



The Spectator

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FEATURES

Pro Scientia Atque Sapientia: On Stuyvesant's American History Curriculum

Read Features writer Christina Pan's investigation of how American (and our namesake's) history is taught at Stuyvesant.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

"The Queen's Gambit" Will Steal Your Rook, and Your Heart

A&E Editor Miranda Lepri reviews Netflix's latest hit "The Queen's Gambit," a masterful miniseries that plays to "completion."

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NYC Public Schools Close As COVID-19 Positivity Rates Rise

By TALIA KAHAN and ERIN LEE

Additional reporting by Maddy Andersen, Jenny Liu, and Momoca Mairaj

After the COVID-19 seven-day positivity rate passed three percent on Wednesday, October 18, New York City (NYC) Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor Richard Carranza announced that NYC public schools will close for all in-person learning starting the following day. Schools had been open for eight weeks since the start of the academic year in late September, the first time they had opened their doors after closing on March 15.

Since the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, no members of the Stuyvesant community in the building have tested positive for COVID-19. But if the NYC COVID-19 positivity rates continue to rise, it is possible that schools will remain closed past Thanksgiving. "We know we're closing for a minimum of two weeks," Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said.

The transition for Stuyvesant students is less substantial than that of other NYC public schools given Stuyvesant's exception plan: all classes are conducted virtually, and students who come into Stuyvesant are able to remotely participate in their classes from a centralized location in the build-

ing. "We're very lucky that we have a model that allows us to switch to fully remote without any real inconvenience for students, even for blended students," Student Union (SU) President Julian Giordano said. "It really doesn't change anything about how things work." SU Vice President Shivali Ko-

Though Stuyvesant's exception model allows for a smooth transition between blended and remote learning, this change has created ripples across NYC. "I'm more concerned about what closures mean across the city: for younger kids, for students who need extra services and support, for work-



TrendHao / The Spectator

rgaonkar agreed. "As high school students and especially as Stuy students, we don't have the need to have our parents constantly checking up on us or telling us to do our homework or study for tests, or even just have our parents take care of us 24/7," she said.

ing parents," math teacher Patrick Honner said in an e-mail interview.

This announcement also has some negative implications for members of the Stuyvesant com-

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Aleksey Olkhovenko and Unique Zhang Elected Freshman Caucus Co-Presidents

By MADDY ANDERSEN, JENNY LIU, MOMOCA MAIRAJ, and KAREN ZHANG

"When I heard there were 16 tickets, I was really intimidated by the competition. A lot of the tickets had solid platforms and a good amount of social media followers. I knew we had a good chance of winning since our platform was decent and we reached out to a lot of people, but at the same time, I didn't want to get my hopes up," freshman and Olkhovenko-Zhang campaign manager Freda Dong said in an e-mail interview.

Out of those 16 tickets, freshmen Aleksey Olkhovenko and Unique Zhang were elected Freshman Caucus co-Presidents for the 2020-2021 school year on November 16. From a total of 398 votes, the Olkhovenko-Zhang ticket obtained a total of 170 votes, while the runner-up, freshmen Margaret Mikhailevsky and Amanda Cisse of the Mikhailevsky-Cisse ticket, received a total of 163 votes.

Having met each other at I.S. 187 The Christa McAuliffe School, Olkhovenko and Zhang fostered their dynamic and civic

enthusiasm prior to attending Stuyvesant. "We were in the same student government program together during eighth grade, and I just know [Olkhovenko] better than a lot of people," Zhang said. "I'm better at empathizing and connecting with people, and he would be better at the academics of this, so I think we compensate for what the other one needs. Both of our charisma really help each other, too."

Olkhovenko and Zhang's platform centered around three pillars—Communication, Compassion, and Community. To promote their campaign, the team reached out to freshmen individually to help spread their ideas. "What was really important was that we contacted people, [...] not just for selfish reasons like 'You should vote for us,' but it was more that we wanted them to know that election day was coming up. We gave them resources, like the [...] the voting sites [...] and of course our own documents," Zhang said.

Now as co-Presidents, Olkhovenko and Zhang hope to

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NEWSBEAT

The January administration of the New York State Regents exams have been cancelled.

Seniors Diego Vasquez and Julian Cunningham participated in the Metropolitan Opera's HD Live in Schools Program and sang "Prisoners' Chorus" from Beethoven's "Fidelio."

When school was in-person, no students or faculty members in the building tested positive for COVID-19.

Social studies teacher Lisa Greenwald is featured in Joan Brodsky Schur's new book "Teaching Writing in the Social Studies" from the National Council for the Social Studies.

Stuyvesant Implements Community Building Initiatives

By MICHELLE LU, ALEC SHAFRAN, RAVEN (RUIWEN) TANG, and JANNA WANG

With social distancing and remote learning, students are experiencing a disconnect from the Stuyvesant community. In an effort to improve the connection, Stuyvesant has put into place several initiatives that aim to bring the students together. By implementing school tours, homeroom Mix&Match sessions, and Flipgrid discussions, the administration, in collaboration with the Student Union (SU) and the Big Sib Program, hopes to promote more engagement among the Stuyvesant community.

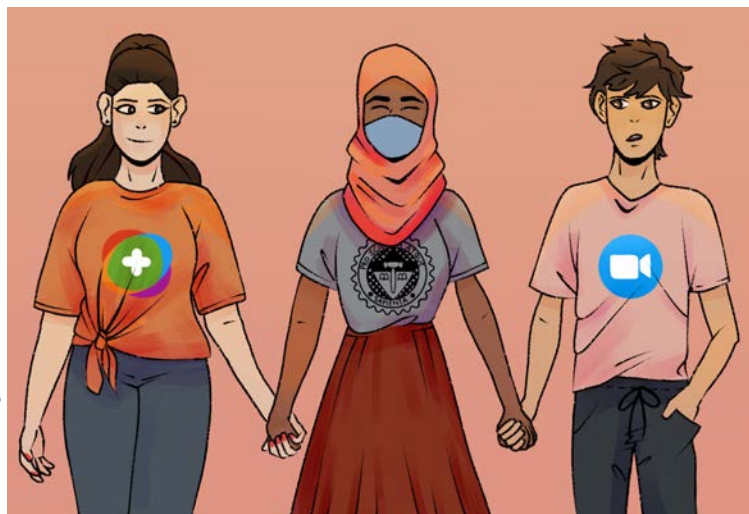
SCHOOL TOURS

Prior to the announcement of school closures on November 18, the administration had begun offering tours around the building for blended learning students to interact with their school environment and with one another. The tours helped to familiarize freshmen with the school building and engage blended students overall.

Typically, blended students stay in the same designated areas to adhere to safety guidelines. "One of the reasons I chose blended [learn-

ing] was [that] I wanted to become more familiar with the school. I was kind of disappointed that we had to stay [in] one place the entire time. During free periods, I would either do [homework] or

our devices was evident," Assistant Principal of World Language, Art, and Music Francesca McAuliffe said in an e-mail interview. "The entire team agreed that tours would be a great opportunity for



Iris Lin / The Spectator

do nothing," freshman Eugene Park said in an e-mail interview.

The administration, however, recognized the lack of movement among blended students at Stuyvesant and decided to host tours so they could move around and interact with other students. "The need to take a break from

students to move around, meet and speak to one another, get to see parts of the building or the surrounding area, and meet various staff members in person."

Students could sign up for a 30-45 minute tour during a free period, when they would leave their designated area and visit various

parts of the building and certain spaces outside of the building if permitted by tour guides, who were members of the administration. "Some of the people and places visited include the Department Chair, Guidance, & Administrative offices, the half floor, [English teacher Mark] Henderson's classroom, the Principal's conference room, [biology teacher Marissa] Maggio's classroom, [the classroom of art teacher Leslie] Bernstein, [SPARK faculty advisor Angel] Colon in the SPARK office, [music coordinator Liliya] Shamazov's chorus classroom, [Director of Family Engagement Dina] Ingram's [office], and, weather permitting, Terry's, Ferry's, and the North Lawn," McAuliffe said.

The tours catered to freshmen who otherwise would not have had the chance to familiarize themselves with the school surroundings. "My hope is that students who are new to the school can start to become comfortable here at Stuyvesant, and hopefully they are aware of the services that we have to offer and the people who are here to support them," Assistant Principal of Security/Health and P.E. Brian Moran said in an e-mail interview.

The administration has re-

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News

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munity despite the more seamless transition. “The burden is on those students who have to take care of their younger siblings who may be in elementary school,” Korgaonkar said. “I could only imagine how difficult it will be for Stuy students who do have to worry about [taking care of a sibling] and playing a bigger role within their household.”

For the administration, this change requires them to work from home unless they are needed in the physical building for activities such as distributing devices to families. “The DOE is making an allowance for certain personnel involved in necessary functions and device distribution if they need to come to the building, and other necessary and approved staff,” Ingram said.

Though more teachers have been working remotely as the semester progressed, teachers who had relied on the Stuyvesant building as a stable work environment will need to adjust to fully remote instruction. “The greatest advantage of being at school for me is having access to instruments, a music library, and necessary props and technology to successfully teach my chorus classes. At home, I have a tiny electronic piano, very little space, and family and neighbors who are not always excited when I have to play or sing at nine in the morning,” music coordinator Liliya Shamazov said in an e-mail interview. “At the same time, I am grateful that we have access to all this technology and are able to have face-to-face interactions with students

and staff, even if it’s on Zoom.”

Honner faces a similar situation with his work environment at home. “I’ll [...] have less access to a dedicated workspace and reliable Internet at home. And like my students, I may have to contend with the occasional random background dancer or violin practice while I Zoom,” he said. “But I’ll adapt, just like the students have, and we’ll continue to get through this together.”

Still, many teachers feel that they are more prepared to make this transition the second time around. “It’s an adjustment, but this past year has been all about adjustments and changes, so I’ll make it work,” Shamazov said.

On an emotional level though, some teachers and blended learners will miss being in the Stuyvesant building. “I’ve been happy to be in the building this year,” Honner said. “I’ve been able to interact in person with some colleagues and students on a regular basis, and that has really helped me get a handle on what I’m doing with my classes. I’ll certainly miss that as we switch to full remote instruction.”

Sophomore Inara Rabbani is also disappointed with the announcement. “Honestly, I don’t think that schools have that big of an impact on the spread of the virus and anything, and I felt like this was helpful for a lot of us to be able to have a change of scenery,” she said. “I really liked being able to leave the house once in a while, and it wasn’t the type of thing [that] I had to be going to school every day, but it was just twice a week or so, and I could feel more motivated because I wasn’t cooped up in

the same room every single day.”

Senior Zoe Piccirillo expressed a similar sentiment about school closures. “I think the decision is not addressing how COVID actually spreads. I believe the reason why cases are rising is [the] adults gathering in groups,” she said. “Since school started, New York’s had extremely low transmission rates within schools. So I don’t think it’s fair for students to have to plan last minute for remote learning [...] when they’re not necessarily the population contributing to the increase in the positivity rate.”

From the administration’s perspective, the change also sets back some of Stuyvesant’s progress with blended learning. “This was disappointing because we really were getting in the groove of doing some things toward socialization and plans, and we’ll still plan for them and hope that we head in the other direction, toward returning,” Ingram said.

In addition, some have concerns about what this school closure means for the rest of the year. “If we go down this route, if we are very quick to close schools and are not willing to focus on opening schools, as a city we need to make a decision about what our priorities are—and our priority should be schools. I think schools should stay open unless the cases in schools rise significantly,” Giordano said. “We all want to see Stuyvesant open in some capacity as soon as possible, and if we keep having shutdowns like this, I think that prevents us from getting to a stage where Stuy could reopen.”

Senior Jonathan Xu is also concerned about a potential a future



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WORLDBEAT

New York City’s public schools closed for in-person learning on November 19, as the COVID-19 test positivity rate reached three percent.

Public health officials advised Americans to **not participate** in traditional **Thanksgiving** gatherings as **Coronavirus** cases continue to increase.

The **FDA** granted **emergency authorization** of the **antibody treatment** that was given to **Trump**, giving doctors **another option** to treat COVID-19 patients.

President **Donald Trump** continues to futilely **challenge the 2020 presidential election results**.

school reopening. “I think the biggest change is what’s going to happen going forward. Since they’ve already done so many reversals, they will be reluctant to reopen the schools early, so we might stay in lockdown a little longer than we otherwise would,” he said.

Ultimately, the Stuyvesant community, after already experiencing its first school closure in the spring, is capable of withstanding this transition. “We got everybody ready,” Ingram said. “And I think everybody is ready. Because we’ve done this before.”

Spanish Meets You Hosts Día de Los Muertos Celebration Virtually

By JAMES LEE

Spanish Meets You (SMY) hosted a virtual celebration of Día de Los Muertos, or “The Day of the Dead,” on November 2. The event consisted of a presentation of the traditions and history of the holiday, guest speakers, and festivities.

SMY is an educational organization that offers virtual tours of Spanish-speaking countries, a pen-pal program, and tutoring services to supplement and enrich students’ Spanish education. SMY recently started educating students on various cultural celebrations and decided to host a celebration of Día de Los Muertos as a way to encourage students to appreciate and spread Spanish culture. “It was important to host this event because SMY hopes to spread the Spanish culture, and the Day of the Dead definitely takes up a large part of the Mexican culture as one of their most important holidays, so we want to let more people learn about this and celebrate it with us,” senior and SMY Vice President and Webmaster Xin Lei Lin said in an e-mail interview.

The event began with a presentation of the culture, history, and traditions of Día de Los Muertos. Afterward, there was a quick Kahoot! game, in which students participated to synthesize the information they learned during the presentation and received extra credit. In addition, there were two presentations by guest speakers Sylvia Moreno, a Mexican-American woman from Texas, and Bryan Velazquez, a Latino student from Florida. Moreno presented her altar, which was used to honor her deceased friends and family. Afterward, Velazquez gave a video presentation, in which he described aspects of the altar of

his family and the food he eats during the holiday. Next, there were three breakout rooms in which the attendees could join to watch “Coco,” a Disney Pixar film about the afterlife and traditions of Día de Los Muertos, make origami marigolds, or make sugar skulls.

The organizers wanted to create enthusiasm for learning Spanish culture and ease tensions

the physical intersection between Chinatown and a predominantly Latinx community and witnessing the hostility that often existed between these two groups. There is a similar dynamic at Stuy, a majority Asian school that can occasionally fall to implicit racism, and we would like to be the solution and shade of grey to that problem.”

When planning for the event,

participants also included younger students from our program, so we had to make sure that the information we presented had to be concise but just as informative.”

Due to the virtual nature of the event however, SMY faced slight technical difficulties when hosting the celebration. “Zoom allowed us to house 100 participants, and it maxed out in less

significant lags during the presentation, and certain gray bars hid the screen at times. Also, sometimes the background music overpowered the voices of the speakers, so it was a bit difficult to follow along at times,” senior Fahima Miajee said in an e-mail interview.

Others had noted the duration of the event and hoped it would be shorter in the future. “One thing the event [coordinators] could have done better is to minimize the duration of the event since it lasted nearly four hours,” junior Joshua Gao said in an e-mail interview. “I would have liked if there were more guests present [at] the event.”

While the event was not perfect, students responded positively to this event, as many felt that they learned a lot from the presentations and activities. “I really liked attending the event, and I thought it was a fruitful session. I left knowing more about Día de Los Muertos and what it really means to those who celebrate it. I think it’s really important to know the cultural significance behind it, in addition to the colorful celebration one sees in the media,” Miajee said.

Gao agreed, adding: “The general experience was quite positive. The presenters spoke very fluent and coherent Spanish, just like that of a native, and I really enjoyed the live house tour to see the sugar skulls and family photos in-person.”

Likewise, SMY leaders felt content with how the Día de Los Muertos celebration went and remain eager to improve it for next year. “We are overall very satisfied with how the event went; if the event is hosted next year, we would love to incorporate more guest speakers and provide a range of activities for students to engage in,” junior and SMY Vice President Naya Mukul said in an e-mail interview.



among the different cultures at Stuyvesant. “SMY wanted to host this event as a way of communicating just how easy it is to fall in love with another culture rather than pit ourselves against it,” senior and SMY President Brian Zhang said in an e-mail interview. “My personal experience and enthusiasm with learning Spanish [were] derived from living in

SMY recognized that they had to be mindful of their audience to make the event engaging for all. “Hosting events virtually is extremely difficult because it is a challenge to keep everyone engaged and interested. We tried to include as many events and activities as possible that fostered not only an understanding of the event, but also an exploration of it,” Zhang said. “Our par-

than a minute after we broadcasted the webinar. Unfortunately, this meant that many students were not able to participate, so we hope to accommodate more people next year,” Zhang said.

Many participants had also experienced minor technical problems on their end. “I don’t know if I can blame the event coordinators for this, but there were sig-

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ported an overwhelmingly positive response from participants, citing the social-emotional benefits they offer to not only freshmen, but also upperclassmen. “So far the freshmen that I have taken on tour have shared positive feedback and that it was pleasant to speak with [Principal Seung] Yu, get a piece of candy from [Pupil Accounting Secretary] Carol [Carrano], discuss their classes with one another, see the Mnemonics, meet some of their instructors in person, get some fresh air out of the building, have a football catch with [Moran] and [Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Casey] Pedrick, and speak with [Program Office Staff] Mr. [Hing] Li about his experience as a student,” McAuliffe said.

Many freshmen have expressed that the tours have helped familiarize themselves with the building and better assimilate into Stuyvesant. “Going on tours with the administration has been a fun experience for me because I got to become familiar with my surroundings, and I’ve learned a little history about the school,” freshman Maya Pulawska said in an e-mail interview.

Pulawska was also fascinated by the Mnemonics, or “Memory Cubes,” a public art project at Stuyvesant that uses clear glass cubes placed throughout the school to encapsulate moments in time at Stuyvesant. “[It’s] crazy how [there are] showcase boxes for years that literally haven’t been born yet, like the graduating year of 2078,” she said.

Overall the tours provided all participants, regardless of familiarity with the building, with the opportunity to have a break during the day and to socialize and connect with both staff and peers. “Students have connected with one another and with staff. They have had the opportunity to meet some of their peers, speak with staff members, and take a technological detox which many shared has been refreshing,” McAuliffe said.

HOMEROOM MIX&MATCH

The Big Sib Program has created Homeroom Mix&Match, a remote initiative for community bonding among freshmen and their Big Sibs. Without the opportunities for physical interaction normally provided by in-person school, the Mix&Match serves as a way for freshmen to get to know students from other homerooms.

The Big Sib Chairs started Mix&Match to increase engagement among the freshman class. “This [initiative] was inspired from a place of wanting to help the freshmen because this year, it’s harder than ever for the freshmen to meet new people,” senior and Big Sib Chair Henry Michaelson said. “It’s important for their high school experiences and careers that they get to meet people or as many people as they can in a setting that isn’t necessarily in class.”

At each Mix&Match session, homerooms are paired up to participate in games and activities, such as Among Us, Mafia, and Jackbox. “We know that the freshmen [...] already know each other from their own individual homerooms, but we wanted to branch out,” senior and Big Sib Chair Andrea Huang said. “The first 15 minutes [of the Mix and Match] are just [conducted as] a regular homeroom session. The next 45 minutes, they meet up with their mixed homeroom Zoom meeting [...] of about 30 to 60 people [...] and within those 45 minutes, they play games together in breakout rooms.”

The Big Sib Program is planning to hold Mix&Match sessions every three weeks, with each session corresponding to a different theme. The first session, held on November 6, was Among Us themed. “We were discussing having it every three weeks, just so the freshmen always have something to look forward [to],” senior and Big Sib Chair Aki Yamaguchi said.

The Mix&Match sessions will be split up into breakout rooms

for freshmen to choose the activities they’d like to play and interact with new people. “The freshmen get a lot of flexibility in what they want to play, as long as they have maybe a couple other people [who] also want to play the same thing as them,” Huang said. “But [the groups are] also big enough so that there’s a bunch of new faces they’ve never seen before.”

In addition, homeroom matches change during each session to provide more opportunities to meet new people. “1AA won’t be mixed up with 1BB anymore. It’ll be 1B[B] and 1C[C] together instead,” Huang said.

Big Sibs have freedom to choose activities for their own homeroom as well. “[In] one of my homerooms, we started off with sharing embarrassing stories about ourselves. So, [...] some of the homerooms pick their own path, and they don’t necessarily have to follow the theme,” Yamaguchi said. “We always usually let our Big Sibs pretty much run their own sessions.”

As Big Sibs and Little Sibs continue to bond, activities for different homerooms have become more tailored to the interests of the freshmen. “A lot of the Big Sibs in the homerooms that I oversee [...] get to know what [their Little Sibs] like and what they don’t like. And so, they’ll kind of do activities that they know everybody will have fun with,” Michaelson said. “One of my homerooms has started their own Minecraft server with their Little Sibs.”

The Big Sib Chairs have received positive feedback from freshmen after their first session. “[Guidance counselor Jo] Mahoney from 1XX was telling her Big Sibs that when she had her homeroom meeting with her Little Sibs, that’s all they would talk about and how much fun it was, so it’s really nice to hear the feedback,” Yamaguchi said.

Many freshmen found the sessions to be conducive for connecting with not only other fresh-

men, but also upperclassmen. “For the second [activity, my breakout room] talked so much that we forgot to actually play the game [...] I was able to find people who were in some of my other classes, so it was pretty cool being able to get to know them better,” freshman Eshaal Ubaid said. “This [session] was really helpful because I got to know more upperclassmen, and I got advice from even more upperclassmen, which is always helpful.”

The Mix&Match initiative is one component of the Big Sib Program’s larger effort to promote community engagement among freshmen. They have previously held a virtual field day and concert and hope to include more virtual gatherings and live Zoom tours for the fall Open House in the future. “Our secondary goal is to have videos installed and in-store for Stuyvesant to use even for years to come, even when the city opens up again,” Huang said. “For freshmen who aren’t able to visit the school for whatever reason during Open House night or their families can’t visit the school, they can have an online option.”

The Big Sib Chairs hope that community-building initiatives like Mix&Match can continue to provide casual and engaging occasions for freshmen to meet, even remotely. “We honestly just want the freshmen to have fun,” Huang said. “And we think that if Big Sibs could do anything to help, we’ll take the opportunity to. And Mix&Match is our solution that we’ve come to after a lot of brainstorming.”

FLIPGRID

The administration has recently introduced a schoolwide Flipgrid, a community-building platform to connect students and faculty virtually. With a new prompt each week, students and staff have the opportunity to hear from one another and react and respond to the prompt before the next is released.

Flipgrid is a free-to-use application that allows teachers to post

message boards and prompts, to which students and invited users can post short video responses. The administration took advantage of this platform for this initiative due to its practical features and accessibility. “Since Flipgrid allows us to see, hear from, and respond to one another, [the administration] thought it would be an effective way to get together even though many of us are physically apart,” McAuliffe said. “The goal is for our entire school community to come together virtually and share some things about ourselves so that we may both learn from and get to know one another to a greater extent.”

These Flipgrid videos create a space for students and staff to express themselves outside of academics through short weekly prompts, such as “What are three facts about yourself?” or “Introduce your favorite pet or animal!” “Flipgrid is a quick burst of sunshine. There is not a commitment for students to invest a lot of time on the site but can click on for a little break between classes and homework,” Pedrick said.

While the administration is enthusiastic about the initiative, there has yet to be significant participation from students. “The Flipgrid created by the administration is a great attempt at increasing engagement, but that, unfortunately, hasn’t gained traction. [Instead], students have embraced more student-led activities, such as those led by clubs and other extracurriculars,” senior and SU President Julian Giordano said in an e-mail interview.

Despite the lack of student participation, the administration is hopeful for Flipgrid’s potential to bring together a virtual Stuyvesant student body. “We are open to receiving feedback and suggestions and hope to encourage additional student and staff responses soon,” McAuliffe said. “It would be great for the student body to eventually create weekly discussion topics and for [student] voices to take the lead on this.

Student Union Introduces Virtual Morning Broadcasts

By NADA HAMEED, ZIYING JIAN, and RAJHASREE PAUL

During remote learning in the spring, daily morning announcements were put to a halt given the virtual circumstances of the school year. To keep the tradition going this fall, the Student Union (SU) recently released its first production of weekly Virtual Morning Broadcasts. These broadcasts are released every Monday through e-mail and posted on the SU’s IGTV on Instagram.

Before the pandemic, two student announcers would deliver morning announcements over the PA system at 10:00 a.m. The announcers would recite the Pledge of Allegiance and relay important information and updates. The updates and announcements aspect of Stuyvesant’s traditional announcements has been retained in the SU’s Morning Broadcasts, but they are now filmed ahead of time and must go through substantial post-production editing before being sent to the student body.

The productions require multiple people and moving parts to come together. There are three broadcasters across grades: sophomore Jackson Mushnick, junior Syeda Zahan, and senior Aki Yamaguchi. “Together, they create a script with general updates, student/faculty submitted updates, and SU updates,” junior and SU Vice President Shivali Korgaonkar said in an e-mail interview. “The broadcast is a re-

corded Zoom call that the presenters edit to form a final video.”

The broadcasts consist of general updates, from School Leadership Team meetings to club updates. Students who wish to have an announcement included can submit through a Google Form. “We’re sending out a form every week that students, teachers, [and] club leaders can fill out [...] if they want an announcement to be included,” senior and Director of Social Media Julie Weiner said. “[Similar to] how morning announcements worked in school [in which] you would go to the main office and you’d get one of those forms [...] we’re doing that this year through a Google Form.”

The broadcasts also include non-academic updates consisting of quotes or fun facts that are written by the Communications department, with which the broadcasters can get creative. “We wanted to make the announcements more engaging [with] a favorite theme of the week, quote of the week, and unknown holidays in addition to general announcements,” Mushnick said.

The SU hoped to use the Virtual Morning Broadcasts to build a sense of community among the student body. “In normal circumstances, Stuy is Stuy because of the energy and enthusiasm you feel among students and faculty around the building, and morning announcements played a large role in the community we were able to build,” Korgaonkar said.

“The SU wanted students to have the opportunity to actually see their peers communicating new information or updates, instead of reading an [e-mail] or newsletter.”

Due to the versatility of the

One point of difficulty for the SU, however, has been creating engaging content. “A challenge was trying to develop other forms of engaging information in addition to the general announcements,

trying to mimic those announcements, but it’s just not the same. Those announcements were that interesting part [of] the day, and we didn’t have a choice to not listen.”

Because of this, many felt unsatisfied by the broadcasts in how they compared to the in-person announcements. “The videos don’t emulate [the original announcements] well, and I don’t think they can. If the objective was to make it normal, it was not [achieved],” an anonymous sophomore said.

Some also felt disinterested by the rigid and scripted nature of the videos. “I don’t feel compelled to watch since I know they’re just reading off a document they wrote to be as neutral as possible,” the junior said.

Nevertheless, some acknowledged that Virtual Morning Broadcasts offered a lot of helpful information. “If there’s ever a time I couldn’t catch up with [school] news, these are a good second bet,” the junior said. “[The videos are] short and sweet.”

Overall, though not all students are fairly satisfied with the execution, the production team is open to receiving feedback and implementing changes to the broadcasts. “I think we’re gonna see how [the Virtual Broadcasts go], and maybe [improve them] based off of the feedback that we get,” Weiner said. “But I’d say that our general goal is to just look for new ways to keep things fun and creative and really encourage people to keep watching them.”



Sasha Socolow / The Spectator

audio-visual format, broadcasters can be creative with the way they present themselves. Mushnick uses this space to express his performative side. “I love being able to talk in a clear, projected voice and adjust my tone to best communicate the script in an emotive way that connects to the audience,” Mushnick said.

Zahan, on the other hand, enjoys the production’s collaborative aspect. “I also love the interactions we have, and my favorite part, I would say, would have to be when I get to edit the video,” Zahan said.

which was at the discretion of the announcers. We brainstormed for a long time trying to think about what we should include,” Mushnick said.

Though the Virtual Morning Broadcasts were attempts to emulate the traditional loudspeaker announcements, many students felt that the videos did not, and could not realistically, achieve that same sense. “The ones over the speaker always had a certain ambiance, and it was so iconic how they’d always interrupt class,” an anonymous junior said. “These Virtual Morning Broadcasts are

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maintain the same level of outreach with their grade. “That’s something we’ll be focusing on [...] right off the bat because even though we have all these events, it’s important that they know what is going on. What we’re really focusing on is creating that connection between us and the students,” Olkhovenko said. Aside from communicating through social media, they plan to send out newsletters and weekly e-mails to regularly update the freshman class.

Recognizing the importance of a sense of unity among freshmen, the co-Presidents are focusing on hosting events, including movie and game nights. “Our first and most important thing is event planning because we understand that students have a tough time with their school experience. To alleviate that stress, we want them to build better connections, and we want them to have a little bit more fun in their lives,” Olkhovenko said. “We will be planning game nights, movie nights—all these different things where students can come together and really enjoy their experience.”

To help students better connect with their teachers, the pair

also hopes to host teachers-relations events. “We would interview the teachers and ask fun questions, and we would upload them on our own personal YouTube [...] it’ll really get the students up and about because they might learn something new about their teachers,” Zhang said. “It’ll help students understand the teacher more, and that way, since they’ll be more comfortable, [...] they will be able to confront the teachers and say, ‘oh, I’m actually struggling a little bit with this. Could you help me?’”

They also plan to pursue joint Student Union (SU) initiatives. Aside from collaborating with Sophomore Caucus on a study guide database, the pair is working with the SU to add a new calendar feature displaying all club meetings on StuyActivities. “A lot of freshmen are interested in joining [...] clubs, [...] and a lot of these clubs with a lot of members were having meetings on the same days and at the same times. This seemed like an easily preventable issue if leaders got together and were like, ‘Let’s just not host meetings at the same time,’” SU President Julian Giordano said. “That was really insightful to us because sometimes as upperclassmen, or as people who have maybe devot-

ed ourselves to one specific club, we don’t get that perspective.”

Many freshmen who voted for the Olkhovenko-Zhang ticket noted the pair’s drive and hope



Courtesy of Unique Zhang

to see their ideas come to fruition. “People have been coming up with a lot of concerns about socialization and not being able to make friends, which is really understandable,” freshman Eshaal Ubaid said. “It is really important for them to push school spirit, and I do think they do that just

[by] looking at their campaign, their social media—they are keeping up with that pretty nicely.”

Though the pair acknowledges the limitations they have as Freshman Caucus co-Presidents, both are confident in their ability to carry out their ideas. “We might not be doing the most policy changes because that’s a really hard thing to implement,” Olkhovenko said. “But we will try to start working on that [...] we’re entering a very well-oiled system [in which] we have a hierarchy, and we’ll be able to make changes much faster than if it was just [freshman] students with no representation.”

Giordano hopes these changes will extend beyond the scope of solely this school year. “They are entering the school at the same time as Principal [Seung] Yu is entering [...] that puts this caucus at a very unique starting point, [...] and they are the caucus that’s going to determine, ‘What does SU look like during the state of remote learning? What does SU look like when everything is thrown on its head?’” he said. “I see so much potential for them to get involved with their grade like no other grade before, and the potential to redefine what student government is meant to do in school, and

that will have a lasting impact.”

As Olkhovenko and Zhang begin their term as Freshman Caucus co-Presidents, they recognize the significance of their position. “It’s important to advocate for [the freshmen] because the students might have issues all over the place,” Olkhovenko said. “If all these students are having all the different issues and they don’t know what to do, as a student body representative, [Zhang] and I are able to collect these causes and see what changes need to be made and then talk to [Giordano], talk to [junior and SU Vice President] Shivali [Korgaonkar] and say to them exactly what needs to be done.”

[Learn more about Olkhovenko and Zhang here:](#)



Features

An Empty Wonderland

By VINCENT TAN

With Halloween over, New Yorkers set their sights on the upcoming winter festivities. Replacing skeletons and cobwebs with turkeys and snowmen, festive decorations and advertisements mark the advent of the holiday season.

As winter rolls around, relatives stop by, longtime plans come to fruition, and hangouts with friends finally happen. Americans use November to reconnect with loved ones and to be thankful. Foods like roasted turkey, pumpkin pies, cornbread, and mashed potatoes with gravy line the dinner table. Seated beside these dishes are family and friends coming from different places. As if it came from a holiday commercial, this idyllic North American holiday is something many people look forward to every November.

However, during such unprecedented times, many are wondering how this year’s holiday season will happen. While people who celebrate with family at home won’t be greatly affected, those who use Thanksgiving to meet others will be much more impacted. “Normally, my family would invite some friends over and we would cook for them, but this year, we won’t be inviting or visiting anyone due to COVID,” senior Aditiya Rashid said.

Rashid’s Thanksgiving plans weren’t the only things changing. At the start of quarantine, her family had to make accommodations for Muslim holidays. “In the case of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha earlier this year, our family held our own Eid prayer at our own home instead of going to the mosque on those days,” Rashid recounted. Faced with the challenges of the pandemic,

celebrations were forced to move to her home.

Her predicament is one that resonates with New Yorkers and Americans all around, now faced with great concerns over increases in COVID-19 cases. Tripling in recent months, infection rates are now raising worries of another possible lockdown, with NYC schools having already closed. Similar to Rashid, senior Leo Yuan also faces the strain of a pandemic Thanksgiving. Usually celebrated at his grandmother’s home, Yuan desires to connect with family but also understands the need for caution with the uptick in cases. “I think we’re just going to get COVID tests beforehand since we live literally blocks away from each other,” Yuan explained.

Lockdown hasn’t only placed a wedge between loved ones but has also affected what many New Yorkers consider quintessential to Thanksgiving. Just like many other events of this COVID-stricken era, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade will still take place but will only be viewable online. Furthermore, the temporary pause of in-store shopping has led to a large shift to curbside pickup and online shopping. As New Yorkers brace for an indoor winter, the Thanksgiving weekend will involve a much more online presence.

With the pandemic forcing everyone indoors, institutions such as religious communities have also found themselves shifting gears. Even though senior Daniel Berlinsky’s family isn’t particularly religious, they still celebrate Hanukkah. “I read the prayer and light candles,” he said. Because of how home-based those events have been, many observers of Hanukkah haven’t found their observances

to be greatly impacted. However, those who usually attend synagogues, meet with rabbis, or connect with loved ones are finding themselves unable to do so.

In addition, other people who celebrate the winter holidays are

more ‘in the holiday spirit’ I am,” she added. To many, the holiday spirit exists as a feeling of joy that comes from the holiday season. Proteasa noted that the inability to share her excitement with her friends has been very off-putting



Chloe Huang / The Spectator

now also seeing canceled celebrations. “The church my parents and I would go to for Christmas [will] host a Christmas service. This year, we’re probably not going to go, which is unfortunate because I always liked to see my parents happy socializing with their friends,” junior Krista Proteasa said.

To Proteasa, a lot of her holiday cheer comes from her environment. “Getting into the holiday spirit means screaming Christmas songs with my friends as we walk to the subway station and drink exclusively peppermint drinks,” she joked. “The more Christmas lights I see, the

in maintaining this holiday spirit.

For Berlinsky, on the other hand, it’s a matter of aesthetics. “Under normal circumstances, I like to decorate my apartment with my family usually by buying a small Christmas tree and putting lights around the house,” he said. When picturing his ideal holiday season, Berlinsky thinks of presents for family and friends coupled with holiday classics on the television. For people like Proteasa and Berlinsky, the festive season comes from decorations, shopping, music, movies, and spending time with friends.

For others, the winter sea-

son yields unique ways to get into the holiday spirit. For Yuan, it’s getting exposure to the outdoors. “I’m part of both the ultimate frisbee and track team, so I’m usually always outdoors late into the evening,” he said. When December comes, Yuan can be found by the East River running in snowstorms wearing nothing but a tank top and short shorts. With a birthday in December, he always looks forward to spending it by watching Christmas movies on the Hallmark channel, accompanied by some hot chocolate and his friends.

When asked about how COVID-19 has affected this sweet holiday get-together, Yuan admits that it does affect his energy. “Team spirit isn’t as strong as it would be, and it’s much harder to bond,” he said. “[Lockdown] also brings the morale down because running on your own [versus] with the team is a very different experience.”

Likewise, senior Leo Xiao, an ultimate frisbee teammate and friend of Yuan, agrees. He noted, “with large gatherings being canceled, it leaves a hole in the annual traditions that normally form strong community bonds.” Had lockdown not happened, Xiao would have looked forward to attending Stuyvesant’s Ultimate Frisbee Alumni Tournament, an event with many alumni teammates returning to play with them again. As Xiao stated, communities thrive on in-person communication. Stuyvesant is a school largely built on extracurricular activities made up of a diverse array of communities. Teams and clubs are a core part of activities for a Stuyvesant student, and not being able to meet is very disappointing to many.

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Features

Pro Scientia Atque Sapientia: On Stuyvesant's American History Curriculum

By CHRISTINA PAN

Suspended in a bronze contraposto, he towers proudly above the decaying greenery, juxtaposed by the sickly-sweet smell of cannabis smoke and taxi exhaust. The arch of his torso rises from his good leg, the other lost to a cannonball in the siege of St. Martin. South of this statue is our school, tucked in the bank of the Hudson River. There's the Bowery near Wall Street, the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, and Stuy Town, full of some of the largest apartment complexes.

And the commonality? These names trace back to Peter Stuyvesant, the director-general of New Netherland, who helped establish the first municipal government of New Amsterdam in 1653. He also authorized the construction of a canal, a market, and a defense wall, much of which is still standing near Wall Street.

Yet the grandeur of these founding stories is deceptive. Peter Stuyvesant was one of the largest slave owners in New Amsterdam—in the roots of our city are the enslaved blacksmiths, bricklayers, and masons who are responsible for his “achievements.” He also vehemently opposed religious pluralism, referring to Jews as “the deceitful race... enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ” and denying Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Quakers the right to build places of worship and practice their respective faiths.

The history of our school, city, and country is irreversible; that is undeniable. However, the question of how we remember it remains—is the morality of our history objective or subjective? How do we study the history of those who have committed heinous acts and those who have endured the worst of it?

“First off, there's no ‘objective’ way to teach history,” social studies teacher David Wang explained in an e-mail interview. “All people have biases, and therefore, all sources will naturally have biases as well. It doesn't necessarily mean anyone's actively trying to push an agenda ([though] it could), but it exists naturally. The only way to try to achieve a more complete understanding of history is to look at many different sources and perspectives and use them to form your own interpretation of history.”

Wang's statement is a central principle for many history teachers, who teach from a variety of sources and perspectives. “When we studied the American Revolution, we looked at the role[s] of Native Americans,

Blacks, and women,” social studies teacher Robert Sandler said. “We specifically looked at Chief Joseph Brant, Ona Judge [one of George Washington's slaves], and Mercy Otis Warren, a patriot who worked as a pamphleteer and playwright. But we also listened to lectures on the impact of Founding Fathers like Ben Franklin, watched clips from HBO's ‘John Adams,’ and studied the heroism of the Culper Spy Ring and the American soldiers at Valley Forge.”

The importance of diverse perspectives is particularly important in a school that primarily leans to the



left.

“I think that it is clear that teachers in the school, especially in the English and Social Studies Departments, have biases toward the left,” senior and president of the Stuyvesant Patriots Club Rudolph Merlin said. “It does not impact my learning in a significant way—they are very respectful of ideas on the other side of the political aisle.”

The Spectator's staff editorial “Adapting to the New Political Norm,” published following the victory of President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr., takes note of Stuyvesant's liberal bubble. “We often make generalizations about the political makeup of our student body, not realizing that more conservatives exist at Stuyvesant than some students think,” the editorial states. “According to the mock election conducted by the Social Studies Department, 10 percent of 1,762 students said they would vote for Trump if they could.”

Perhaps this liberal bubble exists in our study of history because we live in New York. “Up until sixth grade, I lived in St. Louis,” sophomore Sophie Jin said. “The city itself isn't necessarily left or right [leaning], but Missouri's mostly conservative. Part of the curriculum or the

textbook was mandated by its [state] education board. The teacher we had taught by the book, and so we pretty much learned all the facts that it said. I think [at Stuyvesant] right now, it's gotten a lot better, as many of my teachers try to use alternative sources like articles and documents from different sources. It's not just all the facts but something for us to think about and interpret.”

Jin introduces a crucial point.

Through Stuyvesant, students are introduced to a

variety of courses, cultures, and people; smaller schools might not have a similar basis of variety. “Something that concerns me is that teachers, especially [toward] younger students, try to sugarcoat or alter the perception of how we see America,” sophomore Anisha Singhal said. “I think it's pretty impossible to teach an American history that doesn't touch on its barbaric roots. This [teaching] is pretty disturbing too since when you're younger, your beliefs are more malleable. You don't know enough on your own to form your own opinions, and so you learn from the people around you.”

Singhal describes a type of social mythology. In younger years, teachers tend to emphasize elements from dramatic literature rather than documented history. Think of the poem “In fourteen hundred ninety-two / Columbus sailed the ocean blue. / He had three ships and left from Spain; / He sailed through sunshine, wind, and rain,” or the picture books depicting the largely idyllic, peaceful roots of Thanksgiving. Furthermore, the pages in atlases or large graphic posters have the Founding Fathers and U.S. Presidents lined up almost like superheroes. This glamorized, rose-tinted retelling is more in line with how monarchies and dictatorships describe their leaders in historical texts than how democracies would.

Once students enter high school, history texts often get much more realistic. “The APUSH [Advanced Placement United States History] textbook explains the events and explanations behind them and doesn't get political about things,” Merlin said. “However, teachers often do not use the textbook to teach. The fact that [some] students don't read textbooks is very bad because you do not understand a trusted source of information (complied with facts, statistics, and primary sources) to learn about history. You base your opinion off what the teacher says, what your parents say, and what your classmates say.”

The foundations of history can go on to affect one's perceptions in the future, most notably adding to a type of confirmation bias in which new ideas or evidence are interpreted to validate one's existing beliefs. “My dad grew up in communist China,” an anonymous freshman said. “A lot of the curriculum was based on the teachings of that party. It was pretty strict; they weren't allowed to question the teacher [or] Mao Zedong's rule or ideology, and if they did, they would get disciplined. My dad would call this ‘xi-nao,’ which essentially means a form of brainwashing when translated to English. When he moved here, it was pretty difficult for him to adjust. I think it was because of this [experience] that my dad used to teach me a lot of history [on] his own when I was younger, and the teachers liked to brush over stuff.”

In early November, President Donald J. Trump signed the “1776 Commission” Executive Order to 1) promote patriotic education to understand the history and principles of our Nation's founding, 2) restore national unity through an understanding and commitment to America's shared founding principles, and 3) preserve our history by defending the legacy of our Nation's founding along with its Founders. “On the one hand, I believe patriotism is necessary for this country to survive,” Merlin said. “However, I do not like nationalized education because these initiatives are prone to factual inconsistencies and propaganda; I do not

want the government to dictate to me what I need to be learning.”

Our curriculum is modeled on a state-wide standard, but Stuyvesant largely encourages a multiplicity of ideas through a variety of sources. “Outside the standard Regents or AP curriculum and textbooks, [we] introduce newspaper/magazine articles with extensive research such as [The New York Times], The Atlantic, The Economist, [the] Smithsonian, etc., primary sources, and excerpts of books and even academic journals on the subject which go beyond just saying ‘this is what happened’ and challenge students to use these sources to come up with their own interpretations of history,” Wang said.

This intellectual diversity is something that is perhaps missing in Stuyvesant's student body, where organizations and clubs grow increasingly polarized. “I believe that schools are meant to be places for intellectual diversity,” Merlin said. “Diversity of thought is the most important aspect [of] any school. Kids tore down flyers [and] vandalized them—the administration has not done anything. It is awful for a school that wants to promote equality and equity; it should be applied for all things then, namely freedom of speech.”

Yet classrooms have the opportunity to provide a safe, controlled ground for different opinions. In the majority of Stuyvesant's history classes, we're given the chance to analyze history from multiple sources so we can come to our own conclusions. Take Thanksgiving, for example. “We examine the traditional image of Indians and the Pilgrims sharing a festive meal and contrast that with the brutal warfare of King Philip's War which took place in 1675, an incredibly violent conflict,” Sandler said. “At the same time, we examine the Puritan emphasis on literacy, tight-knit families, and the Mayflower Compact, their contribution to representative government.”

But the pat on the back ends when we come back to the very name we are branded under and continue to benefit from. Our name comes from an anti-Semitic, slave-owning bigot, and our admissions exam continues to piggyback off a system of institutionalized racism that undermines the historically oppressed.

Since Stuyvesant's establishment in 1904, our motto has been “Pro Scientia Atque Sapientia,” meaning “for knowledge and wisdom.” The question is, do we live up to it?

An Empty Wonderland

continued from page 4

Since lockdown has stopped students from spending time together, COVID has been an obstacle in communication and opportunity. Whether it was summer or winter plans, many events were unfortunately canceled or moved online. However, people have been finding ways to cope, staying optimistic. To Proteasa, manifesting holiday cheer isn't impossible. “The holiday spirit, you will soon realize, comes when you're in contact with what you associate with the time,” she said.

When asked about what she

associates with the holidays, she mentioned Spotify playlists, pine and cinnamon scented candles, snow globes, and festive lights. While others may not feel the same way about these items, Proteasa's words serve as a reminder that a lot of the holiday spirit comes from what people associate with December. Whether it may be sounds or scents, there is always something specific to each person that brings memories of the holidays.

Moreover, many annual seasonal attractions haven't been canceled even during this time of chaos. While places like Rockefeller Center or Bryant Park Winter

Village cannot house visitors, other groups are still at work to honor annual traditions. The Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree is still being put on display amid the pandemic, and the Saks Fifth Avenue light show is still taking place through live streaming. Furthermore, the Times Square Ball Drop will still occur, now the virtual event to end the year. These traditions provide entertainment to audiences while also reminding New Yorkers of joys that the city still has.

This hope for the future is something that has kept people going, not just the traditions. “I think that when the pandemic is

finally over, we'll have a rebound effect and become even more connected,” senior Don Osipiv said. “But that might just be because I'm generally optimistic,” he joked. Osipov admits that the quarantine has made it difficult to maintain relationships, but he is staying positive. Making attempts to communicate with people, he projects high hopes for the future, something many others could use during these times.

In the meantime, the holiday season will be indoors. It may seem disappointing and at times dreary, but it doesn't mean that the holiday season is gone. For eight months,

New Yorkers have been able to persist, and life has been able to continue. Even when people are stuck at home, they have found ways to communicate with friends and family while also finding joy in different things, whether those are shows or hobbies. Likewise, the holiday season in quarantine can prove to be a new experience and something to look back on years from now. For now, Yuan's words echo a positivity that everyone could use at this time: “Have some hot chocolate, binge on Hallmark movies, and if your family is still with you, appreciate them.”

Pfizer's Vaccine: Can We Trust It?

By **SONYA SASSON**

The second wave of the coronavirus has arrived. Countries in Europe are seeing a rapid increase in hospitalizations and deaths: France reports that 95 percent of their intensive care units are populated by COVID-19 patients, while scientists in Germany announce record-high infection rates. Similarly, states within the U.S. are experiencing their highest number of daily cases so far, with New York's daily count rising to nearly 5,000 cases, a number only seen once before during the first wave in March. With no coronavirus vaccine available, everyone is watching worriedly as the numbers grow at alarming rates.

But a new beacon of hope has arrived in the form of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc.'s coronavirus vaccine announcement in mid-November. In collaboration with the German drug manufacturing company BioNTech, Pfizer has publicized that their two-dose vaccine rendered 90 percent effective against the coronavirus during their preliminary trials. Pfizer and BioNTech updated their results just last Wednesday with a new efficacy rate of 95 percent. While details are sparse, an outside panel of experts confirmed the remarkably high success rate

of the vaccine in addition to a lack of serious safety concerns.

The Pfizer vaccine utilizes a new groundbreaking technology used with messenger RNA (mRNA), which has never been approved for human vaccinations before. This is largely because synthetic RNA is extremely vulnerable to the body's natural defenses, meaning that it has a high probability of being attacked and destroyed before reaching its target cells, which in turn could lead to a risky, unwanted immune response in some patients. Despite these challenges, most of the front-runners in the race for a COVID-19 vaccine are attempting to utilize this technology. Rather than using dead or weakened viral particles to provoke an immune response, the mRNA trains the immune system to target a specific protein found on the surface of COVID-19 viruses. By effectively neutralizing this spike-shaped surface protein, people will not become infected with the virus.

Pfizer and BioNTech state

that their vaccine's efficacy is consistent across all ages, races, and ethnicities. The most serious recorded side effects include fatigue (exhibited by 3.7 percent of subjects) and headaches (two percent of subjects) after the second dose. What is perhaps most impressive about this vaccine is the level of protection it offers to the elderly. Akiko Iwawaki, an immunologist at Yale University, explained, "We know from the influenza vaccine that it's very difficult to achieve protection in this age group with a vaccine." This makes this feat quite remarkable.

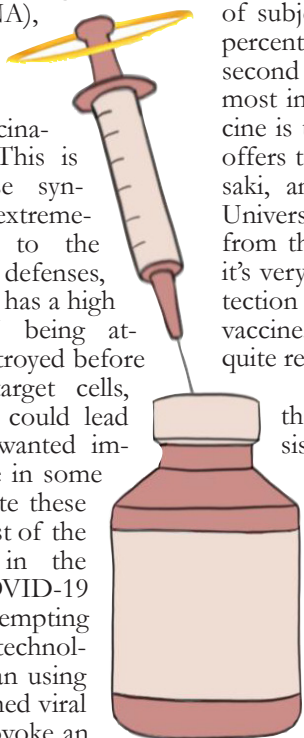
Pfizer has announced that a more detailed analysis of their data collected over the past two months will be disclosed to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as soon as possible. Despite these gains, scientists have cautioned not to celebrate these early results before all data has been collected, especially since it remains unknown how long the vaccine's protection will last and if a vaccinated person can still transmit the virus.

Despite these unanswered questions, the study's preliminary findings indicate that Pfizer's vaccine may have the

potential to transform COVID-19's threat level to that of the common cold. Researchers predict that once the vaccine has reached certified safety and efficacy levels, it will become a "staple" vaccine, such as the annual flu shot. Pfizer's vaccine will not necessarily immunize everyone entirely from the virus, but it will be useful for many people and will reduce the severity of COVID-19 in those infected.

Pfizer plans to request emergency authorization of their vaccine by the FDA later this month. In addition, Pfizer chief executive officer Albert Bourla confirmed that they will follow participants for two years to analyze the protection's durability and immunogenicity. If the FDA approves the vaccine, Pfizer states that they can generate about 50 million doses by the end of 2020, half of which will go to the U.S. Federal health officials have noted that the first doses of the vaccine will be distributed to high-risk exposure groups, like health care workers, as well as the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly.

While Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine has not yet been officially approved, it represents a small victory in the frenzied worldwide race for answers. The promising discovery of a vaccine created with modern tech-



Lauren Chin / The Spectator

SCIENCEBEAT

Scientists used the **synthesis of DNA molecules** in a test tube to generate a **true random number**. It's the largest ever created using **biochemical**, rather than physical, means.

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nology in a time of chaos and uncertainty gives the world hope for a near future free of the pandemic.

No Peeking at My Genome!—How Scientists Are Tackling Issues Concerning Genomic Data Privacy

By **KAITLYN LEE**

What is shaped like a twisted ladder, measures up to twice the diameter of the solar system, and has led to the development of countless innovative biomedical technologies? The answer: the human genome.

The sequencing of the human genome has made a revolutionary impact, most notably in the medical field. Thanks to the discovery of the genome, we can diagnose someone's risk for certain cancers, solve crimes, and even search for long-lost relatives. Genome sequencing has even played a role in the COVID-19 pandemic, with many COVID-19 survivors getting their genome mapped to identify genetic predispositions that increase their risk for COVID-19.

While it's difficult to detract from the advancements made possible by the use of the human genome, there have been growing privacy concerns in regards to collecting genomic data. A leak in genomic data may reveal private health information, resulting in dangerous consequences like discrimination in the workplace and conflicts with family members. And because an individual's genes cannot be easily changed, the leakage of genomic data has permanent effects. Thus, scientists have been trying to identify solutions to provide reliable privacy protections for our genome.

The set of legal standards laid out by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act represented the first attempt at addressing the issue. It used a technique known as de-identification, the censoring and transforming of data until it

cannot be linked to its provided individual. However, de-identification later proved to be a poorly built shield. For example, a certain type of attack known as the "linkage" attack can bypass de-identification by using external databases that share data subsets with de-identified data. Both the de-identified data and data subsets contain information about the individual providing the data, such as zip codes, gender, and salary. This allows attackers to learn additional facts about the individual before fully identifying them. In addition to this vulnerability, full de-identification of genomic data is especially difficult for research purposes, as the data

comes indecipherable for privacy protection.

Another traditional but ineffective strategy for privacy protection is access control, which lends data access only to a trustworthy group of researchers. To implement this system, many genomic databases allow the submission of a summary of the proposed research to be reviewed by a data access committee. The committee determines if the project has sufficient informed consent: whether permission was granted by participants after full knowledge of an experiment's purpose and its consequences. While participants and biobanks involved with these projects have more control over who can access their data, it re-

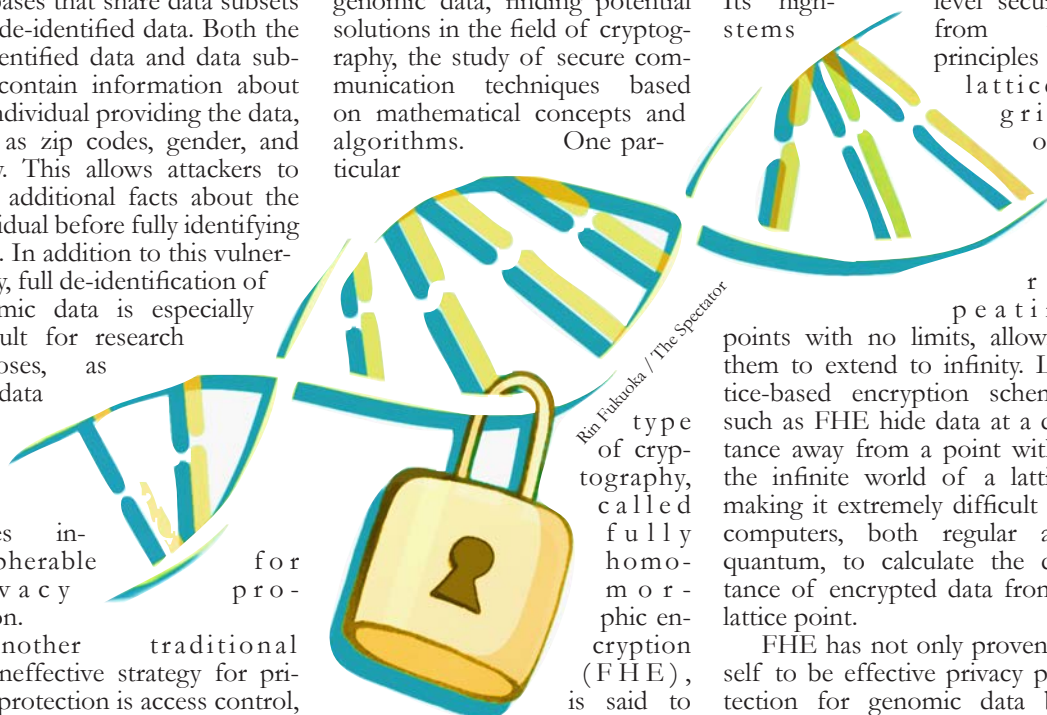
stricts data sharing and does not solve the issue of data leaks when researchers receive the data.

Given the flaws of traditional privacy protection methods, scientists have turned to alternative approaches to securing genomic data, finding potential solutions in the field of cryptography, the study of secure communication techniques based on mathematical concepts and algorithms. One particular

would not breach the privacy of patients, as decrypting the data would not reveal any information about the source. As such, compared to de-identification methods, FHE provides the iron shield of privacy protection. Its high-level security stems from the principles of

lattices, grids of repeating points with no limits, allowing them to extend to infinity. Lattice-based encryption schemes such as FHE hide data at a distance away from a point within the infinite world of a lattice, making it extremely difficult for computers, both regular and quantum, to calculate the distance of encrypted data from a lattice point.

FHE has not only proven itself to be effective privacy protection for genomic data but also opens a pathway outside the field of medicine to safely share data on an international scale. Last year, Brazilian Bank Banco Bradesco collaborated with IBM to test the potential of FHE in financial data. The bank first compared predictions run by its existing machine-learning-based prediction model, both encrypted and unencrypted. It then trained the model with new encrypted data to show how FHE could continue to protect the privacy of client data. Thus, FHE can be used in finances, transferring any data between banks without data



Rin Fukutaka / The Spectator

type of cryptography, called fully homomorphic encryption (FHE), is said to be secure enough to leave quantum computers unable to crack it. Research on FHE first began in the 1970s, continuing until 2009, when computer scientist Craig Gentry developed the first FHE scheme. Since then, he has been refining the precision and efficiency of FHE alongside associates from IBM Research.

Unlike everyday encryption, genomic data encrypted by FHE remains encrypted at all times when used for running computations or when it is transmitted to other places. Any leak of data

Science

The Link Between Mink and the Coronavirus

By ANGELINA CHANG

The discovery of a new coronavirus strain in mink—animals in the same family as weasels, otters, and ferrets—has given rise to Denmark's plan to cull some 17 million mink at more than 1,000 farms out of concern that a mutation in the virus would hinder the effectiveness of new vaccines. Denmark is the world's largest producer of mink fur, and more than one in five farms have reported infections. As a result, more than 200 people have been infected with mink-related strains of the coronavirus.

COVID-19 was first passed from humans to mink, and subsequently from mink back to humans. Large numbers of mink on farms caught the virus from infected workers, and now, mutated versions of the virus have spilled back into the human population.

Danish scientists are primarily concerned about a unique variant known as "Cluster 5," which exhibits mutations that have not been previously observed. According to the Statens Serum Institute in Copenhagen, these mutations alter the sequence of

amino acids that make up the spike protein—the key that enables a virus to fit into a cell's receptor. For SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the lock is a protein called ACE2, which lines the cell membranes. The virus can enter the cell and replicate when the spike protein binds to ACE2. Changes to either the spike protein or ACE2 will affect the virus's ability to enter the cell and the immune system's ability to identify the infection. Preliminary cell experiments also suggest that antibody treatments could be less effective against this strain, but more research is needed before a definite conclusion can be drawn.

Denmark's decision to cull all mink has raised several concerns. After Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen issued the order, the Danish government admitted that the mass cull mandate had no legal basis without the passage of new legislation. Infectious disease experts have questioned the scientific basis for the decision as well: Dr. Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at Columbia University, mentioned that there is not enough evidence to support the claim that this strain will interfere

with vaccine development, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that at this point, the mutation does not appear to have an impact on vaccines.

The decision has been met with mixed reactions from several groups. Danish mink farmers have been devastated by the cull order, and many fear their businesses will be unable to recover. On the other hand, some animal rights advocates have reluctantly supported the cull, fearing that leaving mink alive with COVID-19 would cause them greater respiratory distress.

The transmission of the coronavirus between mink and humans

reveals a greater issue at hand: the farming of millions of animals has given way to a massive spread of viruses between animal and human populations. In both fur and factory farms, animals live in tight and unsanitary conditions that compromise their immune systems, making the farms breeding grounds for viruses. As a result, culling millions of animals appears to be the only way to prevent further propagation of the virus. Given the link between animal farming and widespread virus transmission, it is worth asking if the benefits of fur and factory farming justify the cost.

While fur is widely used in the garment industry, several European nations including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Austria, and Germany have either banned fur production or plan to phase it out. Fur production has brought about not only public health concerns but also ethical concerns: even before the pandemic, millions of mink were killed each year for their fur. To prevent such an outbreak from occurring in the future, countries should consider limiting or banning fur production.



John Shen / The Spectator

Stress-Free at Stuyvesant?

By DEAN CHEN

What is stress? Most Stuyvesant students picture upcoming project deadlines, a criminal amount of nightly homework, and full coffee cups every day. However, stress itself isn't inherently any one of these regular occurrences but rather, a response to them. Pioneering endocrinologist Hans Selye defined stress as a medical term in the 20th century, referring to it as a "nonspecific response of the body to any demand." In essence, Selye established stress as any response, positive or negative, that the body has to any sort of demand (though the word "demand" is rather vague). Stress may be better defined as the body's response to any perceived or real threat to homeostasis, or bodily balance, requiring adaptation to overcome.

Originally coined the "general adaptation syndrome" by Selye in the 1930s, the stress response is our biological mechanism for combating environmental change. The response itself consists of three different components: the alarm reaction (better known as the fight or flight response), the resistance reaction, and exhaustion. Everything begins with a stressor—any physical or psychological stimulus that prompts the body to initiate the stress response. Stressors may be real or perceived, meaning that they have the potential to cause actual harm or the brain simply thinks they do. Did your mom see the F on your math test? A real stressor. Can't figure out that question on your genetics homework? A perceived stressor. The severity and duration of the reaction depend on the threat that the stressor poses, as well as how long it may be present. When a stressor is recognized, the hypothalamus begins the hormone cascade that is the

basis of the stress response.

The hypothalamus serves as a connection in the brain between the nervous and endocrine systems. It begins the stress response by sending a signal through the sympathetic nervous system to the adrenal glands, found above the kidneys. When stimulated, the adrenal glands secrete the hormones epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine (noradrenaline). Increased stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system favors bodily functions that support increased energy production and vigorous physical activity while expending little energy. Together, this combination of responses results in physiological changes that prime the body for physical activity, such as increased glycogenolysis (the conversion of the liver's glycogen stores into glucose), decreased skeletal muscle fatigue, increased cardiac function, and increased lung ventilation. Vasoconstriction (shrinking of blood vessels) in the skin and internal organs and vasodilation (expansion of vessels) in the heart, lungs, and muscles directs blood flow to where it's needed most. Most nonessential functions (digestive, urinary, reproductive) are inhibited. This immediate reaction, prompted by the hypothalamus, is what is known as the "fight or flight" response.

As the short-term fight or flight response occurs, hormones in the hypothalamus and anterior pituitary gland prepare the long-term resistance reaction. A long cascade of hormone release occurs, moving from the hypothalamus to the anterior pituitary gland, and finally the adrenal glands, liver, and thyroid gland. The hormones released from these three organs primarily prompt changes in body metabolism, inhibition of inflammation and immune function,

and stopping of nonessential functions. Cortisol, one of the most important and well-known stress hormones, is released from the adrenal gland. Cortisol is responsible for protein and fat breakdown, increased vascular reactivity (the ability to main-

migraines, anxiety, depression, ulcers, hypertension, atherosclerosis, loss of sleep (Do you even get enough in the first place?), and more. Overexposure to cortisol results in atrophy of the hippocampus and subsequent deterioration of memory, as



Vivian Teo / The Spectator

tain constriction in response to chemical stimuli), inhibition of glucose uptake in nonessential organs, and stalling immune responses. The resistance reaction is intended to see you through the duration of the exposure to a stressor after the fight or flight response dies down.

If the body expends its resources and is unable to sustain the resistance reaction, it enters the exhaustion stage of the stress response. At this point, there isn't much left for the body to use, and rapid decline and death may occur. A state of chronic stress takes a heavy toll on the body, as it never truly returns to a state of homeostasis. Chronic stress can contribute to a number of physiological conditions:

well as over-suppression of the immune system. Chronic stress also causes pathophysiological changes in the brain, leading to cognitive, behavioral, and mood disorders.

Now, the question is, how can we avoid all of the unpleasant effects of stress? Luckily, I'm currently doing my college applications, and I'm still breathing, so you're in the presence of an expert. There are a number of measures that can be taken to manage stress, which find their basis in counteracting the effects of the stress response. As a physiological phenomenon, the stress response varies by individual but produces similar effects in every person.

The American Psychologi-

cal Association suggests a slew of techniques to manage stress, including eliminating stressors, finding social support, eating healthfully, meditating, exercising regularly, establishing a sleep schedule, maintaining leisure activities, and seeking help. Evaluating and eliminating the stressor is probably the first action to take and may be the most helpful. Is it something that can be avoided? How responsible are you for the situation? How much control do you have? Taking a moment to consider each predicament I find myself in helps me reduce the stress that I'm feeling.

Eating normally may be difficult because long-term stress hormone exposure can kill one's appetite or cause cravings for energy-dense foods, but it's important to maintain a regular diet to prevent further health complications. Sleeping normally is also essential in preserving bodily function and helps prevent the cognitive deterioration that occurs with prolonged stress. Additionally, despite the ongoing pandemic and fear of the outside world, going outside can be highly beneficial. Exercise stimulates endorphin release that promotes a sense of relaxation and accomplishment, as well as benefiting cardiovascular and overall health.

Persistent stress seems to be a little too common at Stuyvesant, and considering the bizarre state of the world right now, it may be more present than before. As a result, the importance of prioritizing your health and wellbeing is greater now than ever. It never hurts to look at the positives: you have free time to talk to friends, you feel in control of your work and classes, and you skip the coffee once in a while. Stress may be an inevitable part of our daily lives, but it isn't something that we can't control.

Why Do Humans Dream?

By RIONA ANVEKAR

Mesopotamians were the first people to articulate the concept of a dream: around 5,000 years ago, they recorded their dreams on clay tablets and began to wonder what they meant. Later, Greeks and Romans believed dreams were messages sent from deities or deceased people to predict the future. From then on, specific cultures began to practice dream incubation to cultivate dreams of prophecy. Then, in the early 1900s, Sigmund Freud's theory that dreams are manifestations of our deepest anxieties and desires led to further debate among psychologists. From the beginning of early civilization formation, society has sought to figure out the function of dreams.

Dreams are hallucinations that occur during certain stages of sleep, most prominently during the rapid eye movement (REM) stage when the brain is least likely to recall them. They are images, thoughts, or feelings that tend to be autobiographical; that is, they are based on recent sentiments, experiences, and issues. Many studies have shown that the waking lives of humans have great influence on the content of dreams. For instance, pregnant women dream more about pregnancy and childbirth, hospice workers often dream about the experiences of caregiving, and musicians dream twice as often about music as non-musicians do. Sometimes, an experience from life takes the form of a dream after several days, or even a week, in a phenomenon known as dream lag. However, we also have the capacity to dream beyond waking experiences. The paralyzed may have dreams in which they walk, swim, and run, and the deaf dream of hearing.

There are several dream classifications. One type is the nightmare: frightening dreams that result in awakening from sleep. They are distinct from bad dreams in that they rarely occur. They can be triggered by stress, emotional upheaval, traumatic experiences, or occur as side effects of medications. Nightmares

can contribute to insomnia, daytime fatigue, depression, and anxiety. Junior Shriya Anand recalled a time where a frightening nightmare affected her performance in school the next day: "I



Laitha Xie / The Spectator

had a nightmare that I was in a dystopian society in a forest and someone was chasing after me. Eventually, I reached the end of the forest and fell off a cliff. That woke me up, and after that, I was too paranoid to go back to sleep. The next day at school, I was falling asleep in all of my classes."

The second type of dream is the night terror: very intense episodes of fright that tend to occur during non-REM dreams, unlike nightmares. Children are more prone to experiencing night terrors. Evidence suggests that there may be a genetic predisposition to night terrors and a relationship among night terrors, sleep apnea, and enlarged tonsils in children.

Third, recurring dreams are dreams that appear with some pattern of regularity. They may contain more threatening content than regular dreams and can be a sign of psychological distress. Ju-

nior Paige Wolfing remembered a time in her childhood: "When I was younger, I used to dream of crocodiles eating my family or a shark eating me in a swimming pool."

Finally, lucid dreams are dreams in which dreamers are aware that they are dreaming and can control or manipulate their dreams. Lucid dreamers display significantly higher brain wave frequencies and increased activity in parts of the frontal lobe, the area of the brain which is deeply involved with conscious awareness, a sense of self, and language and memory. Many people try to induce lucid dreaming, but it can result in sleep paralysis. Ju-

nior Tashfia Noor recounted a time where she was able to lucid dream: "I was having a dream where I could fly, and slowly, I began to realize that it wasn't real. I took control of the dream, and I flew all the way to space. I could see the entire solar system, and it was a freaky feeling."

Obviously, there are also normal dreams. Junior Maggie Jin said, "I had a dream [in which] I was going to an ice cream store, ordering an ice cream, and sitting down at a table with it, but then I woke up right as I was about to eat it. I was so disappointed when I woke up." Dreams can also be normal everyday activities.

Dreams may act as methods to confront emotional issues in reality, train the body for fight-or-flight reactions, facilitate creative tendencies, or help store important memories. While asleep, the brain makes connections between feelings that the conscious mind is unable to form because it works on a more logical basis while awake, prohibiting emotional growth during the day. In addition, during dreams, the amygdala is very active. It is the part of the brain that is associated with survival instinct and the fight-or-flight response, and its engagement during dreams signals preparation for a real-life threat. Dreams help facilitate creative tendencies because thoughts and ideas aren't restricted by the logic filter activated in waking life. Lastly, research shows that dreams can act as memory aids by helping store memories, rid the mind of unimportant memories, and sort through complicated thoughts and feelings by blocking out stimuli that could interfere with memory and learning.

The role of sleep is vital in regulating metabolism, blood pressure, brain function, and other aspects, but the evolutionary purpose of dreams is something that continues to spark debate. Sigmund Freud claimed that dreams are a neurotic symptom stemming from the unconscious mind to keep the body asleep. He also argued that a set of censors transforms latent content, repressed thoughts, and wishes from the

unconscious into the content of dreamwork. The main censors are displacement, condensation, representation, symbolism, and secondary revision. More specifically, these censors can work in dreams to displace elements of our experience into characters of lyrics, condense longer narratives into short stories, transform ideas across different mediums, cloak personal experiences in daily life, and refine emotions and thoughts collected from waking life.

Psychiatrist and dream researcher Allen Hobson, in sharp contrast to Freud, argues that dreams do not have an evolutionary purpose and are essentially meaningless. On the other hand, psychoanalyst and neuropsychologist Mark Solms demonstrated a more complex relationship between REM sleep and dreaming in which the seeking system is the generator of dreams. The seeking system is one of the seven major emotional tendencies of the brain and is the system responsible for our motivated actions in relation to survival and our desires. Solms argues that dreams are states of the mind seeking meaning and are motivated psychological phenomena that can enlighten us about our own minds.

Scientists have managed to agree that dreams can be affected not only by health conditions, diet, and daily activities, but also by stress. Stuyvesant students who experience stress on the daily may be susceptible to hyperarousal, which upsets the balance between sleep and wakefulness, making it more difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep. Research shows that daily mild stress increases REM sleep, which is linked to a deficiency in the regulation of the hormone cortisol, a stress hormone. Therefore, stress may trigger more frequent dreams, and more specifically, anxiety-ridden dreams. However, if students spend time winding down before bed, schedule time to write down all their concerns, and practice relaxation techniques, they can control their stress and as a result, enjoy more dreams about eating ice cream rather than getting eaten by alligators.

Forensic Science: A Class Worth Fighting for

By ARTHUR LIANG

Forensic Science, taught by biology teachers Dr. Jeffrey Horenstein and Jason Econome, is one of Stuyvesant's most highly sought-after science electives.

The class aims to give students a glimpse into what forensic scientists do by exposing them not only to the many scientific lab procedures used to analyze crime scenes but also to the creative thinking that is crucial to reconstructing these crime scenes. "Each year will differ, as I emphasize some units over others," Dr. Horenstein stated in an e-mail interview. "For example, two years ago we did a big unit on medical autopsies. Students performed an 'autopsy' on a fetal pig to figure out how the pig had died. The exercise enabled students to go through autopsy procedures such as removing and analyzing major organs." Students also dive into philosophical discussions regarding the moral and ethical aspects of forensic science, studying several case studies where confounding factors like contamination caused the forensic analysis to point to the wrong suspects.

Furthermore, Forensic Science is not a definitive field of study with surefire answers due to the subjective nature of crime. But that subjectivity is part of the appeal of the class. Students enjoy how Dr. Horenstein and Econome emphasize that there are holes, anomalies, and errors that come with forensic science—a pleasant departure from the long-standing theories and laws often taught in science classes.

Of course, not everyone who takes the class wants to pursue a career in forensic science: "For me, Forensic Science isn't something I'm particularly interested in going into for my career. I was attracted to the class simply because I thought it was interesting how we can combine things we learn from biology into practice," senior Chloe Liu said. She continued, explaining that the emphasis of the class is on labs. "You take it [Forensic Science] because the labs are really interesting, something you normally wouldn't get to do. You get to almost be in the mind of a detective and forensic scientist."

In a similar vein, Vivian Yan

(20), who took Forensic Science in 2020, stated, "I feel like the crime scene aspect was most appealing to me because when crimes are committed, you never get to see everything that goes into solving the crime. In Forensics, I was able to step in the shoes of a forensic scientist and work my way up from collecting evidence to determining likely suspects."

To that end, the class's labs are formatted in a way to simulate what students would do if they were forensic scientists at a crime scene. For instance, perhaps the most popular lab the class completes is a fingerprinting exercise that reviews case studies and teaches students how fingerprints leave sweat and oil behind, how fingers leave a mark on everything they touch, and how those marks can be analyzed. "They also learn how to dust for latent prints (prints that need to be made visible through various techniques), and match latent prints with a set of ink prints. Something fun that has happened in each class is that a few students are found to have at least one unique print pattern that we can analyze as a class," Dr.

Horenstein stated.

Moreover, Liu mentioned a blood splatter lab that involves analyzing the size, shape, location, and distribution of bloodstains to recreate the actions that caused the bloodshed. Traditionally, there are also labs for units like ballistics, where labs include tracking guns to their owners and matching bullets to a certain type of gun, as well as decomposition, in which students analyze how long a corpse has been deceased and whether or not it has been moved from its original location. Unfortunately, Liu was unable to do these labs because of the switch to remote learning. "I would've had a better time if I was able to do the labs Dr. Horenstein planned to bring in person," Liu said. "Dr. Horenstein tried hard to find online labs, but they still felt like watered-down versions of what could've happened in person. The class became largely centered around lectures and taking notes, so we couldn't apply what we learned."

Despite not being able to conduct these highly-anticipated activities, the class has still been fulfilling. "Dr. Horenstein [is] still able

to make them fun and engaging for students," senior Ann Zhang stated. This year, Dr. Horenstein and Econome are experimenting with labs students can do with materials at home. Dr. Horenstein explained, "One activity I am trying out this year is for students to set up an entire crime scene in their homes, including a corpse, thanks to volunteers from pod members. In their groups, students are making videos, photographs, and sketches of the crime scene, as well as properly documenting all relevant evidence. Each group will then take the crime scene data from another group and do their best to solve the crime."

As Liu suggests, the shift to remote learning resulted in a shift in the class structure from focusing on labs to emphasizing lectures. For now, Econome and Dr. Horenstein are exploring different options to reproduce the intimate, firsthand experiences students take part in in person. Liu and Zhang remain optimistic, assured that a careful reopening of school will allow the elective to once again be enjoyed to the fullest.

Editorials

The Pilots and Finales

With the recent closure of New York City schools this past Wednesday, Stuyvesant's current learning model is, fortunately, largely unaffected by this announcement, as most students have been adjusting to a fully remote program since September. What's more, students across all grades have bought into virtual instruction, and most, if not all, students are attending classes daily. The vast majority of students are turning on their cameras and actively paying attention and participating in classes. Teachers have also been flexible with teaching remotely, employing different educational platforms and modes of online learning. While we are very fortunate that students and teachers alike have been taking the academic side of school extremely seriously, most of us have lost the socialization that is present in an average day in the school building.

Though all grades are undoubtedly impacted by this struggle, the class of 2024 has been especially hard-hit. Though some freshmen came into Stuyvesant with a cohort of peers from their middle schools, a significant portion of the freshman population did not. In a normal school year, the first months are filled with many opportunities for freshmen to create friendships. Larger events like the Big Sib-Little Sib picnic and dance, as well as smaller interactions—like walking up the escalator with a friend after class—afford such possibilities. In a remote setting, however, these opportunities are far and few in between. For more intro-

verted students, it can seem intimidating to suggest a call or even message a classmate. The lack of a student government has exacerbated this problem: the Freshman Caucus presidents were elected only on November 16, leaving hundreds of hundreds of students without leaders to organize events for the first two months of remote schooling.

Seniors, though in the opposite position of freshmen, are facing similar struggles. In the final season of the television show that is the Stuyvesant student experience, many seniors were looking forward to a last hurrah—showing up to school in pajamas, wearing pink on October 3 (preferably a Wednesday), and sharing the stress of college application season. Instead, they have found themselves losing friendships with those who haven't remained in close touch. The few moments of spirit that Stuyvesant students possess—from promposals to senior spirit days—have further diminished in the virtual environment, ultimately missing the closure of the long-anticipated senior finale.

More broadly, socialization has been a struggle for students across all grades. One of the best parts of a Stuyvesant day is the small interactions between classes filled with a sense of fun spontaneity. Whether that means a wave in the crowded hallways or a shared laughter about the difficulty of a test, instances like these are meaningful and allow students to interact with many of their peers. But most of these interactions are be-

tween casual acquaintances. It is difficult to maintain such casual friendships in a remote environment. As a result, students may find themselves remaining within their insular friend groups because they ultimately don't have a practical reason to have a conversation with those not in their classes or in their already well-established friend group. Still, one silver lining of this situation may be that many students are learning to appreciate being by themselves—and the ability to truly be alone without checking for an e-mail or text message is a valuable one. This realization, however, does not diminish the overwhelming decrease in socialization that many students have struggled with these past months.

Still, socialization during the age of remote learning is far from impossible. Keeping in touch through video-calls and occasional in-person meetings (if safe and distanced) are sure to boost morale and rekindle some much-needed Stuyvesant spirit. Furthermore, though it might be intimidating for freshmen (and all students, for that matter), reaching out to a classmate, perhaps under the guise of homework help, might spark a larger friendship. More often than not, that peer will also be looking to make a new friend.

As students in a rigorous specialized high school, it is not surprising that our academics have remained a priority through remote learning. Though academic engagement is undoubtedly commendable this year, we must also com-

The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper



"The Pulse of the Student Body"

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mit to maintaining the social aspects that are just as important to a high school experience. COVID-19 has already shaped many parts of our lives

in recent months. By taking initiative, we can minimize its impact on the new social dynamic of this virtual environment.

The Death of Regionalism

By JOSHUA GINDIS

Hearing the voices of those who once inhabited my native Brooklyn, whether through black-and-white films or old timey-recordings, I always feel as though I'm observing a conversation between aliens. I grew up surrounded by homebred New Yorkers who dropped their r's and never mixed up merry, marry, or Mary, and yet, I've never been able to speak with this famous dialect. I recently took a New York Times quiz that informed me that my idiolect most closely resembles the English spoken by the inhabitants of Southern California and Kansas City, two places I've never visited. I find that most young people, like myself, increasingly speak an amalgamation of American dialects that lack regional nuances. In much of Louisiana, Cajun French was once spoken in nearly every household, even when it was illegal to teach in schools. Today, Cajun is faced with a slow, painful death, as the majority of its native speakers reach the end of their lives, and only the youngest and least proficient generation is left to preserve what was once a thriving lan-

guage. Throughout the nation, and to some extent the world, regional cultures are diminishing in diversity as every corner of the globe is brought together by advances in communica-

required an answer: how can we protect regional language and culture in a progressively more connected world?

Culture is worth protecting. It is estimated that of the

and constitute a unique way of thinking and of interpreting the world. When the last speaker of a language dies, they take with them a complex culture, history, and piece

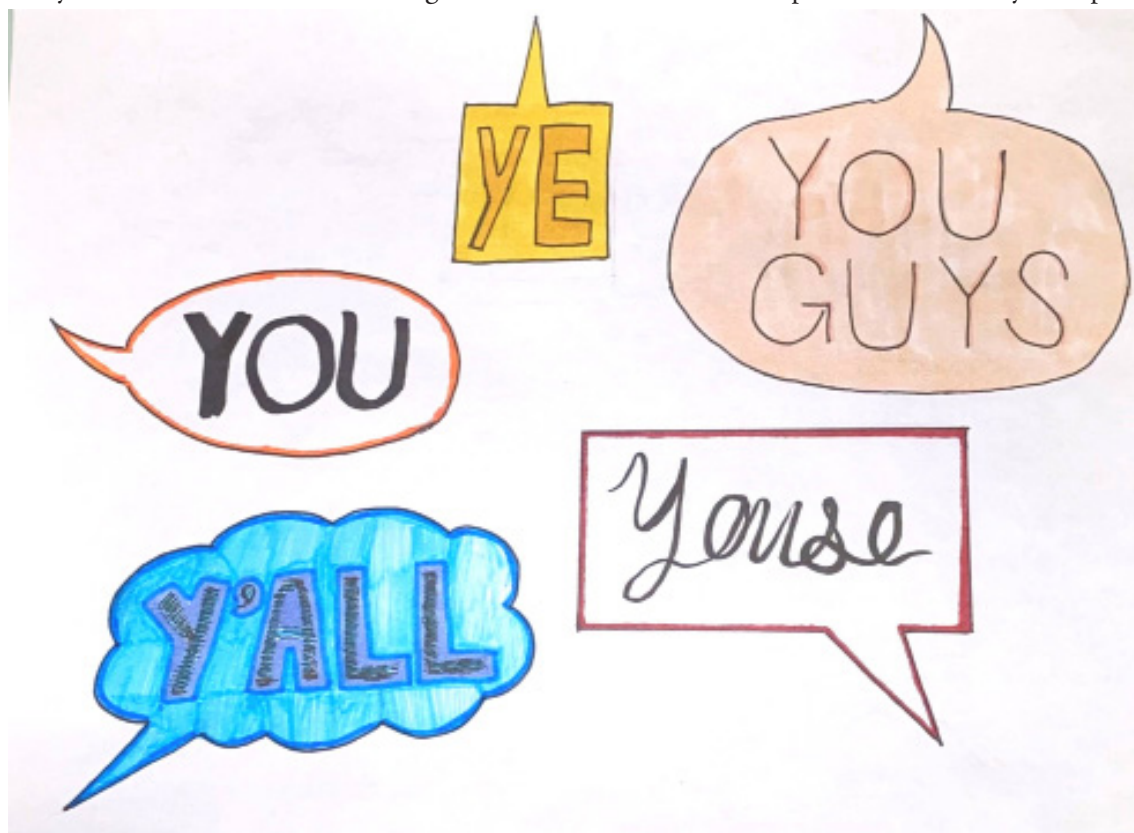
ple live their lives. The more one identifies with a cultural background, the happier one is likely to be. It is human nature to desire a group to be a part of. But the allure of culture comes from its exclusivity, the sense that culture is one's own. As cultural diversity decreases, so too does the benefit that culture has on one's perception of self and general happiness. Therefore, aside from its intangible benefits, working to preserve the cultural diversity of the nation and the world has a real, positive impact on how people live their lives.

However, for such a program to be successful, it would require the support of the people. Culture is not static; it is constantly changing. There is a fine line between preserving culture and prescribing it—just ask L'Academie Francaise, the French institution responsible for preserving the Gallic language that so vehemently resists any foreign influence that it is constantly in conflict with the reality of how it is spoken. Any effort made to preserve regional culture should focus on ensuring the retention of cultural identity and allow-

tions technology. As we carry on in the 21st century and forward, we are faced with a question that has never before

world's 7,600 odd languages, one goes extinct every three months. Languages are cultural fixtures just like any other

of the human experience that can never be brought back. Cultural preservation has real, measured effects on how peo-



Joanna Meng / The Spectator

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China's Chokehold on American Businesses

By **CLAIRE MACDONALD**

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) flagship journal, *Qiushi*, printed an article in July of 2020 consisting of 18 separate quotations from President Xi Jinping that all drive home the same theme: Xi and the Party are the supreme and sole authorities in China. The phrase "East, west, south, north and at the center, the Party leads everything" is repeated, with slight variations, seven times. Xi also writes that "without the Party's leadership, national rejuvenation will remain a fantasy." In a time when China and the U.S. are more economically interconnected than ever before, Xi has cemented his commitment to authoritarianism.

The U.S. first established a diplomatic relationship with China in hopes of pushing the communist nation toward democracy. Trade between the two countries began in 1979, when, seeking to "open up" China, U.S. President Jimmy Carter signed a bilateral trade agreement with Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping. Since then, commerce between the two nations has grown rapidly, increasing from \$4 billion that year to over \$600 billion in 2017. The U.S. government was confident that increased exposure to the Western capitalist lifestyle would win over the people of China and gradually transform the country's worldview. Instead, our economy became increasingly dependent on China's: our trade deficit increased hugely in the '80s to '90s, growing from just \$6 million in 1985 to \$83 billion by 2000, and finally to \$419 billion by 2018. Our economic interactions with China were initially spurred by political motives, but now our economy is inextricably linked with that of China, and our corporations have set aside all American liberal ideologies for profit.

China has seen unprecedented, unforeseeable economic growth and social development in the last two decades; the nation has escaped its reputation as a large source of cheap, often subpar manufacturing and grown to become the second-largest economy in the world. China now holds access to a valuable consumer base due to its rapidly expanding middle class, which is projected to increase from 80 million in 2002 to 700 million by the end of 2020, making it now larger than the entire population of the U.S. Most large companies are now dependent on China's massive consumer base, even those that may appear uniquely American. Ten percent of the total revenue of the Starbucks Corporation came from China

in 2019, and KFC now sells more chicken in China than in the U.S.

This economic growth has been accompanied by growing authoritarianism. Since Xi took power in 2012, China has become increasingly imperialist, strengthening its presence in disputed territories like Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea with aggressive political and military maneuvers that violate all previously negotiated treaties. Xi has also shown disregard for the rights of his mainland citizens: since 2014, Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang province of China have increasingly had their religious, cultural, and social practices restricted. The first detention camps were discovered on satellite maps in 2017, and while the government initially denied their existence, they have since acknowledged the camps and now claim they are peaceful "re-education" centers. In these camps, detainees are reportedly forced to recite Communist propaganda for hours every day and chant slogans praising Xi. If they show any form of disobedience, they experience horrific torture. Female detainees also face sexual assault and forced sterilization. Though the government denies these claims, it did confirm that birth rates in the mostly Uyghur regions of Hotan and Kashgar dropped by 60 percent between 2015 and 2018.

American businesses refuse to condemn these abuses, because they are entirely dependent on the goodwill of the Chinese government. Foreign companies in China have always been forced to operate under tight government restrictions: each one is assigned a member of the CCP to manage a cell of Party members employed there, and state security recruits personnel to work in the office

and discreetly monitor the activities of foreign managers. For most American corporations, this censorship allows them to put aside any personal morals and simply focus on profit. However, as China continually tightens its restrictions, it has become increasingly difficult for foreign companies to avoid violating the government's vague requirements.

The Marriott hotel chain misstepped and sent out a global survey to its rewards members listing Hong Kong, Macau, Tibet, and Taiwan as separate countries in January of 2018. The company, which operates over 300 hotels in the Chinese mainland, was forced to suspend operation of its Chinese website and app

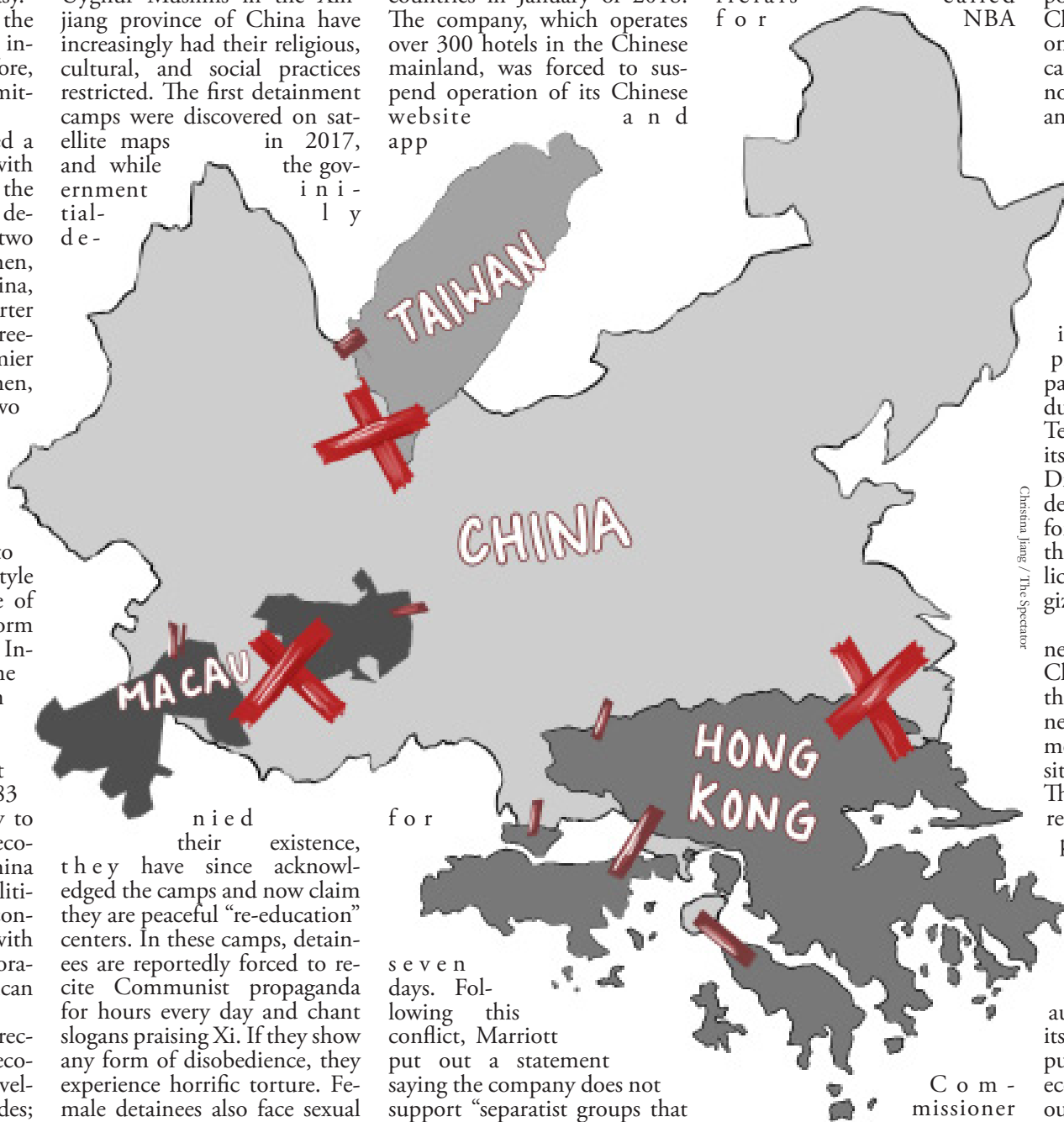
plished, including the U.S.-based Delta, United, and American Airlines, and now list all the disputed territories as provinces of the People's Republic of China. China's censorship of American companies was again seen on October 4, 2019, when in response to pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, Houston Rockets manager Daryl Morey tweeted an image reading "Fight for Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong." Morey later deleted his tweet, but the damage had been done: within a few days, Chinese officials called for NBA

had marked discrepancies between its English and Chinese translations. By late October, Nike, which makes around 10 percent of its revenue from Chinese consumers, had pulled all Rockets merch from its Chinese stores.

China's power stretched to affect even the media covering the controversy. Immediately after Morey's tweet was sent out, Chuck Salituro, the senior news director at ESPN, released a memo to all employees mandating that coverage of the situation avoid any political discussion relating to China and Hong Kong. Then, one of ESPN's shows broadcast a map of China including not only Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau, but also the infamous nine-dashed line in the South China Sea representing China's much-contested claims there. An expert on Chinese law said he had "never seen that map outside of China" and described its broadcasting as "literal Chinese state propaganda." This transparent pandering to the CCP is likely due to ESPN's partnership with Tencent, as well as the fact that its parent company, the Walt Disney Corporation, is hugely dependent on Chinese sales for every part of its movies and theme parks. Despite the public outcry, ESPN did not apologize.

Instead of American businesses "opening up" China, China has instead shut down the free speech of those businesses, turning them into mouthpieces for imperialist positions for the American public. The government will not face resistance from its mainland population in the foreseeable future; most Chinese citizens are unaware of any human rights abuses by the government, and those who are aware are unable to effect change. Since China's authoritarianism is enabled by its strong economy, it will take purposeful and global-scale economic maneuvers or even outright military aggression to coerce China's authoritarian leaders to loosen their grip on the nation.

If American corporations won't change their ways, our government must step in to protect free speech. Right now, the U.S. is engaged in asymmetrical warfare where the government of China uses the tools of our capitalism to assert authoritarianism. We must fight China using our own economic power to ensure that our corporations will not become tools of an antidemocratic government. If the current path continues, the cost will be our freedom of speech.



China's Chokehold on American Businesses

The Death of Regionalism

continued from page 10

ing culture to thrive without the encroachment of modern technology, not to regulate or change culture to make it closer to what it 'should' be.

Despite this vital stipulation, it is incumbent on the government to protect regionalism in an increasingly het-

erogeneous world. Just as the Industrial Revolution changed the dynamic between man and earth in such a way that the government was forced to intervene, creating state and national parks to preserve American nature in the face of technological advancements that posed an unprecedented

threat to it, the government is now responsible for protecting the regionalisms that new technology might otherwise wipe out. The government can invest in local art, theater, and music. Economic stability should be prioritized as a means of discouraging excessive movement within the na-

tion, which removes people from their homes and dilutes the regional character of wherever they go. The government can declare sites and buildings, as well as more intangible items such as languages and dialects, as historically or culturally significant to protect them. There is clearly no shortage of paths

which can be pursued in order to protect our heritage, but each day that passes is another day more and more of our nation's regional flairs irreversibly drift away. Still, if we make the right moves, we may yet live in a world where every land has its own story, and every city is one's own.

Opinions

COVID-19 Is Still Scary, Now More Than Ever

By LAMIA HAQUE

Humans are afraid of many things, from spiders, to clowns, to carnivorous beasts, or even just the thought of death. At the root of all these fears is the fear of the unknown. We think we know everything, so when we discover something unfamiliar, it becomes scary. This fear of uncertainty mostly kept us indoors for the first wave of COVID-19 while also fostering paranoia. For the second wave, we must use not our primal fear of the unknown, but the fear of the certain and promote it with clear guidelines.

Fear has a negative connotation, but in regard to coronavirus, it was a good thing. For months, no one was sure of the effects of COVID-19. Its uncertainty kept us indoors and social distancing. We feared for the health of ourselves and those around us. We knew that even if we didn't have the virus, we wouldn't go near anyone or anything that might. The logic made sense considering that the March COVID-19 positivity rate was up to 68.5 percent in Queens. With the number of

new cases increasing rapidly all over the United States, the same action is necessary. But now, many will not comply. Something is wrong with the initial fear.

The issue with fearing because of uncertainty is that this type of fear diminishes. We all feel the quarantine burnout that pushes us to leave our homes and spend time with our loved ones. We slap on a mask and believe that it has solved our problems. But wearing a mask is not enough. Think about the virus as paint. If we don't want the paint to touch our mouths or noses but we still touch it with our hands, there's a chance that we might not wash it off completely. The paint might get on our phones, clothes, and eventually our faces. If we stay away from people, we eliminate all

risk. This would be possible if we embraced something I call "certain fear," a phrase referring to fear due to certainty of the consequences.



The difference between uncertain and certain fear is that the latter gives us a reason to be

afraid. When we remember what has already happened because of COVID-19, it keeps us from acting on selfish impulses that lead to being complicit in the deaths of thousands. Impulses affect everyone, but our fear of consequences can push us to learn more about the virus and control our actions.

The information is at our disposal, and we can create certain fear by using that knowledge to be aware of how we affect our surroundings. The right type of fear conditions us to think before we act.

The other problem that occurred early on in the pandemic was that instead of having the right amount of fear, we had paranoia and downright panic. In an attempt to prevent the panic, President Trump had downplayed the potential effects of the virus, but his actions led to even more

panic. There was distrust in the government, which caused people to prepare for an apocalypse and scapegoat China for the faults of the American government. People weren't sure of how afraid they should be, and it caused chaos.

To have the right amount of fear, there must be guidelines on how to act during a pandemic. Fear makes sense when we know exactly what to do to prevent the situation from getting worse. We can create a controlled amount of fear with clear behavior protocols, which are something the presidential administration must be pressured to work on now.

While these protocols are being written, we have to channel our certain fear in the right way. We have experience with the virus and have to source our fear from knowing the consequences. We stay indoors because the risk is too high to mingle, even with a mask. We only buy what we need because otherwise, there will be chaos in supermarkets. We remember not to blame demographics who had no control over the virus. If we take these steps, we can find a way out.

A Palace of Doves

By ANISA GAO

I watched the film "Mulan" (1998) repeatedly throughout the two week long Christmas break of 2016, each scene cementing into my mind as I fell asleep on the couch beneath the frigid window. I would always fast forward past the scene where Mulan comes out of her tent to greet her angry fellow soldiers—too overwhelmed with my own second-hand embarrassment—and resume right at the moment she stares in horror as the Huns set off for the Imperial Palace. The screen pulls back from her fear-stricken face to reveal the glittering lights of a celebrating capital city full of dragons and lanterns. If Mulan weren't occupied with saving China, I'd have no doubt she would've stared in awe at the sight. She lives in a rural town—far from the emperor—just like her position in the patriarchal society she grew up in.

If I were in her shoes and living in 15th century China, I would have been astonished to see the foreign sight of riches that a peasant girl could only dream about. My only glimpses into such an extravagant life were from the dramas my

mother watched while I was a kid who curiously peeked at the television. Despite the floors being soaked in blood and betrayal, they were stepped on by elegant monarchs who wore headdresses of gold and fresh flowers and clothes of the finest silks. In one particular scene I saw, the household of concubines and ladies filed out into the throne room, all suspects for a poisoning attempt. As the guilty maid was caught and carried out screaming, a servant turned his head down, out of respect. The servant's gruff hands tightly gripped a broom as he crept out of focus, behind the doors of the room as the emperor beat down a warning to the room full of future potential snakes and scorpions. He had no place in the room full of pale, well-bred nobles.

Dark Chinese girls didn't exist to me until I was in third grade. I had concluded that if my parents were both fully Chinese and I never saw a Chinese girl with my skin tone, then I must have been adopted. There wasn't anything in my mind that could explain why I was the only girl in my family who wasn't fair. Looking back, my skin was al-

most identical to my father's hot chocolate color. But to me, he didn't look far from those servants and scrapped-up soldiers in my mother's movies. He spoke fluent Mandarin and Cantonese and told me about his childhood growing up in a rural village in Guangdong. He strongly resembled my paler uncle; being illiterate in all dialects of Chinese and unfamiliar with any culture, I couldn't help but convince myself that he and I weren't alike at all. It wasn't until I met another Chinese girl tanned like brown sugar that I began to feel some connection to red lucky bags and dumplings buried underneath maple syrup and loonies.

We met on a sunny beach where I could spot her complexion from a mile away. As her parents began talking to mine, we built a dam, and I compared her skin to the color of the wet sand brushing against our legs as the waves trickled in. She spoke fluently to her mother who asked her if she wanted to join Girl Guides with me the following year. That little worry in my head that I wasn't what my parents said I was rubbed away as I saw her speak fluent Chinese back to her mother. I met two

more dark-skinned Chinese in my fourth grade class who were darker than I was and even more knowledgeable of my own culture. I was surrounded by Chinese kids who spoke to me like I could speak back to them, ate the Chinese food that I would bring to class potlucks, and worried as much as I did about my grades. I started calling myself Chinese and even enjoyed the confusion in strangers' faces as I egged them to guess what ethnicity I was. It was a fun little game for me, obscuring a harsher reality.

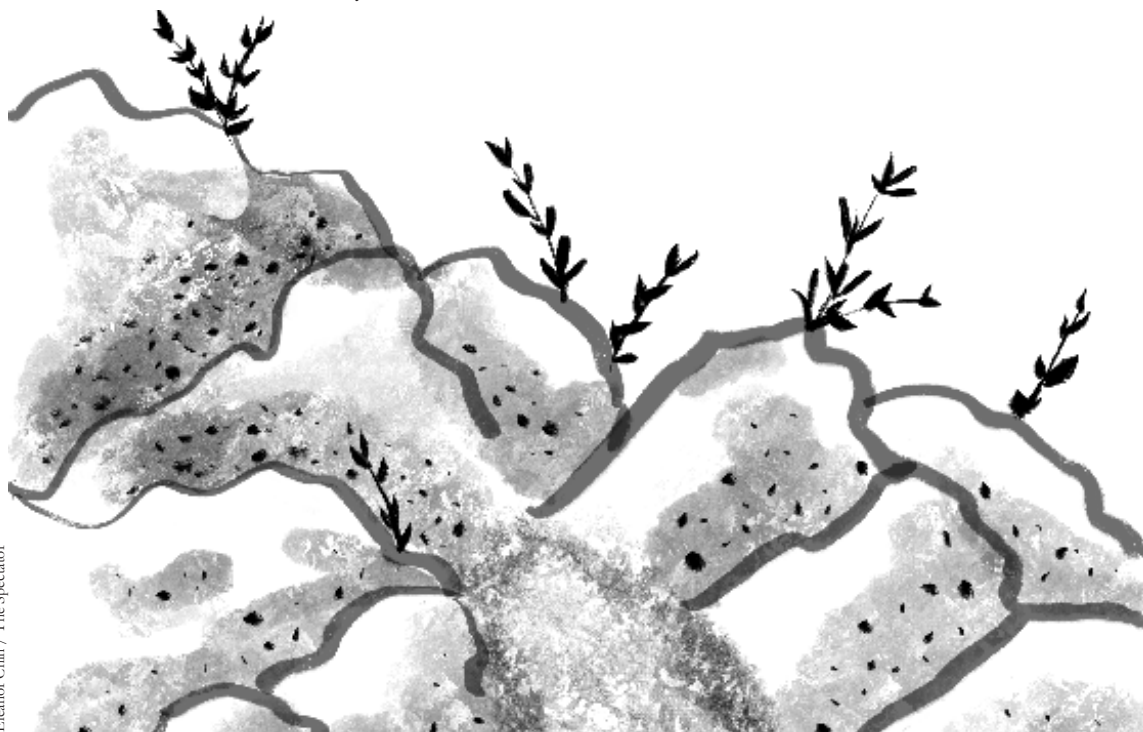
I laughed off the comments I got about my weight and appearance in sixth grade, letting the nitpicks later pummel me down in eighth grade. I tried to not think much of being used as a joke in "date, marry, kill" or being called ugly by the boys during camp. Everything was just a funny tease or a bit of attention that was rarely given to me as a kid. It was fairly sour, but food was food, and I couldn't be a beggar and a chooser, so I pretended not to notice.

Whenever I got called "fat" or "hideous" in eighth grade, I would go on my phone after school to stare at myself in the camera, waiting for my cheeks to lift or my baby fat to dissipate. I would zoom into my odd nose, then my monolids, and then skin. There wasn't anything remarkable I could find, no beauty worth a glance. There wasn't enough makeup I could steal from my aunt to make myself look feminine to others or anything worth an Instagram comment from a friend; the best I could do was to throw on baggy clothes and cover my face whenever someone looked at me.

It's difficult to talk about being darker than most of my family and Chinese peers. Sometimes, when I think about bringing up colorism to them, a bitter sting inside my chest would pull me away. I would feel guilty about sharing that bitterness and keep to myself, letting the taste settle to the back of my throat. Only once in a lonely year would I share this pain with someone

else who shared it too, providing slight relief as we relished the thought that there's someone else to talk to about being called monkey or being referred to as a boy consistently. I would find myself sitting in a palace full of princesses and princes. I sat on a high throne decorated with roaring dragons and billowing clouds and dressed in layers of flowing gold and crimson. The insults about my appearance never reached my ears; I was finally at peace as I observed the luscious gardens, glistening lanterns, and majestic imperial city. Unfortunately, the moment would wash away too soon, and just as soon as the conversation would end, I would wake up staring at my bedroom ceiling, wondering if I would ever be seen as beautiful by my culture without having to save a country.

People who looked like me were destined to remain in the rice fields hundreds of years ago, never to set foot on imperial grounds; we would live under the shadows of the fairer princesses and celebrities. Sometimes I wonder what my father's village looked like; I want to see the miles of roads he biked to school and the house he played cards with my uncle in, but I fear that if I ever visited China, I wouldn't survive being criticized publicly and being stared at for my skin. If I were born a peasant girl in 15th century China, all I would've been able to do back then is stare at the glittering palace from the distance of hundreds of cities as my feet were numbed in the watery fields. All I would see is a horizon, blank and blue against the millions of rice plants on rolling hills, and there would be no hope in my heart to ever see the grand steps or the red towers. I would have to wait for another lifetime to sit amongst my pale peers without worrying about being seen as less than them, but when the time comes, I will be able to admire my arms in the sun as they seemingly glow, full of fire and richness.



Kamala Harris and the Issue of Identity and Representation in America

By **PETER GOSWAMI**

People string firecrackers and give thanks at temples in Senator and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris's (D-Calif.) ancestral village of Thulasendrapuram in India, celebrating her victory. Biden and Harris's victory comes with many firsts for the country. Harris is the first woman, the first Black person, and the first South Asian to be elected to the office of vice president. But what exactly does Harris's multiracial identity mean for Black and South Asian communities?

As a South Asian, I felt obliged to support Harris when Biden appointed her as his running mate, since I wanted Harris to be a prominent voice for South Asians. I was also eager about her embodying a lot of firsts if she were indeed elected to the vice presidency. However, it was wrong for me to think that Harris would be good at representing the South Asian community solely because she is South Asian. After all, merely being part of a community does not mean one can represent that community well. As I delved deeper into learning about Harris, I realized that it is dangerous to support a candidate solely based on sharing a similar background with her.

Though Harris does not frequently talk about the Black and South Asian aspects of her identity, we must recognize that America has a problem with discussing multiracial identity because of the desire to label someone and have the convenience of being able to put them in one category. Multiracial people also have to deal with facing discrimination from the different communities they're part of, as in the case of Harris, who has been accused by South Asians of not being "South Asian enough" and by Blacks of not being "Black enough." However, the way the one-drop rule has worked in America and the way that Asians have been portrayed as the model minority while Blacks are seen in America as lower class have led to Harris's Black identity getting more representation in the media. Harris has even said in her book "The Truths We Hold" that her Indian mother knew that America would view Harris as Black, so Harris was raised to put her

Black identity on the forefront, even in her political campaign. Harris can identify however she wants, but instead of allowing her multiracial identity to be a cause of stigmatization, she can use her unique identity to tackle social issues that affect Asian Americans and Blacks in America.

One of the most obvious ways Harris can use her identity is by attempting to end the tensions between South Asians and the Black community. As a South Asian, I stand witness to the

despite the anti-Blackness that exists within our community? Widespread support of Harris among South Asians is because she has conformed to many of the stereotypes that South Asians approve of. As Nitasha Sharma, an associate professor of African American Studies and Asian American Studies at Northwestern University, said, "[Harris] is highly educated. She is well-dressed. She's married to a nice white man. She's done all the things that Desis approve of. She's not a doctor or

white paradigm" of race that exists in our nation, and yet Asian Americans were the victims of 217 single-bias hate crimes in 2019. Asian Americans are also suffering from discrimination in the workplace. Despite being the largest minority likely to be hired, Asian Americans are least likely to be given executive positions. In order to reduce the discrimination that Asian Americans have to face and in order to make sure that Asian Americans are included in the conversation about race, Harris should take the initiative to use her platform to define Asian Americans as a separate race that is significant in the politics of our nation. She should attempt to enforce laws that end all types of racial discrimination in the workplace and directly address hate crimes that involve an anti-Asian bias. As an Asian American Vice President, Harris can work hard to elevate the role of Asian Americans in politics as well as in the workplace.

I was hoping that Harris would use her multiracial identity to speak for Asian Americans and to end the tensions between Black people and Asian Americans present within our country. But a deeper look at her prosecutorial record made me feel that she may not be successful at embodying the views and taking the action needed to represent both Black and Asian-American communities well. During her time as District Attorney of San Francisco and Attorney General of California, she was not bold about creating police reform and tackling police brutality and police misconduct. In 2015, she "opposed a bill requiring her office to investigate shootings involving officers." In addition to mishandling police conduct and ignoring racial profiling, in 2010, Harris advocated for a truancy law that could make parents face up to one year of jail and fines up to \$2,000. Harris even went so far as to appeal the U.S. Central District of California Court's ruling that California's death penalty was unconstitutional in 2014. As a senator, Harris has spoken out against police brutality, specifically in the cases of the killing of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd and has suggested that policing in America needs to be changed.

Though it may seem like Har-

ris's views have simply changed, it can easily be suggested that Harris has simply shifted for her own political interests and ambitions rather than to truly achieve justice. Though The New York Times described her as "among the Democrats sponsoring policing legislation that would ban choke holds, racial profiling and no-knock warrants," one cannot forget Harris's struggles in the past dealing with police reform in her state as well racial profiling. Police brutality unjustly affects Black communities, and her being part of a community is not enough to do good for that community. Harris is Black, and despite that identity, she was not always successful at advocating for the Black community and was not able to enforce laws that would give Black people equity and protection. As I evaluated Harris's prosecutorial record, I understood that it was wrong of me to assume that she would be good at representing Asians and Black people. If Harris was unsuccessful at representing the Black community in the past, I could not be so sure that she would be able to represent the South Asian community, my community, well. I came to the realization that representation is not derived from one's background but instead from one's will to fight for a community.

Kamala Harris becoming the vice president-elect is truly revolutionary for South Asians, Black people, and women alike, and I felt the impact of the historical moment when Biden and Harris's victory was announced. However, it was necessary for me to understand that a South Asian background did not mean that Harris would be good for South Asian people. It was necessary for me to evaluate Harris's prosecutorial record as well as think about what steps she would need to take to represent Asian Americans. I could then understand that Harris needs to make important changes to how she represents herself politically in order to build a platform that can advocate for the rights of South Asians and Black people in America.

Representation is good. It is also not enough. I am glad I am beginning to build an understanding of that.

Harris can identify however she wants, but instead of allowing her multiracial identity to be a cause of stigmatization, she can use her unique identity to tackle social issues that affect Asian Americans and Blacks in America.

anti-Blackness that exists within our community. Even among my family members and family friends, "bad neighborhood" is an interchangeable term for "Black neighborhood." South Asians often associate Black people with violent crimes, illiteracy, drugs, and gangs. Though interracial and even interreligious marriage is frowned upon, marrying a Black person is especially forbidden for some South Asians. In order to combat the anti-Blackness that exists within South Asian communities, it is necessary for Harris to take advantage of her unique multiracial identity. Harris can do this by speaking widely to the South Asian community about how to deal with anti-Blackness as well as speaking about her own experience dealing with the anti-Blackness she may have faced. However, for Harris to be able to speak to South Asians, it is necessary that they be willing to listen to her and support her; such willingness is probable, since South Asians have widely expressed support of Harris. This approval raises a crucial question: Why is it that South Asians are able to support Harris

engineer, but she did go through law school." In essence, Harris has had to prove to the South Asian community that despite being Black, she has embodied the model minority myth. Therefore, South Asians are able to ignore their anti-Blackness in the case of Harris but not in the case of the Black community as a whole. Harris can use her platform to assert that the model minority myth is in fact simply a myth and that no one should have to prove themselves to be accepted into a group. The model minority myth creates a separation between Asian Americans and Blacks by portraying Asian Americans as the better minority. Harris can easily break this division by using her own experiences as a Black and South Asian vice president-elect to show that everyone is capable of achieving the same things and that there is no one good minority.

Another problem that Harris can tackle by using her South Asian identity is to include Asian Americans in politics and discussions of race in America. Asian Americans are not included in the "Black and

It's Not About College

By **MERIL MOUSOOM**

To My Fellow Seniors:

It feels strange to say that we all entered this school four years ago, took the same classes, and laughed at the same jokes, yet turned out to be so different. As I delve deeper into my interests in race, math and science, they are effectively being eliminated from my field of inquiry. Many of my classmates are doing the opposite as they choose to study subjects like genetics or philosophy.

While I know someone who chose to do all of her extracurriculars within Stuyvesant, Stuyvesant's location in Tribeca allowed me to attend outside

activist meetings pre-COVID.

What I have learned is that the world contains such a multitude of paths and so many different types of accomplishments that comparing yourself to others seems pointless. Yes, Jimmy might be taking AP Chemistry, but he wants to be a chemist, and that's not what I want to do with my life.

With the vast variety of options at our fingertips (there are thousands of different types of jobs), I know I will be successful. Because success is not something that society thrusts upon us—rather, it's something we oftentimes use to define ourselves.

So maybe I call myself successful because I am graduat-

ing high school. Maybe I call myself successful because I am pursuing my passions.

We are all just tiny specks in the world anyway. There are thousands of Ivy League graduates, and not all of them are super famous, rich, or even happy with their lives. But there's only one of you, and you cannot rely on others to determine your self-worth. You are the only one who knows the depth of your accomplishments, of how hard you worked, and of what tangible differences you have had on others. An acceptance letter does not define you.

That is not to say that we can stay positive and happy all the time during this stressful time in our lives.

Sometimes, the worry about my future gets so overwhelming that I can't get out of bed in the morning and I miss online school. My relationships with others have deteriorated, with friendship hangouts postponed for one week, two weeks, and, eventually, months.

The college process has caused me to reflect on my time here. I'm not proud of my 70 in Geometry. Or how I forgot that there was another supplemental due for one school three hours before the application deadline. Or the million absences I've had in school.

The regrets pile up in a jar. I could choose to lament them. Or I could choose to accept them because we all have a jar

of our own, even if no one publicly admits it.

And maybe, after months of essay writing, I won't get into the school of my dreams. And that's okay. I believe in never looking back. Because while I am graduating this school with an 88 GPA, paltry by Stuyvesant standards, everything I did in these four years led me here—led me to write an opinion column for a newspaper that I love. It's not something "elite," but it doesn't have to be; it just needs to bring me joy.

So, my fellow seniors, and hopeful underclassmen, I hope that you can find solace in my words. Because everything comes from within.

Opinions

My Journey as a Home Cook

By ISABEL CHING

In my house, cooking is everything. Drop Julia Child's name at the dinner table, and you'll have secured a seat at next week's dinner table. Say the words "beef bourguignon," and my mother may just profess her undying love for you. Even better, utter the phrase "I love cooking," and you'll have forged some lifelong friendships. My parents are food fiends, obsessed with anything and everything cooking related. For my eighth grade graduation, instead of gifting me a new dress or buying me a phone, my parents took me to their favorite restaurant, Augustine, and told me to order whatever I wanted. Our life at home is no different—it, too, reflects my parents' fascination with food. We have an entire bookshelf dedicated to housing our extensive collection of cookbooks—Mark Bittman's "How to Cook Everything," Samin Nostrat's "Salt Fat Acid Heat," and my personal favorite, Jane Mason's "All You Knead is Bread."

Yet despite my parents' cooking fanaticism, I didn't really learn how to cook until a couple of months ago. Part of this reluctance can be attributed to my desire to break from gender norms—I refused to adhere to the outdated, sexist standards that women should stay home, manage the household, and do the cooking. Why should I, a teenager living in the 21st century, mold myself to fit stereotypes established centuries ago? Wasn't learning how to cook a betrayal of the independence I so prided myself on? Why did I need to cook?

But, like almost every other aspect of my life through quarantine, this notion has changed.

I have—much to the dismay of my parents, who do not particularly like the smell of burnt food—learned to cook. And I am not alone. With restaurants closed and quarantine in effect, Americans must now turn to home cooking if they want to eat the way they did before the pandemic. Researchers have observed a boost in web traffic to cooking and recipe websites, surveys have reported that significantly fewer Americans—almost 38 percent by one approximation—are ordering takeout, and more people are cooking and baking than ever before. However, cooking is a double-edged sword: its effects are both positive and negative.

On one hand, home cooking tends to be healthier. Because home-cooked meals typically involve less processed and sugary foods, they are far healthier than restaurant alternatives. An April study found that Americans get 21 percent of their calories from restaurants, most of which are unhealthy calories. By one estimation, 50 percent of full-service restaurant meals and 70 percent of fast food meals are of poor dietary quality, a staggering statistic considering that the average American ate out 5.9 times a week in 2018. Scientists have further found that eating healthier is linked to living a longer life, something that can be accomplished with home cooking.

However, in times of economic instability and high unemployment, many Americans are struggling to even feed their families, much less think about the nutritional value of the food they are buying. These circumstances are only exacerbated by the isolation a pandemic brings, as health regulations make it difficult to exercise and quaran-

tine takes a toll on the mental and emotional health of many.

Thus, home cooking only works when there is a careful balance. People must take care to use healthy ingredients and be mindful of the amount of processed food they are consuming while also understanding that the positive benefits of home cooking are not a substitute for minimal exercise or consistent snacking. That said, there's so much that cooking has to offer. For one, it provides a wealth of new experiences and wide exposure to different cultures and cuisines. From Italian pasta dishes to English fish and chips to Mexican tacos, cooking is a taste of the world in a nutshell—it's traveling away from the comfort of your own home.

The cooking process is unique as well. There's something special about being able to transform raw ingredients into brand new creations and forming a personal connection. The opportunities that cooking provides are limitless. There is a whole new world immune to the chaos of modern society—a haven free from the trials and tribulations of a world in a pandemic.

Initially, I was averse to cooking culture. The health benefits of home cooking didn't faze me. However, as time in quarantine passed, I realized I could not subsist on a diet of microwaveable leftovers and toast. I began cooking out of necessity. I started with simple carbohydrates, then transitioned to more complex meals. My initial attempts were far from perfect, and I was admittedly a little discouraged. But as time went on, I began to find comfort in cooking—a sense of pride whenever I successfully mastered a new dish. I found pure, unadulterated joy



Clarence Li/The Spectator

in the simplicity of it all, a return to the basics.

Despite the hate and resentment I once harbored toward cooking, I am proud to say I now identify as a home cook. This is not to say that my newfound love for cooking counteracts my hatred for the gender norms surrounding cooking and the home—I still hate those stereotypes. The only difference is that I've learned to separate the two from each other. Cooking myself a meal isn't perpetuating a sexist stereotype—in fact, it's breaking down that stereotype while doing something I enjoy. I've learned that a soci-

etal norm can't be broken down if people aren't willing to truly stand for what they believe. In ignoring and resenting an all-important aspect of my life simply for the sake of going against what I thought to be a sexist standard, I was reinforcing that same belief.

What I once believed to be two conflicting sides of my identity—my parents' love for cooking and my hatred of the traditional gender norms—have now joined together in harmony. I am a cook. Maybe one day, I can add a cookbook to the family shelf.

Trump's Refusal to Concede: Both Laughable and Terrifying

By MAYA NELSON

Donald Trump has a long history of tweeting dumb and downright inappropriate things, dating back to before he was even elected president. His tweets have often caused some trouble, but most of the time, I just find myself laughing at them. Though Dan Scavino, the White House social media director, is partially responsible for running Trump's Twitter account, journalist Robert Draper claims that most of the outlandish tweets that garner attention are all Trump's doing. Notable gems include "Sorry losers and haters, but my I.Q. is one of the highest and you all know it! Please don't feel so stupid or insecure; it's not your fault" and "I have never seen a thin person drinking Diet Coke." However, I never found myself thinking that his tweets would ever get to a point where they would become dangerous. Even for the tweets that did pose a bit of a threat, I always laughed them off, thinking no one took him seriously. However, I realize now that there's a large crowd of people who do believe him, and that reality is the scary part.

It was official that Joe Biden had won the election on November 7 and that there was

no possible circumstance under which Trump could garner enough electoral votes to win. Amassing a total of 306 votes, Biden won the election fair and square—but Trump has refused to accept that. Trump insists that the media was lying and the ballots had been counted incorrectly. He refuses to admit defeat, and though he will eventually be forced to vacate the presidency, this event could lead to the normalization of refusals to cede power and efforts to overturn election results. If one still doesn't see this situation as dangerous, political scientist Brendan Nyhan proposes this thought experiment: pretend the situation was happening in a different country. Imagine that a president of a different country lost the election and refused to peacefully transfer power. He lied about ballot counts and pressured other officials to support him. One would certainly view this as a threat to democracy and an attempt at a borderline dictatorship. Even though it is very unlikely that Trump will actually pull this off, the implications of his actions are still dangerous.

When I looked on Twitter to see the damage for myself, I was shocked. There were dozens of tweets insisting there had

been voter fraud and a rigged election, some even making blatantly false claims that Trump had won the race. The sheer number of these tweets is what surprised me most. And Trump himself was tweeting almost every hour, making me wonder if the man ever spends 10 minutes off of Twitter. The tweets—from Trump and his supporters alike—are both hilarious and frightening. One tweet from Trump says that he actually won Pennsylvania because of uncounted votes. He also claims that he's won three million more votes than he actually has and that many of the mail-in ballots are fake. And of course, there are the dozens of nearly identical tweets saying "ballot counting abuse" or "people will not accept this rigged election." Trump continues to emphasize the fact that all of the votes for him are legitimate, but only the ones for Biden are fake. As he has done repeatedly in the past, he's also been calling out the media and claiming that everything they say is false, writing, "Since when does the Lamestream media call who our next president will be..." and encouraging his followers to listen to non-mainstream sources.

And that impact is a whole other issue: the effect these

tweets are having on Trump's supporters. Though most of the replies to his tweets are telling him to accept the fact that he lost the election, there's still a scary number of his cult-like supporters listening and believing everything he says. Trump has a big influence on a large group of people and when he starts spitting out false information about the election results, they actually believe him. Many Trump supporters have been gathering and protesting because of this impact, most of them not wearing masks while doing so. However, it's not just his supporters who are backing Trump. Many Republican officials are supporting him, though it seems as if most of them are just trying to preserve their own power, not help Trump. They want to avoid angering him and remain popular among Republican voters. Even so, this kind of support will only fuel Trump more. If he thinks he has a large following behind him, he'll only get more confident and try harder to stay in power. However, it is still possible to move forward as a country. We must put faith into our democratic system and know that when January 20 rolls around, Trump will be removed from office, and the actual elected president,

Joe Biden, will take office.

Twitter has not done enough to mitigate the effects of Trump's tweets. The most that is being done to stop him is a warning label on some of his tweets saying "This claim about election fraud is disputed." Considering the danger of the situation, Twitter should at least be deleting these tweets, if not suspending his account. In general, more should be done to slow the spread of misinformation on social media. There are many who claim that eliminating or even just putting a warning on misinformed social media posts is the first step towards censorship. However, when a person has as much influence as Trump does, it's especially important that what he says is true. Trump spreading misinformation about the election is far more dangerous than censorship. Social media platforms have the right to decide what should and shouldn't be on their platform in order to prevent bullying, inappropriate behavior, and spreading false information. Especially in a time like this, with the pandemic and civil unrest in this country still raging, making sure the public is properly informed should be a top priority.

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By ROXY PERAZZO

If there's one thing many Americans can collectively recall, it's evenings spent settled on the couch watching "Jeopardy!" Whether watched alone or competition-style with family, "Jeopardy!" has been a staple of popular culture since 1984, making the death of Alex Trebek heartbreaking news for viewers of the past and present.

Trek announced his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer last year and passed away on Sunday, November 8. He is remembered by his wife, Jean, and his three children, along with friends, contestants, and viewers who have spent decades watching or participating in the show.

Over his career, Trebek, "the man with all the answers," hosted over 8,200 episodes of "Jeopardy!," which, in 2014, made him a Guinness world record holder. Early on in his career, Trebek was a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and hosted a number of game shows throughout the '70s and

"Everybody Loves Alex Trebek": A Eulogy of an Icon

early '80s. The producer for a revival of the original "Jeopardy!," which was on-air from 1964 to 1975 and hosted by Art Fleming, chose Trebek in 1984 to lead the show, a good decision on his part.

Just days before the news of his passing was made public, an episode of "Jeopardy!" aired, in which contestant Burt Thakur shared a heartwarming story, recalling how he would sit on his grandfather's lap and watch "Jeopardy!" every night and how Trebek had helped him learn English. Thakur's story is relatable for many people who grew up watching "Jeopardy!" with their parents or grandparents and who continued that tradition as they grew up and had children of their own. That's part of why Trebek is special to so many. He's been a consistent source of joy and education for millions of people and a reminder of their youth and family.

What made Trebek such a success was not only his kindness and humor, but also his eagerness to provide so many with knowledge. The executive producer of

"Jeopardy!," Mike Richards, said that Trebek "loved that 'Jeopardy!' popularized intelligence" and "reveled in these intelligent people, in the contestants, [and] in the writers."

Ken Jennings, the person with the most "Jeopardy!" wins ever, wrote in response to Trebek's passing: "[Trek] wasn't just the best ever at what he did. He was also a lovely and deeply decent man, and I'm grateful for every minute I got to spend with him."

There have been many variations of "Jeopardy!" over the decades, including "College Jeopardy!" and "Teacher's Tournament," which, in 2011, featured Stuyvesant social studies teacher and life-long trivia fan Matthew Polazzo. Polazzo said Trebek was, "warm, kind, and supportive" and "really rooting for all the competitors to succeed." The last thing that Polazzo had to say about Trebek, in memory, was that it "gave [him] great comfort to know that Trebek was still in the world, and [he'll] miss him very much."

Though Trebek had been suggesting he might retire a few

years ago, he agreed, in 2018, to sign a final contract that would last until 2022. It's unclear now how "Jeopardy!" will continue without Trebek, as many viewers closely associate the program with him. Having never missed an episode (except for April Fools' Day, when he was replaced by Pat Sajak), Trebek is the only host "Jeopardy!" has ever known. Just a few months ago, Trebek was asked how he would say goodbye, and his response was simple: "And until we meet again, God bless you, and goodbye." Now, of course, those words won't air, but the sentimentality of his plans for a final goodbye is so meaningful, especially now.

The death of Alex Trebek is deeply saddening. During his time on-air, he touched many people's hearts and lives and surely won't be forgotten in decades to come. Though nobody is sure about the future of "Jeopardy!," it is certain that Trebek will be remembered by many as the greatest part of the show.

PLAYLIST

Comfort Food

By THE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT

As the weather gets colder and we head toward full-fledged winter, the A&E department attempts to salvage some comfort and warmth in a playlist built to withstand the long season ahead.

Golden Hour
Kacey Musgraves
Country

Can I Call You Tonight?
Dayglow
Indie Pop

anything
Adrienne Lenker
Alternative

American Pie
Don McLean
Folk

she likes spring, i prefer winter
sibld
R&B

Cinnamon Girl
Lana Del Rey
Alternative Pop

Nobody
Mitski
Alternative

Melting
Kali Uchis
Contemporary R&B

Coffee
beabadoobee
Indie Folk

Chateau (Feel Alright)
Djo
Indie

Flower Moon
Vampire Weekend
Indie Pop-Rock

Forrest Gump
Frank Ocean
R&B

Nothing <3
Isalee
Alternative Pop

Green is the Colour
Pink Floyd
Psychedelic Rock

MUSIC

By ANSON GUAN

Picture this: you're a lanky, blue-haired, pupil-less singer, and you've been the frontman of a famous rock band for two decades. After releasing several classic albums and having some of the biggest songs of the 2000s, you decide to make a comeback after seven years. You release two albums, both charting tepidly and receiving mixed reviews, and it's clear that you're losing what made your music great. What do you do? If you're 2D, the frontman of the genre-defying outfit Gorillaz, then you go back to the drawing board, reinvent your music-making process, and make your best album in recent memory.

Gorillaz is a virtual band created by Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett. Albarn, frontman of a rock band, and Hewlett, a comic artist, created Gorillaz as a commentary on mainstream culture: that a fake, manufactured band could be more original than anything else in modern music. The gimmick of the fictional band expanded through their music videos into a whole world and storyline, and the music was as catchy as it was genreless, exploring everything from hip-hop to metal to gospel to country. Gorillaz's latest project is "Song Machine," a monthly web series in which Gorillaz stars as host and its features appear as guests, with each episode containing a new single and music video. The features range from rapper ScHoolboy Q to legendary singer Elton John, and each brings their own flavor to their episode's song. The culmination of the "Song Machine" project so far is its first compilation album "Song Machine, Season One: Strange Timez," a massive album loaded with features on every song. The fact that this sprawling compilation is not only good, but also one of the best albums of 2020 is a testament to the glory of Gorillaz.

With the focus on individual songs over a cohesive album, each track feels unique. The first "Song Machine" single, "Mo-

mentary Bliss," is bursting at the seams with energy, with rapper slowthai and punk band Slaves emanating an infectious mixture of positivity and aggression. On the other end of the spectrum is the relaxed, freely-drifting "Friday 13th," in which rapper Octavian's raspy vocals float over a dreamy beat. Certain tracks don't work as well as others, but at worst they're decent, and at best they're im-

6LACK's lowkey crooning underlines Elton John's powerful vocals.

Despite the abundance of features, the heart of "Song Machine, Season One" is always Gorillaz themselves. On their comeback album "Humanz" (2017), the band lost themselves in the myriad of guests and often sounded like features on their own songs, largely due to the absence of 2D's unique vocals. Thankfully, 2D is

tifully bittersweet yet uplifting track that serves as a reminder of what makes Gorillaz so special. Every song on "Season One" is like that—a return to form for Gorillaz in which their old ideas are given a modern revival while retaining the unique production that made their classic works pop.

The title of the album alludes to our "Strange Timez," a reality that we are all intimately familiar with and probably tired of hearing about. The title track "Strange Timez," featuring rock frontman Robert Smith, is a dark pop ode to the anxiety of 2020, which is viewed through the lens of Gorillaz and their features on every track. Similarly, "PAC-MAN" features a deflated 2D comparing the repetition of day-to-day life to the titular game, a series of mazes with no end in sight. The beat is a simple but effective loop and allows rapper ScHoolboy Q to flow between talking about his violent upbringing to the police brutality and injustice plaguing America. "Opium" takes us through the minds of 2D and rap duo EARTHGANG during quarantine over a seven-minute slow-burning club beat. "The Valley of the Pagans," featuring Grammy favorite Beck, is a playful critique of the shallowness of Hollywood life, and "How Far?" featuring rapper Skepta and drummer Tony Allen is a winding, psychedelic affirmation of ambition in the face of hardship. Whether it's the soaring buildup of "Désolé" or the steady groove of "The Lost Chord," Gorillaz covers almost every sound and mood and filters them through their iconoclastic production.

In a way, "Song Machine" is a perfect representation of the band, a project that embraces collaboration and creativity, mixing genres and artists to create something unique. It creates high expectations for season two of the series, which will no doubt have even wilder features, but there is no question that Gorillaz will deliver and continue to create some of the freshest, most creative songs of their storied career.

Gorillaz's "Song Machine" Is the Most Creative Music Project of 2020



Noah Taylor / The Spectator

mensely creative and well-made. Gorillaz is still experimenting with its production and features, making combinations of artists that work against all odds like "MLS," a collaboration between experimental rapper JPEGMAFIA and Japanese pop rock band CHAI. JPEGMAFIA's verses contrast CHAI's sugary chorus in a strangely complementary way, adding a stinging edge to a cute and bubbly song. Another unexpected collaboration is "The Pink Phantom," in which R&B singer

present on most "Song Machine" tracks, often giving a verse to let the features shine. While he's great in a supporting role, "Aries," the only song in which 2D is the sole lead vocalist, showcases what makes him the soul of Gorillaz. Over production from bassist Peter Hook and drummer Georgia, 2D's vocals are soft yet powerful as he muses on his loneliness and isolation. His voice, combined with the warm, steady bassline and driving vocal refrains in the chorus, culminates into a beau-

Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

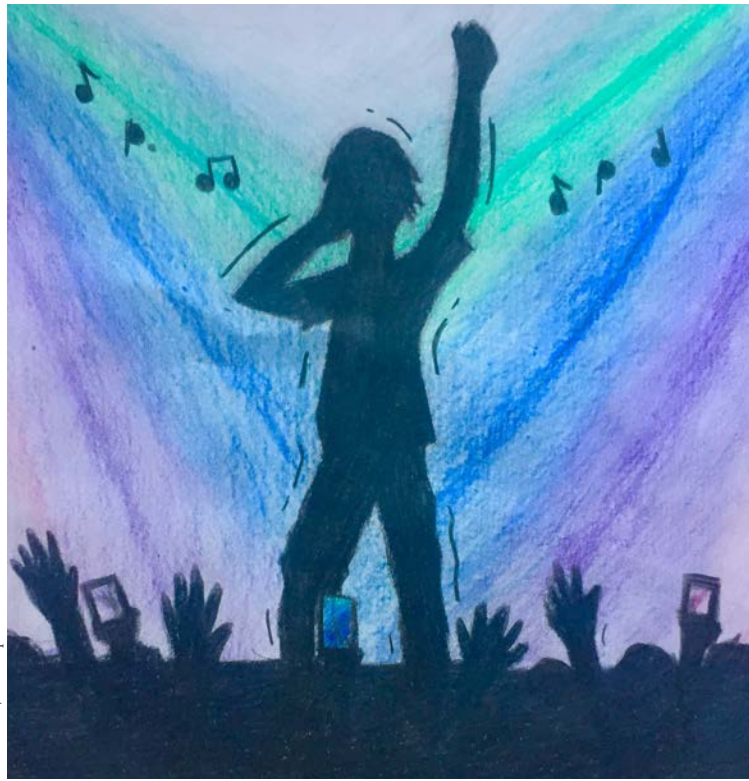
By LEVI SIMON

If you're terminally online like most high schoolers these days, it's likely that some time in the past few months you've heard of a group called 100 geecs. They've recently erupted in popularity, mostly due to the sheer absurdity of their music; nowhere else can you find a scornful autotuned monologue that segues into a beeping trap beat, topped off by the leading vocalist's high-pitched caterwauling drenched in sound effects. But a key aspect of leading this subgenre into the mainstream is not only attracting public attention, but also maintaining it. Since going viral on Twitter and TikTok, 100 geecs has amassed a sizable, yet polarized viewership. Detractors find 100 geecs's music campy, pointless, and insipid. Though most fans were likely surprised by the new style, they were nonetheless drawn to the catchy tunes. Months later, they're fully down the rabbit hole of colorful maximalism of 100 geecs and everything they represent: hyperpop.

Hyperpop is a matrimony of so many genres that it would be hard to compile them into one list. The foundations of hyperpop require a catchy synthpop or bubblegum bass tune with elements of EDM and typically a focus on either

queer culture or Internet futurism, but producers will frequently include metal, hip-hop, and industrial music influences. The themes discussed in hyperpop lyrics and represented in their music videos tend to be extremely exaggerated; it can feel like hyperpop is a parody of pop, hence the genre's meme potential. It seems nearly impossible that so many ideas could coalesce into a coherent and listenable song—for most listeners, they won't—but when everything clicks into place, it's a thing of beauty.

The main pioneer of hyperpop is commonly credited to AG Cook, who founded PC Music in 2013. Along with Hannah Diamond and SOPHIE, Cook released dozens of tracks onto the popular underground streaming service SoundCloud and accumulated a reasonable following. He and his artists built up his label's reputation with twinkling synths, catchy melodies, and bouncy bass. By 2015, most avid music fans were aware of PC Music's digital age love songs. The next year, the label would propel themselves to the top of the underground by catching the attention of hitmaker Charli XCX, who remains one of the genre's biggest faces to this day. She brought the style to relative prominence, and since PC Music produced her EP "Vroom," hyperpop has exploded in both popularity and experimentation, cementing hyperpop at the peak of underground. Soon after, 100 geecs released "1000 geecs" (2019), the virality of which further elevated hyperpop beyond the underground and into the premier genre bubbling under chart suc-



Anna Ast / The Spectator

cess, primed for a takeover one day.

Until then, there are a myriad of different artists and styles within hyperpop to select from. The aforementioned Charli XCX is one of the most accessible artists in the genre. Her shiny synths, typical pop themes, and extensive

feature lists serve as an excellent introduction to hyperpop. Dorian Electra is a nonbinary artist who satirizes gender roles, capitalist work culture, snobbish taste, and sexuality with a surprising amount of insight. They also utilize an extremely unique warbling pitch and formant shifter on their voice which makes them instantly distinguishable. Electra's "Flamboyant" (2019) is one of the best projects in the genre's history, and a must-listen for those interested in the genre. SOPHIE is one of the founders of the sound, and in her own solo work, she expresses all of her less conventional tastes. For some lesser known picks, glaive's fusions of hyperpop and emo rap are particularly unique, while fraxiom blends hyperpop with happy hardcore rhythms and off-kilter synth tones to create one of the most distinctive experiences in hyperpop.

Though hyperpop has been described by many as the genre of the future, I see it as the genre of the present. As technology has grown to dominate our daily lives, it is only fitting for pop culture to represent this change. Hyperpop is not a genre for everybody, but even those who are not adjusted to the off-the-wall experimentation appreciate it for being a unique reflection of the world we live in.

TELEVISION

By MIRANDA LEPRI

It's Paris, 1967. There's a knock at the door, and Beth (Anya Taylor-Joy) awakens, lying clothed in a full bathtub. She crawls for her shoes, downs two green pills (with which we will become very familiar) with a bottle of hotel liquor, and rushes out of the room. The match has already begun. Her time is ticking. We watch her stare down her opponent, chin tilted down and eyes looking up in what we will come to recognize as a habit of hers, and then suddenly we're watching a child, sporting Beth's distinctive red hair, standing at the scene of a terrible accident.

"The Queen's Gambit," based on a novel by Walter Tevis and adapted by Scott Frank, tells the story of Beth Harmon, a chess prodigy who is catapulted to fame at a young age, while simultaneously struggling with addiction. Much like the game it depicts, every move the miniseries makes feels calculated, deliberate, and strategic. In the first episode, aptly named "Openings," we're flung from Beth's adulthood to her youth, giving the story the feel of a classic bildungsroman—think "Oliver Twist"—but with the gripping arc of a sports movie—think "Rocky" (1976). As we watch young Beth (Isla Johnston) arrive at the girls' orphanage where she will live out her youth and play her first game of chess with a kind janitor (Bill Camp), we already know that she'll rise to great renown. It's the eternal appeal of a coming-of-age story that keeps the viewer hooked.

The earliest chapters of the show are certainly the strongest. Watching Beth discover her passion and undeniable talent for chess is exciting in the way that the beginning of any similar story is exciting—the comfort of knowing she'll invariably succeed, the looks of shock on the faces of every smug adult she forces to knock down their king in resignation. There's a tentative optimism

about those early installments, married with the obvious darkness of those little green pills which the orphanage uses to sedate the girls, and on which Beth later becomes dependent. Oddly enough, though it's only in the later episodes that Beth truly spirals into addiction, they lack the same dark edge that the earlier episodes possess. It may just be that the start of any coming-of-age story, when the protagonist has everything to gain and nothing to fall back on, will always be the most riveting part. It's also notable that the

show's plot continues beyond the Paris match from which we initially flash back, rather than coming full circle to meet its beginning. As a result, the remaining chapters feel like more of an afterthought, albeit a very entertaining one.

There's an inherent appeal to the show. Beth is a quick-witted underdog, and you can't help but root for her from the start. Much of the show features Beth facing off against cocky older men. You silently wish for her to crush them. She does. They're appropriately embarrassed, and the viewer feels vindicated in their humiliation. Though much of Beth's character is laid bare from the opening episodes of the show, Taylor-Joy imbues her cold, detached nature with an undeniable charm and underpins it with the erratic energy of an addict (both

to mind-altering substances and the thrill of victory). Maybe it's in her little mannerisms—the way she rests her chin on her hands and peers up at her opponent with those ethereally large eyes, or the subtle, satisfied twitch of her lips after she delivers a scathing one-liner. Whatever it is, Taylor-Joy's performance is laudable, as she carries Beth from awkward adolescence to adulthood.

She isn't the only notable actress of the miniseries. Beth's adoptive mother, Alma Wheatley

Nicholas Evangelinos / The Spectator

have also been surprised to see some familiar faces during Beth's competitive matches. Thomas Brodie-Sangster, known for his younger roles in "Love Actually" (2003) and the Maze Runner series (2014-2018), graduates to an indisputably adult role as Benny, a chess player who manages to bring Beth to a humiliating defeat, and matches her quippy humor line for line. Harry Melling, who many will recognize as Dudley from the Harry Potter series (2001-2011), also sheds his childhood role as the grown-up Harry Belik, a tal-

ent chess magazine, and proceeds to offer her a pep-talk of sorts, one which helps to pull Beth from her spiral of addiction and to her final victory. Jolene feels like a plot device, when she could have been more. This dynamic, however, works surprisingly well when it comes to Beth's love interests. Harry, Benny, and Townes (Jacob Fortune-Lloyd) don't overshadow her, nor do her relationships with them overshadow her true love for the game of chess. For any shows that aim to incorporate romance as a secondary plot of a coming-of-age story, take notes. "The Queen's Gambit" finds that balance effortlessly.

While the miniseries does struggle to maintain the truly impressive quality of its first few episodes, overall, it's a work well done. After all, what else can explain the overwhelming attention it's garnered in the short time since its release, with many lamenting the lack of a second season? Perhaps what the series did best, though, was end. For all those fans hoping for a second season, I wouldn't hold your breath.

The feel of the series can probably best be encapsulated by the motif of the chessboard that Beth first sees on the orphanage ceiling, high on sedatives—one on which she can play out entire games in her mind. The chessboard reappears during Beth's final match with Vasily Borgov (Marcin Dorociński), her Russian rival. When she bests him, it's because she's able to, at last, see the board while sober. That circularity seems to epitomize "Gambit"; it has a specific story to tell, and tells it well, to its conclusion. Beth's last victory, both over the one man she couldn't beat and her addiction, feels final. Much like Beth herself, "The Queen's Gambit" doesn't play to a draw. It plays to completion.

"The Queen's Gambit" Will Steal Your Rook, and Your Heart



(Marielle Heller), who initially seems neglectful and even adversarial, becomes unexpectedly sympathetic at the hand of Heller. Though perhaps better known for her directing career, Heller delivers a solid performance, charging Alma with an overwhelming sadness, one she tempers with bottomless martinis. She and Beth make an appropriate pair—both addicts battling consuming inner darkness, both enabling each other and offering emotional support. Viewers may

ented player who Beth bests—and embarrasses—as an amateur, though they later form a more amicable relationship as student and coach.

Though the show boasts a quirkily star-studded supporting cast, it truly is Beth's story. The show's secondary characters circle around Beth, their lives and stories intersecting with hers when she needs something from them, or when they have something to offer her. Jolene (Moses Ingram), a friend from Beth's orphanage days, is a perfect example of this tertiary supporting character development. Jolene appears toward the end of the series, suddenly, having recognized Beth from a

Arts and Entertainment

TELEVISION

By GAVIN MCGINLEY

America isn't very good at making animations. Despite the U.S.'s dominance in pop culture over everything from Hollywood to the music industry, Western animation, at least on television, has been left largely unexplored and underutilized as a medium. This has only become increasingly obvious with the rise in popularity of Japanese animation, anime. Though there are several cleverly written, well-produced animations made in America, few manage to reach the scale, depth, or intensity achieved in anime or are willing to tell stories even half as strange and creative as those from overseas. There is simply no way that a show like "Attack on Titan" or "JoJo's Bizarre Adventure" would ever be greenlit by American producers, yet both of those animes are hugely popular on an international level. The few dozen genuinely standout American animations do little to balance the scale against the original, insane level of production and variety in Japanese animated series.

No piece of media epitomizes the failures of the American animation industry quite like "Blood of Zeus" does. Produced by Netflix and animated by Powerhouse Studios, the duo behind the surprisingly good "Castlevania" animated series, "Blood of Zeus" had the potential to represent a turning point for adult Western animation as a whole. Sadly, the show doesn't live up to the expectations. Despite the beautiful visuals, solid voice acting, and satisfying violence, "Blood of Zeus" is one of the least ambitious, most

by-the-book, recently released stories. Its impressive animation is not enough to hide its lackluster character writing and total absence of depth, leaving it to wallow in mediocrity.

"Blood of Zeus" follows Heron (Derek Phillips), one of the most stereotypical Greek heroes since the existence of ancient Greece. Complete with muscles, strong morals, and daddy issues, Heron is a son of Zeus tasked with saving humanity and Olympus from demons, giants, and a civil war among the gods. Joined by a posse of forgettable, useless, and underdeveloped side characters, he must defeat Seraphim (Elias Toufexis), the leader of the demons, to prevent the end of the world.

The problem with "Blood of Zeus" is not its lack of complexity. Many of the most beloved movies and shows focus on the conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, on heroes who always do what's right and villains whose ambitions of world domination inevitably fail. The problems instead lie in how little the show adds to the bare-bones formula for an action adventure. Heron's character isn't poorly written because it's dull to have a main character who's always good—it's because he's devoid of any personality. A completely virtuous protagonist isn't an inherently bad thing, but Heron's lack of other traits doesn't give much room in terms of growth or change. The same can be said of his allies. Though the show aimed for a diverse and interesting group to complement our stoic protagonist, it only succeeds in producing

four more Herons, all with identical, pompous declarations about glory and morality. What's more, any efforts made to construct backstories for the characters feel superficial and tedious given the few minutes of screen time allotted to each one.

The only character who gets even a shred of thought to his characterization is Seraphim, the leader of the demons. Seraphim gets the full works in terms of formulaic development: a secret, tragic, and complicated backstory that ties him to the hero and tries to rationalize his comical evilness. Seraphim's motivations of revenge and rage are clearly defined, and as a narrative foil for Heron, he had the potential to be a memorable character. Their dynamic, however, falls through due to Heron's lack of character flaws or motivations, which would've made Heron's attempted character arc of overcoming his anger more believable. Thus, the show leaves Seraphim hanging, with one half of what was supposed to be the main thematic thrust of the story rendered meaningless by the failure to deliver on any other element of the plot.

Seraphim's arc was designed to be static, contrasting with the protagonist's growth and maturation over the course of the plot, but this is undercut by the lack of any change in Heron throughout the story. The significant and often tedious time spent on the villain feels wasted, as there is no relevance given to this more complex view of Seraphim in either the larger ideas of the show or in his actions, which continue to be as predictable as ever. Seraphim

isn't even a well-written character, but with the amount of focus and screen time given to his development, it's ridiculous how flat and empty he remains.

A lot has been said about the classic hero's journey, the structure which most works of fiction follow to create a satisfying build and release of tension. Like most shows and movies, "Blood of Zeus" follows this archetypal format, differing from its peers in only one way: its complete unwillingness to add anything engaging at all. While modern classics like "Harry Potter," "Star Wars," and "Lord of the Rings" were able to form expansive worlds and beloved narratives within this framework, "Blood of Zeus" feels more like a Mad Libs for an ancient Greek adventure, unsurely going through the motions with a meaningless plot set in a bland world. It says a lot about the lack of originality of the show when, in the unbelievably vast canon of ancient Greek mythos, the two adversaries chosen are giants (who at the very least are adapted into Godzilla-style kaiju) and demons, the two most boring and overused ones of the whole batch. The demons in "Blood of Zeus" aren't even interesting; grey skin and superhuman strength, which summarize every dark army thought up in the last four decades. If Rick Riordan has taught the world anything, it's that ancient myths are a very good toolbox to create your own stories, and the inability for "Blood of Zeus" to produce even the slightest bit of suspense and surprise in this supernatural world shows laziness in the scriptwriting.

Despite its numerous flaws,

"Blood of Zeus" still has one thing going for it: it looks really good. The animation in the show is mind-blowingly sharp and creates a unique aesthetic that defines and distinguishes the characters with far more detail than the plot or their dialogue. Though there are a few noticeable drops in frame rate and occasionally the characters look a bit weightless, akin to action figures rather than real people, Powerhouse Studios manages to design a style that fits both high-intensity action and more relaxing, scenic moments. The willingness to show blood and gore definitely enhances the combat, making every blow feel like it packs a punch, though the choreography often feels a bit passive. Even if the animation only provides a thin facade of quality, the visual and aesthetic design of the show was enough to keep me watching, even with the lackluster main plot.

"Blood of Zeus" is mediocre at best. It is a show content with being completely forgettable, unwilling to take any risks or make the effort to utilize its world in imaginative ways. Despite its polished visual design, the series presents only the most basic level of story, with a cast of flat, uninteresting characters and nothing more than vague illusions of thematic coherence. The series is wonderful to watch, so long as you're willing to ignore the dull and often pointless events happening on screen. "Blood of Zeus" could've been Western animation's chance to start telling interesting, innovative stories but instead ends up uninspired, banal, and bland.

MUSIC

By ZOE BUFF

Usually when the bell rings before fifth period at Stuyvesant High School, 60 to 70 teenage musicians slowly flood into classroom 129. For the next 40 minutes, the students rapidly fetch instruments from the adjacent storage space; tune strings, winds, and brass; and perfect excerpts from pieces such as a Beethoven Symphony or a Bernstein Serenade. Symphonic orchestra teacher Joseph Tamosaitis conducts the ensemble from his swiveling chair atop a short platform in the middle of the classroom, lifting the spirits of exhausted teenagers by cracking jokes.

The symphonic orchestra normally meets daily to practice in the first-floor rehearsal room. Musicians from all grades gather to play music, occasionally under the conducting hand of a student teacher. Several take the opportunity to rehearse in their chamber music groups in separate spaces. The unique course introduces students to a special kind of collaboration, encouraging them to explore different styles of music and bringing together some of the most talented musicians in the city. Despite the challenges that accompanied the start of remote classes, the Stuyvesant symphonic orchestra, one of many arts programs canceled as a result of the district-wide shutdown in March, found a way to continue playing.

When online instruction first began in the spring, Tamosaitis set up a Google Classroom platform for the orchestra as a way to relay announcements and distribute assignments. He holds Google Meets every other school day to discuss assignments with the 75

members of the symphonic orchestra and, occasionally, to educate them on music history and performance practice. Throughout the last three months of the 2019-2020 school year, the ensemble worked on two main projects: an audio-only recording of an excerpt from Beethoven Symphony no. 7 in A Major, Op. 92: "Allegretto," and a Final Cut Pro video of an excerpt from the Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 in G major, BWV 1048: "Allegro."

Tamosaitis acknowledged that conducting orchestra class virtually gave him a good opportunity to listen to each musician separately, something that had been difficult under normal circumstances. Teaching a music course, however, presents a tougher challenge than other classes at Stuy. Technology has yet to offer a favorable solution to the significant audio delay of video conference softwares such as Zoom and Google Meet. As of now, it is nearly impossible for any musical ensemble to rehearse over video calls, hence the recording projects that each member completes on their own.

Tamosaitis also mentioned

that a disadvantage of online instruction is the lack of sight-reading opportunities for newcomers to the orchestra. "[Usually] after a semester of playing alongside older and more experienced students, ninth-graders at Stuyvesant learn very fast," he said.

As sophomore Christina Pan, a violinist for the symphonic orchestra,

pointed out, this situation is difficult to recreate through technology. "Since the main focus of an ensemble orchestra is to play together, [Tamosaitis] feels like the main component of it is missing from remote classes," she explained.

Tamosaitis, however, has kept the class engaging despite the remote circumstances. In the

spring, he frequently posted recordings and videos of the pieces that the ensemble had been working on, to boost morale. "I think the remote orchestra has honestly been one of my favorite classes because Mr. Tamo"—as he is often referenced by the students—"always manages to bring his authentic self to class, and it's pretty endearing," Pan expressed.

a face-to-face setting. "We sort of managed to edit all the individual recordings and create something similar to what we would hear in person. But it's just not the same," said junior Macy Jiang, also a violinist for the symphonic orchestra. The actual playing is all done on the students' own time, so they lose the experience of what it's like to rehearse in an orchestra.

"In March, we thought that remote learning would only last until June," Tamosaitis admitted, adding that priorities are different now that the orchestra is most likely facing an entire year of remote instruction. "For me, the most important thing is keeping everybody practicing," he said, since it is harder to check up on students' progress. As a result, students are required to submit a video performance every other week. Tamosaitis plans to put together a video performance of the symphonic orchestra playing a movement from the first "Carmen Suite" by Georges Bizet, using editing software such as Logic Pro and Final Cut Pro to create split-screen recordings of the full orchestra.

As New York City waits for the curtains on artistic organizations to reopen, musicians continue to make the most of the online interaction they are able to have through technology and innovative solutions. Creating a video recording of 75 musicians poses several challenges, a few of which include requiring all students to play at exactly the same tempo with the right dynamics and similar phrasing. Tamosaitis, however, is no stranger to the theater: for him and his orchestra, the show must go on.

Symphonic Orchestra: A Spectacular Outlet



Emily Lu / The Spectator

Google Meets that Tamosaitis hosts for orchestra class have often been entertaining for the high schoolers, whose attention is captivated by the recounts of his musical experiences or crash courses on musical history.

Other orchestra students find that they miss playing together and bringing the music to life in

Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

By DEXTER WELLS

Senior Isabella Lee regards songwriting as her own unique domain of self-expression. Lee's musical background began with childhood music lessons in piano and violin that her mother enrolled her in. As a classical musician, Lee's mother viewed music as something much more significant than just an extracurricular activity, an attitude that Lee often found overbearing. "She was very scary when it came to practicing," Lee recalled. As time went on and her lessons became too much of a chore, Lee dropped them. She knew, however, that she still wanted to keep music in her life but on her own terms.

Singing and songwriting became something that she could do for herself, on a separate plane from her mother. With her prior experience playing the violin in mind, Lee taught herself guitar, a process she found greatly aided by her familiarity with string instruments. She doesn't consider herself to be an exceptional guitar player, but being able to figure out chords is enough for her songwriting needs.

Though determined to stay musical, Lee quickly realized that she had horrible stage fright. Set on overcoming her fear, she joined the Stuyvesant Theater Community (STC) and tried to perform at as many of Stuy's open mic events as possible. Her first STC audition didn't go particularly smoothly, though. "I folded like a chair," Lee recalled. She participated in SING!, and gradually these persistent efforts

to perform diminished her stage fright.

Lee, however, didn't begin writing music she felt confident enough to share until quarantine set in. "There's a lot of [EXPLETIVE] that happened during quarantine, so now, more than ever, songwriting has been a huge way to cope," Lee said.

She often found herself unable to sleep in the middle of the night, so she worked on songs during that time. "Sometimes, you know, life happens. So I would just get my guitar and start plucking at the strings, trying to find chords, and then I would just start singing to them," she explained.

Lee may revise the words for a song, but all of her songs come to fruition within a short period of time: just a few days or even a single night. "It's a very short creative process. I just kind of go with it," she said.

When she takes songs into GarageBand for further production, vocals are the focus. She layers songs further by incorporating ad-libs and runs. She adds instrumentation with the help of a MIDI keyboard, interlacing complementary sounds like cello, bass, and even occasionally organ with artful subtlety.

Despite her concise creative process, Lee finds it very difficult to convince herself that a song is done. "[For] every song, I have like nine versions," Lee estimated, explaining how she constantly finds something to change or tweak whenever she relists. She recognizes that a lot of the flaws she finds in her songs are only perceptible to her and under-

stands that there's a point where she just needs to finalize a song and release it.

Lee considers Amy Winehouse to be a particular artist who

able thing for me, because I'm not very good at either guitar or piano," she remarked.

Her EP "Self Care," released on Spotify earlier this year, is a

ing each one. "In my mind, they were written in the same breath," Lee reflected. She didn't set out to write any of the songs with the specific intention of putting them on "Self Care" but found herself naturally associating those three songs with each other.

Interestingly, not all of the songs on "Self Care" are written from Lee's perspective. Though she takes inspiration from her own life when writing lyrics, she likes to write about events that haven't happened to her. She has even written songs inspired by a storyline that her friend gave her, though she has yet to release them. "Of course I write about my own experiences, but I also like mixing it up," Lee said. "You never know whether those experiences are mine or someone else's, and I like that anonymity."

Music is something that Lee would like to do for the rest of her life, but she doesn't necessarily see it as a career path. "I want it to be something that connects me to other people and a stress reliever," Lee said. Moving forward, she hopes to release more music, perhaps in early 2021. She has a great deal of songs written that she has yet to finalize and polish up in production and expects to release more singles, and maybe even another EP. When Lee visualizes the future, she sees music as a constant that she will never fail to enjoy and as something that she will never let turn into a chore.

Listen to Isabella Lee (Isalee)'s Brand New EP "Self Care," out now.



Sammi Chen / The Spectator

has inspired her significantly and has made her more comfortable with her own voice, which settles in a low range. "She has this kind of husky voice," Lee said. "And I fell in love with that."

Lee's voice is the primary instrument in her songs, and she layers vocals to create a delicate but pleasantly filling texture. "[Vocals are] the most comfort-

collection of three songs she wrote during quarantine. She had played with the idea of creating an EP for a while and found it very fun to bring that to life. While she doesn't think that the songs on the project have a central theme or even necessarily a similar vibe, all three songs were written in the middle of the night, and she was in a similar headspace while writ-

FILM

By CHRISTINA PAN

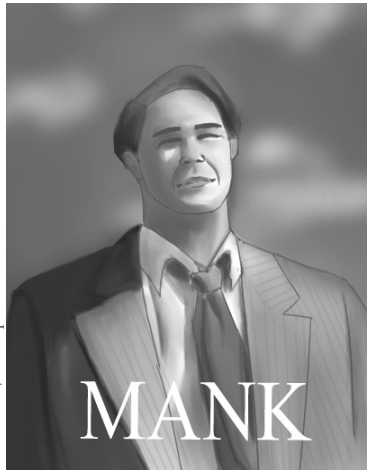
"Mank," David Fincher's 11th feature film, offers a dazzling glimpse into the 1930s Golden Age of Hollywood. There's a seductive nostalgia of the wide-screen noir, filled with smoky silhouettes and inky blacks; the undertones of a bygone Mid-Atlantic accent echoing off invisible walls; the cigar smoke spiraling, the lights flashing, and the champagne flowing. The velvety monochrome on-screen seems off, however; there's the faint imitation of cigarette burns, the faux scratches of an unchanged, old-timey reel, and the crisp definition of a digital camera.

There's almost an artificiality to modern nostalgia; a strange kind of self-awareness past sentimentalism. This is precisely the state of "Mank," the story of the creation of a screenplay, yet fueled with an acerbic, pointed criticism toward old Hollywood and American power structures.

Herman J. "Mank" Mankiewicz (Gary Oldman) came to Hollywood in the 1920s with the confidence and credentials of an established screenwriter. By the 1940s, however, his alcoholism and self-destructive behavior wore his career prospects thin; that is, until he met Orson Wells: the 24-year-old director, actor, and producer (what else!) who proposed a 90-day stay in relative isolation at Verde Ranch, California. There was a film to be shot, a screenplay to be written—and full carte blanche for Mank.

This is the making of the screenplay behind "Citizen Kane" (1941), a film virtually ubiquitous

in pop culture and arguably the crème de la crème through a century-and-a-half of cinema. Following the death of the newspaper mogul Charles Foster Kane (based on William Randolph Hearst, billionaire media mogul and founder of Hearst Communications), reporters begin to investigate the meaning of his dying words "Rosebud," but instead slowly unearth a fascinating portrait of the



Annie Lam / The Spectator

epiphany of the greater sense as he's closeted away in the Ranch, drifting in and out of almost hallucinatory flashbacks.

Fincher's film is wrapped in some of the most gorgeous filmmaking craft imaginable. The entirety of the film was shot on a monochrome sensor camera—no color version of the film exists. Trish Summerville's costumes and production designer Donald Graham create a dazzling blend of 1930s to early '40s glamour and grit. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross' score flips from high-tempo jazz to gravelly undertones of the retro, monaural sound design. Erik Messerschmidt's cinematography is exquisite, with a radiant, almost dream-like black-and-white contour and at times depicts the bold, expressionist style of "Citizen Kane" with flashy montages and playful swings of the camera. The high contrast and chiaroscuro lighting give the film an almost Renaissance appearance, coupled with the seductive thrall of the noir nostalgia.

Between "Citizen Kane" and "Mank," there are structural boldness and temporal fragmentation. The storylines weave together characters, themes, timelines, and plot threads to a smooth entirety; each transition feels somehow preordained. In "Mank," the lengthy flashbacks to the 1930s almost serve as an alternate tense; we meet actress Marion Davies (Amanda Seyfried) and other characters from Mank's memory, told with a teasing, yet magnetic wit.

The most fascinating parts of "Mank," however, come from a darker internal story. Deception is at the center of Fincher's film—

the gorgeous visuals, coupled with lush nostalgia, divert the viewer from its underlying messages. The film has inevitably painful material to contemplate in our era of corona lockdown, media moguls, anti-socialist rhetoric, and (yes) electoral chaos. Flashbacks weave back to the 1930s, with the Great Depression and theater closures; a gubernatorial election takes stage, and wealthy Hollywood elites compete for reigning influence.

The wealthy elites move in the same ring of conservative power players; Hearst is its king, and Mank is its unknowingly addled court jester. The leftist Mank is stranded in the midst of a suffocating machine—his morals have cost him his soul, and he's reduced to alcoholism and sardonic laughter. He is left a small sideshow, a puppet by the strings of those who have cast their ideals aside for a steady paycheck, and a seat on the plump, embroidered thrones of Hearst's estate.

"Mank" isn't only a metatext on film, however. Today, Hearst Communications is just one media company among other powerful corporations. Think of Rupert Murdoch (CEO of News Corp, which owns Fox News, The Wall Street Journal, The Times of London, and more) or Michael Bloomberg (CEO of Bloomberg L.P.) and other individuals with a similar breadth of power. Think about the interplay between the media, elections, and the powerful; they monopolize off each other, practically creating an unbreakable dominion. Part of Mank's journey is the gradual realization of the calamity of factors beyond his control and the sheer, terrifying power

leveraged by the few who can use it.

The heart of "Mank" ultimately lies in the soul of the artist. "Mank" is almost wearily in love with the thorny craft of artistic collaboration, as all the inner parts of the film only titled "America" ("Citizen Kane" is never mentioned directly) come together in a sort of symphonic chaos. Yet this collaboration is equally about Mank himself; if he wants to bring something truly valuable to the process, he must grow as a person, then as an artist.

At the end of "Mank," there's hardly anything to critique. Fincher is meticulous: the score, the production design, the cinematography, and the editing are nearly flawless; the film is a thoughtful love letter to classic Hollywood, that is, first dipped in venom—its subplots eerily resonate with current issues—and yet there's still something missing.

The film lacks an emotional center. When the characters argue, there's never a sense that anything has been lost. The characters shine brightest not in conversation, but in monologues, or in self-definition. There's an attempt at an emotional punch and an almost anticlimactic ending that never lands quite right. While "Mank" certainly can earn the viewers' respect, it struggles in finding our admiration. It's more of a film made with the care and cunning of people who know exactly what they're doing, apart from what we need most now. It feels almost starved of human connection; a glance there, a longing look there, but it ultimately remains a portrait, trapped behind a silver screen.

"Mank" Paints a Beautifully Deceptive Portrait of Classical Cinema

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

The Spectator's Top Ten Endorsements for the Presidency (#7 Will Discipline You!)

By JASMINE WANG

Regardless of whether you supported Joe Mama or a wet orange for the presidency, we can all agree that this election was clearly a divisive one. America, where is your decency? Are we blind to the clear solutions here? We are a democracy (Cue everyone telling me it's a "democratic republic." And to that, I shall loosely quote Supreme Court Justice Amy Cannon Barry: "We get five freedoms in the first amendment: speech, religion, press, and assembly"). We've lost what could have been and now fight in an endless rat race of rich white men. We must come together and rework this democracy from the bottom up.

And herein lies the true problem: the two-party system. The great Jorge Washingmachine himself spoke against it (as stated in my APUSH class). Why should we have to back one candidate who we might not even agree with just to get or prevent the only other major candidate running to be in the White House? If we had more candidates, then surely this could be avoided. Sure, third parties lure you into the feeling of choice, but really, when's the last time a third party won? Clearly, I am the expert on politics here at The Spectator, and just in case we're in this predicament ever again, I've done everyone the great service of compiling a list of 10 clearly better candidates for the presidency than any Devilcrat or Ripublican.

10. COVID-19

Let's start off with a real controversial opinion that'll get your blood flowing. COVID-19 for prez. Coronavirus. Coco. C-dawg. Every president hates it, and that's why it is one of the best choices. It'll kickstart this rough, sluggish economy with floods of masks, hand sanitizers, and more. Capitalism begins with a C, just like COVID! And surely, this ain't a coincidence. It'll educate the

public on health and safety issues better than our current president, too. The age-old adage reads thusly: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

9. @BidenInsultBot on Twitter

If you're a fan of "Will you just shut up, man?" you'll love Biden Insult Bot. It's the cutting-edge live commentary we need. All the biting rhetoric of Biden without the boring policies and whatever. With gems like "Here [are] the facts, you poopdeckin' hurdy-gurdy man," maybe AI is the future after all.

Foreign nations everywhere would be intimidated by Biden Insult Bot. Forget about Russia and China. Forget about North Korea's nuclear weapons. Biden Insult Bot would cut these world leaders down to jelly within seconds. We'd truly dominate the world with the brilliance of Biden's mind trapped in a computer.

8. The old lady who gave you a cough drop on the subway

In tough times like these, we really need more kindness in office. Don't you remember how you were coughing and wheezing on the subway many months ago? Everyone thought you had the 'rona and stayed away, but that old lady showed some real gumption. That's the kind of attitude we need in office right now. Who cares if she was probably trying to lure you into the world of slightly illegal drugs? That's the kind of love-spreading gesture we need now more than ever. Hmm, I wonder what that strange white powder in the middle of my cough drop was...

7. Brian Moran

Moran 2024. Do I even need to explain this one?

6. Vermin Supreme

This man is the boot-hat-wearing, beard-donning legend who guaranteed everyone a pony if he won the election (I am ac-

tually not making this up. Google him). He earned extra points on our highly precise, technical algorithm for being a) alive, b) human, and c) less crazy than the current presidential candidates. (Five-Thirty-Eight's "algorithm" is nothing more than a random number generator compared to our systems.)

5. Gaius Julius Caesar

The classic middle-of-the-line option. Caesar is truly a man of the people—he loved them so much that he chose to end his life surrounded by those he loved: his fellow senators, especially Brutus. What a guy.

If this hamster wins (and it should), I am willing to extract it like a humble tumor and set it free. Who cares if he's like, a little bit dead?

Imagine this: the rich are taking over. They've consolidated their wealth. They make questionable fashion choices. That is exactly the system Caesar usurped with his brilliant mind. He reformed, united, and expanded the Roman Republic. Isn't that what we all need in this day and age, too? Who cares if he's like, a little bit dead?

4. The piece of gum stuck on your shoe

"What?!" you might say. "It can't even talk! It doesn't even meet the criteria you set earlier!" Well, disregard what I said earlier. The best decisions are clearly always made on a whim. I'm always right. Some of the best presidents are silent and steadfast, just like

that piece of gum on your shoe. Some people are quitters. That gum is not. Therefore, Gum for President 2024. Doesn't it just roll off the tongue?

3. Hades

Give the guy some credit. If he can run a kingdom composed of 107 billion dead people, I don't think America would be much different. He'd feel right at home, honestly. Here's a little bit of trivia you can impress your friends with: Florida (especially Disney World) was designed after the Fields of Punishment. Why do you think so many old people "retire" there? It calls for them. They know their

other than the holy, ethereal hamster that runs around in the head of yours truly. This hamster has the potential to unlock all the possibilities of human life. It's brilliance in a pure, undistilled form. It's unmatched. It has brought you this article and many others. Forget having a mortal coil—shuffle that off. The tiny hamster in my brain that tells me what to do would be the best president yet. It's 100 percent guaranteed.

I want to be clear. I'm not endorsing myself for the presidency. Oh no. If this hamster wins (and it should), I am willing to extract it like a humble tumor and set it free. If it can come up with all of this genius in the dark confinements of my skull where I have encapsulated it, it could rewrite humanity outside of it with its omniscience.

Think about it. If this hamster can put together such a worldly article (that you're... still reading?), think about the scriptures it could create if set free. It could rewrite the Bible if I didn't keep it under lock and key for 23 hours a day (for fear of my precious soul). It's like Voldemort and Professor Quirell, only without evil and an ugly turban. So think about that. Maybe it's time for a big change, people.

Make sure to vote. Use your voices for better or worse. What matters is that you get it out there—before it's too late.

Honorable Mention:

Caligula: Oh, Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, even though you randomly killed the leader of Mauretania and married then murdered your sister, there's just something so extraordinary about how you, like no other, took the bold step of making your horse a consul. No one else would have ever possibly thought of that. Insanity or genius? I'll let you decide (But the right answer is genius. I mean... a horse as a consul? The supreme leader? It's like letting Donald Trump run free in a hospital [ahem John Malaney]).

This Would Be Funnier if It Wasn't My Senior Year We Were Talking About

By OLIVER STEWART

New York City (NYC) Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza rolled out a new policy in late October for the hundreds of thousands of students learning remotely at public schools in NYC. While the city had initially announced that there would be staggered times throughout the year for remote-only students to opt back to in-person learning, their announcement marked a dramatic change—now, remote students only have a single two-week window in November to opt back into blended or in-person learning.

As students and parents cried out in anger over the drastic and last-minute change, Chancellor Richard Carranza defended the new policy, claiming that it offered stability and alleviated pressure on principals struggling to handle schedules, which have been in constant flux since schools went remote in mid-March. "Frankly, we're going to [EXPLETIVE] this up colossally. And repeatedly," Carranza

said. "So the more information principals have about how many kids they're going to have to cram into poorly ventilated classrooms come spring, the easier it makes this whole thing. It's good to plan, but hey! Let's be honest. We aren't going to do anything anyway." For some principals, this is too little, too late. Far too late, in some cases—at Stuyvesant,

new-looking swivel chair. "Yeah, no. I got out as fast as I could. When I tried to resign the first time, they convinced me to stay, but I wasn't falling for that again. I'm over at North Shore Senior High in Glen Head. Fewer kids, less drama. Less humor." The former principal then promptly left the Zoom call, saying that he had an "important meeting"

if the virus was "100 percent eradicated" by May, families who failed to opt in by the November 15 deadline will have no recourse and will be forced to continue remotely. "Sucks to suck," de Blasio said. Carranza echoed his comments, mooning our reporter and claiming that opting in was a logical move for all city families. "If you like remote learning so

provingly. "Listen," the governor said at a recent press conference. "De Blasio is a buffoon. We all know it. You know it. I know it. Hell, de Blasio probably knows it. The question is, though, is it my place to correct his mistakes? Absolutely. And will I? Absolutely not." Instead, Cuomo said, he'll occasionally remind de Blasio of how little power he truly has without overstepping what he called "the unwritten code that one tall Italian-American man never stops another slightly taller Italian-American man from derailing a high-speed train." In the coming months, Cuomo plans to dedicate his energy to hunting down and eradicating The Boyfriend and promoting his new book, "Cool Guy: How Andrew Cuomo's Good Looks and Quick Thinking Saved Us All."

When presented with these comments, de Blasio scoffed. "Tall Italian-American man? He's not even six foot. I'd appreciate it if he stood aside and let the really tall Italian-American men do the work around here." The mayor then stuck his middle finger in the approximate direction of Albany.

"Sucks to suck." —Bill de Blasio, NYC Mayor

former Principal Eric Contreras jumped ship at the soonest possible opportunity, announcing his resignation in early July.

According to Contreras, his exit is directly linked to the perceived failings in the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza. "Those two bozos? You have to be kidding me," Contreras said, leaning back in his

in his "fancy office, which is way nicer than the one at Stuyvesant."

Critics of the policy point to the rapidly changing COVID environment in New York as evidence that a single window is wildly inadequate for families struggling with a decision that may define an important period in their children's development. The mayor confirmed that even

much," the Chancellor continued, "why don't you marry it?" Carranza and de Blasio then shared a high five and made "L" signs with their fingers, holding them up in the direction of our reporter.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, despite holding the power to overrule de Blasio, has opted instead to look on from afar and occasionally shake his head disap-

Humor

2020 Christmas Outbreak Projected to Begin Earlier and Hit Harder

By **ETHAN LAM**

According to alarming reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a recent strain of Christmas virus has affected up to 41.9 million individuals far earlier than the typical seasonal strain of Christmas, which has historically occurred during mid to late December. This wave of Christmas is a continuation of the trend of earlier, longer-lasting, and more severe Christmases, with experts generally agreeing that 2020 is the worst Christmas outbreak of the last decade.

Population models have projected that the epidemic may have begun as early as late October, breaking the generally accepted truth that large numbers of Christmas cases typically only appear after Halloween. “The reason for this trend is still unknown,

but that doesn’t mean you can’t help prevent Christmas,” director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases Jordon Balaclava said. “Make sure to avoid known Christmas-dense areas, such as shopping malls, and potential vectors such as Amazon.com. If you sense the presence of 15 percent discounts on peppermint, evacuate the premises immediately. If you’re unsure whether or not an area puts you at risk for Christmas, a good rule of thumb is this: areas where retail workers look



Angel Liu / The Spectator

even more bedraggled and lifeless than normal are to be avoided. In all likelihood, they have developed acute Christmas poisoning as a result of overexposure to Mariah Carey’s 1994 smash hit single, ‘All I Want for Christmas Is You.’ At that point, abandon them, for they’re no longer human—only walking corpses bearing the faces of your former friends and family.”

In addition, Balaclava advises everyone to be watchful for symptoms of Christmas in the people around you. Such symptoms include unconscious humming of holiday songs and a craving for freshly fallen snow. The effects of this earlier strain of Christmas include increased apathy, a dulled response to festive stimuli, and reduced

blood concentrations of the holiday spirit. Fortunately, such detrimental effects of Christmas are temporary and can be curbed with several practices. Balaclava recommends that Christmas-afflicted patients be treated daily with 500 mg of “Bro it’s not even Thanksgiving man, c’mon bro,” which can be obtained over the counter at most pharmacies. Affected individuals should seek to get plenty of rest and drink fluids, while unaffected individuals should tear their ears out because IF I HEAR YOU HUM ANOTHER GOD-DAMN CHRISTMAS SONG, I’M GOING TO DECK YOUR HALLS—

Ahem.

At the moment, there is no be-all and end-all cure for early Christmas, but there is hope for an end to this disease. Research for a permanent solution is ongoing

and could be ready for commercial use as soon as 2030, according to Jar Bananacat, a researcher at Harvard University. This experimental drug is known within academic circles as “Gun.” Bananacat elaborates: “The science behind how it works is very simple. Gun is applied to the infected areas and terminates all early Christmas by targeting the source of the disease: our corporate overlords.” However, despite its seeming infallibility, it’s not ready yet. “Clinical trials have proven that Gun is effective 100 percent of the time, though academic peer review and additional empirical data is necessary before it’s put into effect to create a communist utopia,” Bananacat said. “But I think that Gun has a very good shot of ending this horrid trend. The future’s looking bright.”

We Are Thankful for This Title!

By **AARON WANG**
and **KELLY YIP**

It’s no doubt that 2020 has truly been an extraordinary year. Whether it be the rampaging Australian wildfires, the onslaught of “murder hornets” in the U.S., or the devastation caused by locust swarms in Africa and Asia, 2020 has certainly been eventful. In fact, it was so eventful that you probably forgot all of these existed until now. And who could forget the deadly COVID-19 pandemic to top it all off, like a little maraschino cherry on a parfait of death and destruction? Now, Thanksgiving is just right around the corner, and you might be thinking to yourself, “What on Earth could I possibly be thankful for this year?” Well, fear not: The Spectator is here to share a few silver linings of the chaotic storm that is 2020.

No Social Interaction!

Yes, the coronavirus has closed all our favorite restaurants and maybe even put a few out of business. Yes, the economy’s in a pretty terrible spot. And yes, over a million people worldwide have succumbed to the virus. But hey, since we’re in quarantine, we don’t have to go to school. Well, in person at least. Oh, what about remote learning, you say? Ah yes, that’s pretty annoying... but for those of you who don’t live

near Stuyvesant, you don’t need to commute to school anymore! No more having to wake up before the sun rises and sitting in crowded subways next to strangers who clip their toenails on the train. Wait a minute, that’s it! Be thankful that because of quarantine, you no longer have to risk the encounter of dirty, wild, nail-clipping old men. If that’s not something to be thankful for, then we don’t know what is.

Climate Change and Early Summer Vacation?!

Well, how bad could the wildfires actually be? I mean, we have plenty of wildfires all the time! Oh? Hmm, it seems I’ve just been informed by our editor that tens of millions of acres have been lost, one billion animals have died, and now hundreds of species need emergency intervention to avoid extinction. Now, that sounds pretty bad, and it probably is, but if you think about it, this just means that everything in Australia that is out to kill you is also probably dead! That, and a bunch of carbon dioxide has been released into our atmosphere, so to everyone who wants summer to come earlier this year, your wish has been granted. Thank you, climate change! :D

That One Guy Who Slid Into Your DMs Last Weekend!

Ah yes, that one guy who slid into your DMs last weekend. Having someone use the lyrics of “Call Me Maybe” as a pick-up line was an absolutely unforgettable experience. It is truly unfortunate that you shall remember this sad attempt at trying to get a date for the rest of your life, but all experiences are valuable and worthy of reflection! So, what have you learned? You

Zoom calls. Let’s hope they didn’t screenshot your video, though. That’s just creepy.

Your Group Chat!

Though quarantine may have made you allergic to social interaction and sunlight, it’s also heightened your ability to perceive emotions through text messages. This, combined with your group chat, has taught you how to be sympathetic toward others in the same situation as you,

whether it be with the three other students staying up until

in High School Musical, we are all in this together, so you might as well cherish it.

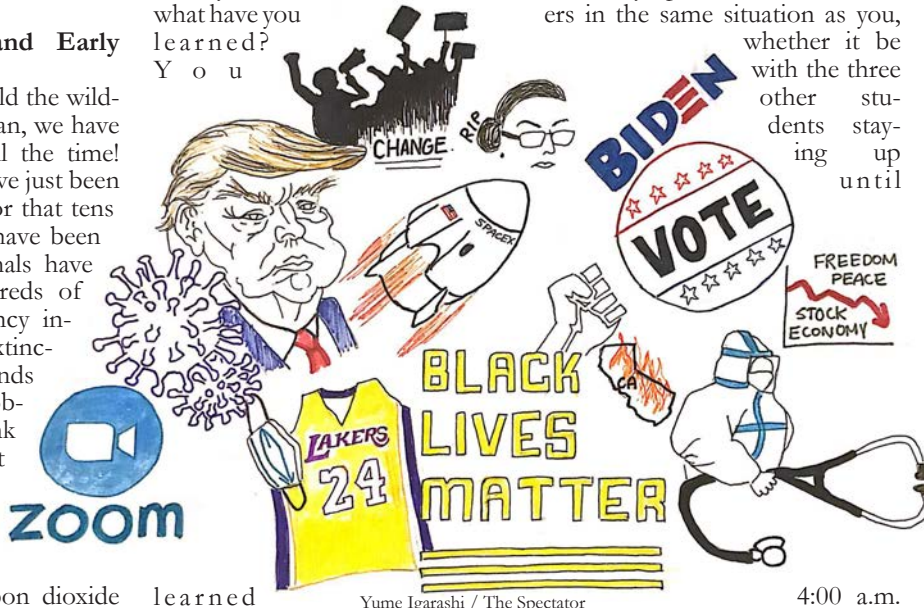
The Sedentary Lifestyle!

Athletes are among those who have suffered the most this quarantine. With many gyms closed, most PSAL sports teams canceled, and the majority of our days spent slouched over our laptops for like 10+ hours a day, the only gains you’ll be having are weight gains. But maybe all we need to do is shift our perspectives. Fitness is a thing of the past; being sedentary is the new lifestyle now. Be proud of your body image; forget Chloe Ting. And instead of focusing on all the terrible habits you’re developing, take a look at all the bad habits you’re leaving behind! With most restaurants closed, you’re not only saving money but also NOT gaining that extra weight.

Video Games!

To be honest, video games have been the source of our sanity for the past few months of quarantine, and they have also taught us some valuable life skills, such as how to deceive your companions (by backstabbing them, literally!), how to successfully hide a body behind a large rock to get away with murder, or how to master the art of lying.

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learned you have higher standards than that and you deserve better than that poor excuse of a suitor. At least you know someone finds your naked morning face and bedhead attractive in

finishing a project or with your peers as you all share the same mutual disappointment of failure as your teacher announces another failing class test average. But hey, as Troy Bolton preaches

2020 Campaign Promises

By **NORA MILLER**

As I’m sure all of you not living under a rock already know, the election has... ended? Took them long enough. Now, before we begin our next four-year-long quest to find a sufficiently large rock to hide under this time (the 47th time’s the charm, right?), let us take a moment to acknowledge the brilliance of some of our newest politicians in addressing the greatest problems of our time.

Newly elected Oklahoma state legislator T. Bois Vacar made a name for himself advocating for the worried cows of his state and their increasingly ruminant farmers. “If there’s one thing this pandemic has taught all of us,” he said in a statement to the press, “it’s the importance of cows. Every day, more and more cows and farmers bite their hooves over how they’re going to

make ends meet with the price of meat plummeting. At the same time, a lot of city dwellers are worrying about their own issues, whatever those are. Who cares. Well, I have a solution! We have all these nice, gentle cows; why can’t we have a huge cow therapy program?” Vacar declined to state how he would fund the program, suggesting that city dwellers would be responsible for choosing and picking up cows to take home.

Such concerns about economic pitfalls accelerated by the pandemic were echoed by state senator Joe Steely, who narrowly won his seat in the 18th district in Gary, Indiana. As he said in an interview with Iron Nerves Magazine, “We here in Indiana have seen factory after factory leave for China, and we’re sick of it. What, do they not like Indians? The next time one of those darn metal lords steals one

of our dear factories, they are not leaving without us.” Steely’s plan to move the entire population of Indiana to China by stowing away inside of factories and waiting for an enormous crane to arrive was surprisingly popular. Many frustrated workers have already taken to living inside of factories, which local mental health experts applauded, citing crowded living conditions and waiting for the implausible as an effective method of relieving stress.

Steely also endorsed the COVID-19 recovery plan of Supra Sparadur, who was elected to the Texas state legislature as the first openly bonheaded representative ever. In her acceptance speech before an audience of 80 people in a space the size of an average New York apartment, she described her plan as revolutionary. “For the last nine months, we’ve been hearing all sorts of codswallop about quar-

antine this and quarantine that. And I say, why is it the sick who should stay home? If you ask me, that’s discriminatory—we should be celebrating those who get COVID-19!” As a way of dealing with the virus, Sparadur suggested parties exclusive to those with the virus, because, as she described, it would “mean bye-bye to COVID tests.” Though she did not answer any questions from reporters about how she would maintain the exclusivity of such events, she dodged the question by talking about her advocacy work for the mentally lazy, who she describes as some of the most oppressed Americans.

Representatives Vacar, Steely, and Sparadur all see themselves in the context of the changing electorate and view the decreasing popularity of common sense as an ideology. “New voters require new sets of policy,” Vacar

mentioned. “Even if it sounds ludicrous and catastrophic to almost all other people.” To this end, the three representatives released a policy guidebook, which they called “Politikz 4 Dummies” (before being sued for trademark violation by the popular “For Dummies” book series), and are hoping to sell physical copies to other legislators to fund the election of like-minded candidates in 2022.

Though the political impact of the election of these representatives has yet to be determined, there is only one certainty. Regardless of what you think of these new policy ideas, as representative Steely explained, the growth of idiots is one of the largest—and perhaps one of the most constant—demographic changes our country is currently experiencing.

The Skype's the Limit

By **LOGAN RUZZIER**

As an amateur Internet historian, it is my duty to capture every minutia of the online world and present it on a silver platter for the average person to masticate. While many others suffer and toil in their 2020 misery, I am hard at work cataloging all the juicy narratives this year has to offer. One particularly succulent story is the myriad of online conferencing software that have sprung up to catch every last drop of demand the market has to offer. It wasn't too far into the quarantine when one ambitious platform, Zoom, beat all the others to the punch and nabbed the greatest share of the consumers. Of course, the behemoth tech corporations that run the world would not give up so easily. While many smaller companies withered and died in Zoom's muscly grip, the whales of the industry poured every cent they could muster into building up a rival. So I, the humble Internet historian, am here to recount what will surely become but a footnote in history and lead you down the dreary Zoom Bootleg Hall of Fame.

1. Google Meet

The only enterprise to nearly rival Emperor Zoom himself was none other than Alphabet Inc., better known as Google. The gargantuan company battled head-to-head with Zoom from the very beginning, but the months following March quickly proved which conferencing platform was fittest to rule. Though Google held massive brand accountability over Zoom as well as near-limitless funding and an infinite hunger for power, they faltered on the battlefield. As Zoom thrived and brought full classes of miserable students together, Google Meet struggled to keep every pupil in place, with kids often stuck looking at a wall of empty frames. I am still flabbergasted to find that, months after all this began, Google Meet is still having critical bandwidth issues. Not to mention that breakout rooms and screen sharing on this platform are far inferior to their counterpart. If you have low productivity aspirations, however, and are content to run with second-rate software, Google Meet is the application for you! (I will remark that this follows the universal rule of brand rivalries: Blue is always superior to Green.)

2. Microsoft Teams

The quintessential Zoom facsimile, there is truly no platform more forgettable than Microsoft Teams. Boasting crap-tier user accessibility and a long list of features that nobody asked for, Teams tries to copy both Zoom and Slack at once. It would be remiss of me, however, not to mention how this platform is

textbook Microsoft. The company is well known for its habit of latching on to any and every trend possible in an attempt to add even more wealth to their already disgustingly tall heap. Fortunately for the corporation, and unfortunately for everyone else, Microsoft is truly too big to fail. Despite marketing a complicated and user-unfriendly interface to the worst possible audience—the middle-aged workforce—Microsoft Teams will in all likelihood still be around for our grandchildren to use. I must admit that the very name of this platform was enough to inspire me to weave this cautionary tale of unchecked corporate greed. I must also admit that I am getting really tired of Bill Gates shoving his fat, hairy finger in every pie.

3. Amazon Groups

If you thought that the first two platforms were particularly horrid, I must caution you that the Hall of Fame floor gets filth-

important to note that if you do not possess an Amazon Prime account, the data from your conference call will arrive in two to three business days.

4. Disney Chat

The only corporation on this list that is not typically tech-oriented, Disney surprised many fans and investors alike when they announced Disney Chat in July of this year. Marketed primarily toward a younger audience than the aforementioned platforms, Disney Chat presents the viewer with a cartoony and colorful interface. Luckily for the software's many customers, it is completely free and only requires that you sign over the rights to your life story to Disney. Disney Chat also offers multiple unique features, such as numerous Disney minigames to play during a meeting and many hilarious voice changers. Signing up for Disney Chat also qualifies you for coupons on Disney merchandise,

and published data indicating that Disney Chat has produced \$16 billion in revenue this last quarter alone.

5. Comcast Call

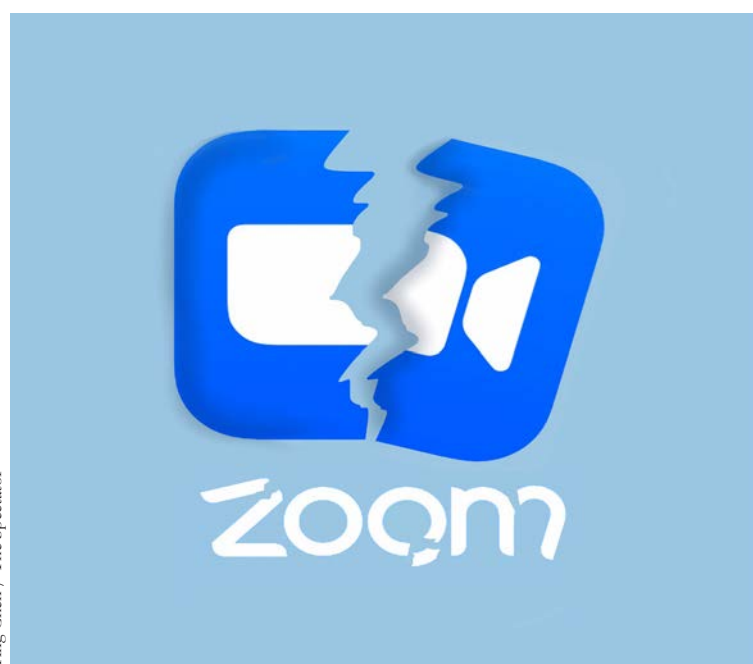
This list would not be complete without the conferencing service offered by notoriously bad cable provider Comcast. Seeing as they've been suffering financially as of late, Comcast has taken a giant leap into the future by offering conferencing software to the world. Keeping in line with their company mission statement, "Piss off," Comcast Call provides a remarkably bad experience. Signing up for Comcast Call online requires answering a 24-page questionnaire, followed by a lengthy exchange with a virtual assistant over the phone. Once you have managed that, a Comcast repairman will arrive sometime in the next three weeks to install Comcast Call onto your computer. It is important to note that while you schedule and confirm an appointment for your Comcast Call installation in both your questionnaire and your phone call, the repairman will pay no heed to the date and time you've provided. After the technician arrives at your house, they will spend at least seven hours installing the Comcast Call software. Though installing the program is as simple as downloading a file from a flash drive, the repairman will have enormous difficulty in doing so and will refuse any help you offer them. After the maintenance worker leaves your house, the Comcast Call software should be ready to run, but only if you manage to solve the innumerable issues the repairman has incurred on your device. Customers have reported that, following the program installation, their devices have switched to Greek as their primary language, changed their OS to Windows Vista, ceased to recognize their home WiFi router, and became incredibly greasy and sticky. Since Comcast servers are constantly overloaded with traffic, there is a maximum of five meetings happening on the platform at any time. When Comcast CEO Brian L. Roberts was asked what advantage Comcast Call could possibly have over Zoom, he simply shrugged.

6. Tesla Talk

The brainchild of a manchild, Tesla Talk proffers the most bewildering experience of them all. Though the software was specialized for usage in self-driving Tesla automobiles, it was adapted for Linux by a self-proclaimed "Reddit Technocrat." In a tweet engineered by a sniveling social media professional and posted to Elon Musk's account, the platform was announced as follows: "Our new conferencing software lets you make memes while you're in band class! Or while you're driving

a brand new eco-friendly Tesla Model S that totally wasn't manufactured with child labor! I'm not like those other old billionaires! Would any of those lame-o's host a meme review video? I'm young, down-to-earth, and relevant! Buy my cars please!!!" Apparently, this tweet originally had an image of "Matrix" actor Keanu Reeves attached, but it has since been removed, and the correlation with the content of the tweet is unknown. Tesla Talk seems to be marketed toward a teenage audience, yet does so in a highly bizarre manner. The main menu of the program is decorated in a manner that can be best compared to the horror vacui of a medieval depiction of the Last Judgment. Littered across the screen is a vast collection of pop culture references, including characters from Star Wars, Minecraft, The Office, and Family Guy, as well as a whopping 28 separate portrayals of Keanu Reeves in his various roles (note to self: investigate further connections to this actor across mainstream media; possible cult?). Tesla Talk offers many features in line with other Zoom clones, with a strange un-called-for twist: there seems to be a built-in method of collaborating on a single document with other members of the call. The tools for this portion seem geared toward photo-editing and include strange "stickers" to add to a communal image. There is also an option to "react" to something that occurs in the conference using peculiar symbols, including a poorly-drawn bald man and a disturbing frog-humanoid. This steaming mess of a platform seems wholly unusable and may be the most garish bid for attention in this whole ghastly collection.

Before I conclude this brief tour, I would like to make you, the willing and contractual participant, aware of some extraneous information. This is far from a conclusive list of all the Zoom bootlegs out there. I excluded many small companies that solely work in this field due to the fact that I am too lazy to research them. Many of them serve only a niche position in the market and are only different from Zoom aesthetically, making them uninteresting to the general audience. The majority of them will likely be out of business by the time you finish reading this article due to the fact that there is no massive business conglomeration behind them to keep them afloat. The grand irony of this entire situation is that Zoom is also a bootleg. There is no trademark on the video conferencing service, and I would argue that every service after Skype is completely unoriginal. The only thing that elevated Zoom to its popularity is its simple user interface and perhaps its catchy name. Go forth and Zoom!



Ying Chen / The Spectator

ier from here on out. As usual, Amazon has found yet another way to crush small businesses on a global scale. Because the corporation thrives on catering to people who are too lazy to leave their house, a conferencing program was right up their alley of indolence. Unfortunately for them, they were too marooned in their ways to build an effective competitor. In order to use Amazon Groups, one must purchase a subscription to the service, which costs an eye-watering \$80 per year. Amazon does have an answer to occasional customers, though. If you only join or host meetings once a week, Amazon will happily cover your call for only \$1.99 per minute. It is vital to read the fine print for this service, though, since color video is only included in the Fire™ package and costs an additional \$35 per year. There is currently no option for occasional customers to have color video in pay-per-view calls; their only choice is a full-year subscription. It is also

including Goofy silly straws and Star Wars M&M fan tubes. Disney Chat has recently been the subject of controversy due to several poor design choices on their platform. Every Disney Chat session requires the attendance of a Disney staff member, usually either a pimply teenager or an overweight, older man. These staff members must keep their mic on at all times and personally conduct every meeting in order to ensure a pleasant experience for all patrons. There have been rumors of these attendees behaving inappropriately in front of members of the call, including swearing, drinking, smoking, and snorting. There are also no cybersecurity measures provided for Disney Chat users; losses of data, identity theft, rampant Zoom bombing, and a feeling of being watched were all reported by customers. One kindergarten teacher who tried Disney Chat for her class reported her experience to be "absolutely horrific." Disney has denied all these allegations

We Are Thankful for This Title!

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And since our exposure to the toxic and competitive culture of Stuyvesant has diminished with remote learning (*cough* shameless plug check out The Quarantine *cough*), many students have looked to video games as an alternative outlet for their

stressful and toxic behavior (we see you, mastery 7 Yasuo mains). And those who say "video games are bad" clearly haven't had the experience of self-discovery that comes with competitive online MOBA games. Not only are you fortifying your mind but also discovering your personal boundaries. You learn that some games are simply unwinnable and that it's ok

to /ff at 15; "gg, go next" is a philosophy that all should embrace.

You, Our Readers <3

If you still can't decide, let us share what we're most thankful for this year: you. We're serious. Yes, you, our lovely, wonderful, charming, hot, sexy, intelligent, heavenly, borderline godly—wait no, scrap that. You ARE godly

and absolutely AmAZiNg (You see that alliteration? We did that for you) readers. We wanted to take this moment to tell you guys how much we appreciate that people actually read our content! Remember that in these difficult times, no matter how terrible things may seem and how hopeless you may feel, please remember to tell yourself that you are

worth it! You are what matters most! If anything were to come out of 2020, it'd be you. You made it, you're here, and you should always be thankful for who you are. Anyway, we really appreciate you being here. Thanks for coming along for the ride, and we hope you'll stay along for whatever 2021 inflicts upon us.

Sports

Sports Editorial

Why Portugal Will Win the 2022 FIFA World Cup

By NAKIB ABEDIN

It was the 2016 UEFA European Championship final, and France and Portugal were about to clash. Portugal, a team many thought was fortunate to even reach the finals, was the clear underdog for the ensuing showdown. France, with an impressive roster including stars such as Antoine Griezmann, Paul Pogba, and N'Golo Kante, was the heavy favorite. France had cruised past the 2014 FIFA World Cup winner, Germany, and defeated Iceland in the games leading up to the final. The final was held in France, offering the French national team an even greater advantage. Once the game started, the French were dominating the play. Though the squad was playing well, "Les Bleus" just couldn't get the finishing touch to score. Things went south for Portugal when its star player and captain, Cristiano Ronaldo, got

injured. The game went on to extra time, and Portuguese striker Eder scored his first-ever goal for Portugal in the 109th minute. For the rest of the game, the Portuguese defended as if their lives were at stake. Ronaldo, albeit injured, yelled out orders to his players, and they hung onto their lead to become champions of Europe. Portugal shocked the world and Ronaldo got his first-ever international trophy. Since then, Portugal has won another trophy: the 2019 UEFA Nations Cup. Already having two trophies to its name with a young and exciting roster, this generation of Portuguese players is destined for success.

Portugal has some of the most talented forwards in the world right now. Ronaldo has shown that even as he ages, he can compete with the best and stay on top of his game. He announced that the 2022 World Cup would be his last, giving

him additional motivation to pour his heart and soul out for his country during his final years in the soccer world. Next, it has Diogo Jota, an exciting prospect who recently joined Liverpool. He has scored a multitude of key goals for the Reds, including a Champions League hat trick against Atalanta and a late game-winner against Sheffield United. Portugal also has a crucial player in Bernardo Silva, whose dribbling can break down almost any defense, and Francesco Trincão, whose skill has been enough to impress FC Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman and soccer fans around the world. However, João Félix may be Portugal's most promising youngster. Atlético Madrid signed him for a world record fee of 126 million Euros. He has all the skills necessary for a great player. With five quality forwards at its disposal, Portugal will have no struggle breaking down any opposition they en-

counter.

Portugal has also produced many solid midfielders. One of the most notable is Bruno Fernandes, who has scored 13 goals for Manchester United and is one of Manchester's best players. Renato Sanches has also performed well for Lille OSC, helping his team beat AC Milan by three goals. Rúben Neves, a key player for Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, has also shown that he is a very capable center defensive midfielder.

In addition, Portuguese back line is rock solid, with Mário Rui from Napoli, Rúben Dias and João Cancelo from Manchester City, and ex-Barcelona player Nélon Semedo. These players are all very well-rounded. They are good passers, so they can play accurate long balls or crosses to the forwards. These defenders are also excellent tacklers, and can take the ball away from skillful dribblers. Addition-

ally, Rui Patrício and Anthony Lopes, Portugal's goalkeepers, are both more than able to make game-winning saves.

The Portugal squad today is exponentially better than the one that faced France in the 2016 European Championship. They can no longer be considered underdogs, as they have many of the most exciting players in Europe.

The Portugal roster is already impressive, but what's more remarkable is the fact that the players are all young. Most of Portugal's star players, excluding Ronaldo, are under 26 years old. They will all be in their primes for the upcoming European Championship and World Cup. Portugal has plenty of time to develop as a team, and will undoubtedly have a strong performance in these tournaments. With a determined Ronaldo leading his team, Portugal has a very strong chance of winning the next World Cup.

Sports Editorial

Coronavirus vs. College Football: The Fight of The Year

By ETHAN KIRSCHNER

With the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges across the country are still grappling with how to conduct their football seasons while minimizing outbreaks and keeping their athletes healthy. Prior to last weekend, most of the college football schedule had been played with few canceled games here and there. Most notably, the Florida Gators and the Wisconsin Badgers have both missed multiple games due to outbreaks within the team. The Wisconsin outbreak came directly after their first game (The Big Ten Conference, of which University of Wisconsin is a member, started their football season late due to coronavirus concerns).

Though the virus still loomed over the heads of administrators and university staff, it never really had a substantial effect on the ability of conferences to play out their seasons. Then, 15 games in the Football Bowl Subdivision,

college football's top division, were canceled or postponed. The number of canceled games in November is already higher than that of the previous two months. The South Eastern Conference also had four of seven contests canceled this weekend.

It doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon either. Throughout the country, numbers are continuing to climb. The U.S. continues to hit grim milestones as the number of coronavirus cases and deaths rises. Just this week, the U.S. set a single day record for the highest number of reported cases at over 187,000. The country also surpassed 250,000 deaths from the virus this past week. Furthermore, the positivity rate of college students was about 12 percent as of the first week of November, which is roughly double the national average. According to NBC News, college campuses are also defying the recommendations of the CDC and local health departments by attending parties. [Forty-](#)

[eight percent of college students](#) have attended large gatherings despite social distancing guidelines, and with the Thanksgiving holiday coming up, these numbers aren't going to decrease anytime soon. Longtime Sports-caster Rob Carlin put it best, "It's been proven that you can try to be as safe as you can and still get Covid...It's an airborne disease... Unfortunately, all it takes is one kid stepping out one time and it can drastically affect a whole operation."

At the end of the day, to put these young athletes at risk is selfish and irresponsible on the parts of the NCAA and administrators. These students are not professional athletes and less than two percent of all student athletes will ever become one. Putting kids' lives at risk in order to make a few bucks showcases the character of those in charge. Even though many players advocated to play out the season, the decision has to be made by professionals in the business, not

players who are seeking the glory of championships or the opportunity to increase their draft stock. To be fair, many college programs need the profit from football to help keep their athletic programs afloat. Though bigger schools have the academic funds to sustain many of their programs, smaller schools rely on the money from "revenue sports" such as football and basketball. However, the expenses of starting up a football season, conducting coronavirus testing, and maintaining COVID-19 guidelines will end up hurting these athletic programs more. The health of their student athletes are also at risk as the number of outbreaks increases.

On the other hand, fans value the excitement and joy that sports bring. Rob Carlin, a fan himself, recognizes that "sports is important to a lot of people. The players, the staff & the schools. But, maybe more importantly, to the fans of these schools. These times are so incredibly difficult

on everyone. Families can't see one another on the holidays. Every norm has been shaken to its core. We need our outlets." As TV ratings have shown, college football is important to the country as a whole. However, The balance of maintaining the sport and the health of the student athlete need to be more equally weighed.

Miraculously, due in part to the discipline of players and daily testing, the college football season has been able to get through about nine weeks. But with more than a quarter of games canceled last weekend, it might be time for colleges to come together to create change. In order for the season to continue, health must be the number one priority in order to keep athletes safe and in order to crown a true champion. But, thus far, it seems as if COVID-19 has taken a backseat to football-related operations. In order for the latter to continue, health must move into the driver's seat.

Sports Editorial

AC Milan: The Rise of a Once Historic Club

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Rebić helped Croatia reach the 2018 World Cup Final, and had 15 goals and five assists last season. These new additions to the squad have been instrumental to Milan's imposing start to the season due to their attacking ability.

Milan has also kept their lead with strong, gifted midfielders. One of them is Sandro Tonali, an Italian talent on a loan deal from Brescia. Tonali made an impact for Brescia during their promotion season to Serie A in 2019. His defensive prowess and game-reading ability has helped Milan progress in the current season. Another midfielder who is crucial to Milan's current unbeaten run is Frank Kessié. Kessié joined Milan in 2017 from Atalanta on

a loan deal, and penned a permanent deal in 2019. He is an expert penalty taker and links well with attacking players. Milan has also added other talented midfielders to their squad, such as Brahim Díaz and Alexis Saelemaekers. Díaz joined Milan on a loan deal from Real Madrid in 2020 for game time. As an attacking midfielder, Díaz boosts creativity on the pitch and assists in attacking plays. Saelemaekers joined Milan from Anderlecht on a loan deal in 2020, and became an important player for Pioli's side, showing the results of his hard work at the end of last season. These midfielders have all shined for Milan this season, bringing their expertise and determination to game after game.

Furthermore, Milan has modified and strengthened its back line, with additions such as Theo

Hernández, a French left back who joined from Real Madrid in 2019. Manager Pioli uses him as an attacking full back, pushing forward to deliver crosses and returning to defend. Hernández performed well for Milan in his first season, with seven goals and five assists in 36 games. Center backs Simon Kjær and Alessio Romagnoli have also made an impression for the "Rossoneri." Kjær joined Milan from Atalanta in 2020, and is an important defensive player for the club. After suffering from many injuries when he arrived, Kjær recovered and began to feature in the starting lineup. Romagnoli has been at Milan for over five years, and is the current captain of the squad. He has started almost every single game since his appointment as captain in 2019, and his versatility and composed nature make him

a very talented player. Goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma is also pivotal in Milan's defense, having started for the club since he was 17. As one of Italy's most gifted prospects and one of the best goalkeepers in the world, he has amazing shot-stopping abilities and a large aerial reach to punt the ball away. A strong defense, attacking-minded fullbacks, and an aerially gifted goalkeeper have all contributed to Milan's exciting run in the league.

With all of the changes in the Milan squad, it is no wonder that it is currently on top of Serie A. Ibrahimović's experience helped the young squad adapt and improve their skills, and the wingers have greatly contributed to the goals for Milan. Tonali and Kessié serve as a good two-man pivot in midfield, improving both attack and defense. Midfielders

Díaz and Saelemaekers have better creativity and advancing during attacking play. Additionally, Milan has one of the best back lines in Serie A, with transformative full backs alternating in attack, strong center backs blocking the opponents from the goal, and a young goalkeeper with strength and technical capability. I predict that the "Rossoneri" will earn a spot in the Champions League, and that if they are consistent in the upcoming months, they will surely win the league title. However, Pioli needs to rotate his squad and bring out the strongest roster in the hardest games. Many Milan fans are jubilant at the club's revival and excited for what's to come with the new squad and manager. Once filled with legendary players, Milan might return to glory as one of the best clubs in the world.

Sports Editorial

An NFL Midseason Check-In

By YAQIN RAHMAN and PHILLIP PHAN

During this global pandemic, the NFL's season has been a welcome sign of normalcy. The NFL has attempted to curb the spread of COVID-19 with regular testing, limited fan attendance, and masks worn on the sidelines. Despite some setbacks, the season has been a success so far. Here's what the NFL's standings look like as of now:

NFC East

The New York Giants are 3-7 but have lost four games by one possession and are a team with significant potential and young talent. Interestingly, despite their poor record, the Giants are still in second place in a very weak NFC East behind the 3-5-1 Philadelphia Eagles, and can still very well make the playoffs. The Dallas Cowboys, who made the playoffs last year, had their high hopes dashed when star quarterback Dak Prescott suffered a horrific leg injury. Meanwhile, the Washington Football Team is still rebuilding and the Eagles have been struggling with their offense, which has left the division wide open. For Giants' fans, they can be optimistic about their future, with a developing second year quarterback in Daniel Jones and a recovering Saquon Barkley. The Giants can be a threat in NFC East for years to come.

NFC West

There's a tight race for first in the NFC West, with the Seattle Seahawks leading the division with a 7-3 record. They are followed closely behind by the Los Angeles Rams and the Arizona Cardinals at 6-3 and 6-4, respectively. The NFC West is by far the most competitive division in the league. The Cardinals and Seahawks game in Week 7 was one of the most exciting games of the year. There were dozens of memorable plays, such as DK Metcalf catching up to Budda Baker and preventing him from returning a pick 6 despite being behind 30 yards. The game went into overtime, and Seattle missed a potential game-winning field goal, which let the Cardinals steal the win. Russell Wilson is proving to be one of the best deep-ball throwers in the league with the help of elite receivers Tyler Lockett and Metcalf. Wilson has been boasting MVP-like numbers and is a prime contender for the award, even though he has never received an MVP vote before.

NFC North

The NFC North continues to be dominated by the Green Bay Packers. The tandem of Aaron Rodgers and receiver Davante Adams has been an unstoppable force. Not many people believed in the Packers, but Aaron Rodgers has proven the doubters wrong, leading his team to the top of the division as a 7-2 team. The Bears' offensive struggles have barred them from catching up to the Packers and the team is trailing with a 5-5 record. The hottest team in the division is the Minnesota Vikings, who have won three games straight after their bye week to maintain a 4-5 record. The Packers are projected to win the division, but if the Bears can piece together their offense and quarterback situation, they could make the playoffs.

NFC South

The NFC South has a new rivalry in the division. It's simple: Brady vs. Brees. Over the offseason, the Buccaneers acquired Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski, and Antonio Brown to make them one of the most entertaining teams in the league. They already had one of the best receiving corps in the league with All-Everything receiver Mike Evans and speedy Chris Godwin. They are an obvious threat to the Saints at the top of the division, though they have lost to them twice already. The Saints are continuing their success this season led by quarterback Drew Brees and a dynamic offense, backed by a solid defense and excellent secondary. They remain at the top of the NFC South at 8-2, but the Buccaneers are only two games behind.

AFC West

The AFC West remains the property of the defending Super Bowl Champions, the Kansas City Chiefs. Patrick Mahomes is clearly one of the best quarterbacks in the NFL, and is now equipped with a record breaking deal of \$500 million that will keep him a Chief for the next decade. In the passing game, Travis Kelce and speedster Tyreek Hill are still some of the best pass catchers in the league and lethal threats for opposing defenses. The high octane offense is accompanied by a defense that improved greatly from last season and continues to make their mark this season, with notable players such as safety Tyrann Mathieu and defensive tackle Chris Jones. But the Chiefs aren't alone in the division, as their only loss came from division rival and newly relocated Las Vegas Raiders. En route to playoff contention, the Raiders won their last three games with a high-powered offense consisting of talented running back Josh Jacobs, speedy rookie wide receiver Henry Ruggs, dominant tight end Darren Waller, and quarterback Derek Carr leading the way. To round out the division, the Broncos and Chargers have lost more games than they have won. But both have players with bright futures, such as the Broncos' Drew Lock and Jerry Jeudy and the Chargers' rookie quarterback and Rookie of the Year hopeful Justin Herbert.

AFC East

The Buffalo Bills reign over the suddenly revamped division. Coming off a solid playoff run last year, Josh Allen has tremendously improved to emerge as a top quarterback and MVP candidate this season, with the help of Stefon Diggs, a revamped offense, and a solid defense to cement one of the league's most deadly pass attacks. However, a surprising wild card emerged this season that's right on their tail, and it's none other than the Miami Dolphins. Coming off a 5-11 season, Brian Flores took the reins of the team and molded one of the most, if not the most, impressive turnarounds this season. The defense stepped up to become an unexpectedly great unit, while the offense flourished after the replacement of veteran Ryan Fitzpatrick with rookie QB Tua Tagovailoa as the Dolphins won three straight games to be 6-3. Meanwhile, the Patriots' dominance during the Tom Brady era has seemingly come to a close this season with the departure of Brady. A respectable defense and the big free agent signing of Cam Newton still couldn't lead them to more than a 4-6 record, with the glaring problem being the lack of offensive weapons on the team. The New York Jets, with the incompetence of Head Coach Adam Gase and a massive shortage of talent, are headed toward a historically awful season.

AFC North

The AFC North remains very competitive, but as the only team boasting an undefeated record, it is clear that the Steelers are one of the most exciting teams in the NFL. They run an unstoppable defense with the likes of elite pass rushers such as T.J. Watt and Cameron Heyward, and a shutdown secondary led by talented players like Minkah Fitzpatrick and Joe Haden. On the offensive side, Big Ben, who was out for most of last season after battling injuries, now leads a remarkably talented offense with an electric wide receiver trio of Juju Smith-Schuster, Diontae Johnson, and rookie Chase Claypool. The Ravens and Browns are in a neck-in-neck race for second with records of 7-3 and 6-4, respectively. The Ravens are still led by last year's MVP Lamar Jackson, and, though the team has somewhat regressed since their great season last year was cut short in the playoffs, they're still a notable threat to opposing teams. The Browns, meanwhile, emerged as a better team this season, with a flashy backfield in Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt to lead the Brown's rushing attack, key offensive pieces in Jarvis Landry, Austin Hooper, and Jedrick Wills Jr, and Myles Garret once again showcasing his dominance as a defensive end. The Bengals, while not having the best record, have rookie quarterback Joe Burrow showcasing his talent as the first overall pick alongside rookie wide receiver Tee Higgins and free safety Jessie Bates on the defensive side.

AFC South

The Colts are in prime positioning to clinch the top spot of the AFC South with one of the most dominant defenses in the league. Linebacker Darius Leonard, the Defensive Rookie of the Year in 2018, has his eyes set on another career season, alongside defensive tackle DeForest Buckner bolstering the defensive line, and Xavier Rhodes and rookie Julian Blackmon running a shutdown secondary. On the offensive side of the ball, Philip Rivers has been a great addition to the Colts, with T.Y. Hilton and rookie Michael Pittman Jr. as wide receivers, rookie Jonathan Taylor in the backfield, and offensive linemen such as Quenton Nelson and Anthony Castonzo protecting Rivers as he throws game-winning touchdowns. The Titans shouldn't be overlooked either, as they boast a 7-3 record, and returning playoff heroes such as Ryan Tannehill, Derrick Henry, and A.J. Brown intend on replaying their miracle playoff run once again. On the contrary, the Texans so far have had a disappointing season after they made a baffling trade in the offseason to give away their star receiver in DeAndre Hopkins during his prime to acquire aging (and now injured) running back David Johnson. Deshaun Watson couldn't do much to save the Texans' 3-7 record, especially when Bill O'Brien was finally fired midseason after a long run of questionable decisions and moves as the head coach. The Jaguars, meanwhile, have only won one game in an upset against the Colts, ending Week 11 at a 1-9 record.

The NFL was presented with the daunting task of keeping the season running for its high-contact sport during a pandemic. Despite the setbacks that the NFL faced as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks, they have succeeded in providing an exciting, unpredictable, and truly remarkable season of football that will go down as one of the most interesting seasons in league history.

Sports Editorial

Coach Mary Wright on the Line After Abuse Accusations

By ALICIA YU

It's natural that athletes strive to be the best at their respective sports, even if they must endure great pains in doing so. This desire for greatness, however, becomes dangerous when coaches use it as a tool for manipulation. Such was the case with former Olympian Mary Wright, a seasoned gymnastics coach from New Zealand. Wright founded Olympus Gymnastics, a gymnastics program based in Utah, in 1993, which was immensely successful. Many gymnasts who trained under Wright were offered scholarships to prestigious institutions, with some even making the Olympics. On the surface, Wright was an ordinary gymnastics coach with an eye

for talent. But as was recently discovered, there's a lot more to the story.

Contrary to her seeming appearance, Wright has a dark past behind her, a reality that is currently being unraveled through a recent lawsuit filed against her by Hailee Hoffman, a former gymnast at Stanford University. According to The New York Times, "training under Wright caused [Hoffman] panic attacks, depression, a recurring battle with bulimia, and a damaged self-esteem...Wright had publicly ridiculed her, calling her stupid, lazy and fat, and pressured her to train while injured, including on what turned out to be two broken ankles."

Hoffman, however, was not the only gymnast who suf-

fered at the hands of Wright's abusive coaching. "[Wright] would be downright mean, awful and hurtful to the girls, and it was almost like she wanted to see how badly she could emotionally



Saadat Rafin / The Spectator

degrade those kids or physically break them," Kellie Land, a parent one of Wright's former gymnasts, explained.

Several former and current gymnasts have since shared horrific stories about the emotional and physical abuse Wright has caused them—abuse so extreme that many of them, including Hoffman, quit the sport altogether.

The unfortunate reality of this situation is that Wright is just one of many abusive coaches. It is becoming common practice for coaches, especially in girls' sports, to impose unhealthy regimens onto young athletes that undermine natural development. This behavior is especially damaging, as it

perpetuates a toxic environment in which athletes are pressured to look and act a certain way, a dangerous situation that is further amplified by the growing presence of social media. It's no surprise that many girls suffer severe mental and physical trauma years after these experiences occur, significantly lowering self-confidence and self-worth.

Though it is not easy, it is important for young athletes to speak about their struggles and erase the stigma associated with abusive sports environments. "I know so many gymnasts who won't speak out because they are still scared of Mary," Hoffman said. "It tells you something about the system and how the abuse of children can leave deep, deep scars."

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Sports Editorial

Why Chelsea will be Crowned Champions

By RUDOLPH MERLIN

The English Premier League season is off to an exciting start. Teams such as Everton, Southampton, and Aston Villa have been surprising contenders, and many have predicted that with these new challengers, Liverpool won't be able to defend their title. Among these prominent contenders, however, one team has been overlooked this season: Chelsea. Suffering only one loss, Chelsea leads the league in goals scored and has conceded the second-fewest number of goals, evidence that this team's ability to spread its attack, maintain possession, and limit its opponent's shots on target could crown them champions of the Premier League.

Chelsea's main strength lies in its attack. Striker Timo Werner, an excellent finisher inside the penalty box, has been a valuable signing for the team, scoring 10 goals in all competitions this season. Furthermore, right midfielder Kai Havertz has shown his importance as a young talent who can control the pace of the game with his footwork and creativity, producing three assists this year. Though Chelsea's offense was one of the

best in the league last season, there was never an attacking three that manager and soccer legend Frank Lampard could consistently rely on to produce goals. Werner and Havertz have brought new elements of control and pace to the Chelsea attack, and their style of play allows Lampard to effectively mix and match players to produce the most optimal results.

Chelsea has seemingly added more to an already talented offense, but the team is also successfully addressing their main weakness: keeping possession.

It was all too common to see Chelsea last year lose the ball in the midfield. Excess dribbling on the wing would lead to frequent counterattacks from their opponents. Last season, Chelsea ranked in the top five in the

number of times dispossessed. This year, however, they have the fewest. Much of this improvement is attributed to attacking mid-

fielder Hakim Ziyech. An excellent replacement for right-winger Willian (who signed with Arsenal during the off-season), Ziyech has a talent for accurate crosses that not only arrive at the strikers' feet but also help the opposing team's defense. He is not a dribbler who seeks to move forward but rather a playmaker who wishes to get as many men in scoring position as possible. This enables Chelsea to keep more possession and move

the ball around the last third of the field instead of dribbling forward in hopes of a shot on goal.

The make-or-break for Chelsea this season will be their defense. It has been four years since the retirement of Chelsea skipper and center-back John Terry, and there has not yet been one player on the roster who has taken any sort of leadership position. Now, the story is starting to change with the signing of Thiago Silva, a Brazilian international. His abilities to read the game, shut down defenders, and conduct play from the back are exactly what Chelsea desperately needs. Alongside Silva, Kurt Zouma's speed and physicality make him a player even the best strikers will struggle to get past. Finally, Chelsea has seen dramatic improvement now that Edouard Mendy has replaced Kepa in goal. One of the most important qualities of Mendy's game is his distribution. His passes are precise and he always has a look of calmness even as defenders close down on him. His shot-stopping is also world-class, and he has conceded only one goal in his last eight starts. He has boosted the confidence of the players on the field, and under his watch, Chelsea has

become an unstoppable and united team.

Chelsea is not without its competition. Liverpool, despite suffering injuries to its defensive core, remains at second place in the Premier League, and Tottenham's lethal counterattack duo of Harry Kane and Son Heung Min has scored 15 of their 19 goals. Also, the performance of Leicester City's strikers and Danish national team goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel has been a major contributor to their current first place position in the league. But if there is one thing Chelsea has shown in its most recent games, it is consistency. The team has never had a loss against a team that they should have beaten this season, nor have they suffered any blow-out losses. Furthermore, Chelsea has talented individuals in every position to fill the roles of injured starters, an important factor that has contributed to its lethal midfield, even without American left-winger Christian Pulisic. Chelsea is in prime position to take the championship due to the extensive progress made on both ends of the field and can reasonably achieve their first Premier League title since the 2016-17 season.



Ivy Jiang / The Spectator

Sports Editorial

AC Milan: The Rise of a Once Historic Club

By SHAFIUL HAQUE

AC Milan is one of the most reputable soccer clubs in the world. The Italian team holds seven Champions League titles and 18 Serie A titles, a feat unmatched by many other clubs. Though Milan has a prominent status in the soccer world, over the last few years it has suffered a drastic setback. Many have claimed that the team has lost its prestige, as it failed to reach the Champions League for almost a decade. This year, however, Milan has

risen above all other Italian teams. Undeclared at the top of Serie A this season, the team hopes to return to the Champions League and regain its seat among the most respected clubs in the world. But how has AC Milan maintained its good run thus far?

A main contributor to Milan's unbeaten run is current manager Stefano Pioli. A former soccer player, Pioli understands the tactical and strategic elements of the sport. During his appointment in October 2019, Milan was in desperate need

of change. The club was ranked 13th in the league, close to the relegation zone, and only picked up seven points in the first nine games. As expected, Pioli breathed new life into the team: in the second half of the season, the club went on a 10-match victorious streak in the league. He operates Milan in a predominantly 4-3-3 formation, which morphs into 3-2-2-3 when defending. This tactic is crucial because it allows the team to quickly transition into attack and brings the full backs forward in play. The players quickly

adapted to the fluid transitions, and the formation is working well, as this strategy is at the root of the club's winning streak.

Milan's improvements in the attacking squad over the last few years have also helped it remain undefeated. In the January 2020 transfer window, the club retrieved well-known forward Zlatan Ibrahimović from MLS club LA Galaxy. Having played for multiple teams in Europe, he possesses a leadership quality that has helped the squad regain its confidence. Even at the

age of 39, Ibrahimović is still a constant threat going forward with his incredible aerial capability and clinical finishing. The club made other additions to the attacking line as well. Rafael Leão joined Milan from Sporting CP in 2019, and improved as a winger. He has made a fiery start to this season, with three goals and three assists in 10 games. Striker Ante Rebić also joined the club on a loan deal in 2019 and extended his stay in 2020.

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Sports Editorial

The Road to the Green Jacket

By YOONAH CHANG

After Dustin Johnson knocked in his final putt of the 2020 Masters, he led by five strokes over his closest opponent, good to finally put him over the edge and allow him to don his first green jacket of his career. In the process, Johnson overcame the demons that had plagued him in the recent past.

Johnson had a 12-foot putt on the final hole of the 2015 U.S. Open. If he had made that putt, he would have been crowned champion of one of the four majors in golf. If he missed it, he would be in the playoffs with a good chance of winning the tournament. But Johnson did the unthinkable and three-putted, causing him to lose the tournament. It was one of the greatest chokes in the history of golf. In this year's Masters, Johnson started the final day with a four-shot lead. History, however, seemed to be repeating itself as Johnson's lead was quickly whittled to just one stroke after the first five holes. This time, Johnson was determined to not let that happen again and was not only able to right the ship, but also ended up with the lowest total score in the history of the tournament (in golf, the lower the score the better).

The Masters, one of the four majors in golf, is usually held in April but was delayed until November this year due to the coronavirus

pandemic. The historic Augusta National Golf Club reviewed the safety guidelines during the 2020 PGA Championship, a major held in August, and carried out a simi-



Shirley Tan / The Spectator

lar approach last week. All players were tested for the virus, volunteers maintained the recommended six-feet-apart instruction, and spectators were not allowed.

Johnson started off smooth in his first round, with five pars, no bogeys (one over par), and an eagle (two under par) in the second hole. His second round on Saturday was his worst performance of the four; he had two bogeys in the 14th and

15th holes and only four pars. With a bogey-free third round under his belt, Johnson approached the final round with runner-ups South Korean Im Sung-jae, Australian Cameron Smith, and Mexican Abraham Ancer all tied four strokes back. Ancer dropped to 13th place with six bogeys while Johnson coasted ahead of Sung-jae and Smith after securing three birdies starting on hole 13 of the fourth round, even though he had two bogeys in the fourth and fifth holes. Sung-jae was one stroke away from Johnson's score after the two bogeys, but Johnson's birdie in the sixth hole provided Johnson the momentum he needed to bury Sung-jae. Sung-jae and Smith tied for second after finishing a whopping five strokes back with 15 under 273.

The great Tiger Woods was never a threat to Johnson's victory and even carded a score of 10 on a par 3 hole after hitting his ball into the water three times. Recent PGA Champion Collin Morikawa finished even further back and tied for 44th place after a flop shot that ended in the water. Bryson DeChambeau was considered one of the favorites, having won the U.S. Open a few months earlier with his overpowering drives. In the end, however, DeChambeau barely made the final cut with a two under par after bogeying two holes, which he claimed was due to dizziness.

Johnson's celebration quickly made headlines as many professionals congratulated him on his historic victory. "Honestly, it still feels like a dream," Johnson told a reporter. "As a kid, dreaming about winning and having Tiger put the green jacket on you, it still seems

like it's a dream, but I'm here and what a great feeling it is, and I couldn't be more excited." With a combination of perseverance and passion for the game, his long-awaited win seemed to be well worth the wait.

SPORTSBEAT

The Minnesota Timberwolves selected **Anthony Edwards** with the first pick in the NBA draft. The biggest headline, however, was the Charlotte Hornets' pick: **LaMelo Ball**.

Golden State Warriors' five-time All-Star **Klay Thompson** suffered a season-ending Achilles tendon tear during a pickup game in Southern California.

Kim Ng is the new general manager for the Miami Marlins. She is the first female general manager in the MLB and any major professional men's league in North America.

The NBA offseason has already seen **Chris Paul** move to the Phoenix Suns, **Dwight Howard** join the Philadelphia 76ers, and **Dennis Schroder** transfer to the Los Angeles Lakers, along with several other crucial trades.

New Orleans Saints' quarterback **Drew Brees** broke 11 ribs in a matchup against the San Francisco 49ers, and Cincinnati Bengals' rookie quarterback **Joe Burrow** tore both his ACL and MCL against the Washington Football Team on FedEx Field, notorious for its injury-causing turf. Burrow is out for the season, and Brees is out indefinitely.