabilities to prosthetics is ridiculous. However, this choice should lie in the users themselves. Perhaps one day this feature will merely be a customization on more advanced technology, letting the users take charge of the ways they use their prosthetic limbs.

In addition, as many functional prosthetic limbs can cost upwards of \$100 thousand, it becomes even more important for engineers to work around the current limitations in prosthetics. Perhaps the most cost-effective solution is something similar to that of the device used in the study published by *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, where stimulation occurs externally. While cost is a major concern for the average person, it may not be an issue for scientists and engineers who want to implement this technology into robotics. Integrating sensory technology into the field of robotics allows for more precise measurements and more complex actions. A NASA rover equipped with this technology may be able to explore like a human and return more detailed descriptions of the landscape. Robots with commercial applications may also benefit from this by gaining the ability to distinguish dangerous objects and the ability to assess the damage on themselves. Sensory technology can also be applied to virtual reality to create more immersive virtual worlds. Despite being a novel development, sensory technology not only shows promise in restoring the sense of pain in amputees through prosthetics but also has endless applications in various other fields.

Science

What Causes Constipation?

By ANGEL LIU

There comes a day when you suddenly experience extreme difficulty trying to excrete feces, to the point in which you wonder if you will excrete out your intestines instead. Well, congratulations: you have constipation.

One of the functions of the large intestine is to absorb water from the food you eat, so if waste is left inside the body for too long, it undergoes scybalation, a condition in which the feces becomes pebble-like. This problem usually resolves itself with time, but if the condition persists for several weeks or more, it becomes chronic constipation.

The cause of constipation can be summed up as stool moving too slowly through the colon. Usually, during defecation, the colon automatically contracts to push stool through itself and out of the rectum. It can perform two types of contractions: repetitive non-propul-

sive contractions, which suck water out of fecal matter and do not move it, and high-amplitude propagated contractions (HAPCs), which do move fecal matter. The frequency of HAPCs is lower during constipation. When HAPCs move fecal matter into the rectum, they give rise to an urge to defecate. If you are unable to defecate in a particular situation, the rectum stores the stool temporarily. To expel the stool, you need to relax the anal sphincters and puborectalis muscle, which are located in the rectal region, and contract the diaphragm, abdominal, and rectal muscles, which are muscles that contract to push out stool.

The causes of constipation can be categorized into two groups: primary causes and secondary causes. Primary causes occur when the body has internal issues, such as a malfunction of the large intestine or other muscles. Secondary causes arise from external factors, such as medications. Drugs like opiates and

antidepressants can reduce smooth muscle contractions. Diseases such as cancer and Parkinson's also play a role in secondary causes. For example, Parkinson's disease affects muscle movement due to a lack of dopamine. This also impacts muscles like the anal sphincter and pelvic floor, which function to push out fecal matter.

The three major types of primary constipation are normal transit constipation, slow transit constipation, and defecatory disorders. Normal transit constipation is the most common type of constipation. It happens when the stool is too hard to be excreted, and there is a problem with the excretion process, causing you to defecate less frequently. However, there is no innate problem concerning stool movement and colon relaxation. It is the easiest type to treat, usually with fiber supplements or osmotic laxatives. Osmotic laxatives, as per their name, draw water into the large in-

testine to make the stool softer.

Slow transit constipation happens when there is a problem with colon motility. This occurs when waste takes longer than normal to pass through and HAPCs do not increase when they're supposed to, such as after meals. You may defecate less than once per week and not necessarily feel the urge to defecate either. The causes are believed to be a loss of interstitial cells, which are cells in the reproductive system that secrete hormones, and conflict between neuron transmissions in the gut. It most commonly occurs in young women, starting in puberty, and is often accompanied by abdominal pain and bloating. The most common treatment for this disorder is laxatives.

Defecatory disorders happen when dysfunction of the pelvic floor or anal sphincter causes difficulty moving stools. It is extremely hard to defecate with this condition, and patients may even have

trouble urinating. Like slow transit constipation, patients with defecatory disorders have hyposensitivity (decreased sensory input) and do not feel the urge to defecate. The most common defecatory disorder, dyssynergia, occurs due to psychological factors. A history of poor toilet usage, painful excretions, back injuries, and brain-gut disorders, as well as eating disorders and sexual and physical abuse, can contribute to dyssynergia. Laxatives do not work on people with this condition. Instead, treatments include physical therapy, nutritional therapy, and surgery, among others.

Most of us have had constipation at one point or another, with 16 percent of the U.S. population suffering from chronic constipation, a large portion of it being among the elderly. Knowing what causes constipation and how to remedy it allows you to tailor your lifestyle to be less affected by it. As a common problem, it is worth studying.

A Potent Antibody Able to Critically Debilitate the Coronavirus

By RUOXIN CAI

The entire world is racing to find a solution for the coronavirus. Many different cures from 3D-printed immune systems to antibodies have been explored. Nose spray, for example, has been shown to prevent infection in ferrets. There are currently 11 vaccines in phase three testing (which entails large-scale tests) and six vaccines that have been approved for highly limited use. Researchers have even begun decoding the COVID genome.

Antibodies are protein components in the bloodstream that recognize intruders in the human body and hold or flag them down for a white blood cell to destroy. Scientists do not know enough about coronavirus antibodies to predict how long a recovered patient would have immunity. As of now, many antibodies have been extracted from patients, and scientists have developed several experimental drug cocktails using a combination of antibodies. For example, the experimental drug Remdesivir developed by Regeneron,

which was given to the President, is actually an antibody treatment.

Coming from a recovered COVID patient, the new antibody is named CV30 and was most recently mapped by the Hutch Research team, led (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/10/201027143551.htm>) by biochemist Dr. Leo Stamatatos, immunology and vaccine developer Dr. Andrew McGuire, and structural biologist Dr. Marie Pancera. This means that they were able to determine the folds of the protein structures that make up the antibody. The device used was a synchrotron, a machine so huge and expensive that private companies can only request usage of government built synchrotrons, which can be up to the size of a football field. They accelerated electrons to a speed where they were brighter than the sun, emitting extraordinarily powerful X-rays. After the antibody was extracted, the team used X-ray crystallography, in which a crystallographer crystallizes the protein and passes very high energy X-rays through it. The diffraction pattern is analyzed by a computer, and the

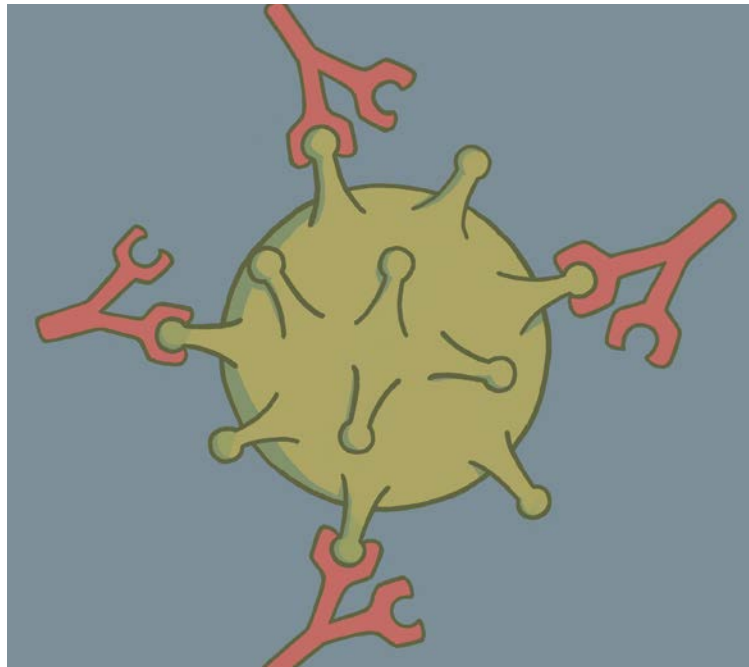
result is an accurate 3D model of the protein down to the atom.

The researchers found that CV30 blocks the human cell receptor ACE2 and breaks off the S1 protein on the coronavirus. The S1 protein is attached to the coronavi-

rus in the form of a spike, which swings open to attach to the cell, allowing viral genetic information to invade the cell. The ACE2 human receptor acts as the gateway through which the virus is able to bind. The CV30 binds to the RBD

(the receptor-binding domain, or the area that binds to the ACE2 receptor), competing with the ACE2 site. The S1 protein regulates the ACE2 binding to the RBD of the coronavirus. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7301900/>)

As of now, experts have stated that further research of antibody therapy may provide the bridge to a vaccine. These therapies are usually short term and could never replace a vaccine, but experts would be able to work with and get more information on the virus. Questions arise in convalescent plasma therapy, which uses the blood of recovered patients to treat those afflicted, as to how it would affect those with autoimmune disorders and preexisting conditions. Several pharmaceutical companies are attempting to make lab-grown treatments called "monoclonal antibody cocktails" based on the current effective antibodies. However, it is too early to tell if they will be effective in realistic treatment or not. Still, given the progress, it is likely that a vaccine will be ready eventually.



The Neurological Basis Driving the Two-Party System

By RIONA ANVEKAR

Since the beginning of the United States, our nation has had a strong tendency to be politically divided into conservative and liberal parties. Conservatives generally hold traditional values and believe in the empowerment of the individual over the government. On the other hand, liberals support socially progressive policies and promote social welfare. The tensions resulting from the differences between these two groups have made civilized politics difficult to achieve. It is difficult to bridge the gap between the parties and rightfully so: the two sides have been proven to be neurologically developed differently, changing how they see the world.

On the whole, conservatives prioritize security, predictability, and authority, while liberals desire novelty, nuance, and complexity. In order to further explore these differences in priorities, a trio of political scientists at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln conducted experiments to research the neurological composition between conservatives and liberals. John Alford, Kevin Smith, and John Hibbing put participants in a magnetic resonance imaging machine and presented them with identical images that triggered social and emotional processing, noting differences in their brain com-

position. Specifically, the areas that process social and emotional information had important distinctions: they found that liberals tended to have a larger volume of gray matter making up the anterior cingulate cortex, while conservatives tended to have a larger amygdala. The anterior cingulate cortex is connected to many regions in the brain, including the orbitofrontal cortex, the basal ganglia, and the insula, so it plays an important role in the functioning of the brain between various regions. Moreover, it is involved in many cognitive functions, such as decision-making. So, liberals tend to have a stronger ability to detect errors and resolve conflicts. The amygdala on the other hand controls how the body feels emotions and perceives them in others, which gives conservatives the advantage of being able to regulate their emotions and evaluate threats.

Scientists then sought to connect the underlying cognitive processes resulting from differing neurological structures to differences in political beliefs. An experiment conducted by Ingrid Haas studying how we process political information showed that liberals paid more attention to incongruent information given, that is, positions taken by either party that are not compatible with their normal beliefs. Additionally, their brains showed more activity in the insula and the

anterior cingulate cortex, which are important in helping people form and alter their attitudes. In addition, a study that scanned the brains of more than 36 conservative and liberal participants while viewing videos concerning controversial immigration policies, such as the building of the U.S.-Mexico border wall and the DACA program which protects young illegal immigrants from deportation, suggested that there is a neural basis to partisan biases and certain language can drive that polarization. The differences in response are attributed to the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that tracks and makes sense of narratives. Overall, the study suggested that political messages use emotional language that drives partisans to interpret the same message in opposite ways, contributing to increasing polarization.

Partisanship plays into an aspect of political neuroscience called motivated reasoning, the innate human desire to be perceived as a good-hearted person living in a fair society. It is a concept where people will justify their opinions or actions despite being presented with conflicting evidence. The role of partisanship is also influential as it can lead to rationalizing long-standing inequalities or injustices in order to justify opinions; in other words, system justification. The neurologi-

cal processes governing the functioning of system justification is the amygdala. Those with larger amygdala volumes are more likely to perceive the current political system as just and want to avoid change and protest, resulting in more conservatism. Moreover, a study at University College London showed that the amygdala is vital to the processing of fear: those with larger amygdalas are more sensitive to fear. Therefore, conservatives are heavily influenced by their desire to satisfy psychological needs to understand the complexities of the world, and to regulate their uncertainty and fear of a changing political climate. They subscribe to their beliefs because it helps them reduce this fear, anxiety, and uncertainty—avoiding change and disruption, justifying the current order of politics. Often, this may justify inequality among certain groups and individuals. On the other hand, a larger anterior cingulate cortex allows for more uncertainty to be tolerated because it monitors such uncertainty. Thus, people with larger anterior cingulate cortices are more prone to accepting liberal views.

In fact, a 2018 study showed that conservatives had a weaker tolerance for looking at disturbing images and were quicker to look away than their liberal counterparts. This may seem like an insignificant difference, but a human's gut reac-

tion of disgust can impact how they see people who are different from them. Though a strong gut reaction of disgust has evolved to be a helpful tool for survival as it helps humans avoid impure pathogens, it also impacts how they see people who aren't like them like immigrants or foreigners, and this feeling is intensified by their natural tendency to be more scared of "the other" because it's not familiar to them. Interestingly enough, another study from the 1980s showed that conservatives preferred simple paintings, familiar music, and unambiguous texts and poems while liberals enjoyed cubist and abstract art. This supports the conclusion that conservatives prefer familiarity while liberals embrace ambiguity and change.

These findings suggest that the development of the two-party system to its current division between generally conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats has been encouraged by neurological differences in brain composition. Conservatives tend to value consistency over change and liberals vice versa due to a strong influence over the brain from either the amygdala or the anterior cingulate cortex. Though the effectiveness of the two-party system is controversial, the innate tendencies of human evolution support the creation and continuation of it.

Arts and Entertainment

FASHION

Raf Simons: Fashion and Creating a Dialogue Between Generations

By EZEKIEL DEVEYRA

When thinking of the global fashion centers from which noteworthy brands emerge, Belgium is hardly the first place that comes to mind. With large cities such as Milan and Paris serving as hubs for the new and flourishing artistic projects of the season, it can become difficult for those outside the upper echelon of fashion to make a name for themselves. Despite this and numerous other tribulations in his life, Raf Simons was able to establish a culture—a religion, even—around his clothing, his name becoming synonymous with the duality of the retrospective and the visionary.

Born in 1968 in Neerpelt, Belgium, Simons graduated from the LUCA School of Arts with a degree in both industrial and furniture design. Despite dabbling in the fashion industry with his internship with Walter Van Beirendonck, a member of the Antwerp Six (an influential, avant-garde fashion collective of the '80s), the world-renowned designer lived most of his early life dismissing the idea of fashion as a career choice.

All of that changed when his then-mentor Beirendonck took him to Martin Margiela's Spring 1990 all-white show. In that event, Margiela presented an amalgamation of couture and street that felt more present and significant than anything Simons had experienced before in fashion. The former

glitz and glamour of the typical runway show were deconstructed into its unembellished form. The event in which Simons would later describe as "emotional and conceptual and psychological" featured models stumbling down uneven runways in deconstructivist style clothing as children filled the front row seats at the site: a graffitied playground. By its end, the emotive performance left audience members in tears, including Simons. Just like that, the designer knew fashion was his passion and was immediately catapulted into unfamiliar and exciting territory. Despite being untrained and inexperienced in the field, Simons was able to actualize his ideas of harmony between the human form and the story it tells into his work in fashion today.

Simons established his eponymous menswear line in 1995 and held his first fashion show in Paris just two years later. His brand gained traction rather quickly as it catered to fashion's two most important audience members: critics and teens. The former commended his use of fabrics and garments—much of this knowledge he acquired through his time studying furniture—to create visually captivating pieces. The latter admired how wearable his clothes were and how well they fit into the streetwear scene.

Through the early 2000s, Simons depicted fashion in a new light: seeing a man's world through a teen's eyes. From his

first collection inspired by school-boy outfits to his post-9/11 collection, in which models walked the runway wearing torn clothes, masked, barefooted, and carrying torches, Simons has uncannily represented the youth's spectrum of emotions through his creative vision. Despite having never designed womenswear, Simons accomplished much in the first few years of his career and was able to broaden his horizons when he was appointed creative director at German fashion company Jil Sander. Up until his departure with the brand in 2012, his work was applauded for bringing new sexuality to Jil Sander's silhouettes while maintaining the minimalistic characteristic of its collections.

The following year, Simons made headlines when he debuted his Fall 2012 Haute Couture line as creative director at Dior. As Simons' portfolio grew larger and larger, his influence extended to more brands and subcultures including collaborations with sportswear brand Adidas and game-changing work as creative director of Calvin Klein; his personal brand displayed a commingling of his own genius along with the ideas and trends he picked up while working with such a vast set of companies. His collections began pushing boundaries by vitalizing the ideas he had played with since his older works. Still present was that teen-aged restlessness in his designs,

but in subtler manners as time progressed. Saturated colors, genderless clothing, shredded fabrics, and asymmetrical layering were all discreet homages to his past designs. With these, Simons simultaneously took inspiration from and elevated the past with bold shapes to create nostalgic fashion that felt unlike anything done before.

With his colorful and decorated career, Simons has become a figure of individuality—a pioneer of the outward expression of emotion through a medium that was once seen as a means to flaunt affluence and status within the high fashion circle. By putting forth innovative ideas and transcending the line between fashion and other cultural outlets, Simons has ingrained his brand into the lifestyle of many. Rapper A\$AP Rocky writes for Time Magazine's "100 Most Influential People" how the Belgian designer has changed the face of fashion so much so that "it's to the point where kids, male and female alike, will get in full arguments over why he's the greatest." With Simons' womenswear debut for his brand just this October, it seems there is so much more he has to show. As he puts it, "the fashion world doesn't know the word 'stop,' so you have to make sure there are sublime moments every day." The fast-paced industry slows down for no one, yet Simons and his reputation have no trouble keeping up.

PLAYLIST

Remedial Tunes

By THE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT

Amidst the tumultuous flurry of exams, recurring Wi-Fi problems, and ocular headaches from staring at a screen for the whole day, you frequently lose yourself in the chaos of remote learning. Momentarily pause your work, and scroll through this playlist of soothing melodies to gain a much-needed reprieve from your day. If you don't feel like searching up these songs individually, go to spec.ae on Spotify!

Sbrike
Hozier
Alternative / Indie

Butterfly Culture
Benjamin Francis Leftwich
Alternative

Santeria
Sublime
Punk Rock

Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay
Otis Redding
Soul

LUCY!
Jaden Smith
Hip-hop

Glory Box
Portishead
Trip Hop

Mystery of Love
Sufjan Stevens
Indie

Curve and Light
Mid-Air Thief
Psychedelic Pop

Transatlanticism
Death Cab for Cutie
Indie

Born Tired
Jhené Aiko
R&B

Saint Valentine
Gregory Alan Isakov
Indie

Come Through and Chill
Miguel ft. J. Cole & Salaam Remi
R&B / Hip-hop

Photosynthesis
Saba ft. Jean Deaux
R&B / Hip-hop

Ophelia
The Lumineers
Indie Folk

MUSIC

clipping. Is a Deadly Threat on "Visions of Bodies Being Burned"

By LEVI SIMON

Murder, paranoia, femme fatales, apocalypse, and Cthulu are just some of the images commonplace in the blood red back alley world that hip-hop group clipping. crafted on their latest album "Visions of Bodies Being Burned." The uncompromising production accents the terror of lead rapper Daveed Diggs' stories with door-knocking sounds, shots of distortion, spacious ambiance, and shrill, chiming tones. The vignettes on "Visions" are soaked in blood, suspense, and darkness in the best possible way, and once you get past the potentially off-putting subject matter, you'll be rewarded with one of the most cohesive and entertaining releases of the year.

clipping. is a California hip-hop group consisting of rapper Daveed Diggs and producers Johnathon Snipes and William Hutson. Though he is best known for his role as Thomas Jefferson/Lafayette in "Hamilton," Diggs has rapping skills that reach new heights over Hutson and Snipes's unorthodox production. Diggs cites West Coast pop-rap subgenres Hyphy and G-Funk as some of his greatest influences, hence his ability to write a good hook and a catchy flow. He even references Hyphy legend E-40 multiple times on "Visions" as a token of his respect. Hutson and Snipes have extensive experience crafting film scores, which manifests in their ability to create a harrowing atmosphere through just a few synths. Producing stellar work since their debut album "Midcity" (2013), clipping. has

continued to redefine the limits of hip-hop ever since. Their previous album, "There Existed An Addiction to Blood" (2018), marked their first foray into horrorcore and is an excellent companion piece to "Visions."

"Visions" starts on a high note with its first track "Intro." The booming, distant kicks and subtle, scratching foley set the tone perfectly for the remaining tracks. Giving way to Diggs' surgical, rapid flows, the foley and kicks grow increasingly distorted until Diggs' verse is abruptly cut off by a wall of fiery noise, which

door knocking. These hits eventually give way to dynamic IDM rhythms, which Diggs flows over immaculately about victims of lynching haunting their murderers and causing them to commit suicide. The clear nod to racial justice returns on "Body for the Pile," in which Diggs intricately details the deaths of three police officers over some grueling metallic shrieks, clicking foley and thunderous kicks. Among the best tracks on "Visions" is its most aggressive, "Looking Like Meat," which features the duo Ho99o9. The resonant, distort-

thing to focus on while they admire the less compromising and chaotic attributes of their sound. Without this key aspect, the songs can feel directionless. On "Eaten Alive," the clattering metallic percussion solo with sparse guitar twanging in the background goes on for far too long and isn't all that interesting in the first place. While "Say the Name" has an earworm of a hook and some vivid murderous imagery, the resonating claps, and low string plucks in the background are disappointingly unappealing. Eventually fading out into a dissonant cacophony of plucks, whirs, clanks, and electronic fizzles, it becomes evident that the song lacks a clear purpose. "Make Them Dead" might also be a bit too abrasive for some; the power electronics intro is a tough pill to swallow for those new to the genre, and the density of the instrumentation could easily lose their attention.

Overall, "Visions of Bodies Being Burned" is a fantastic album. Elements of noise, hip-hop, horror, and even field recordings coalesce into a project only clipping. could have created. Their unique selection of timbres and aesthetics, as well as the brutal subject matter that they explore, might be intimidating for new listeners, but their chilling albums are consistently a cut above the average hip-hop project in every regard. From their expansive, jarring soundscapes to their endlessly creative lyricism, clipping. has constructed an immersive, memorable, timely, and progressive hip-hop album that will surely end up as one of the best of the year.

The vignettes on "Visions" are soaked in blood, suspense, and darkness in the best possible way, and once you get past the potentially off-putting subject matter, you'll be rewarded with one of the most cohesive and entertaining releases of the year.

transitions wonderfully into the bouncy trap bass of "Say the Name." Another major peak is "96 Neve Campbell," which features skeletal production under an inversion of the classic horror movie trope of women getting murdered. This time, the women are doing the killing; in the role of these women, featured artists Cam and China exude buckets of personality and swagger. The next highlight, "Pain Everyday," opens with frantic percussive hits that once again emulate

ed 808s (electronic percussion), Diggs' cutthroat flow, and use of the second person give the track all the thrill of getting mugged and stabbed, but make it way more fun.

There are, however, a few low points on "Visions of Bodies Being Burned." On "Something Underneath" and "Eaten Alive," Diggs' hooks aren't nearly as catchy as they tend to be on the rest of the project. A catchy hook is key to the clipping. formula, as it gives the typical listener some-

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By ANIKA AMIN

One of the latest teen dramas to hit Netflix, “Grand Army” is said to be one of the most realistic yet. Created by Katie Cappiello, a former theater teacher, the show is loosely based on her work “Slut: The Play” (2013). Set at Grand Army High School, a prestigious specialized high school inspired by Brooklyn Tech, it explores the various lives of the teens who attend it.

“Grand Army” focuses on the struggles of its five main characters, though their conflicts escalate quickly as the season progresses. Joey Del Marco (Odessa A’zion) is reluctant to spend time with her father, while Leila (Amalia Yoo) struggles to adapt as a freshman. Siddhartha “Sid” Pakam (Amir Bageria) becomes distraught over his Harvard deferral. Jayson Jackson (Maliq Johnson) is worried about getting into the All-State musical performance. And Dom’s lost her hard-earned \$200, thanks to Jayson and his friend Owen’s antics.

In the first episode, a normal school day is interrupted when a bomb explodes right outside the school. It acts as a catalyst for the rapid acceleration of each character’s personal issues. A fun night out for Joey ends in her being assaulted by the people she cares about most. Dom, already taking care of her family, has more responsibility put on her shoulders when her sister injures her back, stripping them of a source of income. Jayson and Owen’s innocent prank results in a week-long and 60-day suspension for Jayson and Owen, respectively, which potentially ruins Owen’s future and causes Jayson to grapple with his own guilt in the matter.

In some ways, the show is the most realistic portrayal of teenage life in NYC that I’ve seen. As someone who goes to a special-

ized high school, the show does a good job depicting the academic pressure and social atmosphere, while still maintaining an interesting plot. “Grand Army” has been compared to shows like “Euphoria” (2019-) due to its harsh portrayal of teenage struggle, absent of any sugar coating. But in “Grand Army,” the teens actually go to class, dress realistically, and face less glamorous but very real problems.

That’s not to say that the show is without its flaws, however. Occasionally, it falls flat and almost pushes the stereotypes it works so hard to combat. The bomb plot is never fully developed but used as a backdrop for copious Islamophobic remarks, many in the form of casual jokes. While the comments are acknowledged as problematic, they’re brushed aside rather than properly discussed. We don’t even see a Muslim character struggling with this bigoted sentiment, which means these stereotypes are mentioned throughout the show without meaningful opposition. Sid isn’t Muslim yet still perceived as a threat due to his brown skin—that doesn’t stop him from remaining silent when his parents tell him to differentiate himself from “these sick Muslims.” Additionally, the show inadvertently minimizes important points; Jayson and Owen’s struggles as Black teenagers are extremely real and serious and reflect larger issues with racism entrenched in the NYC education system. The harm of zero-tolerance policies, lack of non-Asian minorities, and the

overt targeting of Black students are all discussed in the show. But when these struggles are treated with the same level of importance as some of the less serious topics in the show, it diminishes their impact.

The show presents an interesting and varied cast of characters, some of whom have real audience appeal. Joey’s experience with sexual assault is a crucial story to tell, and the show offers a raw and sensitive exploration of her struggling in its aftermath. Yet her performative activism is incredibly problematic. From letting her friend’s racist remarks slide to contributing to Owen and Jayson’s unfair suspensions, she contributes to the issues she claims

to be fighting against. Hopefully, this is taken somewhere next season, as there seems to be some self-awareness in the show, with Instagram comments shown about Joey’s brand of white feminism. There was some criticism about Sid’s “model student turns out to be gay” plotline being cliché and overdone, but critics fail to consider the lack of South Asian LGBTQ+ representation and the way that his story is uniquely important due to the stigma around this topic in these communities. Additionally, Leila’s character is extremely unlikeable, self-

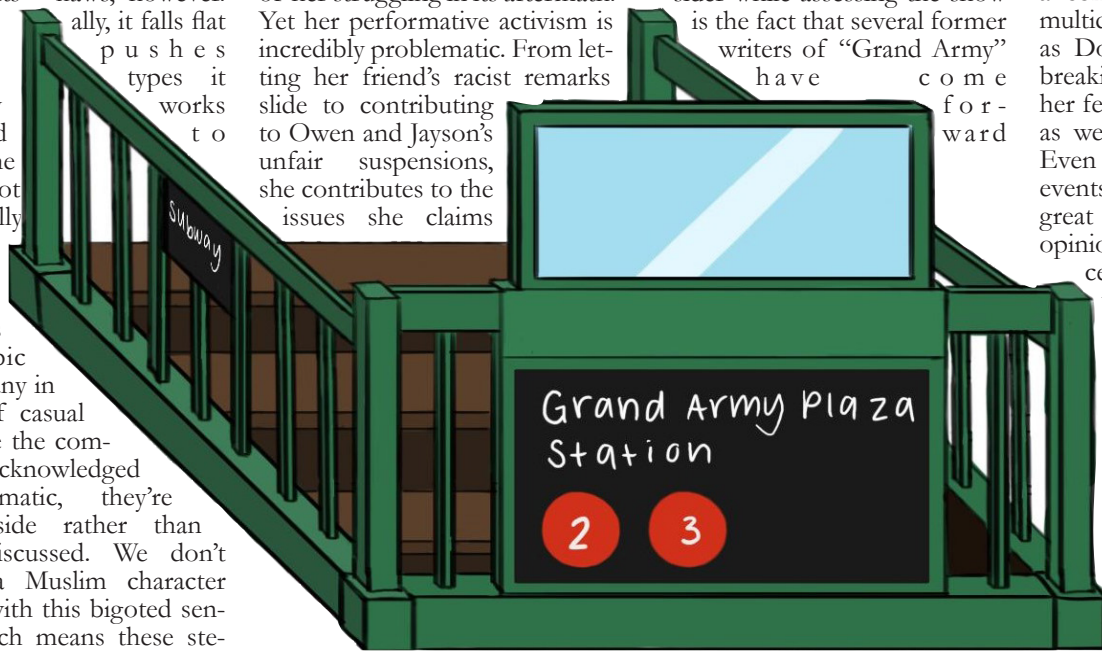
centered, and boring—and we don’t learn anything about her besides these flaws. Her one-dimensional personality takes away from the poor treatment she receives from other characters, detracting from some of the significant issues she faces, like her difficulty connecting with her culture as an adopted child. While these are relatable problems, viewers are too focused on how annoying she is to care.

Something important to consider while assessing the show is the fact that several former writers of “Grand Army” have come forward

low.

There are redeeming qualities: the show is engaging and well-paced, with some extremely moving moments, and the last episode leaves the series with a lot of material for a potential second season. The acting is definitely the highlight of the show. Yoo’s role as Leila is effective to the point of viewers wanting to physically fight the character in moments of extreme narcissism and dramatics. Jean delivers a convincing and appropriately multidimensional performance as Dom. Azion’s Joey is heart-breaking yet powerful, conveying her feelings of betrayal and hurt, as well as her eventual growth. Even before the life-changing events of episode three, she’s great at portraying the care-free, opinionated, and at times self-centered Joey, which makes the aftermath of her trauma that much more moving. Johnson really shines in the last episode, highlighting Jayson’s resolve to do all he can to fight for Owen, and Bageria shows Sid’s character development and journey to self-acceptance in a subtle but moving manner.

The show is inspired by the stories of Cappiello’s students, which brings an air of authenticity to the acting and plot. For a successful second season, the show would do well to retain this authenticity (one of its most appealing aspects), as well as iron out the more problematic aspects and unnecessary melodrama (again, the bomb). Along with that, it’s worth considering how “Grand Army” might benefit from diversity behind the scenes to match its on-screen representation. But all that being said, I have no doubt that many people, myself included, will be waiting eagerly for this story to continue.



Emily Tan / The Spectator

FILM

By JULIE GRANDCHAMP-DESRAUX

Defining a phrase only used when eating seems like a strange way to start a movie, but knowing the difference between salad tossing and tossing salad ends up being pretty helpful while watching “Yes, God, Yes.”

The film, set in the early 2000s, follows Alice (Natalia Dyer) as she navigates her sexual awakening while attending a strict Catholic school. After a rumor about Alice “tossing someone’s salad” spreads, she goes on her school’s “Kirkos” retreat with her friend to escape the shame she feels and to return to the path of righteousness. There, she grapples with being honest with herself and others while simultaneously struggling to abide by Catholic teachings.

It’s refreshing to see a coming-of-age film about a teenage girl discovering masturbation and her sexual urges. I’ve gotten sick of watching 20-year-olds play high schoolers, acting as if adolescent sex, and adolescence in general, isn’t awkward, weird, and confusing. Shows like “Riverdale” (2017-), “Euphoria” (2019-), and “Insatiable” (2018-2019) often offer unrealistic portrayals

of teenage life that glamorize sex and drugs, which can alienate the very teenage audience they’re targeting, while also imbuing them with unrealistic expectations of their adolescence.

Instead of focusing the film on overwrought dramatics, director Karen Maine draws from her own experiences at a rural

Maine described making the film as a cathartic experience, saying that being able to depict the “brainwashing types of retreats” reminded her a lot of her youth and the bizarre way the retreats would force her to connect with Jesus. This is reflected in the film, from the unsettling positivity of the youth leaders to the way Alice

lying in sexual activity with another student. Father Murphy, who teaches Alice’s sex-ed class, spends a lot of time making sure his students understand that sex (including with yourself) that isn’t within heterosexual marriage is a sin. Not much later though, he’s caught indulging himself while Alice hides in a supply closet, too nervous to do anything. It’s this and a conversation with a lesbian (Susan Blackwell) at a bar that help her understand that no, she’s not going to hell for lying and that no one in this world is perfect.

After reading some reviews of the film, it’s safe to say there’s one thing everyone who watched this film can agree on: it’s ridiculously awkward. I frequently wanted to turn off my screen, unable to stop myself from cringing at the embarrassing situations Alice kept putting herself in. At times, the awkwardness can make the film too difficult to watch. But secondhand embarrassment aside, these scenes simply add to the realistic nature of the film in that adolescence itself is often and painfully cringe-inducing.

The film has received some negative reviews critiquing the lack of “edge” or the excess attacks on Catholicism. But in my

opinion, the film’s purpose is to avoid being edgy and instead, opt for a down-to-earth and relatable depiction of teenage sexuality. There’s no need to add unnecessary drama to a sensitive and charming portrayal of healthy self-exploration. In the company of a lot of heavily dramatized media aimed at teenagers however, it’s understandable that for some, the film might feel boring. Furthermore, the film doesn’t condemn Catholicism; rather, it offers a more nuanced portrait of Catholic high school by exploring inconsistencies in Catholic teachings and practices, not to mention that much of these critiques aren’t speculation—they’re based on Maine’s own experiences.

All in all, while “Yes, God, Yes” might fall a little short on entertainment, it’s a refreshing break from all the current dramatized TV shows about high school. “Yes, God, Yes” is a sweet, sincere story of a girl trying to understand herself and her faith. The film is compassionate in its depiction of this struggle, one which probably resonates with teenagers now more than ever as we navigate our adolescence by ourselves amid a pandemic.

With abstinence posters lining the hallways and priests teaching sex ed, it’s the perfect setting for Alice to start questioning Catholicism while learning about herself in the process.

Catholic school to hone in on the thoughts and teachings ingrained in young Catholic minds. With abstinence posters lining the hallways and priests teaching sex ed, it’s the perfect setting for Alice to start questioning Catholicism while learning about herself in the process.

lies to fit in with her peers, who cry while telling stories about their connection to God.

The film also explores Catholic hypocrisy and slut-shaming, like when Alice discovers her priest Father Murphy (Timothy Simons) watching porn or when she’s falsely accused of engag-

Arts and Entertainment

FILM

The Prodigious Bride, The American Regime, and The Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan

By CHRISTINA PAN

This movie and subsequent review are unsuitable for children under the age of three.

“Jagshemash!” And so enters the esteemed Borat Sagdiyev: a strapping man of 536 moons, nearly 19.6 cm in length, a 15-time syphilis winner, and the fourth-ranked journalist in the once glorious nation of Kazakhstan.

Borat (Sacha Baron Cohen) is well known. Borat keeps his 15-year-old daughter Tutar (Maria Bakalova) in a cage (“Is it nicer than Melania’s?” she wonders). Borat sings an original composition, the “Wuhan flu,” at a right-wing, #ALM rally. Borat disguises himself as a “typical Jew” with a Pinocchio-type nose. Borat interrupts and frames an “innocent sexy time between a consenting man and [his] fifteen-year-old daughter into [...] something disgusting by the fake news media.”

If you’re wondering how something this crude and stunningly vulgar could possibly be made into a movie—no less an internationally recognized cultural phenomenon—it’s probably because it’s the “Borat” sequel. This movie, generously titled “Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” is in some ways a quintessential, almost timeless retelling of the current times.

The first “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan” (2006) has become something of a cultural phenomenon throughout the years. The phrases “Jagshemash” and “Chenqui” (hello and goodbye in Borat language, respectively), “my waiiife,” “very nice,” and “wawaweeewa” are all a sort of lingua franca among those who have seen the movie. The movie’s success came from its masterfully done satirical comedy—Borat’s open and unforgiving anti-Semitic, misogynistic, and almost incestual antics directly contrast their outer meaning; Baron Cohen is Jewish; Borat speaks Hebrew; and the movie, in its unique mockumentary format, criticizes all of the “US and A.”

In the sequel, Borat finds himself in the gulag for humiliating Kazakhstan. The country’s “Premier” releases Borat on the grounds that he will deliver the Kazakh Minister of Culture Johnny the Monkey to Michael Pence to redeem his country (this is Plan B, since Borat cannot get close to Donald Trump after defecating on the tower’s landscaping). Following a 22-day cargo ship ride to the “US and A,” however, Borat discovers that his daughter Tutar has snuck into the crate: she claims that Johnny has eaten himself during the voyage. Now, the only option is to deliver Tutar to Pence, or Borat will “be execute.”

A synopsis doesn’t exactly do this film justice. “Borat Subsequent Moviefilm” is an audacious story that masterfully moves between ridiculous crudeness and pointed political commentary. There’s a scene at a confectionary where Borat buys Tutar a cupcake; she ends up swallowing the plastic baby figurine on top of it. Borat rushes her to a pro-life Christian pregnancy center, asking that the baby be removed.

“I was just trying to give my daughter pleasure, and next thing I know, there is a baby inside of her,” Borat explains. “Did you ever put one in your daughter?”

The “doctor” slowly makes sense of the situation and responds: “We’re at this moment. It doesn’t really matter how we got here; God is the one who creates life, and God doesn’t make accidents.”

Borat and Tutar are satirical caricatures, but the rest of the people aren’t acting—and that’s the terrifying part. A sugar baby advises Tutar to date older men: “you’ll have to get one that just had a heart attack”; a saleswoman ignores Borat when he says “show me dresses that are the no means yes category”; the confectioner ignores Borat when he asks her to write anti-Semitic messages on a cake; Borat stays in the house of QAnon conspirators, and they slap the coronavirus with a frying pan.

Past the indifference and blatant prejudices of the majority, however, are others who demonstrate selfless compassion. Jeanise Jones, a babysitter hired to take care of Tutar when Borat

scrounges for money to pay for his daughter’s breast implants (in Borat-world, big breasts are essential for seducing politicians), helps Tutar realize a world past the one her father has shown her.

Jones learns that Tutar strives to gift herself to a man, wants a cage “better than Melania’s,” and believes that women cannot drive, masturbate, or read books without dying. Tutar stubbornly believes Borat as well, stating, “My daddy is the smartest person in the whole flat world.”

But what follows is the movie’s turning point. Jones helps Tutar recognize her own rights and break free from Borat’s misogynistic views. Tutar ends up leaving Borat, driving his own car into the distance.

Crestfallen, Borat considers suicide. But “since I did not have money to buy a gun,” he narrates, “I went to the nearest synagogue to wait for the next mass shooting, disguised as a typical Jew.”



Yume Igarashi / The Spectator

As Borat he walks into the synagogue, he greets an elderly Jewish woman. This woman is Judith Dim Evans, who passed away over the summer. Evans was a Holocaust survivor who spoke frequently about her experiences. In the film, Borat meets Evans in a highly offensive caricature and denies the Holocaust, then asks her to “use your venom on me to finish me—I am very depress.”

Despite it all, Evans gives Borat a hug, saying “I was in the

Holocaust. Can I hear your story?” Evan’s story—and her selfless kindness—dissuades Borat from suicide. After, Borat ends up meeting Jones again, telling her that Tutar has come to her senses and is “about to gift herself to [Giuliani] the old man.”

Yet suddenly, Borat is swept with a sudden emotion. He exclaims, “I have a pain in my [EXPLICIT]! Why my chest hurt?”

Jones replies, explaining: “You’re giving a little girl to an old man! That should make your chest hurt—it should make your heart hurt.” A montage of Borat and Tutar plays against a backdrop of sentimental music; he rushes to the hotel where Tutar is meeting Giuliani.

What ensues is a visceral, almost terrifying, climax in both the moviefilm and in reality.

Bakalova poses as a conservative journalist while simultaneously acting as Tutar. Rudy Giuliani, the mayor-turned-attorney

matched bikini, raving: “She too old for you! She 15!”

This harrowing account immediately blew up on the Internet. In response to the scene, Giuliani tweeted, “I was tucking in my shirt after taking off the recording equipment. At no point before, after, or during the interview was I inappropriate. If [Baron Cohen] implies otherwise, he is a stone cold liar.”

In an interview (Good Morning America, October 23, 2020) Baron Cohen replied: “I would say that if the president’s lawyer found what he did there appropriate behavior, then Heaven knows what he’s done with other female journalists in hotel rooms. I just urge everyone to watch the movie—it is what it is, he did what he did—and make your own mind up. It was pretty clear to us.”

It is what it is. There’s something simultaneously exhilarating and depressing watching Borat compel others to be comfortable enough with the idea of racism, prejudice, misogyny, or antisemitism enough to expose their own underbellies. “Subsequent Moviefilm” also strangely morphs into something of a family movie (not that you should watch this with your family—please don’t) in the sense that by the end, Borat realizes that he loves Tutar—he loves his daughter. He loves her “more than his male sons”; he loves her as the third-ranked journalist of Kazakhstan.

Yet the ultimate power of the moviefilm comes in its comedy and unforgiving, wild insanity. Just imagine any other movie with the lines “How many girls you normally put in a cage this size?” or “Finally the time come to deliver my daughter to the Vice [EXPLICIT] grabber.”

In our present nightmare of ugly rhetoric, social unrest, and unceasing tragedy, it’s almost comforting to laugh at a world almost as insane as ours, that is, until we remember our current reality. The moviefilm is, by the end, an appropriately bizarre retelling of a country in a unique kind of chaos—an artifact of the strangest possible times, told by the strangest possible chronicler.

And for parting words, the chronicler would probably like to say, “Chenqui.”

CULTURE

By AARON VISSER

Last September, I participated in one of quarantine’s major events: family movie night. Not just any movie gets to be screened in the Visser household. Each film must pass a highly selective process, in which endless vetoes are cast and loud arguments ensue until someone suggests a film that miraculously manages to fit the bill for that particular night. On that September night, my parents came with a movie in mind: we were going to pay \$30 to watch the new live action “Mulan.” Fortunately for our family, I bravely interjected and brilliantly argued the case for why we shouldn’t spend our time and money on the movie that The Spectator would later describe as “Exceptionally Awful, Shockingly Stupid, and Despicable.” Instead we watched the original 1998 animated feature, which my parents had never

seen before.

Every family member enjoyed all 90 minutes, which left me with a question: why did my parents automatically gravitate toward the poorly reviewed live action remake over the beloved cartoon? They have both reminisced about their love for the animated movies and shows they watched as a kid and have shown me countless hand drawn classics from Disney and modern computer animated films from DreamWorks, Pixar, and more. It wasn’t love they lacked but respect for the medium. To them, animation was for children and live action for adults. They are not alone. Most adults in America don’t give the medium of animation the esteem it deserves.

The Disney live action remakes often appropriately draw the ire of movie fans for their lack of vision, as well as the fact that they better resemble an artistic

con job than true craftsmanship, designed to con viewers out of their money and lure them with nostalgia and more realistic visuals. Disney, however, is and always will be a profit-driven corporation. They won’t stop repackaging their successful properties as long as movies like “The Lion King” (2019), “Aladdin” (2019), and “Beauty and the Beast” (2017) keep raking in billions of dollars. Remakes of “Peter Pan,” “The Little Mermaid,” and a second live action of “101 Dalmatians” are already in pre-production for next year. The problem isn’t Disney—it’s the adults who keep shuffling into the theaters with their families to feed on some more nostalgia in a form acceptable for those embarrassed for liking animation. The only way to end the shameless corporate remakes is for Americans to give the artform of animation the respect it deserves.

To find the answer to our problem, we should look overseas to Japan, where the art form of anime is loved by all ages. Japanese audiences unceasingly support original animated stories at the box office (five of their top 10 domestic grossing movies are animated) and are unsurprisingly rewarded with new stories from empowered creators sponsored by companies that respond to the same market incentives present in the U.S. Equally unsurprising is that when American opportunists like J.J. Abrams see the success of an original anime film like “Your Name” (2016), they only see a chance to remake it as a live action movie for American audiences, nevermind the sheer idiocy of removing what is arguably the most beautifully animated movie of all time (not including other works from director Makoto Shinkai, see Weathering With You) from animation. Hollywood executives

like Abrams say they want to take a great story and make it accessible to the millions of viewers who have never seen it. That’s exactly the problem. Americans automatically prefer a film with recognizable actors than a dubbed anime.

Most American audiences think animation is for children, and in most circumstances, they are correct: animation is for the inner child in all of us. Our rational adult side wants to see things more literally. While as a kid we might have had no problem believing in Simba the talking lion, we now require a real breathing actor to connect with the characters on screen. This is just a misconception. Even those who may have lost most of their imagination can still anthropomorphize anything resembling a human face. I have seen adults for the two hours of a “Mulan” (1989) viewing truly

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believe that the drawings on the screen are real individuals. It's quite magical. The best animation can activate childlike emotions as well. No one does this better than the master of mobile drawings, Hayao Miyazaki, who is responsible for some of the greatest modern movies ever made, such as "Spirited Away" (2001), "My

Neighbor Totoro" (1988), and "Princess Mononoke" (1997). His films allow viewers of any age to immerse themselves in his fantastic worlds with the awe of a child. Pixar has also rightfully won acclaim for being able to tell stories with mature themes for adults with a wonder and level of imagination only present in children.

Animation opens up the mind of not only the viewer, but also the artists who create the films.

Many people argue that naturalistic art has stopped progressing and that visual art today is far inferior to the brilliant visual works of Van Gogh, Picasso, or Cézanne. Anyone making this absurd claim should watch "The Tale of The Princess Kaguya" (2013), "Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse" (2018), or the aforementioned "Your Name" (2016), all made within the last decade. These films are the work of not

any single individual, but swarms of people working together to create some of the most beautiful and innovative visual art ever.

Just like in any other medium, the animated masterpiece is much rarer than the artistically uninspired duds only digestible by those under 10 years old; see "Emoji Movie" (2017) and "The Boss Baby" (2017). But when done right, animation can be better than normal live action

for adults and children alike, for its only constraints are the artists' and viewers' imaginations. A film shouldn't be less respectable because it's a cartoon, and just because a film can be remade with realistic CGI doesn't mean it should. In Hollywood, we vote with our wallets. So next time you're in my family's situation of choosing between watching a live action remake or the original, make the right decision.

MUSIC

By ZIFEI ZHAO

When most people hear the name "Beabadoobee," they think of the lyrics "Don't stay away for too long / Don't go to bed / I'll make a cup of coffee for your head" from Powfu's downbeat, Lo-fi song "Coffee." But Beabadoobee is so much more than a background vocal. Bea Kristi, who goes by Beabadoobee, is a 20-year-old British Filipino singer-songwriter. Aside from being a young artist, she is also a '90s and early 2000s fashion icon for teens around the world. Her latest album, "Fake It Flowers," is a milestone in her growth as an artist, her implementation of nostalgic alt-rock having vastly improved and matured and showcasing her great artistic potential.

The 12-track album opens up with "Care," an electric ballad about childhood trauma that sets the tone. The song is vastly different from her indie bedroom-pop

songs, which are usually acoustic or lightly rock-inspired. Here, with dynamic drumming and strong guitar riffs, Bea isn't afraid to show off influences from Avril Lavigne, Veruca Salt, and Pavement. "Worth It" and "Dye it Red," personal favorites, follow the same style as "Care" with their lush drums and explore deeper themes of teenage infidelity and identity.

In contrast, "Back to Mars" and "How Was Your Day?" are more acoustic and laid-back in terms of percussion. These songs are like her previous albums but grungier, demonstrating her improved production and instrumentation. As she continues to expand her instrumentation styles, she dives deep into hard-hitting themes of mental health, lost friendship, and relationships. Previously, her albums were mostly about teenage romance, but with this new focus on broader, tougher themes, Bea establishes a

growing maturity in her songwriting while maintaining a relatability with her audience.

Though her songwriting has developed beyond typical romantic themes, Bea still needs to work on conveying her emotions effectively and genuinely in her lyrics. In "Further Away," she sings, "Say what you want / It's hard cause it sucks / I'll just pretend to give a [EXPLICIT]." Though she has potential, her lyrics are quite blunt and can come off as underdeveloped or superficial. Notably, in "Horen Sarrison," a beautiful love song about her boyfriend Soren Harrison, she provides listeners with imagery of "pavement on the rain" and "last empty seat on the train." In future albums, we hope to see imperfect, yet emotionally vulnerable, lyrics and a delivery that matches.

Beyond her music, Bea's music videos continue to build her signature nostalgic vibe. Her videos are wonderfully '90s-inspired and use a variety of cinematic elements to effectively convey a weathered and hazy look that floods viewers with a rush of lost memories. It's common for her videos to invoke past experiences that viewers had forgotten about. Another aspect of Bea's music videos is their symbolism. All of Bea's videos are shot and directed by Harrison, allowing for a deeper connection between the director



Emily Chen / The Spectator

and songwriter. This unique relationship allows for strategically-linked physical images to metaphors in songs and creates a fun and beautiful experience for viewers and listeners. Her nostalgic music videos help emphasize that Bea is no longer a small artist in her bedroom, but rather a developed artist with professional and stylized production.

Through Bea's experimentation of intense alt-rock influences, "Fake It Flowers" is the album we all needed to recognize Bea's potential as an artist. Her instrumentation is wonderfully different from her typical discography, and she surprises listeners with her exploration of deeper themes. While her lyrics do fall short in expressiveness, her album is overall cohesive and dynamic. Hopefully, this is not the last of Bea's experimentation with production, and we look forward to seeing an even more powerful rock album in the future.

MUSIC

By SAMIRA ESHA, LIANNE OHAYON, and LEVI SIMON

Pop princess Ariana Grande has returned to the charts with her highly-anticipated sixth studio album "Positions." Though Grande's career was built on her bubblegum pop roots, this album abandons the sugary sweetness of her earlier career and takes on an experimental, R&B-influenced edge. Arianators have been seeking such an album from Grande ever since the release of "Sweetener" (2018) and "thank u, next" (2019), but many outside listeners have been surprised to hear a different approach to her usual sound. "Positions" is a fun, effervescent album that is refreshing to hear from Grande, and though there are some songs that fall flat, it's an overall enjoyable listen for R&B and pop fans. But in contrast to her previous album "thank u, next," "Positions" underperformed according to critics and a large sum of her fans.

Compared to her earlier work, "Positions" heavily incorporates trap, R&B, and hip-hop into its production. Major hip-hop producers, including Murda Beatz and London on the Track, are featured on various tracks. With their help and her usual production team, Grande was able to create a project that contrasts with her previous five albums, especially in terms of musical style. Alas, this experimentation led to the downfall of some of the core aspects of an album. Lyrically, Grande is passionate and expressive, describing the different stages of a new relationship. She, however, is not as clever with her wordplay as she has shown herself

to be capable of. The songs blend together to create a cohesive album but are almost too cohesive at some points, making it hard to differentiate between the songs after listening to them one after the other. "Positions" is suspected to be an album Grande wrote for herself and therefore, less accessible to mainstream audiences, resulting in mixed reviews.

Many of the songs on the album are great. Through thoughtful lyrics, melodic harmonies, and the incorporation of different instruments across the 14-track album, we are able to see a more buoyant side of Grande that had been less apparent in her other two recent albums. As in every album, there are a few that stick out for their originality and overall composition. For example, "pov" is arguably the greatest song on "Positions," baring the raw emotions that listeners heard throughout all of "thank u, next" in particular. Lyrics like "I can feel it starting to subside / Learning to believe in what is mine" express the core feelings that many people truly want in a relationship: clarity and transparency. "love language" and "just like magic" each have a myriad of different beats that add variety to the album as a whole, and "my hair" combines jazzy and sultry elements into the album. The plucky synth strings of "shut up," "34+35," and "positions" serve as a catchy backdrop for Grande's cooing, which is simple, sensual, and angelic, but the three tracks blend together in the listener's memory. Another peak highlight is "off the table," her second collaboration with The Weeknd, whose contributions to

the track result in one of the most satisfying crescendos in Grande's discography. Here, Grande shows her capacity for emotional depth by including heartbreaking lyrics about not being able to love again as she did in her previous relationship with the late Mac Miller. The Weeknd plays the male coun-

sings about being "delicious" over some below-average production that fails to be bouncy. The track shows promise with its warping, wiry synth passages at the beginning and end of the runtime, but they never contribute to anything greater and end up feeling tacked on. The percussion on "nasty" is

There is no doubt that Doja Cat is incredibly talented, but the synth orchestration clashes with her unique, husky voice and boisterous rapping style. "obvious," the penultimate song on "positions," is the archetypal Ariana Grande song and does little to stand out; in an album that is full of artistic improvement, the song simply doesn't fit.

"Positions" indicates a major change in Grande's place in the music industry. Since her first album, "Yours Truly," there has been a gradual shift in the musicality of Grande's projects, and this album is her baby steps into the R&B genre. As such, there are a few growing pains. Nevertheless, Grande has established herself as a talented lyricist and an amazing singer, so it will be interesting to see her progression and growth in the sultry, sexy R&B sector of music. The songs on the album hold more blatantly sexual undertones, in contrast to the emotional distress expressed in Grande's last two albums. Sexuality is not new to Grande's music, but she shows that she is more comfortable with the topic in this project.

Grande has completely reinvented herself in this new era of music, but this is just her start in the R&B world. Her new sound is far more mature and unique, emphasizing her transition from a young child star to a mature vocalist and songwriter. Since "Positions" is a new step for Grande, it may not have been as cohesive as previous records, and Grande still has a long way to go in order to perfect the genre. We, as well as the rest of the world, are eagerly waiting to see her metamorphosis.



Afza Mahmud / The Spectator

terpart and references past tracks of his throughout his verse, like "The Hills" and his previous collaboration with Grande, "Love Me Harder." Their chemistry is apparent, and it makes the relationship in the track feel all the more real.

Unfortunately, the tracklist lulls with "six thirty," where Grande

by the numbers, and the instrumental melody is so low in the mix that it's practically nonexistent. "motive," Grande's collab with Doja Cat, also pales in comparison to the rest of the tracklist. Though one of the more upbeat songs in the album, the track heads downhill once Doja Cat starts singing.

Beabadoobee's "Fake It Flowers" is the Alt-Rock Album We Needed

Ariana Grande Switches To Sultry R&B On "Positions"

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By IVY HALPERN

Have you ever watched a show where all you wanted to do was punch the main character in the face the whole time? Well, “Emily in Paris” is the show for you. While many began the show because of Netflix’s extensive marketing and our current lockdown travel lust, the beautiful Paris scenery doesn’t quite make up for the unrealistic characters, illogical plot, and simply put, everything else that the show does wrong.

The show is about Emily (Lily Collins), who relocates to Paris as part of her job to give an “American perspective” at a marketing firm. She speaks no French and is clueless to classic “Parisian culture,” which is heavily stereotyped in the show. Parisians weren’t happy with this show’s take, with one saying, “some clichés are so extreme that I wonder how the French cast rolled with them.” The main trope of “Emily in Paris” is a portrayal of French dating culture as dominated by cheating and polygamy. Despite the overwhelming criti-

cism, creator Darren Star backs up his show, saying that the extreme stereotyping only goes to show the lens of an American girl who has never been to Paris and does not represent the opinions of the creators.

The first episode alone is filled with more clichés than there should be in an entire TV show, and they. Never. Stop. Emily gets to her apartment and—of course—meets her hot neighbor Gabriel (Lucas Bravo) right away, the obvious chemistry between them allowing for even the most oblivious watchers to predict what will happen an episode or two later. Emily then meets her classic “Devil Wears Prada” type boss, Sylvie. Instead of hating her verbally abusive boss, Emily constantly tries to win her over in what seem like the most ineffective yet cringy ways. The audience, however, can’t enjoy the mendacity Sylvie shows Emily—a supposedly likable quirk—because of her blatant and unlikeable anti-feminist behavior.

Emily is only said to be an assistant in marketing but seen like a powerful executive. In the first

episode, Emily says she is meant to just provide an American perspective for a French marketing company, but she is constantly taking on high clients and saving the day with her superhero-like tendencies where her extravagant ideas always somehow just work. Whenever she is faced with daunting challenges throughout the show, she fixes them just a few minutes later in the most impractical yet miraculous ways.

And when you think her job success can’t get any more confusing, all of a sudden Emily is inexplicably an influencer on Instagram and continuously markets for clients without any permission from the company.

Her influencer status is far from the only unrealistic aspect of the show. For example, Emily gets retweeted by the President’s wife and instantly becomes best friends with a random woman she meets at the park. The most unrealistic aspect has to be her high-end attire with severely over-styled looks. In the last episode, Emily is wearing two pocketbooks and a Chanel turtleneck. There is no marketing position

that would afford Emily to dress this way, and the audience knows this. In 2020, this styling is just another way Emily’s character comes across as incredibly shallow and unrealistic.

Along with the show’s non-viable aspects, the plot is predictable and extremely unoriginal—even for a dumb meet-cute movie. First of all, why is it that every guy she meets immediately falls in love with her? No matter how many different guys fall for her, Gabriel, her neighbor, seems to be the one she truly likes. Of course, she can’t just be with him, as the writers made sure to add in one of the most overused tropes: a love triangle. Gabriel likes Emily but has a girlfriend, with whom Emily grows to be good friends. The three of them are put in many awkward situations, but in the end, not to worry, everything works out as per usual for this show.

Emily’s token Asian best friend, Mindy, also makes for a clichéd storyline. She is the classic rebellious daughter of rich parents, who have set plans for her despite her dream to be a

singer. Of course, she abandons them and their money, which is how she comes to meet Emily in Paris.

Though her whole life has changed throughout the course of the season, Emily goes through no character development, and neither does any of the other characters. Her unrealistic and cloying behavior ensures the show has no real depth or heart, and Emily never becomes a character the viewer can care and root for. Throughout the show, she says that she always needs everything to be planned and perfect, and that is exactly the way everything seems to go for her, stunting the growth of her character and the potential of the story.

I can probably keep picking “Emily in Paris” apart for ages, and if I haven’t made it clear enough, I do not recommend it. The cringe, stereotypes, boring plot, and impracticality make this show incredibly painful to watch. Unlike many shows that are so outrageously bad and clichéd they turn out enjoyable, “Emily in Paris” doesn’t even have the sincerity to achieve this.

When it’s second period and
your teacher’s already assigning
too much homework.

sathirtham_22



Nicholas Evangelinos / The Spectator



Vivian Teo / The Spectator

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Humor

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PSAL Sports Postponed... Forever?

By KRISTA PROTEASA

With The Spectator's recruit-meImagine a world. Now imagine that this world is your world. In this world, you're part of a PSAL sports team (Like fencing! Join fencing, ahem, this is not a shameless plug). You were distraught at the news that your spring season, and subsequent fall season, would be canceled because of the ongoing thing that I don't quite remember. Oh, was it a paramedic? A hyperkalemic? AH YES! A pandemic... great.

You're determined to practice throughout the whole block of time that you don't have school. You're going to be so jacked when you go back to school.

"Wow Y/N, how'd you get so jacked?" your crush will ask you in the hallway.

"I don't know. Maybe I was born with it, or maybe it's Maybelline," you snicker cockily.

With all these fantasies, you get to work. One thousand push-ups every day coupled with 5,000 squats twice a day as a warm-up. You stab a raunchy target you made in your room because you would ideally have another person to fence, but remember, paramedic? No social interaction here, so our wall target shall suffice.

Fall passes with no signs of the panda-emic disappearing. But hey! You're so pumped for the spring. You've got to have a season, right? Alas, it was postponed. Your disappointment was immeasurable, and your day was ruined. It's already been postponed twice, like your SAT. But eh, you'll live. What are another two months or so?

Two months fly by as you remain in agony over the fact that your skills have not been flexed since March. Will you even have a season? Unfortunately, you will not. It has been postponed again.

The days continue to drag by as you cry every time you rewatch your old games. "Golly, when will I get to do THAT again?" you think as a tear rolls down your cheek.

It's now the fall of the next year. Season? Think again. You try to practice, but this time, something feels off.

Where should my foot be? Is my arm okay? Why can't I do the thing with my fingers? WHY CAN'T I DO THE THING?

Oh my, whatever are we to do???? How are we going to win playoffs if we can't do the thing????????!!!!!!

Another 18 years pass. You are still in high school. You didn't eat your vegetables, and this is your karma. You've purposely been failing gym so you could be held back and perhaps still live the high school sports team fantasy. Gasp! Could it be?

PSAL sports will resume in the fall.

"Wait, what does this do again?" asks a teammate, who is now a company CEO. That would be the main piece of sports equipment you use to play this sport here. How did she forget that?

"Guys, where do I put this?" asks another as her toddler runs across the room. That would go into the plug behind you. How could she forget something so trivial?

However, you find yourself

brain, the instructions stored in your brain have disappeared.

As if by coincidence, every other sports team from your original graduating class appears from behind the many trees in Rockefeller Park. None of them remember how to do their thing either. If there haven't been seasons to recruit new members, how can these teams even continue? Can they even continue? Why are they here in the first place? Is this the end of PSAL as we know it?

Fear not, for Charlie Brown has come to our rescue. All of you never knew this, but Mr. Brown actually has won every Olympics since the beginning of time, in every sport you have all forgotten how to play.

"Oh, Charlie Brown! We're saved!" you think to yourself.

Charlie respectfully throws all the equipment the teams own into the Hudson River. You all won't be needing it anyway, and besides, he of course has his own set of everything.

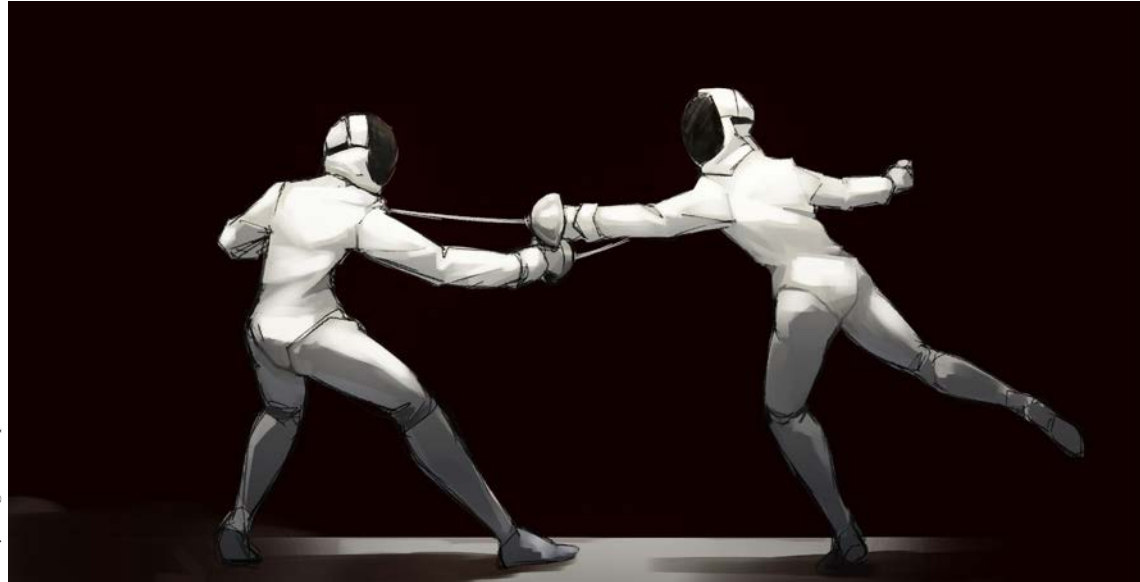
The young lad then goes on to teach the entirety of Stuyvesant High School every one of the sports you have all failed at preserving. You didn't do enough squats, I'm telling you. 'Tis a shame you forgot in the first place. Over the next year, he becomes captain and supervisor of all the 43 PSAL teams at Stuyvesant High School. He single-handedly saves the PSAL because without Stuy, does the rest of the league even exist? I jest, unless you are in agreement?

Let's come back to the fateful day Brown showed up. Your day never officially finished.

"Welp, time to pack up, I guess," one of your teammates says grudgingly.

"Alright. You guys wanna get halal?"

Some things never change.



Cindy Yang / The Spectator

You find yourself slipping. Why can't you do the thing? You've been training so hard. Why is it that you cannot do the thing?

No biggie, some more squats will do the trick. More squats, in fact, did not do the trick in reviving your athletic ability. Another four months pass. You try to practice again, but your brain has become clogged with fantasies of you doing the thing rather than actual knowledge of how to do the thing. You take to Messenger for advice.

"Can any of y'all do the thing? I tried a couple of months ago, but I just... can't?" Your teammates share the same sentiment.

REALLY?! Despite your aging joints, your heart remains eight years old, and you jump for joy. Your squats may not have helped to remember the thing, but one thing is for sure: you can definitely tell that you've been doing squats.

It's fall. You and your teammates are now grown adults with careers, and some of you even have families. None of this matters, for you all have some seasons to catch up on. You, the only member still currently a student at Stuy, summon a meetup at school, but you all freeze almost immediately upon actually doing the sport.

asking one of these seemingly useless questions.

"Hold up, what do I do with my feet here?" Oh no, it's happened.

You've all forgotten how to do the thing. The seasons just kept passing you by, and just as you had to socially distance yourself from your team, your knowledge started to socially distance itself from you.

All of you quickly realize what's happened. As you futilely try to remember how to do the thing, the thing simply does not want to be done. No matter how many times you move the feet, wave the arms, or smack the

On Caffeine Sources

By EMILY CHEN

As your local sleep-deprived senior who has built their staying-awake stamina and is writing this after submitting their college application 10 minutes before the deadline, I feel completely qualified to write this review. For my fellow seniors, I hope this offers some solace for the next month of cramming supplements. And for the rest of the school, do what you want with this information. We are all sleep-deprived anyway, so without wasting any more of your time than I already have, here's a review of (and some extra thoughts that no one asked for) your choice of speed juice.

Iced Coffee: 10/10

A classic; you can't go wrong with it (unless you're paying \$7 for it. Thank you so much, Tribeca). There are, of course, different levels of "good" here. If you get black iced coffee, props to you—I don't know how you manage to drink it, but props. If you get normal iced coffee from the coffee cart, I want to call you basic, but I can't—definitely not—because I get coffee here. No, it's because it's just there: right next to the train station, in your backpack (you know, when

everything was normal and coffee was still an illegal substance within the school building). I'm sure it now haunts some of you in your dreams because let's face it, the halal guy and the coffee cart man are the main protagonists of Stuy. We're just the supporting cast.

Red Bull: 9.8/10

Red Bull is like the younger sibling that people obsess over at family reunions. You either love it or hate it, but you have to admit, Red Bull is superior to every other energy drink (though, maybe it is the iced coffee equivalent in the energy drink world: can't call you basic for it because it's just there). I've been thinking, is this the thing we gave the daphnia in freshman year bio lab? Perhaps this was the beginning of Stuy conditioning us to get a caffeine addiction. How many of us actually thought, "Oh look, the daphnia are going crazy. Did that one just die? I now vow to never touch caffeine?" It was more like caffeine = speed = making up two units worth of studying in one night and barely passing a test. (The equals are for all my Java folks; not calling out any classes here, but Terrain.java still gives me nightmares.)

Monster Energy: 6.2/10

Monster Energy is like Red

Bull's big brother that's less accomplished. I'll give them credit for having a better design than Red Bull; that never happens to the older sibling. Honestly, it tastes like rubber mixed with Sprite, like if Red Bull collected dust and expired (do energy drinks expire?). Monster drinkers are like the kids who listen to Wallows or The 1975 once and then call themselves ~quirky~ and very much "not like the other girls."

Coca-Cola Energy: 5/10

Yes, that's right. Coca-Cola has an energy drink. Did I know that before Googling it? No. Have I tried it? No. Does it work? I'd assume so. Came out this January, so I'll just call it bandwagon.

Bang Energy: 2/10

If you drink this, I'm going to assume you worship social media influencers. I've never seen anyone actually drink this except for the people in sponsored ads on Instagram and TikTok: its logo is basically the TikTok logo. I'm sure the creators of Bang Energy did a great job of loading it with caffeine; I'm sure their mar-

keting team had the right idea; I'm sure if you were left locked in a staircase with bad Wi-Fi and a five-page English paper due next period, Bang Energy could pull you through. But, again, have you ever seen anyone actually drink this? Taking a video of yourself opening a can of this and taking a sip, then posting it on your TikTok isn't going to get you sponsored—pack it up, Danielle Cohn.

5-Hour Energy: -3/10

Has anyone ever actually taken 5-Hour Energy, or have we only ever seen the TV ads of various businessmen walking around their office, talking about how tired they are and how much work they have to do? It took all 17 years of my life to realize that 5-Hour Energy is a drink and not a pill, so maybe we aren't their target audience. Consequently, if you take 5-Hour Energy, I'm going to assume you have the personality of an IKEA chair and that half of it is made up of complaining about your



Emily Chen / The Spectator

life—understandable, but also, no thanks.

1st Period Swim Gym: 20/10

Not a source of caffeine, but if you don't freeze to death or fall asleep in the pool, I suppose you'll be awake for at least half of second period. For the freshmen who are doing blended learning, if you want the true Stuy experience, I highly recommend this; you can't really go wrong. It's 100 percent effective; I can't guarantee that it's 100 percent allowed, but hey, administration can't rewind time and make you not try it. What are they going to do? Kick you out? Send you home? Good, cause COVID is still a thing.

That's it; that's all. If I offended you because you're just that connected to your choice of caffeine, I'm not really sorry, but I will say that there is nothing wrong with IKEA chairs, there's nothing wrong with trying to get sponsored on TikTok, and there's not too much wrong with spending dollars on iced coffee. Pick your poison—whatever gets you through the day/night/next three months. This might go without saying, but please don't drink/take/do all of these at once—I'm not trying to have half the school drop dead like the daphnia.

Expressing My Dear Thanks for Zoom Thanksgiving

By LOGAN RUZZIER

As you reach for another mouthful of stuffing, you drop your pencil onto the kitchen floor. While you kneel down to grab it, the contents of the math packet that you were attempting to hide under the table flutter to the floor, spoiling your feeble attempts at multitasking. The resulting jerk you make in response dumps the contents of the folder you were leaning the packet on as well. You toss your head back and listen to the reverberations your expletive makes on the pots and pans hanging on the other side of the room. The hair on the back of your neck stands up, and you slowly gaze back to what is sitting on top of the table; you find your entire extended family gaping at you through your laptop screen. You gingerly grab your fork and take another bite out of your stuffing.

It all started about a week ago, when a stray text to an unused family group chat ignited the holiday equivalent of a civil war. Just as our Founding Fathers righteously argued for independence almost 300 years ago, the members of your nuclear family shot down all talks of an in-person family reunion for Thanksgiving. After miraculously convincing your relatives in New Jersey that a 50+ person gathering would be smooth-brained, the herculean task of teaching all the oldies to use Zoom ensued. Indeed, many,

many hours went into setting up the virtual get-together that you just ruined.

Of course, you didn't want to do this. You're a Stuyvesant student. You would've been content to blow half of your day off doing the "two hours" of homework your teachers assigned, then curling up with what is now your 14th rom-com at 3:00 a.m. in the morning. But your parents' word is law, so now you have to explain to Grandpa Dan why you haven't been to church in almost a year.

Once your dad smacks you upside the head for making a scene, the dinner is once again in full swing. You dig your nails into your thighs as you hear Uncle Roy ask your mom to pass the potatoes for the third time this hour, and his wheezing laugh snaps your focus away from your precalculus homework that was due a week ago. "You get it? Because we're 'a zoomin'?" he chortles. Cringing heavily, you need a minute to regain your sense of vision following the enormous facial scrunch. You sigh as you sweep a drop of cranberry sauce that was launched from the whirlwind feasting of your family members off an equal sign. For a solid 20 minutes, you are able to rest your homework on your kitchen table since everyone's faces are too deep in their plates to notice. The dull roar of

cutlery clinks and indeterminate food processing could be a little less distracting, though.

This peaceful intermission is not to last, anyway, for the plates of your family begin to clear. Aunt Gretchen, who is ambitiously hosting the Zoom meeting, decides the conversing must begin, and screen shares a list of assigned groups for socialization. You're about to protest when your family's Zoom gets forced into a breakout room with Aunt Tilda and Uncle Bill. Aunt Tilda, the renowned family chatterbox, rapidly jumps into what is essentially a questionnaire. Uncle Bill, on the other hand, who just moved into his cabin

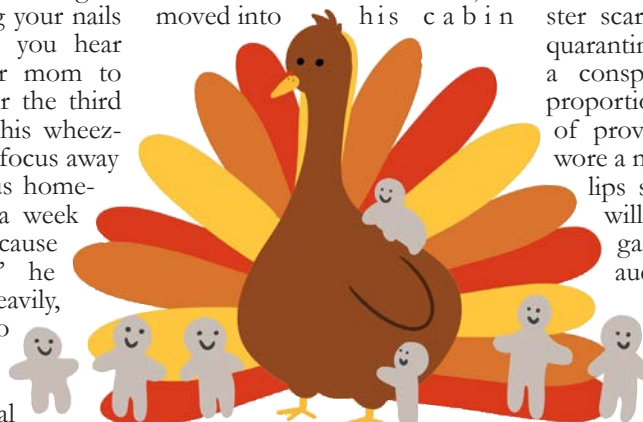
ensues. You notice that in this short time, she's already grown power-hungry, muting belches and unjustified Mahjong boasting alike. You finally have the opportunity to resume your task. Uncle Bill, however, isn't so lucky, and Aunt Gretchen forcibly unmutes him in order to uncover his romantic pursuits as of late.

But just as usual, all it takes is one rogue comment to sever that pleasant conversation you were sharing, and your ears burn as Aunt Lorraine goes on another political tirade. Unsurprisingly, she's transitioned from a flamingo pink to a lobster scarlet during her time in quarantine and begins to unravel a conspiracy of near-Biblical proportions. She's on the brink of proving that Satan himself wore a medical mask when your lips split open against your will. Almost shouting to gain control of the Zoom audio, you launch into a well-scripted rebuttal. Just as you're about to use the word "ignorant," your mother delivers a swift dig to your left shin, and you pipe down. "It's best," she whispers, "to let bygones be bygones on Thanksgiving."

The fourth time Grandma Meredith forgets to unmute herself, you excuse yourself from the room due to a compound misery of boredom and lethargy. You have to practically tear

yourself away from your parents' grip to leave. Due to the butterball turkey you just devoured, you collapse on the very first piece of furniture you encounter once you escape the view of your laptop camera, which happens to be a marble coffee table. You arise 14 hours later, just in time for your first-period gym class, and are severely winded from your set of five calf raises. You also end up slamming your face on the keyboard after dozing off during your minutes-long meditation.

Yet another Thanksgiving has come and gone, and you feel even less grateful than usual. You're about to complain a whole lot online to a disinterested audience when the slightest hint of thanks wafts in your noggin. Sure, you may have been suffering at home almost non-stop for the past eight months, and into the foreseeable future, but it isn't all bad. You could've been stuck with arguing parents or a dreadfully annoying sibling. You could've been stuck rationing food and water from quarantine bankruptcy. You could've actually gotten sick. You could've not had a laptop or a Netflix subscription. You could've even been stuck in New Jersey instead. Well, you might have some of these troubles. Heck, you might be able to fill in all this stuff on your Suffering Bingo sheet, but I just don't know for sure. It's kind of hard to tell from here.



Sabrina Chen / The Spectator

in Maine, takes the opportunity to mute and turn off his video. Knowing him, he already has his latest Hemingway in his hands. After a dreadfully long and unproductive hour, Aunt Gretchen brings you all back to the full room, and a chaotic discourse

The Voting Quest

By RUOXIN CAI

It's November 3, and I've finally decided to embark on the quest to vote. Why didn't I vote early, you ask? Well, I've been very busy sitting on my bed practicing for a role in a Nickelodeon show as a burrito so that the existential dread passes over the decaying specks that are my last three brain cells. You know how it is.

"ARE YOU GOING VOTING?" my roommate hollers from the kitchen, his head wrapped in a cast. His voting sticker is slapped right on top of his head like a laurel wreath.

"Yeah," I respond, shoving the last of my impulsivity regulation potions into the bag.

"Yikes," he says, and adjusts his neck cast. "I would offer you some of my breakfast Doritos, but like, coronavirus."

An apathetic shrug. My preferred breakfast is a dose of daily news that makes me feel overwhelming existential dread and annoyance that healthcare and college still aren't affordable for us peasants yet. Wakes ya right up. "I'm good."

I take one last breath of fresh air before strapping on my metal-plated mask.

"Good luck dude, see you next week."

Outside, the world has turned into a wasteland. Deflated Halloween decorations drift in the dust, abandoned. The local deli is quiet and covered in cobwebs.

Just kidding. Huge crowds are clustered right outside the door, screaming into each other's faces and licking each other's elbows. Some are rubbing their

ankles on the nearest doorknob they can find. This well-known scene is the first task voters must face—the Plains of Plague.

I've heard of this. The task is to simply get across the plains unscathed. I'd seen the (mental and emotional) scars my roommate came back with. With a brave sigh, I forge through the streets. Someone breathes into my armpit. College frat boys laugh ob-

half. I'm alright, though—'tis but a flesh wound.

The next task is a flock of bluebirds that try to skin me alive and chirp incessantly in my ear. I take a chug of an impulsivity regulation potion and feel the uncontrollable tidal rage welling up inside of me

unbelievably nauseating. I take several meditative deep breaths and move on.

It's alright. I chug five more pint-sized potions. I make it through the bluebirds with only a few chunks of flesh missing and depression regarding the state of human society swimming in my veins like Adderall in a Hollywood B-list celebrity's system or racism in Mitch McConnell's skin



Cecilia Chen / The Spectator

noxiously. Little trolls with red hair toddle around, and gunshots go off somewhere.

Yay America.

I pull out a bulky shield and push through. The crowd screams at the sight of my mask, stumbling back in fear. "How are they breathing through the mask?" someone screeches.

I emerge, sweaty and traumatized from the grasping arms of the tormented souls. There's a glob of spit on my shoes, and my pinky finger has been cut in

shrink. I resist the urge to find every bluebird fluttering around me and grind it into iridescent blue dust. That would take much too long.

Birds are government surveillance spies. Bluebirds are the heralds of the Antichrist.

One poops right into my recently-dyed hair and I sigh, trying to force a calm, well-considered response. At random intervals, a horrifying screech comes from the biggest bird within the swarm. The sound is

flaps. Then is the stage of pure boredom. I wait in line for the next five hours. Someone blows the trumpet really badly. I need to use the bathroom, but I also need to stay in line. To the left of me is a line stretching all the way back into the fog, and to my right, people go through swift as the coursing river and with all the force of a raging typhoon.

Interesting. Eventually, I get through to the next task—people. I am trapped inside a room with a person who never stops talking, and I cannot strangle them. I make it out by chugging my last 15 impulsivity regulation potions.

Along the way, I realize I've run out of the ability to actually

care anymore about this absolute flaming garbage, so I embark on a side quest for at least five hours to survive in a burning dystopia where there are fire tornadoes, orange skies, and hornets everywhere. I only survive by humming the Star-Spangled Banner to remind myself that I still need to survive so I can tear down antiquated American institutions.

For that, I get 10 percent of my energy replenished, and I continue on, the unquenchable rage I inherited from growing up in an unstable household giving me the ability to violently shove the hordes of knee-high, red-headed gnomes out of my way.

When I finally approach the voting booth, there's only one poll worker and 20 people in front of me. The sky gets darker and darker. When the last person in front of me goes in to submit their ballot to the machine, the poll worker blinks at me and says, "Hello, fellow citizen. Unfortunately, the booth is now closed. Come back through due process next time, please."

"But that's four years away—"

The worker blinks again and says in a cheerfully hollow voice, "We're also framing you for murder."

"What?" I say. "Why is this happening to me?"

"Because this is America, and life is a nightmare," the poll worker singsongs before disintegrating.

And there I stand, in that empty poll booth, the souls just as unfortunate as me yelling in the line behind me.

I fall to my knees, and I scream into the night.

Humor

What Should You Say to Ruin Thanksgiving This Year?

By **CAROLINE PICKERING**

Thanksgiving is a time when families can come together and share each other's company after another long year, but it is also a time when families are forced into a house together after a long, grueling year full of political, social, and mental instability. So of course, in this climate, a fight is bound to break out—and who better to start it than you? Take this quiz to decide what you can say to ruin the holiday for everyone in your family!

- 1) What is your favorite animal?
 - a) Lion
 - b) Shark
 - c) Rabbit
- 2) Which subject is your favorite?
 - a) Humanities
 - b) Arts
 - b) STEM
- 3) How long have you been on TikTok?
 - a) At least since 2019, maybe earlier
 - b) March-June 2020
 - c) I don't use TikTok, it's for losers
- 4) If you were stranded on an island, what would you want?

- a) A TV, my phone, or some other type of electronic device
 - b) The Communist Manifesto <3
 - c) This question is impractical. I hate fun, and I hate you.
- 5) How many hours of sleep do you get?
 - a) 7-9
 - b) 4-6
 - c) 12
 - 6) One of your peers is having trouble with a math problem, and they ask the class group chat for help. What do you do?
 - a) Give them all your answers
 - b) You were the one asking
 - c) Bully them for being stupid and offer no helpful commentary
 - 7) Who are your top two musical artists?
 - a) Mitski and Mother Mother
 - b) Ariana Grande and Nicki Minaj
 - c) I don't listen to music
 - 8) Which was your favorite channel growing up?
 - a) PBS Kids
 - b) Nick Jr.
 - c) History Channel
 - 9) What's your favorite color?
 - a) Blue
 - b) Black

- c) Red
- 10) Where do you normally go for food outside of school?
 - a) Ferry's
 - b) Whole Foods Market
 - c) McDonald's

If you answered mostly As:

"So, who voted to take away my rights three weeks ago?"

A perfect question to pose during a lull in the conversation, this provocative statement will certainly have your whole family fighting in seconds. Not one to back down from a challenge, you are always eager to take charge and make your voice heard.

That, or you just LOVE to watch drama unfold.

And who can blame you? Which ever side of the aisle you're on, you can't deny that things are coming to a boil, and watching Aunt Hippy and Uncle Football absolutely lose it with each other is comedy gold. So have fun either participat-

ing in the battle of a lifetime or watching your creation unfold.

If you answered mostly Bs:

Finally confronting that one relative who body shames you every year.

Boy oh boy, haven't YOU gone through a transformation over quarantine! You've done lots of soul-searching, probably self-diagnosed yourself and everyone you've ever interacted with, and

h a v e had a

com- plete physical, political, and emotional makeover. This year, you're ready to take the in-

sults and absolutely destroy any-

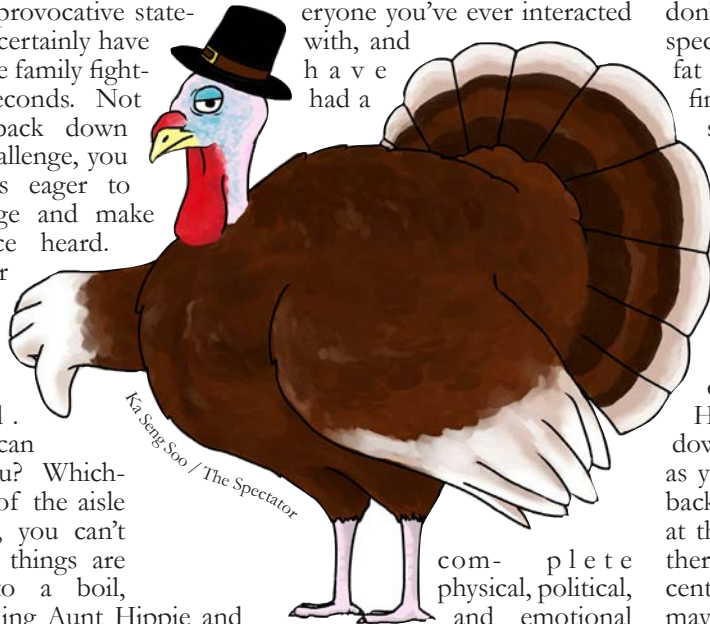
one who comes after your dyed hair. You may be problematic, and your only source of current events comes from "Hello Kitty says ACAB" posts, but honestly, I'm proud of you for finally destroying your ugly, dusty waste bin of a relative.

If you answered mostly Cs:

Nothing

You think you're so smart, don't you? You think you're so special? You're a coward. A big fat stinking coward. When you finish reading this article, I'm sure you're going to go back to getting off to the suffering of others. I hope you're happy with yourself and your false claims of "non-opinion." You refuse to grow up and grow as a person. :/

That, or you're the main character of your family. Have fun staring out the window with a melancholy aura as your family falls apart in the background. You may not be at the center of the action, but there's no doubt you're at the center of the show. And hey, maybe at the end of it, you'll be everyone's favorite for keeping your mouth shut.



Sports

Sports Editorial

We Need PSAL Sports Back

By **SAM LEVINE**

As I walk down the West Side Highway from Chelsea Piers down to Stuyvesant, past all of the gold leaves falling from the trees, I see families out and about for walks, their faces covered with masks. I pass Chelsea ballfields, Chelsea Park, Chelsea Piers, Pier 40, Pier 46, and the ballfields in Battery Park. What is the one thing that all these places have in common? There are sports being played at every one of them.

Greenwich Village Little League is playing fall ball from ages four to 17. Teams practice soccer all around Pier 40. I can't watch these things without stopping to wonder where PSAL sports have been all fall.

I spent my summer and fall playing travel baseball tournaments every weekend. We played

in five different states along the Northeast across more than four months, and not a single COVID-19 case has been reported among any of the teams. Not one! All it took was a few modifications—the umpires stood behind the pitcher's mound, players socially distanced when not on the field—and we could play ball. I don't understand why the PSAL can't do the same.

Fall sports are played almost entirely outside (with some notable exceptions, like volleyball), which would negate the issue of a lack of indoor space to practice and play. If schools have been deemed safe enough for students to enter, then it seems fair that outdoor, somewhat socially distanced sports should be safe enough to play too. If I could play baseball in five different states the entire summer COVID-free, and youth leagues

(which are much larger in scale than PSAL) can start up again in the city, then PSAL should be able to follow suit and allow for some normalcy to return to our lives with sports.

It's not just for the fun of playing that some people need it though. Many athletes are aspiring to play in college, and some maybe as professionals. These student athletes need sports to return if they want to play in college and beyond because it's nearly impossible to get recruited when you're not playing. Not only is it difficult when they're not playing, but many other states and athletic leagues are playing, so colleges will look to those kids before NYC athletes when they are looking for potential recruits.

In addition, with most of us spending our days in front of a computer screen for five hours

straight, sports can give us back something to look forward to in a time of otherwise monotony. Studies have shown that exercise can improve moods and better our mental health, and that's something that a PSAL return would provide.

The PSAL has cited a lack of funds due to the city losing money as a reason for not returning soon. Normally, the money that the PSAL receives from the city would go toward paying coaches, paying referees, booking permits, etc. That would be a valid concern, except the league didn't have a spring season last year, and they aren't having a fall season now. So what happened to all the money that the PSAL is saving from not playing those two entire seasons? That surplus money should be used to go into this fall and winter's seasons—at least until the

city has enough money to fund it as usual.

I understand why there may not be PSAL indoor sports in the winter because of the increased transmission of COVID-19 indoors. I wouldn't advise that we play indoors for the time being, but this spring should certainly have had outdoor sports, albeit with some changes: the PSAL should be ready to start up sports by 2021. Look at all the other youth sports leagues playing around Stuyvesant. If the PSAL enforces some of their precautions, such as wearing masks on the bench and being socially distanced when not playing, as well as potential COVID tests once or twice a month, there's no reason for the PSAL to not return in full by the spring. High schoolers around the city need sports back, and the PSAL should give us what we need.

Sports Editorial

The Khabib Era Ends

By **PHILLIP PHAN**

Khabib Nurmagomedov balled up on the canvas and broke down into tears. He had just defeated Justin Gaethje at UFC 254 in Abu Dhabi on October 24, 2020, but wept for his father who passed away from COVID-19 complications in July. His father had also been his coach and trainer for the entirety of his career. Leading up to the fight, though, Nurmagomedov remained stoic. He finally allowed himself to mourn publicly on October 24. He then announced it would be his last time in the Octagon—a promise to his mom, who didn't want him to fight anymore with-

out his father. Nurmagomedov peeled off the tape from his hands and removed his gloves. He left his gloves in the ring, following common tradition for fighters and symbolizing the end of his career. Nurmagomedov would walk away from the sport with a 29-0 record. He finished as the undisputed and undefeated lightweight champion.

Though he was the favorite, Khabib had a lot stacked against him leading up to UFC 254. The loss of his father interrupted and loomed over his training camp. The pandemic further complicated things as Nurmagomedov was forced to train away from his gym at the American Kick-

boxing Academy in California. Even worse, he endured a broken foot from training. Gaethje was not the average lightweight either. He was a former NCAA Division I All-American wrestler and brought incredible power and striking to the table. Nurmagomedov had never faced a more complete opponent before.

Even through all the adversity, the then 28-0 champion showed the audience why he was undefeated. In round one, Nurmagomedov started off the fight trading punches and kicks with the powerful Gaethje instead of relying on signature wrestling. He then brought Gaethje to the ground for an armbar submis-

sion, but Gaethje survived until the horn. Shortly into round two, Nurmagomedov brought Gaethje to the ground yet again, and this time, he secured the triangle choke. Gaethje quickly went unconscious, and Nurmagomedov won the fight. After the match, Gaethje knelt next to a weeping Nurmagomedov and embraced him, a beautiful moment for the sport.

Nurmagomedov began his career in September 2008, fighting in Russia. Over the next three years, he went undefeated, finishing 11 out of 12 opponents. He won seven fights in 2011 alone and held an impressive 16-0 record, earning him a call from the

UFC. Nurmagomedov quickly made a name for himself in the UFC and earned a title shot against lightweight fighter Al Iaquinta. Nurmagomedov defeated him easily and was king of the division that previously belonged to former lightweight champion Conor McGregor. McGregor returned to MMA fighting after a boxing match with Floyd Mayweather, the most viewed fight of all time. Before Nurmagomedov's fight with McGregor, McGregor made fun of his family and heritage, but Nurmagomedov remained calm.

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Sports Editorial

Gareth Bale's Fallout With Zinedine Zidane

By SHAFIUL HAQUE

Gareth Bale was loaned to Tottenham Hotspur from Real Madrid. While this may seem like a standard transaction, this move is a reflection of issues running much deeper than just the transfer fee. Conflict between Real Madrid's Gareth Bale and manager Zinedine Zidane has been apparent in the media for years. With Bale's frequent inconsistencies since Zidane's appointment in January 2016, Bale struggled to establish himself in the starting 11. The Welshman's frustrations grew more public after he failed to start in two consecutive Champions League finals. Last season, Bale only played 20 matches for Real Madrid, with three goals and two assists in all competitions. Bale's exclusion from the squad prompted Zidane to loan him to Tottenham Hotspur for the upcoming season. Spanish news reports enjoy fabricating the feud between the two, but the more important story is what caused the clash in the first place.

Gareth Bale and Zinedine Zidane have been a part of the same organization since 2014. Already a Real Madrid legend during his time at the club as a player, Zidane managed the reserve team for two years. Manager Rafael Benitez was fired in 2016 due to Madrid's struggle for a top finish, and Zidane was placed in charge of the first team. People doubted Zidane's tactical understanding, but the Frenchman guided Los Blancos to second place. During the remaining part of the 2015-16 season, Bale struggled with a muscle and a disrupted calf injury, which saw him in and out of the squad. However, Zidane still retained his confidence in Bale. He was a crucial player during the

semi-finals and final of the 2016 Champions League which Real Madrid won in a penalty shoot-out.

During the 2016-17 season, Bale's problem with injuries grew substantially. He suffered a hip and ankle injury, which sidelined him for four months, and he picked up a calf injury in April that ruled him out for almost the entire season. Because of Bale's

dane was aware of his injury problem and opted for players Isco and Marco Asensio to play his role. Bale was used as a rotational player, a backup for first team players. In my opinion, Zidane should've given Bale the option to find a new club or stay at Real Madrid, as Bale still had many years left in his professional career. If Bale had stayed at Real Madrid, he would have

questioned Zidane's decision to place Bale on the bench instead of the starting 11. However, their questions were not answered, as Zidane resigned from his managerial position, referencing the club's need for change as the reason. Bale found himself back on the team again, but many noticed he wasn't the same goal-scoring pace machine that he used to be. Real Madrid was also in a crisis,

game time, but the club refused the transfer offer, angering him. Bale suffered from calf and ankle problems during the first half of the season, and he found himself warming up the bench. He sparked controversy in a national team match during Wales' 2-0 win over Hungary in November. After helping his team qualify for the Euro 2020s, he held up a flag of Wales that read "Wales. Golf. Madrid. In that order," which angered many Real Madrid fans. In the second half of the season, Zidane permanently kept him on the bench in most matches, and it appeared that Bale had no interest to play. Many of the Los Blancos' fans wanted him out of the club after he skipped training for upcoming matches to play golf.

Many pundits suggested that Bale should go back to his former club—Tottenham Hotspur—and Zidane agreed to a deal with the London club on a season-long loan. It is common knowledge by now that Zidane and Bale have a complicated relationship. I believe that Zidane was upset by Bale's injury problems, and he required a more reliable winger to help Madrid establish dominance on the European stage. As for Bale, he might've been angry at Zidane for excluding him from the squad and believed that he still had the ability to help the team. I think the loan deal benefited both parties: Bale would have more time to play to improve his game and Zidane would experiment with other players to see if he required Bale in the squad. Only time will tell what's in store for Bale's future with the club and Zinedine Zidane, but it seems highly unlikely that either player or manager wishes to play with each other ever again.

Only time will tell what's in store for Bale's future with the club and Zinedine Zidane, but it seems highly unlikely that either player or manager wishes to play with each other ever again.

recurring injury problems, Zidane gave other players a chance, and the outcome generally worked out well. I think that Zidane should've recognized Bale's insistence to play and helped him mentally recover from his injury problems. However, Zidane only focused on the squad that was playing, which was detrimental to Bale's development. Bale played a few minutes of the Champions League, coming on for the last 13 minutes in Madrid's 3-1 win over Juventus in the final. Real Madrid also won the La Liga title, though Bale was not a pivotal player to their success.

In the 2017-18 season, Bale slowly improved. However, Zi-

only found time on the bench, as Zidane didn't want to start him. Bale suffered another injury in his calf and hamstrings and was sidelined for three months. Additionally, he played very few Champions League minutes and sat on the bench for some matches. People began to question if Bale and Zidane were on bad terms, but both insisted that their relationship was fine. Bale was crucial in Madrid's win over Liverpool in the CL Final, where he came off the bench to score two goals to win the game. Even with his injury during the season, he scored 21 goals and made seven assists in 39 matches.

It was at this point that many

with two managers sacked seven months into the season and knocked out of the Champions League. As a result, Zidane returned as manager, and Gareth Bale's exclusion from the squad became imminent. Bale was immediately dropped to the bench by Zidane, playing very few minutes in La Liga. Real Madrid ended the season in third place, 19 points behind Barcelona.

The 2019-20 season might have been Bale's last season at Real Madrid. With Zidane purchasing talented young attacking prospects, it was apparent that Bale's tenure at the club was close to an end. Bale was very close to leaving in search of

Sports Editorial

The Khabib Era Ends

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Then, during the fight, when he was on top of McGregor and pounding him, Nurmagomedov said, "Let's talk now. Let's talk." He finished the fight in round three and stepped up in one of the biggest fights of all time.

Nurmagomedov's aura is undeniable. He is one of the most feared fighters of all time. No one outworks Nurmagomedov and his work ethic is what all MMA fighters aspire to achieve. Hailing from the cold, barren mountains of Dagestan, Rus-

sia, Nurmagomedov wrestled a young brown bear at the age of nine to strengthen his grappling. He swam in freezing cold waters against the current to train his endurance. The stories of his Russian training only add to his legendary career.

His masterful grappling and wrestling became iconic. He dominated his opponents with the same game plan every time. They knew the takedown was coming, but no matter how much they trained, they could never get on his level. His wrestling was so good that it made his striking even better. His fight IQ was high

and every attack was well-calculated. More importantly, he never allowed his emotions to get in the way of his fights. Whether he felt anger or sadness, he performed to the highest degree with integrity. His pride and faith have resonated with millions of Muslims across the globe.

With his victory in UFC 254, Nurmagomedov has truly cemented his legacy. He is in regard to the likes of Anderson Silva, Jon Jones, and Georges St-Pierre, some of the greatest MMA fighters of all time. Nurmagomedov has only had three title defenses compared to Silva's 10 and GSP's

nine, but it is hard to deny Nurmagomedov's incredible zero losses as a fighter. He missed out on many legacy-defining fights in his career due to unfortunate circumstances. The stars never aligned for a fight with Tony Ferguson, a former lightweight champion, who was on a 12-fight win streak. This dream fight was canceled four times. His bout with Max Holloway, the featherweight champion, was also canceled. In the fights he had, however, he always dominated and hardly took any damage. Everyone loses in MMA, except Nurmagomedov.

It all started with a boy and

his father simply bonding over wrestling. That hard work and love created one of the greatest fighters the world has ever seen. It made his final moments in the Octagon so special. It felt like Nurmagomedov would trade it all for another moment with his father. He was at the top and only getting better. As entertaining as his fights have been, Nurmagomedov is more than deserving to put his career to rest. He leaves the Octagon as the greatest lightweight fighter to step in the UFC ring and an inspiration to millions around the world.

Sports Editorial

The Path to the Dodgers' Victorious Postseason

By MAYA BROSNIK

When Kevin Cash came out of the dugout in the sixth inning of Game Six of the World Series to make a move to the bullpen, the entire sports world couldn't believe what they were seeing. Blake Snell had been pitching like Randy Johnson through the first five and one-third innings, and yet, Cash decided that Snell had gone far enough. Social me-

dia exploded, both in the moment and in the days that followed, bashing Cash for what everyone saw as a bad decision. Sure enough, the Dodgers immediately scored two runs in the inning, what turned out to be the deciding runs, and went on to win their first World Series since 1988.

The Dodgers had the best record going into the postseason at 43-17, which put them on

pace for 116-46 over a regular 162 game season. Despite this impressive mark, the title was all but assured throughout the postseason, especially in such an unpredictable season.

Going by the numbers, the Dodgers' sweep of the Brewers in the best-of-three wildcard series, a new addition this year, was fairly easy. They allowed just two runs in the two games combined to move on to a highly antici-

pated matchup with the up and coming San Diego Padres in the NLDS. But the Padres too were no match for LA, and the Dodgers outscored the Padres 23-9 over the course of three games, sweeping the series while proving that they could score runs without solely relying on the homerun ball, which accounted for only one run. But the NLCS was not as smooth sailing for the Dodgers. They lost the first

two games, the second by only one run, but they seemed to give themselves a boost in winning game three 15 to 3 and scoring 11 times in the first inning. Unfortunately for them, the Dodgers were blown out themselves the next game, putting the team a loss away from a trip home.

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Sports

Sports Debate

It's Time for the Giants to Move on From Daniel Jones

By ARI GUROVICH

Is New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones good? Is he the best option for the team moving forward? As a fan of the debacle known as the Giants, I have been pondering these questions frequently over the last season and a half. Admittedly, there is a lot to like about Jones. On a weekly basis, one can watch him make impressive throws deep down the field, fit the ball into tight windows, and scramble to pick up yardage even after the play breaks down. These flashes of greatness occur every single week, and they leave the viewer thinking that Jones is a phenomenal quarterback with practically limitless potential. However, these moments are accompanied and superseded by Jones's horrendous mistakes that often result in the Giants losing winnable games.

In his career with the Giants, Jones has been plagued by several chronic issues, many of which have only grown worse over time. Primarily, Jones often makes poor decisions and tries to play the hero, which he is ill-equipped to do, resulting in interceptions. It is no accident that Jones has thrown nine interceptions this season, which is the third highest in the NFL. Furthermore, though Jones is a great athlete who can get away from pressure when he sees it coming, he is so oblivious to it at times that he steps right into sacks, which often leads to fumbles, rather than scrambling to extend plays or throwing the ball away. As a result, Jones ranks third in the NFL in fumbles and second in sacks. Though the Giants' offensive line is certainly a work in progress, many of the sacks Jones has taken this season were entirely avoidable. To make matters worse, both of the head coaches that Jones has played under, Joe Judge and Pat Shurmur, have been forced to avoid calling long passes and play action, unless such plays were absolutely necessary. They know that, statistically, the longer Jones holds the ball, the more likely it is that he will be sacked or make a reckless decision resulting in an interception. To illustrate, Jones took 87.5 percent of his sacks during his rookie year while holding the ball for more than two and a half seconds. As such, he rarely gets to throw the ball downfield because of his poor pocket presence and inclination to throw interceptions due to erratic decision making. This severely limits the Giants' playbook and makes it much easier for

opposing defenses to neutralize the Giants' offense.

Thus, though Jones is an accurate thrower, a good athlete, and a hard worker, he has enough holding him back that I doubt he will ever be a truly good quarterback. Krish has compared Jones to legendary quarterbacks Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, but in my opinion, a more apt comparison for Jones is New Orleans Saints quarterback Jameis Winston. Winston also showed flashes of greatness throughout his four years as quarterback of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, but he ultimately never developed due to his poor decision-making and partiality to throwing interceptions. Though Jones's rookie season could be compared favorably against those of Brady and Manning in some regard, both Brady and Manning were able to learn, adapt, and improve significantly in their second seasons in the NFL, whereas Jones has only appeared to regress from his rookie form and exacerbate many of his issues as a sophomore quarterback.

Luckily for the Giants, projected first overall pick Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence is entering the NFL Draft at the end of this season. Lawrence has been touted as one of the best quarterback prospects of all time and, unlike Jones, Lawrence's best trait is his consistency. He is able to make any and every throw consistently and make good decisions. In fact, Lawrence is such a good quarterback that he often looks pedestrian and dull, a polar opposite of Jones's exciting and flashy play style that often results in interceptions and fumbles. Make no mistake, though, Lawrence has historic quarterback talent and possesses every trait that makes for an elite quarterback: he is tall and has a strong arm, quick release, accuracy, footwork, good decision-making, mobility, pocket presence, leadership, and diligence. Therefore, though Jones certainly isn't the only problem holding back the Giants, as they also lack a solid offensive line and wide receiver corps, I think that Lawrence is too good of a prospect for the Giants to pass up in light of Jones's deficiencies. Even the second, third, and fourth best quarterbacks in this year's draft, Justin Fields of Ohio State, Zach Wilson of BYU, and Trey Lance of NDSU, would all be significant improvements compared to Daniel Jones. Therefore, I believe that it is imperative that the Giants draft a quarterback in the first round of the 2021 NFL draft.

Why Tanking for Trevor Isn't the Answer for the Giants

By KRISH GUPTA

Let's face the facts. The New York Giants are 2-7, dead last in the NFC (L)east. Quarterback Daniel Jones, expected to make a big leap in Year 2, has already thrown nine interceptions and fumbled the ball seven times, looking much like his rookie self. Admittedly, for a Big Blue faithful fan, nothing about this year has been pretty. Just when one part of the team starts to get better, another part messes it up.

That being said, it's not time to give up on Jones. Week in and week out, Jones has shown he has the tools to be a star. He is the modern-day quarterback, a threat with his legs as well as in the air. In a Thursday Night Football matchup against the Philadelphia Eagles, Jones exploded for an 80-yard rush, the longest rush for a quarterback in five years, in which he topped 21 miles per hour, the fastest speed for a quarterback since 2018. That rush could have been a touchdown, had it not been for Jones tripping over himself 10 yards from the end zone, a play emblematic of the Giants' season. Jones remained calm despite his meme-worthy fall, and the drive still resulted in a Giants touchdown. For the rest of the game, the Giants played catch-up against the Eagles, and had it not been for the Giants tight end Evan Engram dropping a crucial, perfectly placed dime from Jones, they might have even gotten the win against the division leaders. Though Jones certainly hasn't played up to expectations in 2020, the rest of his offense, most notably his offensive line, hasn't done its part.

Jones's primary weakness is his tendency to turn the ball over, but these problems aren't unfixable by any means. The majority of his interceptions come down to his decision-making, not his talent. If the coaching staff can instill better instincts about when to hold onto the ball and take the sack or throw the ball out of bounds rather than force a longshot throw, Jones's interception numbers will almost certainly plummet. In addition to throwing interceptions, it's no secret that Jones fumbles the ball a lot. Over the offseason, he put on muscle, but ball security has continued to plague him. These woes can't all fall upon the shoulders of Jones. Without star running back Saquon Barkley for much of his career and with a pitiful offensive line, Jones has seen tons of

pressure and an overall feeble running game, forcing him to drop back much more than he would like. Though Jones certainly needs to improve his own turnover issues, it's time for the Giants' front office to build around him and give him the protection he needs.

In New York, players are likely scrutinized more than in any other media market in the nation. This constant pressure, especially for young players, leads to fans jumping to conclusions way too quickly. Many have called for Jones's head and want the Giants to tank the rest of the season to pick Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence with the first pick in next year's NFL Draft. This is a massive overreaction to Jones's issues in Year 2.

Jones is in his sophomore year in the league. He has played in just 22 games, and his second season is amidst a global pandemic. Historically, some of the best quarterbacks ever have struggled in their beginning stages in the league. Peyton Manning, for instance, threw 28 interceptions as a rookie. Daniel Jones threw 12 in his first season. Tom Brady, the GOAT himself, threw 18 touchdown passes in his first full year as a starter, while Jones tossed 24 in his rookie season—in two games fewer. I'm not saying Jones will be the next Brady or Manning (though I'm not exactly ruling that out either), but my point is that becoming a good starting quarterback takes time. In the modern-day NFL, young quarterbacks have been rushed into the starting job earlier, with mostly poor results prior to the season. As Jones matures, he has the potential to lead the Giants to glory.

Even if Jones's talent isn't enough to justify keeping him, betting on Lawrence would be a gamble. A quarterback change isn't just a simple footnote. This would be a blockbuster move setting the organization two years back in its rebuilding mission. The prime years of stars like Barkley, Sterling Shepard, and Darius Slayton could all go to waste, forcing the front office to make a total franchise overhaul. The most pragmatic solution for the team is to commit to Jones, giving him confidence in his team and letting him worry about improving, not about getting benched. Had the Giants benched a kid named Eli Manning after a rookie season where he finished with a 68 QB Rating, they likely never would have won two more Super Bowls.

Relax, Giants fans. Jones is the man.

Sports Editorial

Doping Over Quarantine

By NAKIB ABEDIN

After winning the UEFA Champions League (UCL) with FC Bayern Munich, Leon Goretzka posed for a picture with the trophy. This photo immediately went viral across all social medias. Goretzka, who was very slender not too long ago, looked more like a professional bodybuilder than a soccer player, which shocked the world. Goretzka had seemingly become one of the strongest players in Europe in just a matter of months. Many of the other Bayern players also had incredible transformations. Alphonso Davies and Robert Lewandowski, for example, put on a tremendous amount of muscle mass. Questions began to arise about whether these players had used drugs to help them get stronger or if it was just the sheer

amount of time that they had in the offseason that allowed them to do this. After all, these were

athletes this much stronger in less than a year?

Virtually all competitive

considering the use of performance enhancing drugs, as they know they will most likely be

out these tests. This gave athletes a golden opportunity to gain a major competitive advantage over their peers. This gives birth to the question—did athletes breach the integrity of their respective sports by taking banned substances to boost their performances?

The question still stands. Recent studies have shown that even taking a small dose of performance enhancers for a short period of time can have benefits that last for years. With infrequent testing during quarantine, the Bayern Munich players could have taken a small dose of anabolic steroids and removed it from their system within a few weeks.

Recent studies have shown that even taking a small dose of performance enhancers for a short period of time can have benefits that last for years.

exceptional players with near superhuman athletic abilities. However, was hard work alone enough to be able to get these

sports have monitored doping for decades. The frequent testing was enough to deter the vast majority of athletes from even

caught. However, throughout quarantine, social distancing and lockdown protocols have made it significantly harder to carry

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Sports Editorial

How Super Is the Super League?

By VERNON HUGHES

The Super Bowl is easily the most-watched sporting event in the United States. That statement does not hold true when applied to a world stage; with a mere 100 million viewers worldwide, it does not even come close to the estimated 380 million worldwide viewers who watched the 2018 UEFA Champions League Final. The UEFA Champions League, formerly known as the European Cup, has served as European club soccer's most prestigious competition since its inception in 1955. Yet it might soon be entirely replaced as talk of a reformed Champions League has been in the air for a couple of years now. Recently, reports have surfaced over a plan for a "European Super League," which would see fewer, more selective teams compete in a completely revamped format. But, what does this plan entail, and how has it been received by various parties?

The European Super League is set to bring the biggest and best clubs to play each other in an American-style format (a regular, round-robin season with playoffs). JPMorgan Chase & Co. plans to fund the competition by investing around six billion dollars. English Premier League teams Liverpool FC and

Manchester United have been heavily involved in discussions to start the Super League after their recent proposal to shrink the Premier League to 18 teams failed. They have set their sights on starting the competition in 2022. The proposed plan suggests that either 16 or 18 teams will be given entry to the competition. These would include the top sides from Spain, England, Germany, Italy, and France, such as FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, FC Bayern Munich, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain, and others. The teams will play against each other in a round-robin format, playing home and away games against each side. The eight teams with the most points (three for a win, one for a tie, and zero for a loss) would then compete in the playoffs, inspired by the US sports model for basketball, football, and soccer.

One problem with the plan thus far is managing scheduling between the Super League and other competitions. With 18 teams, each squad would play 34 games before the playoffs even start. To put this in perspective, teams that go all the way to the Champions League Final must only play 13 games. This could spell trouble for do-

mestic leagues and cup competitions, as most leagues range between 34 and 38 games. Domestic cup competitions—the FA Cup in England, Copa del Rey in Spain, DFB-Pokal in Germany, and others—might also be entirely scrapped to avoid overscheduling.



EUROPEAN SUPER LEAGUE

Ivy Jiang / The Spectator

Though the European Super League is widely anticipated among fans who would love to see heavyweight clubs compete more often, the news has not

been as well-received by officials. The UEFA, which governs European soccer, has publicly criticized the competition, and its lack of approval has stalled talks. According to Goal, the world's largest online soccer publication, UEFA president Aleksandar Ceferin has openly called it "one of the most boring projects in the world." He also said, "It's not a serious discussion. [T]hese kinds of ideas would kill football."

One reason for the competition would be the massive financial gains clubs would get from viewership and a base fee provided by JP Morgan. However, Javier Tebas, the head of La Liga, has offered an alternative view. Goal reports him saying, "a project of this type will mean serious economic damage to the organizers themselves and to those entities that finance it, if they exist because they're never official. These 'underground' projects only look good when drafted at a bar at five in the morning." On the other hand, FIFA may be backing the competition, even if UEFA is fully skeptical.

Club presidents and managers have also voiced their opinions on the league—the most revealing coming from former Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu. Bartomeu

resigned from the Barcelona presidency on October 28, 2020 and was subsequently open to answering questions about the league. Regarding Barcelona's involvement in the competition, CNN reports that he said, "The Board of Directors approved the acceptance of the requirements to participate in a future European Super League, a project promoted by the big clubs in Europe." Barcelona has agreed to participate if plans proceed, indicating that the team is further in agreement than previously thought.

There are two sharply contrasting views on the European Super League. Some believe the prospect of seeing the best clubs compete and the profits resulting from the league are great reasons to promote it. Meanwhile, others think it will not be an improvement compared to the current Champions League format and will decrease the rarity of big clubs facing each other, thus making the games less exciting. Plans and reports will continue to surface in the coming weeks, and definitive decisions will be made eventually, likely through a vote. For now, with no general consensus thus far, people can only continue to imagine what a new European Super League would look like—and if it's even worth it.

Sports Editorial

Doping Over Quarantine

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After doing that, it is possible that the levels of these steroids may have been too low to detect and by doing this, they essentially could have gained an advantage over other athletes that could last the rest of their careers. This, however, is purely speculation. There is no hard evidence so far to show that any athlete cheated. However, seeing some of these miraculous body transformations in such a small period of time raises many questions, especially because most of these top tier athletes were already training at

such a high level before quarantine started.

Doping was actually far more prevalent than people realize before quarantine even started. A 2011 anonymous survey found that 44 percent of 1200 athletes surveyed had admitted to doping. However, only one to two percent of tests conducted were positive. This means that an enormous amount of cheating goes on even while anti-doping officials conduct regular testing. With tests few and far between for a 4-month period, the amount of athletes cheating could have skyrocketed. The New York Times

reported that in April 2020, 4 months into the pandemic, there were only 576 blood and urine samples collected from athletes, compared to over 25,000 in 2019. Travis Tygart, the chief executive of the United States Anti-Doping Agency, said: "It would be naïve for us to think people have not taken advantage this time." The New York Times also reported that in a survey of 1400 athletes, "More than 50 percent said they believed international athletes had used the lull in testing caused by the pandemic as a doping opportunity, and 30 percent said they suspected American athletes

had done so." Knowing this, it is not a question if athletes used performance enhancers, but rather, a question of how many did.

The effects of doping throughout quarantine will likely have an effect on sports for the next few years, and may cause doubts on athletes that legitimately achieve amazing feats. It is very possible that numerous world records will be broken in the upcoming years due to the number of athletes that could get away with doping. Some longstanding records have already been broken. Matthew Futterman reports, "Records in the

men's and women's 5,000 meters and the men's 10,000 meters, all of which had stood for more than a decade, fell in early October."

Unfortunately, we will not know which records are illegitimate. The overall breach in the integrity of sports may cause doubts on any major athletic feats over the next few years. As it is too late to know if any of these athletes actually cheated, all we can do is presume their innocence and cheer them on to go above and beyond the current limits of mankind.

Sports Editorial

The Path to the Dodgers' Victorious Postseason

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Down 3-1, it seemed like their playoffs would end in disappointment for the eighth year in a row. However, in an incredible feat, the team went on to win the next three straight, including a come from behind Game Seven victory to secure the NL pennant. Corey Seager even set the NLCS home run record for a shortstop with five on his way to MVP of the series.

The World Series started off fairly evenly matched. The Dodgers took Game One, with the Rays answering back by winning Game Two. After a Game Three win led by six strong innings from Buehler, LA had a chance to go up 3-1 in the series in Game Four, and it looked like that would be the result heading into

the ninth inning. The Dodgers were up 7-6 with two out and two on in the ninth, and there were two strikes on Rays' batter Brett Phillips, who didn't have a hit in over a month. Phillips roped a single into center field, which was misplayed by the Dodgers' center fielder Chris Taylor. Kevin Kiermaier easily scored from second, but the misplay allowed the go-ahead run to come around third base and try to score. The runner, breakout star Randy Arozarena, stumbled around third base and would have been caught in a rundown, but the catcher missed the relay throw, and the Rays walked it off, tying the series at two games apiece.

Game Five was a fairly ordinary 4-2 Dodgers victory that set up a Game Six win-or-go-home scenario for the Rays. With for-

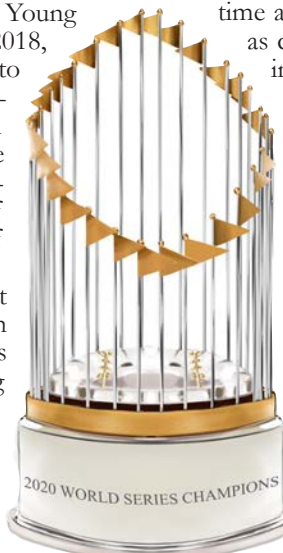
mer Cy Young winner Blake Snell on the mound though, the Rays weren't making it easy. Snell looked like the Cy Young that he was in 2018, throwing a gem into the sixth inning before Cash pulled him, making one of the most controversial moves of the last decade if not more.

All throughout the season, Cash has adhered to his policy of listening to the analytics, specifically the ones that said that pitchers were significantly worse the third time through the order.

However, Snell's opponents actually had a lower OPS (on-base + slugging) against him the third time around the batting order as compared to the second in 2019 and 2020. Instead of leaving in Snell, who had struck out Mookie Betts, Seager, and Justin Turner each time they had been at the plate that game and was cruising at only 73 pitches, Cash brought in Nick Anderson, who had allowed one run or more in his six previous outings. Like Anderson, Betts, the next batter, was also better against right handers and hit fastballs best, a pitch Anderson threw

64 percent of the time. As if on cue, Betts pulled a fastball for a double down the left field line, setting up the Dodgers with second and third and one out with Corey Seager coming to the plate. Anderson threw a wild pitch and Austin Barnes scored tying the game, and then Seager grounded out to first scoring Betts, giving the Dodgers a lead they did not relinquish, winning the World Series three innings later.

The 2020 season was not normal. It almost did not happen, but the fact remains that the Dodgers won the same season that 29 other teams lost. Plenty of people will put an asterisk next to this victory, but the truth is that the Dodgers are the team hoisting the trophy, so they are the champions, regardless of anybody's claims.



Christina Jiang / The Spectator

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Sports Editorial

No Mask, No Seat

By **MATT MELUCCI**

Since the gradual return of sports in May, sports leagues have taken different approaches to playing during the pandemic. The NBA finished its playoffs in late July in the Orlando Walt Disney World bubble. The MLB restarted its shortened 60-game season in late July, with players wearing masks in fanless stadiums. After canceling its preseason, the NFL began its season in September, which has been running somewhat smoothly with several COVID-19 precautions. Soccer leagues and tournaments have continued their seasons with altered formats and have had minimal cancellations. All leagues are continuously adjusting their policies, from isolating players to mandating that all personnel wear masks, in order to carry on play without having to shut down mid-season due to an increase in COVID-19 cases. Now, sports leagues face the challenge of figuring out how to ensure players are healthy and adhering to mask mandates as well as devising new measures to safely allow fans to attend games.

There have recently been numerous cases of carelessness regarding COVID-19 safety protocols within professional sports. Such incidents beg the question: how should leagues handle players and coaches who do not follow pandemic guidelines?

In Game 6 of the 2020 MLB World Series, the Los Angeles Dodgers faced the Tampa Bay Rays for the championship title. During the eighth inning, Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner was pulled off the diamond after he tested positive for COVID-19. As

soon as the Dodgers defeated the Rays to win the World Series, Turner returned to the field to celebrate. He embraced his teammates, held the trophy, and passed it around all without his mask on. It's understandable that Turner would want to celebrate with teammates

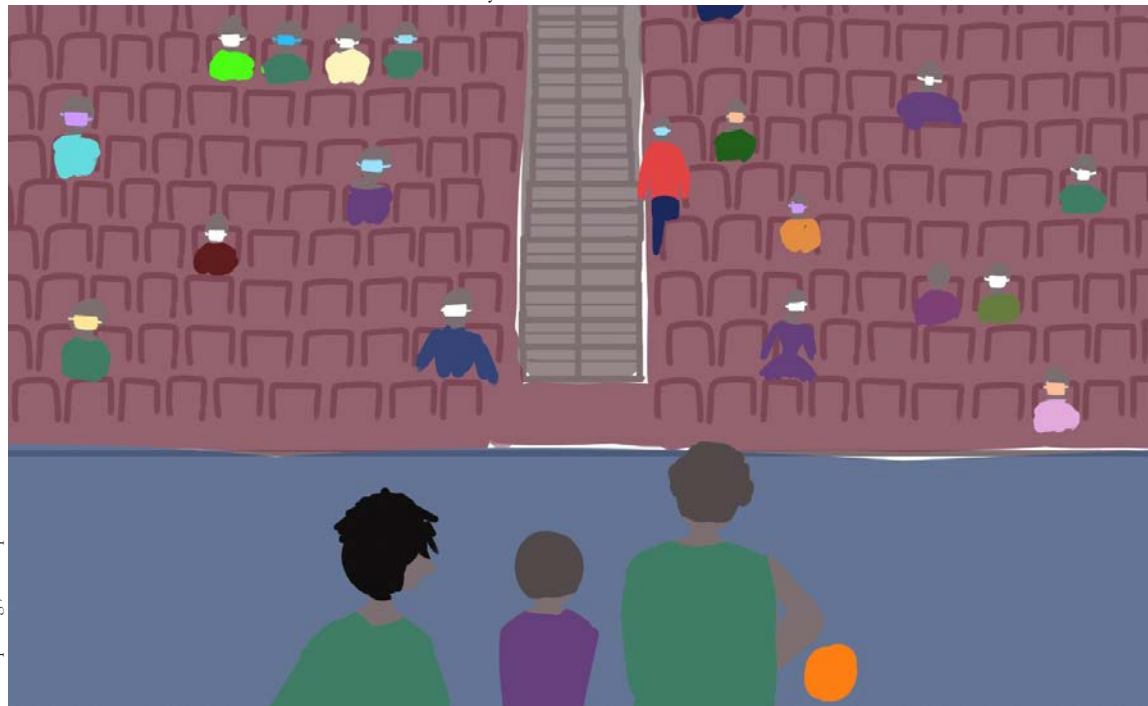
as the Dodgers defeated the Rays to win the World Series, Turner returned to the field to celebrate. He embraced his teammates, held the trophy, and passed it around all without his mask on. It's understandable that Turner would want to celebrate with teammates

MLB issued a statement on their website regarding Turner's irresponsible decision, ultimately deciding not to punish him or the Dodgers. The NFL, on the other hand, has stepped up its punishments for safety guideline violations. The NFL released a memo

preventive measures, sports organizations have also taken cautious steps to bring fans back into stadiums. Some NFL teams have allowed a limited capacity of fans, usually 20 percent, to attend home games. These lucky fans must wear masks and sit in socially distanced pods to watch the game. The league is continuing its plans for Super Bowl LV as well, potentially hosting in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' Raymond James Stadium at 20 percent capacity.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver allowed players to invite their family members and close friends to the NBA bubble and displayed virtual fans on a 17-foot tall LED screen for the playoffs. The MLB, however, allowed about 11,500 fans to watch the NLCS and World Series games at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas. Soccer has been behind other sports in its efforts to reintroduce fans to stadiums, but leagues like the Premier League and Bundesliga are hoping to have in-person spectators by next year.

If leagues want to keep playing through the pandemic, they will need to adjust their safety protocols accordingly. Infected players should not be celebrating on the field with their team no matter the circumstances, and coaches and players alike are expected to set a good example for fans by wearing their face coverings on the sidelines. It's better to have no fans in the stands than to have no sports to watch, so leagues need to take their policies seriously. Sports organizations have come far during the pandemic, but without the enforcement of important safety rules, leagues could shut down again within weeks.



after their win in the World Series for the first time in 32 years. However, his actions not only marred the championship team's celebration, but also reflected badly on the league as a whole and sent a terrible message to fans around the world.

The NFL began its season this year with few game postponements. However, there have been various situations in which players and coaches have not worn masks in public. Several Las Vegas Raid-

doors; they should consistently wear face coverings and practice social distancing to avoid punishment by the league and stay healthy.

Leagues like the MLB and NFL must decide how to deal with coaches and players who consistently violate COVID-19 health restrictions. Over 40 games were postponed due to the virus this MLB season, yet Turner still celebrated on the field with his team without safety precautions. The

on its website stating that NFL officials are now authorized to penalize teams for unsportsmanlike conduct if coaches or personnel on the sideline approach them without a face covering. In fact, Raiders head coach Jon Gruden and New Orleans Saints head coach Sean Payton were both fined a hefty \$100,000 for not wearing masks on the sidelines of a late September game.

In addition to implementing

Sports Highlight

The NYC Marathon, Gone Virtual

By **JULIANNE YOTOV**
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The New York City (NYC) Marathon attracts thousands of runners from all around the world to compete in its legendary five-borough 26.2 mile course every year. Athletes begin on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in Staten Island and enter Bay Ridge, Brooklyn before crossing the Pulaski Bridge into Hunters Point, Queens. From there, they cross the Queensboro Bridge and run along First Avenue on the Upper East Side. After that, runners cross the Willis Avenue Bridge in Mott Haven, Bronx. Finally, competitors re-enter Manhattan along Fifth Avenue, eventually entering Central Park, where they cross the finish line.

Despite the grueling distance, marathon races have become increasingly popular over the past few years. 53,627 runners completed the NYC Marathon in 2019, setting a world record for the most number of finishers in a marathon.

Due to the pandemic, the New York Road Runners (NYRR), the organization that holds the NYC Marathon, announced on its website that all in-person races would be canceled indefinitely starting March 18. The NYRR later announced that all remaining in-person races would be cancelled for the rest of the year, including the NYC Marathon, on October 7.

The NYRR finds itself in familiar territory as this is not the first time the NYC Marathon has been canceled (the marathon was canceled in 2012 due to Hurricane Sandy). As a result, the NYRR has been very flexible in creating a race alternative for marathon enthusiasts who were disappointed by the cancella-

tion. This year, the NYRR offered athletes across the world the opportunity to take part in a virtual marathon free of cost from October 17 to November 1 in lieu of the NYC Marathon. Finishers are mailed the iconic finisher's medal in celebration of their accomplishment. The NYRR's creative approach was met with generally good reception as over 24,000 runners from 125 coun-

tries around world participated in the virtual marathon, one of them being biology teacher Marianne Prabhu, who completed the virtual marathon in a time of 4:18.14.

her time in the water, her true passion was on the running course. "I would keep my fingers crossed our head guard would [hold] running [workouts] when the water was cold," Prabhu explained.

Though her high school days are long over, Prabhu has maintained an active lifestyle of "short runs, spinning, and other workouts." She completed two half marathons last

She also cited the boy's swim team, in which she coaches, as another source of motivation. "It [the boys' swim team] made me yearn for a sense of personal accomplishment I haven't really experienced since I was a swimmer," Prabhu said.

Thus, Prabhu entered a NYRR lottery for a chance to compete in the NYC Marathon through Stuyvesant and sure enough, her name was pulled.

While many athletes were discouraged to train as a result of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, they didn't seem to stop Prabhu, as she continued training for five months. "The real marathon was canceled," she said. "There was nothing else to do, so why not keep at it?"

Though the marathon was undoubtedly far from what Prabhu had imagined her first marathon experience would be like, she nevertheless

found silver linings in her experience. "Luckily, I had a friend meet me to run the last four miles, and she kept me going. [Biology teacher Marissa Maggio] also joined me on a Citibike and got strangers in the park to cheer for me. They helped keep a smile on my face and distracted me from the pain," Prabhu happily recounted. "[I] got by on the satisfaction of knowing that [I] had accomplished something that pushed [me] to [my] limit."

As most marathon runners can attest, completing one's first marathon is an amazing achievement—a testament to the power of resilience and positivity in times of uncertainty. "Any goal is attainable if you break it into manageable steps. Whether it be a race, a project, professional or personal goals, everything is doable," Prabhu encouraged. "Keep at it, adjust your plan, adjust your timeline, but never adjust the goal!"



Courtesy of Julianne Yotov and Alicia Yu

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Prabhu's love for running began when she was a lifeguard in high school. Though she spent most of

year, along with Assistant Principal of World Languages, Art, and Music Francesca McAuliffe, who is also an experienced runner. In fact, Prabhu cites McAuliffe as the person who encouraged her to participate in the 2020 NYC Marathon after "[raving] about how much she loved [it]."

SPORTSBEAT

The NBA will begin its 72-game season on December 22 to take advantage of increased revenue on Christmas Day. Training camps are expected to start in early December, and the season is scheduled to conclude before the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

USA Wrestling elected not to participate in the 2020 World Championships in Serbia due to coronavirus concerns.

The U.S. Olympics and Paralympics Committee sued several insurance carriers for allegedly delaying the resettlement process regarding the Larry Nassar scandal.

After winning the 2020 WNBA Championship, the Seattle Storm formally endorsed the Biden-Harris ticket in a bold and rare move.