



SPOOKTATOR

This Class Does Not Exist



Junior Logan Ruzzier issues an urgent message to all Stuyvesant students: “Feeling confused? Concerned? Anomalous? Learn more about SCP-345. Secure. Contain. Protect.”

SEE PAGE 2

SPOOKTATOR

The Nightmare Before Christmas is Not a Halloween Movie

Contemplating which movie to watch on Hallows Eve? Asa Muhammad has the answer for you, and it is surely not The Nightmare Before Christmas.

SEE PAGE 27



CoronaVirus Update: Vampire Edition

By NORA MILLER

Look, we all know that this last month has been terrible. Wait, no, this last year. Actually, come to think of it, this last decade. But—and I know you guys are all super excited—we’ve discovered yet another global problem that has the potential to ruin our lives! That’s right, vampires. Despite what all of those well-meaning public health officials have been saying, we here at The Spectator know the truth, and it’s not COVID-19 you need to be worrying about.

Still not convinced? Well, while we’re all whining about our masks like a bunch of suckers, the real suckers are hiding, passing themselves off as upstanding citizens. I’m telling you, never trust anyone if you can’t see their canines—how do you really know I didn’t just die and come back to haunt you during quarantine?

Okay, fine, so no looking for fangs. What about the skin? Given that the general consensus among Stuyvesant students during this time has been that sun exposure kills, how do you know that isn’t actually true? Well, sadly, judging people’s skin color won’t work either. I mean, look at yourself! If you were

any more sallow, we’d be mistaking you for a ghost, not a vampire. But before you start asking me about the eyes, let me be clear: if your red-eyed friend calls themselves dead from an all-nighter, for your own sake, believe them. That’s what they all say.

How-ever, believe it or not, the fact that everyone you know is probably trying to suck you dry is not a cause for concern. That’s right, we have three foolproof ways of vanquishing vampires in cold blood.

Method 1. Ask them out! There’s nothing vampires love more than a good night out: stale air, dark skies, and truly delectable necks. As the great Sanguia Hemophagio said, “You can’t face danger unless you court with it.” And really, what’s the worst that can happen? Do you really need all that excess blood?

If you and your new ghoulish friend hit it off, be proud! You’re

doing this for the good of society. Take them out for dinner, and make sure you pile on the garlic—you want to make sure your garlic breath is actually deadly.

Method 2. If you’ve never looked at a sallow, red-eyed ghoul and felt your heart flutter,

cyanide in there, and congratulations! You’ve just reduced the city population by at least 10 percent.

Alternatively, you can use the blood as bait. Why do anything immediately when you can do it later? If you’re the kind of perfectly normal person (or vampire) who enjoys constructing elaborate fake people and human-sized mouse traps, then your art skills just might save society.

Method 3. In some rare cases, a little sunshine might be enough. If you’ve ever walked outside in the last few months and been like, “AAHHHHHHH!!!!” you have a sense of how it feels to be a vampire. With just a few strategically placed mirrors, you can ensure that others always have the same opportunities that you did.

Method 4. Despite all of your efforts, you may still be tormented by vampires. But that’s not a super big problem—after all, there’s always the nuclear option. Sacrifice yourself, and you will die an honorable death. So many of us spend our lives trying to serve society—really, what more direct a method is there? We’ll remember you fondly (we promise!) and hopefully, the vampires will go away eventually. That is, I will. I don’t know about the rest of you.



Eleanor Chin / The Spectator

that’s alright too. We suggest holding a midnight blood drive—why catch one vampire at a time when you can catch them all? Just bribe your local Red Cross chapter and try not to gloat too much at the idea of sucking people’s blood, and all of New York will show up. At the end, slip a little

SPOOKYBEAT

All SAT testing centers in New York City for the November date have been closed. All students are suggested to venture farther out. Ohio is recommended.

I take it back. The November and December SATs have been canceled entirely across the country. Try to find a spot in March I guess?

Stuyvesant AP students are found to have been given 12 hours of homework instead of one.

Stuyvesant has a whopping zero National Merit Semifinalists.

Boograms are scheduled to be delivered through carrier pigeons. Be sure to keep your windows open throughout the day.

Single Pumpkin Looking to Date Again

By OLIVER STEWART

Citing the rapidly approaching Halloween season and the struggles of being alone, Steven The Single Pumpkin confirmed on Thursday, October 15, that he was looking to get back out there and start dating again. Though Steven hasn’t been on the market since his saucy fling with a pumpkin scoop ended messily early last November, he feels that now is the time to put himself back out there and give the apps a try.

Anonymous sources confirmed that Steven created accounts and set up profiles on several apps—Tinder, OkCupid, and Match.com among them—in the hopes of attracting a pumpkin, gourd, cobweb, spider, skeleton, or witch looking for a long-term relationship. When questioned as to what he specifically looked for in a partner, Steven had difficulty explaining and repeatedly said that the appearance of a “spark” was vital in a relationship. “I don’t know,” he went on. “Something special. I need somebody who has that something special.” When pressed further, Steven was unable to identify what exactly that something special entailed.

While Steven matched with an array of people and swiped right for many more, he struggled to elicit responses. Despite pulling out

all the stops, Steven had difficulty getting texts back no matter what he tried. Playing it cool and dropping a “hey” didn’t yield any success, and neither did pickup lines, including hard-hitters such as “Halloween is coming up... you should go as my girlfriend” and “Are you a jack-o’-lantern? Because you’re lighting up the room.” He even started a conversation with a cute skeleton by saying “Heyy... do you have a bone number?” The skeleton could not be reached for comment by either Steven or The Spectator.

Discouraged by the lack of success he found on the apps and demoralized by Halloween night’s rapid approach, Steven began to accept the possibility of attending Halloween parties alone and sitting on a windowsill by himself for the duration of the month of October. “I admit, the carved smile is definitely feeling a little forced at this point,” he said, seeming melancholy. “I think it would be really nice to have the option of letting my emotions out, y’know? Unfortunately, I have no choice but to grin all day, every day, and my carver didn’t even have the decency to give me a full mouth of teeth.”

When Halloween night finally

continued on page 2

Which Spooky Something Are You?

By KRISTA PROTEASA

Howdy, folks! You may or may not have noticed, but it is officially spooky season! You know what that means? It means it’s time to embrace all things spooky.

If you have ever found yourself at a crossroads between which of these gloriously pumpkin-themed trinkets or snacks you’d be, fear not, for I present you with a solution. With this mathematically sound formula, I shall put your racing thoughts to rest. The formula states that the adjective attached to your zodiac sign + the connector attached to the first letter of your name + the noun attached to your height range will produce the result of which fall-themed object you’d be if you were one. Now, get excited for the knowledge you’re about to uncover!

Drumroll, please.
You are a(n)...

Zodiac sign: + First Letter of your name: + Your height:

Zodiac Signs

- Aquarius: Ghastly
- Pisces: Brooding
- Aries: Sinister
- Taurus: Gory
- Gemini: Wicked
- Cancer: Spooky
- Leo: Deadly
- Virgo: Undead
- Libra: Menacing
- Scorpio: Masked
- Sagittarius: Bloodcurdling
- Capricorn: Fiendish

First Letter of Your Name

- A: yet cinnamon-y
- B: and orange
- C: but dusty
- D: in the name of spookiness
- E: yet riddled with cobwebs
- F: and zombie-like
- G: as ever
- H: and crispy
- I: but disappointing
- J: yet somehow surprisingly suspicious
- K: with a hint of malicious intent
- L: and unfortunately burnt (and obnoxiously so)
- M: and carved
- N: but somehow on fire
- P: and cold
- Q: along with fellow spooky peers
- R: and covered with a strange mold
- S: contrary to popular belief
- T: while rifling through spell books
- U: (as a result of one particularly eventful Halloween)
- V: but delicious
- W: yet still not in a spooky mood
- X: with a spooky purpose
- Y: and on a broomstick
- Z: and over-spiced

Height

- <5’0” : Haunted windowsill
- 5’1”-5’3” : Pumpkin spiced scam
- 5’4”-5’6” : Purposefully forgotten bat-shaped gummy
- 5’7”-5’9” : Crusty apple cider donut
- 5’10”-6’0” : Bag of stale candy corn and lies
- >6’1” : Rotting jack-o’-lantern



Sophie Pogor / The Spectator

And voilà! There you have it, folks! Now you can go back to finishing the lab you’ve been putting off for a week. Don’t worry, this was written while I was in the same boat :’} But at least now I know I’m a wicked, with a hint of malicious intent, crusty apple cider donut! I hope you find your Spooky Something as wonderful as you are! Stay spooky folks~

The Spooktator!

This Class Does Not Exist

By LOGAN RUZZIER

Item #: SCP-345

Object Class: Euclid

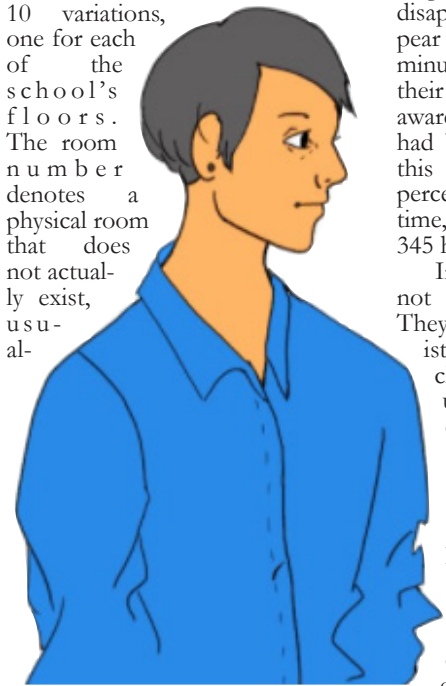
Special Containment Procedures: Due to SCP-345's position within an active and renowned school, in the midst of ██████, ██████, proper containment is all but impossible. The sheer amount of witnesses that would require amnestization following a theoretical attempt at SCP-345's containment would be well beyond the scope of the SCP Foundation's abilities. Further research related to the capture of SCP-345 is ongoing and is headed by Dr. Narom of Site ██████, which is located in the warehouse on ██████ Street and ██████ in ██████. Until superior means can be established, the following conditions will be sustained:

One undercover SCP Foundation agent is to be stationed within ██████ High School at all times (while instruction is ongoing at the school). They will serve as a member of the school's staff whom the school nurse can contact at any moment in case a student's condition becomes suspect. They are also to track instances of SCP-345-A by whatever means necessary (e.g. through the institution's built-in security cameras or in person if possible) should they appear or act in a manner that is new to the research Dr. Narom has thus far undertaken.

If an instance of SCP-345-A is recovered, they are to immediately be taken into custody and sent to Site ██████ for treatment by Dr. Narom. They will be debriefed on their current situation and either administered Class C amnestics or sent to Foundation educational facilities, depending on the subject's reaction to the new information. Students from ██████ High School who became instances of SCP-345-A have been known to prosper under Foundation instruction and eventually become Foundation researchers or agents themselves.

Description: SCP-345 is a highly anomalous phenomenon that has been occurring on the premises of ██████ High School at ██████ Street, ██████ since the school's relocation to the building in 199█. The event begins anew once the school year starts in September

of each year. When class schedules are released for the new year, approximately 30 of them will, for an unknown reason, become spontaneously irregular. These schedules, distributed to students in their homerooms, are designated SCP-345-B and contain a class that does not exist. This mysterious class is always written with the instructor name "BRAUN," as all ██████ High School schedules include only the class teacher's surnames in all caps. The room numbers included in instances of SCP-345-B have 10 variations, one for each of the school's floors. The room number denotes a physical room that does not actually exist, usually-



Aries Ho / The Spectator

ly being one above the highest existing room number for a given floor. Upon receiving an instance of SCP-345-B, a student will make one of two decisions: they will remark to themselves that they've never heard of a "BRAUN" in their school before and call their classmates' attention to it in person or online, or they will not notice it and proceed with their instruction as normal. If the student makes the former choice, the instance of SCP-345-B will immediately transform into an ordinary class schedule. If the student, however, takes the latter path, they will become an instance of SCP-345-A.

Instances of SCP-345-A will behave in a similar fashion to other students of ██████ High School, possessing incredibly

high levels of performance anxiety and completing assignments on a downright neurotic basis. They will take part in all usual activities associated with attending high school, including participating in class, doing homework, and socializing with peers, but with one notable exception. Once they are scheduled to attend Mr. Braun's class, they will make their way to what should be the physical location of the room number described on their schedule. Once the student reaches that spot, presumably a dead end or an empty stretch of hallway, they will disappear. They will then reappear in the same spot about 45 minutes later and continue with their school day, completely unaware of the strange event that had befallen them. Interestingly, this disappearance cannot be perceived by those nearby at the time, which indicates that SCP-345 has psychic effects.

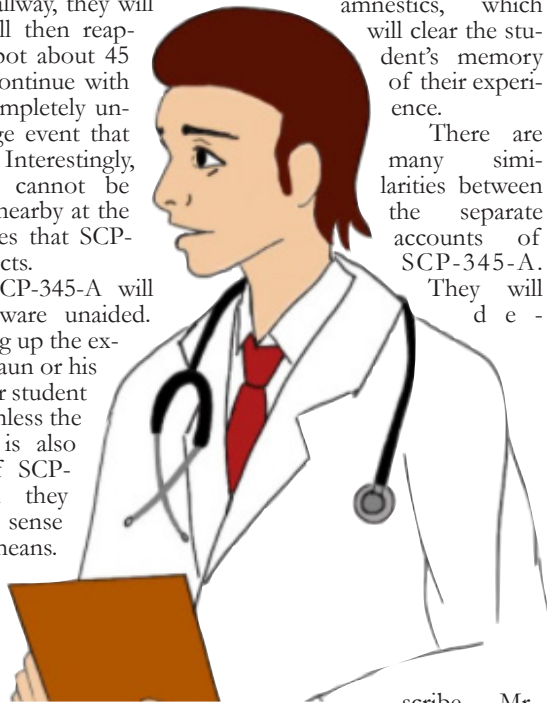
Instances of SCP-345-A will not become self-aware unaided. They will never bring up the existence of Mr. Braun or his class to any other student unprompted, unless the other student is also an instance of SCP-345-A, which they can innately sense by unknown means. If another normal pupil asks them about their classes, however, they will divulge their

attendance of Mr. Braun's class, which, of course, they will not find strange in any way. If the other student insists that the teacher does not exist, SCP-345's illusion will be broken. They will feel incredibly disoriented, and the next time they seek Mr. Braun's class, they will be unable to find it. These students will typically look for a teacher's assistance, who will refer them to the nurse after judging them to be unwell. This is when most instances of SCP-345-A are discovered by the Foundation's undercover agent and are open for study.

The agent will thoroughly interrogate the student regarding Mr. Braun's class, using queries given to them by Dr. Narom. After they have attained all the data they require, they will break the news to

them that Mr. Braun does not exist. It is at this point that instances of SCP-345-A undergo their most trying experience. Initially, they will become increasingly agitated that they've been misinformed and try to convince the agent that they are wrong. Once they are convinced of the truth, however, they will be overcome with immense grief. They mimic the symptoms of one processing the loss of a loved one. Then, the agent will either welcome the student to the SCP Foundation or administer Class C amnestics, which will clear the student's memory of their experience.

There are many similarities between the separate accounts of SCP-345-A. They will de-



scribe Mr.

Braun as a very tall, older, Caucasian man with a slight paunch, bald head, and impressive mustache. Every time, they will describe his accent as very odd but are unable to offer any comparison to other known accents, such as a British or German one. They always find Mr. Braun to be incredibly likable and captivating and often describe him as their favorite teacher. The class Mr. Braun teaches, however, depends on the floor of the room number instances of SCP-345-A are given on their schedules.² These students often try to prove Mr. Braun's existence, either by attempting to proffer assignments he has assigned, which they cannot find, or asking other students they've seen in his class, who have never heard of him.³ They may try to produce

their schedule, but before the agent can have a look at it, it reverts from SCP-345-B to a normal schedule.

Addendum A: Another means of discovering instances of SCP-345-A has been found. Once the school year has concluded, the highest performing students at ██████ High School are taken in for questioning. Some of these students boast an unbelievably high grade for their regents or AP exams, which is a sign that they have attended Mr. Braun's class (though reasons for this correlation are currently unknown). In these cases, students are often not informed that Mr. Braun does not exist, for they have completed their tenure of his class with no adverse effects and would only be hurt by the knowledge of the loss of their favorite teacher.

Addendum B: Numerous attempts to uncover SCP-345 by other means have failed. Instances of SCP-345-B have escaped all tries of interception by homeroom teachers. Though grades of students taking Mr. Braun's class are recorded, no associated documents with them exist, and they are automatically submitted online under a different teacher's name. Members of the 05 council have debated over whether a widespread survey of ██████ students relating to SCP-345 would be worth the resulting attention to the phenomenon, especially because a news outlet, ██████ Post, favors ██████ High School for content. But, the deliberations are still ongoing.

Addendum C: Dr. Narom is developing a new perspective on the true nature of SCP-345, one that states that Mr. Braun is in fact an existing entity. If this were the case, Mr. Braun could be deemed a Keter class being, possessing extraordinary dimensional and reality-warping abilities. Since the entity has been consistently described to have a sunny disposition, it might not be adverse to collaboration with the SCP Foundation. Further experiments have been devised to gather more information about SCP-345, such as creating nonexistent subjects at ██████ High School for Mr. Braun to teach or attempting to have an SCP Foundation personnel enroll in his class.

¹ Agent ██████ is currently serving as school nurse at ██████ High School in order to funnel SCP-related information to the numerous other SCP Foundation personnel undercover at the school. Each of these agents have been specialized to deal with a specific SCP entity, and they follow a strict protocol specific to each specimen. Due to the increase of abnormal activity at ██████ High School and the surrounding ██████ area, Dr. Narom has requested more researchers to join him at Site ██████.

² For example, all classrooms on the school's eighth floor are physics labs, so it is there that Mr. Braun teaches physics. Mr. Braun has been recorded teaching every class that is offered at ██████ High School, including Forensics, Optics, AP Calculus, and Weightlifting. When a subject is discontinued at the school, Mr. Braun is no longer reported to teach it. One instance of SCP-345-A reported that he wept when Mr. Braun informed him that he would no longer be teaching Italian after his class.

³ Every classmate referenced by an instance of SCP-345-A has been proven to not be another instance of SCP-345-A. When two instances of SCP-345-A discuss Mr. Braun's class with each other, they will not consider his unusual characteristics, such as teaching diverse subjects, to be strange, and will forget the exchange immediately afterward. It is for this reason that SCP-345-A will not divulge other instances of themselves, so information about other instances can only be gleaned from intense scrutiny of camera data.

Single Pumpkin Looking to Date Again

continued from page 1

came, Steven found himself staring out the window as merry trick-or-treaters passed by his house in full costume. He had RSVPed to several parties taking place at different times that night, but he just didn't have the energy to put on his little pumpkin lid, let alone make the trek to a bustling party across town. Instead, he sat on his windowsill watching ghosts, werewolves, Spidermen, and cats file past, laughing and eating candy. A single drop of pumpkin juice slid down his smooth orange exterior as a sexy nurse walked by hand-in-hand with a flannel-clad lumberjack.

At 11:30 p.m., Steven rose, telling himself that it would be rude of him not to make an appearance at his friend Marlene's party which had started half an hour prior. At least, he thought to himself, Marlene's "party" will be more of a

get-together. No flashing lights or pounding music to contend with. Straightening his pumpkin cap, Steven rushed out the door, re-entering when he realized he had forgotten to put in his best candle before rushing out once more and heading toward Marlene's place.

Marlene's party was, as promised, an intimate event, which Steven found himself both grateful for and dreading as he hung his lid up by the doorway. The quiet was nice—he was certainly in no mood for dancing, but there was nowhere for him to hide—no way for him to melt into the crowd and forget about his desperate pumpkin solitude among a thousand other seeking souls. Rather, there were about 20 souls in the vicinity, and almost none of them seemed to be seeking. In fact, around half were in couples' costumes, a fact which Steven felt was really nothing more than the universe taking the

opportunity to rub his nose in it.

After making the necessary introductions, Steven drifted around, picking up a few bites to eat and eventually settling in a corner where he gave the room a quick once-over before focusing his attention on his plate of food. Stabbing away at some green olives he had gotten from a bowl labeled "eyeballs," Steven forgot his sor-

rows
and
in-

stead

focused his ire on the fact that Marlene would serve olives with the pits still in and not provide a designated receptacle

for the stones. "I mean, who does that?" he grumbled to himself.

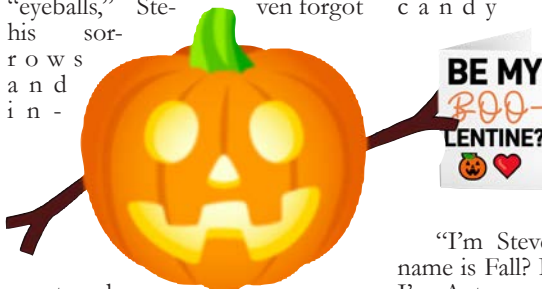
At least, he thought he was grumbling to himself; a disembodied voice came from somewhere to his right and said, "I know! Who does that?" Beyond shocked to receive a response, Steven looked up, startled. There, standing by the door, was the most beautiful c a n d y corn Steven had ever seen. Steven stammered, lost for words, and she filled the space he left. "I'm Autumn," the candy corn said. "What's your name?"

"I'm Steven," he said. "Your name is Fall? Because it seems like I'm Autumn for you." She stared at him blankly. The little pumpkin cogs in Steven's head whirred and he realized, to his embarrassment, what he had just said. "Wait! No.

I meant... wait, let me try again. Okay." He breathed in deeply. "Your name is Autumn? Makes sense, because I think I'm falling for you."

She laughed. "You're Autumn for me? I've never heard that one before." Steven blushed and looked at his olives. "Seriously," Autumn said, "I can't believe there's no pit bowl." He looked up and laughed nervously. "This 'party' kinda sucks," she went on. "What do you say we take these olives and go back to my place? I have a bowl we can use for the pits."

Without waiting for an answer, Autumn grabbed his hand and pulled him toward the door. She picked up the bowl labeled "eyeballs." The door slammed behind them, and they ran down the stairs, laughing as they went. The street outside was cold, but as they stepped out into the night air, holding hands, Steven felt his candle burn a little warmer and a little brighter.



Oliver Stewart / The Spectator



The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper

“The Pulse of the Student Body”

Volume 111 No. 4

October 30, 2020

stuyspec.com



OPINIONS Please Talk to Strangers

Basing her argument on personal experience, Opinions writer Elena Hlamenko claims that, as both people and students, we need to reclaim our connection to others that has been lost over the past few months.

SEE PAGE 16

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Bittersweet Universe of Joji’s “Nectar”

Anson Guan and Morris Raskin review comedian-turned-musician Joji’s third studio album “Nectar.”

SEE PAGE 19



What “Voting” as High School Students Looks Like

By ISABELLA JIA, ANA-MARIA SKARICIC, and JANNA WANG

As the November 3 election approaches, students are participating in various initiatives to raise voter awareness and education. Clubs such as Students for Biden, Coalition Z, and Young Democrats have collaborated to organize phone banking sessions scheduled for every Friday until election day.

Senior and Students for Biden President John Grossman is a phone banking captain who has been conducting phone banking sessions under the National Democratic Training Committee’s Get Out the Vote program. “Combined with other high schools in New York, we are sending out tons of calls each week, and it’s super exciting that we are truly making a difference in this election even though most of us can’t vote yet,” Grossman said in an e-mail interview.

Student phone bankers like Grossman have been reaching out to voters in swing states and canvassing voters for the Biden-Harris campaign. “When you are on the phones, you get to see how this election connects to families all over the country. While I consider myself to be educated on policy, at the end of the day I am a 17-year-old kid from New York,” Grossman said. “Getting to speak with people in Wisconsin, Ohio, or Florida exposes me to other points of view, and it shows me how this election affects people on so many levels.”

Partnered with swing coalition programs and a political activism organization called Blue Future, Coalition Z has also been phone banking to swing states such as Pennsylvania, Florida, and Ohio.

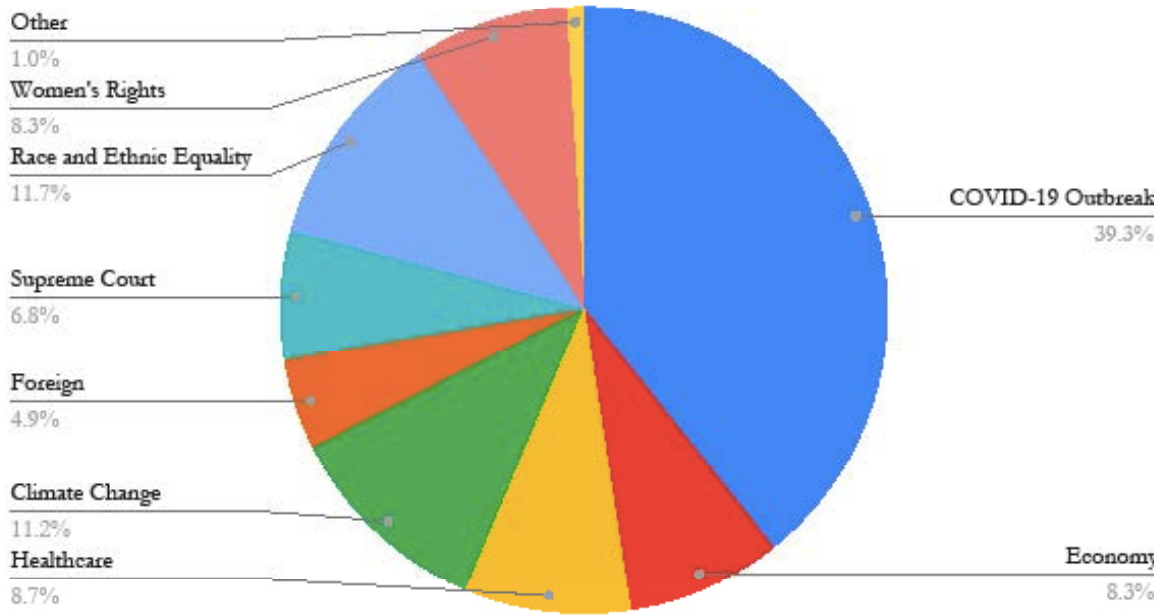
They are holding training sessions every Wednesday to equip volunteers with phone banking scripts and strategies. “The organizations I’ve worked with encourage talking to people [who] aren’t already voting for Trump,” junior and Coali-

especially since it’s in a swing state.”

Likewise, juniors and Stuyvesant Save the Children Co-Presidents Maya Dunayer and Rhea Balakrishnan have organized a schoolwide webinar to combat voter apathy. During the webinar, a panel con-

tics and beyond. “I’ve been feeling like there’s nothing I can do about the upcoming election, and I wanted to create a way for myself to get more involved. Even though I can’t vote, my voice still has power, and I think that this webinar is a great

Issues We Care About Most



To better understand the student body’s political spectrum, The News Department conducted a survey to which 157 students responded: 25.5 percent were freshmen; 36.9 percent were sophomores; 21.7 percent were juniors; and 15.9 percent were seniors. An overwhelming 91.1 percent of Stuyvesant students support Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, with 61.1 percent affiliating themselves with the Democratic Party. While students are slightly more polarized regarding the issues they care about the most, the majority cite the COVID-19 pandemic, which 39.3 percent of respondents found the most important, considering its ongoing urgency.

tion Z Co-President Anika Amin said in an e-mail interview. “It’s more about reminding those that would vote to vote, as well as getting those crucial undecided votes in,

sisting of New York City Representatives Ben Kallos, Brad Lander, and Carlina Rivera spoke about civic duty and using one’s voice to simulate change in New York City poli-

way to use my voice,” Dunayer said in an e-mail interview. The presentations were followed by an interactive session in which participants 16 or 17 years of age were able to

NEWSBEAT

Stuyvesant will not be hosting the SAT in December but will be hosting the PSAT for juniors only on January 26, 2021.

The only option for students to opt into blended learning for the rest of the school year will be between November 2 and 15.

Biology teacher Marianne Prabhu completed the virtual TCS New York City Marathon on October 25.

Senior Catherine Dell’Olio performed in a virtual choir performance of “Bridge Over Troubled Water” in the Manhattan Borough Arts Festival.

Senior Max Stuart, under stage name “YS Montana,” performed “Guacamole” as part of a Songwriters Hall of Fame Master Session that featured producer Needlz.

pre-register to vote while ineligible participants wrote letters encour-

continued on page 6

Stuyvesant Reduces Number of Blended Cohorts

By LEXI CHEN, NADA HAMEED, and JANNA WANG

Starting on October 19, Stuyvesant reduced the number of blended cohorts from four to two. Initially, students were placed into four blended cohorts that took turns going to school for two days every eight days. Positive responses from these students and more students opting for fully remote learning prompted the administration to convert the four cohorts into two, thus granting blended learners the opportunity to physically go into school more often.

After Cohort B finished up in-person learning on October 19, Cohorts C and D returned to the building together on October 20, thus collapsing the number of cohorts. To ensure a smoother transition into blended learning with the reduced groups, the administration has modified the model so that each cohort attends in-person schooling for four consecutive days, and returns to remote learning for the following four. “Once we had experience with all four groups (A,B,C,D), we felt we could combine into two groups, while still

maintaining all safety measures. This allows the students who are coming in the blended model, who want to be in the building for a variety of reasons, to be in more often,” Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Casey Pedrick said in an e-mail interview.

Students in blended learning attend their classes—conducted through Zoom and Google Meet—from designated areas throughout the building. Originally, freshmen were assigned to the sixth floor gym, while sophomores were placed in the fifth floor cafeteria, juniors in the third floor gym, and seniors in the Murray Kahn theater. “There are fewer than 100 students in on any given day, so very few changes needed to be made. We took the sixth floor gym off as a location, so students are in the cafeteria, the third floor gym, or the theater,” Pedrick said. Students previously in the sixth floor gym were moved to the other locations. The administration is also considering removing the theater from the list of designated areas depending on how things proceed in the following weeks.

The administration does anticipate a few challenges associated with this new blended model.

“Factors including the change to colder temperatures, the increase/decrease in positivity rates across NYC, [and] the constant adjustments that need to be considered when students and/or staff might be impacted or exposed to COVID are all considerations we have to anticipate,” Principal Seung Yu said in an e-mail interview. “We’ll need to review thoroughly and make sure families are aware of the implications of having one opportunity in November to opt-in for blended this school year.”

In planning the new model, the administration also had to consider student reactions. “We thought the frequency of more days would help build routine and possibly help build community for students who chose blended. The challenge is that not every student feels comfortable coming into the building more frequently at this point, and they are still evaluating whether blended is productive for them,” he said.

Sophomore Maya Brosnick, however, plans to continue attending blended learning and feels that Stuyvesant is safe enough to carry out the new plan. “Stuyvesant is a large school, and there are three different rooms. There is

a lot of space between students, and I think [two cohorts are] safe,” she said. Even with fewer rooms for students, Brosnick still thinks students will be able to effectively maintain social distancing.

Senior Michelle Tsfasman enters the school building by the Hudson River, which leads directly to her current designated spot in Lecture Hall A. She has found that Stuyvesant’s original structure was sparse enough to allow for more students, thus having two cohorts would not be problematic. “There were like two people in my lecture hall, maybe three maximum. It was three maximum and then it was me, but I was the only one on Friday,” she said.

Some students have noted that the earlier plan of four student cohorts wasn’t very successful in terms of social interaction. “They had a community-building exercise early on, but it wasn’t much social interaction, so going into school more would be better for that,” Brosnick said.

With two cohorts, however, there will be more opportunity for students to safely interact with each other and not through a screen. “The whole point of actually going to school is for like a little bit

of socializing with people rather than being there by yourself, as long as it’s safe and [socially] distanced and everyone [is] wearing their mask,” Tsfasman said.

In order to combat the lack of student interaction, the administration is looking into creating opportunities where students can engage with more of the building and one another. “Grouping students and finding ways for authentic interactions are difficult, but we’re working on it. Right now, our team is setting up brief tours for our freshmen who are in person to see the building. We’re finding open periods where we can have small student groups interact, move around, and meet one another,” Yu said.

The administration is optimistic about shifting into blended learning with two cohorts while maintaining a safe environment and is excited to offer blended students access to the building more frequently. “We absolutely love having the students here. My favorite part of the day is the time I spend at the bridge, welcoming students to the building, offering them PPE [personal protective equipment] and breakfast, and sharing a quick connection,” Pedrick said.

News

Talk Circle Around Race Discusses Allyship and Accompliceship

By FAHIMA MIAJEE

The Black Students League (BSL) and ASPIRA hosted a virtual Stuyvesant Unity Talk Circle Around Race (TCAR) on Allyship versus Accompliceship with the Stuyvesant Muslim Students Association (MSA), South Asian Youth Association (SAYA), and Stuyvesant Asian Coalition (SAC) on October 20. The event was moderated by leaders of BSL and ASPIRA along with Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Casey Pedrick and SPARK Faculty Advisor Angel Colon, while the conversation was facilitated by senior and BSL co-President Sarai Pridgen. TCAR is a series that began last year, which included a virtual event discussing COVID-19 and police brutality last June.

The two-hour session started with an introduction to Allyship versus Accompliceship toward Black, Indigenous groups, People of Color, and other minority communities. The rest of the session was split into several parts that consisted of an introduction by a moderator, followed by a discussion of a series of questions in breakout rooms, and ending with a share-out in the main session.

Though not every club moderated, all the Stuy Unity Clubs were heavily involved in preparing the event. “MSA, SAYA, and SAC played a huge role in planning and organizing the TCAR,” senior and BSL co-Vice President Tolupe Lawal said in an e-mail interview. “From gathering attendees to helping draft the TCAR agenda, Stuy Unity often works together to build every TCAR.”

The first segment, introduced by Lawal, focused on the terms

“actor,” “ally,” and “accomplice.” Participants discussed why accompliceship is favorable to allyship, what being an accomplice means to the individual, and whether allyship still carries relevance today. Students also shared their views on recent actions taken by people around the world against injustice, social media activism, and stigma around accompliceship in society.

Senior and ASPIRA co-President Veronica Fuentes then led the second segment, which highlighted the importance of not being a bystander, correcting friends and families on beliefs that are racist or inconsistent with their values, and the significance of privilege in relation to accompliceship. In addition, junior and ASPIRA co-Vice President Elio Torres highlighted accompliceship across minority groups with an introduction of the Jewish philosopher and Civil Rights activist Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Finally, senior and BSL co-President Falina Ongus introduced the controversy around non-Person of Color (POC) artists who highlight POC issues and direct attention to themselves rather than those affected by such issues. “Within the last few months, restrictions on activism capabilities have led to a surge in other mediums of activism, such as social media,” Lawal said. “We wanted people to re-evaluate their role within activism as well as challenge the performative activism that may be seen across several platforms.”

The chat box, as with the last virtual Talk Circle, was used to further the conversation in the main session, share book recommendations, and highlight important social media platforms. “There were times [when] the chat and the

people speaking were on different conversations, but no one was being ignored while they shared, so I think it was alright,” Fuentes said in an e-mail interview.

Within the Talk Circle, a few attendees voiced controversial opinions, which sparked discussions of their own. “[There was a] big argument toward the end when someone tried to make the claim that white privilege isn’t all that prevalent or all that important and that racial bias isn’t the issue, but class,” an anonymous student said in an e-mail interview. “Despite the fact that there were dissenters and despite the fact that they didn’t totally seem to listen at times, I think just the fact that they bothered to show up is definitely a huge step.”

Fuentes emphasized the importance of respectful conversation regarding these topics. “While there were some disagreements during this past TCAR, and while I personally don’t agree with what some of our participants believed, I’d say that I am fairly happy with this month’s TCAR,” she said. “We just ask that all discussions remain respectful and that people come in willing to hear each other out and be mindful of what they share.”

Various participation regarding other relevant topics from attendees helped to create an insightful and engaging discussion. “My favorite part of TCAR was, hands down, the rapid-fire explanation given by [senior] Jonathan Schneiderman about the history of Jewish oppression and migration,” Lawal said. “I know very little about Judaism and [its] history, so I was happy to learn more about it and grateful for Schneiderman’s [very] thorough anecdote.”

Overall, the hosts hoped that



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and NASA

WORLDBEAT

Justice Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court, pushing the court further to the right.

The United States reported 85,000 COVID cases on October 23, the most cases reported in a day.

NASA has confirmed that there is water on the moon’s sunlit side, which can be used in deep space exploration.

Keith Raniere, leader of the sex cult NXIVM, has been sentenced to 120 years in prison.

Three people were stabbed and killed in a basilica in Nice, France, which was less than two weeks after French school teacher Samuel Paty was beheaded in Paris, France.

the participants were able to gain a new perspective from hearing the thoughts and opinions of other students during this TCAR. “I hope that everyone walked away with a pensive mind,” Lawal said. “It’s easy

to justify self-righteousness when being an activist, but I believe that it’s more important to be able to listen and learn from others in order to be more open to making change for the betterment of others.”

Updated Policy Allows More Teachers to Work Remotely

By SUBYETA CHOWDHURY, MICHELLE LU, and CATHERINE DELL’OLIO

Just one month into the school year, the Stuyvesant administration has expanded the school’s policy on teachers working from home, allowing teachers with familial obligations and responsibilities that do not require them to stay within the building to work remotely. The Department of Education (DOE) previously outlined that only teachers over 65 or with medical accommodations could apply to work from home. Due to overwhelming concerns of teachers across the city, however, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) pushed the DOE to alter this policy with a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

Administrators and teachers initially found the new remote qualifications vague. “The UFT negotiated [with the DOE] to make it so that teachers who did not have specific duties that required them in the school building did not have to be in the school building,” English teacher Mark Henderson said. “[They announced this] agreement between the UFT and the DOE, [...] but the DOE didn’t make a system for deciding who needs to be here and who doesn’t [...] some people need to be here since we have students in the building, [but there was no plan for] how to determine which teachers need to be here.”

The administration had to make accommodations under short notice. “Principal [Seung] Yu was under a lot of pressure to figure this out and received no real guidance from above. I’m glad he made the decision that makes sense for our school,” Henderson said.

With the introduction of this new update, many teachers have now opted to work remotely. “[The new

policy] affected me a lot because I have children at home—they’re nine and 12—so they could be home unsupervised, but it’s better if somebody is home. When this new policy was announced, I was very happy because I could teach from home, and I could also keep an eye on my children,” Math teacher Gary Rubinstein said in an e-mail interview.

Henderson has also found the new change to be beneficial. “My sons are in middle school, but one is particularly in need of my help once or twice a week. I was hoping for more flexibility than the initial plan had, and the administration quickly amended the plan to allow teachers to choose [when they would like to] come into the building, so long as [they] notified [Assistant Principal of Organization] Dr. [Gary] Haber the Friday beforehand,” Henderson said in an e-mail interview.

Despite the increase in the number of teachers working remotely, the administration has ensured that there are enough staff members in the building to accommodate the students coming in for blended learning. “Supervising of the pods is being handled by the school aides as well as substitute per diem teachers. We have enough staff members in the building every day, and Dr. Haber’s office is on top of this daily,” Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said in an e-mail interview.

Working from home, teachers can avoid the risks of commuting to and spending time inside the building. “My experience of working at home is similar to the experience many students have. I like that I can sleep in a bit longer because I don’t have to commute, and I don’t have any fears that I’m exposing myself or my family to sickness,” Henderson said in an e-mail interview.

Rubinstein added, “It’s risky to come in, whether you’re on the

subway you’re taking risks, or if you’re on a bike, actually. And I didn’t really feel that safe in the building; I didn’t know if all of the safety protocols were followed as much as I’d want them to be.”

For the teachers who have chosen to continue working in the school building, however, the administration has made sure to take proper measures to ensure everyone’s safety. “We are complying with all health and safety protocols from the DOH [Department of Health] and DOE and have plenty of PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] provided by the DOE. Our custodial staff works nonstop and keeps our building immaculate in complying with health and safety regulations for cleaning and sanitizing,” Ingram said.

These protocols have alleviated concerns, with teachers reporting that they feel comfortable working within the building. “I feel pretty safe being in the school building. It’s clean, not crowded; everyone is wearing a mask; temperature gets taken at the door; and there is plenty of hand sanitizer,” chorus teacher Liliya Shamazov said.

Along the same lines, Yu said, “Fortunately, we have a community that recognizes and prioritizes safety. Both the students and the adults have been diligent about wearing their masks and following physical distancing. [It is important, however,] to continue to remind one another of following protocols and to hold each other accountable for doing so if we want to ensure everyone’s safety.”

Some teachers who have chosen to work from school have expressed that they feel more productive in the building. “Teaching at home is more difficult because I don’t have all the props and can’t bring too much home with me. The needs of my classes always change; our projects evolve, so it’s hard to plan for what

to bring home,” Shamazov said. “At school, I have a piano, a room where I can sing and play comfortably, a vast choral library, and necessary teaching materials I rely on daily. When I make recordings or demonstrate vocal technique, I can do so comfortably without disturbing family members or neighbors.”

Working at home, Henderson noted, has blurred the line between his personal and professional lives. “I find it much more difficult focusing on work when I’m at home. My wife and sons are at home, [and] we are constantly distracting each other just by being around,” he said in an e-mail interview. “[At school,] I’m much more in a work-only mindset [...] I have a dedicated space for my work, [and there is] very little to distract me.”

The policy, however, does not give the administration the option to work at home. “The administrative APs are part of the CSA [Council of School Supervisors and Administrators] Union and do not have the agreement that the UFT have under the MOA. They may, however, apply for a medical accommodation to work remotely as can DC37 employees (school aides, lunch workers and other DC37 like me),” Ingram said. “The APs I’ve spoken to seem to

DOE ANNOUNCES 2020-2021 GRADING POLICY

In an update sent to families on October 26, Department of Education Chancellor Richard Carranza announced the grading policy for the 2020-2021 school year. Just like the policy last spring, students cannot receive failing grades and will instead receive “course in progress” (NX). Students who receive an NX will be able to fulfill the course requirements after the school year ends. Families will also have the opportunity to change any passing grade to “credit received” (CR), meaning that while the student will earn credit for the course, it will not impact their GPA. Attendance will not be factored into a student’s grade, though students must attend their remote and blended classes.

ADVERTISEMENT



KWELLERPREP

Advanced Test Preparation Grade 3-12
ELA, MATH, SHSAT, ISEE, PSAT, SAT, ACT

Newly Expanded Facilities!

Kweller Prep Queens

108-22 Queens Blvd; 2nd Floor
Forest Hills, NY 11375
(Queens Blvd and 71st Road)

Kweller Prep Manhattan

370 Lexington Ave; Suite 605
New York, NY 10017
(Lexington and 41st Street)

- **Kweller Prep offers Zoom Online courses in all subjects.**
- **Advanced Test Preparation in Small Group Settings.**
- **15-year Established Learning Center with Proprietary Textbooks.**
- **14-week ELA/MATH, Hunter, SHSAT, TACHS, ISEE, SAT, ACT, AP, SAT II, and Regents Fall & Spring Classes.**
- **7-week Hunter, SHSAT, ISEE, PSAT, SAT, and ACT Summer Camps.**
- **Hebrew, Spanish, English, and Chinese Lessons Available.**

**FALL, SPRING, AND
SUMMER PROGRAMS**

**Register for Classes at
www.KwellerPrep.com
Office: 1 (800) 631-1757
Email: Info@KwellerPrep.com**

News

When Performing Clubs Go Remote

By ANUSHRI MAHABIR, MAGGIE SANSONE, RAVEN (RUIWEN) TANG, SAKURA YAMANAKA, and KAREN ZHANG

Due to current remote circumstances, performing art clubs at Stuyvesant are adapting to ensure the safety of students as they start developing their shows. Many have opted to have fully remote practices, while others are meeting in small groups. Here's how some performing clubs are changing their procedures:

STUYVESANT THEATER COMMUNITY

The Stuyvesant Theater Community (STC) is planning to hold all of their shows virtually and create new remote opportunities for STC members and the school community as a whole.

During a typical school year, there are three STC shows held in November, January, and May or June. This year, Slate, the executive board of STC, is planning a virtual show in December called the wautumn (winter/autumn) musical, as well as two more shows toward the end of the school year. STC will primarily use Zoom for rehearsals, with STC members asynchronously pre-recording the entire musical from their homes and the editing crew assembling them together. Afterward, the final recording will be live-streamed through ShowShare, which interested viewers will pay a fee to watch.

The wautumn musical will be presented differently from previous years, since it will not be performed in-person. "It'll be [...] less of a performance in the moment on a particular night and more of a whole production coming together over the course of a couple of weeks and then us sharing the final product," senior and Executive Producer Clara Yuste Golob said.

In addition to offering opportunities to work with different platforms, the virtual setting of the wautumn musical has created new ways for crews to be involved. This year, Slate established the editing crew, which will put together footage and audio in a multi-step process. "The band will edit together all of the band audio [...] and then, [we'll] edit together the cast vocal recordings and chorus recordings into that. And we'll mix the vocals together, and then we'll send that off to the video editors, who will then match that up with a lip-synced recording of the vocals," senior and STC editing and cast director Alexander Lake said. "It's almost going to be like producing a movie, and I think that's a really cool thing that we don't usually get the opportunity to do."

In addition, the art crew will also be adjusting to the remote setting. "The art is going to be taking on a more digital role [...] making Zoom backgrounds and then also working on animations, which is a really fun, new thing that STC hasn't gotten to work with yet," Yuste Golob said.

Junior and STC Art Director Cadence Li added, "Usually, for art crew during a typical year, we would be painting really large swathes of paint for a fairly simple background compared to what this year is probably going to demand [...] it probably will have to be more detailed because you'll be seeing it up close on a screen instead of in the background while the cast is acting."

With communication and work being conducted remotely, the art crew directors are anticipating challenges in collaborating with the members of their crew. "Since everyone is going to be working on things separately, it will be sort of difficult for the art to look consistent between everything," Li said.

To overcome the lack of physical interaction, some directors are holding bonding sessions. "I think, in terms of teamwork, it might be less, just because [...] normally we would have this one big thing that we would need to get done," senior and STC Art Director Emily Chen said. "So, to compensate [...] we have all these team bonding meetings [with] Zoom calls [and] skribblio."

While the dance crew is adjusting to the new opportunities given through a pre-recorded musical, it is also facing its own set of challenges. "We're definitely still going to be dancing as much as we usually would [...] but because everything is done over camera or over video, we're going to try to definitely experiment a lot more with camera angles and some positioning," junior and dance director Christine Lin said. "[Sophomore and dance director Christina Shen] and I [...] were trying to figure out application choreography [...] it just made me realize how much more difficult it is to be communicating movements online [...] for example, we'd both be trying to play the music, and it would glitch, [and] the video's inverted."

STC has also hosted a movie night and is planning to hold more virtual community-building initiatives where non-STC members can also become involved. For example, they are preparing a Battle of the Bands Tiny Desk Concert event. "[We hope to give] an opportunity for kids throughout Stuy [who] are interested in music [...] to come together," Yuste Golob said. "We're hoping through STC, [freshmen and] students of all grades will be able to come together again and get to work on something that they really love [and] enjoy."

With the experience and knowledge gained from hosting events and activities in the virtual setting, STC hopes to incorporate more remote events in the future. "Just by being curious and trying [...] these different formats online out, we'll really be able to build some kind of foundation for what Stuy and what Stuy activities look like remotely," Yuste Golob said. "Though this is kind of new for everyone, it'll be a really great opportunity, [...] so at least we know that we have a plan and that Stuy doesn't just disappear when we're remote."

STUYSQUAD

StuySquad plans to continue holding a showcase for performers this year as they traditionally have. Dance crews will hold rehearsals virtually, and the season will conclude with an online showcase.

This year's StuySquad show will be modified to accommodate viewers and performers during the pandemic through a webinar that will feature videos of each dance crew performing in late January. "We're hoping for the final show to be a webinar where people can pop in, watch their friends perform, [...] and still be able to support them in the chat," junior and StuySquad President-in-Training Alec Shafran said.

Most directors will be using Zoom for virtual rehearsals, but some are hoping to hold occasional in-person meetings due to the highly interactive and collaborative nature of StuySquad. "A lot of [directors] are planning on having occasional rehearsals in the park so that it's a big open space where they can remain social distance and have their mask on while having that feeling of community that StuySquad is so well known for," Shafran said.

Junior and StuySquad Flow Dawn Director Isabelle Lam is hoping to hold in-person meetings, since finding substitutions for specific light-up equipment needed for flow can be difficult, and teaching certain moves virtually is not as effective. "Since I'm leading whipping [the prop she specializes in teaching], it's much harder to substitute for a whip so for [rehearsals], it'll probably be in-person."

In addition, StuySquad hopes that dance crews will be able to record their performances at dance studios as they start to open up in New York City, while also accommodating those who cannot meet in-person. "We're planning on having the crews [...] record [at the studio] for everyone who is comfortable enough or whose parents are comfortable letting them come into the studio, and recording everyone there, and having people who don't feel the safest [...] send in videos and have that be edited together," Shafran said.

To piece together the webinar, StuySquad is considering establishing an editing team, opening up opportunity for more students to get involved. "A lot of people at Stuy who are super talented [...] don't get the chance to get involved in these kinds of extracurriculars. Having them be involved and the StuySquad community this year could be an awesome way to be a part of it," Shafran said.

The virtual format of StuySquad, however, has proved to be an obstacle in recruiting members. "One of the biggest challenges was outreach because [though] this year's a perfect chance to try out whatever new crews that someone might be interested in, at the same time, people don't really want to do it because it's over Zoom, and it's obviously not going to be the same," Shafran said. "You don't get a chance to do that, so many people were turned off [by] the new format that StuySquad is taking, so we're trying to [get] through that this year is really the best year to try out whatever you want."

In addition, though many are excited to practice and perform, some are worried about cultivating a sense of community virtually. "One of my favorite parts of StuySquad is bonding with the people in my crew which might not work so well virtually. Also, the thrill of performing in front of a live audience will be missing as well," sophomore Isabella Chow said in an e-mail interview.

Though the performance will be recorded this year, StuySquad hopes to preserve the spirit of the showcase by attempting to emulate the format and style of previous StuySquad showcases. "We're still going to have the emcee, which is one of the staples of StuySquad," Shafran said. "We're still going to try to keep the show as it would be normally as possible, just over an online format and prerecorded so it can be the best show possible."

Despite being unable to perform in front of a live audience, StuySquad is grateful for being able to continue to be active and stay connected with their club. "Despite what technological issues may come our way, the Board and I are so excited. I also know it's the last year for seniors like me to be in StuySquad, so I want this to be just as special for us," senior and StuySquad President Roshni Patel said.

STUY LEGACY

Similar to the other performing clubs, Stuy Legacy is adjusting to the pandemic by prioritizing the safety of members as they continue to practice and refine their dancing virtually.

Currently, there are no upcoming competitions for the fall season, and it is uncertain whether events will take place during the spring. "Since we don't have a competition to work for, we don't have to create [...] a performance set or anything," senior and Stuy Legacy leader Min Sun Yu said. "This season, we are still having regular meetings three times a week, and we're focusing more on just the skills that we need to practice [...] as dancers, and just having [...] a good, creative, fun time with each other."

Meetings are primarily conducted through Zoom to avoid risking the safety of those participating, which remains a priority for Stuy Legacy. "Though we're a high school team, we're pretty involved in the dance community [...] basically, what we do is kind of reflective of the community, and [in] the dance community, like every other social group, we're all just trying to get through this situation together," Yu said. "It would have been wrong to kind of promote our own dancing and do in-person things, and that would be so ignorant of the situation when everyone's just trying to be safe."

Interacting virtually has brought its share of challenges for the dance team. "Dance is [...] almost 100 percent a social activity [...] of course you can excel in that on your own and improve your skills, but it's a really different experience together. The fact that we're a team, but we're having to be separate—it feels so different," Yu said. "Dancing in a studio and being in that supportive environment where everyone is just cheering each other on, just having fun [...] a lot of that is lost in a Zoom call [...] we're literally just looking at our faces, and the timing doesn't even match, and we can't even tell if we're doing everything synchronized, so it's just really, really frustrating."

Additionally, Stuy Legacy has decided not to recruit new members for the fall season due to the difficulties of a virtual audition process. "We decided to keep it exclusive to only members from the last season just because we thought that doing auditions virtually for the fall season would be a little messy," Yu said. "We [also] wanted to focus on [...] the creative aspect." New members, however, will likely be able to join in the spring season since the group is planning on holding auditions then.

Despite the transition Stuy Legacy has had to make this season, they are continuing to dance and improve as a team. "Overall, I'd say that [in] Stuy Legacy, we're all just trying our best like everyone else is during this pandemic, but a lot has changed for sure," Yu said.

What "Voting" as High School Students Looks Like

continued from page 3

aging registered voters to vote.

Sophomore Melody Lew recognized the importance of voting after participating in the webinar. "I learned about more reasons why we should vote—not just for the sake of voting. Voting can help close equity gaps because the more people that vote, the more representation [there is]. Voting also shows which issues the candidates should focus on," she said. "I already knew the

importance of voting, but this webinar made me realize how much more important voting actually is."

The Stuyvesant Young Democrats are taking a different approach in working on fighting voter apathy through debates with other clubs of different political opinions. "We have done some things as a club as we have arranged a debate with the Young Patriots Club to voice our opinions, and we want to share this debate in the larger Facebook groups and have everyone listen, so they can see how important this

election is and the differing sides," junior and Co-President of the Stuyvesant Young Democrats Ben Hamel said in an e-mail interview.

Hamel is also a board member for the Jewish High School Students for Joe Biden, in which he works to raise awareness about how to vote during the pandemic. "We started spreading information about the way mail-in voting would work, targeting old voters, as it's [safest] for them to either do mail-in or drop off voting," he said.

Through his involvement,

Hamel has also been phone banking to constituents, during which he has encountered a variety of experiences. "I've been calling about 20 to 30 homes a week. There are many calls that are not answered, and it is rather frustrating," he said. "One time, I called an older woman [who] I thought was a swing voter, leaning Biden, and explained to her how Biden's plans would lead us out of this crisis and would keep her safer [...] I ultimately got her to say she was voting for Biden, [...] and it was a re-

ally rewarding experience for me."

Many students are civically engaged in the upcoming election, and they recognize the importance of continuing their initiatives in the future. "There is so much at stake in this election, and as young people, we could end up being worse off than our parents if we keep going in the wrong direction. Being young gives me a sense of urgency on all these issues, and I think it makes me more committed to using my voice to fight for change," Grossman said.

Features

What Scares You?

Halloween has come rolling around again; ghosts and monsters are back in season. What makes Stuyvesant students shiver in fear?

“Personally I find small rooms scary, so I guess I’m a bit claustrophobic because if I’m running from a scary monster, being cornered and unable to do anything would probably be worse than anything else.”
—Nicholas Zhong, senior

“Bugs are pretty scary. I’ve had nightmares of bugs taking over the whole world.”
—Rohan Saha, senior

“In most instances, I’m scared of heights. I’m [also] occasionally scared of the dark if my eyes can’t adjust.”
—Nikki Chen, sophomore

“The SAT.”
—Jennifer Ji, junior

“I think the college application process is pretty scary. So unexpected.”
—Sean Fung, senior

“Skinny Trump.”
—Tiffany Wu, senior

“Something that scares me is my family restaurant. Since I was 10, I have to help out in the restaurant every Saturday and on the holidays for the entire day (11 a.m. - 12 a.m.). The restaurant didn’t start out as my fear, per se, but as a child, every time I did something wrong, the punishment was to work more in the restaurant (so like if I have 5 days off from school, I might need to spend all 5 days there or just 1 day there, depending on my behavior. Or, my parents planned to give me a break for a week, but I messed up, so the break was taken away). Like how some kids are grounded in their room, I’m grounded in the restaurant. So, the fear of the restaurant kind of grew onto me. Another reason is that the family restaurant is located in a pretty shady neighborhood. One time a dude rushed into the restaurant and started shooting one of the customers. Thank god no one died, but it wasn’t a pretty scene either.”
—Leeker Lin, senior

“I think death is really high up there.”
—Cassie Fenwick, sophomore

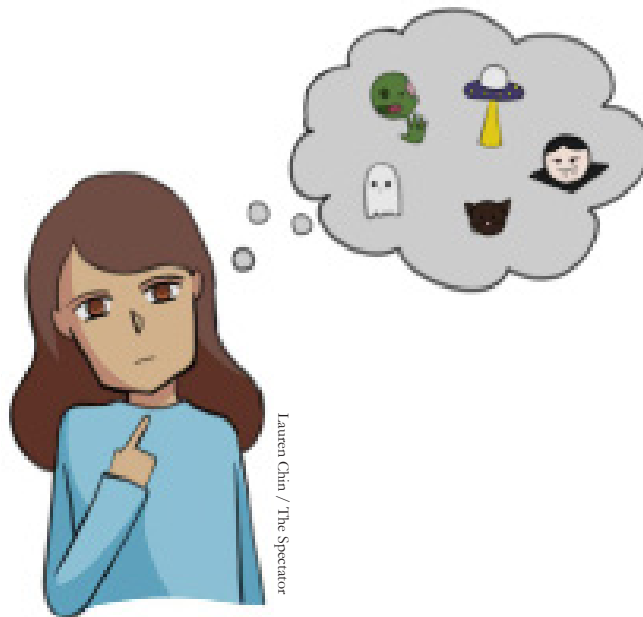
“Ah, my future. I’m afraid of disappointing my parents. They worked so hard to get where we are now, and if I don’t live up to their expectations I’m just afraid of their disappointment. I wanna be able to buy them the things they never had, as they truly deserve it. If I do not get to do that in my future, and they die without having what they wanted in their lives, I’m going to be very sad and disappointed in myself as well.”
—Sabrina Chen, junior

“Well, there’s this Spotify ad right now about an asylum, and I really don’t appreciate it playing when I’m this sleep deprived. Have they turned to scaring people into getting Spotify Prime? I think I’ll stick to singing along to Hello Expedia. Seriously though, it’s 3 a.m., and I only have my lamp on. From my computer’s camera, you just see my face and a pitch black background. The ad goes ‘eEeeEeeEeheahea’ right when I turn on Photo Booth to check on my eye bags. I need sleep.”
—Xiaoshen Ma, junior

“I’m scared of myself.”
—Anonymous, junior

“I’m scared of the dark.”
—Viana Lin, junior

“I’m concerned about the future, or should I say, our lack of one, if we don’t do anything about climate change.”
—Sasha Socolow, junior



“The fact that one day, I may end up with my parents’ biggest flaws. Was this supposed to be a light-hearted question?”
—Anonymous, sophomore

“Being a disappointment to my parents.”
—Naya Mukool, junior

“I am scared of mental degradation.”
—Victor Veytsman, junior

“Getting eaten alive by bugs.”
—Michelle Chen, senior

“Failure.”
—Sharon Liu, sophomore

“Dolls. Especially those that fall under the uncanny valley.”
—Daisy Lin, junior

“What scares me the most is the fear of going out all alone and something bad happening. I’ve been watching a lot of [‘Criminal Minds’ (2005-2020)] lately.”
—Hepzibah Srithas, sophomore

“The little man, Maurice, who lives under my bed.”
—Ian Graham, junior

“If we are talking about superficial fears, I really hate bugs. I think they are really gross, and if you look at them up close, they literally look like they don’t belong on planet Earth.”
—Sejuti Mannan, senior

“I, for real, hate ghosts so much. I don’t know if they’re real or not, but whenever it’s dark, I run up the stairs so fast. It’s embarrassing.”
—Aidan Look, junior

“What scares me is being lonely. I don’t like losing people, especially my friends and family. I hate ending calls, and I am terrified of drifting away from my friends. I am also really scared of insects, rodents, and clowns.”
—Lauren Lee, sophomore

“I’m scared of Trump winning the election.”
—Nafisa Ishra, junior

“Heights. Just heights.”
—Angie Gyrzbowski, junior

“I’m so deathly terrified of needles to the point that when I enter the doctor’s waiting room I turn pale and start to tremble. My hearing goes kind of fuzzy, and I feel cold everywhere, and I can vaguely hear my mom telling the doctor that I’m scared of shots, so he needs to do it really fast, and the doc laughs like he always does, and I know he’ll try to do it fast, but he never does it fast enough. ‘Just a little pinch,’ he always says, but it feels like he’s driving a bulldozer into my arm. The slight prickle when the needle hits is alright, but when he presses down on the plunger, I find myself thinking I’d rather be plowed down by a truck.”
—Sunny Bok, senior

“Thinking I’m muted on a Zoom call when I’m actually not.”
—Serena Chan, senior

“I was very scared of the dark when I was younger, but now things like horror movies, ghost stories, and ouija board games scare me. I am also pretty scared of wild animals like snakes and sharks. Murderers and serial killers are super real and scary in our society as well as electronic baby dolls, which are just terrifying. To be honest, though, the scariest thing of all is deadlines.”
—Jahan Kavi, senior

“Myself.”
—Nate Kim, sophomore

Features

VOICES

By ANISA GAO

As Halloween season dawns upon the Western Hemisphere, the winds grow colder, and there's a certain chill in the air you can't find during the springtime. One can almost hear the gentle whistle from the northern winds, rushing through the aging trees. As the winds die out in the bustling metropolis, there will be a mortician somewhere preparing to receive the possible bodies of racist Halloween costumes—hopefully—toilet papered houses, and fresh food posing as surrogate-wrapped candy. Without a shadow of a doubt, Halloween has always been an evolving holiday since its more morbid beginnings. But after the tumultuous start to 2020, Halloween will surely never be the same. On these frigid and dry days, I like to reflect on my past with this haunting celebration and wonder if I'll miss trading lollipops or painting whiskers on my face.

Back in 2012, I was just another girl guide—a Canadian Girl Scout—swept up on the wave of Halloween spirit. As I sat in a group circle holding my guide book, Leader Snowy Owl clapped her hands as she asked what everyone was wearing to the costume party. Like drunken college students, my troop went nuts, cheering and screaming the princesses they wanted to be or if they were allowed to bring an axe to the party. Though I was not prepared nor looking forward to this instance, I smiled brightly, nodding to my patrol as they boasted about their seamstress mothers. That night, I stared at the magnetic calendar on

my bedroom door, nervously counting the days until my troop's costume party.

There was a pile of pumpkin guts and seeds sitting in my stomach, reminding me to find a costume so I wouldn't make a fool of myself in front of my friends. Unfortunately, my parents weren't awfully keen on buying me a new costume that I'd only wear once,

convinced I would grow it or throw it away before the following year. Being a smaller-than-average first-grader, everything from my preschool years fit me, including a flimsy red dress with a spider-webbed tulle overskirt and black velvety angel sleeves, an old costume my mother bought for my second Halloween in school. It must have been part of a costume set, but I couldn't find any of the other garments or accessories. My mind assumed it was a vampire dress at the time, but I never ended up figuring out what that dress was supposed to be.

As I sat in the car, pressing my face against the ice-cold window, I looked at all the whimsical decorations dotting my neighbors' front yards. This distraction was full of bright

jack-o'-lanterns, gravestones, a giant moving cat, and hundreds of spiderwebs sprawled over shrubs. Awe turned into fondness, which turned into a twisted worry that no one was going to stop by my house—gated, tall, and hard to get into—to trick-or-treat. Though it resembled a haunted house at night, most kids skipped over it, thinking we were either asleep or out for flesh. This thought made me won-

steely gym door handle, I crept in late. The scene I stumbled upon was full of ghosts, zombies, princesses, fairies, and serial killers, all gathered around a stack of guide books, chanting their Girl Guide Promise: "I promise I will do my best to be true to myself, my beliefs, and Canada; I will take action for a better world and respect the Brownie Law." I shivered, not knowing if my chills were from the blasting air conditioning or the creepy air that surrounded our troop as we all rose up and dispersed into our own ritual circles.

Sitting in the Elves group, I absentmindedly listened to my group leader and stared as they handed out lollipops and themed playing cards. It seemed as if no one else noticed the shuttered blinds, opened back door, and spilled fruit punch as they exchanged their Smarties and Kit Kats. Were they all hypnotized by a soul-sucking enchantress, or had their brains been gobbled up? I wasn't sure, but I knew that if

I stuck out, something was going to come out to get me, the conscious head in a sea of mindlessness. Sighing as someone asked what I was, I accidentally told them I was a witch. As Leader Brown Owl came around with a box of chip bags, I looked behind to see nothing peeking out of the gym divider and grabbed some Doritos.

I woke up the next morning, dizzy and confused about what happened the night before. With my pillowcase

soaked in sweat and my floors covered in Maynards wrappers, I sank into my mattress and stared up at the ceiling. Through the window shone a bright white light, and I smiled, happy to skip a day of school. Thinking there must have been something watching over me, I asked my bedroom ceiling for a new costume and my health to go out again on the next frigid Hallows Eve. The evil spirit in the air listened and granted me four new cavities and a high fever the next Halloween, leaving me in my pajamas to hand out Sour Patch Kids to my schoolmates from my house. Something inside me danced as I watched more and more kids stop by with their garbage bags and baskets, choking that dying excitement to wear my flimsy red witch dress.

As an eighth-grader, I sat in the middle of my home-room, smiling at the sight of a classmate with glued-on fur and fangs. She giggled with her plainly dressed friends as the boys snickered behind her; the next period, I couldn't help but stare at her as the Halloween fever took over her bones, overwhelming the will to finish her math worksheet. I wondered where that old dress was after my father dropped off all my past costumes at Value Village back in Canada. My hands couldn't help but sketch out a layered, velvet black formal dress with a giant cape during social studies as I let my mind daydream my perfect, imaginary Halloween costume. Unfortunately, the dream was cut short when my teacher called on me, asking me to pay attention to the 19th-century prohibition.

Halloween Fever



Rachel Chuong / The Spectator

der if the giant, sparkly spider and neon purple webs were enough to draw people in. As we pulled over to my school, I unbuckled my seat belt and hopped out of the car, stepping over the wrapper of a Rocket. Hand clutched against the

Taking the SAT: A Remix

By RACHEL VILDMAN and JENNIFER JI

Along with the many unwanted surprises from the year 2020, far too many Stuyvesant students have received the notification from the College Board reading "Important Information About Your SAT." When opening the e-mail, they are met with the frustrating news that their SAT has been canceled. With over hundreds of SAT testing centers closing all around the world, only a small portion of students were able to take the SAT since the start of the coronavirus outbreak. While the format of the test remained identical to previous years, the same could not be said about the overall experience of taking the exam.

Junior Andrea Khoury was one of the lucky ones who was able to take the exam during the pandemic. Still, she can relate to the despair felt by many others when receiving a cancellation email. "I took my SAT at Saint Joseph's High School in Trumbull, Connecticut," Khoury shared. "I had signed up to take it both in Brooklyn and New Jersey [before], but they got canceled due to site closures." Re-signing up for different test centers on the same

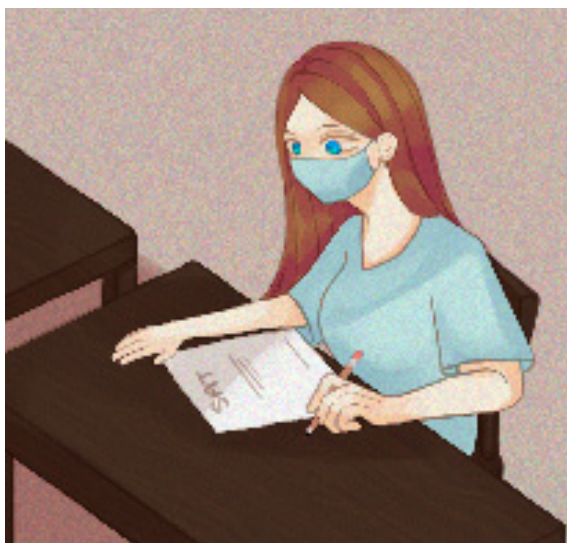
date is a common occurrence, especially with recent surges of coronavirus cases in the tri-state area. While students aren't allowed to take the test in the event of a test center shutdown, according to the College Board, they would receive a refund of the SAT test fee with the option to select another school or take the test on another day.

While many testing centers in NYC have been closed, many remain open in areas with fewer COVID-19 cases. When choosing her testing center, junior Anika Amin took this into consideration and chose a location where there tended to be fewer cancellations. "I looked up the closest available SAT centers to me outside of New York state on [the] College Board [website] and selected the first one that showed up," she recalled. "I knew from friends that if I chose a school in Manhattan, it would have been canceled."

Senior Geoffrey Li took a slightly different approach when signing up for his SAT. Li waited until mid-August to sign up for his September 26 SAT in Bellmore, Long Island. "I chose

the location because almost every location in NY was full, but I went to the list and manually looked through each school. [I]t turned out that Bellmore was only 30 minutes away, and it had minimal spots left," Li

Ivy Jiang / The Spectator



shared.

Junior Alicia Yu had a vastly different experience from Li. Yu took the SAT at Holy Cross High School located in Flushing, Queens. She shared, "I signed up around three months in advance, and I chose the location because it was simply closest to where I live."

While the registration process was very different for most

students, the test administration was similar. Li, who had taken the SAT before, shared, "It wasn't that much different, besides the fact that they had you wear a mask and checked your temperature as you walked in."

Amin recounted her experience similarly, saying, "We had to stand in line outside the school, and as we filed in they checked our temperature and did other precautions against corona."

However, the new safety precautions "didn't feel like a burden of any sort" according to Khoury, and made most students feel safe while taking the SAT. "I definitely felt safe. Everyone sat so far apart. The necessary precautions were taken. The new rules were totally fair and acceptable," Khoury said.

Amin shared that view, saying, "I felt pretty safe, and I think [SAT administrators] took all the necessary precautions."

While both Amin and Khoury's testing locations took all crucial precautions, the same could not be said about

Yu's testing center. Though Yu's center at Holy Cross High School is located in New York City, which continues to have a high number of coronavirus cases, it surprisingly had fewer precaution measures than other centers outside New York, such as Khoury's school in Connecticut. Yu shared, "I definitely feel that [the administrators at Holy Cross High School] should've done temperature checks and required stricter social distancing." Yu was also concerned about the number of people in the testing room: "They could have had [fewer] students placed in the room because there were quite a lot of people in our room, and the desks weren't spaced out a lot," she explained.

Ultimately, this testing process is new for all parties involved and both the College Board as well as Stuyvesant students are still trying to figure out new ways to adapt. For some students, that may mean taking on a strategy similar to Li's—booking a test last-minute—and for others it might, unfortunately, mean opening a test cancellation e-mail. Looking ahead, though, hopefully more Stuyvesant students will have an opportunity to take a test in a safe environment.

Does Your Workout Work Out?

By ISABEL CHING

In a world filled with so much movement, excitement, and change, it's difficult to imagine a place without physical activity. Think of TikToks of teens waking up at 5:00 in the morning to go on a two-mile run before school and then going to swim practice. Think of YouTube videos of celebrities training for hours on end with trainers to make sure they stay fit for the runway and of the twice-weekly gym classes at school not too long ago that have been replaced with none other than the beloved Zoom. From running to playing a sport to going to the gym to hanging out with friends, exercise is everywhere, whether we like it or not.

But the coronavirus has changed that prevalence. Gone are the days of in-person workout sessions and meetups—health regulations make it nearly impossible to continue exercising like before. School gym class has been reduced to Zoom calls and yoga stretches. Parks only recently opened. So, most of us, as expected, have remained cooped up in our homes, awaiting the day when we finally find the courage to crawl out from under our covers and go for a run or hit the gym. But, alas, not all Stuyvesant students are the norm—the dedicated have braved the formidable pandemic conditions to work out.

For senior Mohammad Hamzah, these workouts take the form of calisthenics strength and cardio workouts. Hamzah, who has remained committed to his routine throughout the quarantine (no small feat considering this quarantine has stretched almost eight months), finds that these daily workouts are very positive for him and have been an amazing outlet during these uncertain times. He explained, "There's no way to stay sane during the pandemic

without finding an excuse to spend at least an hour out each day...Being stuck at home is extremely tough both mentally and physically. I feel like if I didn't do this my body would deteriorate."

Hamzah's thoughts were echoed by sophomore Isabella Jia. "I'm motivated to work out because I want to stay fit and healthy. I also did ab workouts consistently last year on the soccer team at Stuy, and I didn't want to slack on working out, so I decided to continue doing some form of the ab workouts to maintain a sense of normalcy," she wrote in an e-mail interview.

But the desire to maintain a sense of balance and normalcy is not the only thing that has driven students to work out. Other people have been inspired by the fit folks around them. In the case of freshman Aareeb Jamil, it is a bet he has made with his friend that motivates his workouts: "I have to get abs by December 5 or he gets to practice his Muay Thai strikes on me. It's made me a lot more consistent with the ab workouts." He elaborated on the effect of his changing body on his morale: "Abs are more aesthetic than functional, but I think that if I can manage to attain a six-pack, it'll motivate me to be more consistent overall."

Like Jamil, sophomore Janna Wang has also found inspiration in a fellow classmate. "I exercised regularly with a friend at the beginning of quarantine. We would follow workout routine videos together, but personally, it served more as a consistent way to socialize and do an activity with a friend rather than being a way to stay healthy," Wang said. She found that her time working out with her friend was "pretty positive," because it helped her maintain a routine and spend time with her friends in the process. But these workouts have

since stopped because Wang simply no longer has time in her schedule. She doesn't miss it, though. "Not working out doesn't have a negative effect... because there are things I prioritize more. I think that what stopped me from continuing was just the fact that I don't necessarily enjoy it enough to go out of my way to make time for it," she explained.

Friends are not the only place inspiration can be found, though. Physical education teacher Rebeca Morel-Wernham has found motivation in her family: "My father is going to be 87 soon and still manages to take long walks, do push up and dips at home, and even some shadow boxing." She elaborated on the positive effects she has seen firsthand: "It is so important to him to work out, and I see how that has been such a positive impact on his life and longevity. Seeing the impact on his quality of life motivates me to do the same." Even though she has a toddler, Morel-Wernham has continued to do yoga, running, walks, and some obstacle courses from her home and has found that completing workouts has left her feeling "accomplished" and with a "renewed sense of energy."

For others, however, working out is about more than just staying healthy and fit. In the case of junior Lucinda Bryce, the top scorer for the Stuyvesant girls' soccer team last season, it is her ambition to become a college soccer player that fuels her desire to work out. "That dream [to become

a college soccer player] alone requires a certain level of commitment to both fitness and skill, which is a lot of work that can feel unrewarding at times," she said. "However, as I continue to invest time into it, I can see improvement in the bigger picture, which is gratifying." Bryce's workout requires commitment. She plays soccer for around an hour every day, which she supplements with ab workouts and running on days when she doesn't have a scheduled soccer practice with her club team.

By her own estimations, she runs about three to four miles every week and spends upwards of 12 hours a week playing soccer.

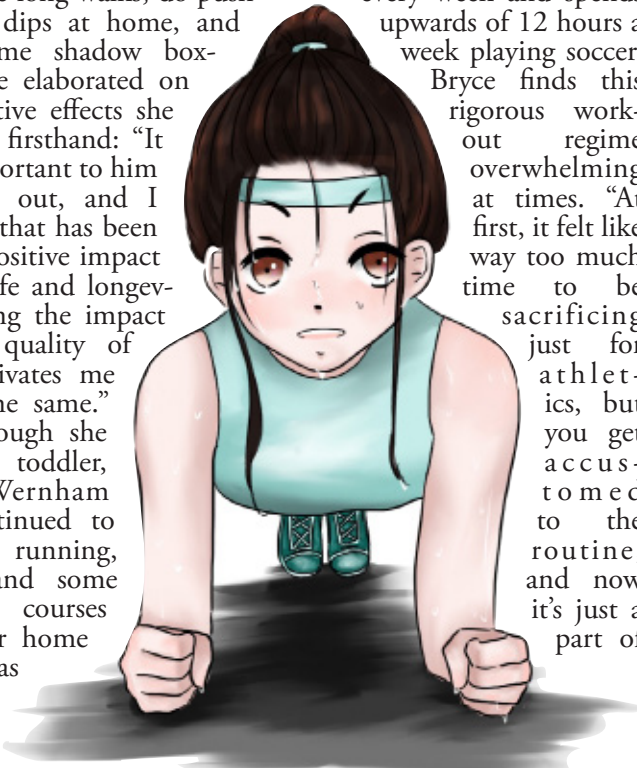
Bryce finds this rigorous workout regime overwhelming at times. "At first, it felt like way too much time to be sacrificing just for athletics, but you get accustomed to the routine, and now it's just a part of

out may seem daunting, but it's fine when you actually do it. I struggled in the beginning since I wasn't used to it, but by staying consistent, you'll get used to it."

Jamil echoed Jia's thoughts on the importance of consistency and even provided a helpful tip for when it comes to staying focused. "I recommend listening to music while you work out. It helps me focus and takes my mind off of other things. It gets me into the moment."

Bryce has a more cautious approach to working out. A seasoned athlete, she finds that there are pros and cons to constantly exercising. "In quarantine, I think it's great to stay healthy, and working out can be a great use of your time. However, I would be really careful. There have definitely been times during quarantine that I've found myself working out for the wrong reasons, or working myself too hard," she explained. "Working out shouldn't be the focus of your day, or your top priority, in my opinion. It's really easy to become obsessed with the wrong parts of it, instead of just focusing on being healthy."

Not all of us are as dedicated as Bryce, however. Quarantine has been difficult to navigate, and many of us have grown accustomed to routines that barely involve leaving the house. So, for those of us struggling to find the motivation to get up and get out, Morel-Wernham offers her take: "My advice to students is to be safe, take advantage of your resources and work out during this pandemic. We are lucky to live in a city with so many bike lanes, waterfront trails, beautiful parks, and even exercise parks that are free for us to utilize." She continued: "You will feel so accomplished after finishing a good workout, less stressed, and ready to take on more."



Christina Jiang / The Spectator

my day. Working out really helps me clear my head," she explained. "It's almost like hitting a reset button on my day."

But not everybody is as motivated as Bryce or Hamzah. For those who may be struggling to get into a quarantine workout routine, Jia offers words of wisdom: "I think everyone should definitely try to work out, even if it's 10 minutes each day. I know working

"You're Still on Mute"

By ELLEN PEHLIVANIAN

After just two years of teaching, One might think that participating in class from the comfort of our own homes would inspire increased confidence and participation. After all, talking through a screen and clicking a blue button instead of raising your physical hand yield nothing to lose. However, embarrassment can be encountered anywhere, regardless of physical proximity. And many students have learned that the hard way.

Junior Krista Proteasa shared a humiliating moment that happened during math teacher Gary Rubenstein's pre-calculus office hours. "I was asking a question about one of the DeltaMath assignments, [...] and the only way that I could get him to see the question was if he made me co-host to share my screen. So he made me co-host and I

thought I was sharing the DeltaMath tab. [T]urns out I ended up sharing my Instagram feed," Proteasa said. "So the remainder of the three people

experience as a funny one. She jokingly added, "Honestly, I was considering dropping out in that one singular moment. I was re-evaluating all my life

"I [realized] that I really suck at technology. It took me a couple of Zoom classes to understand the mute buttons. Like, I would have myself unmuted and have all of my classmates hearing my sister screaming."

—Debolina Sen Kunda, junior

that were in there just saw a bowl of oatmeal. There was no context to this bowl of oatmeal on my feed, but I was so confident [that I was sharing the question tab]." Proteasa felt exposed and embarrassed, but also couldn't help but view the

choices." Proteasa also learned a couple things from the encounter, reflecting: "Now I'm definitely going to be careful with double-checking and triple-checking whatever screen I'm sharing because I do not need that again."

A senior who wishes to remain anonymous got the fright of a lifetime after his teacher's vocal malfunction during an online class. "[Economics teacher Ellen] Schweitzer was speaking, and her voice suddenly became demonic and echoey. It lasted for five seconds the first time, but it scared the living daylight out of some people," he said. He continued on, explaining Schweitzer's second attempt to speak. "The second time it happened, she stared at the camera with a look of defeat while we were all laughing, and she reached for a pair of headphones, which cut out her audio completely," he said jokingly. He concluded on a heartwarming yet unsettling note: "We [love] Ms. Schweitzer, but I'd give anything in the world to hear her demon voice again." At least the moment had some value other than being horrifying, as it was

the perfect precursor to Halloween.

Freshman Unique Zhang experienced multiple Zoom failures over the course of this year. "One time in Art Appreciation, [...] we were talking about this one specific picture someone took of a statue. Behind it, it had brass rods, and I made a comment saying that it looked like spaghetti. [M]y mic was unmuted, and [the teacher] asked me if it was thick or thin. It was kind of embarrassing for me," she expressed. "Another thing that happened during band was that one girl speeded immensely and was out of speed on everything, but she played all the notes right." Zhang then empathetically recalled the teacher's reaction, stating, "He was like, 'Nope, you're switching to French [h]orn,' and that poor girl said, 'I don't

continued on page 10

Features

Spooky Season: Stuyvesant Edition

Halloween season is right around the corner, and it's that time of year when fake ghosts, creepy sculptures, and other spooky trinkets decorate homes and businesses. Despite the quarantine, Halloween festivities are still in sight, ranging from socially distanced trick-or-treating to online events. To add some excitement to this well-known "spooky season," we've interviewed Stuyvesant students about their spooky experiences and beliefs, ranging from supernatural experiences to paranormal events.

Religious Ties to the Supernatural

Paranormal and supernatural ideas have been integrated into the human experience for centuries, but each person often has a different opinion about what constitutes these phenomena. Some believe that people's perception of certain phenomena arises from the need to explain the unknown. Senior Fahima Miajee described her views of these events, noting that "paranormal phenomena are things that can't be explained and therefore, are turned into thrilling stories." In her experience, unexplainable events often have, to some extent, rational explanations. In terms of her personal beliefs, Miajee mentioned her religious belief in certain supernatural beings such as jinn, which are creatures of fire known for making deals with humans, and angels made of light. "Aside from belief in the supernatural based on my faith, I have zero belief in other supernatural beings, whether in my own Bengali culture or western society," Miajee stated.

Senior Bushra Islam similarly touched upon these religious values, as she mentioned her experiences and upbringing surrounding the existence of Islamic entities and creatures. In fact, "religion and the supernatural often go hand in hand," she explained. "From a young age, I've heard stories about jinns, Dajjal, and other creatures that encompass the capability to possess humans or animals, that have contributed to my fear and belief in the supernatural."

Influences From Multiculturalism

Cultural folklore often makes its way into childhood in the form of tales and stories. In South Asian culture, especially from the Bengal region, specific stories often have themes of "black magic, tantric arts, witches, roaming spirits with malicious intents, and demons," Islam recounted. When asked to give a specific example, Islam referred to the scariest story she ever heard. Her grandmother told her about "the lady with long hair [who] sits in trees and in the sunset, attacks those that come under it." This superstitious story has stuck to Islam, who heard it at age six, as she is still scared of going under large trees and avoids them when she can.

Though students' paranormal beliefs are often shaped by their personal origins, Miajee stressed that her personal perspective is influenced by a combination of international cultures. To start, her interactions with Western culture have combined with her Bengali one. Growing up, she heard stories of Rakkhosh (man-eating giants) in the woods as much as she read and watched tales of the Brothers Grimm, Walt Disney, and Hans Christian Andersen. In addition, Miajee learned about both pujas in Hinduism and Santa Claus during Christmas. She believes it's impossible to talk about the paranormal strictly in terms of a single culture and the local myths that it carries. "Globalization has made our supernatural beliefs immensely multicultural," she concluded.

The Culture of Horror Filmmaking

Cinematic culture has had one of the largest influences on students, instilling fear around topics that otherwise would not hold the same meaning. Haunted houses are classic examples of this impact. One of Islam's favorite movies is "The Conjuring," which is about a haunted farmhouse that is taken over by a supernatural entity. Part of why the movie is so terrifyingly terrific is its believable nature and connections to reality. Islam found herself personally concerned about the wellbeing of the characters.

Unknown entities and the bloody destruction they create aren't the only categorically paranormal topics that horror filmmakers use. Miajee cites the film "Brimstone" as the scariest movie she's watched, recalling that it was hard for her to fall asleep at night after watching it. It's about a vindictive preacher who hunts a wrongly accused woman turned fugitive. Brimstone plays on the loss of human emotion and exposes a dark, hidden side to human nature.

Frightening Stories From Our Students

Outside the screen, students have experienced some spook in their day-to-day lives as well through unexplained, possibly supernatural experiences. Islam recounted the "absolute scariest, most frightening, [and] unforgettable night" in her life. She was in Bangladesh in 2017 staying at a house that already seemed scary because of its enormous, haunted house-like size. Islam slept with her sister that night after everyone locked their rooms and settled in. The clock had just struck 3:00 a.m. when Islam's sister awoke to perform the morning Fajr prayer. Instead of carrying on with the prayer, Islam's sister whispered her name and nudged her awake before turning her face and panicking about another presence in the room. In the faint light, Islam recalled seeing "a long black shadow" that lasted for a moment before disappearing. Though she dismissed the shadow as a mere deception of the eye, she felt restless thinking of the possibility that it was actually there.

Senior Nicholas Zhong recalled a recent encounter during an outdoor walk in which he felt on-edge because of an unhuman presence. "There was this one time when I [...] came across some abandoned train tracks. It was in the late afternoon, right before nighttime, and I noticed three figures following me in the distance," Zhong narrated. "I couldn't really tell, but they were kind of unnerving—it was something about those three guys in the distance that was just creepy," he concluded.

Miajee also mentioned a similarly unnerving experience in her own childhood memories in a remote location. "One time when my father was back from New York, we took a trip as a family to my dad's childhood village [...] [W]e were on a dirt road with no street lights," Miajee remembered. "I could tell that we were also right next to a graveyard, [...] and for some reason, the car was stalling. I think I held my breath the entire time and prayed until the car left the dirt road and we could see streetlights again."



Christina Jiang / The Spectator

Present and Lurking Fears

In terms of supernatural or paranormal fears, Zhong mentioned his specific aversion to possession or losing control of his body. "You can't control yourself—you're not 'you' anymore—and the feeling of something—ghosts, spirits, anything—crawling under my skin is not something I'm a big fan of," he explained. In more everyday terms, however, Zhong described his more common fear, stating, "The creepiest thing for me right now, though, is when I think I see something in the corner of my eye, and there's nothing there. It's probably irrational but still a little disturbing."

Miajee similarly described her present fear of jinn, noting, "I have heard a lot about jinn activities and seen some evidence of them, which is why I constantly mumble prayers to repel evil at times. Jinn activities look a lot like ghost activities, so that's the only paranormal thing that might scare me."

Though the true existence of the paranormal or supernatural is met with differing opinions, the influence that they extend on cultures and humanity itself is undeniable. As Miajee stated: "A lot of human experience is grounded in tales and accounts of paranormal activities, and they are the basis of primal human fears, cultural superstitions, and spiritual beliefs ... Scientific discoveries have somewhat extinguished some of the irrational fears that human beings live with, but I feel like people like that fear. Fear makes people feel alive, and no matter how 'rational' society becomes, people still seek fear and make up unexplained phenomena that can produce fear." This search for fear, in fact, could be what makes horror movies and horror-based genres so popular. And while quarantine may hinder traditional Halloween activities, it may be festive to indulge in some fear, whether through paranormal films or supernatural stories. Miajee echoed this sentiment and described how her own fear has influenced her. "In my world, I live with the knowledge that there are forces beyond my control and which scientists still can't explain," Miajee explained. "While sometimes that produces fear in me, it also can be reassuring to know that the human race is not alone in this universe, that our existence has a deeper meaning and this world has a hidden side."

Final Thoughts on the 2020 Election

By **CHRISTINA PAN**

2020 is a year for the history books.

From a deadly pandemic to a global justice movement for Black lives and all things in between, this year has catapulted the U.S.A. into an unprecedented era. Over 220,000 Americans have died from the coronavirus; millions across the globe have united under a cry for overdue social justice. With each passing day, it seems almost as if the magnitude of the world's problems is so great that events that would have made front pages in ordinary times take to the sidelines. Even in our own neighborhoods, the way we carry out our lives has been fundamentally altered; it's almost as if every individual needs to be a Titan, or an Atlas, each carrying a piece of the world on their shoulders.

2020 has essentially redefined global politics and history. It is a year that, by scholarly standards, is so notable that its events could be formed into the document-based questions of future history curriculums.

Yet it seems that future history students will have to sit through one final chapter. With November 3, 2020 fast approaching, there are ever-increasing tensions within and between all parties. Junior Student A, who was one of the many students who chose to retain anonymity due to the confidential nature of political opinions, wrote about their political opinions in an e-mail interview. "At Stuyvesant, most people automatically think it's a given that you hate [Trump], or you're just really leftist. I personally think that the first couple of years of Trump's time in [office] [were] just fine. I wouldn't say I ever supported or didn't support [Trump], but with knowledge

of 2020, nominating him was a big fiasco on the GOP's part," they wrote. "Unless the current White House finds an alternative to what it's been doing, I don't think it's a good idea. America is as stable as an earthquake right now, and selecting a new face to represent it is extremely risky."

Other students feel more hopeful about the impact of a new presidency on America's current status quo. For senior Student B, electing a new person in office will reflect the state of America's current social unrest and need for change. "I'm generally optimistic about the future of America. Trump is a bit of a dumpster fire, but he's very likely to be out soon," Student B said. "Biden isn't the greatest president. On race issues he's sparse on concrete action, [and] on foreign policy he's a bit hawkish, but I think he'll move the ball forward. I'm optimistic because we're finally rounding a corner on climate change, social awareness of race issues, and new economic schools of thought surrounding stimulus and government spending."

For others, however, the 2020 election—and its candidates—is just one part of a larger puzzle. "Honestly, I've been numb to the ills of America for a long time, so I find it difficult to get angry," sophomore Levi Simon said. "I'm just tired when the other option is also a bigoted hack, just less so, which is why I'm not exactly spending my time phone banking or writing postcards. I want the DNC and America to do better in the future. Hopefully, [when] Biden is elected they'll realize what the solution to this country's problems are and move past neoliberalism."

Much like Simon, freshman Jennifer Ye believes that each candidate's personal his-

tory reflects strongly on their potential incumbency. "There is no doubt we should be settling for Biden this current election because just to simply put it, Trump doesn't give a [EXPLETIVE] about anyone besides himself and his green dollar bills."

Others believe that Trump's presidency represents the out-

the opposition (to the point where he thinks they should be dead.) He's rolled back environmental regulations and tried to attack parts of our democracy in almost every sense of the world."

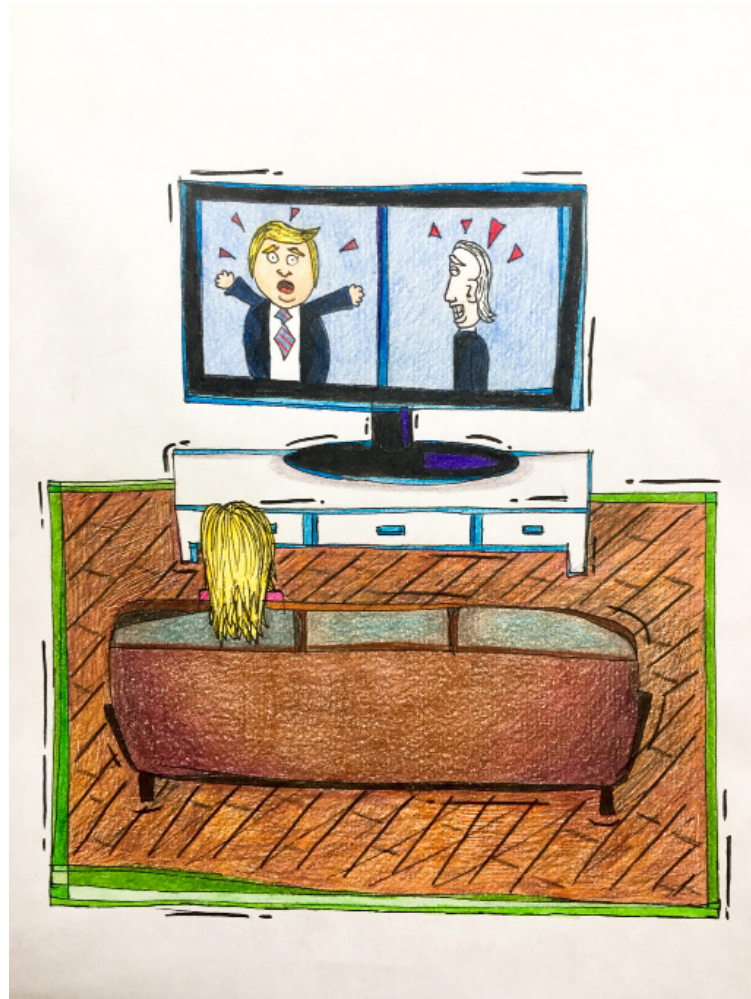
As sophomore Sayeb Khan said, "The state of democracy and its inherent flaws have never been put on display so

that profited off the backs of enslaved people, fought a bloody war just to see them endure years and years of systemic oppression, [...] and did not let people marry who they love (you don't decide to be gay!) up until five years ago." The final straw, in Student C's view, was electing Trump. "We voted for [Trump], who claimed climate change was a hoax, sat idly while white police officers [continued] to murder Black people and get away with it, and trie[d] to control what women [choose] to do with their bodies," they said.

Yet for many, it's not just the Trump administration that reflects a broken system and history. It's also some Trump supporters who continue to give the administration power. "[Trump supporters] act like fanatics," Adeishvili said. "They treat [Trump] like a god and they raise him onto this pedestal. Trump promises to bring us back to a former glory. What former glory? What glory did America have when it spent most of its history destabilizing democracies, supporting fascists, and destabilizing communities even on their own land?"

The final word goes to both Adeishvili and Student C. "We are living in a political nightmare," Adeishvili declared. "Trump isn't a virus amongst a usually perfect system. He is the symptom of the diseases that have been plaguing this country for years. Some radical change needs to be made, or else again our democracy will be under threat by people like Trump."

Student C, drawing from the popular TV series "Avatar: The Last Airbender," had one final insight: "In the wise words of Avatar Kyoshi, 'only justice will bring peace.'"



Anna Ast / The Spectator

puts of an intrinsically broken political system. "The fact that we somehow managed to vote [Trump] into office should be an indicator of how this system is a mess," sophomore Luca Adeishvili said. "[Trump] has refused to condemn white supremacist groups, made a lot of his rhetoric targeted against certain marginalized groups (Muslims, immigrants) and to

explicitly."

Much like Adeishvili, freshman Student C strongly believes that the Trump administration has helped perpetuate a standard that reflects America's own contentious origins. "Why don't more people realize how disgusting America is?" Student C asked. "We stole this land from indigenous people and tossed them aside, established an economy

"You're Still on Mute"

continued from page 9

think my parents will allow it.' He said it wasn't her parents' or her decision. [I]t was his decision [...] [I]t was so terrible and intimidating."

An anonymous junior had a humiliating run-in with her sister—to the front row view of her entire class. "During Spanish class, our teacher asked us [a question]. No one was going to answer, so my teacher was looking for people to call on, and my six-year-old sister walked in with her underwear on," she mused. "Out of coincidence, I was called on to answer the question," she mortifyingly recalled, leaving the rest to the imagination of the reader. She clearly endured other memorable moments during remote learning, resignedly adding, "Man, this stuff probably won't ever end for me."

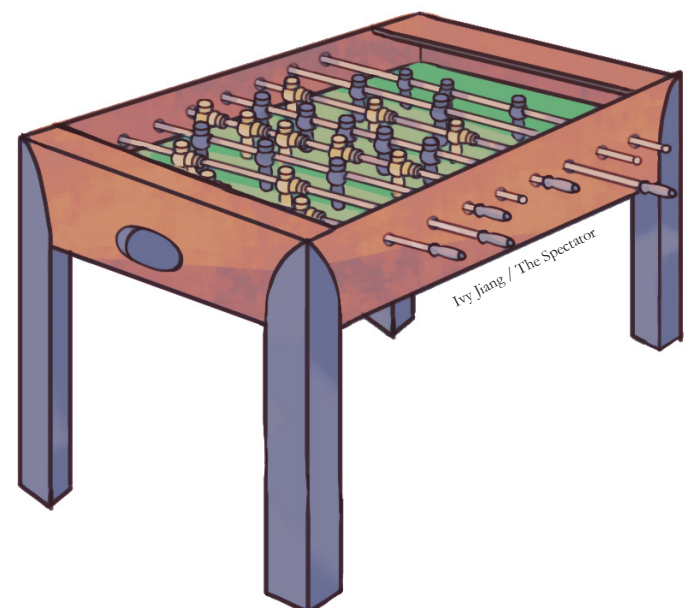
Junior Debolina Sen Kunda, contrary to Zhang and Proteas, shared a Zoom failure that was a moment of epiphany as much as it was one of humiliation. "When my teachers would ask us to raise our hands to answer a question for extra credit, I never got called on for any extra credit and thought that all of my teachers hated me. I practically had this idea until today during my last period when I mistakenly clicked 'Participants' and saw the 'Raise Hand' feature," she described. Upon seeing the function, though, Kunda realized that she had been unaware of how to raise her hand in the virtual environment. Struggling with the raise hand button was not Kunda's only difficulty: "I [realized] that I really suck at technology. It took me a couple of Zoom classes to understand the mute buttons.

Like, I would have myself unmuted and have all of my classmates hearing my sister screaming," she said. Similar to Proteasa, Kunda used the experience to reflect and learn from, concluding, "This happened so many times already that whenever I talk, I stop in the middle just to see if I am unmuted."

It seems like Zoom can be just as embarrassing as a classroom. Otherwise unnoticeable mistakes in class are amplified, and the awkward silence that follows these moments is equally uncomfortable. Whereas normally, a couple of people would let out a laugh and the class would move on, students can't exactly unmute and then mute themselves to laugh, thus making those awkward experiences even more memorable.

Dead Art

"Due to the pandemic, the PSAL has launched a new sport for students to participate in: foosball."



Ivy Jiang / The Spectator

Features

Better Watch Out! Stuylooween Rises From the Dead

By ANGELA CAI and JENNIFER JI

Halloween is right around the corner! In the midst of quarantine loneliness, students may feel that celebrating Stuylooween is the last thing on their minds. To bring back the spooky spirit, here are some of the most iconic costumes students and teachers have to offer and a look at what's to come this Halloween.

Computer Science Teacher Samuel Konstantinovich



Konstantinovich and Dyrland-Weaver as Sith/Jedi

Konstantinovich as Professor K-OS, an office supply villain.



If you've ever seen the Stuyvesant computer science department on Halloween, you know they always aim to impress. Computer science teacher Samuel Konstantinovich is no exception. As a Stuyvesant alum, he credits his commitment to dressing up for Halloween to his past Stuyvesant teachers who would put on a costume every year. "I would like to follow their lead for as long as I am able," Konstantinovich explained.

As for his plans this Halloween...that shall remain top secret.



Computer Science Department as Star Trek characters

Junior Emma Wong in Sophomore Year as a Hotdog

There are certain students that stand out in a crowd, and junior Emma Wong is definitely one of them! Known for extravagant, full-suit Halloween costumes, Wong dressed up as a clown freshman year and a hotdog sophomore year. She finds joy in dressing up for Halloween from her peers' funny reactions. "It's really fun to get into the spirit of the holiday, and it's cool when people are entertained by my costumes," she said.



Juniors Ellie Yu and Melody Lin as Bubble Tea

Since their freshman year, dressing up in matching Halloween costumes has been a tradition between juniors Melody Lin and Ellie Yu. In their freshman year, Lin dressed up as a bear, and Yu dressed up as a reindeer. "We thought it was super cute and comfy," Yu said.

During their sophomore year, Lin and Yu decided to opt for a costume that would resonate more with them and the rest of Stuyvesant: bubble tea. With cylindrical protrusions sticking out of their headbands and fuzzy black circles attached to their shirts, Lin and Yu made quite the bubble tea duo.

Part of the reason Lin and Yu chose this costume was that the materials needed to create the costume were easily accessible. "We just attached a toilet paper roll onto a headband and cut out and glued the store-bought felt onto our shirts," Yu explained.

The only trouble they encountered was in the makings of the costumes. Each individual circle had to be cut out individually and hot glue-gunned onto their shirts. "The process was very tedious," Lin said. "But it was necessary because we wanted to make sure it didn't fall off."

Additionally, due to the wide variety of milk tea flavors ranging from taro milk tea to melon milk tea, choosing a bubble tea flavor or shirt color was a difficult choice. Ultimately, Lin wore a purple shirt to represent taro milk tea and Yu wore an orange shirt to represent Thai milk tea.



Better Watch Out! Stuyloreen Rises From the Dead

Mathematics Teacher Gary Rubinstein

Decked out in a rainbow duct-taped costume and rolling around a cart full of assorted candy, mathematics teacher Gary Rubinstein was a bizarre sight standing in line at Whole Foods last Halloween. That wasn't the first time Rubinstein created buzz with his costumes, though. After dressing up for the past 16 years, Rubinstein is famous for his over-the-top and creative Halloween costumes, which range from a Citi Bike to a college rejection letter.

However, Rubinstein hasn't always been crafting up the elaborate costumes he's known for today. When he first started teaching at Stuyvesant in 2003, Rubinstein simply dressed up as physicist and mathematician Albert Einstein. It was only after seeing former computer science coordinator and "king of teacher costumes" Mike Zamansky paint his body green for his costume as the Hulk that Rubinstein decided to step up his game.

The following year, Rubinstein dressed up as the fictional character Ali G, played and created by actor and comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, who was on the popular show "Da Ali G Show" at the time. "Students really reacted to this costume, and this [response] started my string of 16 years of Halloween costumes," Rubinstein said in an e-mail interview.

Rubinstein's favorite costume was last year's, when he dressed up as the Whole Foods screen that tells customers where to line up at the register. Since all of his costumes are handmade, it took Rubinstein considerable effort to construct the costume, and the process included programming an iPad app to stimulate the changing of numbers. "I also threw in some math concepts like 'register Pi,'" he said.

Though Rubinstein's costume was well-received among the staff and students, customers at Whole Foods were less impressed. "I was covered head to toe in rainbow duct tape and had an iPad screen on my chest, and not one person there batted an eye," he described.

From an artistic standpoint, another one of Rubinstein's favorite costumes would be a Citi Bike. Rubinstein went through several iterations of the design, which consisted of wheels and a toy character on the bike. "I'm really proud of that one," he said. "It was instantly recognizable and something that nobody else thought to go as."

Additionally, since Rubinstein is a mathematics teacher, he strives to incorporate aspects of mathematics into his costumes. Rubinstein dressed up as the math concept FOIL in 2010, a mnemonic for the standard method of multiplying two binomials. "The costume was tough because if people can't figure it out, then it isn't considered a good costume," he explained. "But it has to be hard enough so that people feel satisfaction when they do figure it out, and that one went over very well."

Despite the coming Halloween season being remote, Rubinstein is determined to preserve his 16-year tradition of dressing up for Halloween. So far, he's decided on three options.

The second runner-up for this year's Halloween costume was dressing up as a COVID-19 vaccine and creating a syringe costume. "I thought about it, but I feel like other people might be doing that also," he said.

Similarly, the first runner-up costume idea was dressing up as comedian Sarah Cooper, who is famous on the short-video app TikTok for lip-synching President Donald Trump. "I was going to dress up as her and have a speaker play Trump's voice, and I would be lip-synching," he said. "The only challenging part of the costume would be having to memorize some of Trump's interviews."

As for the winner among the three options, "I'm going to leave it as a surprise what I actually go as," he said. "I hope I don't let everyone down. It is a lot of pressure I put on myself, and I've set up some high expectations and now I've got to live up to them. But when a costume gets a good reaction—like, for instance, the Whole Foods costume last year, that makes it all worth it."

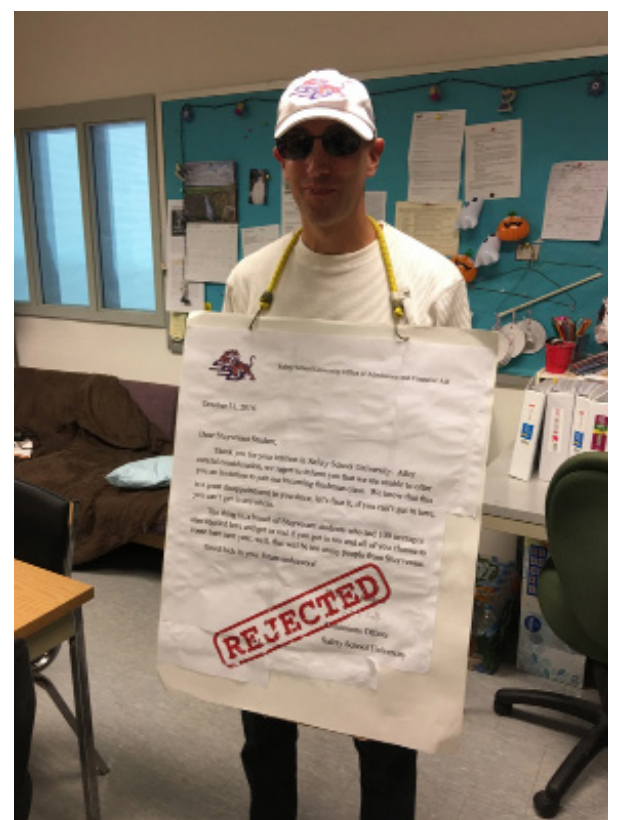
Halloween is a magical holiday. Teachers become Star Trek characters for the day, students become street snacks, and teachers and students are brought together through the shared celebration of dressing up for Halloween. While Halloween this year will no doubt look a little different, it seems the spirit of Stuyloreen will continue to live on. What costumes will Stuyvesant be brewing up next?



Rubinstein as Ali G



Rubinstein as FOIL



Rubinstein as a Citi Bike, Whole Foods screen, and safety school rejection letter

Halloween is a magical holiday. Teachers become Star Trek characters for the day, students become street snacks, and teachers and students are brought together through the shared celebration of dressing up for Halloween. While Halloween this year will no doubt look a little different, it seems the spirit of Stuyloreen will continue to live on. What costumes will Stuyvesant be brewing up next?

Editorials

THE 24 MANDATES OF REMOTE LEARNING

Though the Hallway Code of Conduct no longer applies, remote learning must carry on with strict law and supervision. Straight from Chancellor Richard Carranza's desk, read the most important mandates that everybody must abide by, effective immediately:

1. Teachers must eat and sleep in the school building and go to their houses every morning to teach their classes.
2. If a teacher accidentally leaves a Zoom call and a student becomes the host, it is that student's duty to continue teaching the class. That is what the spirit of Stuyvesant has chosen. Carry on accordingly.
3. If a student is made a co-host, he or she is now entitled to the salary and benefits of a Department of Education (DOE) employee. Contact School Chancellor Richard Carranza for more details.
4. Teachers must now give at least a five second warning before visiting breakout rooms to give students time to strike up a fake insightful conversation. Ideally, teachers might even send a group text to the room members, letting them know of their impending arrival.
5. Students must stay in the breakout rooms for the full remaining minute so the teacher can tell that the group is having some highly tasteful discussions that must go on until the very end.
6. Cameras must be turned on at all times, especially in breakout rooms, so students can live with the shame of not uttering a word to any of their other discussion partners.
7. Simply unmuting without being called on during discussion is banned. Students must raise their blue hand before talking like a civilized Zoomer.
8. When raising a hand, students must make use of all three options: their physical hand, the blue raise-hand button in the participants window, and the thumbs-up icon. If all else fails, students may raise their left leg.
9. Virtual physical education (PE) class must now be done in the PE uniform. If a student is physically in school that day, the sawed-off upper half of a Hazmat suit must be worn.
10. A DOE study has determined that students don't exercise sufficiently during online PE. Therefore all teachers must now conduct ***completely standard*** PE classes over Zoom, leading online running sessions and online basketball games. Remote boxing should consist of students beating the crap out of their laptops.
11. For all chorus and orchestra classes, students must unmute themselves and sing or play at the same time to emulate the musical environment. It is imperative that students keep their earbuds in at max volume during these class periods.
12. Students must remain completely silent when a teacher shares their screen incorrectly or fails to do so, but are permitted to chuckle audibly as long they remain muted.
13. Zoom must add a react feature to comments (c'mon, catch up with Facebook Messenger). All participants must react to a chat that has not been replied to, lest the commenter face the embarrassment of being left on read by 30 people.
14. Instead of "Your Internet Connection is Unstable," the Zoom message must now read, "Be prepared to hear the sped-up version of this conversation in the next five seconds. Or nothing at all."
15. Google Meet: just don't go. Alternatively, students may engage in a fun session of continuously changing the number of visible participants on their screens.
16. If a student is eating in class, he or she must angle the camera down to ensure that the class knows the contents of the meal and is sufficiently jealous of their delicious food.
17. For underclassmen, teachers must host an "icebreaker" session to ensure breakout rooms are as awkward as humanly possible. Whichever group can sustain the longest period of awkward silence gets a hug from Principal Seung Yu.
18. When testing on Zoom, students must ask their questions out loud (and mumble it so that the teacher must ask them to repeat) rather than using the private message chat.
19. If students are not admitted by teachers into classes within 15 minutes of the period starting, students are legally allowed to leave.
20. Students who schedule makeout Zoom sessions with their significant others must do so in Zoom rooms named "The Hudson."
21. Don't be the student who asks a complex question with one minute left in class. Not even the teacher likes it, Schneiderman.
22. Also, do not be the person who condescendingly teaches a clearly advanced yet unrelated topic in the chat section. Robert Bork can wait.
23. Teachers must begin class with a healthy dose of chill Lofi music to relieve any Zoom fatigue. Phoebe Buffay put it best: "my eyes, MY EYES!!"
24. To become better acquainted with teachers, all students must schedule at least one hour long Zoom dinner per marking period with teachers in which students and teachers watch one another eat in total silence.

The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High
School Newspaper



"The Pulse
of the
Student
Body"

EDITORS IN CHIEF

Talia Kahan*
Erin Lee*

NEWS EDITORS

Maddy Andersen*
Jenny Liu**
Momoca Mairaj**
Karen Zhang

FEATURES EDITORS

Hayeon Ok
Zoe Oppenheimer*
Clara Shapiro

OPINIONS EDITORS

Kristin Cheng
Jonathan Schneiderman*
Aaron Visser**

SCIENCE EDITORS

Claire Shin
Kristoff Misquitta
Gerard Lin**

SPORTS EDITORS

Krish Gupta**
Caroline Ji
Sam Levine
Matt Melucci

HUMOR EDITORS

Chrisabella Javier
Olly Stewart*
Kelly Yip

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITORS

Suah Chung
Miranda Lepri
Morris Raskin
Jiahe Wang

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITORS

Zoe Oppenheimer*
Francesca Nemati**
Sasha Socolow**

ART DIRECTORS

Michael Hu
Andrea Huang
Adrianna Peng
Sophie Poget**

LAYOUT EDITORS

Allison Ho
Ezra Lee
Amy Lin
Michelle Thuang

COPY EDITORS

Irene Hao
Haley Huh
Shreyasi Saha**
Raven Tang**
Brian Zhang

BUSINESS MANAGERS

Rachel Joh
Tina Nguyen**

WEB EDITORS

Cynthia Or
Victor Siu

FACULTY ADVISER

Kerry Garfinkel

* Managing Board

**Editors-in-Training

Please address all letters to:

345 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10282
(212) 312-4800 ext. 2601
opinions@stuyspec.com

We reserve the right to edit letters
for clarity and length.
© 2020 The Spectator
All rights reserved by the creators.

FOR THE RECORD

In the class of 2024 freshman survey, we reported incorrect statistics for the responses to the question "I would sacrifice a good grade to preserve my academic honesty." The correct statistics are: 28.2 percent strongly agreed, 41.4 percent agreed, 19.4 percent, were neutral, 7.0 disagreed, and 4.0 percent strongly disagreed.

Civility in Politics and the Presidential Debates

By MAYA NELSON

"Are you seeing this right now?" my friend texted me on the night of the first presidential debate. "This can't be real." Across social media and the Internet, thousands of people were outraged by the sheer chaos occurring on the debate stage. People were making memes, having arguments over who won, and coming to the general consensus that this behavior shouldn't be allowed in politics. Many people, including myself, were shocked that one of these men was to be the leader of the United States of America. If they couldn't refrain from insulting each other every two minutes, how can we expect them to run a country?

Though one might claim "Oh, Trump was way more unprofessional!" or "Biden was definitely worse," both candidates did and said things that were uncalled for. It felt like

I was watching two siblings argue over who gets the last cookie, not a presidential debate. Even if President Donald Trump was more unprofessional with his constant interruptions, Former Vice President Joe Biden shouldn't be calling the president a "clown" or telling him "Shut up, man" on live television. Trump's behavior was also inexcusable: he shouldn't have brought up controversies surrounding Biden's son, and he needs to learn that a debate involves both parties having a chance to speak, not just him. However, even if this might reasonably provoke Biden into insulting Trump, fighting fire with fire does nothing. The American people deserve to have both candidates cooperating and being civil to best understand each of their political views. Biden's response to Trump's uncooperative behavior is understandable, but that does not

justify it. Insults and interruption should not be allowed in a presidential debate, no matter the circumstance.

As much as people try to point out the humor in the situation, I find it depressing that America has come to this: two grown white men throwing schoolyard insults and constantly interrupting one another. It's disappointing that we have to pick the "lesser of two evils," rather than pick a candidate who accurately reflects our political views. Ultimately, we are the ones who got ourselves into this situation. We chose to vote for these candidates in the primaries and now we're paying the price. As a country, we need to elect better leaders if we want to see actual progress and change.

However, the vice presidential debate proved to be a stark contrast to the presidential debate, showing how people should act in a politi-

cal environment. Aside from the occasional snarky comment or interruption, which was to be expected, the debate was actually civilized. The two vice presidential candidates listened to each other and respected one another's time. They didn't insult each other and weren't constantly shouting. The two debates were so violently different from each other that it surprised me. Both Kamala Harris and Mike Pence showed professionalism during the debate, and I respect them for that. Even if the price paid for civility meant that the most interesting thing that happened during the debate was the fly that landed on Pence's head, at least I could understand the political views of the two candidates. Another example of political civility is the Supreme Court hearings; they may be extremely boring, but at least you can understand what is going on. In contrast,

I found myself lost during the first presidential debate because of the constant interruption and deviation from the original topic. Now, one might argue that civility can distract from the seriousness or danger of what the candidates say. Is rudely saying something controversial worse than politely saying it? I'd say yes. Politeness should be expected in a debate, and though rudely saying something might garner more attention, it has just as much of an impact.

Even though politics is a game of deflection, lying, and persuasion, the one thing we're supposed to be able to expect from politicians is professionalism. In the case of Biden and Trump, neither of them showed that. Hopefully, by the fourth debate, both candidates will have learned their lesson so that the American people can finally hear what they have to say.

Why The Spectator is Endorsing Joe Biden for President of the United States

In almost any election in the past, a candidate whose main pitch is a return to decency and normalcy would be a weak candidate. But the 2020 election is not a standard election, and normalcy is exactly what America needs. The Spectator is endorsing Vice President Joe Biden for president because this election is about the man currently in the Oval Office. Over the last four years, President Donald Trump's policies, political rhetoric, and personal conduct have disqualified him for another term. The COVID-19 pandemic has continually demonstrated his inability to govern in a crisis, and the recent mass protests have highlighted the extent of his willingness to pour gasoline on the embers of partisan conflict. America has reached a historical crossroads for democracy and unity. Joe Biden promises to govern all of America and to unify rather than to foment hate and division. His commitment to this basic tenet of the American system and a progressive governing agenda make him the clear and crucial choice over his opponent, who has demonstrated over his entire career a commitment to the opposite of both.

DONALD TRUMP

The political career that brought Trump to where he is today began during the 2008 presidential election, when he made his entrance into right-wing politics as a prominent proponent of the conspiracy theory that Barack Obama, the most major Black candidate for president to date, was actually born in Kenya, thus making him ineligible for the presidency, an idea with no basis in reality and no purpose but to undermine a prominent Black politician's legitimacy to hold power. Over the next eight years, he became known as a regular caller-in to Fox News and for his bombastic and often outright [counterfactual](#) Twitter account. Then, in 2015, he announced a bid for the Republican presidential nomination with a [speech](#) in which he infamously said, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best ... They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, their rapists—and some, I assume, are good people." His campaign quickly descended further when he [called](#) for a "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States"—a goal he would later [try to effect](#)—in December. By March, when he was far and away the likeliest candidate to win the nomination, he had already built up a [rich record](#) of calling for violence against protestors at his rallies.

In the general election, he

focused largely on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's alleged crimes, a list of offenses that included a botched explanation of a terrorist attack that killed four American officials in Benghazi, Libya and a host of vague but severe charges surrounding Clinton's use of a private e-mail server. With these accusations serving as fuel, his Republican National Convention was host to gleeful chants of "Lock her up."

His presidency has gone fairly predictably. On the one hand, he has pursued fairly standard Republican policy. He pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, which had been a major step toward international cooperation on tackling climate change. On the other hand, he has mixed this standard Republicanism with uniquely Trumpian quirks, such as [persistently pushing](#) for the arrest of his political opponents; being [friendly with dictators](#) while [alienating](#) liberal, democratic allies—an especially disturbing trend in a world that seems increasingly divided between authoritarian and liberal countries; and rolling back Obama's efforts to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants while turning what was the sometime practice under Obama of separating families into administration policy. As his presidency has progressed, the line between him and his party has increasingly blurred, and this year's Republican platform [merely endorsed](#) "the President's America-first agenda."

Perhaps scariest is how he has culled violence. His pushing of a conspiracy theory in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections that Jewish billionaire George Soros was funding a migrant caravan in an "invasion" of the U.S. inspired the deadliest anti-Semitic terrorist attack in U.S. history, and under his administration, hate crimes in general have [soared](#). After a fervent supporter of his sent pipe bombs to prominent politicians and journalists, he swiftly condemned the violence—and then immediately went back to the rhetoric that had prompted it, sending a clear message to any similarly-minded supporters. He has expressed [fervent support](#) for police brutality in dealing with protestors, and during the summer [sent](#) unmarked and militarized federal agents into Portland. Just this month, during the first presidential debate, he was asked to condemn the Proud Boys, a particularly vicious and gleefully violent White supremacist group. Instead, he told them to "stand back and stand by" and said that someone had to deal with the radical left, implying that they

ought to do so.

And then, of course, there is the coronavirus. Stuyvesant students are acutely aware of how he has handled that: downplaying the virus, denying its importance, and using "personal liberty" as an excuse not to promote mask-wearing, well after the Centers for Disease Control said mask-wearing should be a ubiquitous public health measure. Even if one believes the government ought not force people to wear masks, there is no question as to whether the president ought to encourage it, and he has not. The proof of Trump's failure is in the pudding of the disproportionate number of Americans the virus has killed: despite making up five percent of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for [over 20 percent](#) of its COVID deaths. When Trump's utter irresponsibility led to his contracting the virus, some hoped it would make him more vigilant about it and that it would cause him to reveal how serious it was. Instead, he has used the fact that he, with access to the world's best medical care, recovered as a reason that Americans should be cavalier about the disease.

If Americans re-elect Trump, they will endorse his policy and personality, empowering an erratic man no longer constrained by officials around him. Trump will continue to appoint [conservative](#) judges, roll back [environmental regulation](#), push for more [tax cuts](#), and [resist efforts to help people](#) hurt by the coronavirus-induced recession. He will continue from the Oval Office to cheer on conspiracy theories, attack the media as "the enemy of the people," and insert himself into every controversy in the culture war. Trump's re-election would be a final repudiation of any expectation of decency from political leaders. Any candidate who [lacks morality](#) or acts misogynistic can point to the man in the Oval Office and look [saintly](#) by comparison. In other areas, a second term would not only be a continuation but an escalation. Trump is now free of members of his own administration who acted as a [check on his anti-democratic overreaches or reckless actions](#). A second term Trump administration, therefore, would be filled completely with corrupt and under-qualified sycophants. In our system, one man has the power to go to war and to use civilization ending weapons. Not only is Trump mentally erratic and obviously not cognizant of the humbling power he wields, he will have no one around him to help check his worse tendencies. The second Trump term would be a con-

tinuation of the first but with a democracy more battered, a man less restrained, and a country closer to collapse.

JOE BIDEN

Joe Biden is the antithesis of Trump. Anyone who's close to him will describe him as "good" and "decent." No stranger to tragedy and hardship, "Joe" dedicated his life to improving prospects for those even less fortunate than himself. Unlike Trump, who received [hundreds of millions of dollars in wealth from his father](#), Biden grew up in a working class family in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He overcame his stutter and went on to become one of the most influential people in politics today.

After earning his B.A. from the University of Delaware (he would be the first president since Jimmy Carter to hold a degree from a public university and the first since Gerald Ford to hold a degree from a state university) and working in law for several years, he ran for the United States Senate in 1972, defeating the highly favored Republican incumbent to become one of the youngest senators in the history of the nation. When everything seemed to be going right for Biden, his daughter and wife were tragically killed in a car crash, and his two sons were severely injured. Despite the unimaginable pain of his losses, Biden still fulfilled, and excelled at, his duty as Delaware's senator. In order to spend as much time with his sons as possible, he commuted to Washington and back to their home in Wilmington, Delaware daily via Amtrak train.

While in the Senate, Biden became prominent for his foreign policy expertise. He championed policies such as expanding NATO while opposing the genocide in Darfur, eventually earning himself the chairmanship of the Committee on Foreign Relations. In addition, he became a leader in nuclear arms control, heading a committee in talks over arms limitation with Kremlin officials. He had his missteps—most notably, he, along with the vast majority of elected officials, supported the Iraq War—but his overall record was long and sturdy.

After an unsuccessful presidential bid in 1987, which he had to drop when past incident of plagiarism surfaced, Biden continued to serve in the Senate until 2008, when, after another fizzled presidential run, he was selected by Senator Barack Obama as his running mate for that year's election. While vice president, Biden cemented his legacy as a foreign policy virtuoso, implementing a

number of policies that aided the United States overseas greatly; for instance, he built upon his expertise in nuclear antiproliferation to be instrumental in effecting the New START treaty between the U.S. and Russia for arms reduction. Given the centrality of the presidency to foreign policy and vice-versa, having as much policymaking experience, not to mention friends on the international stage, as Joe Biden is a significant asset in a President.

In addition to foreign policy, Biden has been a vocal supporter of stricter gun control laws, but his other efforts to combat violence have been less successful. His 1994 crime bill became a major driver of mass incarceration. However, violent crime was a bigger problem in the 1990s than it is now, and the bill had significant support within the Black communities it would end up hurting the most. And Biden has done the right thing since: recognized his error, apologized, and tried to do better in the future. He also has significant experience in working across the aisle; for instance, he averted an economic crisis in 2013 by negotiating a bipartisan tax deal with Republicans and Mitch McConnell.

If elected, Biden would likely be one of the most liberal presidents ever. He would almost certainly crack down with more coronavirus restrictions, likely a federal mask mandate, something that President Trump has mocked. Biden would also implement a radical climate policy and reenter the Paris Climate Accord to help the nation slow the impact of climate change. Biden has progressive views on other issues as well. He advocates for raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour as a true fighter for the working class—a group that Biden correctly sees as including not only White factory workers in the Midwest but also [Black mailroom workers](#) in New York City. He will increase taxes on the rich, but won't increase taxes for households earning less than \$400,000 annually.

One Biden stance that the Stuyvesant community may feel resonates with them most is education: Biden supports lowering the cost of college, ensuring that two years of public college are free for everyone, and other initiatives to ensure that high quality education is accessible to all.

From his humble roots in Scranton to the highest office in the land, one thing is for certain: Joe Biden will work every day to make life better for all Americans—not just the rich and powerful. And he'll do it all without tear-gassing a single protestor.

Opinions

The Capitalist Case for Eating the Rich

By JOSHUA GINDIS

Jean Jacques Rousseau once said: “When the people shall have no more to eat, they will eat the rich.” Though this sentiment was popularized during the French Revolution, Rousseau’s words live on today. People are out in the streets chanting “Eat the Rich!” and I’m starting to worry they’re not kidding. “Eat the Rich” has come to be a mantra of leftists upset by socio-economic inequity, with the implication of a coming revolution. Ominously, income inequality is [more prevalent](#) in modern America than it ever was in pre-Revolutionary France.

Fiscal conservatives and boomer-types have long written off such complaints as the ravings of uneducated children. “Just wait until they get to the real world,” they’ve said. “Then they’ll see.” However, they did go out into the real world, and they did not see. Young people understand the pernicious effects that come with excessive wealth inequality, a reality that conservatives have for years ignored. If we continue to ignore these issues, they will only grow worse, and those who defend the excesses of capitalism will be to blame for whatever ensues.

I cannot say that [the rise in support](#) for socialism and communism, both of which I hold to be deeply evil ideologies, is unwarranted or undeserved. When young people whose parents or grandparents grew up in the most prosperous and vibrant economy in recorded history are subjected to the relative stagnation of the

last 50 years, can we blame them for losing faith in the system that refused them the pursuit of happiness? Left-wing economic systems, even if ineffective, provide the allure of security and equity that is so sorely lacking in our society today.

Wealth inequality is inevitable in any free society and often occurs in a pattern known as the Pareto Distribution, where the square root of the number of individuals in a system are responsible for half of the productivity of that system, or 20 percent of these individuals are responsible for 80 percent of the system’s productivity. This distribution is one of the primary reasons why communism fails wherever it is tried: people are different and have varying capabilities, thereby producing different outcomes. However, American wealth inequality has long since exceeded the Pareto Distribution: in 2016, [77 percent](#) of the country’s wealth was held by the top 10 percent alone.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor has had and continues to have adverse societal impacts. For example, simple poverty can cause property crimes and theft. However, relative poverty, not absolute poverty, can also be [responsible for](#) a great bulk of violent crime. Disparities in income among neighborhoods [create](#) food deserts, which themselves create disparities in health which correlate with income, exemplified by [obesity rates](#) among different socio-economic groups. On the flip side, the wealth highly

concentrated in a society has its own negative effects. When one has obtained this much money, they cannot spend it all. Most of it ends up invested in forms of capital such as real estate or stocks, not circulating through the local economy and enriching only its owner. While this capital could stimulate some growth, the investment tends to go to larger corporations and in many cases moves offshore. Additionally, extreme wealth inequality concentrates political influence in the hands of the few, silencing the voices of those who need representation most. An individual can amass such an immense amount of wealth that they can exert substantial control over the government without ever having been voted into office, becoming a threat to the representative government itself.

Our economy, our government, and our society are deeply diseased, and most conservatives don’t want to admit it. American capitalists have fallen victim to the same trap as their left-wing counterparts: they have become too ideologically possessed to recognize the shortcomings of their economic ideals, the symptoms of which are abundantly evident. Just as leftists are quick to scapegoat the wealthy for all of their problems, rightwingers cope with the unfortunate reality of the modern American economy by blaming everything on high taxes. Supply-side economics is fundamentally sound, and its philosophy is one we should carry with us to the future. Lowering taxes, cut-

ting regulations, and allowing the rich to remain rich creates jobs and stimulates economic growth. However, these policies are imperfect, and the compulsive adherence to this framework creates a myriad of negative externalities.

For example, fans of supply-side economics support low taxes because the more money individuals have in their bank accounts, the more they can invest in their business, which in turn creates jobs and gives back to the community in a far more efficient manner than any government spending ever could. However, the wealthy are the most capable of creating jobs, and so this idea taken to its logical extreme calls for the rich to keep as much of their money as possible. This provides the ideological backing for the immense [corporate bailouts](#) and tax breaks for the rich for which the government has become notorious.

The obvious solution to all of these issues is a wealth tax, which would increase taxes on those that make more than a certain amount of money. Libertarians will tell you that wealth taxes drive the wealthy from their homes, doing little but lessening the nation’s tax base. However, this is partially [untrue](#). The wealthy are very often willing to tolerate higher taxes in exchange for higher quality of life or simply to avoid the difficulties of moving. Many states, such as Florida or Texas, have no income tax, instead having higher consumption and property taxes. These systems indirectly target those who are wealthier, and by lessening taxes on the poor and

middle class, allow them to thrive.

The market [has lifted](#) millions upon millions from squalor and has proved itself to be our most effective tool in fighting poverty. The economic liberalization of China turned a destitute communist country into one of the largest and fastest growing economies on the face of the Earth. However, a surge in inequality accompanied this economic boom. This disparity is acceptable so long as it remains under control, lest it tear the social fabric apart. Total income equality, or even any semblance of it, shouldn’t be anyone’s goal, as it is unworkable and leads to countless other negative consequences. Rather, a stable and prosperous nation must ensure high levels of social mobility. Supply-side economics create the vibrant economy necessary for such a society to exist, but they fail to address existing income disparities, often perpetuating differences in wealth and leaving behind those who are less fortunate. We have to be willing to sacrifice some of our tax dollars to ensure that every member of society is provided for and that they are capable of making their way up the ladder of success. After all, if one is in dire need of welfare or healthcare, one cannot reasonably have an equal chance of succeeding in society as someone who already had access to them. If we wish to call ourselves a meritocracy, we must provide at least the most basic of social services to ensure that everyone has a shot at achieving the American Dream.

Please Talk to Strangers

By ELENA HLAMENKO

Despite my hectic schedule as a senior in the midst of college applications, I do my best to maintain some of the habits I’ve picked up over the past few months during quarantine: reading the New York Times morning briefing, dabbling in podcasts, and watching an occasional TED Talk. On one Sunday afternoon, as I did my best to “relax” and distract my mind from upcoming deadlines, I stumbled upon a particularly interesting TED Talk that described much of what I was feeling as a teenager stuck in the confines of remote learning.

That feeling was solitude. Despite doing my best to maintain communication with my friends over late-night FaceTime calls and socially-distanced hangouts, my daily routine easily became grueling. I spend six hours a day behind my computer attending online school, breaking only for lunch, then spending the rest of the evening doing homework, college applications, and the occasional aforementioned call. I’m not complaining: everyone has it tough, stuck in unideal work environments produced by a global pandemic. But after romanticizing my senior year of high school for most of my childhood, weeks without face-to-face interaction wasn’t exactly what I had expected.

In the TED Talk filmed during pre-COVID times, this phenomenon is described in a slightly different manner: sure, people may experience face-to-face interaction under normal circumstances, but the solitude associated with a lack of human connection remains. The speaker, Danny Harris, recalls how he worked a “standard job, in a standard city”—just another man in a suit among a sea of similarly-clad working professionals. In Washington, D.C., this

observation was heightened by the diminishing cultural scene, which was being drowned out and traded for government buildings, law firms, and other establishments with a suit-and-tie uniform. Harris describes how one evening, as he stood in a grocery aisle with his head buried in his phone and his

ments a conversation he has with strangers each day. Though quitting your job in favor of pursuing social connection may sound extreme, Harris’s decision is remarkable and one that we should follow to a scaled-down extent.

As I listened to Harris’s despair over the obsession everyone

up staircases without exchanging more than a strained smile or a superficial greeting with our friends, who have also prioritized their next class, task, and personal agenda. Instead of being carbon copies of suit-and-tie working professionals, we are similarly sleep-deprived, academically-driv-

that: a sea of strangers. As I sulk in my COVID-19 loneliness, I’m haunted by one thought every day: I’ll form new memories with my friends, and I’ll maintain online communication with my favorite teachers, but I will never form new relationships or learn the stories of the people who have walked the same hallways as me for three years.

I’ve realized this too late, and if it weren’t for quarantine loneliness, perhaps I wouldn’t have recognized this phenomenon within Stuyvesant in the first place. And while it’s easy to blame others for the lack of widespread community and interconnection, I too am at fault. I didn’t follow up on the budding semester-long friendships I formed in classes or ask the students who had sat next to me for entire school years about what their weekend plans were. Asking standard questions and truly caring about the people on the fringe of your life shouldn’t be such a rarity. If everyone makes the first step, I’m sure that Stuyvesant can look radically different in only a few months.

As I anticipate the end of college application season, the “second term senior” status, and the college chapter of my life, I know that this behavior toward others is what I want to change. I think back to Harris and how much more meaningful his life has become when he stopped to learn others’ stories and maintained connections beyond typical work friendships. To get to that point, I’ve realized that it’s as simple as asking the neighbors you run into every morning how they’re doing or asking your classmates about their lunch plans. It doesn’t matter if these conversation starters get brushed off. People crave human connection—it’s in our DNA—and I vow to begin taking the first step.



Angela Liu / The Spectator

hand feeling overpriced produce, he looked up and saw dozens of versions of him doing the same thing—all wearing suits, all in their bubbles without ever striking a conversation with each other.

This feeling of resembling every other worker—of merely being a single, disposable employee in an endless sea of cubicles—is a dystopian image of capitalist America. But for Harris, this moment was less a moment of despair and more of a spark of inspiration. Feeling helpless and utterly disconnected from the world around him, he quit his job and began a project through which he docu-

has with their own problems and the personal bubbles we live in, I thought of Stuyvesant. With a student population of over 3,000, we aren’t as large as D.C. or any sizable city, and yet we experience the same problems Harris describes. I once joked that I only know a sliver of the 900 students in my grade without thinking much of it. But everyone was in a similar position, sticking to their confined circle of friends and familiar faces in the classroom. All of us chase after a GPA, a number of Advanced Placement classes, and an extracurricular that takes one hour of sleep away. We sprint

en students who seldom pierce their personal bubbles.

That’s not necessarily all bad. The drive of Stuyvesant students is remarkable, and I will never stop bragging about the incredible people I’ve met at this school. But in that process, we too have lost the spirit and soul a school should have. We have lost the connection to each other, using stereotypes of “nerdy STEM students” and “the quiet kids” as excuses to avoid starting conversations with strangers.

I’ve been at Stuyvesant for more than three years, and yet the majority of my grade is just

SCIENCEBEAT

NASA's **SOFIA Observatory** has confirmed that there is **water** spread across the soil on the surface of the Moon.

1551 million tonnes (8.8%) less carbon dioxide was emitted worldwide in the first half of 2020 compared to the first half of 2019 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The same team that created the plastic-digesting enzyme PETase has created a "**super-enzyme**" that can **digest plastic up to six times faster**.

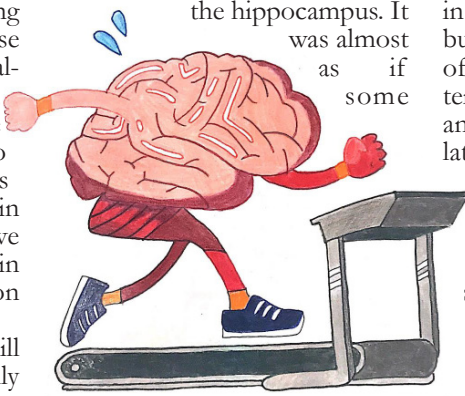
NASA's Osiris-REx spacecraft landed on the asteroid **Bennu** and has acquired 60 grams of its rocks and dust for return to Earth by 2023.

By **SONYA SASSON**

Imagine a pill that, when consumed, mimics the metabolic effects of exercise on the brain: brain tissue receives more oxygen due to an increased heart rate, which then promotes brain plasticity (the neurological ability of the brain to change, grow, and adapt). Exercise can even stimulate the growth and development of new brain cells, which can lead to improvements in memory and cognitive function. By simply ingesting this intriguing "exercise pill," one could cease to engage in physical activity altogether. More importantly, however, consolidating the brain benefits of exercise into a drug available to older adults could play a significant role in combating age-related cognitive declines by protecting the brain directly through the simulation of daily exercise.

The contents of such a pill were researched thoroughly during multiple experiments on

mice of varying ages and levels of vitality. In a study featured in "Science Magazine," researchers took the blood plasma from healthy, active mice and injected it into older, lethargic mice. The results were astounding: the older mice **showed** signs of increased brain activity similar to the effects present after the active mice did exercise. The mice that received the injection experienced increased levels of fitness and memory retention and even new neuronal growth in the hippocampus. It



Yume Igarashi / The Spectator

mystery molecule in the plasma of the healthy mice magically rejuvenated the older mice by tricking their brain into thinking they had just exercised.

These results support a theory endorsed by several scientists regarding the presence of a liver protein in blood plasma called GPLD1. GPLD1 is an enzyme that targets cells by releasing proteins on their surface to complete biological jobs usually associated with metabolism. In fact, this liver enzyme circulates in the blood soon after exercise but lacks prevalence in the blood of inactive elders (older people tend to exercise less frequently and thus have less GPLD1 circulating in their blood). As a result, it would make sense that proteins within the plasma of healthy mice were able to target cells in the sedentary mice and mimic the brain benefits of exercise.

According to another study conducted by the University of California—San Francisco

(UCSF), GPLD1 could potentially provide a key to understanding age-related cognitive declines and neurodegenerative disorders, as daily exercise is often unavailable to older adults due to physical limitations or disabilities. It was these researchers at UCSF who believe that the production of an "exercise pill" (including GPLD1 in its contents) which imitates the benefits of exercise on the brain will be available for consumption soon.

In a broader scope, these observations of liver-to-brain communication emphasize the startling levels of interconnectedness our organs possess. By attempting to understand the various processes GPLD1 undergoes, a therapeutic breakthrough is on the horizon. The fact that a singular protein produced in the liver can generate astonishing effects on the overall health of the brain has inspired scientists to search for ways to seamlessly connect the two organs in future developments.

Sweet Dreams

By **OSCAR WANG**

Sleep is every Stuyvesant student's favorite subject: we either find joy in having had a good night's rest or compete for the greatest sleep deficit. But however we choose to sleep, there's one thing we all have in common: dreams. Though the act of dreaming may seem pointless on paper, dreams often reveal specific details about one's habits, both awake and asleep. For example, one's experience of recurring dreams or recollection of a recent dream may reveal specifics about their current thoughts and emotions. Some even relate their unusual dream experiences to superstitions. While everyone's able to recall a few dreams they've had, fewer people experience either of two sleep phenomena known as lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis.

To begin to understand the neurology behind lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis, one must first understand the scientific definition of a dream. A generally accepted denotation is that dreams encapsulate all unconscious thoughts, emotions, or perceptions. Neurologically, dreams occur due to sporadic nerve activity in the brain's sensory cortexes. While there are many theories explaining the reasons behind unconscious nerve activity, some leading hypotheses are that dreams serve as simulations for threatening situations and that they contain memories and sensory information to dictate one's mood. According to the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, dreams are a reflection of one's unconscious thoughts and desires accumulated while awake. Freud argued that the content of dreams could be separated into two categories: manifest, which is what an individual remembers, and latent, the deeper meaning behind the dream. Regardless, dreams are the result of combining memories with erratic thoughts and sensory information.

Rapid eye movement (REM) sleep also plays a role in determining the content of one's dreams. While non-REM dreams are shorter and more cohesive, REM dreams are typically more complex and fragmented. While the hippocampus—the site of memory formation learning—and the neocortex—the sensory part of the brain—are both highly active during REM sleep, they are not in communication with each other. Hence, memories formed while

dreaming tend to be disjointed and confusing.

Dreams distort our sense of reality by presenting us with visual thoughts in an intangible environment. This is further complicated by the phenomena of lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis. Most people think of lucid dreaming as an unconscious state in which one is aware of their dreams and has the ability to freely control the events that occur, creating highly realistic fantasies. Meanwhile, sleep paralysis is generally perceived as the opposite: an experience that occurs while sleeping or waking during which individuals are unable to move their body and sometimes perceive vividly terrifying hallucinations. According to a study from the International Journal of Applied and Basic Medical Research, only eight percent of people suffer from sleep paralysis. Another study showed that more than 50 percent of people experience lucid dreaming at least once in their life. Yet, these distinct events still share similarities in terms of the neurological factors behind them.

A study published by the Journal of Sleep Research aims to quantify the factors linked to both lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis. The scientists outlined a set of distinctions between the two and tested for the variables that dictated both events. For example, they noted that sleep paralysis involves returning to full wakefulness, whereas lucid dreaming occurs entirely unconsciously. Another question they sought to answer was why lucid dreaming sometimes led to sleep paralysis in some, but not in others. The predictors they analyzed in their 1928 participants included sleep quality, well-being, waking experiences, and personal beliefs. The researchers hypothesized that personal beliefs in the paranormal and conspiracy theories would contribute to subconscious paranoia, leading to different dream experiences. They then compared the results of the experimental data with the frequency of sleep paralysis and lucid dreaming in the participants. After analyzing their results, the researchers noticed that traits of curiosity, sensitivity, and daydreaming had positive correlations with lucid dreaming frequency. Meanwhile, believers of conspiracy theories were more likely to experience sleep paralysis than lucid dreaming. Paranormal beliefs, on the other hand, were not clear predictors of either phenomenon. The most ob-

vious difference was the magnitude of life stress and anxiety. While more stressed and anxious individuals experienced sleep paralysis, relaxation and calmness were seen more frequently in lucid dreamers.

Thus, one important distinction is that while sleep paralysis is the result of poor sleep quality and improper stress management, lucid dreaming is, surprisingly, the result of mental training and consistent daydreaming. This trend is seen in the positive correlation between daydreaming and dissociative hallucinations. While one may expect these phenomena to represent two sides of the same coin, their main underlying causes are unrelated. Therefore, this distinction also proves that it is possible to experience both events in one night; the increased imaginative capacity stemming from lucid dreaming can cause more terrifying hallucinations during sleep paralysis.

While lucid dreaming rarely leads to dangerous side effects, experiencing frequent sleep paralysis is a sign of underlying sleep issues. Though sleep paralysis is fairly easy to diagnose and treat, it manifests several adverse neurological effects, including increased anxiety and heart complications in severe cases. The risk factors of sleep paralysis are also increased by social distancing and remote learning. Studies indicate that prolonged exposure to these conditions may increase stress and worsen one's mood, making it more likely for sleep paralysis to occur. As an alternative, one could try documenting their unconscious experiences to practice mindfulness as a means of avoiding negative REM experiences.

Understanding the factors behind both lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis gives psychologists a better understanding of their patients' experiences by describing them beyond the labels of "good" and "bad." While many psychologists currently practice dream analysis, it is mainly used in psychoanalysis. This is partly because dreams are still heavily under-researched due to their intangible nature, leaving words as their only descriptors. However, neuroscience has advanced several steps in the past century, namely with neurotechnology and understanding the inner workings of the brain. Perhaps the next treatment for certain neurological disorders, then, will not be a medication but rather an elicited dream.

The Science of Gossip

By **JENNA MACKENROTH**

Growing up, I was frequently reminded that gossip was one of the greatest social sins. My parents warned me against backbiting and told me that partaking in the devious deed would eventually catch up to me. The shows I saw on television were filled with sappy tales of gossip and ruined friendships, complete with teary hugs and sniffles at the end. The moral of the story was always the same: gossip hurts the people around you, and your safest option is to avoid it at all costs. Yet, despite the best efforts of both my parents and the television shows, I still found myself continuing to sneak a little whisper about some social situation or another. It led me to wonder why gossip is so irresistibly commonplace if it's so bad.

By definition, gossip is the act of spreading information with details that are not necessarily true. When anyone mentions the word "gossip," a clear image comes to mind of dirty secrets being swapped via whispers and shifty glances. Though it has maintained its salacious reputation, even inspiring well-known shows such as "Gossip Girl," one of the largest misconceptions about gossip is that it is primarily malicious. In fact, a meta-analysis published in "Social Psychological and Personality Science" showed that most gossip is related to neutral topics rather than the expected malicious ones. Malicious gossip focuses on criticizing people, while neutral gossip focuses on more mundane themes. For example, neutral gossip would involve briefly mentioning a coworker's achievement, whereas malicious gossip would involve mentioning the same achievement and accrediting it to negative or dishonest behavior. Positive gossip includes congratulatory themes. Approximately 15 percent of the conversations analyzed were categorized as malicious gossip, while nine percent of all conversations rang up as positive gossip. The rest was idle chatter.

This study might make most of our gossip seem benign and useless. However, there is a neurological reason behind our tendency to falsely think of gossip as primarily negative. A 2011 study published in "Science" titled "The Visual Impact of Gossip" suggested

that negative gossip alters the way we see physical features. A team of scientists brought in a group of volunteers and had them look at a set of individual photographs of faces. As the volunteers observed each person, the team would attach gossip about each person. For example, one volunteer would learn that one person threw a chair at his classmate, while another would learn that the person had helped an elderly woman with her groceries.

After this, the team observed how each volunteer's brain responded to seeing the faces of the people they had gossiped about. They did so by showing unrelated images to the left and right eyes of each volunteer. For instance, one volunteer would look at a photo of flowers with his right eye while looking at individual photographs of the faces with his left eye. This caused what is known as binocular rivalry, a visual phenomenon caused by our brain's inability to focus on two images at the same time. The researchers found that the volunteers focused more on the faces that they had gossiped about negatively, implying that they found them more interesting than those they had gossiped about either neutrally or positively.

Frank McAndrew, professor of psychology at Knox College, said that this study points to gossip as a means of cultural evolution: "For years, people like me have been saying that our intense interest in gossip is not really a character flaw," he said. "It is part of who we are. It is almost a biological event, and it exists for good evolutionary reasons."

Similarly, many psychologists and anthropologists argue that gossip plays a large role in social development. Robin Dunbar, a British anthropologist, supports the theory that gossip was an element of survival in ancient hominids. Dunbar argues that gossip largely stems from an evolutionary need to steer clear of harmful situations. By quietly sharing information with one another, early hominids were able to identify harmful situations, regardless of whether they were internal or external. He extends this idea to modern-day socializing, where social groups may spread information that helps individuals avoid other potentially harmful individuals.

continued on page 18

Science

Craving Halloween Candy? Here's Why

By SHRIYA ANAND

With Halloween right around the corner, I am sure that we have already started to crave sweets. Some of us may have even dipped into the Christmas season, starting each day with hot cocoa and ending on a candy cane. What is it that makes us so addicted to sweets? The answer is simple: hormones.

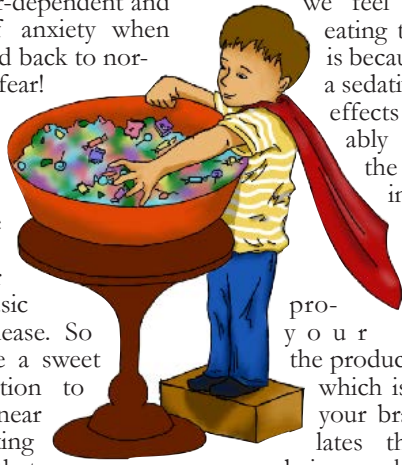
You may notice that eating a bar of chocolate or a bag of Skittles gives you a temporary feeling of happiness. This is because candy contains a processed sugar known as sucrose that triggers the release of endorphins upon entering the bloodstream. This boosts mood and provides a temporary chemical “high.” However, the arguably more intriguing aspect of our response to sugar is the release of the hormone dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter

that plays a role in how we feel pleasure. It is also the hormone that is related to the addiction to opiates, alcohol, nicotine, amphetamines, and cocaine. Unsurprisingly, a Princeton University study found that rats given a considerable amount of sugar in their diet became sugar-dependent and showed signs of anxiety when their diets reverted back to normal. But do not fear!

Dopamine is a significant part of the brain's reward system, and even the simple acts of eating our favorite foods or listening to music can cause its release. So even if you have a sweet tooth, an addiction to sugar is nowhere near as severe or lasting compared to that

of the aforementioned drugs. Of course, the fact that they are even mildly addictive is a sign that sweets should be consumed in reasonable portions.

As much as candies and other sweets give us a temporary boost in mood, there is no denying that we feel sluggish after eating too many. This is because sugar is also a sedative whose after-effects are considerably stronger than the little “kick” it initially triggers. When you intake large amounts of processed sugar, your body inhibits the production of orexin, which is a chemical in your brain that stimulates the feeling of being awake. As a result,



Sunny Bok / The Spectator

you feel sleepy a few minutes after consuming treats with high amounts of sugar. This feeling of sleepiness may also be coupled with a sluggish attitude or mood, and while some believe that it is simply because we are descending from a high, there may be a bigger explanation. Refined sugars are often linked with depression because not only do they fail to provide the body any nutrients, but they also consume vitamins such as vitamin B, the “mood-enhancing” vitamin.

Other health issues come with not controlling sugar intake, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, weight gain, and fatty liver disease. Considering the time of the year, it may be hard to control sugar intake, so rather than eliminating sugar, try better alternatives. Instead of store-bought candies and milk chocolate, opt for dark chocolate or chocolate protein

bars. Protein essentially reverses the effects sugar has on orexin, energizing you and keeping you awake. Homemade gummies, granola bars, and healthy trail mixes are also a great option. Sugar-free candies, such as some mints, are another great alternative. However, they should be taken in moderation, considering that a popular sweetener—maltitol—does act as a laxative. Unfortunately, other non-laxative sweeteners are not naturally derived, and the body has trouble detoxifying itself of these substances.

Regardless, we all deserve to treat ourselves every so often, and with Halloween approaching, we have another reason to do so. Of course, given all the side effects and science behind sugar, we should consume it in moderation or opt for healthier alternatives if we have trouble controlling our intake.

The Science of Gossip

continued from page 17

Dunbar is also one of the largest proponents of the theory that gossip serves as a form of [cultural learning](#), or the way a culture or group of animals learns and passes on information. He argues that gossiping facilitates the spread of information within a large social network. As the information is spread around the social network, so are the shared reactions and opinions regarding it. Consequently, individuals who participate in gossip implicitly learn which customs and behaviors are deemed acceptable, thus contributing to their personal social development. When more specific information on particular members of social groups is passed around, it allows judgments to take place. What is

going on with so-and-so? Do we like them? Have they done something wrong and should we exclude them now?

Such cultural questions are easily answered as the information moves along the social conveyor belt. As judgments of behavioral values spread through the social group, sets of shared values begin to form. Through gossip, the definition of what is deemed morally acceptable by the group becomes clearer, consequently leading to the development of a distinct culture characterized by a unique set of values and customs.

Gossip is present at Stuyvesant, just as it is in most high schools. A poll asking students if they gossiped about anything received 126 responses: 62 percent answering “Yes” and 38 percent

answering “No.” Junior Sajia Athai provided her opinion on the matter: “There have been many instances where gossip has helped me avoid detrimental situations. I wish I could stay away from gossip, but [...] things about people [often] get revealed that help me understand their true colors.”

Similarly, some students reported the idea that though gossip had potentially shielded them from harmful situations, they were trying to dissociate themselves from it to avoid the toxicity that came with the constant conversation.

Sophomore Elizabeth Black said, “When it’s the second type of gossip—the bullying type—it’s not fun to be the person it’s about. And even if it wasn’t your intention, things you say about other people can get twisted and taken

too far.”

Similarly, junior Sasha Socolow said, “A lot of times my words were misinterpreted, or sometimes I said hurtful things without realizing what I was even doing.”

Perhaps the wariness of gossip emerges as a result of a collective digital presence. In the age of technology, gossip takes on a new degree of severity. Instead of being passed around in the form of difficult-to-pinpoint rumors, information now spreads through screenshots and videos. The large number of apps dedicated to social networking and communication also means that formerly private details can easily reach unknown and sometimes unwanted audiences. By making gossip more accessible, technology has also caused it to become more danger-

ous. Though screenshots seem to offer a sense of veracity in uncertain situations, they can easily be faked and used to spread misinformation.

Humans are ever-evolving, including our methods of communication and societal building. Despite its adaptation to the presence of technology, the use of gossip as a means of creating strong social bonds is unlikely to fall out of fashion. Regardless of the way society views it, gossip is responsible and necessary for the evolution of our cultures and social values and patterns. So the next time your parents jab at you for casually gossiping with your friends, simply tell them that you’re practicing cultural learning, evolution, and building stronger social bonds with those around you.

You Said You Saw It Coming, So Why Did You Get Scared?

By HENRY CEN and RIONA ANVEKAR

As spooky season approaches, people find themselves searching for fright at every corner, whether it be through a haunted house, creepy costumes, or best of all, horror movies. All of these enhance the anticipation and excitement building up to Halloween, giving them a thrill that chills them to the bone. However, people usually don’t question why they enjoy that sense of fear. Why would humans enjoy watching horror movies when the purpose to induce fear is seemingly counterintuitive to the human instinct of survival?

What distinguishes the feelings of watching a horror movie from being in actual danger is the reaction of the [frontal lobe](#). In the case of watching a horror movie, the brain has enough time to classify the scenario as a fake threat not endangering the body. On the other hand, when we feel fear, the [sympathetic nervous system](#) engages and prepares the body for potential danger instead of the parasympathetic nervous system, which restores the body to a calmer state. In the context of a horror movie, a jumpscare triggers the sympathetic nervous system, which releases various neurotransmitters and hormones intended to put the body in fight or flight mode, but the frontal lobe calms the body down enough for the feeling to then become enjoyable. [These hormones](#) include endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin, putting people in a state similar to that of a [high arousal state](#). Essentially, the frontal lobe allows the body to live on the edge of true fear.

Still, one’s personality also has a heavy impact on how one re-

acts to fear and whether or not it is enjoyable. According to clinical psychologist Kenneth Carter, people who thrive in scary situations have a specific sensation-seeking personality trait. Originally described by Martin Zuckerman in the 1970s, this [sensation-seeking personality trait](#) is defined by four components: the need for an external stimulus, a propensity for spontaneity, the wish to be exposed to new things, and the pursuit of exciting and risky physical activities. To identify this trait, psychologists asked participants to rate how excited they would be to try a new activity on a scale of 1-5. Those with higher scores usually have lower levels of adrenaline and cortisol and have higher levels of dopamine. Both [adrenaline](#) and [cortisol](#) are hormones released to prepare the body for fight or flight mode, typically resulting in increased heart rate and blood pressure, expanded air passages in the lungs, increased levels of blood sugar, and enlarged pupils. On the other hand, [dopamine](#) is released when the brain expects a reward, and it contributes to feelings of happiness and motivation. So when people with the sensation-seeking trait are put in scary situations, they are naturally more prone to experiencing more pleasure and less stress.

Well, what if you aren’t one of those people? How can you avoid shrieking like a banshee in front of your friends? It may help to know the sneaky and clever tricks cinematographers use to ensure the most enjoyable and frightening horror experience. Some are

well-tested classics that you may be familiar with, while others are less apparent and may cause you to rethink your film-watching experience.

The first technique that cinematographers use is likely the most know—the jumpscare. The defining characteristic of a jumpscare is the jolting of the audience. The sudden stimulus causes a break in the tension, creating a sharp spike in adrenaline that gets blood pumping. However, the mere scare factor is no longer enough to satisfy a currently desensitized population that is usually anticipating a jumpscare. Masterful



cinematographers take advantage of this by creating a “release” right before the anticipated scare. This could be the protagonist turning the corner to find

no one or discovering the source of an ominous growl to be a mere cat. As soon as the audience lets down its guard and sighs in relief, the cinematographer initiates the jumpscare, causing the audience to respond more intensely than usual. According to [Christian Grillon](#) Ph.D., a psychophysiological who studies fear and anxiety at the National Institute of Men-

tal Health, “If a startle-eliciting stimulus comes, then the startle will be much larger than in a non-anxious state.” Anticipation worsens the response because it pre-activates the amygdala, the part of the brain that deals with fear and anxiety. The amygdala is also part of the startle neural pathway, which means when the jumpscare happens, the response is exacerbated. So while you can’t do much to avoid screaming at a jumpscare, you can reduce the response by relaxing and accepting the scares.

A technique that may not be as well known but is in almost every horror movie is [underexposure](#). By either reducing or strengthening a camera’s exposure, shadows are accentuated, creating an ominous atmosphere that plays with the audience’s focus. Cinematographers can use underexposure to create darkness in the parts of the frame that they want hidden from the audience. This can serve to frighten the audience by allowing another element to emerge from the darkness or build tension by teasing the possibility of it. The tip here is to focus on the positive space, the part of the frame that you can see.

A lesser-known technique is the use of nonlinear sound and [infrasounds](#). Sound plays a large role in the horror experience but is rarely credited. Nonlinear, or distressing, sounds can greatly add to a movie’s atmosphere. High-pitched squeals often build tension by inciting chaos. Visceral sounds like growls and groans add to feelings of dread. Even silence, the absence of sound, in a tense environment is effective in

building the desired atmosphere. Infrasounds are soundwaves at 19 hertz or lower. Being at such a low frequency, they cannot be heard by human ears. Amazingly, however, they can be felt by the body. Cinematographers use this strange phenomenon to create sensations of oscillation, shivering, and prickling that greatly heighten the atmosphere. “Paranormal Activity” is a well-known example that made use of infrasounds.

Cinematographers also love using mirrors and reflections. They are often used as a tool for depicting the distortion of reality in the film, whether it be by emphasizing the dual nature of its villain through reflections or using cracks in glass to incite dread. Mirrors can also be used as a jumpscare catalyst by frightening those who are overly attentive to details. If you want to avoid the screams, don’t look at the mirrors.

The culture of horror movies is hard to understand. It seems almost paradoxical to enjoy fear. But the hype and following of horror come from its ability to take its audience into a realm of reality that reawakens the primal human senses by triggering the audience’s fight or flight mode and setting their bodies on the edge of terror; the body is also able to release hormones that allow them to enjoy the fear. Cinematographers have to continually improve and sharpen their technique in order to satisfy this demand, which has led to the current complexity of horror: using classic techniques that will always work, playing off of these classics by subverting them, or even innovating new techniques. The horror genre has and follows no rules, which means its potential is boundless.

Arts and Entertainment

CULTURE

By CHRISTINA PAN

Five years ago, American pop culture experienced a series of events that prompted a major cultural reset. “Fifty Shades of Gray” had just been released, fulfilling Wattpad fantasies across the internet; “Hamilton” took center stage, stirring a sudden interest in the personal history of the Founding Fathers; Adele said “Hello,” and 12.3 million people found that interesting.

Yet the defining moment of the year—and perhaps of the decade—was June 16, 2015, when President Donald J. Trump officially announced his presidential bid with a campaign rally and speech at Trump Tower. At the conclusion of the speech, Trump famously declared, “The American dream is dead.”

And that is one promise fulfilled. Fast forward to 2020, amidst an out-of-control pandemic, today’s America is in a state of economic decline, racial animosity, and rampant inequality. The most memorable moments of 2020 won’t be coming from a film, song, or play—it’ll be from the very leaders that run the show.

The current administration’s shoddy handling of the coronavirus can be seen as the last nail in the coffin of the ever decreasing state of America’s perceived cultural dominance. It has essentially, in other words, reduced the illusion of American exceptionalism to shreds.

The ideology of American exceptionalism doesn’t just mean that the U.S. is “unique.” Countries, just like people, could all be classified as “unique,” regardless

The Finale of American Exceptionalism?

of underlying similarities; exceptionalism requires something more. Exceptionalism is the belief that America is predestined to follow a path that is fundamentally different from that of other countries. If two roads diverged in a yellow wood, America wouldn’t just take the one less traveled by—it would step outside the very road itself and into a seemingly superior moral and cultural state, free from the ails of another world’s problems. It is the exception.

This idea of America’s cultural exceptionalism comes primarily from the mid-20th century. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, Americans sought to build a peaceful and prosperous image following the instability and deprivation of World War II and the Great Depression. This came with the development of American soft power—the attractiveness of a country’s culture or domestic values—to strengthen its international moral and cultural appeal as a superior alternative to Soviet authoritarianism.

America’s determination to redefine its culture led to the emergence of its film and music industries on an international scale. Film and television presented an idealized image of American family life: happy housewives, hard-working fathers, and playfully mischievous children. Rock and roll music, with stars like Elvis and David Bowie, celebrated young love and freedom from the oppression of middle-class society. This combination of post-war media painted America

as an ideal country—one that celebrated equality, justice, and democracy.

In recent years, however, American culture has been defined by works that directly critique it. From horror films like “Get Out” (2017)



Daniel Berinsky / The Spectator

Childish Gambino’s “This is America” (2018) to dystopian films like “Joker” (2019), genuine showcases of the American glory ages are far and few between.

This cultural shift is reflected on the international stage. In the faraway days of early 2020, “Parasite” (2019), directed by Bong Joon-ho, earned the Oscar for Best Picture—the first non-English film to do so. Even before “Parasite,” however, the Oscars have been dominated by international faces. Only one American director, Damien Chazelle for “La La Land” (2016), has won the Oscar for Best Director since

2010; the rest are Mexican, Taiwanese, and European.

American influence on the small screen is also slowly yet steadily dwindling. Had it been decades earlier, an American network might have bought the rights to repurpose hit TV shows like “Money Heist” (2017-present), which is in Spanish, or “Dark” (2017-2020), which is in German with English-speaking actors, but streaming sites have already provided a platform for the original version. Even American stories aren’t a retelling of its current climate—the majority of stories in film or TV nowadays are set in fantasy worlds like “Game of Thrones” (2011-2019) or are nostalgia trips like “Stranger Things” (2016-present).

In early September, Christopher Nolan’s “Tenet” opened in 41 countries, but America was not one of them—cinemas remain closed in most regions, including the key markets in New York and California. Even more humbling, perhaps, was that “Tenet” was not the highest-grossing movie of the weekend; it was “The Eight Hundred,” a lavish Chinese action-war film.

As the rest of the world reopens, America is faced with an out-of-control pandemic and a polarized political climate. Gone are the days of desirable Americanization—even internally, American culture seems to protest against its status quo.

Our culture is a reflection of the current state of the world. It’s something interesting to think about the next time you watch, listen, or spectate; times are changing.

PLAYLIST

Subtly Spooky

By THE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT

We’ve all heard Halloween classics like “Thriller” and “Monster Mash” throughout the years, and it’s difficult not to wonder: could there be more?

For the A&E department, the answer is an enthusiastic “yes,” as we’ve compiled a list of some more subtle Halloween titles that should still set the mood for a spooky night.

Hellboy
Lil Peep
Emo Rap

Heads Will Roll
Yeab Yeab Yeabs
Art Punk

bury a friend
Billie Eilish
Pop

La Grippe
Squirrel Nut Zippers
Swing

Enter Sandman
Metallica
Heavy Metal

BLACK BALLOONS |
13LACK 13ALLOONZ
Denzel Curry ft. Goldlink
and TwelveTen
Experimental Hip-hop

Medicine Man
Dorothy
Modern Rock

Tokyo Drifting
Glass Animals / Denzel Curry
Hip-hop / Rock

Funhouse
Pink
Pop Rock

Hurt
Johnny Cash
Classic Country

Season Of The Witch
Lana Del Rey
Pop

Pitchfork Kids
AJR
Pop

Alone Again
The Weeknd
R&B Pop

CUT EM IN
Anderson .Paak ft. Rick Ross
R&B / Hip-hop

MUSIC

By ANSON GUAN and MORRIS RASKIN

A man runs along the path to the rocketship, his crewmates pleading with him behind a locked fence to come back. Mission control is falling apart as the lone traveler boards the rocket, sets his course, and blasts off into space with a middle finger to Earth and little plan but to escape. That traveler is Joji, the infamous Internet humor pioneer rocketing off to new artistic territory as a popstar. Traversing countless eras, personas, and mediums, singer-producer George Kusunoki Miller (Joji) has faced an ever-present uphill battle as he navigates his way deeper into the 21st century zeitgeist, and his latest project “Nectar” only serves to solidify his place in the spotlight.

This effort (being his third studio album in just three years) is another slap in the face to those who attempt to size the artist up too quickly, as Joji once again proves he can’t be held down. On “Nectar,” Joji sounds freer than ever, gliding his way through 18 tracks with his classically smooth delivery and diving drones, delivering a project that couldn’t feel more “Joji” if it tried, despite pushing the artist’s boundaries in several areas.

On the album’s first track, “Ew,” Joji sets the tone for the project, drawing the listener in with soft keys and a simple melody line describing the singer’s desire for longevity in a relationship. This feeling of longing is sorely

felt throughout the album, both through the lyrics and stripped-back instrumentation. Joji’s voice has never been a powerful force in its own right, but it carries a certain solemnity that the artist has been able to capitalize on throughout his discography. This, typically paired with bare-bones percussion and plucky keys, establishes an ethereal feel from the get-go and creates a sullen consistency within each track.

Production is a reliable strong suit on “Nectar” and ties the album together with clicking percussion, drowned strings, and the classic Joji synth pad. The instrumentation is as lush as ever and brings the project to life, elevating Joji’s imperfect voice and adding a certain depth and richness throughout. A notable example of the additive value of good production on “Nectar” can be found in “Run,” a pre-album single that received widespread critical acclaim. From the first plucked note in the song, Joji’s brooding vision of love gone wrong comes to life, building with the addition of simple bass notes and a staccato drum kit and culminating in a cathartic peak post-chorus. “So I’ll just run,” Joji sings, holding that last word in a multi-part harmony, with layers upon layers of droning guitars, pulsating bass, and pounding drums to hammer home the climax. It’s a dark, slow-burning ballad with some of Joji’s best vocal performances and production, unlike anything he’s made before. Even on tracks that otherwise feel like time-filler, the blame is usually

not on the production, but rather the occasionally repetitive nature of the album as a whole.

“Run” is one of many stand-out tracks on “Nectar,” as Joji tries to expand beyond the mellow lo-fi sound he carved out in “BAL-LADS 1” (2018). There’s “Sanctuary,” a dreamy pop anthem in which Joji sounds simultaneously bored

of the universe yet obsessed with love. There’s the moody and atmospheric “MOR-DUS,” which builds to an angelic yet somber crescendo and the trap-infused “Mr. Hollywood,” in which dense bass highlights Joji’s beautiful vocal melodies. While “Pretty Boy” is rough around the edges, its catchy flow, grinding bass grooves, and surprisingly good Lil Yachty feature make it one of the most unique offerings on the tracklist. “777” is a bouncy video-game-sounding banger underlying melancholic lyrics, and “Daylight” is a warm yet melancholy collaboration with Diplo. The album ends with a one-two combo: the sentimental balladry of “Like You Do” followed by “Your Man,” an invigorating electropop finale that feels like the sun breaking through the clouds after a long, raging thunderstorm.

Despite the artistic strides Joji

makes on “Nectar,” exploring new sounds and refining old ones, it’s difficult for him to keep all 53 minutes interesting, with multiple times in the tracklist when he falls back on amateur lo-fi trappings. Tracks like “Upgrade,” “Nitrous,” and “Normal People” add little to the overall experience of the album and bring nothing new to the table for Joji. The most disappointing example of this may be “Reanimator,” which, despite featuring experimental rock artist Yves Tumor, barely feels like it has any purpose or artistic direction. With its longer runtime, “Nectar,” more than any other Joji project, demonstrates that lyrics are not his strong suit. There’s only so many times that Joji can sing about lost love and the emptiness of Hollywood life in the same way before it becomes meaningless.

Despite the album’s shortcomings, it’s undeniable that “Nectar” is an improvement on all fronts for Joji. His production is stronger; his vocals are clearer; and his songs have more variety than ever before. It sounds like the culmination of years of work and shows infinite potential for the rising star. Five years ago, nobody would have believed that the comedy YouTuber screaming in a pink morphsuit would become one of the most promising artists in pop, but the time is now, and Joji is definitely someone to watch.

The Bittersweet Universe of Joji’s “Nectar”



Cecilia Chen / The Spectator

Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

By ZOE BUFF

Ever heard of Annemarie Eifeld? Nina Hagen? “LICHT” by Nena? Probably not. How about Shawn Mendes? Miley Cyrus? “Rain On Me” by Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande? That’s more like it. On average, over 65 percent of all songs on the German charts are by American pop artists. Given the wide influence of American pop music in foreign countries, it doesn’t come as much of a surprise that most Germans would recognize American artists more often than German ones.

I recently began attending a boarding school in Munich, Germany. Almost every single store I’ve walked into blasts American pop music over the speakers. One would think that Germans might find comfort in songs in their native language, but during my time here, I’ve generally discovered the opposite. Curious about how German teenagers perceived American pop in comparison to German pop, I created a survey

for my fellow classmates to fill out. Most responses came with high praise of the former and criticism of the latter. The general consensus was that American pop songs were simply more pleasant to listen to because the lyrics usually make more sense and fit the musical style better.

So what is the German musical style exactly? Most modern American pop songs are catchy and repetitive, often accompanied by digitally enhanced instrumentals and synthesizers. Music production plays a big role in the development of all American pop music nowadays. German pop often sounds sonically similar to American pop songs, but even then there is a striking difference. Most German pop songs don’t digitalize



the singer’s voice, or at least not as drastically as many American pop songs do. There are many German pop songs that sound as if they’ve barely been produced at all due to the dominance of instrumental accompaniment in the mix. On the other hand,

there are certain German pop stars, including Stuyvesant legend Wincent Weiss, who create their tracks to mirror the style of American pop. Even then, however, there is little music production done on the actual vocals of the singers.

Back to the lyrics though: it’s not news that the German language is less pleasant to speak and listen to than English. Due to the raspy consonants and additional vowels required, German lyrics are often complicated mouthfuls with strange phrases that sometimes don’t make much sense. Many Germans I’ve spoken to, both teenagers and adults,

strongly believe that the English language simply sounds more natural when matched to the melody of a pop song. In response to the survey, one student wrote that American pop music sounded more “fluid” in terms of rhythm, lyrics, and melodies.

Another student pointed out that American pop is marketed on a larger scale than German pop. That would explain why my fellow classmates were familiar with every single pop star I listed on the survey, while none of my friends back home in New York knew any of the German pop stars I introduced to them. When asked about favorite pop artists and tracks, the German teenagers listed only American singers and songs. It’s quite evident that American pop music has had quite an influence on young people in Germany, having taken over almost every stereo in the nation. While it seems to be widely appreciated in a foreign country, the opinion differs a little across the Atlantic.

Americans often disagree on

their perspectives on pop music. Some believe that most people only listen to it to follow a trend because they view it as a staple of modern day culture. Some criticize American pop songs for their lack of artistic authenticity, insisting that they are simply cheap crowd-pleasers. After examining responses from both American and German teenagers, it seems it is the latter who hold American pop music in higher esteem.

As of 2019, the American pop industry is the biggest music industry in the world, and for good reason. Songs by American pop artists have stretched to the farthest corners of the world—I must have heard “cardigan” by Taylor Swift at least 20 times during my brief trip to Taiwan—and have dominated music markets in foreign countries. But who knows? Maybe German pop artists like Wincent Weiss will market their tracks more extensively, and soon we’ll be seeing songs like “Feuerwerk” at the top of our charts instead of “Firework.”

MUSIC

By DEXTER WELLS

One of hip-hop’s most notorious rapper-producer duos is back, and rap enthusiasts are buzzing with reactions. Sheyaa Bin Abraham-Joseph, better known as emcee 21 Savage, and Leland Tyler Wayne, better known as producer Metro Boomin, dropped the highly anticipated “Savage Mode II” on October 2. The album serves as a follow-up to their 2016 project “Savage Mode,” which, more than any other album since, established 21 Savage as a respected name in the rap world.

“Savage Mode II” impressively demonstrates the artistic range possessed by the Atlanta duo. They manage to pull off songs that, stylistically, would have seemed completely out of character (especially for 21 Savage) a few years ago. Particularly with his 2018 album “I am > I was,” Savage began to show that he cannot be confined to the generalization of cold trap beats and hard street lyrics. While that’s certainly his

forte, he’s fairly capable of writing more melodic songs. Notably, “Mr. Right Now” (featuring Drake) and “Rich [EXPLICIT] [EXPLICIT]” (featuring Young Thug) feel much more lighthearted than other songs on the album that mention homicide, as Savage lets his vocal chords take some of the spotlight. These two tracks, which are back-to-back on the album, offer a sort of intermission from the expected style of the rest of the album. On these, Savage raps and sings about enjoying luxury goods and treating women to the finer things in life. Even a savage needs days off. Regrettably, though they show off the versatility of the duo, these tracks disrupt the essential themes of “Savage Mode II” and lack the indubitable sense of belonging possessed by songs with more grim lyrical content and the quintessential Boomin trap sound.

The album wouldn’t be a proper sequel to “Savage Mode” if there wasn’t a fair amount of discussion of gang activity and

the hardships of living in a cruel and uncaring environment. Track two, “Runnin,” describes how Savage keeps his enemies on the run and is prepared to take violent action against them (perhaps with his trusty knife). And as the title suggests, the song “Glock in My Lap” is about the violent lifestyle that Savage is familiar with and his experience with crime and weapons. “Glock in my lap,” he raps, “Used to rob and trap.”

Moving away from the oft-spotlight-stealing rapper, Metro Boomin’s production shines, which comes as little surprise to anyone familiar with any of his other work. He’s widely regarded as one of the best contemporary hip-hop producers and has proved so time and again. The beats on “Savage Mode II” are no exception to his rule. Boomin has an ear for percussion, melody, and instrumentation that is rivaled by few of his peers. Unexpected sounds find a home on his beats, such as the strings on “Glock in My Lap,” which perfectly comple-

ment the subtle choral samples to create dense textures.

Of course, one cannot discuss this project without discussing the interludes, which feature Hollywood legend Morgan Freeman. Freeman is certainly a surprise to an unsuspecting listener, but his contributions tie the album together to a greater extent than would have likely been otherwise possible. On interludes scattered throughout the album, he establishes certain themes that set the tone for ensuing songs. On “Intro,” for example, he alludes to a central theme of partnership. His “Snitches & Rats Interlude” explains the distinction between the disloyalty of a snitch and that of a rat, which is the focal point of the following track, “Snitches and Rats.” Despite being 83 years old, the Hollywood veteran proves that he is hardly out of place on a modern trap album and conveys the most significant ideas of the project with a dramatic air and timbre that only he can muster.

“Savage Mode II” feels like

a fairly cohesive listening experience, especially with the tastefully interwoven narration in the interludes. The themes of struggle, gang life, and street etiquette that are so prevalent in previous collaborations are present and emphasized more meaningfully throughout this album than ever before. The quality production that can be expected of Metro Boomin only enhances the listening experience. Simultaneously, there are tracks that explore the boundaries of what styles Savage and Boomin can successfully delve into. While “Savage Mode II” undeniably demonstrates the technical ability of the Savage-Boomin duo, certain tracks do end up feeling a bit out of place. This album is absolutely worth at least one full listen through, and rap fans will likely add standout tracks to their playlists, but it doesn’t qualify as incredibly groundbreaking. Overall enjoyable? Yes. Bound to go down as one of the best albums in rap history? Very doubtful.

CULTURE

By AGATHA EDWARDS

As one of the most loved holidays in the U.S., Halloween has been celebrated for years, but where did it exactly begin? Though its origin isn’t well known, most records point to European immigrants who brought their traditions to America. Halloween was initially a festival in Europe, but in America, the holiday has become a community bonding opportunity. Everyone knows what goes down on October 31 here, but how do other countries celebrate Halloween? Turns out, there are a variety of unique Halloween customs all around the world.

Mexico

Perhaps the most well known holiday similar to Halloween, El Día De Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) is celebrated on the first two days of November. It’s a community-centered event in which families and friends gather to commemorate the memories of lost loved ones. Mexicans build altars, ofrendas, and pile food and

drinks on them as offerings to the dead. Bread, salt, and water are always included due to their symbolic meanings; other common foods include tangerines, guava, figs, sweet potatoes, and chilacayote (a native squash). They also decorate their homes with sugar skulls made of chocolate, seeds, and honey and inscribe the names of their loved ones within.

China

China’s Halloween equivalent is called Teng Chieh, which takes place on the 15th night of the seventh lunar month of each year. Families remember those who passed away by hanging up photographs and placing food and water in front of their photos. One of the most common foods prepared is yuanxiao (rice dumplings) filled with sugar, sesame, bean paste, or dried fruit. Families light up bonfires; lanterns shaped like dragons, birds, tigers, and other sacred animals and colorful lights float on mini paper boats to help guide the spirits onto the afterlife. Lantern owners also post pieces

of paper with written riddles onto the lanterns, and those with correct answers receive a small prize.

Japan

Japan only started celebrating Halloween very recently when Tokyo Disneyland hosted a Halloween event in 2000, but their traditions are similar to the ones in the U.S. The nation celebrates the holiday on October 31, but there are many Halloween parades throughout September and October. Though there is no trick-or-treating, there is a fun game where kids collect stamps around their neighborhood and exchange them for candy. The Japanese also wear elaborate cosplay costumes to street parties. Kawasaki hosts one

Italy

In Italy, Halloween lasts from October 31 to November 2 and is referred to as All Saints Day. The Italians have been celebrating their dead on these days for over a millennium. Families prepare a feast for their loved ones and create bean-shaped cakes called Beans of the Dead. They later go to church so that the spirits can be left alone with the feast. It is said that if the families return home and their food hasn’t been consumed, the spirits disapprove of their home and will conjure evil against them. In more

recent years, costumes have been popping up in Italian shops for the holiday, but there is no trick-or-treating.

Germany

The Germans also honor their deceased on All Saints Day. They, however, have their own traditions on October 31 similar to America’s: kids will dress up in costumes and go door-to-door to ask for treats from their neighbors. Families participate in pumpkin festivals and leave the pumpkins out on their doorsteps. There is also a 1,000-year-old haunted castle called the Burg Frankenstein that features actors dressed as ghosts and ghouls and is a popular venue for Germans and tourists alike.

Romania

Romanians don’t trick-or-treat like Americans, but kids do dress up in costumes and celebrate the holiday with parties and events



Arts and Entertainment

CULTURE

A Cultural Glimpse Into the Spooky Season

continued from page 20

on October 31. They emphasize Dracula and Transylvania (which is actually inspired by Romania), drawing many tourists and Halloween enthusiasts to its grounds. Many visitors tour the castle and watch plays featuring the vampire. There is also another holiday called St. Andrew's Night, cel-

ebrated on November 30, when garlic is brought out as a protection against ghosts; it isn't a serious belief, merely a fun, superstitious tradition.

Cambodia

The people of Cambodia honor their dead like many previously mentioned countries. Their festival P'chum Ben is a 15-day

celebration that occurs in either September or October (depending on the calendar). Cambodians typically bring out traditional foods like sticky rice and beans wrapped in banana leaves to Buddhist temples, where families and friends gather. Cambodians listen to speeches and songs at a temple while the spirits of their loved ones roam around.

America's Halloween traditions definitely share some similarities with other countries, but some cultures have completely different customs. Nonetheless, all around the world, different places have their own wonderful and unique ways of celebrating Halloween or its cultural equivalent. Though in many countries trick-or-treating and dressing up

in costumes is the norm, Halloween internationally is not defined by this stereotype, since other nations have festivals to honor their dead and symbolic traditions that create a nuanced depiction of what Halloween truly is. Regardless of where you live, let's hope these traditions live on for years to come.

MUSIC

By LEVI SIMON

The advent of COVID-19 has certainly slowed the release of new music, but the past few weeks have been surprisingly active. Here are some quick reviews of a few projects that have dropped, ranging from utterly forgettable to impressively potent.

BLACKPINK—"The Album"

Korean pop supergroup Blackpink has finally dropped the highly-anticipated, sugary sweet follow-up to their 2018 debut EP, "Square Up." "The Album" is a brisk eight tracks totaling 24 minutes, but each track is chock-full of energy from all four members, assisted by their punchy, driving production. There's not much variety between the pop ragers, but "The Album" gets in and out quickly, so it's not much of a detriment to its quality. The trap and EDM tinged production would kill at a party (whenever we get back to having those), and the hooks are sticky from front to back.

"The Album," however, isn't without its flaws. The collaboration with Selena Gomez, "Ice Cream," comes off as cloying and uncomfortable; the anti-drop on the track "Crazy Over You" drags all of the momentum of the project's buildup to a grinding halt; and most of all, "Bet You Wanna" with Cardi B only succeeds in wasting Cardi's talents with a throwaway verse and some horrid vocal processing. Despite its shortcomings, "The Album" is worth looking into if you're interested in K-pop or in the mood for a simple pop album.

Machine Gun Kelly—"Tickets to My Downfall"

Machine Gun Kelly made his first foray into pop-punk with "Tickets to My Downfall" after his largely panned rap career effectively crashed and burned following a feud with Eminem. "Tickets to My Downfall" is much more pop than punk, as it's openly manufactured for the radio, and there's no revolution-

ary ethos to be found anywhere. At worst, it's a shoddy, overcompressed recreation of the many, many pop-punk pastiches etched into our early 2000s culture. At best, it leans into its transparently fake, uncouth melodrama for a rush of pure pop adrenaline. The Halsey collaboration, "forget me too," is a perfect example of such a track, and songs like "concert for aliens" and "jawbreaker" capture the same meathheaded magic. If the project were consistently open about its derivative corniness, I might have enjoyed it more than I did, but more often than not, it careens toward cheap trap percussion and 808s à la the late Lil Peep, which comes off as far less than self-aware. The Travis Barker-aided drumwork, however, is punchy and boisterous throughout the record, and the guitar riffs are tight, albeit a bit lifeless. Overall, "Tickets to My Downfall" is openly fake and dumb, but I appreciate it for its honesty. Listeners might check it out if they're looking for some pop-punk to turn their brains off to. (If you're looking for some excellently written pop-punk, however, check out "Brave Faces, Everyone" by Spanish Love Songs, one of the best projects of the year.)

Idles—"Ultra Mono"

Now for some hardcore punk. Frontman Joe Talbot's electric energy surges through Idles's highly anticipated third project. Packed with toned, noisy riffs and leftist politics, "Ultra Mono" is a focused blast of an album that is a must-listen for any punk fan. But the star of the show is Talbot's soaring, animated delivery. His mantric and manic flow penetrates the mix on every track, serving as the lifeblood of the album. The way he delivers lyrics is both insistent and declarative—the perfect blend to support the demand for a more just world that Talbot preaches on every song. "Ultra Mono" is pointed and direct, rarely dragging or pulling punches, but sometimes that can be to its detriment. The ideas

are rarely presented with much poise or nuance. Listening to "Ultra Mono" can feel similar to the scene depicted on the album cover: getting hit over the head. Some examples of Talbot not leaving much up to the imagination include, but not limited to: "Consent, consent, consent, consent," "Our government hates the

second track's ethereal and subdued pads over blocky percussion are a more accurate tone-setter for the rest of the project. Sufjan covers a variety of themes over his decaying and dynamic soundscapes, such as faith and purpose. His lyricism is much more personal, nonspecific, and conversational than what Stevens has been

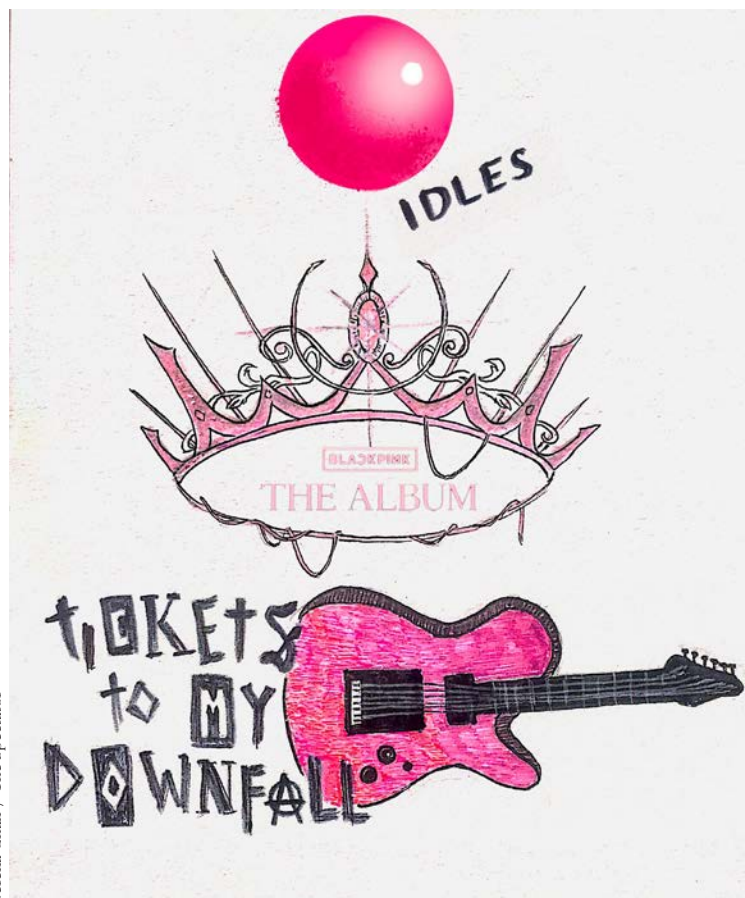
what it could be and what Sufjan has accomplished.

A\$AP Ferg—"Floor Seats II"

A\$AP Ferg has been perpetually disappointing since his bombastic and towering 2013 project, "Trap Lord." His forward-thinking, Southern-style, grandiose, and religious depictions of drug-dealing and crime life through a New York lens have since dissolved to sterile, forgettable commerciality without much personality or distinct flavor. Most hip-hop fans, however, have remained hopeful, as glimpses of Ferg's former greatness have shone through on singles and album tracks such as his smash hit, "Plain Jane." As for his latest attempt at redemption, it's certainly not as soulless as 2016's "ALWAYS STRIVE AND PROSPER," but it's far from "Trap Lord." Ferg embraces the rhythms and groove of the emerging New York drill scene to pull together a collection of textured bangers, but very little stands out about the project as a whole. The gritty, creeping synths that populate "Floor Seats II" are par for the course. The only percussion that sticks out is on the opener, and that's for the worse—the lumpy, accented half-groove isn't flattering at all, and the sound effects in the back of the mix sound out of place as they fail to add hype to an otherwise downbeat track. As for Ferg's rapping, he's clearly a talented emcee, but his lyrics are nothing special, and his flow isn't exciting enough to carry the relatively brief project.

There are a few highlights though. "In It" is a slapdash, skeletal combination of creaking bed frame samples, chanting vocals, and heavy bass, but guest rapper Mulatto and Ferg flow impressively enough to make the track into some above-average playlist fodder. But in general, "Floor Seats II" fades into the glut of hip-hop without much that stands out. I would be surprised if anyone remembers it in a few weeks, but check it out if you're in the market for some new tracks for your tepid workout playlist.

The Week in Review: A Selection of Album Appraisals



poor," and "This means war, anti-war." "Ultra Mono" is more than serviceable for what it is, but it's a step back from Idles's previous efforts.

Sufjan Stevens—"The Ascension"

Multi-instrumentalist Sufjan Stevens returns for an electronica epic in the vein of his 2010 project "The Age of Adz" but with a stronger emotional core and better attention to detail. While synths beep and twinkle around Stevens's thin falsetto and twittering tom fills in the opener, the

known to pen, and his transition away from his signature lofty character studies can end somewhat poorly, exemplified when he describes pooping in his pants and wetting the bed to very little benefit. And there are a few production mishaps that can break the vibe of the record. The swell of "Tell Me You Love Me" feels sloppy and undercooked, and the understated refrain of "Gillgamesh" is far too shrill—Sufjan's voice fades beneath the production in such an unrecognizable way. "The Ascension" is a good listen but pales in comparison to

TELEVISION

By GAVIN MCGINLEY

"The Boys" takes pride in its grittiness. With season one entering a superhero genre oversaturated with hyper-sanitized, kid-friendly adventures, the show stands out with a more mature, cynical take on the childhood staple. The series is surprisingly refreshing, in a market so long dominated by enjoyable but formulaic Marvel movies. More so, "The Boys" is a genuinely good television show, tackling relevant political themes alongside outstanding worldbuilding and character development. Its exaggerated aesthetic of over-the-top gore

and explicit imagery, often the forefront of its appeal, enhances the more nuanced aspects of its script. While its pacing and storytelling lack the polish of season one, season two of "The Boys" is an excellent follow up, building on the world and story as it expands the scope and complexity of the show's themes and plot.

On the surface, the world of "The Boys" is identical to real world depictions in other superhero films. Through the numerous explosions, capes, and lasers, however, the show strategically lets just enough of reality pollute the story to satirize the real world while remaining fun and exciting.

The antagonist of the show is not a singular person but a corporation by the name of Vought International, a media and pharmaceutical giant responsible for the management of America's superheroes. The face of Vought is the Seven, a team of the world's most powerful heroes who, like celebrities, have their every word and action planned by a PR team to maximize their public approval and hide their overwhelming narcissism. Loosely based on the Justice League, the Seven are led by Homelander (Antony Star), a man with Superman powers, a god complex, and a complete disregard for human life. Other

members include A-Train (Jessie T. Usher), the fastest man in the world who regularly takes performance-enhancing drugs in fear of being usurped, and the Deep (Chace Crawford), the Aquaman of the Seven and a serial perpetrator of sexual harassment.

Season one starts with Hughie Campbell (Jack Quaid), an unassuming and weak-spirited retail worker whose life is turned upside down when his girlfriend is killed after A-Train accidentally runs into her at superspeed. He's contacted by Billy Butcher (Karl Urban) to help him and his band of vigilantes (the titular Boys) take down Vought and the Sev-

en. Butcher, who is convinced Homelander killed his wife, is morally ambiguous and violent, often pushing the boundaries of what Hughie and the audience deem acceptable. The rest of the Boys, creatively named Frenchie (Tomer Capon), Mother's Milk (Laz Alonso), and the Female (Karen Fukuhara), while not nearly as questionable as Butcher, all have a propensity for crime and a loose ethical code; the fact that all these characters remain distinct and likable is a testament to the series' writing. Season two

continued on page 22

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

continued from page 21

raises the stakes, with the main gang becoming fugitives from the law and an immortal Nazi named Stormfront (Aya Cash) joining the Seven. Additionally, Homelander, who ended last season by killing his crush/mother figure (it's complicated), spirals further out of control as he begins a romantic relationship with Stormfront and, with the deployment of superheroes alongside the U.S. Army to fight super terrorists, starts committing war crimes.

One noticeable detail of "The Boys" is that no one's ever just killed. Characters are always exploded into giblets or burnt to a crisp or cut in half in horrific detail, leaving a graphic image in the viewer's memory. Though this distinguishes it from Marvel's brand of clean, bloodless media, the show's never-ending carnage is hardly unique within its genre. There have been dark, violent superhero stories going back to the '80s, when morally grey, obnoxiously edgy, grimdark aesthetics was the norm in comic books. Where "The Boys" differs is that it is capable of delivering a meaningful narrative behind its excessive brutality. These attempts at darker storytelling in comics often failed to include any depth, presenting a facade of maturity by doubling down on violence, sexual content, and nihilism without adding anything of substance.

Take, for example, the common storyline of Superman turning evil (or any alternative through cloning, multiple universes, etc.). The countless stories based around this pitch almost all stumble into the same pitfalls. Cripplingly aware of the stigma that comes with adapting content aimed at children (and specifically Superman, who's seen as simplistic and silly), every writer aiming to explore higher-minded concepts defaults to turning him into an angry, exaggerated supervillain to maximize the contrast with his typical boy scout persona.

Homelander, who could be another iteration of "Superman but bad," comes to represent so much more. In the context of the show, he's a symbol for radical evangelical conservatism and the toxicity of American exceptionalism, with his public persona of a humble, sincere, Christian patriot flowing into familiar coded, xenophobic rhetoric. When Homelander is deployed as a tool of the U.S. military, his strategy almost mirrors the horror of a drone strike, with him landing in some remote village, killing his target along with a number of innocent civilians, and flying away without facing any consequences, perfectly encapsulating the callousness of the War on Terror. Homelander's capacity for mindless gore is not only a shock tactic to emphasize how dangerous he is, but also a way for him to embody the real consequences of war and bloodshed.

This is where "The Boys" really shines: not through flashy violence or crazy action but through well-written characters and seamlessly incorporated political themes. Season one of "The Boys" was praised for the sensitivity with which it handled trauma and workplace sexual harassment, exploring the challenges of seeking justice in an environment focused on profit without defining its characters by their trauma. The newest season, while displaying a shift in focus, still hones in on a number of po-

litical issues.

Perhaps one of the less subtle ways politics is addressed in the show is with the introduction of Stormfront (Aya Cash), the newest member of the Seven and a character likable enough for the audience to be disappointed when it turns out she's named after an alt-right website (Stormfront was the first major white supremacist website on the internet) and not her lightning powers. While a Nazi villain is far from novel, her intense characterization paves the way for more complex political commentary. Her growing romantic relationship with Homelander, the archetypal American patriot, serves as a controversial condemnation of the readiness with which religious conservatives associate with extremists and draws parallels between the two groups. Additionally, Vought's willingness to overlook both of these heroes' flawed ideologies to protect its reputation plays into one of the biggest themes throughout the show: the cynical nature through which corporations view politics.

One of the running jokes throughout season two of "The Boys" is "girls get it done," the cliché, faux-feminist marketing slogan for Vought's "Avengers"-style movie about the Seven. While it's a clever jab at Disney and the rest of Hollywood, who like to force poorly constructed, semi-progressive lines and scenes into their

movies for no reason but to fake an enlightened world view, it shows an effort to explore identity in a new way. "The Boys" has plenty of representation across gender, race, and sexual orientation but remains critical of the

kind of media that reduces such characters to two-dimensional figureheads of social stereotypes. The characters are diverse and have complex, well-developed personalities with ideas, hopes, and struggles beyond their most surface-level traits.

tural issues not seen in the previous season. The plot of season two is almost disconnected from its pacing, with the most significant advancements holding seemingly little weight, and some of the most tense scenes holding little relevance. A great deal of

"The Boys" is a show that aims high while staying fun. It combines the elements of outstanding action-adventure with nuanced political commentary, all complete with realistic and engaging character writing.

Despite how intense the story and action can be, "The Boys" handles all of its characters with a level of nuance that gives the whole world, not just the main cast, a real sense of depth. The central group of protagonists all have their own quirks and distinct identities, and entire subplots are given to side characters with little relevance to the main plot, just to give their lives realistic progression. The Deep is given an entire arc of him joining a Scientology-like cult in a desperate bid to redeem his public image after he's exposed for sexual harassment; though he holds little importance to the rest of the plot, the level of thought put into all of his idiosyncrasies and repeated moral failings makes his story just as compelling as any other part of the show. Strangely, one of the least unique characters is Billy Butcher, arguably the most important figure in the series. Butcher falls into the archetype of a violent antihero with a heart of gold and would come off as predictable and boring if it weren't for Karl Urban's brilliant blend of humor and off-the-rails intensity.

Despite the show's overall clean execution, season two seems to have a few deeper, struc-

ture progression in the show happens through the main cast going to a place and completing an action without meeting any resistance, while high-intensity scenes are randomly inserted and rarely result in any shifts to the story. This makes some of the most important revelations and twists feel mundane and makes the more visually elaborate set pieces come across as meaningless. Nonetheless, the show manages to deliver exciting action and fascinating storytelling, and this issue never becomes major enough to disrupt the audience's experience.

"The Boys" is a show that aims high while staying fun. It combines elements of outstanding action-adventure with nuanced political commentary, complete with realistic and engaging character writing. Despite some minor structural issues in season two, it's a series that can flow from humor and graphic violence to scathing criticisms of its own genre and intricately crafted political allegory. Though at first glance "The Boys" seems like a mindless murder-fest, behind its stylized brutality is an intelligent, contemplative story well incorporated into its more eccentric elements.



Aries Ho / The Spectator

FOOD

By ALTHEA BARRETT

Halloween is here once again, and since most festive activities have been canceled due to the pandemic, it's hard to think of new things to do. There is, however, one constant in these uncertain times: food. Let's take a look at some Halloween-inspired treats you can make at home this season.

Pumpkin Whoopie Pies

Pumpkin whoopie pies are a favorite of mine. They are two soft pumpkin cookies fixed together with fluffy cream cheese filling, and I would honestly be happy with eating only them for the rest of my life—though I'd likely last about three weeks.

For the filling, you will need:

- 5 tbsp. butter
- 4 oz. cream cheese
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- A dash of ground cloves
- 3-3 ½ cups powdered sugar

For the cookies, you will need:

- 3 cups of flour
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground ginger

- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- 2 cups of packed brown sugar
- 2 ¾ cups of canned pumpkin
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla extract

For the frosting:

1. In a small saucepan, heat the butter over medium-low heat until melted to a light golden brown. Then, cool for 15 minutes.
2. In a bowl, beat the browned butter and cream cheese with a mixer on medium for about two minutes or until fluffy.
3. Add maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and ground cloves. Beat on low until combined.
4. Gradually beat in powdered sugar until the filling meets its desired consistency. Adding more powdered sugar leads to a denser texture.

For the cookies:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
2. Stir together the first seven ingredients listed above in a small bowl.
3. In a larger bowl, beat brown sugar, oil, and melted butter with a mixer at medium speed until combined.
4. Add eggs, pumpkin, and vanilla extract to the large bowl.

Beat for one minute.

5. Add the mixture from the first bowl to the second bowl, half at a time, beating well after each addition.
6. With rounded tablespoons, drop the batter 1 ½ inches apart onto the prepared cookie sheet.
7. Bake for 12-14 minutes or until tops spring back lightly when touched.
8. Spread about two teaspoons of the filling onto the flat bottoms of half of the cookies. Top with the remaining cookies.
9. Sift powdered sugar over the whoopie pies.
10. Keep the cookies uncovered, and chill for 30 minutes before serving.

Edible Mice

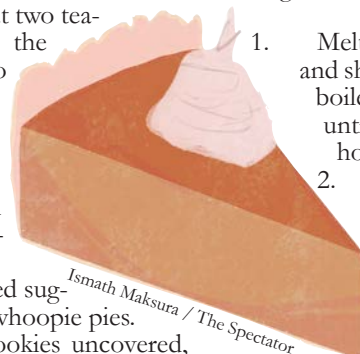
For something a little less taxing—and kind of cute—you can make edible mice. Whenever little kids came over for Halloween, my family would be sure to have at least a handful of them available. Made of cherries, almonds, and chocolate chips, these are a nice touch to any celebrations you

might want to have this year.

You will need:

- 6 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp. shortening
- 24 maraschino cherries with stems (drained)
- 24 milk chocolate drops
- 48 almond slices
- Garnish: white and red gel icing

1. Melt the chocolate chips and shortening in a double boiler over low heat. Stir until smooth. (Warning: hot)
2. Dip each cherry by the stem into the melted chocolate mixture, and set on wax paper.
3. Press a chocolate drop onto the opposite side of the cherry from the stem. This will be the head of the mouse.
4. Add two almond slices to each mouse as ears.
5. Use white and red gel icing to make little dots for eyes with the red on top of the white as pupils.
6. Cover the edible mice. Keep them refrigerated.



Ismath Maksura / The Spectator

Spooky Seasonings

Pumpkin Cheesecake

This final one is a classic in my household: pumpkin cheesecake. It's an absolute necessity for my mother every autumn and my father's favorite dessert. On the first day, we all get a slice, and then my father eats the rest of it. A pumpkin filling on a pecan crust with a bourbon cream topping, this dessert is rather time consuming to make—but absolutely worth it if you can.

For the crust, you will need:

- ¾ cup of graham cracker crumbs
- ½ cup of finely chopped pecans
- ¼ cup of granulated sugar
- ¼ cup of packed brown sugar
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted and cooled

For the filling, you will need:

- Three 8 oz. packages of cream cheese
- ½ cup of granulated sugar
- 1 ½ cup of packed brown sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 tbsp. bourbon
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. cornstarch

continued on page 23

Arts and Entertainment

FOOD

continued from page 22

- 1 ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. ground ginger
- ½ tsp. grated nutmeg

For the cream topping, you will need:

- 1 ½ cups of sour cream
- 3 tbsp. granulated sugar
- 1 ½ tbsp. bourbon

For the crust:

1. Mix the graham cracker crumbs, pecans, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and butter in a large bowl until blended.
2. Butter a 9-inch springform pan. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and ½ inches up the sides of the pan. Refrigerate for one hour or until firm.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

For the filling:

1. Beat the cream cheese, granulated sugar, and brown sugar in a large bowl on medium high speed.
2. Beat in eggs, cream, bourbon, and vanilla until the mixture is smooth.
3. Sift the cornstarch, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and nutmeg into the batter. Beat until mixed, and pour over the chilled crust. Place the pan on a baking sheet.
4. Bake for 60-70 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
5. Make the cream topping near the end of the baking time by mixing the sour cream, sugar, and bourbon in a medium-sized bowl until blended.
6. Spread the cream topping over the top of the hot cheesecake once it's done baking.
7. Bake the cheesecake for five more minutes. Then, transfer to a rack, and cool.
8. Cover the cheesecake loosely

with foil, and refrigerate overnight before serving. Refrigerate any leftovers.

There are still plenty of ways to celebrate Halloween, even if all the necessary precautions due to the pandemic have thrown most normal holiday traditions out the window. Experimenting with a new recipe is a great way to have fun this season, so wash your hands, put on your apron, and get baking!

CULTURE

By ROXY PERAZZO

Don't let COVID-19 trick you into thinking this Halloween can't still be a treat. Here are some great ways to make this Halloween season just as fun—I mean spooky—as all the others!

The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze

Just over an hour north of NYC at Van Cortlandt Manor, you'll find The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze, boasting over 7,000 carved pumpkins in a variety of designs. Everyone is required to wear masks and stay six feet apart, so you can enjoy getting scared without being scared of COVID-19. The Blaze promises lots of fun outdoor activities that make for great photo-ops, including a "Pumpkin Planetarium" and "choreographed" music for each location playing throughout the whole experience. The Blaze is open all the way through November 21, but get your tickets

now because it always sells out quickly!

Address: Van Cortlandt Manor, 525 S Riverside, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520
Price: \$25

The Skyline Drive-In

Drive-ins are making a comeback. The Skyline Drive-In in Brooklyn is showing horror and comedy-horror movies all month. Some titles include: "Scream" (1996), "Paranormal Activity" (2007), "Beetlejuice" (1988), and "The Evil Dead" (1981).

Address: 1 Oak St, Brooklyn, NY 11222
Price: \$55 (per car)

Mazezilla

While a little farther away from New York City, Mazezilla in Pennsylvania has a corn maze,

pumpkin patch, and a produce stand, all of which are, of course, outdoors. Their corn maze is 11 acres, and the pumpkin patch is vast as well, with both mini and large pumpkins along with a hayride to and from the patch! Mazezilla is open on weekends for all of October and for the first weekend of November.

Address: 415 Old, State Rte 115, Saylorsburg, PA 18353
Price: \$10-\$12 depending on the time of day

Student Union (SU) Events

For those who want to get in the Halloween spirit from the comfort of their own home, have no fear (maybe some, to make sure the vibe is complete), because the SU has several Halloween events planned! While we are all sad that Boograms and costume contests can't happen in person, the SU is brainstorming ways to uphold those traditions.

Aside from those two, they plan to host virtual Halloween movie nights and Halloween-themed art and photography contests.

Festive Treats

If you're afraid of ghosts or just want to stay indoors, whip up a spooky treat, and watch a scary movie with friends and family. There are so many amazing Halloween recipes out there, but here are a few of my favorites. The Food Network has a treat called Red Velvet Vampire Cupcakes. The normal red velvet recipe will do, but add red jam filling and two bite marks for a spooky twist! The next are Skeleton Cookies, so get a gingerbread man cookie cutter early this year, and decorate

them in a skeleton shape with icing when they're done. A quick dessert, meringues only need eyes and a mouth to be little ghosts! And rice crispy treats with spiderweb-like icing and little spider candies are also an easy Halloween dessert.

If there's one thing the pandemic has taught us, it is that sometimes it's good to reimagine our ways of doing things, and Halloween should be no different. Sure, it's a bit upsetting that people can't have get-togethers, but there's so much more we can do to get in the spirit of Halloween. Plenty of good comes from thinking outside the box—or coffin.



Ismath Maksura / The Spectator

A Guide To a COVID-19 Halloween

MUSIC

By CAROLINE PICKERING

"Bohemian Rhapsody." Widely considered to be one of the greatest songs in music history, it has been loved by generations since its release. In fact, it's one of just a few songs that has managed to re-enter the Billboard charts multiple times, decades after its original release. Since this year marks its 45th anniversary, it's important for us to remember why this song is so powerful and why people keep coming back to it.

"Bohemian Rhapsody" has received the most love, and much hate, for its incredibly unique and somewhat experimental song structure. Though Queen is known for producing music in out-of-the-box ways, "Bohemian Rhapsody" is certainly the crown jewel of their discography. The song combines the emotion of a ballad, the vocals of an opera, and the head-banging rhythm of classic rock together to create a spectacular piece of music you can't help but dramatically lip-sync to on long car rides.

As many songwriters are well aware, blending genres is no easy task, but Queen manages to pull it off spectacularly. Each section brings something new to the table to create a cohesive piece. One might think that playing an angry, almost punk-like hard rock section just after performing a verse that could be straight out of "The Merry Widow" wouldn't work, yet it does. The whole song is tied together seemingly effortlessly with the help of the intro and outro, which are the same in feeling and instrumentation, taking the lis-

Forty-Five Years Later: A Look Into Why "Bohemian Rhapsody" Has Stood the Test of Time

tener on a spectacular journey but still returning to the same place where the song began.

One of my personal favorite musical attributes of the song is the use of panning, which one can most heavily pick up on when listening through headphones. This is a recording technique where certain tracks, mainly the harmonies, are played in solely the right or left speaker. This gives us the feeling of being in the studio with the band, making you just as

spare him from being sentenced. The man pleads for the court to let him free, but they refuse, even though the man claims he is already damned. And in a turn of fate, the man breaks free and declares that the people have no right to cast him aside for any crimes he may have committed, because if they had loved him before, they should still love him now. The song ends on the same nihilistic note it begins, but this time, the man is at peace. Nothing

mian Rhapsody" was released in 1975). While this has never been fully confirmed, it has been widely speculated and accepted by many people, including Queen's guitarist, Brian May.

The metaphor is so powerful and so deeply rooted in the song that I'm discovering new nuances to this day, despite first listening to it five years ago. The "murder" in question is meant to be the murder of Mercury himself, killing the person he used to be and coming out as someone new. Being a part of the LGBTQ+ community was very stigmatized and still is today in many parts of the world, which is why Mercury apologizes to his mother, knowing he can't live a lie even if it hurts the people he cares about. He knows he'll face backlash from the media and that society doesn't want to "lose" him to homosexuality. There is also a reference to Galileo, who was condemned for speaking the truth of heliocentrism by the Catholic church in 1633. This is a metaphor for homosexuality, as many people condemn it on the grounds of going against Christian beliefs, and though Mercury was not Christian himself, he and others like him were still quite literally persecuted by the Church. He even cedes to the Christian conservatives, claiming the Christian demon Beelzebub will meet him in Hell.

But then the attitude of the song changes. It is no longer Mercury being tormented and accused by the public for who he is: he stands up, challenging them. He won't be cast aside for who he is, not after they've been praising

him for years. It's a moment filled with raw emotion: anger toward a system that refuses to let him live his truth, at people so full of their own ignorance they can't even see the world around them for what it is. It's a moment that anyone who has ever faced any kind of discrimination or failure will recognize.

That's why this song has become a power ballad for generations. "Bohemian Rhapsody" is packed with passion and meaning. It's truly special when you, as a listener, can really resonate with the message the artist is trying to convey and hear just how much it means to him or her in the craft itself.

This song reaches a special anniversary at a time when the rights of the LGBTQ+ community are coming into question, with two Supreme court judges earlier this month stating their plans to renege on the 2015 decision that allowed same-sex marriage in the United States. The LGBTQ+ community has faced and still continues to face many hardships, and for many, "Bohemian Rhapsody" is a testament to those struggles and a message of overcoming them. It's a song that makes people feel heard and loved.

Forty-five years later, "Bohemian Rhapsody" still stands out as arguably one of the greatest songs ever written. And while it's been many years since Freddie Mercury died, his legacy lives on through "Bohemian Rhapsody," still giving courage, voice, and hope to thousands of people all over the world.

"Bohemian Rhapsody" is actually a powerful and beautiful metaphor for singer-songwriter, Freddie Mercury, and his personal experiences and struggles of coming to terms with being LGBTQ+ in 1970s Britain.

much a part of the song as the music surrounds you.

But a great melody is nothing without lyrics, and personally, I think "Bohemian Rhapsody" features some of the greatest lyrical storytelling of any song.

At first glance, the song is the story of a man who has committed murder and now must face the consequences of his crimes. He laments to his mother that he doesn't want to cause her pain, but what's done is done, and he can't lie to himself. In the operatic section, he is facing trial, with the members of court begging to

really matters, after all.

This is already an incredible story, one of heartbreak and love, loss and resilience. The story, however, goes so much deeper than a mere murder trial. "Bohemian Rhapsody" is actually a powerful and beautiful metaphor for singer-songwriter, Freddie Mercury, and his personal experiences and struggles of coming to terms with being LGBTQ+ in 1970s Britain. It's said that it took Mercury seven years to write the song, during which being gay was legalized in England (homosexuality was legalized in 1967; "Bohe-

Sports

NBA FINALS

Lakers Clobber Heat to Win 2020 NBA Finals

By AIDAN FINGERET, PHILIP VON MUEFFLING, and PHILLIP PHAN

In likely the wackiest NBA Playoffs ever, a familiar face finished out on top. LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Miami Heat in six games in the NBA Finals for the team's record-tying 17th NBA title. With play from the NBA's Orlando bubble finally concluded, here is a breakdown of the Lakers and the Heat, as well as an early look at the landscape of the league for next season, whenever that may be.

Miami Heat

The Heat made a Cinderella run through the playoffs, downing favorites such as the Milwaukee Bucks to win the Eastern Conference Finals. Miami became the first fifth-seeded team to ever make the Finals. Before the playoffs, the Miami Heat were touted as a team with a young core and good pieces but lacking a true star. They were expected to be a first to second round exit by many.

Led by coach Erik Spoelstra, a three time NBA champion himself, the Heat, however, were able to engineer a dominant playoff run. The Heat swept the Pacers in the first round before easily dispatching title favorite and first seed in the Eastern Conference, Milwaukee Bucks, in five games. In the Eastern Conference Finals, the Heat proceeded to beat the Celtics in six games. Leading up to the finals, all of the Heat's losses were less than 10 points, and one occurred in overtime.

Miami kept up with the Lakers in Game 1 but lost key players, Goran Dragic, to a torn plantar fascia, and Bam Adebayo, to a shoulder injury. Due to the mounting injuries, the Heat couldn't stop the Lakers and lost Game 1. Dragic was expected to miss the rest of the series indefinitely. A hobbled Miami Heat team was demolished in 2, but they came back to win Game 3 after an all time great Finals performance from Jimmy Butler, who had a 40 point triple double and left it all out on the court. Adebayo returned for Game 4 but as a shell of himself, and the Heat fell once again to the Lakers in Game 4. Butler willed the Heat to a tough win in Game 5 with a 35 point triple double, hitting clutch shots, but the team looked tired in Game 6 and lost the series.

The Heat's defense was phenomenal in the playoffs, switching from 2-3 zone to man constantly. The high basketball IQ of Spoelstra combined with the talent of lengthy defenders Butler, Adebayo, Jae Crowder, and Andre Iguodala proved to form an elite defense. The Heat culture, defined by a gritty, unselfish, and defense-first mentality, was easily seen throughout the playoffs. All of the players bought in and prioritized winning over anything else, with Meyers Leonard being an example. He started for most of the regular season but saw little playing time throughout the playoffs. Instead of complaining, he stood and cheered with infectious energy throughout the whole playoffs. Five-time all star Butler was the team leader in the playoffs and stepped up in clutch moments. After being traded from the 76ers and Timberwolves because he was a "locker room cancer" who rattled the team's younger players for not working hard enough, Butler was finally surrounded by people who wanted to win as badly as he did. He showed up in the Finals, scoring 30+ point triple doubles in Games 3 and 5. Without Dragic and Adebayo in Game 3, Butler had a monstrous 40 point night, taking over in the 4th quarter and mouthing to James, "You're in trouble."

He proved to be capable of leading a team to a championship.

He was not without help, however, as many of the Heat's young stars also performed well. Tyler Herro consistently gave the Heat offense off the bench and showed up in key moments, including a 37 point explosion against the Celtics. Duncan Robinson's gravity as a shooter opened up the Heat's offense and was a consistent threat on the floor. Adebayo and Dragic, who have both made all-star appearances, were the second and third best players on the team, respectively. Dragic played the best basketball of his career, leading the team in scoring with 20 points per game up until the Finals. Adebayo was a double-double machine throughout the playoffs and notably the best player in the Heat-Celtics series.

With their unprecedented run, Miami will become a very attractive destination to many free agents this offseason. Equipped with a young core, Heat will make many deep playoff runs to come. Butler has had a legacy-defining playoffs, going toe-to-toe with the GOAT in the Finals and playing about 47 minutes in each game. Spoelstra has added another Finals appearance to his resume and remains one of the elite coaches in the NBA. Though the team fell short of an NBA championship, Heat fans should be very excited about the coming seasons.

Los Angeles Lakers

This championship marks the 17th in Lakers history, tying them with the Celtics for the most NBA titles in league history, though they have won five more than Boston this decade. This championship win made James not only the fourth player to win a championship with three teams, but also the first to win Finals MVP on three different teams.

The importance of Anthony Davis for this team cannot be overstated. He was their anchor on defense while also being the most overqualified second option in the NBA. After Game 4, there was real debate as to who should win Finals MVP between Davis and James. Though Davis did not win the award, to be in that conversation with a player of James's caliber is an accomplishment in and of itself.

The defining feature of this Lakers team was their defense. With a defensive-minded yet underrated head coach in Frank Vogel, possibly the best defender in the NBA in Davis, and a rotation chock full of capable defenders who completely bought into the defense-first philosophy, the Lakers had the undisputed best defense in the NBA playoffs. At times, it became almost impossible for their opponents to score in the half-court against them.

Though the Lakers possessed the best offensive and defensive engine a team could ask for in James and Davis, they still needed their role players to step up, and step up they did. The best Laker aside from Davis and James was Rajon Rondo, who has long held the reputation of someone who does not always show up in the regular season; a lot of Lakers fans questioned whether Rondo should even play in the playoffs after poor performance on both ends of the floor for two straight regular seasons. Despite his prior shortcomings, he almost immediately proved those questions to be unfounded. Rondo even set the playoff record for most assists off the bench in a single postseason after missing the first five games of the postseason. After Rondo, the most important player for this Lakers team was Kentavious Caldwell-Pope, who was, like Rondo, not a fan favor-

ite heading into this postseason, but showed he can play on the biggest of stages. In Game 4, it was five straight points from Caldwell-Pope that sealed the game for the Lakers, putting them up 3-1, a Finals lead that had only been come back from once.

Looking Toward Next Season

The longest season in NBA history came to a thrilling conclusion, with superstar Butler along with the Heat's rising stars against the Lakers two-headed monster of James and Davis. In the next season, the hierarchy of the NBA could look very different.

Just one year removed from their fifth straight Finals appearance, the Warriors won just 15 of 65 regular season games in 2019-20 and were on pace to have one of the worst seasons in the organization's history. They currently have one of the worst cap situations in the league with three max deals on their salary, not including the four-year, \$100 million extension given to Draymond Green last summer. This heavily restricts them in free agency to low salary players and veteran minimum deals. Green, Stephen Curry, and Klay Thompson are all expected to return healthy after they all missed parts of last season. The Warriors will look to go on a revenge tour to return to their previous dominant play. They will look to use their Number 2 overall pick in this year's draft to bolster their roster and become a contender once again.

Similar to the Warriors, the Brooklyn Nets will look to their stars returning to the league from major injuries to elevate them from pretenders to contenders. After signing a huge deal with the Nets, Kevin Durant missed all of this season following his Achilles rupture in the 2019 NBA Finals. Durant should be ready to go for training camp and hopefully return to his All-Everything caliber. The Nets hope that Kyrie Irving, who surprisingly decided to sit out of the bubble, will return as well. It is now up to the Nets and only the Nets to become contenders—they have the star power, the young talent, and an intriguing young coach in Steve Nash.

The Clippers have all the talent in the world, yet on the biggest stage they imploded and blew a 3-1 lead to a talented Denver Nuggets team. It was time for change in the other half of Los Angeles, and after the dismissal of NBA legend Doc Rivers, new coach Ty Lue will look to turn this team around. Despite Allen Iverson stepping over Lue in the most disrespectful play in NBA history, Lue has done quite well for himself as a coach, winning a championship in Cleveland with who else but James. All eyes will be on the fun guy, Kawhi Leonard, who has to live up to the hype. If he plays at the level he did for the Raptors and Spurs, not even Pandemic Paul George can stop this team from being championship contenders.

Finally, it's time to talk about the Milwaukee Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo cannot do it alone. After he won Most Valuable Player for the second season in a row, the Bucks have a perennial MVP candidate on their hands. But it is not enough to simply give him Khris Middleton and say "go win a championship." They need to sign Antetokounmpo to a max extension and look to surround him with capable 3-point shooters. Look for the Bucks to make a run at 3-point ace Joe Harris in free agency.

Though the landscape of the NBA will certainly look different come the 2021 season, we are in for some fantastic basketball.

Top Five Halloween Sports Moments

By MAYA BROSNIK

Halloween is a spooky night itself, but don't get it confused—sports don't take a night off on the 31st. In honor of Halloween, we're counting down the top five coolest Halloween sports moments.

Honorable Mention: This one was not on Halloween, but the spookiness factor makes up for it. The Cubs and the Mets were in a race for the 1969 postseason, and the Cubs were up by 2 ½ games. The two teams were playing each other on September 9. The game seemed ordinary until a black cat wandered onto the field. The cat went straight to the Cubs dugout, walked back and forth a few times, and then disappeared, but it was enough to curse the team. The Cubs lost the 2 ½ game lead they had over the Mets and their spot in the playoffs, while the Mets went on to secure their first ever World Series win.

5. In Game 3 of the World Series on Halloween 2009, Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod) hit a ball deep down the right field line which hit high off the wall for a double, putting the Yankees in good position to score with second and third and one out. The only thing was that A-Rod was standing on second signaling homerun. After both he and the Yankees' coaches protested, the umpires convened and went inside to check the replay. A minute later, they emerged and overturned the call stating that it actually hit a camera in the stands, giving the MLB its first postseason replay review homerun and A-Rod his first ever world series hit.

4. The Wizards beat the Celtics 114-69 on Halloween 2002. Not only was this the greatest margin of a win on Halloween, but it also was the Celtics' worst ever loss by point differential. Even including the thrashing they delivered to the Celtics, the Wizards/Bullets still own the worst record on Halloween with a .263 winning percentage on the date.

3. Leading up to Halloween 2010, NBC officials were doing everything they could to get people to go to the Saints at Steelers game, including a pre-football costume contest. This was an ordinary promotional pitch until someone pointed out that they must be breaking some sort of record. This led to a Guinness World Records representative being in attendance for the game and a 20-10 Saints victory. The previous record of 508 costumed participants, like the Steelers, was easily defeated that Halloween as the New Orleans contest hosted 17,777 costumed people.

2. The Arizona Diamondbacks were leading Game 4 of the 2001 World Series with one out in the 9th inning and were looking to take a 3-1 lead in the series. The Yankees' first baseman Tino Martinez had other ideas as he stepped to the plate and hit a game-tying home run to send the ballgame into extra innings and for the first time ever, past midnight and into November. Just a few minutes later, Derek Jeter hit a walk off homerun to win the game and tied the series at 2-2, earning the nickname "Mr. November."

1. The spookiest Halloween moment of all took place in 2009 during the Spurs vs. Kings game. Out of nowhere, a bat flew onto the court near the end of the first quarter. The officials halted the game to try to catch the bat, but the fox mascot in a Batman costume struggled to do so. Instead, Spurs guard Manu Ginobili lined up his shot and swatted the bat out of the air with his bare hands. The Batman theme song played, and the game continued with a Spurs victory. The bat, unlike the cat in the 1969 Cubs and Mets game, did not seem to do much in the way of luck though, as the Kings did not make the playoffs, and the Spurs were knocked out in round one.

Sports

WNBA FINALS

The Seattle Storm Wins Its Second Championship in Three Years

By ALICIA YU

The Seattle Storm has been absolutely unstoppable in the Wubble (WNBA Bubble), capping off its historic season with a remarkable 18-4 regular season record and 6-0 play-offs record. Led by superstar forward Breanna Stewart and experienced guard Sue Bird, the team ended its season in a fitting 3-0 sweep against the Las Vegas Aces, asserting its sheer dominance in the league yet again.

Twenty-six-year-old Stewart has had an incredible impact on the floor throughout the season, becoming the Storm's most reliable weapon. Her versatility—three-point shooting, lane-driving, aggressive defending, and meticulous passing—has made her nearly impossible to guard. In game 1, she scored 37 points, nearly breaking the record for most points scored in a final's game. In addition, she averaged 25.7 points, 4.0 assists, and 7.8 rebounds per game throughout the playoffs, which is even more impressive given that she suffered a devastating Achilles injury in April. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Stewart confessed that

“[she] wasn't sure if [she] was ever going to be back to where [she] was.” This setback, however, obviously did not deter her as she returned in full swing, arguably in even better shape than before. As Stewart later remarked, “To be able to be here—to be able to see myself playing like this and having so much potential going forward—it's exciting.”

age was finally catching up to her. Her unparalleled experience makes her a great asset both on and off the court, and her quickness and agility make her a tough guard to defend—even against the best defenders in the league. Furthermore, her unmatched court vision and superior play-making enable her to dish teammates easy buckets. This

the Storm, as many other players stepped up when it mattered most and made the case for their greatness. The Storm found a reliable guard in 27-year-old Jewell Loyd, who reigned as the second leading scorer in the franchise this season behind Stewart. Veteran forward Alysha Clark, who was unanimously named to the WNBA's 2020 All-De-

was forward Natasha Howard, who was named the 2019 WNBA Defensive Player of the Year. Howard's shooting in the paint and unmatched size advantage have been pivotal to the Storm's dominance near the hoop.

Equipped with a strong lineup of rising stars, experienced veterans, and, well, Stewart (who defies all categories), the Storm entered the season with a single goal in mind: to win another championship. All season long, they lived up to expectations, cementing their identity as a high caliber team in a league of its own. The best part is: there's no stopping the Storm from here. With a stacked lineup of developing superstars like Stewart and Loyd, the Storm has an immense wealth of talent that it is sure to capitalize on going forward. This WNBA season was filled with many uncertainties—a cancellation of all professional sports, a Disney restart bubble, a frenzy of trades and deals—but the Storm made one thing very clear: the sky's the limit, and they have no intentions of stopping any time soon.

This season has been nothing short of exciting for Stewart, as she can now finally begin her well-deserved break with a championship ring and Finals MVP trophy to her name.

Indeed, this season has been nothing short of exciting for Stewart, as she can now finally begin her well-deserved break with a championship ring and Finals MVP trophy to her name.

Going strong at 39 years old, team leader Bird has also been a key factor in the Storm's fourth championship. Though Bird is a 17-year veteran, her strength and skill quashed all doubts that her

comes as no surprise though, as she holds the WNBA record for the most assists all time. In fact, she broke the final's assist record in game 1, setting 16 assists in her usual dominant fashion.

Stewart and Bird make an incredible duo, but as the sports world has seen time and time again, two superstars alone cannot win a team championship. This statement could not be truer for

defensive First Team, gave the Storm the defensive boost they needed with her incredible athleticism and range. Another player who made huge contributions to the Storm's lineup was guard Jordin Canada, who filled in for Bird in a few playoff games. Canada has proved herself to be a great playmaker and lane-driver, despite her small frame. Topping off the Storm's ensemble of talented supporting players

Sports Editorial

Billy and the Haunted House of New York Sports

By AIDAN FINGERET and KRISH GUPTA

“Alright young'uns, step right up and enter, if you dare, to the New York Sports Haunted House!” bellowed the scraggly tour guide.

“Mom, I don't wanna go,” shouted young Billy. “New York Sports are scary bad.”

“Honey, it's okay,” she replied. “It can't be that bad. After all, how bad can a sports team be?”

Young Billy gathered his pride and stepped up to join the other three members of the tour group, clutching his mother's hand tightly. As the group headed into the house, the tour guide explained, “The NYSHHS [New York Sports Haunted House Society] is not liable for any insanity experienced while exploring the New York Sports Haunted House. We have had some... er... incidents.” He had to add that disclaimer due to an incident last season when an entire tour group ended up in a mental facility, which resulted in an ongoing lawsuit that he was not authorized to speak about.

They first came across the Hall of Football. As they entered, the tour guide warned, “Be careful to watch your step, many have lost entire seasons due to the turf in here. It's the exact turf that was on the field for the 2020 Jets vs. 49ers

game—very hard stuff to get a hold of due to the poor quality of it. Whoever is still left when we get to the end of the hallway will then enter into the butt dimension.”

As the group carefully stepped across the turf, one five-year-old decked out in NY Giants apparel shouted, “I'M THE NEXT SAQUON BARKLEY!” and ignoring the tour guide's warnings, sprinted across the turf through the cones when he suddenly let out an ear piercing scream and crumbled to the ground, clutching his leg.

The tour guide immediately pressed a red button on the wall, calling the ambulance. “Let's move on,” he said as he briskly exited the room, leaving the poor child writhing in pain on the floor as the wail of the ambulance neared. “The medics will salvage what's left of him.”

When Billy made it to the door of the butt dimension, he was terrified of what he might find. Once inside, he saw something truly gut wrenching: hundreds of monitors surrounded them on all four sides of the very narrow room, all of which were playing the same five seconds of that fateful Jets vs. Patriots game on Thanksgiving night in 2012. The camera kept panning to Mark Sanchez's face as he collided with the behind of his O-Lineman and the voice

of Troy Aikman repeating “the backside of Brandon Moore” set to scary music. Billy and his mom grew paralyzed with fear at the entrance, though the tour guide startled them out of their trance by saying, “We all remember where we were that night, watching Mark Sanchez pull one of the most humiliating plays in the history of sports. If you're wondering what those things flying across the room are, you would be correct in thinking that they are butts. In fact, [Moore] was kind enough to

have to remind me? I've spent the last eight years erasing the memories of that night and now...now.” He trailed off, proceeding to turn back and run through the Hall of Football to the entrance of the Haunted House. Apparently forgetting the MetLife Turf implanted in the Hall of Football, Billy heard the loud blood curdling scream of the man and a thud, followed by the whimpering of the five-year-old. Not daring to look back, Billy sprinted through the flying butts and stopped

ed House. Only the strongest will live to see the light at the end. Three people in the history of the house have made it all the way through, and one of them is me.” The tour guide had a misty faraway look and shuddered.

“We have reached the Knicks Korridor,” he announced. Ghosts that looked like stars Kevin Durant, Kyrie Irving, Zion Williamson, Kristaps Porzingis, and LeBron James roamed the room. “The ones that got away,” the tour guide explained. “This room is rumored to be haunted with the ghosts of players the Knicks could have had. Every October, these ghosts return and possess innocent visitors.” Billy noticed a large hulk-like man, consisting of several actors stacked up with the head of James Dolan stomping around the premises. “And why have one horror in a room dedicated to the most beleaguered organization in the league when you can have many?” the tour guide continued. “This room also has past coaches in the walls. Isaiah Thomas and Derek Fisher, among other terrible coaches, snap at the ankles of passersby.”

The three remaining guests slowly weaved through the ghosts, avoided eye contact with monster James

“We all remember where we were that night, watching Mark Sanchez pull one of the most humiliating plays in the history of sports.”
—Haunted House tour guide

let us take a cast of his butt, so you could have as accurate a butt fumble experience as possible. Get out of this room quickly, or you may be stuck in the fumble dimension for all eternity.”

One group member, a middle aged man donning a Sam Darnold jersey, broke out into a fit. His breathing quickened, and he began to growl as he shouted, “Why did you

at the doorway of the next room. Out of the five people who started on the tour, two were gone. Billy, his mom, and the grandmother of the five-year-old were the only ones remaining.

“And then there were three,” the tour guide ominously whispered, sending a chill down Billy's spine. “And now, we have reached the second-to-last stop of the Haunt-

continued on page 26

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Sports Editorial

Twitch and Soccer: An Unusual Mix

By SHAFIUL HAQUE

The world's most prominent soccer stars are well known for their goals, assists, and mind-blowing tricks on the field. During the COVID-19 pandemic however, soccer has come to an unforeseen halt worldwide. Many of these soccer players, bored and trapped in their luxurious homes, eventually stumbled upon a platform called Twitch.

Twitch is an online streaming service on which people can livestream their gameplay and reaction to videos. Soccer players saw Twitch as an opportunity to have fun with their audience and contribute to COVID-19 relief funds. As a result, many migrated briefly to this platform, and some are still active now.

Sergio Agüero, or Kun Agüero, is an Argentinian forward for Manchester City in the Premier League. He is famous on and off the pitch, with over 400 career goals to his name and 14.7 million followers on Instagram. During lockdown, he began to play video games, the first being FIFA 19. He is known to get very angry at times, often raging at the game and even screaming when he loses a match. As his audience grew, he held livestreams during which he would chat with his viewers and talk about events in his life. Surprisingly, on one stream, he called his friend Lionel Messi, F.C. Bar-

celona superstar. Agüero also began to play video games with other South American streamers, such as Ocelote, Ibai, and Papo. Some of the other games that he has played were Rocket League, Fall Guys, and Among Us, multiplayer games that have been gaining extreme popularity on Twitch. Agüero has also given back to the Twitch community, gifting Argentinian Twitch streamer Cyroo \$500 for his father's diagnosis of cancer.

Another player who joined the Twitch platform is English soccer player Dele Alli, who plays for Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League. He is a well-known athlete in England, with 7.2 million followers on Instagram at only the age of 24. Along with his outstanding football background, Alli has embraced the Twitch lifestyle during quarantine despite having never used it before. He encouraged Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne to join him in a Soccer Aid event to raise funds for the COVID-19 relief effort. The pair played a few games of the crowd-pleaser Fortnite and earned almost \$2 million. Both players were happy to use their online platform to help those affected by the pandemic around the world. In an interview with NBC Sports, De Bruyne explained how he felt using his platform positively: "We are more fortunate than others, so we are able to

do more [...] and in the end, we were just doing something fun while raising money for charity, so at the end of the day it's a combination of doing something fun and nice for the community."

Some players even used the platform on a larger scale by collaborating with other celebrities to raise money for charity. Gamers Without Borders was a fundraising event on Twitch in which gamers competed in tournaments for a \$10 million charity prize pool. Donations were made to charities working to stop the spread of COVID-19. Gamers Without Borders involved a FIFA 19 event for some of the biggest names in soccer, such as Trent Alexander-Arnold, Alli, Paulo Dybala, João Félix, and André Silva. Other celebrities, such as rapper Snoop Dogg, singer-songwriter Liam Payne, and comedian and DJ Kerwin Frost, also joined these athletes. Alexander-Arnold was matched up against Payne, who he beat in the first two matches out of three. Dybala also managed a 2-0 sweep against Alli, as did Félix against Silva. Finally, Frost beat Snoop Dogg with a score of 2-1. This event's \$10 million contribution to charity made Gamers Without Borders one of the biggest charity esports events of all time. The fundraiser was an excellent way to raise money to aid those affected by the outbreak, and participating soccer players felt

SPORTSBEAT

The **LA Dodgers** won the World Series for the first time since 1988, with Shortstop **Corey Seager** winning World Series MVP.

Former All-Pro WR **Antonio Brown** signed with the **Buccaneers**, his fourth team in the last three years.

The NBA is targeting a start date for the 2020-2021 season on **Christmas Day**, while players are pushing for a later date, possibly **MLK Day**.

The **Miami Dolphins** named fifth overall pick **Tua Tagovailoa** their starting quarterback, despite a strong start from Ryan Fitzpatrick.

Khabib Nurmagomedov defeated Justin Gaethje at UFC 254 and then **retired** shortly after, going down as one of the best to ever fight in the octagon.

Track and field athlete **Christian Coleman** has been banned from track for two years due to missed doping tests. He will miss the Tokyo Olympics.

they were helping a good cause by supporting these charities.

Many soccer players used Twitch streaming to engage with their audience and raise money for charities. Because they couldn't be on the field, they decided to entertain their audience in other ways—with rage and banter. As an avid

soccer fan, I was already excited when many of the players whom I loved started using Twitch. Watching them play games on the field and then play video games at home was a new and enjoyable experience, one that nearly made me forget about the pandemic.

Sports Editorial

Billy and the Haunted House of New York Sports

continued from page 25

Dolan, and everything seemed to be going well until, about halfway through the hall, the grandmother erupted in a deep voice, "I, with Kyrie, will bring the city of Brooklyn a championship!"

"Oh no, I had hoped this wouldn't happen," the tour guide muttered under his breath. "Not after last year. The ghost of KD seems to have possessed her." Then, louder, to Billy and his mom, the tour guide reassured them, "We'll have to leave her here. She'll emerge sooner or later." In reality, the tour guide knew that the poor old woman was stuck there until KD fulfilled his promise and brought the Nets a NBA Championship.

Billy, still gripping his mother's hand, tiptoed through the rest of the room and made it to the doorway of the last room. The tour guide announced, "You two have made it to the final stop of the tour, but don't get too excited yet. Legend has it that this last room is the most difficult to advance past due to the supernatural forces at work. The Curse of Bambino was broken back in '04, and now

this room is a swirl of broken magic. Welcome to the Baseball Diamond of Despair."

"Here you will experience some of the worst plays in New York baseball history for as long as you can endure," the tour guide explained. Billy and his mom entered to find a **b i z a r r e f u l l - s i z e d**

b a s e - b a l l d i a m o n d. As they brushed off their initial disbelief, the tour guide launched into a monologue: "Before there was any mention of the War-

riors or Clippers blowing a 3-1 lead, there was this. In the

2004 ALCS, two of the biggest rivals in the history of sports, the Yankees and the Red Sox, were facing each other. The Yankees were up 3-0 and had all the momentum until this play." Billy and his mom then turned to watch on the Jumbotron as the Yankees, up 4-3 in the bottom of the ninth of game four, pitched to Bill Mueller as Dave Roberts took off for second. The throw from Jorge Posada came in just a tad late, giving all the momentum to the Red Sox and allow-

ing Roberts to score off a single. The Red Sox went on

to win Game 4 and propeled themselves to a victory in seven games and their first World Series win since 1918, breaking the Curse of Bambino."

Billy's mom, transfixed on the play, dropped his hand. The tour guide looked over and cursed under his breath. "And I forgot to mention, because of the forces in this room, if you look at the screen for too long, you'll remain stuck there until the Yankees beat the Red Sox in a ALCS Series in the future."

Billy let out a cry and started shaking his entranced mother, "Mom, don't leave me here!" The tour guide attempted to calm him down. "I hate to say it son, but we need to keep moving and get out of here before we get stuck ourselves. You need to gather your wits; follow me."

The tour guide scampered toward second base, making sure not to look at the Jumbotron. Billy was left with no choice but to follow.

And then the unthinkable happened. They made it out. Billy dove out of the exit



Adrianna Peng / The Spectator

The Spooktator!

The Nightmare Before Christmas is NOT a Halloween Movie

By ASA MUHAMMAD

“The Nightmare Before Christmas” is a beloved holiday classic—but for which holiday is a contentious matter. I’m here to resolve any confusion you may have. “The Nightmare Before Christmas” is definitively a Christmas movie. This may seem confusing to some of you. Yes, the protagonist is literally the Pumpkin King. Yes, he lives in Halloween Town. This is the first reason why the film is not a Halloween movie. Halloween Town and the Pumpkin King are the status quo of this movie, meaning Halloween is the norm. You don’t judge a movie by its norm. Christmas, however, is an event—one that is central to the plot of the movie. This deviation from the norm is what defines this movie. The nightmare when? The nightmare before Christmas.

The character arcs and conflict of the story all surround Christmas.

Another argument is the time of the movie in the human realm, which is Christmas Eve, as seen when Jack Skellington arrives to give his “gifts” to the world. The definition of a Christmas movie is relatively loose when it comes to movies that take place on or around Christmas. The most famous example is “Die Hard” (1988), but to keep this as close to “The Nightmare Before Christmas” as possible, we’ll establish a precedent with “Batman Returns” (1992). “Batman Returns” is another gothic Tim Burton film scored by Danny Elfman, and it just so happens to be a Christmas movie as well. Despite releasing on June 16, 1992, the backdrop of Christmas is ever-present in the film, an important precedent for

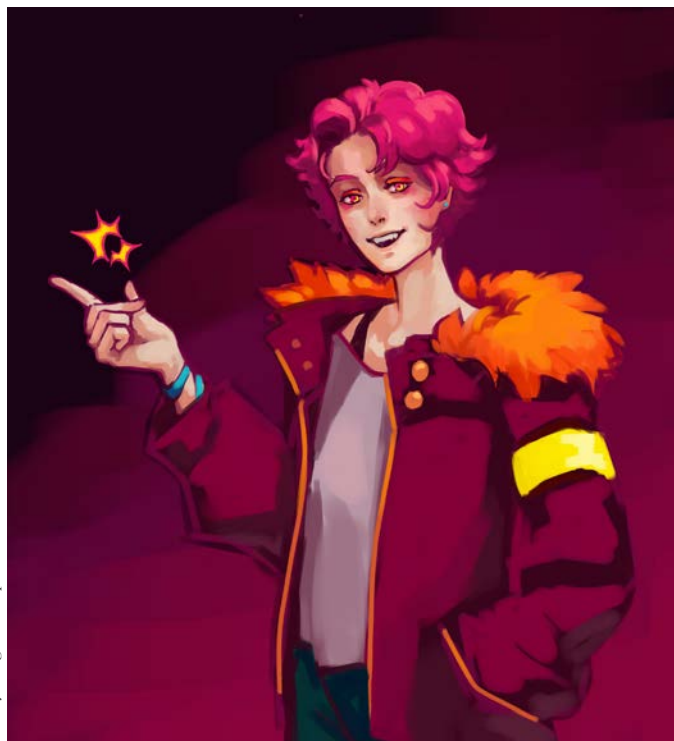


“The Nightmare Before Christmas.”

The main source of confusion surrounding “The Nightmare Before Christmas” is that it was released on October 13, 1993. It’s uncommon that a Christmas movie is released during the height of spooky season, and the gothic nature and overall Tim Burton-ness of the film didn’t fit well with traditional American notions of Christmas, so it was marketed as a Halloween movie. Even then, the film was genius, giving the audiences a pretense of Halloween, establishing a spooky setting that the viewer could relate to. In doing so, the audience was better able to relate to Jack Skellington and his journey to understanding the Christmas spirit, and that’s what makes “The Nightmare Before Christmas” a subversive masterpiece.

Tricks and Treats: Personifying our Favorite Halloween Candies

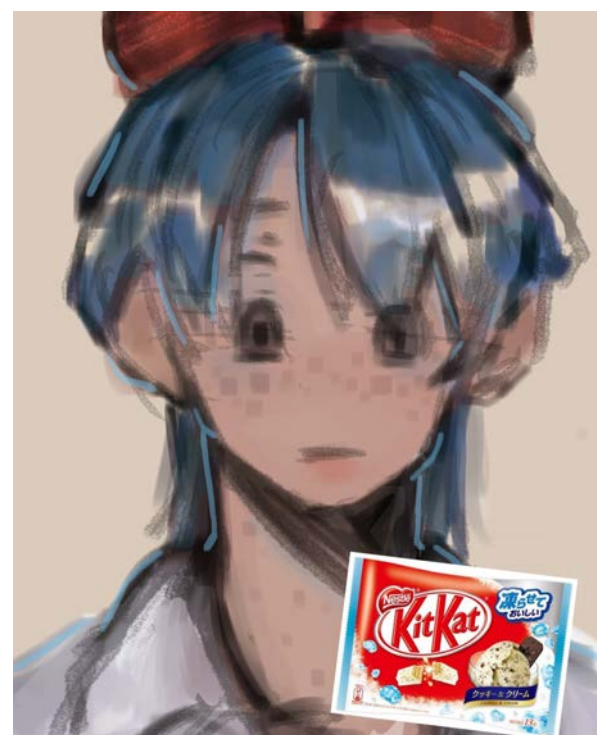
By THE ART DEPARTMENT



Cindy Yang / The Spectator



Sunjung Bok / The Spectator



Fahia Mabud / The Spectator



Chloe Huang / The Spectator



Cadence Li / The Spectator



Serena Chan / The Spectator

The Spooktator!

The Ohio Week in Review

By ETHAN LAM

From a growing arachno-communist movement to a radical decree from the governor regarding gun laws and more, this is the Ohio Week in Review. Should the knowledge in this article prove too much for your feeble mind, The Spectator is not liable for any damages.

In a shocking decision, the College Board of Ohio has moved to completely phase out the SAT in favor of a multi-level battle royale fighting tournament broadcasted live on television. All 17 forms of Ohioan martial arts, including ki blasts, have been legalized, but the College Board of Ohio CEO Mecha-David Coleman states, "The martial arts are only a single facet. The true test is to lie and manipulate your opponents, which truly tests the preparedness of our children for career paths in politics and law."

A new movement has started in order to advocate for a race war in Ohio. The movement, consisting mainly of several thousand college dropouts, aims to breed hate but is currently unsure of what minority to oppress, as there is nothing in Ohio but Ohioans. A bill that proposes to invent a new minority to systematically oppress is awaiting ratification.

The entire population of Ohio formed a hive mind on October 10, 2020, at 3:09 p.m. EST. Standing in orderly rows along most roads, the affected citizens chanted, "We are Ohio. Ohio is all. Florida will be ours." They then began marching toward Interstate 77, likely as a so-

lution to last week's carpool fiasco. The citizens broke formation after roughly five minutes on October 12, 2020, at 3:14 p.m. EST, shaking their heads dejectedly.

In a unanimous vote, they shakily decided that they didn't ever want to be in each other's heads ever again. "Oh god. It seemed like a good idea. You know, sharing

nia was nominated to be the new invasion state by the high council of Ohioan Elders. However, when the Ohioan forces arrived there, the state was, mysteriously, once again on fire, despite the wildfires having been put out several weeks ago.

Though the seat of power shifts on a biweekly basis based on the results of a ritualistic duel, in a sur-

time-walls, saying that "They're not here to protect us, they're there to protect everyone else from us.")

In a split five-four decision, the burning of coal SPECIFICALLY for warmth has been outlawed on October 13, 2020. The Fifth Amendment of the Ohioan Constitution states, "No man shall interfere with the workings of gods."

said.

The Supreme Ohioan Council has once again unanimously moved to support universal healthcare. "We're not barbarians," Supreme Justice Conan stated.

The new bill to create a new minority was passed unanimously on October 14, 2020. The newly proposed minority consists primarily of college-age dropouts. Since the publishing of this article, over 20,000 members of this new minority have been rapidly and eagerly oppressed by eager oppressors, as they are reportedly "terrible at Ohioan martial arts." The young adult novel industry has wholeheartedly approved of this development, stating that the current situation is great fuel for romantic post-apocalyptic-themed novels and sells extremely well for their primary demographic of 11 to 12-year-olds.

Next time: A terrible evil sealed away for 1,000 years, never to return, awakens from its slumber to go to the bathroom. In a controversial decision, child slavery is outlawed, only leaving slavery between two consenting adults legal. Thousands of protestors take to the streets, demanding to know whether or not condom companies invented children to sell more condoms. God reveals in an exclusive interview that he had no part in creating Ohio, and Satan refuses to even say its name. If you feel like throwing up, you may do it now. That's right, let it all out. I'm sorry you had to read this. We'll be back for updates next week, and this has been your Ohio Week in Review.

A new movement has started in order to advocate for a race war in Ohio. The movement, consisting mainly of several thousand college dropouts, aims to breed hate but is currently unsure of what minority to oppress... A bill that proposes to invent a new minority to systematically oppress is awaiting ratification.

minds with people," said one distressed resident. "But you have no idea what I've seen."

Ohioans opted for the safer route of air travel this week, but they arrived to find Florida deserted, presumably because the weekly Floridian invasion of Ohio had once again happened concurrently as the weekly Ohioan invasion of Florida. They likely went along two separate routes, causing them to not meet each other. After the 160th consecutive failed invasion, Califor-

prisingly progressive move, Ohio governor Mike DeWine is pushing for stricter gun control laws. Despite his right-leaning views, DeWine went on record stating that he truly believes in the cause: "If [the gun laws are] stricter, then you won't have guns and I will." This has caused tension among the Republican population of Ohio, not unlike last month's proposal to separate the state from this timeline. (DeWine had held yet another controversial stance to support the

As Santa Claus was recently classified as a type 4 god under Article 5, he has been left unable to fuel his cruel pranks on small children, and the demand for coal was deemed unconstitutional. Recreational coal burning and medical coal-burning remain legal, but they may soon require paperwork for public carrying. Due to the ban, many have been deprived of their life-saving coal. "I'm gonna move to California. See if I can start a wildfire to warm myself up," one irate resident

Tricks and Treats: Personifying our Favorite Halloween Candies



Ismath Maksura / The Spectator



Adrianna Peng / The Spectator



Jenny Chen / The Spectator



Susannah Alin / The Spectator



Eleanor Chin / The Spectator