



The Spectator

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"The Pulse of the Student Body"

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FEATURES

The Vaccine Dilemma: NYC's Journey Back to Normalcy

With the recent approval of the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines by the FDA, Stuyvesant students are beginning to prepare for receiving the vaccine themselves. What's more—teachers have already begun to take it!

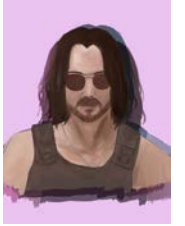
SEE PAGE 7

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Cyberpunk 2077: Seven Years to Come Out Unfinished

After years of delay, the highly anticipated (and highly glitchy) "Cyberpunk 2077" has finally hit shelves. Read A&E editor Gavin McGinley's thoughts on the brand new game.

SEE PAGE 18



Facebook Post Ignites Conversation Regarding Mental Health

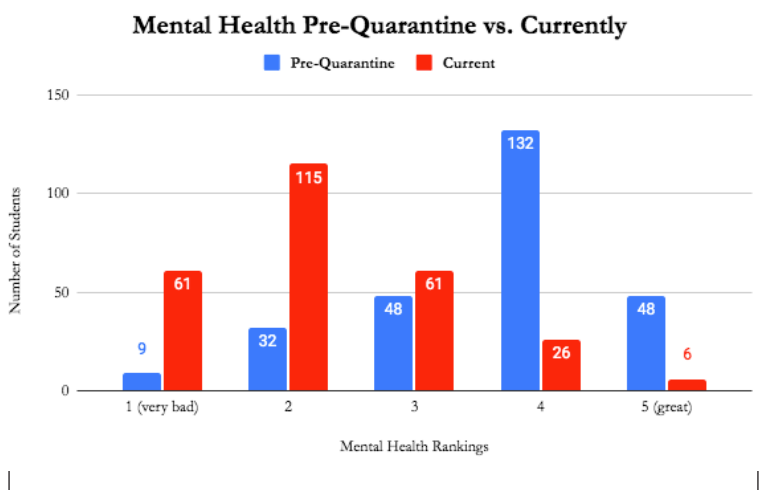
By TALIA KAHAN, ERIN LEE, JENNY LIU, and MOMOCA MAIRAJ

Additional Reporting by Morris Raskin and Karen Zhang

The Sunday before winter break ended, January 3, 2021, a sophomore posted a message to the "Dear Incoming Stuyvesant Class of 2023...We Have Advice!" Facebook group. The post begins: "Am I the only one who is absolutely dreading going back 2 school tmrw?" and garnered 482 reactions and 374 comments from the rest of the student body. "Corona has taken a real toll on my mental health but there don't seem to be any real outlets in school," the student continued. "[EXPLETIVE] the fact that all 3300 of us are just sitting here, accepting the way things have been handled, when frankly what our school is doing is not acceptable [...] [EXPLETIVE] upholding the reputation of the hellhole that is Stuyvesant High School instead of maintaining the health of its students."

Comments to the post included

"hey, you're not alone" and "this post really just sums up everything" as Stuyvesant students recounted students' mental health during the fall semester received a total of 269 responses across all four grades,



the difficulties they were facing in remote learning, addressing topics including overwhelming workloads, deteriorating mental health, and lack of enforcement of remote learning policies.

A Spectator survey regarding

with questions inquiring about the quality of students' mental health before and after the March quarantine began. The majority of

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Mental Health is a Two-Way Street

STAFF EDITORIAL

Winter recess and the conclusion of the first semester have allowed both the Editorial Board and the larger Stuyvesant student body to reflect on the remote learning experiences this past semester. We understand that as a community, both teachers and students are still trying to navigate this new virtual setting, and we appreciate teachers for their kindness and consideration for us students. Teachers' determination and flexibility have allowed Stuyvesant's virtual learning to progress at an accelerated rate, efforts that shouldn't be understated. However, a minority of teachers have presented their students with a very real struggle throughout this remote period. With the recent Facebook post regarding students' declining mental health gaining significant traction, it is clear that our community must address the lack of enforcement of many of Stuyvesant's academic policies to ensure a smoother, more successful second semester.

Lack of policy enforcement is an issue that seeps into several

regions of school life. These infractions can manifest themselves in various forms, such as assigning more work than the homework policy allows or expecting students to stay in class well after the period ends. Because students are only guaranteed a lunch period every other day, asking students to remain in class even a few minutes after the period has ended takes away valuable time that students, not teachers, are entitled to. Furthermore, when teachers assign more work than is allotted for their classes, students are stripped of time they could be spending on other tasks. With the overwhelming burden of Zoom fatigue, it is especially important that students find time to de-stress and enjoy outdoor activity at the end of the school day. But when teachers assign several hours of online work, this becomes impossible and, instead, students stay confined in their isolated workspaces for sustained periods of time. This

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NEWSBEAT

Senior Srinath Mahankali was recognized as a Regeneron Science Talent Search Scholar.

Social studies teachers Lisa Greenwald, Lori-Ann Newman, and Robert Sandler were accepted to Master Seminars, hosted by The Academy for Teachers.

On January 19, the College Board announced it would discontinue administering SAT subject tests and the optional essay portion of the SAT.

Stuyvesant Theater Community (STC) will present virtual performances of their Fall/Winter musical "Head Over Heels" on January 22 and 23.

The January Regents have been canceled. As a result, a modified weekly schedule was released, consisting of asynchronous and synchronous instructional time.

StuyHacks Holds 10th Biannual Hackathon Virtually

By ISABELLA JIA, JAMES KANG, and RAVEN (RUIWEN) TANG

StuyHacks X, Stuyvesant's biannual hackathon, was held virtually for the first time from January 9 to 10. During the event, participants had the opportunity to attend coding workshops, cooperate in teams to create software projects, and win prizes.

During a hackathon, participants work in teams to build a project within a short period of time. Hackathons also feature workshops, panels, and other activities and culminate in the judging of submitted projects. In addition to the top three places and the Best Game title, other awards included Best Beginner's Hack and Most Innovative.

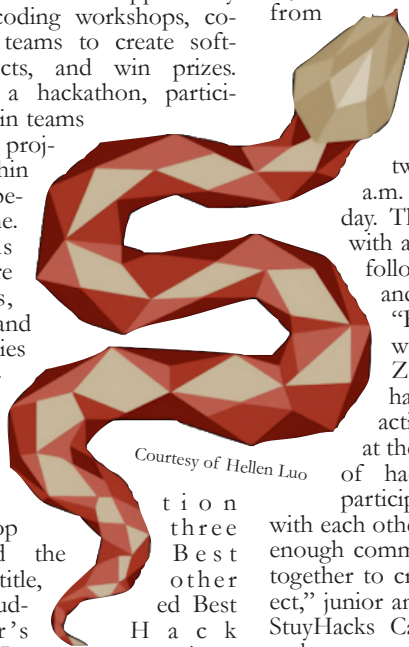
StuyHacks X used Zoom to host workshops and Slack to coordinate team communication between the hackers and organizers. Though the organizers changed StuyHacks to accommodate the online format, participant turnout was similar to that of

previous years. In total, over 150 people signed up this year, a number comparable to the 160 participants of last year's in-person event.

This year's hackathon scheduling and organization were modified to accommodate the virtual format. In previous years, StuyHack's January 12-hour hackathon runs from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on one day; they also host a 24-hour event in June.

This year's January hackathon ran over two days from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. The hackathon started with a team-building event, followed by workshops and award ceremonies. "Because StuyHacks was held virtually over Zoom, we decided to have a team-building activity for 30 minutes at the start of our first day of hacking. This enabled participants to converse with each other and see if they had enough common interests to work together to create a fantastic project," junior and Junior Director of StuyHacks Carol Chen said. "To make our event simple for the hackers, we created one Zoom meeting for all the workshops and ceremonies. Participants were allowed to enter and go as they pleased, similar to how they would do so dur-

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Courtesy of Hellen Luo

Art Teacher William Wrigley Introduces New Comic Art Elective

By MAHIR HOSSAIN, JUNI PARK, and VEDAANT SHAH
Additional reporting by Alice Zhu

Art teacher William Wrigley will teach a comic art elective starting this spring. Wrigley, who began

The elective will combine drawing with storytelling. "[Wrigley] is teaching Painting right now, and I'm one of his students. He doesn't really focus on the technique or skill, but he focuses more on the concept behind it or the inspiration or the planning. In his comic



Tris Liu / The Spectator

teaching at Stuyvesant this past semester, also teaches Art Appreciation and Painting. The new elective will be open exclusively to juniors and seniors.

class, obviously he's going to teach us how to draw, but he's mostly go-

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News

Stuyvesant Dance Organizations Host Cultural Dance Appreciation Panel

By **EMMA CHIO, ZUZI LIU, and RAJHASREE PAUL**

Stuy Squad, SING!, Tap Club, and StuyArts hosted a cultural dance appreciation discussion panel on December 17, with guest speakers Eboné Vanityzo Johnson, Sangita Shresthova, and Jason Samuels Smith. The hour-and-a-half-long event was organized over Zoom and promoted through Facebook posts, school e-mails, and teachers, with around 120 students and teachers attending.

Early in the year, the Tap Club approached English teacher Lauren Stuzin with the idea to host a panel relating to dance and reached out to Stuy Squad leaders to collaborate. “As an advisor [of SING!], I got to see a lot of the behind-the-scenes work and love that go into SING!,” Stuzin said in an e-mail interview. “It was pretty spectacular to see students falling in love with creating art, teaching each other, learning from each other, and working together in such beautiful ways.”

Stuzin decided to host a panel on the history of dance upon observing its absence in Stuyvesant’s dance community. “I began to realize how disconnected our community’s passion for the arts and dance [is],” they said. With this interest in mind, they contacted Johnson, Shresthova, and Smith and arranged a date for the presentation.

According to Stuzin, the purpose of the panel was “to start a community conversation around 1. how can we understand the dynamics at play when we dance dances from cultures we do not know about and/or cultures that have been historically oppressed and marginalized, and 2. how can we as a community use this understanding to be better people in the world? How can we honor and support the people whose art we love?” they said.

While Stuy Squad was not part of the initial planning, they helped bring attention to the panel. “There is a really big dance community at Stuy,” junior and Stuy Squad President-in-Training Melody Lin said. “Many students are passionate

about dance, but not a lot of them know where the dance styles they are involved with are from and the background behind [them].”

The event began with each of the speakers introducing themselves and their respective dance styles. Eboné Vanityzo Johnson is a teacher and choreographer with a focus on hip-hop dance; Jason Samuels Smith is a tap dancer who teaches, directs, and choreographs unique tap dances; Sangita Shresthova is a Bollywood dancer, as well as a scholar, speaker, educator, and choreographer. Each speaker discussed the history of their dance style to provide students and teachers greater insight into dance in general. After the presentation, the panelists opened up the floor for students to ask questions.

The speakers brought up issues that plague the dance community, especially within certain genres and styles. “Despite there being so many cultures represented in [StuySquad] shows, we often forget that there exists a fine line between appropriation and appreciation,” senior and Stuy Squad director Katie Ng said in an e-mail interview.

Throughout the panel, students were able to learn about the topic of appropriation in dance. “It gave people a sense that different dancers from different dance traditions come to the question of appropriation differently,” Shresthova said. “I think it’s important to remember that, and it actually points to a larger way of how we get our questions about how we are creative. Where does creativity come from? How many ways can our bodies move? And what does it mean? What does it mean to copy somebody versus to make it your own?”

Johnson shared her own experience as a woman of color in the dance industry. “The things that you see are sometimes not telling you the exact truth of what goes on behind the scenes. There is a lot of racism; there is a lot of separatism; there is a lot of colorism within the arts,” she said. “I feel proud to give my experiences and [...] shed [light on] the negatives because people may think

of Hollywood when they think of the industry; they think of glitz and glamor, and they don’t understand that there are some negative things that also trail behind that.”

Overall, the panelists were glad to have been able to participate in the event. “When it comes to topics of discussion like appropriation, things can get really complicated and especially personal and difficult to talk about quite easily,” Shresthova said. “I thought that the event was organized in a really friendly, open way and that it encouraged people to explore these topics [like appropriation] through specific practices without getting defensive or feeling antagonistic, but out of a genuine love for dance.”

The discussion panel was also an enriching and engaging experience for attendees. “Hands down, the event was really rich in history and discussion,” sophomore Ziy-ing Jian said. “Each speaker was very knowledgeable on the history of each type of dance, and speaking for myself as well as others, we all learned a lot from this unique event.”

Additionally, Jian commended the online aspect of the presentation. “The virtual medium was an advantage as speakers were able to present videos and images, enriching the discussion,” Jian said.

Vanityzo, Smith, and Shresthova encourage dancers and dance enthusiasts to take the time to learn the history and culture of dance before uptaking the practice. “I feel like if people like myself and other educators don’t push the envelope on learning about the culture, that it could end up being lost and a thing of the past,” Johnson said. “Learn all of the entirety, and don’t just learn what you want what you want to know because there [are] so many beautiful stories and so many beautiful people that are forgotten and died broke because they never got their dues.”

In the future, Stuzin aims to feature more guest speakers from other dance disciplines, as they have gotten requests from Stuy Squad Step and Latin to continue planning



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and NASA

WORLDBEAT

President-elect **Joe Biden** was inaugurated as the **46th president of the United States** on January 20.

A **mob of Donald Trump** supporters stormed the **U.S. Capitol** in an attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election results on January 6.

The **National Rifle Association** declared **bankruptcy** and plans to reincorporate in **Texas**.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter banned **Donald Trump’s** accounts on their platforms. **YouTube** temporarily suspended his account.

New York City’s property tax revenues are expected to **drop by \$2.5 billion** in 2022.

these events. “Some ideas we have are to host a Zoom talk circle to unpack the panel discussion, create a mutual partnership with another high school that has a dance program, and invite dance professionals to train us in dance,” Stuzin said.

The panel’s organizers hope to continue engaging Stuyvesant students in the history of dance. “I am grateful that [students] have taken the initiative to host these types of

events to teach their peers about the history and context of a hobby that we all love,” Ng said. “A huge portion of our hip-hop dancers are Asian American, [...] but we often forget about the roots of hip-hop [...] this panel was just a baby step to sharing different perspectives regarding culture, and hopefully, there will be more similar events to enrich our own perspectives and challenge what we already know.”

Administration Alters Finals Week Amid Online Classes

By **JADY CHEN, KAI LI, JANNA WANG, and EUGENE YOO**

Due to the citywide closure of public high schools and the cancellation of the January Regents, the Stuyvesant administration announced changes to January’s Finals/Regents Week. Under normal circumstances, Stuyvesant administers both Regents exams and uniform final assessments during the last week of January. Students only come into the school building to take their respective exams, as there are no classes.

This semester, however, Finals/Regents Week will be separated into two weeks. During Finals Week—from January 19 to January 22—departments will conduct in-class or unit finals or host synchronous class as usual. Uniform finals for Geometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, and Technology classes will be held on January 25, and all instruction will be asynchronous. January 26 to January 29—Regents Week—will be instructional days this year, as the Department of Education (DOE) canceled the January Regents administration.

The administration developed a testing schedule for Finals Week to ensure that students are not overwhelmed with assessments. “Students will still be tested in specific disciplines each day to allow proper time to prepare and to

reduce stress,” Assistant Principal of World Language, Art, and Music Francesca McAuliffe said in an e-mail interview. “As a result of our remote alternating class schedule, most students will likely have fewer assessments on any single school day.”

While having fewer classes per day may help space out exams better than in past years, some students believe departments should opt not to host final exams within the remote environment. “With the lack of focus, I personally don’t think that finals should be administered due to the fact that you don’t know what goes on in each specific household and how the learning situation of each student has been affected,” sophomore Kyle Lee said in an e-mail interview.

Sophomore Cynthia Chang voiced a similar concern, saying that the remote setting would make it harder to concentrate. “Taking tests (especially if they’re timed and even more so when we’re on Zoom) at home is definitely worse than taking it in school,” she said in an e-mail interview.

Some students have taken the opposite stance, however, arguing that students have fallen behind this year and that finals are important for keeping up with the curriculum. “Because most departments are not having finals and there are no Regents, our level of preparedness and

overall knowledge is lower,” sophomore Nika Raiffe said in an e-mail interview. “Both the teachers and the students know that there isn’t a big final assessment, so most people treat the curriculum more casually.”

Though the decision to host classes during Regents Week—the week after Finals Week—was made by the DOE and not Stuyvesant, the administration allowed departments to choose whether their classes would have synchronous or asynchronous classes. They also asked that no new assignments be due during the week. The English, Chemistry, Physics, Technology, and Mathematics departments have decided not to host live instruction, while the Biology, Computer Science, Social Studies, World Language, Art, Music, and Physical Education/Health departments will. “Contact time is something that our educators and I agree supports learners tremendously in these disciplines,” McAuliffe said regarding her departments’ decision to continue live classes.

While the Mathematics and Technology departments will be hosting asynchronous classes, they will be administering uniform finals on January 25. The tests will be assessed using various online learning platforms, including JupiterEd and DeltaMath. “All of the final exams for Geometry, Algebra 2, and Pre-Calculus will be administered

online using DeltaMath, the same program students used to complete their summer assignment. Unlike previous years, all of the exams will be administered at the same time,” Assistant Principal of Mathematics Eric Smith said in an e-mail interview. “The content of the exams isn’t different from last year.”

For many students, Regents Week typically serves as a period of time to unwind and prepare for the next semester after finals exams. “Regents Week is actually the time you use to destress and decompress before the next semester, and I think a lot of students were looking forward to that time because we don’t have a lot of that time now that we’re in remote learning,” senior and Student Union President Julian Giordano said. “It feels like we’re confined to our homes, and the only thing we do in our homes is work, and it’s going to feel that way for the entirety of Regents Week because we still will be in live classes.”

Some students are concerned that the continuation of live instruction during both Finals and Regents Weeks will add to an accumulating pile of stress. “The only reason I’m a little disappointed that live instruction will proceed during Regents Week is because when we took in-person finals, I could devote the entirety of the rest of my days/week to studying, but now

if one were to have multiple finals that week on top of live instruction, the stress levels must only have increased,” junior Krista Proteasa said in an e-mail interview. “This type of motivation we have to conjure ourselves while remote isn’t in endless supply. In fact, it’s usually used up fairly quickly, so breaks are absolutely necessary to let us breathe from time to time.”

Chang acknowledged the increased stress levels she may face but recognized that having classes during Regents week might be necessary. “[It] makes sense since the tests are canceled. I do wish we had an official break during that time, but I also don’t want us to fall behind,” she said.

Giordano, however, expressed that many students are reaching a point of academic burnout. “I think we have this emphasis on live instruction during Regents Week [because] we’re losing class time, and we need class time to make up for the time that we’ve missed, and a lot of teachers are worried about preparing students for AP exams, Regents exams, or whatever the case is,” he said. “That’s definitely a concern, but in trying to recreate last year, teaching everything the way we did before and keeping the exact same curriculum, I think we’re sort of lying to ourselves because it’s not possible [...] students do need a break.”

STAFF EDITORIAL

Mental Health is a Two-Way Street

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behavior contributes to growing frustrations among students and the feeling that their time is not important—and thus, not respected.

While these infractions are often chalked up to the expectation that Stuyvesant students should be able to manage the pace of an accelerated curriculum and increased workload, that justification does not hold up. The ability to withstand unhealthy amounts of stress and work should not be viewed as a necessary characteristic of a “successful” Stuyvesant student. In fact, when teachers play the “you should be able to handle this workload because you are a Stuyvesant student” card and hold the efforts of a select group of high-achieving students as the standard level of work productivity, unsustainable work habits are normalized. In order to combat this harmful mindset, students and

teachers alike must understand that Stuyvesant can be a rigorous institution without copious amounts of homework. Mental health and academic rigor are not mutually exclusive, and it is time our school environment reflects that.

Of course, the stress we have encountered in remote learning is no novelty; Stuyvesant was already stressful before quarantine, and issues with workload existed before remote learning. But given the toll that the pandemic has taken on many of us regardless of schoolwork, the state of our mental health has become far more pressing. Students have *struggled* with burnout, isolation, and mental instability, and we must take concrete steps to alleviate the issues exacerbated by remote learning.

First and foremost, administrators must hold teachers accountable, whether by proactively monitoring Google Classrooms to assess assigned workloads or responding effectively to student

complaints. If students or administrators notice that teachers are consistently breaking these rules, conscious efforts should be made to inform teachers of their policy breaches and to encourage them to both alter and monitor their methods of assigning work. For example, assistant principals could mandate all teachers to organize and maintain an anonymous Google Form in which students can voice their concerns. The Spiral of Communication should also be amended to reflect this change: rather than concluding with a notification sent to teachers that they are not following the homework policy, there should be several steps that follow up with both students and teachers ensuring that an appropriate response is being undertaken to rectify such issues.

In addition, guidance counselors, like teachers, should hold office hours after school to more effectively allow students to convey their concerns or challenges to

the administration. These sessions would allow students to check in with an adult at Stuyvesant, free of the pressure or anxiety that may come with confronting a teacher directly. Using Zoom breakout rooms or the waiting room would allow counselors to facilitate one-on-one discussions rather seamlessly, too.

Effecting tangible change in the school community is a two-way street. Many students, intimidated by the possibility of repercussions from their teachers, choose to remain silent and do their assigned work rather than speak up against clear violations. Instead, peers should work together to communicate their difficulties to teachers. Whether this is done by group email, direct contact, or anonymous correspondence through a third party, it is imperative that students take initiative to end the cycle of compliance that occurs all too often when teachers do not follow regulations, as delineated by [The](#)

[Spiral of Communication](#). Moreover, students who are content with how this past semester has gone should be cognizant of the fact that their remote learning experience may differ from that of their peers. Remote learning has affected members of the Stuyvesant community to varying degrees, and it is important that we remain supportive and empathetic of one another.

Above all, it is important to remember that students, teachers, and administrators came to Stuyvesant for a reason: to be a part of a rigorous, fulfilling education. Creating the optimal remote learning environment is not an easy undertaking and requires the work of the entire Stuyvesant body. We, as students, will actively strive to put our best foot forward every day, and we ask that the faculty invests the same degree of effort into creating a more healthy learning environment for the school community.

Art Teacher William Wrigley Introduces New Comic Art Elective

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ing to focus on making a narrative story,” senior Kelly Guo said.

Wrigley’s passion for art was heavily influenced by his high school art classes. “I was very fortunate to go to a school in Connecticut that was sort of a magnet school. It had an art program equivalent to the program at LaGuardia, and those teachers gave me purpose in a lot of ways when I was a teenager,” he said. “When I got into art classes, it just opened up a whole new world for me.”

Despite the support Wrigley received from his teachers, he felt that comic art in particular was often neglected in his classes. “I had painting teachers, and silkscreening teachers, and photography teachers, all these different things. The one thing I didn’t have was anybody who would let me do comics as a project,” he said. “They didn’t consider it to be art.”

Undeterred, Wrigley explored comic art outside of the classroom. “When I was 17, I moved to New York City for a summer to intern at a comic company so that I would learn things that my teachers were not teaching me,” he said.

After becoming a teacher, Wrigley knew he wanted to incorporate comic art into his curriculum. “I’ve been teaching in the public system for about 10 years, and for nine of those years in my last school. I had a comic project with my students; I’d begin the second semester with a comic project,” he said. “We would only make one page, but the students learned that it was a really good way to do a memoir and to reflect their own lives in more than one way. It opened up a lot of students to the possibility of art in a way that they hadn’t thought of before.”

Despite only teaching at Stuyvesant for less than a semester, Wrigley saw an opportunity to introduce a comic art elective. “When I interviewed here, I knew that [Assistant Principal of World Language, Art, and Music Francesca] McAuliffe was interested in the comics that she had seen in my portfolio, and when I started getting to know students here, it occurred to me that something I could offer that would expand the art program would be to offer a comics elective,” he said. “I made a slideshow explaining what comics are aside from superheroes—that they are a medium, not a genre—showing examples from my stu-

dents’ work from my last school, talking about what I felt it could offer Stuyvesant.”

To Wrigley’s surprise, the administration immediately approved his elective. “I wasn’t sure that it was going to be accepted,” he said. “I certainly didn’t expect that it would be accepted for the next semester.”

Though students have yet to take Wrigley’s elective, many have requested the class for their spring program. “I was pretty interested by [the] idea because ‘casual’ arts classes aren’t particularly common at Stuyvesant,” junior Adnan Quayyum said. “I was happy to be able to list Comic Arts on the [spring elective selection form] because I feel like modern forms of art are underrepresented at Stuy while more classical takes are promoted over them.”

Other students are excited to take the course because of how different comic art is than other currently offered art electives, such as ceramics and painting. “A lot of art classes in Stuy and a lot of mediums focus on a singular moment. Ceramics takes you into a singular moment into a pot, and painting makes you take the singular moment within a scenery. Within comics, you are telling a story, and

you’re designing that story to however you want the readers to look at it and how you want to present it,” senior Md Hoque said. “It takes in personal writing, which is not really explored in Stuy, and it combines it with art, which is an astounding on by itself.”

Students taking Wrigley’s painting elective this semester have found his class to be one of the few places they can express themselves creatively and prepare to continue pursuing art beyond high school. “Painting this semester has been something that has impacted me a lot, especially because I’m someone who wants to major in art in college, but Stuyvesant does not really offer too many opportunities to learn about different mediums [and does not guide] students through portfolio building which is needed for some colleges if you want to major in art,” Guo said. “Right off the bat, [Wrigley] was really open to reaching out to seniors who wanted to apply to art schools [...] he’s been helping me with the process for the past few months.”

Wrigley’s painting elective also inspired students in their own creative endeavors. “Up until this year, I’ve only had roughly two classes related to art. I’m trying to major in architecture, which is kind of

daunting in a sense due to the lack of art experience. When [Wrigley] first came in and started talking about painting with this passion, I felt like I could talk to him about architecture,” Hoque said. “For students who want to do art, [...] we don’t really have much experience, and that was the case for me. I started my own club because of the lack of opportunity here. [Wrigley] was one of the few teachers I could rely on instead of relying on myself.”

Though students are grateful for the new elective, many also wish that Stuyvesant offered more art-based opportunities. “When I was in eighth grade, I was offered the opportunity to go to LaGuardia for fine arts, but I [was] pressured by my parents to go to Stuyvesant instead,” Guo said. “I can’t do STEM—I’m really bad at math and science—and art is the only place I find confidence and comfort. I just wished Stuyvesant would offer more of that.”

Wrigley hopes his elective will bring more art to Stuyvesant while giving his students the same eye-opening experience he had in his high school art classes. “I would like to be able to spend my career giving some of what was given to me to my students,” he said.

Stuyvesant Cancels Plans to Administer the PSAT

By ISABELLA JIA, RIFATH HOSSAIN, and JANNA WANG

Stuyvesant canceled its plans to administer the PSAT on January 26. Though the College Board provided three days to take the PSAT in October 2020 and an additional day on January 26, Stuyvesant decided not to administer the exam due to public high school school building closures and recent increases in weekly COVID-19 positivity rates across the city.

The PSAT, or Preliminary SAT, is a standardized test administered by the College Board. Though sophomores can take the exam, high-scoring juniors can qualify for the National Merit Scholarship. In past years, Stuyvesant hosted a PSAT day to administer the exam for all juniors and sophomores.

The PSAT cancellation came as a disappointment to many stu-

dents. “I’ll be a little sad if I can’t take the PSAT,” junior Raj Dhanda said. “That merit distinction will be missed.”

Because many students were uncertain in their options to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program, a few have turned to out-of-state options earlier in the year to take the PSAT. “[The] College Board said that if the PSAT wasn’t being offered at my high school, that I should try and register to take it somewhere else. I called around to a few private high schools in the city, but that didn’t turn out well,” junior Elizabeth Stansberry said in an e-mail interview. “I’m from Texas, and my family was already planning to go to Dallas in October, so I decided to register to take it there.”

Additionally, some sophomores hoped to take the PSAT as part of preparation for the SAT. “I thought [the PSAT] would help me prepare

for the SAT which I’d be taking in [...] junior year. I planned to take it this year before the pandemic came, but now that the pandemic is here, I decided that I would not be taking it,” sophomore Alind Raad said in an e-mail interview.

There are, however, alternative options to apply for the National Merit Scholarship Program. According to the [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#) (NMSC) website, “a student who does not take the PSAT/NMSQT in October 2020 or January 2021 because of illness, an emergency, or other extenuating circumstance, but meets all other requirements for NMSC program participation, may still be able to enter the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program.”

Stuyvesant not hosting the exam qualifies as an extenuating circumstance, allowing juniors to use scores from SATs administered

between August 2020 to June 2021, instead of a PSAT/NMSQT scores, to be eligible for the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program. “Fortunately, the College Board has announced that juniors may use the SAT or a PSAT score for the NSMQ, so students are not at a loss for National Merit submissions by not having a PSAT submission,” Director of Family Engagement Dina Ingram said in an e-mail interview.

In order to do so, juniors must send an official report of their SAT scores to NMSC and fill out the [Alternate Entry Form](#) by April 1. SAT scores can be submitted no later than October 15, 2021. Only students who have not taken the PSAT in October or January will be able to enter the competition through this route.

To qualify through the alternate entry, Ingram encourages students

to take the SAT. “[Students] should seek out an SAT exam, even if it’s in another state, if possible, to take as a junior if they are interested in the National Merit Scholarship opportunity,” she said.

Sophomores can still prepare for the PSAT using various online resources available. “While the PSAT is good practice for sophomores, practice can be gained by free timed tests offered like the ones we arranged over the holiday break through our partnership with AppleRouth Tutoring or by finding them online,” Ingram said.

Though many are disappointed by the cancellation, some students have accepted the change. “I don’t care about it too much,” junior Ajay Pal said. “All I will know is I tried hard to take the test, but I couldn’t, so it isn’t that bad. You have to deal with what life gives you.”

News

StuyHacks Holds 10th Biannual Hackathon Virtually

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ing our in-person hackathons.”

Mentors hosted eight workshops, which were designed as introductory lessons to expose beginners to different concepts in computer science, such as “Making Backends with Node.js,” “Introduction to Terminal,” “Introduction to Java,” and “Basics of Arduino.” “When reaching out to mentors, we asked if they were interested in hosting a workshop and then we picked out the coolest sounding ones and added workshops that were attendee favorites in the past,” senior and Executive Director of StuyHacks Madelyn Mao said in an e-mail interview.

Bill Ni (19) was one of the mentors for StuyHacks and taught the Terminal and Java workshops. He has been mentoring StuyHacks the past two years and continued this year as a way of giving back to the community. “I was a StuyHacks participant when I was still in high school, and I mentored the last two years. I find it to be a very helpful way to give back to the CS community at Stuy,” he said in an e-mail interview.

Freshman and first-time hackathon participant Rebecca Bao felt that the hackathon allowed her to experiment with her interests. “I have always been super interested in STEM, and I thought that this opportunity in the weekend could serve as a challenge for me to pursue more of what I like to do,” Bao said in an e-mail interview. “I wasn’t the most sure what to expect and how the hackathon would be structured, especially in this virtual competition [...] though it was only two days, my team and I accomplished a lot and created an interactive website [on which] one can draw on their screen using an utensil by color detection through their webcam.” Bao’s team was awarded second place overall.

For junior Alyssa Choi, the hackathon served as a new opportunity to explore her computer science interests. “I thought it would be a cool experience because I enjoy creating CS projects. It was also the first time I participated in a hackathon, so I was curious [as] to how competitive programming would differ from real-life programming,” Choi said in an e-mail interview.

Her teammate, junior Xiaoshen Ma, was also a first-time participant

and was able to develop both her teamwork and computer science skills. After applying these skills, Ma and her group were able to make their project more appealing and won the Best Game award. “We spent a long time on this game, and we really wanted to make it look nice visually,” she said. “So when it was all starting to come together, the project was turning out as we expected.”

Their video game, Stardust Mania, is a dungeon crawl game, in which a star is controlled by a player to navigate a labyrinth environment or dungeon. “Our team spent most of the weekend building our project, but we weren’t able to finish everything we planned because of how ambitious our game idea was,” Choi said. “Regardless, it was all worth it in the end when we placed the title of Best Game. In addition, we learned what we could’ve done better, in terms of planning, organization, improving code, and more.”

While winning an award at the hackathon was a memorable experience, Ma noticed that in a remote setting, other participants were unable to see the projects that others accomplished. Like other groups in the hackathon, Ma and her group

submitted their project through Devpost and even made a [YouTube video](#) as a demonstration on how to play the game. When it came to award presentations however, the audience wasn’t able to view the projects made by other participants. “It would be cool, at the award ceremony, a little presentation of the winners’ projects, because we were all interested in what the people did,” she said. “At most, we just got the name and a summary, but it would’ve been nice to have them screen-shared.”

Additionally, Ni noted that the lack of in-person interaction may have made it more difficult for participants to ask for help. “It’s hard to muster up the courage or find a reason to message the mentors privately, being that we don’t eat meals together, and we can’t foster a connection as friend and friend rather than student and teacher,” he said. “The lack of face to face contact dehumanizes situations that normally participants would be able to talk us up or ask us for help.”

Though Ni would have preferred an in-person hackathon setting, he acknowledged that it wouldn’t have been feasible. “The

event being virtual definitely impacted [my] experience. I would definitely prefer it to be in person, but given the circumstances, it would be impossible without being possibly risky, dangerous, or downright irresponsible,” he said.

Despite the lack of connective opportunities an online format presents, the virtual setting of the hackathon did make it more accessible to students. “Because StuyHacks X was now virtual, we were able to gather attendees from different states and countries,” Chen said.

Moving forward, StuyHacks organizers will take into consideration external factors, such as the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, when deciding whether to continue remote hackathons or host in-person events. “If we still have to take COVID-19 into consideration, then we will continue to have completely remote hackathons. If schools open, and it is safe to hold large events of 100 people or more, then we would like to make our hackathons a mix of in-person and virtual,” Chen said. “This way, we will be able to welcome and include students all over the world to expand our support of budding hackers.”

Facebook Post Ignites Conversation Regarding Mental Health

continued from page 1

respondents reported that their mental health has decreased since March 2020, confirming the strong response of the Facebook post. An overwhelming 79 percent of students reported that their mental health had gone down, with eight percent saying that their mental health had remained constant and the remaining 13 percent saying that their mental health had improved. Moreover, while 84 percent of students reported having average or above average mental health prior to remote learning, that number fell to just 35 percent for students’ mental health in its current state.

While there was not a significant difference between students of different genders, the data indicates that the mental health of freshmen has declined the most since pre-quarantine. On average, freshmen’s mental health fell by 1.8 points on a one to five scale. This change was less severe for sophomores and upperclassmen, with their numbers decreasing by 1.5 and 1.3 points, respectively. Notably, the larger decline among freshmen was due to their mental health rankings in the “pre-Covid” period (4.1) compared to that of other students (3.6). Currently, all students hover around 2.2. The larger decline among freshmen’s mental health could be caused by the academically strenuous transition for many freshmen.

Students expanded on their responses through an optional short response question at the bottom of the form. “I live in a small one-bedroom apartment with five people, and it’s really stressful,” one student said. Others shared similar experiences: “I’m a Big Sib and talking to my Little Sibs is so concerning right now. They are mostly below zero on the scale for mental health because of a lack of socialization and an awful introduction to Stuy,” “I don’t have any time for myself. I get off of class, eat lunch, do hw, eat dinner, do more hw, hygiene, maybe even more hw, and then go to sleep wanting this tiring cycle to end,” and “Wish the bar was lower. My mental health is in the negatives.”

Students’ reactions to the Facebook post as well as to remote learning as a whole stem from mul-

iple issues ranging from course load and intense school days to a lack of socialization. “I kind of really hate it. Like, as much as I hated the long commute to school and waking up at six in the morning, the one-hour classes now make [the school day] even more unbearable to sit through,” sophomore Michelle Hu said. “Due to everything being remote, I don’t feel like I’m learning anything in class. I have to spend extra time [outside of class] trying to relearn [the material] in order to actually even do the homework.”

The post cultivated a collective sentiment among the students regarding the struggles they felt during remote learning. “My immediate reaction to the post was, ‘Wow, that’s exactly how I feel.’ No one else had put something into words that way before,” Student Union (SU) President Julian Giordano said. “This really resonates with a lot of students because we’ve been internalizing this a lot. We’ve been blaming this on ourselves. We’ve been saying this year’s been really hard because I’m doing something wrong, and that’s not the case.”

While mental health issues and overwhelming workloads were present at Stuyvesant even before remote learning, Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Casey Pedrick has noted a tonal shift amid the pandemic. “This is the start of my 11th year, and I’ve always, from day one, heard different iterations of ‘the workload is too much,’” she said. “But this wave feels different. This wave feels like a cry for help, [a] waving of the white flag in surrender.”

English teacher Megan Weller, too, has had encounters with students who are struggling. “I have had several email, office hours, after-[class] Zoom chats with students [about] how hard it is, particularly because it is remote learning, because we are in a pandemic,” she said. “Whether what’s hard is being in a house, being depressed about everything that is going on and therefore losing motivation to do work and falling behind, [those] emotions are taking a physical toll.”

Still, not all students feel this way. Some members of the student body believe that the remote setting has allowed their mental health to improve. “I have also lost so much

[motivation], but if [I] were to compare it to me on March 7, 2020, [I] would say [my mental health is] significantly higher [...] It’s a mix of me having 1+6+10 free so my day flies by each time, and some good teachers,” an anonymous sophomore commented on the Facebook post.

Additionally, a minority of students who replied to the post feel the amount of work that has been assigned during remote learning has been manageable. “I feel that the school has adjusted as best as possible to the situation [...] I do not think there is a crazy amount of homework being given even before the remote learning undertaken this year,” an anonymous senior commented on the post. Similarly, an anonymous sophomore commented, “We’re getting about half the work we usually get, in my experience [I] have a lot of free time after class.”

Sophomore Navid Zunaid, too, has found remote learning easier because of an increased amount of his free time. “I think remote learning is freedom and you have, let’s say, two to three hours more free time, more time to do the things that you might find personally meaningful,” he said.

While social studies teacher David Wang tries to take his students’ time into consideration, his workload has increased considerably due to the constraints given in teaching the AP curriculum within the virtual setting. “I don’t believe there’s any limit on how much work we should give,” he said. “I think that’s left up entirely to the discretion of the teacher. I myself try to take into consideration how much time my students have and the work that I give might be too much, but [...] I have to give a certain amount due to the fact that I have to cover what’s going to be on the AP.”

According to the “Fall 2020 Instructional Expectations” document, teachers must “adhere to all school and departmental policies ... the homework policy for the 10-period day remains in effect, so teachers may assign up to an hour of homework between live sessions in non-AP classes, and up to two hours of homework between live sessions in AP classes.”

Students acknowledge that teachers are not completely at fault

for not adhering strictly to the guidelines. “I feel like the teachers don’t have as much guidance as to what they should be doing and what they should not be doing,” junior Ava Yap said. “I’m not completely blaming them because they have a lot going on, too.”

The SU also recognizes that teachers’ infractions do not come from a place of bad intent. “When it comes to a lot of policy infractions and issues that we get emailed from students about teachers giving too much homework, or giving tests on the wrong day, it’s often the same teachers over and over again, and something we’ve noticed about that is it’s oftentimes not coming from a bad place from teachers,” junior and SU Vice President Shivali Korgaonkar said.

More generally, the SU has been responsible for mediating many of the student-teacher interactions and conflicts. “We’d really like to talk to teachers directly, and teachers who may not be as aware of SLT meetings and discussions we have with students and each other,” Giordano said.

Giordano is hopeful that students’ sentiments will inspire change in the administration’s handling of remote learning. “We’re at this place in time where we can try new things that have never been tried before, and if we create change now, I think it will stick, and it can fundamentally change Stuyvesant culture,” he said.

Hu is less optimistic, however. “When I read the post and I realized how many people were also really upset about everything, I was like, ‘Wow, maybe something will change,’” she said. “But in all honesty, I really don’t think the policies will change due to the teachers.”

Hu feels her complaints fall on deaf ears not just among teachers but also among support staff and the administration. “Whenever I hear from [my] guidance counselor, they usually just say the same things like, ‘Oh, just be organized,’ or ‘Just have a schedule,’ or ‘Just talk it out with teachers,’” she said. “But whenever you try to mention that things are rough, they kind of just throw the same things at you. It feels like they aren’t really listening.”

From a guidance perspective, Pedrick is unsure of how to

help students without a considerable change in teachers’ behavior. “From a counseling standpoint, we are just in a position to just give advice and work with time management and report things to Assistant Principals and hope some change happens, but it’s not happening,” Pedrick said. Pedrick further explained that guidance counselors mainly provide support for students and report observations to the administration.

One concrete change students would like to see implemented is policy revision. “I know I’ve had nights where I’ve stayed up until midnight, 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m., even 4:00 a.m., just doing work and getting through all my stuff,” Yap said. “That takes a huge toll on my physical and mental health. I just think that they need to restructure what they already have in order to make it more sustainable for students.”

More broadly, administrators hope that Stuyvesant can open more conversations regarding class workload through improved student-teacher relationships. “We would love students to have a relationship with their teachers where they feel safe bringing that [workload issues] to them, but we also respect that for students, that’s not often their comfort level,” Pedrick said.

Pedrick also noted how Stuyvesant teachers and administrators may need to readjust expectations for covering curricula given the circumstances. “I know that a lot of the teachers of AP classes are very concerned about getting through all of the material to set their students up for the best possible success,” she said. “I’m even wondering if we can just recalibrate that. What is our definition of success?”

Students hope that going forward, the administration and teachers will show a greater understanding of their circumstances. “If they were just a little bit more approachable to the students, and if they made it a little bit easier for students to get in contact with them or understand the students a little bit more, what they are going through,” senior Bineth Abeysekera said. “Our mental health is deteriorating because of the pandemic so be a little bit easier on us, just a tad bit.”

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Features

VOICES

Remote Learning Testimonials

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

We sent out an anonymous form for students to share their thoughts about mental health, workload, or anything else regarding this past semester. Here is what they said*:

*Certain responses have been edited for length and clarity.

My experience with Stuyvesant remote learning has been an ongoing rollercoaster. Some days workloads will be extremely heavy, where I spend my nights crying up until midnight. Whereas, other days I feel less overwhelmed and can handle it. One thing I would like to point out is that through remote learning, it is very hard for me to grasp onto topics. As each day teachers pile us with more and more assignments, it eventually becomes extremely draining and exhausting. And the teachers have done nothing about it, if I'm being quite honest. Aside from synchronous and asynchronous day work, I have no social life. I don't speak to anyone that goes to Stuyvesant, if I do it's only during the few minutes we are in breakout rooms. At times it does get lonely having no one to relate to or talk to about my experiences here. Oftentimes I do find myself contemplating if it will be worth it after four years and if I want to stay here, at Stuyvesant.

—freshman female

Many of my teachers have been unsympathetic to students' needs and extraordinarily hypocritical in their expectations for students. Several of my teachers expect work to be submitted on time and emphasize that they will deduct points if not turned in on time, yet have graded my assignments from September in January, or have not been bothered to even look at my work. At that point, what difference does it make if I submit my work in September or December? Additionally, teachers continue to blatantly ignore homework/test policies and continue to assign useless, tedious, busywork assignments. I genuinely don't think I have learnt a fragment of new information in any of my classes because teachers teach a "flipped classroom" or just go over homework all period instead of teaching new, informative content. Several of my teachers have also not updated grades, and some continue to not use an online grade-book despite multiple requests to do so—this leaves me with no understanding of what my grade is or how I could possibly improve. Not only must I attend classes in which I learn nothing, but on top of that I am forced to learn on my own and teach myself in order to stay afloat in all of my classes. Personally, it is extremely taxing on my mental health and honestly has taken a toll on my physical health as well. My intent in expressing my frustrations is not to place blame on teachers, but rather to highlight the ineffectiveness of current policies and procedures. I understand wholly that teachers have multiple classes and many students, but all the student body is asking for is more sympathy and less hypocrisy. —junior female

The situation we're in has negatively (and positively) affected people in so many different ways; Yes, some of us have acquired new interests or ways of thinking, and I'm thankful that I've used this last year to develop my beliefs. But my morals have also been solidified and I can assert that the administration has done a less than poor job in accommodating us. The mental health of our entire generation has deteriorated, ED culture is rampant, and school has done nothing but make all of this an excruciatingly painful transition. Enforcing a homework policy that does nothing but account for classes meeting every other day, forcing students to use their cameras, treating lessons and assigning work as you would if we were attending classes as normal—the administration might see this as an attempt in emulating on campus classes, but all we, as students, see is adults inconsiderately pretending that our problems don't exist. —sophomore female

As someone who would never think to have a late assignment pre-quarantine, I am now in a constant state of making up late work. —senior female

It is widely understood that teachers will not be able to fulfill the curriculum requirements this year. Despite what the College Board is forcing, there's just no way for the teachers to teach full curricula. Even though this is accepted, they seem to be forcing what they can down our throats. If a student needs to focus on their mental health, it's discouraged. We understand that this isn't easy for our teachers, but this feeling isn't always reciprocated. Many teachers have said to me or friends that it's imperative that we show up to every class session and complete the work in a timely manner. This just isn't possible for everyone. There needs to be more empathy displayed in every direction: between teachers, admin, and students. Everyone is ready to point their finger at someone else (us students are guilty of it), but we need to come to the realization that we can't have the same expectations as past years and that this needs to be a collaborative effort. —senior male

I think it's rather obvious from the over 300+ comments on the original Facebook post regarding this topic that students aren't really pleased with the administration's handling of remote learning. The most egregious of it all is probably the homework policy adjustments, making it so students can get up to four hours of homework on certain days which is just incredibly unhealthy and can cause serious burnout. I've had to stay up till 1:00 am doing multiple assignments assigned by my teachers because the homework policy allows for it. It gets extremely hard having to balance all the extra work as well as extracurricular and classes outside of school without feeling burnt out or extremely stressed out. —Luca Adeishvili, sophomore male

I undoubtedly have depression. I detest people who ridicule others for self-diagnosing or asking others to just "toughen up." Someone knows if they have depression. They are not making this up for attention or clout, and it is utterly atrocious for someone to insinuate that. No, that is not possible when the immediate environment surrounding you is something so unbearable. And discussing mental health with my parents is laughable. They think it's some type of teenage temporary insanity. They don't understand it. And I hate to say it, but Stuy's counseling is really bad. The "coping at home" sessions do not help in the slightest. My guidance counselor has not responded to my email asking for mental resources. I do not think my parents will want to pay for anything relating to therapy. I think it is only until the pandemic ends and I can go back to Manhattan out of this damned borough and house will I find peace. —sophomore

Stuyvesant's handling of remote learning has been poor. I remember when schools had just closed due to the virus, tons of schools around the city had a week-long break to ease the transition, but Stuy didn't give us a break: from that moment on, I began to lose faith in the administration. I understand where the administration is coming from; I'm sure they face tons of pressure from parents to uphold academic rigor as their child/children are more academically successful than others. I just wish that the administration was more caring. Upholding academic rigor and caring for your students' mental health aren't mutually exclusive. I can't stress enough how tone-deaf the administration has been. The administration is just continuing like business as usual, but these aren't usual times. —sophomore male

The Moment of Tooth

By ARIANA DEVITO, ISABELLA JIA and SABRINA LI

The pure joy of lifting your pillow to reveal dollar bills after losing a tooth is an experience most can reminisce about. Even if the tooth fairy actually existed, there are no more baby teeth left to shed for most Stuyvesant students. As our adult teeth assume their permanent positions, few are blessed with perfectly straight teeth. The majority must undergo dental procedures and treatments to refine their new sets of chompers.

For many students, that entails wearing braces for anywhere from three months to four years. What was once considered a stigma among teenagers has now become more acceptable as we witness teens sporting theme-colored brace bands coordinated with the calendar and holidays. The growing acceptance of braces can make students more comfortable wearing them. Sophomore Alika Peker suggested that wearing braces helped her fit in, considering that so many of her peers donned them. She was not particularly excited to get them initially, but the experience proved better than expected. For Peker, a major drawback was not being able to eat certain foods that would potentially damage the braces. However, the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be the greatest

hindrance. "I was supposed to get them [braces] taken off in March, I think, and that got delayed [by] 10 months," she said.

Anonymous sophomore B had a similar experience. "Because of the pandemic, I was not able to go to my cleaning in time. However, I'm caught up with appointments now," they disclosed in an e-mail interview. The sophomore expects to get braces soon to correct a deep overbite and inverted canines but is not looking forward to this procedure. In addition to the pain factor, there are other sources of concern. "I'm not looking forward to not being able to eat certain foods and also having to clean them out," they clarified. These worries are well-justified. Managing braces is often tedious on many levels.

Freshman William Tang wore braces for about one and a half to two years and noted similar cons that come with braces. "There are some things that you dislike. For example, you can't really [floss, so] you have to [use] that water thing or do it very tediously," Tang expressed. Similar to sophomore B, he echoed the problem of not being able to eat certain foods.

"Some foods are just harder to eat, and [...] you can't eat [gum]," Tang said. But it doesn't end there; after you get your braces taken off, you also have to wear retainers. "I have two retainers. One is an invisible one, and one is the good old-fashioned one," he explained. Though br-

but now I just subconsciously put them on every day," she said. Additionally, Ying still has scheduled orthodontist appointments, which she eventually stopped going to. "I went back a few times and thought it was pretty unnecessary after around five times because

it's a two-hour commute traveling there but only five minutes [are spent] at the dentist's office," she revealed.

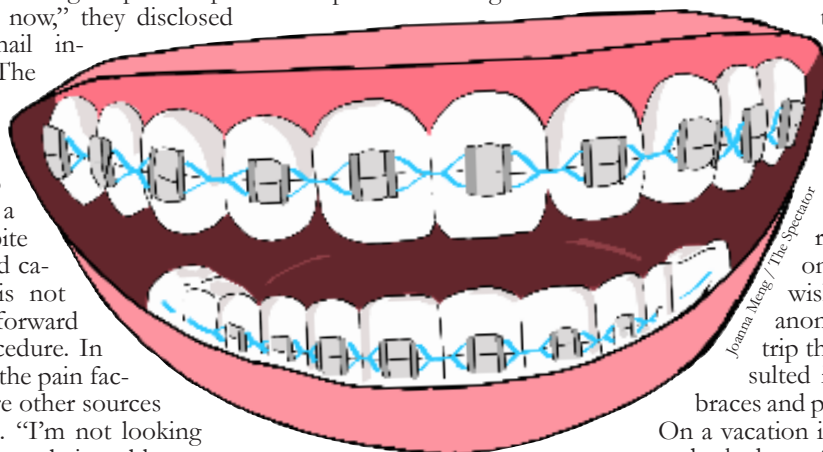
People get braces for many reasons, but for one junior who wishes to remain anonymous, a biking trip that went wrong resulted in a fresh pair of braces and partial teeth fillings.

On a vacation in Asia, this junior embarked on a 20-mile biking trip in the countryside with friends when they encountered some half-pipes meant for skateboarding. "I decided to go up the largest one and see how long I could stay in the air for; [that's] when I landed on my face, and I guess that's how my teeth cracked," they explained in an e-mail interview. This excursion, seemingly innocent at first, resulted in new dental gear for the student: "I'm currently wearing braces, and I have partial fillings for my two front teeth since they were chipped."

Freshman Lorraine Li has

taken a different path. Instead of wearing braces, she has worn Invisalign for the past year since her teeth were decently aligned to begin with. Still, Invisalign can be equally a nuisance, she revealed. "It gets inconvenient at times when I go out to eat and I forget my case, so I have nowhere to put them," she explained. As a result, she often drops her Invisalign in non-sanitary locations. "I'd drop them in public, in school cafeterias, in the bathroom, on floors, and in sinks," she added. While this description is enough to conjure feelings of disgust, there are some advantages to wearing Invisalign over braces. "[I] ended up choosing Invisalign because I didn't want shiny metal seen every time I open my mouth, and I didn't think I'd look good with braces," Li elaborated. While she never faced insecurity about her teeth, choosing Invisalign over braces has been the better option for her self-image.

The pursuit toward the coveted perfect smile definitely comes with its strife. If only the tooth fairy could miraculously straighten our new set of teeth could we avoid all of these complications. Comfort comes in the fact that braces and dental gear are commonplace in this generation. Hopefully, after all the trouble, the feeling of seeing a set of freshly aligned teeth will be reminiscent of getting that \$5 bill under your pillow after the tooth fairy's visit.



Joanna Aleng / The Spectator

Features

The View from 2021: 2020 in Hindsight

By SHIVANI
MANIMARAN and
DEXTER WELLS

As it turns out, nobody had 2020 vision. The curse of 2020 caught the world by surprise, leaving us to watch as a series of very unfortunate events unfolded around us. But, at long last, we have escaped from a year that was chaotic, tragic, and challenging in historic proportions.

Pandemonium ensued from the get-go of 2020. “At the start of the year, there was the killing of Soleimani,” recalled sophomore Jonathan Song. “That problem stopped, but that week of back and forth was kind of scary.”

As concerning as the start of the year was, the political and social upheaval did not end there. “Another major event to me was [the Black Lives Matter movement] (BLM). We had a lot of BLM protests. You saw some rioting happening,” added junior Saif Elmosalami. These riots were incited by the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020.

Sophomore Keara O’Donnell remembered a list of saddening deaths. “There was Kobe Bryant. There was Chadwick Boseman. There was also Ruth Bader Ginsburg, RBG,” she listed.

Despite all the different crises, it’s safe to say that for most people, 2020 was meant to be a year like any other. “I was expecting the same old, same old,” said Song. “[We’d] just be pushing through the same stuff we did every other day.”

Even before 2020, senior Jordan Gray learned to recognize that “normal” was a tricky term to

define. Still, he couldn’t have anticipated the complete disruption of the conventions he was accustomed to. “I—like everyone—wasn’t expecting my whole life and routine to be upended,” Gray said. His expectations revolved around impending college applications and a sense of dread for all the work he would do over the summer in preparation. “Those personal expectations were probably identical to every other junior,” he speculated.

Most students didn’t expect the duration or severity of the pandemic and lockdown. “I knew coronavirus was bad, but I didn’t realize how bad it would get,” remarked O’Donnell. “I wasn’t really expecting quarantine to happen. I wasn’t expecting it to become so crazy.”

Freshman Erica Chen was counting on lockdown to end on April 20, as originally planned, in order to fully experience her last year of middle school. “I was happy because I thought I would at least get to go back to school and meet all my classmates and teachers in my middle school before I left for high school,” she explained in an e-mail interview.

Gray recalled hearing about the virus and feeling almost no worry: “As it entered the news more and seemed to grow bigger, a concern grew for others, but I wasn’t worried for my own safety.” The closest thing he had to compare it with was the Ebola outbreak years ago, which had barely affected the United States. Gray didn’t feel particularly concerned until shortly before the lockdown began in March. “I don’t think I started to really take the issue seriously until a week before quar-

antine started,” he recalled. “Going into the last week of school, my family did mention that they were concerned about me going to school and [...] that maybe I shouldn’t go. I remember that week was weird; people were starting to realize this might affect us.”

Similarly, freshman William Tang only began to realize in March how serious the virus might be. “When the city declared it a serious issue, I think I started to take it more seriously, like a lot of people,” he said. Although Tang has been lucky enough not to be directly affected by the virus, he definitely has a greater sense of its reality now. “I haven’t gotten COVID, and no one I know has gotten COVID, but some people in my building have,” he explained.

Senior Serena Chan had expected to close out her years at Stuyvesant with a grand finale, but she has learned to accept and work around obstacles. She was looking forward to spending more time on extracurricular activities, and without them, she feels a bit robbed. “I feel like I’ve missed out on what could have been a more fulfilling time,” she said. In particular, she was looking forward to a final SING! performance in person. Despite the challenge to bring SING! to life virtually, she remains optimistic. “We can still go down in history as the iconic first virtual SING! performance,” she said. Chan also expected to spend more time with friends after school and was disappointed by the lack of opportunity to socialize in person. Still, she has managed to adapt. “To make up for it, at least we have text messages, video calls, and Zoom meetings, which are things I’m grateful for,”

she said.

Remote learning was perhaps the most significant feature of 2020 that students were forced to adjust to. “Teachers could assign the same, if not more, work, so I found myself doing more work and just trying to balance it out. It gets pretty stressful pretty quick[ly]. I mean, you think you have that time at home, but you really don’t,” O’Donnell said.

Gray found remote learning to be stressful, even without considering the anxiety surrounding the virus. “While my concerned teachers were assigning less work, working remotely was tough,” he said.

For Chen, the transition to Stuyvesant’s homework was also especially shocking over remote learning, despite warnings from upperclassmen. “It turns out, those were not [complete] exaggerations, and Stuyvesant definitely owns up to [its] name of having a heavy workload,” she said.

Chan has found it “strangely relaxing to take classes virtually” and considers it an unexpected advantage to a senior year that has otherwise lacked the thrill she hoped for.

Unfettered by the numerous obstacles, Elmosalami was among those who were able to find some advantages to remote learning. “I didn’t like COVID because I liked being at school. But I saw it as a positive because I started working out at home,” he said.

O’Donnell had a similar experience with free time. “I was also able to do things I wouldn’t normally be able to do. I did a bit of French independently and stuff like that,” she said. Tang noted that he had the opportunity to

take some online classes over the summer because of the pandemic.

The 2020 presidential election was, in Elmosalami’s opinion, more noteworthy than those of the past. He was most impressed by the voter turnout. “In past years, there haven’t been that many people voting. This year, the voter turnout was crazy,” he explained. “More than half the country went to the polls and voiced their opinions, which is phenomenal for democracy.” He was also surprised by Trump’s refusal to accept the results of the election, which was not seen in previous elections. “Of course, people are rambling on about voter fraud, though evidence wasn’t shown, and a lot of trials happened because Trump believed that voter fraud stole the election, which was a very ignorant thing for him to do,” he said.

Looking back from the first few weeks of 2021, many students can’t find much sense of whether there will ever be a “normal” like there was before, but they have certainly learned what they value. “Listen to the scientists,” advised Tang. “They know better. If you don’t, this is what happens.”

To Gray, the lesson was more about enjoying what he had. “I think we all just want to be able to go back to our normal routines,” he said. “I never thought I’d miss waiting for the train or getting yelled at to take my headphones out.” Even such seemingly dull and mundane things seem to hold a trace of pre-2020 “normal” life, which we so desire to return to.

Elmosalami awaits such a return to normalcy in 2021. “I’m hopeful that this year will be better for everyone,” he said.

When Hands-on Becomes Cams On

By JOSSLYN KIM,
AMANDA BRUCCULERI
and RACHEL VILDMAN

“Turn and talk,” your teacher begins as the bell rings.

Such an instance is one of the many interactions that have become foreign to students during remote learning. Breakout rooms and shared Google Docs seem to replace in-person interactions in many classes. Classes that have traditionally required more hands-on learning and collaboration between students, such as chorus, drafting, band, and other electives, are finding different ways to cope with the lack of interaction in virtual learning. Many students who have taken these classes both in-person and remotely have found notable contrasts.

For junior Ian Zaman, the change from in-person chorus to virtual chorus has been difficult. “Chorus did involve a lot of interaction since we had to sing together and work with one another to do so,” Zaman explained. As a result, chorus class looks completely different when done virtually. “Now we’re learning music theory and doing virtual recordings, which is a lot harder because you don’t have a chorus to back you up,” Zaman said. While he does like the addition of music theory, Zaman expressed that he “feels it’s not really what chorus is about.”

Music Coordinator Liliya Shamazov, on the other hand, explained that she feels that the change in curriculum is actually beneficial for her students. “We are spending time building other valuable musical skills and exploring topics we normally do not have time for. As a result, my

students will be much stronger musicians when we return to live instruction,” she said. Shamazov also believes that virtual learning has given students the advantage of doing work on their own time, which wasn’t possible during in-person learning. “Now, after learning to make rehearsal tracks, students are able to learn and review music at their own pace,” Shamazov stated.

Band, too, has found new methods of integrating online performance into the class. Before the switch to online school, members of the Stuyvesant band were able to play their instruments together, listening to each other to ensure synchronization. This seemingly simple task is now nearly impossible to accomplish over Zoom. Instead of performing in class, band students send in recordings of themselves playing their parts of the score. These recordings then get synched to each other to create a virtual video performance. “The vibe of the class has changed because instead of trying to synchronize our parts in real time and in person, we now have to record our parts individually and try to upload our recordings,” senior Serena Chan expressed.

Many students, like senior Angus Chen, prefer this model, as it’s less nerve-racking than performing live. “I think recording takes away from the interactive aspect of the band, but it’s a lot more relaxed when you don’t have to play live,” Chen said.

Senior Sunny Bok also shared her preference for virtual band. “It’s more organized,” she explained.

Unlike music, 10-tech courses, which are mandatory classes

for students to graduate with a Stuyvesant diploma and include ceramics, woodworking, and painting, have not adapted with as

interactions is particularly difficult for seniors who need Wrigley’s assistance with their college art portfolios.



positive a response to the remote environment. Ceramics, for example, requires access to specific materials, like a kiln, and demonstrations. Senior Kelly Guo is disappointed with the virtual shift, as she feels that the class’s potential has been restricted. “We couldn’t truly experience the class,” Guo explained. The lack of materials, student interaction, and teacher feedback have left some students feeling unmotivated and lost. “A lot of students are behind on assignments because they were either having trouble getting materials or just losing motivation overall,” Guo described.

Guo shared similar sentiments about her painting class, which is taught by art teacher William Wrigley; the lack of in-person in-

teractions is particularly difficult for seniors who need Wrigley’s assistance with their college art portfolios. Wrigley noted the limitations of his classes as a result of virtual learning. “Right now, I’m able to show my own hands working through a document camera, but [I] am never able to look over a student’s shoulder to see how their hand moves a brush across the paper, then offer technical or intellectual support,” Wrigley shared. Another obstacle this class faces is lack of access to materials. “Some students have access to a wide range of art materials, while others have only printer paper and pencils, and the projects I have planned have to factor that in,” Wrigley explained.

Technical Drawing, also known as Drafting, has also been forced to deal with the absence of the necessary materials. When

taught in person, students were required to draw with tools such as a T-square and a drawing board. Now, Zoom sessions usually consist of the teacher demonstrating activities through a document camera. “On Zoom, we usually talk about concepts we need to know about for the homework or we start the homework with the help of our teacher,” sophomore Ben Balodis said.

Rather than drawing with one’s hands, students use an online browser called Onshape to complete work. Onshape is a computer-aided design system that allows students to work collaboratively on design projects.

Robotics teacher Joseph Blay uses this software with his students as well. “Students learned how to design in this 3D modeling and assembly software and then made original parts designed to be 3D printed,” Blay stated. Blay sees this adaptation as an advantage, as he’s never been able to show his students Onshape before. Moreover, robotics students are able to work on assignments on their own time, as they have access to materials at home. “Every student has their own kit, so they can work on projects as much as they like. In school, kids are limited to only be able to access their parts and projects during class [or] if a teacher is there after school,” Blay said.

Ultimately, it is inevitable that online classrooms will never completely replicate the atmosphere created by in-person instruction, especially classes that depend on student collaboration and working with materials. Still, we can choose how we view the situation: as always, the glass can either be half full or half empty.

Features

The Vaccine Dilemma: NYC's Journey Back to Normalcy

By **EUGENE YOO,**
AVA FUNG,
MAHIR HOSSAIN
and **MILLIE BELL**

With the recent approval of the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines by the FDA, rapid distribution to millions of frontline health workers, essential workers, and the elderly has begun in hopes of subduing the coronavirus. Among these frontline workers are teachers and counselors who run schools such as Stuyvesant. Eventually, the vaccine will be available to students too, but only if they agree to receive it. The 90-95 percent effectiveness rate, though a great relief for many, doesn't provide full reassurance to all. From freshmen with four months of virtual high school under their belts to seniors anxiously awaiting their reunion with fellow grads, these are anxious times for everyone.

Most Stuyvesant students hope to take the vaccine. They have a strong desire to reunite with their family, some of whom they haven't seen since last spring, catch up with friends, and return to a classroom setting. Sophomore Navid Zunaid explained why he believed that it was so important for everyone to take the vaccine as soon as possible. "The way I see it is, the longer we are here in this pandemic, this lockdown, [the worse it's going to be] for the nation's health in many ways. Obesity's going up. Mental health issues are going up like crazy," he said. "I think that is one of the downsides of COVID-19 lockdowns because even though [...] they're preventing COVID-19, they're causing a host of other issues you know that aren't

so easy to solve."

However, the vast majority of students have decided that they would prefer to wait an indefinite period of time before taking the vaccine. Influenced by different family members and the lack of clinical trials on the teenage age group, many remain wary of its safety. "I recently heard that someone who got the vaccine got face paralysis [...] Just that factor of being in the unknown and unsure about the drawbacks of the vaccine is making me iffy about getting it," freshman Bishesh Shah remarked.

Freshman Kevin Chan had similar thoughts on the vaccine, saying, "Since it's still really new, I'm not sure if it's completely safe to take; and especially since I don't plan on leaving the house, I would rather not take it." Without the vaccine, both Shah and Chan plan on continuing to stay home, social distance, and wear masks.

Zunaid, though proceeding warily, is assured by some aspects of the vaccine. "One of the things that makes me more reassured about taking the vaccine is that major world leaders and also the military are getting it first. These are people the government has a marked incentive to take care of. This is one thing that reassures me," he said. In addition, he mentioned that there may be vaccination passports required in the future to travel internationally and that the vaccine will be strongly mandated, two factors that would push him to take the vaccine as well.

For other students, the most influencing factor has been their family members. Sophomore Frances Schwarz comes from a

relatively conservative family, and her father is against the use of vaccines. Because she herself is more liberal, the topic of vaccines causes some debates within her household. "Every day, I just hear 'the vaccine is gonna kill us,' and with the whole coronavirus pandemic, he says it just ends up stripping us of our [...] freedom of choice," Schwarz said.

Yet some people argue that a return to normalcy is well worth the risks that come with the vaccine. A vaccine would mean the reopening of schools. A vaccine would mean a change in students' lives. Shah looks forward to the rekindling of connections, saying, "Kids during this time are definitely struggling with school [...] I'll start to build more connections. It would be so much easier than talking on the screen."

However, Schwarz is wary of the return to school. "I don't know [...] I'm scared as of now because it's winter and [there are] new strains of COVID right now. So I still feel hesitant about saying, 'Oh yeah, I'll just go to school,'" she said.

For some people, getting the vaccine is no longer a hypothetical—it really happened. Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Casey Pedrick received the Moderna vaccine on January 10, 2021. She was delighted by how efficiently hospitals are carrying out the vaccine. "I felt it was run very well at Queens Hospital. I could tell that there was a particular woman who was in charge, and you go into the main area [...] And as I was exiting, I even went to the woman who I could tell was in charge and just told her she was doing a great job and that I could tell that she was run-

ning a very tight shift," Pedrick explained. Some of Pedrick's relatives contracted COVID-19. She hoped that by getting the vaccine, she would be helping accomplish the goal of herd immunity in Queens, where COVID cases are the third-highest of the boroughs.

For counselor Brandan Sandra, receiving the vaccine was a sigh of relief, as she had severe



Courtesy of Casey Pedrick

symptoms of COVID-19 in March and tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies in May. Sandra took the vaccine as a shield, as she didn't want to become re-infected by the coronavirus. Sandra is what many health experts call a "long-hauler," who are people who still have remnants of the coronavirus after experiencing the majority of severe symptoms, which include difficulty breathing, extended periods of lost taste and smell, and increased heart rate while doing simple tasks such as sitting down. "I really don't want to go back to where I was in March, April, May, the summertime, [when] every other week felt like I was going to the ER thinking I was having

a heart attack," Sandra said. At one point, she was a fence-sitter on whether to get the vaccine, but she now has little regrets considering her health compared to when COVID-19 peaked in NYC around March.

Looking forward, the vaccine is a crucial piece for life to return to normal at schools such as Stuyvesant and to restore education in New York's facilities. Director of College Counseling Jeffrey Makris regularly meets with juniors and seniors who seek to land a seat in their dream colleges and universities. He explained that the vaccine, although crucial for the economy, is nonetheless a puzzle piece to helping staff become protected against the contagious coronavirus. "There [are] some things that we can do remotely [to] get by, but it doesn't substitute the real experience of interacting with people on a day-to-day basis. At least vaccinating the professionals that are a bit older [who] might be a little more vulnerable [...] is one step to being able to bring everybody back," he said. Makris reported that he doesn't have any side effects after taking the vaccine on January 15 and believes that side effects will be minimal.

Despite the alarming number of coronavirus cases in the United States, vaccines are providing hope for many. Students and teachers might get to see each other in 3D. A prom or graduation may not be a wild dream for seniors. Maybe people will... hug. Or high five. Or maybe even just talk without masks. The vaccine is a risk, but perhaps it's worth a shot. It is a shot.

S(no)w More Snow Days

By **ZIFEI ZHAO,**
OLIVIA WOO,
LIANA WU and
DALIA LEVANON

There's nothing quite like waking up to a fresh, heavy layer of snow on the ground and checking the news to see the words "SCHOOLS CLOSED" blared on the television screen, accompanied by a cute animation of falling snowflakes.

In previous years, many students have looked forward to snow days and would spend the occasions relaxing with family or having fun with friends. These surprise days off from school also became breaks when students were able to catch up on sleep or schoolwork. "Instead of worrying about waking up at 6:00 a.m. and preparing to go to school, I got to sleep a few more hours, [...] and on some days, I did work in advance," sophomore Andrey Sokolov explained.

Freshman Iris Lin expressed a similar sentiment. "I had this very big project in middle school [which] took a lot of time and effort. And at that time, I was a very big procrastinator, [...] so I set it off to the weekend [even though it was] due on Monday." However, by Monday morning, Lin was still not done with her project. The sudden arrival of a snow day saved Lin and gave her additional time to complete her project. "I was so relieved but also a little angry [because] I spent all night just trying to finish this," Lin recalled with a sigh.

However, with the majority of students attending classes virtually this year, the New York State Education Department has an-

nounced that schools are required to opt into remote learning on days when a heavy snowstorm will normally have prevented students from coming into buildings. The reason behind this policy is that the start of the 2020-2021 school year was delayed in September, and turning potential snow days into days of remote learning would help prevent losing more

sons continued as usual that day, disappointing many students who had hoped for a day off. "It doesn't feel right to deny people their snow day; robbing one million kids of a free day is not an easy thing to do," freshman Henry Ji said.

On the other hand, Sokolov stated that the full day of remote learning on December 17 was



Vivian Teo / The Spectator

educational time.

This new mandate was first enacted on December 17, 2020, after a heavy snowstorm from the northeast plunged New York City into 10 inches of snow. It was the biggest snowstorm in the city since 2016, so it is likely that schools would have been closed that Thursday under normal circumstances. Instead, remote les-

sons continued as usual that day, disappointing many students who had hoped for a day off. "It doesn't feel right to deny people their snow day; robbing one million kids of a free day is not an easy thing to do," freshman Henry Ji said.

explained. In addition, he expressed that remote learning was a bit lighter than in-person school for him, so he wasn't particularly bummed out that he couldn't get a day off. "It was only four hours of Zoom calls, and the Zoom calls didn't end at the same time as normal school. So I still had more than enough time for myself, and I didn't have to worry too much about homework due the next day," he explained.

Under normal circumstances, snow days were called the day after a heavy snowfall, when it would have been too dangerous for students to commute to school. However, snow days are not only valued for their practicality. Much of the excitement surrounding them is due to their sudden and unexpected appearances which often leave students feeling in a better place both mentally and emotionally. "[A snow day] hypes kids up and makes them feel a little better about themselves," Ji said.

However, with an easier understanding of remote learning platforms and a growing reliance on technology, snow days may permanently be a thing of the past, and not just during the COVID-19 era. There is speculation among parents, students, and teachers that even after schools return to full in-person instruction, remote learning will be implemented on snow days, maximizing instructional time for teachers.

Regardless of whether or not they support the removal of snow days while classes are all remote, many students feel that it's unfair to apply these policies after the coronavirus pandemic has end-

ed. "It's a snow day, and it's not remote learning. You can't just force us to go to remote learning," Sokolov said. Taking away snow days would be taking away something special for students to enjoy. Student's busy schedules mean that many of them are not getting enough time for themselves, which snow days make up for. "We spend so much time just walking around and going on transit. The reason snow days are special is [that] you don't have to go anywhere. For the most part, you won't have classes, and you kind of gain back all the time you lost on transfers," he said.

Ji also believes that snow days should not be completely obliterated from the school system, but his approach is a bit different. He feels that it would be too difficult and impractical to ensure students attend online classes on a day they were supposed to get off of school. "Half the kids aren't even going to log on to Zoom since they'll be like 'Oh [EXPLETIVE], I forgot my laptop.' Kids are [going to] leave stuff at school or they might not have Internet that day, so it would just be a complete mess. There's absolutely no way you could guarantee a perfect transition for one day," he predicted.

Whether or not snow days continue in the future or truly become a thing of the past, one thing is certain: students will never forget that burst of exhilaration that came with the announcement of this special treat and the cathartic feeling when they fell right back into bed. As Sokolov wisely said, "Snow days are special."

Photo Essay

Waves

By THE PHOTO DEPARTMENT

Svetlana Kabanovich / The Spectator



Athena Lam / The Spectator



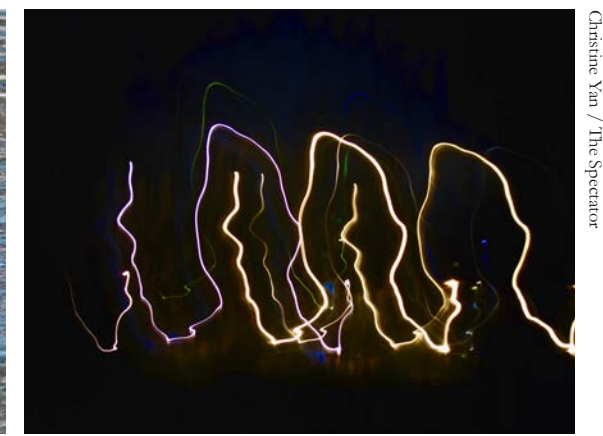
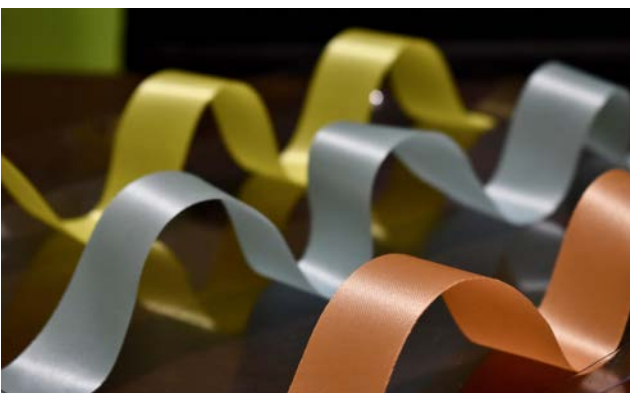
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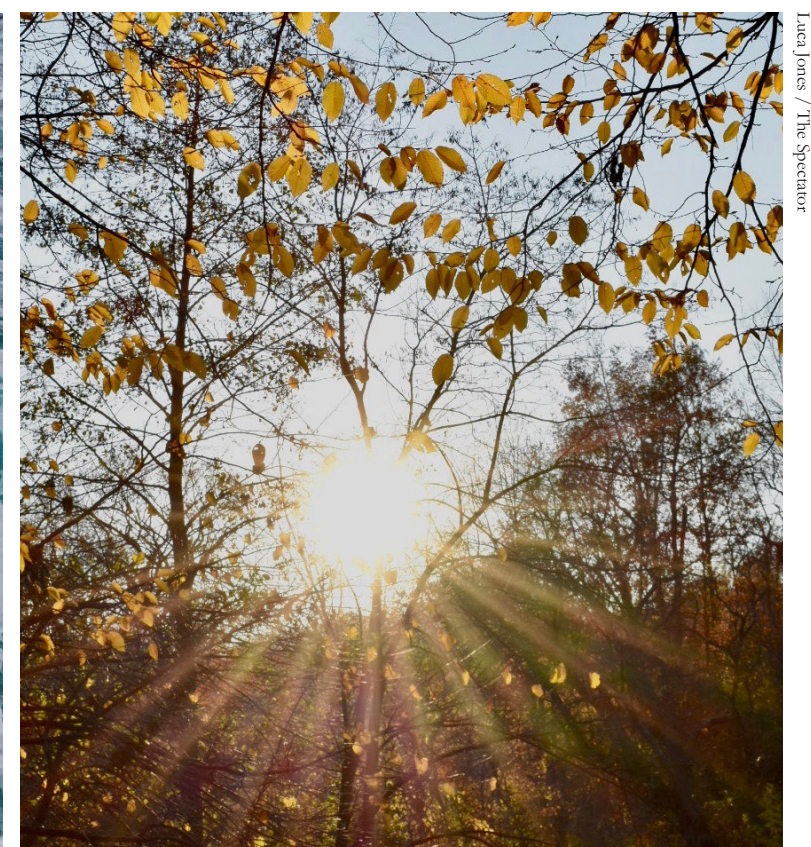


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Luca Jones / The Spectator

Editorials

Closing Comments

This is the final issue for the seniors on the Editorial Board. Here are their departing pieces of wisdom.

Jonathan

If I could change two things about Stuyvesant, the first would be the racism against Black and Hispanic and Asian American students, faculty, and staff, in all its forms. The second would be the fact that leaving Stuyvesant is not considered to be a real option by a significant part of the student body, and is not generally spoken about. The very phrase “Dropping out” connotes a failure, and there is a sense that to leave Stuyvesant is to succumb to just that.

Nonsense. Stuyvesant is, by design, not the right school for everyone. It is supposed to be a pressure cooker, and it is supposed to give a workload that would be unreasonable for the vast majority of people. Within the Spectator Editorial Board, whether Stuyvesant should be less intense is a perennial topic of discussion. My position is consistently that it should not be, because I came here for this level of intensity; I think there ought to be a school to serve my needs, and I was told that Stuyvesant was that school. To take away the intensity would be to take away what I signed up for and what I thrive in.

A better solution: if it's not what you signed up for, or if what you signed up for turns out not to be a good fit, leave. The catch is that, as I wrote last April about the present moment: “Central to my general position about the workload at Stuyvesant is the element of choice ... But my general framework doesn't apply here. Stuyvesant's juniors chose to be Stuyvesant juniors; no one chose to be living in the middle of a pandemic.”

So normalize leaving, next year. In the meantime, this school needs to sacrifice some rigor for compassion.

Caroline

Shoutout to Mr. Hiller, whose flip flops made my first year of Stuy feel a lot homier; Mr. Holmes, whose hot dog experiments and Tower of Hanoi demonstrations made me think for a hot second that I could actually pursue a career in computer science; Mr. Sandler for forever embedding into my brain that Zachary Taylor died of raw milk and cherries; Zhou lao shi for being the most compassionate, loving teacher I've ever had; Mr. Grossman for bringing together the wonderful world that is my Great Books class; and Mr. Garfinkel for teaching me that authentic writing is the best writing (#m'okay4evah—ikyky).

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge everyone who put up with me the last four years—I don't know how you did it, but I'm glad that you did.

Olly

I've really enjoyed a lot of my time at Stuyvesant and a lot of the people I've gotten to spend it with. I realize that that isn't particularly descriptive, but I procrastinated writing this, so I don't have time to go into more detail. In particular, I've loved working alongside all the writers and editors of The Spectator over the last few years (except Jordan Barakat, who has been a bane on my existence from day one) to keep making dumb jokes and putting out this paper biweekly-ish.

I always assumed that my time at Stuyvesant would be a constant upward trend peaking in senior year; I certainly didn't anticipate spending the last year and a half of it attending classes from my bed. In a lot of ways, I regret not getting to have a more normal senior year with more normal senior things, but it hasn't been as bad as it could have been. I'm immensely grateful to all the people who have made this year and the last four bearable, and I'm sorry I can't high five you about it.

Erin

Though I honestly can't remember much about geometry proof theorems or the order of Chinese dynasties, my Stuyvesant experience has raised me well. I've learned the worst things about burnout, and the best ways to recover from burnout. I've learned that believing in yourself is sometimes all you really need.

If I had to pass down any practical “senior” wisdom, it would be to take care of yourself more. Don't skip breakfast, especially when your mom wakes up early in the morning to make it for you. Sit up straight, and buy yourself a laptop stand to save your back. There will be many times where you will need to put yourself before others and especially before Stuyvesant, and that is perfectly okay. Take a break or a mental health day when you need one (see: burnout), and spend time with loved ones doing activities you enjoy (see: recovering from burnout).

And when you're not recuperating from malnutrition or intense sleep deprivation, make sure to do what you love, and fight for what you love. Stuyvesant is often full of relentless deadlines, endless weeks of stress, and back-to-back rock bottoms. But the spaces you actively build for yourself, where you get to pursue your personal passions surrounded by amazing people, are all you will really remember once high school flies by.

Talia

It feels weird to be in the position of giving advice. To be honest, I still feel like a sophomore at heart. Still, I have picked up a few words of wisdom over my nearly four (gasp) years at Stuyvesant. First, the people at Stuy

are what makes our school so special. There is no feeling quite like that of running frantically between floors during SING! practice; sitting on the half-floor, sophomore bar, or junior atrium (rip senior bar) with your computer on your lap while pretending to study for a test or write an essay but really just laughing at a joke; or, of course, staying up into the wee early hours of the morning on the nights that we send The Spectator. I did all of these with friends. So hold those relationships tight. Second, high school will fly by. Don't get too caught up in the little things (think: tests, applications). Try to remember, and I know it's hard, to stay after class to catch up with a teacher or take the subway home with a friend you have not talked to for a while. Those are the memories that will stay with you (a perfect grade on a test never will).

Brian

If I were to describe Stuy in the flavors of Starburst: Lemon would be for the many moments that seemingly make you want to drop out, but then collectively become what's the best flavor (you can argue all you want). Whether it's studying three periods before a test, rehearsing your oratory speech for a speech competition to a night janitor, or grabbing a quick after-school boba to soothe the fact that your phone has just been confiscated for the third time, do it with a friend! High school is a lot easier when you choose to surround yourself with all sorts of amazing, interesting, and caring people you love, people you're able to celebrate the highs and brave through the lows with. And what's more, though Stuy has its fair share of problems, from the occasional student-administration communication breakdown to implicit racism against some students, transform your observations into experiences that create a more inclusive tomorrow where people aren't afraid to talk anything lemon.

Orange, which tastes exactly like the fruit but almost in an artificial way, is our commitment to finding a balance between research and preserving the human side of the equation. Yes, numbers are important. But please don't be that person crying about an A- on an English paper and certainly DON'T be that person going around making fun of people for not having enough AP classes. Be empathetic to others, and remember that in a school as hard to get through as Stuy, success requires a supportive, loving community, not an individual.

Miranda

If you're going to sneak iced coffee in your backpack, make sure it's sealed. Like, really make sure. Buy a pair of \$12 sneakers from Target and leave them in your gym locker. They'll last until senior year, and you'll never have to do the “unprepared” walk of shame into the gym in Doc Martens. Sometimes skipping the escalators and taking the long way up with a friend is worth being late to class. No homework or test is worth an all-nighter (I really mean it, not sleeping has never made my life better). Bring a water bottle to school and hydrate, otherwise you might faint in the chemistry lab and scare your teacher to death (definitely not based on personal experience). When a teacher writes “see me” on a test, see them. It's scary, but worth it, because they'll help you if you let them. Let yourself be happy for your friends when they succeed where you fail. And check out the stuff in those little glass tiles sometimes. Some of it's really cool.

Irene

Here is my advice:
If there is a club, a class, something you want to join and partake in, do it. Don't delay it. Four years pass by in a flash. Don't chicken out on Speech tryouts last minute, or join that dance group senior year because you tell yourself you'll go all out your last year of high school and then find out that you really like that group and wish you'd sign up earlier.

There is more to see beyond the 1/2/3 Chambers St train station; buy some discounted Toblerones from the Lot-Less store; flip through the Barnes & Noble above the Whole Foods, or the cart outside the Mysterious Book Shop; admire the crepes at the Takahachi Bakery; visit Poet's House. Trust me; you'll get lost in the shelves.

Treat yourself if you're in a sour mood and have some change to spare. That, and it's a good excuse to buy a Chipotle bowl, or Shake Shack fries (regretfully, I've never had Shake Shack. Criminal, I know).

It's the small things that resound the loudest. If someone looks cool in a new outfit or dyed their hair, drop a compliment. Purchase some chocolates or carnations from Indicator and send a note their way, or plant a surprise sticky note on their locker. Walk with friends to their lockers or next class. When we return to a world where six-feet apart is reduced to a customary 1.5-foot distance, I'll be sure to high-five and hug all my friends.

Cynthia

My memory is a little blurry looking back on these four years. Only some things jump out: hanging out and

continued on page 11

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School Newspaper



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Closing Comments

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sleeping on the ninth floor, running on only adrenaline when staying late in school for chorus rehearsals, SOS and SING! performances, looking forward to taking rollerblading class before March 2020 hit, carrying boxes of pizzas to the fourth floor, and staying up late debugging my convoluted code while on voice chat with friends, for example. The memories of running to the subway and into AP Music Theory always one minute late, however, I could make do if they were a little less vivid. Don't be too sad about having a one to tenth floor climb, just think of it as having leg day every day. There are so many more little details, but the point is, the friends and acquaintances I have made these moments shine golden. They helped me overcome some of my fears, when I had stood, pale faced, hesitant to join a club meeting because I didn't know anyone there, and supported me through some moments where I thought the end of the world was coming (mental breakdown—is that what they were?).

There's something exhilarating about seeing the people around you succeed, in their own ways, as you succeed. So keep in contact with those you form relationships with, and don't hesitate to participate in whatever you're interested in.

Also, I'm not sure if this is free advertisement but PokeGreen, albeit a little expensive, really saved my growling stomach on those late nights at school. Feel free to judge.

Maddy

After interviewing Mohammad

Haque ('02) for an article about a documentary featuring former Stuyvesant students recounting their experiences on 9/11, I asked him why he chose to share his story in the documentary and with me. He replied, "There's no small story when it comes to something like September 11."

Reporting for The Spectator these past four years, I've found there's no small story, period. I've written and edited articles covering everything from anti-racism initiatives at Stuyvesant to changes in the school administration (there have been quite a few!).

I've learned from each piece I've worked on. From Haque, I understood the ongoing emotional toll of 9/11 through the lens of another Stuyvesant student. From investigating the role of Facebook within Student Union elections, I became a more mindful consumer of social media. From my interview with Eve Berman—one of the first 13 women to attend Stuyvesant in 1969—I was inspired to be brave and fight for change I believe in.

More than anything else, The Spectator has taught me the power of actively and thoughtfully listening to the wonderful people all around me. My biggest piece of advice would be to connect with and grow from your peers. Listen to their not-so-small stories. There are so many still waiting to be heard.

Zoe

High school is just as important as college. Instead of worrying about what's next, make sure you enjoy now.

Calculus Before Checkbooks?

By ANISHA SINGHAL

We focus so much of our lives on scores. The SHSAT, SAT, ACT, and GPA are all quantifiable measures of our work and aptitude that we strive to perfect. But how many of us are preparing for the most important, ongoing score of our lives: our credit score? After graduating, some of us may never solve a calculus problem again. Others may never look under a microscope again. But every single one of us will have to manage our finances. And yet these are the skills that high schools aren't teaching us.

Financial unpreparedness is a nation-wide catastrophe that is constantly chipping away at people's livelihoods. A study by the National Financial Educators Council found that the lack of education on personal finances costs Americans a collective \$295 billion in 2018. Only 34 percent of Americans can score at least a four out of five on a basic financial literacy test. Such high rates of financial illiteracy have detrimental impacts on people's savings and economic stability. Nearly half of Americans don't have enough savings to get them through three months of expenses, and 36 percent are financially fragile (meaning they cannot gather \$2,000 within a month if faced with an emergency). Of course, external factors such as low wages and high living expenses greatly influence savings and debt, but if schools instill good financial

habits in their students, future generations will be a lot more prepared for economic hardships, such as global pandemics or housing crises.

Schools have the responsibility of providing the resources and knowledge that will prepare students for their lives after graduation. Nowadays, however, more emphasis is put on grades than on preparation for real-world responsibilities like financial management. High school is a launching pad for students going off on their own, whether it be to college or to work, and it is a critical point for them to learn the basics of personal finance. Fundamental knowledge, including opening bank and investment accounts, knowing the logistics of credit and debit cards, and taking out loans (including student loans), are all left out of most high school curricula. The impact of this ignorance can result in crushing amounts of student debt, jeopardized credit scores, insufficient savings, and poor budgeting skills.

Student loans are such a critical concept that they are one of the frontline issues in many political campaigns. For instance, President-elect Joe Biden is planning to forgive \$10,000 worth of student debt, a financial burden that about 45 million Americans carry. As people graduate from college, an overwhelming amount of debt weighs them down, sometimes up until their fifties. Yet when I go off to college and am looking

to take out a loan without my parents' support, research, and knowledge, I will be clueless about where to even begin. Like me, many high school students are at the doorsteps of momentous financial decisions—but are educationally unprepared to make them.

When schools fail to deliver education on essential life skills, families are forced to pick up the burden at home. Despite this responsibility, a study in 2017 found that 69 percent of parents have some level of reluctance to discuss money-related matters with their children, meaning many students do not get any financial education at all. Unfortunately, the students who are most negatively impacted by insufficient financial education are usually those whose families may also lack that knowledge. People are generally more willing and confident about discussing fields in which they themselves have been successful. Therefore, the more affluent parents with abundant financial knowledge are much better equipped to discuss financial matters with their children than parents who struggle financially themselves. This educational disparity regarding money, a matter that plays a critical role in everyone's life, further increases the divide between the rich and the poor. Even worse, students may not

even know that they are lacking financial literacy until

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Gamers, Rise Up

By ALEX CHO

We are poised to enter the golden era of video gaming: the size of the video game market surpassed those of sports and film combined, and the best games have achieved polish and narrative sophistication to rival highbrow art forms.

Yet expert reviews and customer ratings on newest games indicate that they fail to meet the standards set for them in previous years. Given the medium's emerging preeminence, the latest raft of gaming flops appears mysterious. *Cyberpunk 2077* has become just the latest symbol of large-scale gaming incompetence. CD Projekt Red, the development company responsible for *Cyberpunk*, had amassed a cult following the release of the *Witcher* series. *Cyberpunk 2077*, one of the most anticipated releases of all time, promised similar qualities but in a gritty sci-fi universe. However, players of the early versions complained of vast numbers of bugs and lack of compatibility with common gaming systems. Lawsuits and refund demands followed; CD Projekt Red's brand was tarnished. Why would the major game studios risk their reputation on a half-baked game?

First, these studios decided to impose accelerated production schedules to take advantage of the market window offered by COVID-19. What better time to launch an immersive game than when consumers have more time on their hands than ever? In one year's time, the unique opportunity could be gone. Unfortunately, by accelerating production, they risked their reputation for excellence, something hard to earn and easy to throw away.

In contrast, take Rockstar Games, a well-respected

development house, which recently won multiple awards from the gaming platform Steam for its renowned *Red Dead Redemption II*. Now take a look at the employee reviews for Rockstar games, and you'll notice almost all four and five stars. They frequently leave comments such as "managers seem to genuinely care about your wellbeing" and "great environment." Game development is a time and labor-intensive process, and employees at Rockstar Games certainly work hard. The developers have to chase down bugs, ensuring that the architecture is stable across more platforms than ever and ensuring consistent quality. But as the reviews suggest, Rockstar Games has an environment of respect, and employees are well compensated. But most are not so lucky. The BBC reported that employees at CD Projekt Red were forced to work 100+ hour weeks at rates well under market during the sprints demanded to meet the rapid production schedule. This culture is not at all unusual in the gaming industry.

The difference comes down to integrity. A reason that certain software companies have gotten away with mistreating workers for this long is the Silicon Valley myth popularized by startups like Netflix and Google, which bring to mind jungle gyms in the office, unlimited vacation days, and kombucha on tap. While that image is sometimes connected to reality at top companies, there are multiple tiers of labor in tech, extending from the almost-royalty-like founders and executives at leading firms down to the computer engineers at development shops in Ukraine working for \$5 per hour and the content moderators in Indonesia working 12-hour days for pennies for the unpleasant task of keeping Instagram free of obscenity.

Even within the sunny, friendly state of California, there's the phenomenon of H1-B Visa immigration bondage: foreign programmers are brought to work in American tech under a special program for skilled workers allowing them to stay in the country—as long as they stay at their host company. If they quit, they can be deported. Managers abuse the fact that these workers are basically stuck in indentured

up to those who open their wallets for these products and use them in their everyday lives to insist that they be produced in a just and equitable way. A frustrating bug in *Cyberpunk 2077* is a symptom of deeper issues. While gamers might just vent on a message board and move on, these flaws are an opportunity to take a longer and harder look at what is going on. Slaughterhouses in the early 20th century had to change after

examine our broken immigration laws. The HB-1 system should be replaced with something that simply lets engineers with sufficient skill move freely into the country, fulfilling our demand for tech labor without serfdom to a particular company. That change would both reduce outsourcing and eliminate the corrupting visa bondage. There should additionally be a labor bill of rights, including an exchange-rate adjusted minimum wage and other basic conditions any company that wants to do business in the U.S. must adhere to, even if their production is located abroad.

This initiative and other reforms would help alleviate the widening inequality in our leading industry, which has been minting its big winners more billions than ever during COVID. But it requires tearing ourselves away from our screens (and consoles) long enough to advocate for change. Stuyvesant is full of gamers, enthusiasts of Super Smash Brothers and League of Legends, and they have the ability to demand that the companies that make their games treat workers fairly. (Riot Games, maker of League, has in particular been cited for gender discrimination and a culture of harassment.) Taking action could mean circulating petitions or even boycotting games that are produced unethically. These may seem like small actions in relation to the size of the industry—but as gamers are nothing if not networked together, a strong gesture could have the potential to reverberate through the community. Gaming isn't a subculture where its bad behavior can be ignored anymore; it's fully gone mainstream, and it needs to grow up and clean up its act. That's the only way gaming will truly reach its "golden age."



Noah Taylor / The Spectator

servitude.

For gamers and other consumers of technology, it's becoming harder and harder to plead ignorance about how their favorite toys are being made. Like fashion, and food before it, "fast tech" is due for a reckoning. It's

journalists like Upton Sinclair shed light on the terrible practices they were maintaining. Student movements have sprung up in recent years against "fast fashion." Similar actions now need to be pursued against "fast tech."

The new administration should

Opinions

It's Time to Axe Legacy Admissions

By JOHN GROSSMAN

College admissions often feel unfair. Elite schools expect us to have perfect grades, dozens of extracurricular activities, test scores in the 99th percentile, and unique personal struggles that we've managed to overcome. If a student fails to display their overwhelming perfection and confidence without seeming unlikable or "too intense," he or she rakes in mountains of rejection letters and ends up at their ninth-choice school. Many students, therefore, spend their entire time at high school studying and taking on every extracurricular possible in the hopes of gaining an advantage in the college admissions process. In reality, however, the largest advantage is not given to the kids with the best grades, letters of recommendation, or awards, but to the kids whose parents went to that college.

Legacy admissions were first introduced at Dartmouth in 1919. The original policy read, "All properly qualified sons of Dartmouth alumni and Dartmouth college officers' would be admitted." This practice was put in place specifically to decrease the number of Jewish students at

Dartmouth because Jewish applicants rarely had fathers who had attended Dartmouth. This practice was soon adopted across all the Ivy League colleges, with the Princeton Board of Admissions specifically stating that this policy was used to resolve the school's "Jewish problem." The use of legacy admissions in the early 20th century ensured that the populations of elite institutions remained largely white, Protestant, and wealthy.

Since their creation, legacy admissions have been used as a way to give well-off white students a leg up in the admissions process. Legacy students are five times more likely to get admitted to Harvard, and 36 percent of Harvard's class of 2022 are legacy students. These students are certainly qualified, but it is unjust that between two equally qualified students, the student whose parent(s) went to a certain college is given an advantage.

People cannot control what family they are born into. Yet elite universities judge students in part based on their family pedigrees. Under this system, many of the best students are at an inherent disadvantage when put up against the children of a university's alumnus.

Even though we have varying degrees of control over our course load, grades, and extracurriculars, no amount of studying can change our family name. It is incredibly frustrating to know that family legacy could be the missing piece in a deserving student's application, but it is even more infuriating when we realize who is benefiting from this system.

Legacy admissions overwhelmingly help the wealthy. In Harvard's class of 2022, 46.4 percent of legacy admits came from families with an annual household income over \$500,000. This statistic is deeply unsurprising because Harvard's big selling point is how successful their alumni are: the average starting salary for a Harvard graduate hovers around \$80,000 and 10 percent of their graduates are making more than \$250,000 by the time they are 32. The fact that these students gain an advantage in the admissions process is completely unnecessary and goes against everything Harvard claims to stand for.

The first part of Harvard's mission statement reads, "The mission of Harvard College is to educate the citizens and citizen-leaders for our society. We do this through our com-

mitment to the transformative power of a liberal arts and sciences education." A commitment to the transformative power of education implies that people are getting transformed. It conjures up imagery of a school welcoming students from all walks of life and preparing them for the highest positions in society. However, legacy admissions contradict that image in every possible way. A Harvard education is not quite as "transformative" if many of the students already start off rich. Harvard and other elite universities are essentially giving a platform to those at the top of the socioeconomic pyramid while they claim to be "educators of the people."

When confronted with these criticisms, elite universities employ two main arguments in defense of legacy admissions. They claim that legacy admissions increase donations so they can give more financial aid to low-income students. But it has been repeatedly proven that legacy admissions have no clear effect on alumni donations. More frequently, they argue that legacy admissions help build a strong alumni community. This claim is true, as it makes alumni more

likely to send their kids to their alma mater.

That being said, legacy admissions also severely limit who is welcome in that community. Legacy admissions put working-class students, the children of immigrants, and people of color at a significant disadvantage. If elite schools want their alumni community to be insular and homogenous, then legacy admissions are a great way to do that, but otherwise, their focus should be on diversifying their alumni community, not closing it off.

At the end of the day, legacy admissions have few true benefits and plenty of clear disadvantages. They started as a tool to keep certain students out of top schools and are now used to keep certain students in. They give the children of alumni an extra pat on the back for being born while providing everyone else another hoop to jump through. Legacy admissions essentially tell the public that while schools like Harvard claim to be for everyone, they still reserve a few spots for those at the top. This unfair policy keeps plenty of qualified students out of elite schools, and it is about time we eliminate it.

Social Media Must End

By AARON VISSER

Every person has his or her social media hot take. The Right complains about arbitrary censorship, the Left concerns itself with the spread of dangerous conspiracy theories, technocrats argue for the end of their monopolies, and advocates such as Tristan Harris focus on the damage to our attention. Yet most don't go all the way and recognize that social media is wholly toxic to our society and personal lives.

While media moguls of the past controlled individual outlets, the unelected "kings" of the Internet—owners of absurdly powerful social media companies—collectively de-

fine the terms of engagement for every outlet and individual. Who are Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey? I certainly didn't elect either of them and neither did anyone reading this article. Multiple fruitless congressional hearings and a general lack of state action have shown that only these individuals actually have the power to govern these sites.

And boy, have they governed badly! Last week saw an insurgency at the Capitol incited by our social media President, and driven by social media conspiracy theories. A Vox poll found that 72 percent of Republicans "don't trust the election results" and 49 percent believe Antifa is "very

much to blame" for the attack on the Capitol. Though Facebook, Twitter, and 4chan didn't create these theories, they are entirely responsible for the spread of these ideas. The main emotion these platforms produce is outrage, mostly directed at our fellow Americans. The exit ramp from our democratic implosion may not exist, but it certainly won't be found online, where professionals spend all day dunking on the other side.

Yet nowhere has social media been worse than in our personal lives. These corporations have developed products so addictive that people not only frequently find themselves scrolling for hours, but also

realize that such scrolling is a necessity central to their social lives. The 40-year-old mom has to be on Facebook, the up-and-coming journalist must be on Twitter, the college senior on Snapchat, the high school girl on TikTok, the middle school boy on YouTube, and the bored online learning student on all of them at once. Everyone I know uses some combination of these apps for hours every day. Yet when I ask whether it provides them satisfaction, I receive a confused look as if they don't even comprehend why that question is important.

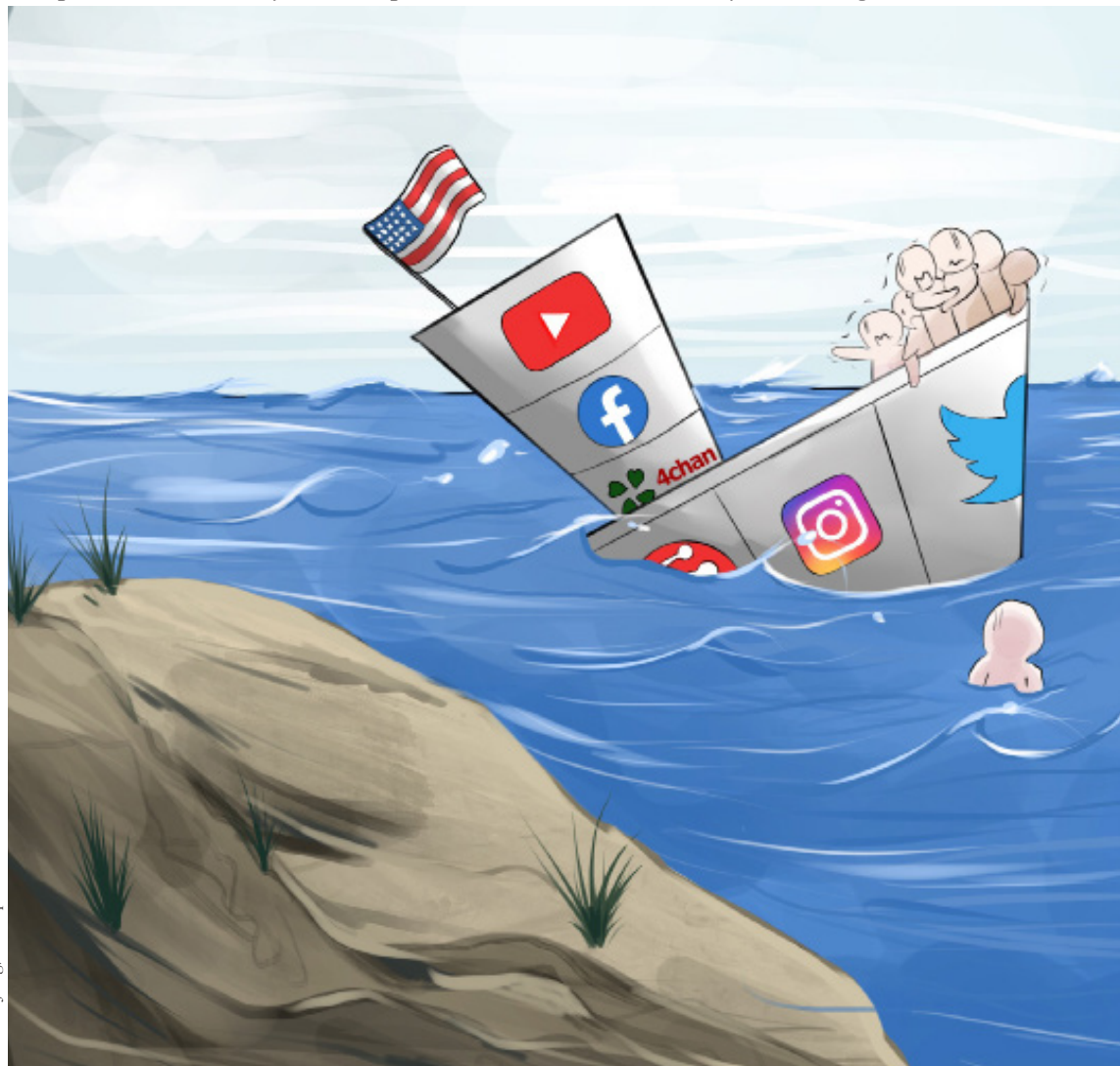
Yes, social media isn't without any potential benefits. Light entertainment is great in moderation and some people have created relationships through the sites. Though it claims to have been so great for friendships, people spend less time with friends than ever. It should help people hookup, but sex has gone down. Depression, self-harm, and suicide rates have all shot up. For younger kids, especially girls, the connection between self-harm and social media is clear. The damage these apps continue to wear upon our society's young people is deep, yet companies have paid no price.

Moreover, social media has begun to regulate itself in a way usually characteristic of the government. In a display of power last weekend, Google, Amazon Web Services, and Apple all moved to ban the conservative social media site Parler for its part in inciting violence. Whether or not you feel the act was justified is beside the point: it demonstrated that the U.S. government doesn't define free speech in the 21st century. Instead, social media apps seem to be the ones placing limits on free speech.

Most people who recognize the problematic nature of social media advocate for some small tweak that will magically

solve everything. Right now, a popular idea is to break up the big firms, as if separating Facebook and Instagram will fix the problems with their business models. Some people advocate for more censorship, others advocate for less, pleading in the court of our Internet kings to dictate the speech policy in our online world. Besides telling people to learn to use social media more responsibly or politely asking to change its algorithms, no one has come up with a good solution to the social and personal problems these sites produce. That's because there is none.

Social media is fundamentally broken. It abuses our democracy and personal lives. People shouldn't have more "friends" than they can actually know. The only proper solution is the accidentally brilliant one pushed by President Trump, probably the least thoughtful person ever. Congress must repeal Section 230 of the Communication Decency Act. This is part of a law passed in 1996, when the Internet was still dial-up, that protects social media companies from legal liability for the content posted on their platforms. If social media is a factory, Section 230 allows them to dump their toxic waste of liability, conspiracy theories, and hate into the river of our society free of consequences. Without that clause, these platforms couldn't exist in their current form. No more Facebook, Instagram, 4chan, YouTube, or Twitter. Laws would have to be passed to deal with the fallout; no one wants to see Wikipedia or other user-produced sites go. Kumbaya and spiritual healing wouldn't immediately break out. But the arrowhead must be pulled out before the wound can be treated, and as long as social media exists in its current dangerous form, we can't deal with so many of the most important issues in society.



Opinions

The Media Is a Pedophile

By ELIZABETH BLACK

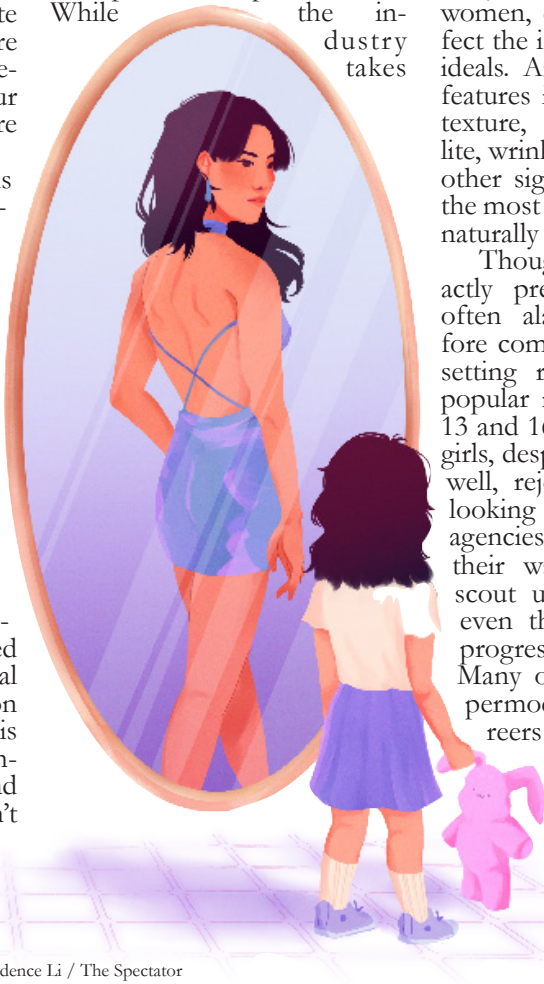
Every girl has stood in front of her bedroom mirror, resenting the uneven skin, body fat, and other “imperfections” brought on by puberty. In 10 years’ time, the cycle will repeat with a slightly different focus: we’ll see fine lines on our faces and stretch marks on our thighs. Though all women have these natural features, we hate them. We’ll want nothing more than to be teenagers again, remembering how we were at our most attractive when we were underage.

Female beauty standards have been at the core of society for centuries, many socially constructed and differing in every region and decade. Some ideals, such as full lips and a low waist-to-hip ratio, have evolutionary explanations, as does a preference for younger women, because they are more likely to have a successful pregnancy and childbirth. However, there’s little biological reason for a 16-year-old girl to be more desirable than a 26-year-old.

Nonetheless, childlike features have always been deemed attractive, and lack of a primal reason allows for the conclusion that internalized pedophilia is behind these disturbing standards. However, men who find such features attractive aren’t necessarily pedophiles themselves: with the exception of certain innate preferences, the average man’s idea of a “perfect woman” changes with his environment. Today, the most common source of this influence is the media he consumes, telling him what to be attracted to before his sexuality is even fully developed. Body types and facial features go in and out of style like clothing,

but constant through the years has been pedophilia’s iron grip on the industries that influence these standards. By working to remove or at least lighten this effect, we can improve our world for women and girls.

Our society protects minors more than any other in history, but the fashion and modeling industry keeps its standards as pedophilic as ever. While the industry takes



Cadence Li / The Spectator

these ideals favor children. Models most desired by agencies are ones with childlike features: they are slender with narrow hips and small breasts, as well as hairless from the nose down. Shaving for women was an unknown concept until the 1940s, when magazines began advertising it by making models shave. Today, the absence of body hair is a core standard for women, demonstrating the effect the industry has on beauty ideals. Among other desirable features is perfect skin, rid of texture, stretch marks, cellulite, wrinkles, dark spots, or any other signs of adulthood. For the most part, these traits occur naturally only in children.

Though models aren’t exactly prepubescent, they are often alarmingly young. Before companies recently began setting regulations, the most popular models were between 13 and 16 years old, with older girls, despite being teenagers as well, rejected on account of looking too womanly. Many agencies have yet to change their ways and continue to scout underage models, and even the better firms make progress at painstaking rates. Many of today’s famous supermodels began their careers before they were 18 and will likely retire within the next few years. Most female models are considered too old to work once they reach their mid-20s, an age at which they are perfectly youthful and beautiful, because they look like women and not girls.

Meanwhile, male models continue their careers well into their 40s or 50s. Year after year, middle-aged or older male

celebrities win titles like People Magazine’s “Sexiest Man Alive.” Men are allowed to have wrinkles and gray hair, while women are criticized as soon as their skin becomes imperfect. To be masculine is to be a man, fully grown, and developed with signs of age and wear; to be feminine, however, is to be a “girl,” dainty, and “cute” the way a child is.

Results of this disparity are evident in today’s popular sexual preferences. A recent study described in Christian Rudder’s “Dataclysm” asked people between the ages of 20 and 49 what age they prefer in a sexual partner. While almost every woman claimed preference for men around her own age, both 20-year-old and 49-year-old men preferred women in their early 20s, with their “perfect age” for a woman never exceeding 24.

Today, mainstream media is becoming overtaken by platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. Despite benefits that social media has brought, its allowance for the sexualization of children may be worse than that of any other form of media. Users know that a considerable portion of content depicts women in sexual or somewhat sexual contexts—there’s nothing inherently wrong with this subject, but the majority of this content is uploaded by underage girls. Commonly referred to as “thirst traps,” these photos and videos attract both young men and pedophiles. Content from social media is constantly uploaded to child pornography websites, victimizing girls who were just having fun or being confident. Unfortunately, it’ll never be possible to stop pedophiles from finding these photos and videos, so the only solution is for girls not to post

them. Social media platforms must install stricter regulations, and the girls themselves should be careful and consider who may see their posts.

Pedophilia is even seen in regular pornography, which often plays a key role in the development of a boy’s sexuality. Popular categories of content are “teen,” “barely legal,” “schoolgirl,” “father-daughter,” and more atrocities. Pornography with extremely pedophilic undertones is popular among men of all ages: “teen,” for instance, has been a top 10 search for the past six years. This problem is unsolvable by law, since the videos star adults who only look and act like children. While better than casting actual children, it should not be socially acceptable to watch porn in which women wear pigtailed, braces, and children’s pajamas while holding stuffed animals. Much of this content also focuses on virginity as female “innocence” nature is considered attractive. The adult film industry doesn’t care that those who enjoy this content may begin consuming actual child porn and develop full-blown pedophilic tendencies.

To begin to reverse the damage it has caused, the media needs to strongly regulate its conduct toward young girls. The fashion industry should treat aging female models the same way it treats aging male models, social media platforms and users should control the content that underage girls post, and pornography companies need to filter videos with pedophilic undertones. Through showing more women who look like adults, we can slowly but surely normalize natural occurrences of puberty, and perhaps, someday, women will be allowed to age in peace.

into consideration features men are attracted to for evolutionary reasons, it also factors in its own “taste,” which heavily influences overall beauty standards over time—the problem, of course, is that

The Paper of the People—and Its Death

By ISABEL CHING

Since America’s birth, printed newspapers have brought information to the public. They have carried news about wars, politics, people, and the world. Our nation’s roots can be traced back to the power of the printed paper. During the Revolutionary War, newspapers sparked and sustained the flames of rebellion and dissent, informed the public about wars and battles, and ultimately united a divided nation. In the words of American Revolution historian David Ramsay, “In establishing American independence, the pen and press had merit equal to that of the sword.” Newspapers were a powerful force in ensuring American independence and have continued to uphold the values for which independence was fought. Yet over three centuries after the publication of America’s first newspaper in 1704, it seems that the era of printed newspapers may be coming to a close.

Today’s printed newspapers are dying a slow and painful death. Prior to the development

of online news sources, printed newspapers were the main source of information and dominated much of the public sphere, because they connected previously isolated communities. However, people today no longer need their daily newspaper—a few clicks online suffice instead, as most news nowadays is easily accessible and available for free. The truth is that printed newspapers are, and have been, on the decline since the advent of the Internet. Despite the large, positive role that printed newspapers have played in the past, it’s time to acknowledge that their death may simply reflect the changing of eras and offer the news world an opportunity to move forward.

Research reflects the death of printed newspapers. Printed newspaper circulation fell to its lowest level since 1940 in 2018 with total daily newspaper circulation (printed and digital) numbering around 28.6 million for weekdays and 30.8 million for Sunday publications. Financial difficulties have arisen as a result of this decline too: advertising revenue for

newspapers is estimated to have dropped 62 percent from \$37.8 billion in 2008 to \$14.3 billion in 2018. The pandemic has only exacerbated the existing decline. As Americans are no longer able to afford small luxuries due to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, newspapers have reached the nadir of their suffering during this past year. Six publicly traded newspaper companies, which collectively own over 300 daily papers, saw advertising revenue fall by a median of 42 percent from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020. With such drastic declines, it seems unlikely that the newspaper industry will ever return to its previous prominence.

However, America’s insatiable desire for fresh and exciting news has not waned—in fact, it is stronger than ever. The chaotic, political climate of today’s world, coupled with the leisure time that quarantine offers, has left Americans hungry for news—just not printed news. Online platforms, like television and digital news reports, have become the new modern center for information.

For one, they don’t require the same amount of labor as their printed counterparts, which often need to be delivered and packaged. Second, they tend to be much cheaper, since they can reach a larger audience without needing to be distributed. In fact, advertising revenue for three of America’s biggest broadcasting networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, increased over the same period while newspapers’ advertising revenue fell 42 percent. The three media giants averaged a combined 30 million viewers, a 39 percent jump since last year. Digital platforms experienced growth as well. In contrast to their printed newspaper counterparts, digital newsrooms saw substantial increases in employment, with numbers increasing approximately 82 percent from around 7,400 to 13,500 between 2008 and 2018. This shift represents a transition from traditional printed newspapers to digital news as the latter is simply more convenient, cheap, and accessible. Forsaking these benefits simply to maintain tradition would be blatantly disrespecting progress.

While some view the end of printed newspapers as the end of a cornerstone of American journalism, printed newspapers are a thing of the past, and the most we can do is respect and acknowledge their death. This death, however, need not be synonymous with the death of free, accessible knowledge. If anything, the switch to online media sources, like television and websites, should make knowledge more accessible to the public, since printed newspapers are more expensive and difficult to obtain. In fact, there are already efforts made to promote this progress. Organizations like the American Journalism Project, which strives to establish a network of nonprofit, reliable news outlets, provide a great starting point if we are to leave behind the era of printed newspapers and begin the transition to online platforms. Ultimately, the death of printed newspapers should not be emblematic of an end to news as we know it—rather it should represent the birth of a new era of information and public knowledge.

Calculus Before Checkbooks?

continued from page 11

they are thrown headfirst into making their own financial decisions and find themselves completely

unprepared. Recognizing the lack of financial education and the need for it is the first step toward creating a more financially literate America. Until our

education system catches up and adds sufficient financial literacy education to the curriculum, students have to take on the responsibility of educating themselves. Whether it is through

the extensive materials available online or through family and friends, it is crucial that every student acquires the financial knowledge they will need to be successful in the long run. Over

time, your GPA will fade into an inconsequential measure of your past excellence; it’s actually your credit score that has the potential to define your future.

Opinions

Life in Lockdown:

Replicating the Israeli Approach to COVID-19 and Vaccination

By MAYA DUNAYER

When I arrived at the Israeli airport in December of 2020, I was surprised by how orderly and efficient the COVID-19 precautions were. The airport officers asked me a series of questions regarding my recent exposure to COVID-19, including where I would be staying for the mandatory two weeks of quarantine. The Israeli Red Cross station stood with COVID-19 tests ready to be shipped off to the lab and returned in a few days. Everybody wore a mask, and everyone followed social distancing protocols. It's an entirely different world compared to the United States, and the world needs to use Israel as a standard to model their COVID-19 policies after.

Here in Israel, COVID-19 restrictions are followed and enforced. If a police officer catches you without a mask, you can be fined 500 shekels, which translates to about \$145 USD. The Israeli police regularly checks on those who are in the mandated two-week quarantine, and anyone caught violating it is fined 5000 shekels (\$1460 USD). Aside from these

restrictions, Israel also enforces lockdowns around every two months whenever COVID-19 rates spike. Currently in its third lockdown, Israel attempts to keep cases down through various means, such as closing schools and requiring citizens to only travel within a one-kilometer radius from their houses. If citizens are found violating any of these restrictions, they will also be fined 500 shekels. Due to these restrictions, Israeli citizens are much more compliant. The difference is stark compared to the United States, where you can find crowded streets with multiple people maskless.

Aside from the effective regulations Israel has in place, it is also the country with the best approach to the vaccine in the world. Israel made deals with vaccine companies such as Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Pfizer in mid November in order to ensure access to the vaccine before larger countries did. They paid a hefty premium for the vaccines, with one anonymous official from the prime minister's cabinet claiming it was "around \$30 per vaccine dose or around twice the price abroad." This quick approach

allowed the tiny country to gain access to the vaccine before many other countries, due to concerns that Israel would not be able to gain access to the vaccine once bigger countries made deals with the companies.

Israel also made the smart decision to repackage the vaccine doses in boxes that are around the size of a pizza, allowing for distribution to more remote sites and in smaller numbers. With about 400 vaccine centers across the country, including in Arab towns, Israelis are able to find a vaccination center near their home for easy access. Israel's universal public healthcare system, in which every citizen is covered by a healthcare maintenance organization and then connected to a national digital network, makes the process even more efficient. If they are in the group of citizens who are currently being prioritized for the vaccine, including adults over 60, healthcare workers, and those with medical conditions, Israelis may either receive a text message prompting them to make a vaccination appointment, or they may call a center to schedule an appointment. With about 150,000 Israelis

being vaccinated a day, Israel is the country with the highest proportional rate of citizens vaccinated, with 11.5 out of 100 citizens vaccinated. The second highest proportional rate, for reference, is Bahrain, with 3.53 out of 100 citizens having received the vaccine. Israel also makes sure no dose of the vaccine is wasted by allowing citizens who have lined up on the streets outside of the vaccination centers to receive the vaccine if there are extra doses available.

In stark contrast to Israel's astonishing progress, the United States and other world powers are lagging behind. The United States has vaccinated only one percent of its population. Though it is true that these world powers have much larger populations and have distributed more vaccinations overall than Israel has, the proportional rates are incredibly low. Israel's public healthcare system is, of course, not replicable in many of the world's larger countries, but the system of texting citizens when they are able to set up a vaccination appointment is incredibly effective, and other countries should attempt to put something simi-

lar in place. It is also important to recognize that no dose of the vaccine should be wasted by allowing anyone to get vaccinated if a center has extra doses. Informing people of the location of their nearest vaccination center will also make the process more efficient. Finally, the United States government must continue to purchase vaccine doses, even if it has to be at a premium. Though it may be expensive, these doses are the most important thing that the United States needs right now, and no expense should be spared. These policies will assist the United States in giving the vaccine to everyone who needs it as quickly as possible.

The United States needs to take a page out of Israel's book and provide its citizens with the same easy and efficient access to the vaccine. Every day, the U.S. drags its feet and delays the process, and more innocent people are put at risk. Using what has worked for Israel in American policies moving forward is the most effective way to ensure that we can have as many people vaccinated as soon as possible and put a stop to this pandemic before it can claim more lives.

What It Means to Stand Your Ground in a Changing United States

By LAUREN CHIN

The United States has become increasingly dangerous over the past year. Even with the ongoing lockdown, riots and attacks have become more and more common. Many are prepared to defend their lives from those with opposing viewpoints, no matter what it takes. Yet when is it truly justified to use lethal force?

In Ohio, the Stand Your Ground law allows civilians who legally own guns to use lethal force when faced with life-threatening circumstances. Up until January 4, the legislature only applied if a person was in their home or vehicle. In any other instance, they were required to retreat from the situation first. Now, the law has been expanded to allow lawful use of lethal force in any place in which the person lawfully has a right to be at.

While this expansion may seem extreme, Ohio's decision is merely the most recent in a large number of doctrines. Some form of the Stand Your Ground law exists in every state in America, but in only 14 states, New York being one of them, are citizens asked to attempt retreat before using lethal force.

The purpose of this law is clear: to provide more safety and freedom to those who are legally allowed to own and carry guns. After all, as citizens of the United States, we have the right to bear arms and act in self-defense according to the Second Amendment. In a perfect world, the Stand Your Ground law would allow citizens to successfully protect themselves, their families, and their communities from violent attacks.

Unfortunately, the reality is a bit more complicated. Despite its intentions, the Stand Your Ground law may do more harm than good. RAND Corporation compiled multiple studies re-

lated to the Stand Your Ground law and similar doctrines in April of 2020. Research gathered from seven separate experiments indicated that the law may lead to more violent crime, as criminals would prepare for civilians armed with guns. This may incentivize criminals to carry more dangerous weapons or use lethal force more liberally in order to prevent attempts of self-defense. The same study also explains that there is no evidence that these laws actually prevent any gun-related misconduct.

have attempted to use these and similar laws as justification for their actions that would otherwise be condemned as criminal. The first time the Stand Your Ground laws came under intense scrutiny was in 2012, when high school student Trayvon Martin was fatally shot. George Zimmerman, the shooter, claimed that he had acted in self-defense and was ultimately acquitted of all charges. This supposed claim of innocence sparked outrage throughout the nation as people wondered what threat an

had been paralyzed in a police shooting. By the end of the night, Rittenhouse had wound up killing two people and severely injuring a third. Public statements from his lawyer and supporters claimed that he had the right to draw a gun, as he was only there to keep the peace in Kenosha and thus acted in self-defense. Rittenhouse was officially charged with homicide but pled not guilty on January 5.

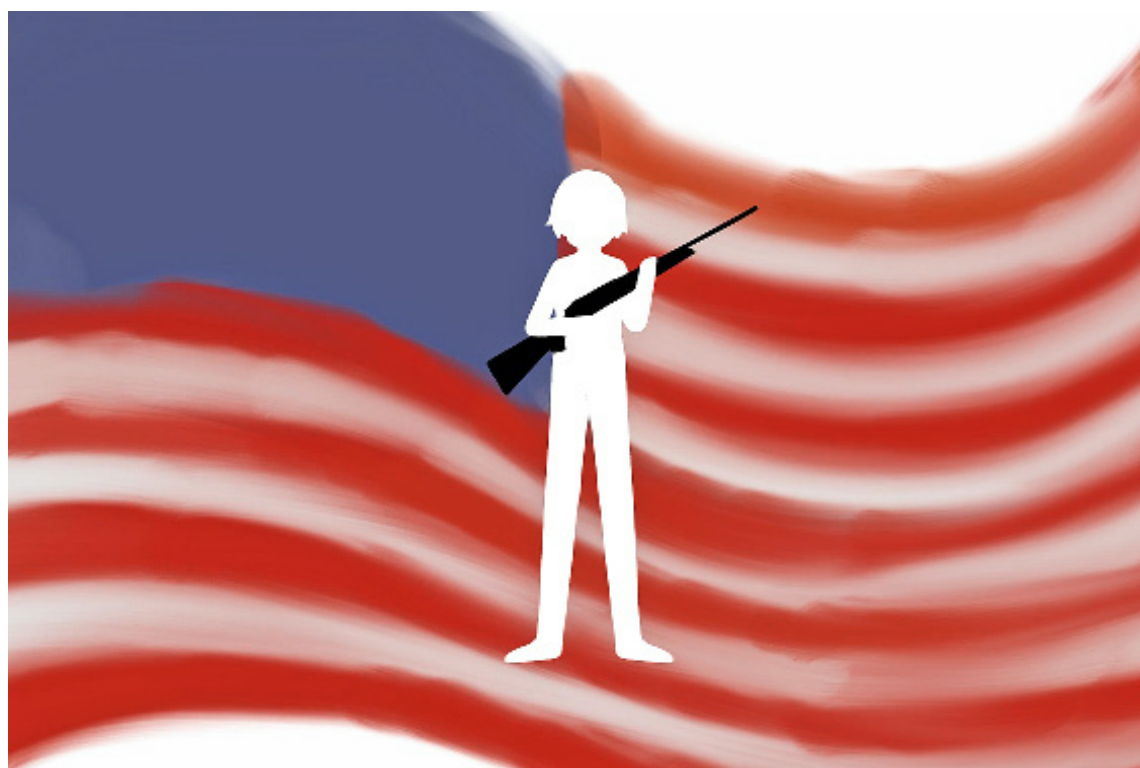
The definition of "self-defense" becomes blurry in situations like these. Often, it can create a situation of one per-

Ground cases throughout the United States. He found that white people who killed Black people were far more likely to be found justified in their killings than any other pairings, especially in states with a Stand Your Ground law. Once again, the Stand Your Ground law fails to establish a concrete definition of "self-defense."

Ultimately, the initial idea of the Stand Your Ground law is not the issue. Though giving citizens the right to protect themselves from danger is well-meaning, it is not necessarily practical in a place as politically volatile as the United States. In order to ensure its true success, a clear definition of self-defense must be included in its policies. This clarification would ensure that these laws aren't subject to a different interpretation each time they are brought up in court, setting a coherent standard for all cases.

At the very least, other states could follow New York's precedent. Here, citizens are tasked with a duty of retreat before using lethal force. In other words, they can only claim self-defense and use the Stand Your Ground law if they attempt to disengage from the situation. Of course, there are always exceptions; when a person is inside their own home or vehicle or if they are threatened with kidnapping or assault, no duty to retreat is necessary.

It's important to realize that laws and regulations do not always work perfectly in the real world. Many proponents of a policy only advocate on behalf of the hypothetical benefits without looking at its actual impact. The Stand Your Ground law is an unfortunate example of this situation where people see it solely as a way to protect themselves without acknowledging the unnecessary danger that it can cause.



Lauren Chin / The Spectator

Furthermore, those who carry guns aren't always the perfect protectors. It's unreasonable to expect every citizen to behave as a trained officer would. There is always a possibility that someone will make a mistake and further escalate the situation. When officers arrive at the scene, it may be difficult to discern who the initial attacker actually was.

In addition, some people

unarmed teenager could pose. Though his attorneys did not explicitly claim that Zimmerman was "standing his ground," many still attributed this not-guilty verdict as a direct result of the Stand Your Ground law.

More recently, in late August of 2020, a teenager named Kyle Rittenhouse brought a rifle to Kenosha, Wisconsin. There, many rioters were protesting on behalf of Jacob Blake, who

son's word against another's. There is no clear boundary on when the Stand Your Ground law should actually be used, especially since there seems to be a racial disparity between those who are successful in using it and those who are not. For example, soon after Zimmerman was exonerated, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center conducted a study on successful Stand Your

A Rechargeable Zinc-Air Battery Could Transform Energy Use

By ANGELINA CHANG

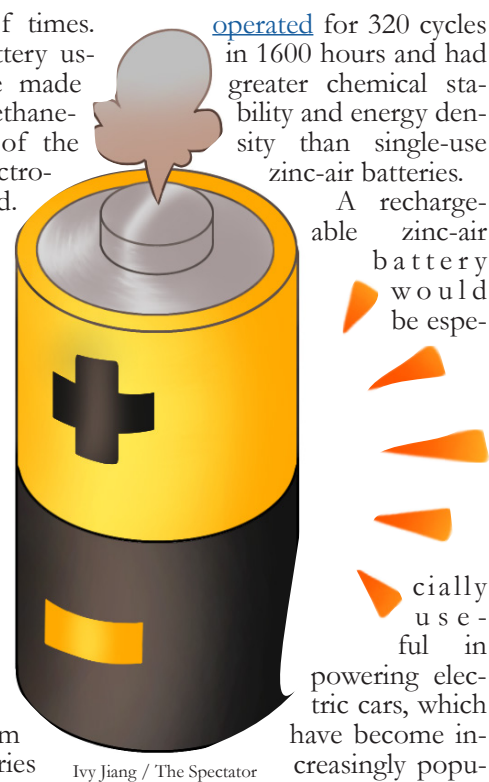
Deriving much of their power from air, zinc-air batteries have been a [promising source of energy](#) due to their large energy densities, relatively inexpensive production costs, and long shelf lives. The problem is that they are often only single-use under specific ambient conditions and with short active lives. However, a new development in producing a rechargeable zinc-air battery could lead to its use in a wider variety of devices.

Like most batteries, zinc-air cells produce electrical power from chemical reactions. They [receive](#) one of the reactants—oxygen—from the air, which then reacts with the cathode inside the cell. Water in the cathode reacts with oxygen, forming hydroxide that migrates to

the anode. The hydroxide and the zinc from the anode react, producing water and zinc oxide. In this reaction, electrons are released and travel through a circuit to power the connected device. However, since zinc-air batteries rely on the outside environment for one of their reactants, excessive exposure to air or humidity can cause the zinc gel to dry up or flood the cell with water vapor. This reaction is also irreversible because the caustic electrolyte—the liquid that surrounds the cathode and anode—can break down the electrodes.

A new design could solve this issue, leading to longer-lasting zinc-air batteries. Researchers led by Dr. Wei Sun, a materials scientist at the University of Muenster in Germany, [created](#) a prototype of a zinc-air battery that could be

recharged hundreds of times. They developed a battery using a new electrolyte made from zinc trifluoromethanesulfonate salt instead of the strong alkaline electrolytes traditionally used. The new electrolyte is hydrophobic, keeping water molecules away from the surface of the cathode. This new design improves the reversibility of the reaction, allowing the battery to be recharged. After testing the battery, the team found that their batteries



Ivy Jiang / The Spectator

AlphaFold: The AI That Solved a 50-Year-Old Protein Structure Problem

By KAITLYN LEE

From your silky-smooth hair after taking a hot shower to the billions of antibodies circulating your body to help fight off infections, your complex body and its amazing capabilities are built by proteins, one of the fundamental building blocks of life. It is the proteins' structural variety that allows them to perform so many different functions in the human body. So, it is no surprise that decades of research have been dedicated to developing technology capable of predicting a protein's structure, as structure determines function. An AI network known as AlphaFold, developed by Google's AI subsidiary DeepMind, was recognized in a competition known as Critical Assessment of protein Structure Prediction (CASP) for doing so with great accuracy in November 2020. With AlphaFold, scientists have gained the potential to not only achieve a much deeper understanding of protein structure and function but also utilize the power of proteins to revolutionize all fields of biology, ranging from medicine to environmental science.

The story of AlphaFold began in 1972 when Nobel Prize in Chemistry laureate Christian Anfinsen concluded his acceptance speech with a postulate stating that a protein's structure could be determined solely by its amino acid sequence. Proteins are made up of molecules known as amino acids, and there are about 20 that occur naturally. As a protein typically has 100 amino acids in its sequence, an immense number of amino acid subunit combinations allow for the 3D structure formation of 200 billion known proteins worldwide. With such a vast number of proteins, technology that could easily predict a protein's structure with just its amino sequence could cut down the time needed to understand each and every protein important to our everyday functioning. And while techniques such as X-ray

crystallography, nuclear magnetic resonance, and recently, cryo-electron microscopy, can already determine a protein's structure, they require trial-and-error procedures that can span years in heavy lab work and cost millions in equipment.

However, a major obstacle stood in the race for protein structure prediction technology: a protein can undergo 10^{300} different folds before it settles into its final 3D structure. In order to encourage research and development to find a solution to this challenge, Professor John Moult and Krzysztof Fidelis founded CASP in 1994, a biennial contest that assesses participants' ability to predict protein structure accurately based on experimental data. Accuracy is scored on a metric called the Global Distance Test (GDT), which is the percentage of amino acids within a threshold distance from their correct positions. As Professor Moult stated, a score of 90 GDT is considered to be competitive with experimental results. AlphaFold entered CASP in 2018 and won first place amongst its competitors, but in CASP 2020, AlphaFold rose to the summit of the mountain of decades-old protein structure prediction research and development, outperforming its 100 competitors. In comparison to median scores for best competitors in previous CASP competitions, which ranged from 30 to 40 GDT, AlphaFold managed to obtain a

median score of about 56 GDT in CASP 2018 and improved to an 87 GDT in CASP 2020. With such excellent scores in CASP, AlphaFold was deemed a solution to the protein structure prediction challenge by Moult and Fidelis, opening up a pathway for AlphaFold as a primary tool in scientific research.

But how does AlphaFold topple over other AI in making precise protein structure predictions? During its initial devel-

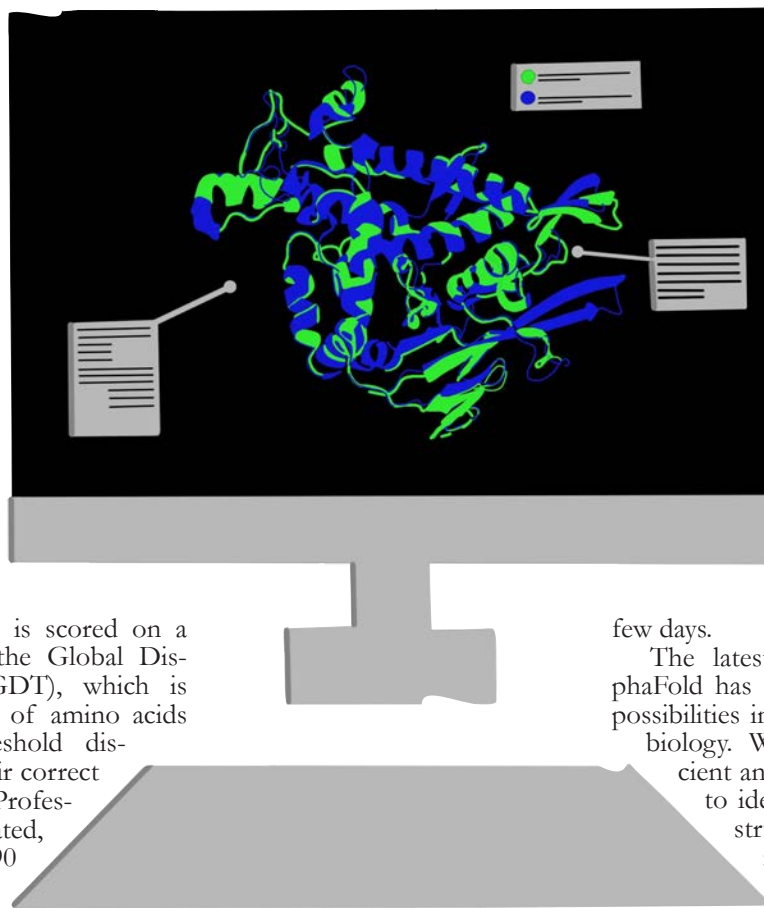
opment, AlphaFold applied a method known as deep learning, a type of AI function consisting of algorithms closely mimicking the workings of the human brain and neural networks, to predict the distance between pairs of amino acids in a protein and the angles between chemical bonds connecting these amino acids. AlphaFold then searched for a model that fit the protein's properties. Later on, DeepMind developed and implemented their own new deep learning network, including information about the physical and geometrical constraints of protein folding to upgrade AlphaFold. In its latest version, the folded protein is visualized as a spatial graph, which is used to analyze the physical interactions within proteins. Using an attention-based neural network system, AlphaFold can focus on a subset of inputs, interpret the structure of the graph, and use methods such as evolutionarily related sequences, multiple sequence alignment, and a representation of amino acid pairs to refine the graph. These procedures, alongside a database of about 170 thousand protein structures, is what allows AlphaFold to create highly accurate predictions of protein structures within a few days.

The latest version of AlphaFold has opened numerous possibilities in various fields of biology. With a more efficient and inexpensive way to identify new protein structures and determine their functions, scientists can use AlphaFold for faster drug development as new diseases are being rapidly discovered. "This is a problem that I was beginning to think would not get solved in my lifetime," stated Janet Thornton, a structural biologist at the European Bioinformatics Institute and a past CASP assessor. Thornton hopes that with AlphaFold, scientists will be able to identify the functions of thousands of proteins and gene variations of these proteins that cause genetic

disorders. As for environmental science, AlphaFold can search for enzymes that decompose industrial waste, which may lead to the development of potential solutions for pollution, such as genetically modifying bacteria to synthesize these enzymes.

AlphaFold may even provide future pandemic solutions by providing a more comprehensive understanding of novel viruses by identifying their proteins. DeepMind's group of researchers have already used AlphaFold to combat the current COVID-19 pandemic by predicting six proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. AlphaFold demonstrated especially accurate predictions for the structure of two SARS-CoV-2 proteins known as ORF3a and ORF8, whose respective functions are promoting cell death and immune system bypassing.

AlphaFold has solved a 50-year-old protein structure prediction problem, and its potential in diverse areas like drug development, industrial waste reduction, and pandemic response not only shows how significant proteins are but what AI is capable of in the life sciences. As one of the first AI networks developed to aid our understanding of how proteins work, AlphaFold will become part of the bridge that branches our knowledge of biology into the new developing field of AI and life-like machines. For Stuyvesant students, this can not only be an exciting new achievement to follow and keep up to date with but also become an inspiration for new interdisciplinary projects and ideas connecting these two fields to expand our scientific expertise. As a more accessible, cheaper means of scientific research, AlphaFold opens up endless opportunities for young STEM students and the global scientific community to continue studying proteins as the essential units of our body and as a future solution to tackle medical, environmental, and various scientific world issues.



Susannah Ahn / The Spectator

opment, AlphaFold applied a method known as deep learning, a type of AI function consisting of algorithms closely mimicking the workings of the human brain and neural networks, to predict the distance between pairs of amino acids in a protein and the angles between chemical bonds connecting these amino acids. AlphaFold then searched for a model that fit the protein's properties. Later on, DeepMind developed and implemented

Science

Amidst Wind and Snow

By OSCAR WANG

By the time you read this, it has likely been over a year since COVID-19 entered the United States. Ask any Stuyvesant student, and they would respond that they have become all too familiar with seclusion since then. Yet this lifestyle has been typical for researchers in Antarctica since 1958. A majority of the population knows of Antarctica's existence—perhaps you learned about the seven continents and that scientists are working in Antarctica while learning what two plus two was. However, few people are aware of the research scientists have been periodically conducting on the continent's desolate terrain.

At first glance, Antarctica's freezing winds and dry climate make it inhospitable for any humans brave enough to enter the isolated expanse. Despite this, the Earth's coldest continent has much to offer for scientific research. Upon closer inspection, these deadly conditions make it an ideal location for biological, astronomical, oceanic, and meteorological research. In fact, thousands of scientists spend up to a year gathering data for various research projects. Several groups of scientists have probed Antarctica's icy landscape, which houses a treasure trove of meteorites that would have disintegrated upon or after impact, had they landed anywhere else in the world. Other scientists in research stations scattered throughout the continent constantly conduct investigations to uncover new information about Earth, its organisms, and extraterrestrial objects.

As global warming continues

to threaten communities around the world, the Antarctic ecosystem becomes an increasingly valuable area of study, as it can reveal the most immediate effects of rising temperatures on the organisms most sensitive to it. The scientists in the [AnT-ERA](#) program recognize the threat of global warming and observe its effects on the local wildlife in Antarctica's pristine landscape to study biological resilience to warmer temperatures. This research can reveal the nuances in both molecular and ecological interactions, such as the effect of temperature on an organism's ability to create enzymes and how this change manifests in the ecosystem. Currently, the researchers are working on compiling this information in data workshops and creating panel discussions centered around the preservation of wildlife.

This scientific evidence not only helps spread awareness about climate change but also informs researchers studying other ecosystems about resilience toward a warmer climate and the threshold at which temperatures become dangerous. Thus, this research has potential applications in future technology and solutions that could mitigate the effects of climate change before it is too late.

To meet these ends, the Belgian Ice Sheet-Shelf Ice Measurements in Antarctica project aims to study the movement of Antarctic ice and its composition. This effort, led by glaciologists Frank Pattyn and Jean Louis Tison, involves drilling to acquire samples of ice and numerous

measurements of ice thickness. These scientists also establish a network of tracking beacons, communicating the distance from each other to a receiver to track the movement of the ice. With this data, scientists can reliably measure the annual erosion of ice due to global warming.

American scientists have also dedicated three research stations to closely monitoring the ozone hole over Antarctica and its effects on local wildlife. In the future, this team hopes to cre-



Rin Fukuoka/ The Spectator

ate more realistic simulations documenting various factors leading to ozone depletion and its effects. Another

team located in the McMurdo station focuses on finding evidence of glacial erosion due to global warming. As part of their investigations, they use a process called [swath bathymetry](#), an application of sonar technology to measuring depth, to discover evidence of underwater glacial impacts. This technology allows them to document the tectonic features of the

ocean floor to better understand Earth's interior and its interactions with the ocean. This understanding helps scientists better predict earthquakes and find solutions to limit their damage.

Research facilities in Antarctica also gather astronomical data. You may remember the [black hole image](#) that shook the world in April 2019 which originated from a network of telescopes, including one in Antarctica. In addition to that, the [SAMBA project](#), an initiative started by a team of Belgian and Japanese scientists at the Princess Elisabeth Station, aims to uncover meteorites that struck Antarctica's surface. The team reasons that while 37,000 tons of meteorites fall to Earth each year, only a minuscule fraction of them can be readily observed, as many fall into the oceans, while others

look deceptively like earthly rocks. However, the meteorites that fall into Antarctica's snow meet a different fate. Upon impact, these rocks are preserved in ice and lay uncontaminated for years until wind erodes the ice enough for the meteorites to be uncovered. By researching these meteorites, scientists gain insight into the composition of objects in our early solar system, along with more information on the formation of the Earth. In addition, studying previous impacts helps inform scientists how to better predict and prepare for future collisions. Scientists can also prepare for solar storms by observing the sun and sky above Antarctica, thanks to the clarity provided by low levels of at-

mospheric water vapor, allowing them to accurately measure cosmic background radiation with increased precision.

Psychological research is also conducted on humans to document the effects of long-term isolation, which may be useful for future space voyages. [One study](#) identifies a new coping mechanism adopted by scientists in isolation. Dubbed "winter-over syndrome," this mental state is a protective measure against chronic stress in which individuals become less reactive to their senses and emotions. As a result, while this "psychological hibernation" allows individuals to work in an isolated setting without losing their minds, it also exposes them to risks they would have otherwise sensed and avoided. In the Antarctic setting, the scientists risk injury in the freezing environment. But on a potential mission to Mars, scientists would experience prolonged winter-over syndrome, which could spell catastrophe if not properly addressed.

Despite being over 9,000 miles away from Stuyvesant, Antarctica is still relevant to our lives as students. Let Antarctic research serve as an example of practicing resourcefulness in dire situations. As dull and draining remote learning can be, there will always be ways of mitigating stress. Like the scientists of the South Pole unearthing meteorites from ice, you too can find joy in boredom. It all begins when you keep track of the erosion around you—when you set beacons to track the activities you enjoy. Though it may feel like we have spent a year in Antarctica, there are still many ways to turn our current situation around.

“Beam Me Up Scotty”: The Future of Networking

By SATHIRTHA MONDAL

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

There's a good chance you picked the ability to teleport. Believe it or not, humans have achieved teleportation. But there's a catch: it's teleportation in the world of quantum mechanics, and it may not exactly be what you had expected.

The phenomenon of teleportation is a popular subject in the world of science fiction. However, for a long time, teleportation has only been hypothetical. It may be decades before we can travel thousands of miles in an instant or recreate our favorite Star Trek teleportation scenes. But we have achieved the next best thing: quantum teleportation.

Quantum teleportation is the method by which quantum information is transmitted from one location to another. It's made possible by entanglement, a phenomenon that [links](#) two or more particles to each other. Entangled pairs are correlated such that changes in the quantum state of one particle are instantly reflected in the quantum state or state of the system using integral quantum numbers of the other particle, regardless of the distance between the two particles. Therefore, any information can instantaneously teleport between the entangled pair even if they are great distances apart.

Scientists have achieved quantum teleportation before, such as the successful [transfer](#) of qubits, or quantum information, over 60 miles in 2015, but thus far, all

transfers have had very low accuracy. As a result, the method was labeled unreliable.

Recently, a team of researchers achieved sustained quantum teleportation when they [transported](#) qubits a distance of 27 miles with 90 percent fidelity. By using advanced low-noise superconducting detectors and custom-made optics, the researchers teleported qubits a substantial distance without compromising accuracy. This attainment is a significant milestone because its high data fidelity and distance pave the way to creating a working quantum Internet, a project in the making.

Quantum computing is still in its infancy, and as a result, the researchers' endeavors to create a fully developed quantum network in the near future may appear unfathomable. However, a fully realized quantum network, a system that can efficiently exchange data and communications, is imminent with the recent breakthroughs.

The quantum Internet would be a network that supports quantum devices and could potentially render the current Internet obsolete. Since it would harness the laws of quantum mechanics, a mature quantum network could become incredibly valuable due to its robust security and performance compared to the current Internet. Further, the quantum Internet would use quantum devices, which have a greater capacity to complete various tasks and process calculations than classical computers.

Quantum computing uses qubits, or quantum bits. Meanwhile,

classical computing uses bits. Bits can [occupy](#) one of two states, either zero or one, and can be applied to a device that can also be in two possible states. Meanwhile, qubits can [be](#) in a state of zero, one, or a combination of the two. This is due to the phenomenon of quantum superposition, which can be illustrated by Schrödinger's cat thought experiment. The example states that if one places a cat in a sealed box containing a toxic radioactive substance, the cat can be either dead or alive after a period of time. Since the box is sealed, it exists in either state at the same time. Accordingly, superposition allows the qubit to indefinitely exist in multiple states simultaneously. As a result, a system using multiple qubits can [increase](#) its performance exponentially, as opposed to the classical bits whose performance increases linearly. Quantum superposition allows the quantum Internet to teleport information faster than the speed of light.

In addition to its unprecedented speed, the quantum Internet would also be far more secure than regular networks. This heightened security is accredited to entanglement, the phenomenon responsible for quantum teleportation. Since entanglement allows for linked particles to instantly change, information can be transmitted without vulnerability to attack from an outside source. Classical information, such as a message, [travels](#) in a straight line and passes through repeaters, or devices that receive, amplify, and alter signals before retransmit-

ting them. This allows for privacy breaches since the information can be read. Quantum networks use quantum repeaters with entangled particles and can thus amplify the signal without needing to read it. QKD, or Quantum Key Distribution, encrypts the data in a quantum network and promises absolute security by using entanglement. Unlike classical cryptography where classical and quantum devices can effortlessly access the data, quantum cryptography makes networks virtually unhackable, even with quantum technology. As indicated by the \$173 billion cybersecurity industry, protection and privacy are sacrosanct when using the Internet, and seeing that the current network is extremely flawed, nations such as the U.S. have [pushed](#) for the progression of the quantum Internet.

In spite of the promising future of quantum computing, there still exist considerable drawbacks and uncertainties. Firstly, quantum computers are immensely expensive and difficult to program. Nevertheless, proposals such as the United States's 2021 \$237 million request have [accelerated](#) the development of the quantum Internet. The primary concerns regarding quantum computing are the qubits being prone to error and decoherence. It has been discovered that the quantum states are vulnerable to noise and liable to errors. Nonetheless, Peter Shor has [established](#) error-correcting methods against sound, pushing error rates to zero. In addition, the qubits' interaction with the

environment prunes the signal and [results](#) in decoherence, or the diminishing of quantum properties as a result of interactions with the environment, leaving it prone to errors. Decoherence is an irreversible process in which the system [reverts](#) to a classical system by losing its quantumness and is the main hindrance to applying quantum mechanics in the real world, as it is impossible to isolate the particles from the environment. Nonetheless, it poses a challenge only because the study is relatively new, and as scientists learn more, new algorithms and techniques will arise and these setbacks will be overcome.

The quantum Internet is an evolving contender and may soon replace the Internet network. Thanks to recent achievements in quantum teleportation, scientists are closer than ever to securing the quantum Internet. Though obstacles and flaws such as funding and decoherence still remain, the world of quantum mechanics is promising and may prevail over these complications quicker than one might expect. Soon enough, you will be able to download terabytes of data or perhaps your favorite film series in an instant and use the Internet without worrying about your cybersecurity. As time progresses, our dependence on technology has only grown, and thanks to quantum mechanics, we can rest assured knowing our reliance will be in good hands. The world will soon experience the unmatched performance and security of the quantum network, the network of the future.

Arts and Entertainment

FASHION

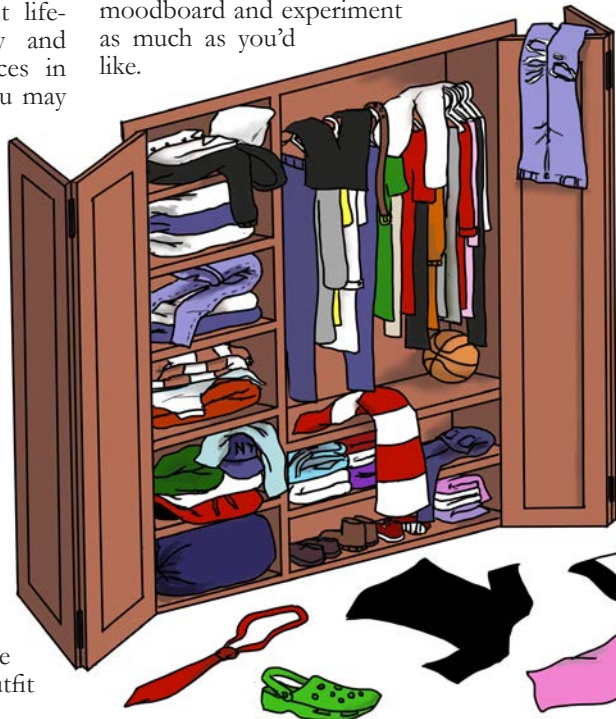
STUYLE CORNER: The Wonder Wardrobe

By JULIA PANAS

The wonder wardrobe is a fully interchangeable closet personalized for a minimalist lifestyle and is eco-friendly and beneficial for your finances in the long term. Though you may have never heard of the wonder wardrobe, you're probably familiar with its predecessor, the capsule closet: a small collection of clothing where most items complement each other. In a sense, the wonder wardrobe is like the capsule wardrobe to an extreme, as in this model, every piece is guaranteed to pair well with another piece. As an example, a random top will match with all of your jeans, shorts, and skirts, and vice versa. Because of this organized system, you'll never have to struggle with putting together an outfit in the mornings.

What makes the wonder wardrobe even more unique is that you're not limited to a basic color palette. In a capsule model, you typically start with a base color (such as black or navy) and "build" on that base with a variety of other neutral colors including white, grey, blue denim, or taupe. In contrast, with the wonder wardrobe, your color theme has no restrictions. For example, you can have a romantic combination of light pink, cherry red, dark brown, beige, and ivory. Or perhaps modern brights like lemon yellow, sky blue, lime, cobalt, black, and white. Additionally,

there's no need to stick to a minimalist aesthetic like with the capsule closet; you are free to draw random inspiration from your moodboard and experiment as much as you'd like.



Ka Seng Soo / The Spectator

Wonder wardrobes are personalized not only to an individual's taste in fashion, but also to their lifestyle. Someone who goes to the gym every day before work will have a very different closet than a party-loving college student, or a writer who lives by the beach. These differences in environment and routine will be reflected in the types of clothing included in their closets and the materials of these garments.

Finally, one of the most important qualities of the wonder wardrobe is its small size. The

idea is to buy fewer clothes of higher quality so that they will last longer, resulting in less waste. In

this way, the wonder wardrobe is very environmentally-friendly, as you won't be contributing to the 92 million tons of clothing thrown out every year. To shift to a more sustainable lifestyle, begin by shopping at brands like Reformation, Levi's, and People Tree. Restricting yourself to buying less clothing also ensures that you'll only buy comfortable pieces that you truly love, and make you feel

great wearing them.

It's evident that a wonder wardrobe takes a lot of planning. For this reason, it's best to find and purchase all of your clothing at once, at the start of each season. This way, you can try on every possible outfit combination and make any adjustments if needed. One suggestion is to start off with a basic model of six tops, six bottoms, a couple of dresses and jackets (depending on the season), two to three pairs of shoes, and two bags.

Of course, this sounds expensive—which is why the best

way to start a wonder wardrobe is to first look into your own closet. Use the Marie Kondo method to toss anything that doesn't "spark joy," and only keep the items you truly love wearing. Unfortunately, that one sparkly top you swore you were saving for New Year's Eve but haven't touched in years will probably have to go. Donate the items you no longer need to a clothing drop or thrift store instead of throwing them away to be more eco-friendly. From the clothes you've saved, pick a few items that match together to start your new wardrobe, and store away the rest.

Next, work on your color scheme. Choose colors based on the clothes you picked, but don't be afraid to add more! A wonder wardrobe is all about experimentation and self-expression, no matter the size of your closet.

Then, figure out what clothes you need based on your lifestyle. Think about what activities you do in a typical week, whether that's exercising, socializing, working, or working from home. From there, make a list of garments that will suit your needs. If you only go out once a month, there's no need to buy half a dozen polyester beaded tops. But, if going out is something you do frequently, look for tops that are more versatile; for example, a silk button-down shirt works great for going to dinner with friends and can easily be dressed up for a professional interview.

Versatility is very important for items in a wonder wardrobe, so keep that in mind for the next step: shopping. To make this step simpler, use your list and color

scheme to quickly navigate websites by filtering for clothes that fit your palette and are available in your size. While shopping, take screenshots of the items you like and envision how they might work together to create cohesive outfits. Finding tops and bottoms that all match effortlessly is harder than it sounds, but easy once you know what to look for. One tip is to pick all of your statement garments or patterned items to be either tops or bottoms. For example, you can have a few flashy tops, and make all of your bottoms solid-colored so that your outfits are easier to coordinate.

The beauty of a wonder wardrobe is that it will completely simplify your getting-ready routine. You can rest assured that every time you open your closet, the perfect outfit will be there. Not only will this save time, but it will also increase your confidence; you'll be wearing outfits that you truly love and allow you to fully express yourself, while also being sustainable and reducing your ecological footprint. By investing in this wardrobe, you'll be doing good for yourself and for the planet.

Note: This wardrobe model was pioneered by Daria Androne-scu. She's built her own company around this concept, and if you're interested in learning more, I highly recommend [checking her page out on YouTube](#). She posts examples of fashionable and timeless wardrobes for all body types and seasons and explains how to budget your clothing spending if you decide to convert to this closet.

LITERATURE

By SUAH CHUNG

"A voice rises like smoke inside her chest.

Never pray to the gods who answer after dark."

The fragile grass parts in a halo at her feet, and her hazel strands of hair shine golden against the dying sun, the last remaining glow of dusk bleeding into darkness. In the midst, she hears the clamor of clanging pots and pans from her small wooden village, which has served as both her home and prison for all these years. The girl is kneeling, murmuring under her breath, moving lips pressed against a wooden ring, and praying for an escape, a miracle. As the shadows from the hanging branches of the forest grow lean against the moonlight, an apparition appears and holds out his hand to her.

At this crossroad, she takes his hand, and her ring disintegrates. In that moment, she loses her father's carpentry, her prized possession, her past, and her name, all for the chance to live out her future.

This is the premise of "The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue" by V. E. Schwab, reminiscent of a Faustian tale—a bargain made with the devil in exchange for one's soul. Told through a series of flashbacks, the story integrates Addie's past memories into the present, building on the initial air of ambiguity and loneliness that permeates all aspects of her life.

"The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue": An Artistic Portrayal of Self Love

Though the novel starts in the present, Addie's story begins in 1714 Villon-sur-Sarthe, a village on the outskirts of Paris. It's in these memories where the reader first glimpses her unbridled spirit, her love for her father's vibrant storytelling on their trips to the city, and the rampant growth of her imagination, haphazard and beautiful. Her soul is most profoundly expressed through her charcoal sketches, their emotional nuance only amplified through Schwab's lush prose. As Addie grows older and is increasingly restricted by the expectation to marry, the listlessness and desperation she feels toward her future strike a chord with the reader, successfully executing a profound take on an otherwise cliché premise.

Desperate to escape the life of a housewife, Addie runs away to the forest on the day of her wedding, unwilling to conform to expectations at the cost of sacrificing her dreams and identity. Her view is undoubtedly feminist, powerful in its resolution but tragic in execution. In her distress, Addie tells the darkness to make her belong to no one and grant her immortality, until she willingly gives up her soul. Hence, in an effort to make Adeline promptly relinquish her soul, the darkness removes her from the memories of the people from her village, preventing anyone from remembering her for more than a few moments. Addie soon

realizes the difference between being independent and belonging to no one and resigns herself to an unmoored yet isolated life.

Belonging to nothing, Addie is unable to alter her surroundings, with any attempts at writing and art fading away at her fingertips. And when Addie tries to say her name, it gets lodged in her throat, a byproduct of the curse. So she trades names and identities like coats, not even able to maintain a semblance of her past life. She finds, however, that she can act as a muse and lover for painters, musicians, photographers, and writers, leaving evidence of her existence by planting ideas or images into their minds during the temporary moments they share. As these works cannot record her face, the seven freckles that dot her face most commonly manifest as constellations, a motif and allusion to the use of stars in Greek mythology to immortalize and remember their heroes.

Though this concept is intriguing, Addie's cycles through different lovers become repetitive, with only the first few standing out for their distinctive characters. Addie's lovers exist for the sole purpose of her character development, and through her accounts of Remy, a young Parisian philosopher, and Sam, a female painter, the reader witnesses Addie experience love in increments. With Remy, she falls in love with his intelligence and regard for

women as equals, while with Sam, she is attracted to her warmth. As the cycles continue, however, instead of experiencing a more vibrant form of love, Addie's relationships only grow more distant and dull, overwhelming the reader with a sense of numbness. Addie's first partners undoubtedly had the potential to develop into memorable characters but fade into the background as the novel progresses. This is further demonstrated by the male protagonist, Henry, a photographer and owner of a small bookshop. From the start, Henry is the only person to truly remember Addie since the day she was cursed, which is the storybook premise for a fated romantic interest. Their encounter should've been a turning point of the novel, when the two timelines of the past and present intersect, and Addie finally experiences love fully. Instead, Henry is almost a repeat of the pattern, only exceptional because he can remember Addie. Despite Schwab's effort to craft a connection between the characters through her metaphors and lush prose, there is a lack of familiarity in their conversations and interactions, and it becomes clear that shared curses and mannerisms are not enough to drive a romance.

Perhaps in this way, "The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue" presents an unromanticized version of love, secondary to finding and loving who you are as a

person. Addie and Henry's relationship serves as the backdrop to their personal growth, with Henry's struggle to be accepted by society and his family particularly striking. With moving sensitivity, Schwab describes Henry's depression as dark storms that emerge without warning and engulf clear skies and rays of the sun, figuratively depicting his struggle to find his identity in those brighter moments.

"The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue" is, at its core, a love letter to the different forms of artistic expression, a self-reflection of one's impact on the course of history and how to find your own identity within the mix. It is at times heart wrenching and delicate, encapsulating loneliness and the desire for emotional connection with a personal nuance. Though the course of the story may slow at times, the novel remains universally resonant with its readers, a narrative of autonomy separate from gender limitations, and the struggle to make a mark on society. After the countless paintings illuminated by seven stars, blurry photographs, and music that seemed to have composed itself, it is only fitting that Henry publishes Addie's life story in a leather-bound cover, her first piece of work with her name emblazoned on the front. In golden ink, the letters spell "The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue," the book you, the reader, are holding in your hands.

Arts and Entertainment

GAMING

By GAVIN MCGINLEY

“Cyberpunk 2077” is perhaps the most anticipated game of the last decade. Announced by CD Projekt Red in 2013, the game had seven long years in development to build hype on a global scale. This was only spurred on by the massive online discussion surrounding the game, initially because of CD Projekt Red’s previous successes, but later from the announcement of Internet darling Keanu Reeves’s role in the game, as well as the months of repeated delays. Alas, “Cyberpunk 2077” was never going to live up to the years of accumulated hype. Even when considering inflated expectations, the outrage created by its buggy, broken state at launch is completely justified. Yet, under its rough exterior, “Cyberpunk 2077” can be a genuinely enjoyable game, delivering on an immersive and engaging narrative, a fun and complex open world, and perfectly serviceable action.

The strongest part of “Cyberpunk” is, surprisingly, its story. CD Projekt Red’s gritty, tragic plot is genuinely poetic and emotional in a way few games manage. From the jump, players take control of V, a mercenary in the dystopian, crime-ridden corporate hell hole that is Night City. One thing that “Cyberpunk” does well is making the player care about its characters, whether it’s the protagonist, Johnny Silverhand (Keanu Reeves), or anyone else you meet in Night City. The mix of well-written dialogue, impressive animations, and cohesive individual arcs bring the characters and their world to life. Of course, Reeves is excellent. As Johnny Silverhand, cyborg rockstar, he is literally implanted into your head early in the game and plays a big role as V’s imaginary friend or alternate personality. There are even a few missions when you play as him, and Reeves excels at being likable, obnoxious, and un-

believably cool all at once.

Looking at the gameplay of “Cyberpunk,” it’s important to remember that it is, first and foremost, a role-playing game. Its biggest concern is immersing players in its world, and for the most part, it delivers. There’s

mercenary.

“Cyberpunk,” however, has a disappointing lack of importance placed on player choice and an absence of any real customization outside of combat. One of the main focuses of the game’s marketing is the idea that

tion makes “Cyberpunk” almost work as an action game within an RPG, with high octane cyber violence and first-person shooter mechanics clearly the focus of most of its encounters. One of the reasons that “Cyberpunk” seems to have overshadowed other RPGs is that, while RPGs have a relatively limited target audience, shooters and action games appeal to almost everyone. So how is the action? Compared to most other games it’s perfectly fine, if not a bit generic. Combat is varied and fun, with the game’s wide array of customization opening the door to a number of distinct playstyles, each one approaching encounters in a unique way. Though shooting is downright painful at lower levels, with experience allocation into shooting skills, gunplay becomes much smoother as the player progresses. Every new weapon or cybernetic enhancement affects action in a noticeable and exciting way, and it feels really amazing to run around the futuristic world as a lawless cyborg.

On a more sour note, some of the more subtle parts of the action seem to be crucially underdeveloped. Stealth bounces between laughably easy and soul-crushingly impossible, while driving, which makes up a significant portion of the game as you traverse Night City between missions, is unnecessarily difficult. A much larger problem is the incredibly poor balancing between playstyles. “Net Runner,” a kind of super hacker, is by far the most original, deep, and fun playstyle the game has to offer, involving hopping through camera feeds and frying people’s built-in electronics, but the difficulty is so low that there’s no reason to ever invest time into this more complicated, slow-paced approach. When you can punch the final boss to death in 15 seconds on the hardest setting, actual thought put into combat starts to feel pointless. There’s also the

problem of the game constantly throwing new side missions at you, often during other assignments, without a comprehensive or navigable way of organizing them.

The more controversial problems with “Cyberpunk” come not in its design, but in the long list of bugs that hugely detract from player experience. Those on PS4 or Xbox One—the majority of the playerbase—were bombarded from start to finish with distracting and often game-breaking glitches. While the game can look amazing, most of the time it’s visibly loading in textures or spawning NPCs in walls. Combat, with a high number of enemies and particle effects, can lag the game to an almost unplayable extent, making aiming incredibly difficult. A number of bugs make progression impossible, forcing players to reload entire missions, and the game sometimes crashes unpredictably every few hours. It seems very likely that the constant delays on “Cyberpunk”’s release were due to its inability to run on anything other than next-gen consoles and high-level PCs. Even on more powerful computers it remains plagued with technical problems.

“Cyberpunk 2077” is certainly disappointing, but it is by no means the disaster people portray it as. Though it’s not the genre-defying masterpiece many expected, it still has a masterfully designed open world, interesting characters, and a well-written story. It feels like a game with a huge amount of potential, but one that needs months more in development to be fully released. The majority of the game’s elements are broken, unbalanced, or unfinished, but the complete pieces hint at a game that could be truly excellent. CD Projekt Red will likely be able to patch “Cyberpunk 2077” into a more stable state, but as it stands now, the game’s enjoyability is overshadowed by its extensive amount of embarrassing flaws.



Annie Lam / The Spectator

very little you can’t do, or try to do, in Night City’s intricately crafted network of streets. A few hours in, and the massive metropolis is completely open, with all of its stores, apartment complexes, and ramen booths fully accessible and functional. Night City is vast, but every corner is packed with thought and detail, with some side quest or collectible to find. V is a blank slate, and the game includes everything from basic stat allocation to customizable genitals to fully absorb the player into the cyborg

your actions would visibly affect the open world of Night City, but outside of the final missions and distinct endings, there are few tangible outcomes for the hundreds of decisions the player makes. The complete omission of any dialogue skills also contributes to the more linear feel of the game’s story, and while other RPGs allow players to talk their way through situations, “Cyberpunk” insists that every problem should be addressed through combat.

This increased focus on ac-

MUSIC

By ELEANOR LEUNG and JENNY LIU

The world thought Taylor Swift was done, but alas, she’s taken us back into the folklorian woods once again with “evermore.” Though “evermore” is considered the sister album to “folklore,” there’s something to be said about the aptness of “evermore” in the grand scheme of Swift’s entire discography. Swift has been so ahead of the curve that her albums have come full-circle and become a sphere. Country-infused tracks like “long story short” and “no body, no crime” pay homage to 2006’s “Taylor Swift” and 2008’s “Fearless.” One can hear the harmonicas and banjos shine through after being dusted off and reclaim their glory. The light, airy “long story short” and “gold rush” are reminiscent of 2008’s “Speak Now” and 2012’s “Red.” But for all this to come full-circle, Swift had to depart from her early sounds in the first place. “1989” and “Reputation” mark her snakeskin-shedding period, filled with surging synthesizers and

electronic production. It was the start of her reinvention journey: gone was the nice, country girl image. “Lover,” however, was a grace period, (as the cotton candy skies suggest) the rainbow after the storm. “folklore” and “evermore” signaled her return back home.

The whimsical opening chords of track one, “willow,” pick up exactly where “cardigan” left off, unveiling more of the woodsy fairyland air evocative of “folklore.” Even with sparse instrumentation and production, “evermore” crafts a world embellished with pixie dust and gold. Fan-favorite tracks “champagne problems” and “willow” feature Swift’s classic guitar, while tracks “tolerate it” and “evermore” are backed mainly by piano. The true beauty of Swift’s songs on both “folklore” and “evermore,” however, lies in her lyricism. One can only truly appreciate the music after they’ve really understood the story Swift weaves using her lyrics. For example, “Your Midas touch on the Chevy door / November flush and your flannel

Taylor Swift (For)evermore

cure,” (from “champagne problems”) references King Midas from Greek mythology, who turns all he touches to gold. This is a possible allusion to Swift’s partner, Joe Alywn, who she is currently in a happy relationship with. Swift often uses gold to describe her boyfriend, suggesting that their connection is pure and valuable.

The lack of sappy hooks and ultra-catchy refrains on “evermore” is what differentiates it from “folklore.” Songs like “closure” and “tolerate it” can easily become melded in the listeners’ minds into shapeless, foggy mist. This largely has to do with the absence of musical direction, as many of these tracks lack a buildup to a sweeping chorus or climax. Still, as mentioned before, Swift’s songwriting abilities more than compensate for any pacing issues, as listeners are typically too immersed into the alternate world of magic and fairies to notice.

Not only does Swift’s introspective songwriting pay homage to her older music/albums, but it also allows her to inter-

connect her stories to create her signature nostalgic feel. One can imagine Dorothea (a character from a track on “evermore”) at the same high school as Betty and James (from “betty” on “folklore”) while Abigail (“Fifteen” from “Fearless”) sits in their classes and Drew (“Tear-drops on My Guitar” from “Taylor Swift”) walks down the school hallway, waiting to break someone’s heart. I suppose the heart is rather fond of youth.

Though these fictive characters undoubtedly bring a vibrancy to Swift’s storytelling, her most powerful lyrics are inspired by the experiences and memories with her family. They ground her narrative and help her develop the emotional maturity that is so prominent in the album. The album wouldn’t be the same without the slivers of Swift’s personal life which display a sincerity absent from the tabloid headlines in the media. Her music acts as both an encouragement and a memorial for the people she loves. This is exemplified through “Lover,” as she dedicated “Soon You’ll Get

Better” to her mom, Andrea Swift, and her battle with cancer and again through “evermore” on “marjorie,” a tribute to Margaret Finley, Swift’s late grandmother.

Maturity in music is not a new concept, but the way it appears in Swift’s music is. Gone are the days when she spoke of fairy tales, the boy next door dating the cheerleader, and white horses. There’s a realization that reinvention is not a forced phase, but a natural, enduring process. It doesn’t have to be as sharp as transitioning from country to pop or calling out celebrity feuds in high-budget music videos. It’s simply realizing that “you haven’t met the new me yet” (“happiness” from “evermore”).

Long story short (pun intended), “evermore” just fits. Swift left her early sound only to come back and reinvent it to sound more mature and insightful. As she writes on “marjorie,” “What died didn’t stay dead.” I would argue that it came back even more alive.

Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

By LEVI SIMON

Daniel Dumile was a man of many monikers. He was a secretive man, who used a plethora of pseudonyms and his iconic mask, to obscure his real life. By concealing himself, he shifted focus to his music. With complete control of his image, he could be whatever he wanted to be. With his newfound powers, Dumile became MF DOOM, hip-hop's supervillain, and one of the most influential rappers of all time.

Dumile's career began in the late '80s, when he formed a rap group called KMD with his brother and a few other rappers from Long Island, where he lived. When his brother was fatally hit by a car on the Nassau Expressway in 1993, Dumile withdrew from the rap scene in shock for four years. Once he returned, he played gigs around the city, experimenting with personas inspired by his childhood obsession with comic books. On his 1999 debut, "Operation Doomsday," MF DOOM was brought to life.

Sporting a villainous metal mask, a deep, husky voice, and unparalleled rhymes and wordplay, MF DOOM was established as one of the most refreshing up-and-comers in underground hip-hop. Throughout the next five years, Dumile dropped a handful of excellent projects under various monikers. "Take Me To Your Leader" (2003) sees Dumile's production at its airiest and ramps up the use of colorful, cartoony samples that would later populate his most iconic work. "Vaudeville Villain" (2003) is his grittiest and most straightforward project. He exchanges most of the runtime devoted to character building on his previous projects for dense flows and dark production.

Dumile had one of the most impressive years in hip-hop history in 2004. With the release of both "Mm.. Food" and "Madvillainy," he cemented himself as one of the greatest rappers of all time. "Mm.. Food" is a series of light-hearted, catchy, quotable, food-themed tracks that has captured the hearts of many. Fan

A Tribute To the Illest Villain

favorites such as "Hoe Cakes," "One Beer," and "Beef Rap" land on the project, and almost every track is of comparable quality. It's one of the most fun rap albums of the 2000s; it's dense, creative, and one of a kind. On the other hand, Dumile's influential collaboration with the unparalleled producer Madlib, "Madvillainy" is a return to Dumile's darkness and widely regarded as the greatest abstract hip-hop album of all time. His cartoony persona is in peak form, as he raps about his fictitious evil doings in the third person. "Meat Grinder" and "Fancy Clown" are some of the best character portraits in hip-hop's history, and they're textured with some of the most captivating production since GZA's "Liquid Swords" (1995). Madlib's sample flips and percussive flair are near unrivaled within hip-hop, and Madvillainy is at its peak. Each beat is its own woozy, stoned out, instantly recognizable world for DOOM to explore. From the dreamy drone of "Accordion" to the slinking lounge guitars of

"Curls," to the bouncy chop on "Figaro," each beat is full of personality. The cartoon samples are expertly manipulated to form an entertaining subnarrative, and the accompanying side effects further bolster the comic book aesthetic. It's a near flawless project and an essential member of the hip-hop canon.

Naturally, with such a high quality discography, Dumile was bound to make an impact on future artists. Members of the Odd Future collective, such as Tyler, the Creator and Earl Sweatshirt have called DOOM their favorite rapper of all time, and it shows in their music. Both of their voices and flows are reminiscent of Dumile's, and Earl's work prior to "Solace" (2015) has a DOOM feel to the rhyme schemes. Other notable artists with a DOOM obsession include Logic, Action Bronson, Joey Bada\$\$, and surprisingly, Drake. In fact, early in his career, Drake released a remix of "Accordion," titled "The Grind" featuring Nickelus F. Each of these rappers has gone

on to be influential in their own right. There's a good chance your favorite rapper wouldn't sound the way they do without the impact of Dumile.

Despite Dumile's influence, he remains largely unknown to the general public. His name is relegated to fan discussions, but within said discourse he has amassed quite the reputation. It isn't infrequently that he is compared to such legends as JAY-Z, Kanye West, Tupac, Nas, and The Notorious B.I.G.. In the wake of his death, it seems all the more necessary to examine the mark he made. Though Dumile died in October 2020, it was only announced just a few hours before the ball dropped in Times Square in 2021, shocking the entire hip-hop community. Rappers and producers sent their condolences and shared their dismay in mass. Rest in peace to Dumile, a legend and an inspiration to all that knew him.

"Livin' off borrowed time, the clock tick faster." —MF DOOM

TELEVISION

By AGATHA EDWARDS

Almost a year after the first season dropped, a second season of "The Mandalorian" came out on October 30 on Disney+, captivating fans all around the world once again. Set in the "Star Wars" universe, the show takes a highly episodic format, with each distinct narrative exhilaratingly full of action-packed fights and missions involving everything from dark robots to giant spiders. Though the "Star Wars" movies are well-known, the franchise's deeper lore is not, and "The Mandalorian" allows viewers to further explore this universe from a different perspective, learning about new storylines within this already beloved mythos.

"The Mandalorian" mainly focuses on the relationship between the Mandalorian himself (Pedro Pascal) and The Child, a cute green organism nicknamed "Baby Yoda" by fans worldwide. In the season, along with warriors Cara Dune (Gina Carano) and Greef Karga (Carl Weathers), the pair stopped evil forces of the Empire, the iconic antagonists of the "Star Wars" movies, from stealing The Child for experimental purposes. The Mandalorian, also called Din Djarin, finds out that The Child possesses great power, leading him to spend this season seeking out other Mandalorians to help him bring The Child to a Jedi master. Together, Din and The Child travel across galaxies searching for answers, meeting friends and enemies along the way.

Executive producers and directors Dave Filoni and Jon Favreau are the minds behind "The Mandalorian." Along with other directors, these two were tasked with an immense challenge: provide "Star Wars" fans with the same experience they got while watching "A New Hope" (1977) or "The Force Awakens" (2015) for the first time in theaters. There may have been fewer fighting and flying scenes than in the movies, but there was still plenty of action and suspense.

The sets created for the show are stunning and extremely real-

istic, featuring rocky and grassy mountains, an underground frozen planet, a barren desert civilization (Tatooine, from the original "Star Wars" movies), and of course, outer space. The cos-

born warrior to a brave, caring, father-like figure is illuminated in the emotional season finale. The Mandalorians are bound by a strict way of life that doesn't allow for much freedom, and in

ed up loving the more isolated storylines of this season. All of the stand-alone episodes were action-packed and kept watchers on the edges of their seats, and peppered with hidden details and

one of the fan-favorite episodes from this season was episode two, one of the stand-alone adventures, which almost worked as a horror movie, being both captivating and absolutely nerve-racking.

This season of the Mandalorian also provided plenty of fan service, calling on nostalgia by bringing back existing characters and making countless references to previous pieces of "Star Wars" media. "The Mandalorian" as a series takes place only a couple of years after "The Return of the Jedi," so there was plenty of content for the writers to work with. Of course, one of the main allusions is having Din travel to Tatooine, Luke Skywalker's home, in the first episode, and other references include reintroducing Boba Fett (Temuera Morrison), Ahsoka Tano (Rosario Dawson) from the animated Clone Wars series, a few characters from the previous season, and one huge surprise in the final episode. The first season didn't have any cameos like these, so it was very exciting to see some references this time around. On the other hand, the show would be just as great a stand-alone epic in its own world. Din is without question the main character and central focus, and nostalgic "Star Wars" references are more of a side dish, meant to please the audience rather than define the show. Bringing in these characters does create potential for spin-offs though, including "The Book of Boba Fett," which is confirmed to come out in October 2021.

All in all, "The Mandalorian" has enchanted "Star Wars" fans old and new alike, all over the world. The characters, plot, set design, and costumes are all on point, and the dialogue is riveting, sprinkled with bits of humor and emotion throughout. Due to its popular reception, "The Mandalorian" has been renewed for a third season, expected to air toward the end of 2021. Aside from "The Book of Boba Fett," there have been several other rumors of spin-offs. Looks like the "Star Wars" universe has no intention of coming to a close.

"The Mandalorian" Season 2 Thoughts



tumes and makeup are incredible, ranging from the original, shiny Mandalorian suit to the colorful face painting of characters like Cara Dune and Ahsoka Tano.

The second season of "The Mandalorian" did an incredible job of pushing Din out of his comfort zone to make risky but ultimately successful sacrifices and decisions. His character growth from a cold, stub-

born warrior to a brave, caring, father-like figure is illuminated in the emotional season finale. The Mandalorians are bound by a strict way of life that doesn't allow for much freedom, and in

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Arts and Entertainment

MUSIC

By **THEO KUBOVY-WEISS**

Though 2020 was unanimously considered a dumpster fire of a year, the one realm in which it did succeed was music releases. From Fiona Apple's [Pitchfork-10-receiving](#) "Fetch the Bolt Cutters" to Phoebe Bridgers's poetic and heart-wrenching "Punisher" to Lil Uzi Vert's transformative, intergalactic "Eternal Atake," there was something for everyone to enjoy. Yet, just as we hope to be the case in every other realm of culture, society, and epidemiology, 2021 has the potential to one-up the past year. To guide you in your fulfilling musical journey over the next 12 months, here are some of the most anticipated albums of this year:

ADELE

After admitting that her album wasn't done during an October episode of "Saturday Night Live," Adele has been rather quiet about the state and

potential release of her next project. Despite rumors of an impending release, given the quality, success, and time between releases of her past projects (2011's "21" and 2015's "25"), fans shouldn't get their hopes up too high for a follow-up in the near future.

SZA

Following a series of successful mixtapes and her debut album "Ctrl" (2017) receiving universal acclaim, SZA fans and music buffs alike are highly anticipating her next move. Despite allusions to the album's imminence throughout the past year, all we got was the release of "Good Days" on Christmas. Whether this is a teaser track to her next album or a one-off drop is unclear. But, given her ongoing conflict with her record label Top Dawg Entertainment, the timing of the release of new music is anyone's guess.

FRANK OCEAN

Following the smash hit of

2016's "Blonde," Frank Ocean has released a series of singles in 2018 and this past year. His uncharacteristic activity on Instagram, Apple Music radio show "Blonded Radio," and his website blonded.com have led fans to speculate that his next album will be coming soon. Yet, with such a mysterious, private and elusive figure like Frank, it's just as likely to drop tomorrow as it is to drop in a decade. All we can do is hope and wait.



Yaqi Zeng/ The Spectator

DRAKE: "Certified Lover Boy," Coming January

It's been a while since Drake released a widely well-received project, but hopefully his up-

coming album will change that. Last year's release of "Dark Lane Demo Tapes," a compilation of unreleased tracks, left fans largely unsatisfied and looking for more. With a teaser video including many scenes from past albums (including fan favorites like 2011's "Take Care" and 2013's "Nothing Was the Same"), hopefully this album will reestablish Drake in his prime. We'll find out later this month if that ends up being the case.

LANA DEL REY: "Chemtrails Over the Country Club," Coming March

While Lana Del Rey has always had an active fan base, her music received scant critical acclaim until 2019's "Norman [EXPLETIVE] Rockwell!" With deeply

personal and evocative poetry, her last album marked the beginning of a new era for Del Rey, one that will hopefully continue for years to come. Announced alongside the release of her spoken-word album "Violet Bent Backwards Over the Grass," "Chemtrails Over the Country Club" promises to be a profound, moving project. After all, being named "one of America's greatest living songwriters" by Pitchfork doesn't come without high expectations.

KENDRICK LAMAR

Without any formal confirmation of a 2021 release, trying to predict a Kendrick drop is... risky. But, after a number of planned (and later canceled) music festival performances and solid features, 2021 could be the year. It's been four years since 2016's Pulitzer Prize-winning "DAMN," so fans are hungry for more. Fingers crossed he delivers.

MUSIC

By **DEXTER WELLS**

Ludwig Göransson is perhaps the most interesting name in the musical world at present, in large part because he spans so much of it. Born in Linköping, Sweden in 1984, Göransson was named after the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven. He attended the Stockholm Royal College of Music and in 2007, moved to Los Angeles to study film composition at the University of Southern California (USC). Göransson has worked on a multitude of shows and movies, including "New Girl" (2011-2018), "Community" (2009-2015), "Creed" (2015), "Venom" (2018), and "Black Panther" (2018).

In the film world, Göransson's work on the soundtrack of "Black Panther" was the result of a college friendship. Göransson met the film's director, Ryan Coogler, at USC through a roommate. Coogler, 21 at the time, was directing the short film "Fig" (2010) and asked if Göransson would score it. The duo went on to collaborate on all of Coogler's short films and feature films, as well as "Fruitvale Station" (2013) and "Creed." The two stayed in close communication throughout the production of "Black Panther," discussing what countries the

fictional Wakanda would resemble culturally. Göransson felt that he would only be able to do Coogler's script justice if he experienced West African culture firsthand, so he traveled to Senegal. There, he accompanied prominent Senegalese musician Baaba Maal on tour in Dakar and met many other griots, or storytelling musicians. He recorded with many of these griots in Maal's studio, assembling an arsenal of unique instruments. The final score combines African instruments with classical music and hip-hop percussion in a thrillingly, unexpected—but fitting—balance. Göransson's score earned him a Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack For Visual Media and the Oscar for Best Original Score at the 91st Academy Awards in 2019.

His most recent endeavors include Christopher Nolan's "Tenet" (2020) and Season 2 of Jon Favreau's "The Mandalorian" (2019-present). Göransson returned to "The Mandalorian," acclaimed for the final episode of Season 1, for which he received the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Music Composition for a Series. The flute theme he created for the show is nothing short of iconic. Rather than trying to imitate the mastery of John Williams, the composer of the origi-

nal "Star Wars" trilogy (along with "Jaws," "Jurassic Park," and many others), Göransson found his own way to make the music fit. While the soundtrack stays true to the original "Star Wars" music, which utilizes recognizable themes, he combines rhythmic percussion, ricocheting wind instruments, and a medley of strings to create a unique sound, contrasting John Williams's use of typically classical instruments. Alongside his embrace of acoustic instruments, Göransson uses synths to amplify climactic moments. At times he even incorporates electric guitar, and during the introduction of the formidable "Dark Troopers," harsh dub-step-esque electronic music. Remarkably, it all feels coherent within the show's context, as the Mandalorian traverses various planets and encounters a range of challenges.

In contrast with "The Mandalorian," Göransson's work on "Tenet" is highly dissimilar. Scored to complement Christopher Nolan's style, the soundtrack is bold and extreme. Göransson departs from his efforts to stay culturally authentic, since "Tenet" doesn't represent a particular culture (or cultural struggle), as previous films Göransson has scored have. Göransson's soundtrack reflects an audacious, futuristic premise

with accordingly avant-garde synth. It is, in a word, epic. Tense arpeggiation enhances the suspense or anxiety of certain scenes, while softer, padded synths add texture throughout other, less action-packed scenes. Additionally, a liberal amount of thud sounds are incorporated alongside synths for dramatic effect. Göransson, however, is attuned to the more emotional passages within the film, during which he prefers to use classical string instruments. Ludwig was present on set for the film's climactic scene and used rather unorthodox techniques to produce a soundtrack he was satisfied with. To reflect a major aspect of the film, "inversion," Göransson actually wrote the sheet music for some of his musicians backward.

Though he has worked predominantly in television and film, Göransson's career has reached the realm of hip-hop as well. In fact, it was on the set of the NBC sitcom "Community" that Göransson met Donald Glover, better known as Childish Gambino. Glover and Göransson have since collaborated on every Gambino album, from "Camp" (2011) to "3.15.2020" (2020). Their most critically acclaimed album to date is the 2016 Funkadelic-inspired "Awaken, My Love!" The album received nominations for

Album of the Year and Best Urban Contemporary Album at the 60th Annual Grammy Awards in 2018. The single "Redbone," which is RIAA quintuple-platinum certified, was nominated for Record of the Year and Best R&B Song, and won the award for Best Traditional R&B Performance. Göransson also produced the 2018 hit single "This Is America" (triple-platinum RIAA certified), a critical discussion of racial injustice and gun violence.

Ludwig Göransson is distinguished by his versatility and eagerness to experiment—the two go hand-in-hand. From reversing sheet music in his own studio to flying to West Africa, he has demonstrated a commitment to perfection and authenticity of sound that is rare among his peers. Additionally, he has played a role in the conversation of race within the United States. Though a foreigner and white, he has shown his dedication to assisting his Black collaborators, like Glover and Coogler, and amplifying Black voices rather than speaking for them. Göransson throws himself wholeheartedly into all of his work, and the music reflects it. He is a modern master of sound, whose expertise will only increase throughout the future of his career.

"Death To 2020": An Hour-Long Fever Dream

By **KENISHA MAHAJAN**

"It's a look back over the year. We're reliving the events of 2020."

"Why in the [EXPLETIVE] would you wanna do that?"

A good question indeed. Sadly, it's never answered in Netflix's new 70-minute mockumentary "Death to 2020." Produced by Emmy-winning producer Charlie Brooker who's best known

for the hit series "Black Mirror" (2011-present), "Death to 2020" showed promise at first. I mean, 2020 was essentially one long "Black Mirror" episode. Instead of the clever, sharp satire audiences have come to expect of Brooker, "Death to 2020" ended up resembling CliffsNotes for 2020.

Unless you've been living under a rock for the last year, "Death to 2020" will likely strike you as an uninspired, overdone

political comedy. The film is profoundly mediocre, featuring bland jokes that you've likely heard before and all-too-familiar characters fetched straight out of Twitter. "Death to 2020" simply recounts the events of the year and doesn't offer the audience more than some recycled observational humor. A piece like "Death to 2020" is meant to offer some much-needed reflection on such a peculiar year, but it hardly warrants a head-tilt, let

alone serious contemplation.

"Death to 2020," however, cannot be considered stale just because of its writing. Political satire has been on the decline for the last few years. This downturn is largely attributed to "President and experimental pig-man, Donald Trump" (their words, not mine). The purpose of satire is to be humorous while exploring social and political issues. Trump seems to be the perfect target for comedians, but he has made their

job exceptionally difficult. While most presidents have learned to take a joke or two, Trump responds to any ridicule with full force. By refusing to accept the very mechanism of satire, Trump makes ironic humor next to impossible. An added obstacle for satirists in developing original ideas has been the media. With the media openly criticizing our

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Arts and Entertainment

FILM

“Death To 2020”: An Hour-Long Fever Dream

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president unlike during previous administrations, political satire is no longer about saying what everyone is thinking but instead about offering a fresh take.

Regardless, a lot of the faults of “Death to 2020” are avoidable. There are a few lame attempts at adding nuance to the film by poking fun at both sides of the political spectrum, such as referring to the right as “[EXPLICIT]-nose extremists” and the left as “whiney woke-lords,” paired with one too many jokes about Biden’s age. Another issue lies in the structure of the film: the movie follows a chronological story-

telling format with interviews and short skits woven in. Though the structure plays to Brooker’s stylistic strengths in establishing an overarching satirical narrative, it isn’t

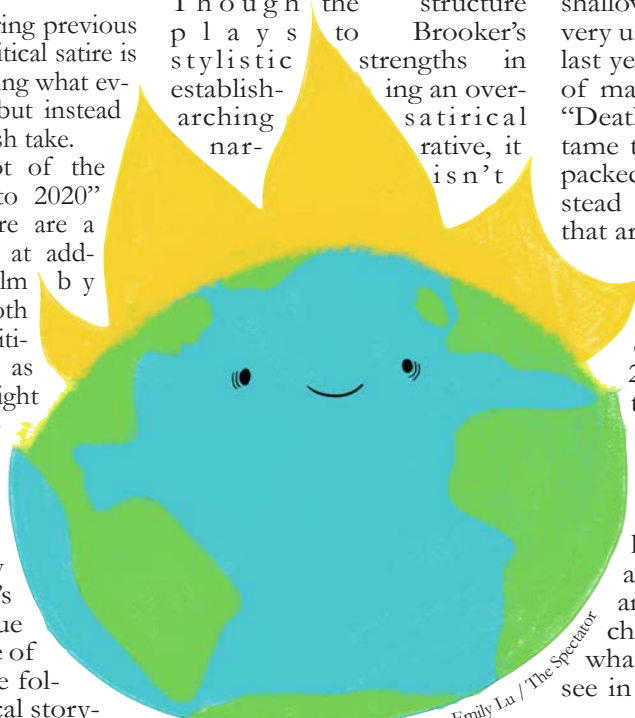
utilized effectively. Instead, we’re left with a collection of shallow one-liners, which is very unusual for Brooker. The last year gave writers a wealth of material to work with, but “Death to 2020” is a rather tame take on such an action-packed year. The film is instead filled with comments that are just... so 2020.

The highlight of the movie is definitely the star-studded cast. “Death to 2020” is meant to tell the story of “the most historic year in history” through multiple perspectives, including historians, powerbrokers, psychologists, royalty, average citizens, and anyone in between. The characters are a mix of what one would normally see in any PBS history docu-

mentary and some archetypes specific to 2020. The cast most notably features Samuel L. Jackson, Hugh Grant, Lisa Kudrow, and Joe Keery; however, the most memorable performances are Cristin Milioti’s “regular soccer mom” and Dianne Morgan’s role as “one of the five most average people in the world.” Though the “Karen” trope is the easiest to overdo, Milioti’s performance as a crazed “Kathy” will get plenty of laughs out of you. The ironically human-hating behavioral psychologist, Dr. Maggie Gravel (Leslie Jones), is representative of cynicism during 2020 and offers a breath of fresh air between some duller sections. Honorable mentions go to Joe Keery’s performance as Duke Goolies, your stereotypical millennial influencer and “barman/mixologist/DJ/life

coach,” and Kudrow’s nutty “nonofficial White House spokesperson” persona. Despite the film’s shortcomings in terms of writing, the actors’ delivery saves the script.

The greatest issue with “Death to 2020” is simply its lack of perspective. It’s admirable that one would take on the task of recapping such an eventful year, but perhaps it’s too early for us to look back on the events of 2020 in a new light. The film impressively straddles the thin line between “too late” and “too soon” and fails at both. “Death to 2020” may not be a cinematic masterpiece, but it’s a surefire way to kill time and laugh at a rather hellish year. If you are really wishing “Death to 2020” however, then this movie is one you can go without seeing.



TELEVISION

“The Flight Attendant” Takes Off

By ROXY PERAZZO

HBO Max’s new mystery series, “The Flight Attendant,” began its gradual release on November 26, 2020. A show that follows the typical hallmarks of both crime and comedy simultaneously, it gives viewers the best of both worlds.

The series follows Cassie Bowden (Kaley Cuoco), a disconnected flight attendant, who, after working on a flight to Bangkok, wakes up in a hotel room next to a dead man with no memory of what happened. Cassie’s immediate instinct is to clean up and flee the crime scene, eventually leading to her desperately trying to prove her innocence to the FBI. Her panic and grief over the incident pushes her to conduct her own investigation and leads her down a dark path with constant twists and grave consequences.

“The Flight Attendant” puts a unique twist on the classic mystery story as Cassie frequently reflects on the night she spent with Alex Sokolov (Michiel Huisman), the man she woke up next to. She even asks him for advice throughout her investigation by imagining what he might say as she delves deeper into the ever more mysterious world of Alex.

“The Flight Attendant” makes the mystery even more appealing by candidly displaying the flaws and struggles of the characters, and of Cassie in particular. The toll that the murder and investigation take on Cassie and her relationships is not neglected, nor are Cassie’s alcoholic tendencies. Through the show’s exploration of personal issues, the characters are given layers and depth, which makes the story even more personal. Throughout the episodes,

Cassie not only imagines herself back in the hotel room with Alex, but also remembers her childhood and goes on a mental journey to remember the reality of how certain childhood memories occurred (as her brother remembers), as opposed to the flawed versions she has carried with her. The style of storytelling puts viewers in the character’s head and allows them to see her thought process. There are no “Why would you do that?!” moments, no matter how stupid the decision might be.

Despite each episode being jam-packed with new cracks in the case, “The Flight Attendant” manages to not feel rushed. The pacing of the show leaves viewers wanting more (good news, the show has been renewed for a second season), as the urgency of the case is delicately balanced with a plot that progresses at a steady pace. The overlap of

both personal and case-pertinent scenes makes each episode captivating and the entire season binge-worthy. “The Flight Attendant” is also well-balanced when it comes to humorous and serious moments, and the deadpan comedy makes the show a little less disturbing, providing enjoyable moments of friendship between the characters.

While most of the plot lines were well thought-out, there are two storylines involving Cassie’s friends—Ani Mouradian (Zosia Mamet), a lawyer, and Megan Briscoe (Rosie Perez), another flight attendant—that don’t seem to go anywhere. Ani is shown at one point smuggling something into a prison, and risks being disbarred (it’s not exactly clear for what, but it seems to be more than just smuggling). It’s never made clear why she is taking part in this illicit activity, and there doesn’t seem to be a

future for the concept. Megan is shown several times talking with suspicious people over the phone, but it isn’t made clear why or what she is doing. “The Flight Attendant” still has a chance to resolve Megan’s plot holes in the second season, though.

Overall, if you’re looking for a generic, run-of-the-mill crime procedural, “The Flight Attendant” is not the place to find it. The first season is a good mix of both mystery, drama, and comedy, with none of the genres taking away from the others. The introspection of the protagonist is unique and results in greater viewer engagement. Above all, “The Flight Attendant” does a great job of balancing the disturbing, sad, and funny scenes, while maintaining the integrity of the investigative nature of the show.

MUSIC

A Silent Requiem In “Sound of Metal”

By CHRISTINA PAN

The first thing you’ll hear in Darius Marder’s directorial debut “Sound of Metal” isn’t heavy-metal drumming, but the sound of an orchestra tuning as the theatrical logo of Amazon’s Prime Video Cinema unfolds on screen. Each sound is shaped with sterile minimalism—the strings are almost synth-like, a singular note prolonged as the camera pans to the theater front, its timbre crisp and defined.

Then comes silence. The curtain is drawn, and the first act has yet to start. When it does, we hear a ringing before the music. It’s a jarring noise, like a knife scraping against a bottle, reverberating constantly. Yet the music comes back quickly, and we’re swept to the intoxicating fervor of a rock show. Ruben Stone (Riz Ahmed) is at the drums, hammering away as Lou (Olivia Cooke), the band’s frontwoman, howls into a microphone and thrashes her gui-

tar. It would almost be a beautiful moment, complete with a strange sense of organized cacophony, but the ringing comes back, and the audio flips out. It’s muffled, in and out, and it’ll only get worse. We’re hearing what Ruben hears. The sound design sucks us into his mind: the feeling of drowning in deep water, suffocating panic, and the flickering haziness of everything. Unease creeps in almost instantaneously.

“Sound of Metal” follows a musician who goes deaf, but that’s not what the film is about. There’s a total submersion we find ourselves in that captures the fragility of daily existence. Films about life-changing events often turn to gimmicky melodramas, with cheap sentiment to tug at the heartstrings; “Sound of Metal” is anything but.

Ahmed plays it subtle, a quietness that comes with the fear and denial of loss. It’s mere minutes after we meet Ruben and Lou that he gets diagnosed,

learns about surgical options, and starts racing to raise the money for his expensive surgery so he can get back to where he was before. He can play through it. Everything is fine; let’s play at the next show.

But there’s no going back. The doctor explains this, and Ruben, egged on by Lou, begrudgingly checks into a facility for the deaf run by a man named Joe (Paul Raci). Most of the film takes place in this rural retreat, with the sounds of crickets buzzing, the laughter of children at an associated school for the deaf, and the banging on the dinner table as sign language flashes in flurries of conversation. Ruben, however, is repeatedly thrown into situations where he’s isolated. He sits miserably mute while those around him converse in sign language. He can’t communicate with the deaf or the hearing until he learns to adapt to his current situation.

There isn’t an inciting event

throughout the film besides Ruben’s deafness. Instead, Marder builds tension from the anxiety of the restless. When Ruben first meets Joe, he’s warned that the retreat isn’t about fixing his ears, but his mindset. Yes, he’ll learn sign language, and he’ll be welcomed to the conversation that goes on silently around the idyllic space. But he has to learn to sit with himself first. Ruben’s always found comfort in activity and noise; it’s this constant “go, go, go” menace that tells him that all the stopping, stillness, and silence means death. The horror of deafness isn’t just the loss of music, but the rejection of change and the deception of normalcy.

As I watched “Sound of Metal,” I couldn’t exactly pry my physical reactions from what was happening on screen. It captures a musician’s journey through deafness with such gritty authenticity that it made my skin crawl. It made me want to run away, or perhaps throw

on headphones and revel in the sound of an orchestra, or listen to my favorite song until I could think of nothing but the lyrics. Marder submerges his audience in pure empathy to the point where the viewer, like Ruben, needs to escape.

Once we step away from the screen, however, there’s this realization that we’re experiencing precisely what Ruben is. We’ve been in quarantine for nearly an entire year, and there’s an accepted sense of optimism that looks to the future when we can all be in person again and everything will be the same as it were before the coronavirus. And yet “Sound of Metal” fights for the opposite, in all its sensitive and silent glory. It makes me think of music at a funeral, the haunting mark of an ending, a requiem of sorts. But Ruben can’t hear the music. He can’t bring himself near the coda and stays hovering in a continuous cycle of yearning—all for a reality that he can’t get back to.

Humor

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

New Zoom Updates! (Super Fun!)

By ERICA CHEN
and OLIVER HOLLMANN

Hey Zoom users! Welcome to our company blog where we will be sharing comments and thoughts on new updates. We wanted to let you know that there will be a blog post before every major update; this way, you can know what to expect on this website!

Have a jolly day.

Update Blog: Jan 30, 2021

Zoom update team here! We're back with more news about the latest Zoom updates.

First up, there was an abundance of comments on our website asking for students to be able to choose breakout rooms by themselves. The users claimed that it would make group work much easier and that if this were to happen, they would recommend Zoom to everyone they knew. So, obviously, we decided to add that function. We expected to see the number of users increase exponentially.

Unfortunately, while the number of users did increase initially, it decreased soon afterward. We were shocked to find that there were multiple complaints about how students were using their freedom to cause chaos. "Students are choosing breakout rooms arbitrarily and making it hard for teachers to handle. They are literally just hopping everywhere," a commenter named Teaching@Stuy claimed. "They're purposely choosing the same breakout rooms as their friends, not getting any work done, and wasting so much class time!"

Now, we're conflicted. People wanted us to add that extension to breakout rooms, but others thought it created too much trou-

ble. After much consideration, we decided to take away breakout rooms completely. After all, the best solution to a problem is to remove it by its roots. Without breakout rooms, there's nothing for anyone to argue about.

Update Blog: Feb 12, 2021

Greetings! Now that our platform's troubling issues have been irrevocably solved (Ha, we aren't falling for your tricks again. We aren't fools), we are excited to

ever, due to the overwhelming byte size that all the flags take up, we have opted to simply replace each flag design with a white background over which, in black text, is the name of that country. Software limitations aside, we hope that people will be inspired and empowered by these very low-quality images with incredibly small text.

As an unfortunate consequence of these numerous and variably applicable emoticons,

After much consideration, we decided to take away breakout rooms completely. After all, the best solution to a problem is to remove it by its roots.

roll out a new set of emojis! Many of our users have been "bored" and "confused" with our previous choice of emoticons, including "Joy," "Open Mouth," and "Tada." We recently received a number of unhappy comments about our removal of the "Coffee Break" emoji. We didn't know how much people enjoyed leaving Zoom calls for a break! Well, have no fear because our research team just finalized a list of brand new emojis that are available right now! The lineup consists of "Volcano," "Man Playing Handball," "Banjo," "Blueberries," "Easter Island Head," "Abacus," and finally, "Biohazard."

For those of you who want to show off your national pride, we have also introduced flag emojis for all the countries and provinces of the world. How-

we do have to completely remove the ability to screen share, as update testers found that if they used at least one of our array of emojis during a screen share, the platform would completely crash. Though presentations will no longer be possible, the demand for new emojis was too great to ignore. We hope that people will now be able to connect to each other on a deeper level through Zoom.

Update Blog: Mar 3, 2021

Hi again, this is the Zoom update team! We have received a vast amount of feedback to our last update, in large part from teachers, who have, to our knowledge, unanimously disliked the removal of presentations through screen sharing. We have responded to many angry letters, and we want to reaffirm that the

staff at Zoom cares about the people who use our product, especially those who rely on it for education.

To be transparent, we plan to address another concern from teachers: virtual backgrounds. A number of distressed teachers have spoken out about students using displeasing or inappropriate backgrounds. One such educator, who chose to remain anonymous, said that one of his students "showed an image behind them that distracted and derailed the class, creating a disruption that [the teacher] could not deal with in the slightest."

To solve this issue, we have removed the ability to create virtual backgrounds and replaced it with a fresh, new, and incredibly limited selection that, while remaining pleasing to the eye, will not draw too much attention. This selection includes "Licorice Black," "Brick Wall," "Coffee Brown," and "Concrete," as well as a one-hour video of paper being shredded. We anticipate people enjoying these fun, expressive backgrounds and for many to become familiar with the wide variety of colors, especially because they are being forced to use them.

Update Blog: Mar 28, 2021

We're back with a quick fix to the current platform. Since the last update, we have received complaints from teachers that many of their students consistently turn off their cameras, as many would rather not be seen with the recently introduced virtual backgrounds. "The colors make me puke," a student (going by the name of SchoolAin'tLit) commented. "Not to mention, the color gray is incredibly unflattering and makes me look like I'm in a jail cell."

We were sad to see this de-

velopment, so in order to improve the organizer experience, we have completely removed the option to turn off cameras. Many of you reading this may be concerned about your privacy, but have no fear because we have also implemented a feature that will remedy this problem.

We call this feature "Avert Attention," and you can activate it with a button on the bottom left of the Zoom window screen any time you don't want to be seen. When you press this button, red flashing text will appear on every other participant's screen, reading: "PLEASE IGNORE [Your Name Here]. AVERT YOUR ATTENTION FROM [Your Name Here]." This will surely prevent all other participants from looking at whatever is happening on your camera.

Update Blog: Apr 22, 2021

With all of our new additions to the Zoom interface, there's been an increasing amount of criticism targeted at how challenging it is to use the platform, especially for the elderly. "My family wanted to do a family reunion over Zoom last week, but my grandparents were unable to operate Zoom and couldn't join the meeting due to technical difficulties. If only Zoom were more user-friendly for the elderly and non-tech-savvy people..." a comment complained. After hours of staff meetings and arguing about what to do to make Zoom easier to use, we finally decided on our master plan, which involves transforming Zoom into one easily accessible button! Super minimalistic and easy to use.

This update will be ready to download sometime by this week, so be on the lookout! See y'all next time!

Honey x College Board

By AMY ZHANG
and EZRA LEE

Here at the College Board, we understand that the current times have taken a toll on many students. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit students and their families especially hard, and our thoughts go out to those who have lost loved ones. AP students across the world are adapting to changing situations, whether that be mentally, physically, or most importantly, fiscally. Students have been left in a place of financial instability over the past year, which is why we are partnering with eCommerce website Honey to help alleviate some of the undue stress on our hardworking scholars.

What is Honey?

Honey is an Internet browser add-on that you can, well, add on to your preferred browser to make searching for coupons easier! When you're checking out your cart, Honey automatically searches for coupons to apply to your order.

How do you use Honey?

1. Add in Seconds*

Search up joinhoney.com/CB-student-crisis-aversion-movement and click Add to Chrome.

2. Shop Like Normal

Honey and College Board will work together to give you the best deals possible on all your standardized testing needs.

3. Save (Practically) Instantly

Now you can apply any coupons available on the College Board website to your order!

(Not tech-savvy even though your entire schooling experience has been moved to the interweb? Or maybe you claim you're a visual learner when in reality you just like looking at pictures? Check out Ms. Monster's YouTube channel to see our brand ambassador's tutorial on Honey and how she uses it herself.)

Not only have we implemented this incredible tool for students to use, we've also included bundle deals for standardized tests to make the most of your (parents') money!

Savings Saturdays!

Save up to 30 percent** off any single AP test!

B(T)GO Bonanza!

Buy two SAT subject tests and get one free!***

Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?

Answer a Calculus BC question correctly and get a coupon for your next purchase!

Not sure what to think of saving money? Don't just take our word for how helpful it is; here are some reviews from former College Board students! Many students have found the Honey x College Board collaboration to be extremely helpful, especially during the pandemic.

"Last year I had to pay up to \$564 on AP testing, but now I only have to pay \$859 because of the student discount I got from Honey! That's a \$295 difference!" —Dinosauce313 on Reddit

"The Honey and College Board collaboration is great!

They finally fixed the glitch where I couldn't click the

"check out" button for my cart with the timer counting down to the site wiping out my entire order! Last time, I was

forced to wait another three months until

I could purchase my AP test, so this was great!"

—wishxart on Twitter

"The last time

I tried purchasing a Math II subject exam, I

used a coupon I had gotten from the Calc

BC discount promotion. I got a total of \$5 off.

I then went to Shake Shack and

used those \$5 to get fries." —formergiftedkid on Instagram

"This is pretty cool I guess. Can I

go back to my room?" —Kevin, one of our employee's son

"Wait, we have to take SAT subject tests already?" — Anonymous junior

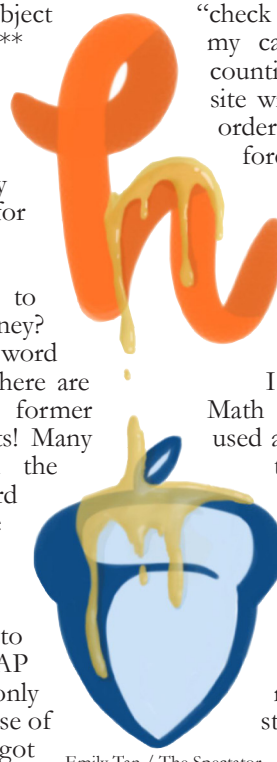
We realize that this is a unique and unprecedented way to address the needs of our cash cows, but our decision comes after much deliberation. The staff at College Board want to not only provide students with this opportunity at equal education but also provide students with a chance at a financial education. Learning how to save money is a huge asset to have and will surely benefit you for years to come. We only want to help students save money for college. Truly. That's all we want. We swear.

It has truly been an honor to work with Honey in order to help people in need. Thank you to Honey for this one-of-a-kind partnership!

*May vary depending on Internet connection speed

**The inverse of 30 percent

***This bundle does NOT include any STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) SAT II exams, which are Biology E/M, Chemistry, Physics, Math I, and Math II



Emily Tan / The Spectator

Teachers Are Secretly Thrilled With the End of the Semester

By ERICA CHEN

One early morning at 3:00 a.m., I awoke in a cold sweat, suddenly remembering that the semester would soon be over. It felt like the world was ending! It was another major change from what everyone was familiar with.

Soon, schedules would be switched, classmates would be swapped, and new teachers would be assigned. While some may have bittersweet feelings about this, others are ecstatic to escape from the wrath of their least favorite teacher or their most annoying classmates.

I knew these feelings all too well. After all, I'm a student.

But what about teachers?

For the next few days, I interviewed my teachers about their feelings and opinions of watching their students leave their classes each year, under the pretense of writing a Features article. Little did they know, I'm a Humor writer, and I have the privilege to do whatever I want.

Strangely enough, all the teachers responded with the same exact answer: "I'll always remember each and every one of my students, as they are all precious to me. They will always be engraved in my heart. Each time classes change and I watch my students leave, I am

always filled with an immense amount of sadness, but I wish them the best for their future. Even now, as the end of the semester is approaching, I feel the same way. I want to cry my eyes out and use up all the tissues I had stocked up on during quarantine."

Dozens of teachers were interviewed, and not a word different from any of them! This was way too suspicious. I had to figure out what was going on.

With no one to help satisfy my burning curiosity (there wasn't anybody around, and even if they were, they were sure to take the side of their teachers), I took it upon myself to find out.

I pulled out my computer and promptly hacked into my teachers' devices using my amazing, unbelievably legendary computer skills. After pulling multiple all-nighters, combing through thousands of Google searches (teachers search up "how to spell stuyvasint" too!), scrolling through

hundreds of texts (if you were wondering, they were all a huge yikes), and watching multiple video conferences (I taught myself how to spot

plagiarism in papers! Teachers are a lot less clueless than we think), I found some concrete evidence of the teachers' true feelings about saying goodbye to their students.

Here's an excerpt from a video conversation between two teachers:

"My classes are just such a nightmare! I can't wait until the end of the semester when I can get these students off my hands," teacher A exclaimed.

"My thoughts exactly! No one participates, and I just end up staring at little icons, seemingly talking to myself! I'm slowly going insane!" teacher B added on.

"I tell my students that I'll miss them, but frankly, I won't! I'm shivering with excitement just thinking about the day they're all gone," teacher A laughed.

Needless to say, I was shocked. Though I expected

to be surprised, I didn't think I would hear such piping hot tea!

I found similar information in the search history of other teachers. They even took their concerns to Google! (Well, some used Bing.)

"How to tell a convincing lie to children"

"How to act emotional"

"How to keep a straight face while lying"

"How dumb r students"

"How easy is it to lie to high school students?"

Just how many lies have our teachers told us?!

Identities are hidden for anonymity reasons and for the safety of my average

Finding out that teachers actually despised their students dealt a huge blow to my perception of teachers. Who knew that they were hiding so many secrets beneath their innocent facade?

If they could lie about this, what else are they hiding from us?

I decided that from then on, I wouldn't waste my hacking skills and would instead use them to shed light on the rest of the mysteries our teachers are concealing. There must be so much more that I can uncover and expose!

I'll miss you!

I can't wait until they're gone.



Sophia Li / The Spectator

Mitch McConnell's Head Falls off During Senate Session, Terrorizes Democrats

By HELENA WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON—Lawmakers were horrified today when the head of Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell fell off in the middle of a heated speech on the Senate floor. However, according to his Republican colleagues, situations such as these are normal occurrences among the party's rank and file.

"I'm gonna be honest with you, Mitch's eternal life compact with the Devil has been going pretty poorly," Senator Josh Hawley told reporters. "He's been living on ley line energy for the past several decades, ever since every fast food worker started wearing garlic wreaths around their necks. You know that whole thing where his hands went blue? That's commonly caused by your body being so disgusted by your hypocrisy that it attempts to eject your soul." When asked why he would know the results of

breaking an oath to the Devil, Senator Hawley awkwardly sputtered, "I... I... I'm definitely not attracted to that big man with the Viking horns, but he was just so forceful in how he broke in!" Hawley then ran away from reporters, who noted that he was wearing elbow-length gloves.

McConnell was in the middle of once again attempting to justify denying working class Americans money when the incident occurred. "First off, Americans should be able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, just like how I accepted help from charities to handle my polio as a child. They'll be able to do this with their minimum wage salaries through sheer determination and American bravery. Now, on that note, could we raise my salary for the fifth time? I'm only worth \$22.5 million, which doesn't go as far as it used to."

At this point, his head was noticeably wobbling on top of

his neck and turning a violent shade of desaturated blue. "And of course, I'd just like to mention that the only reason people are poorly paid is because of the Democratic unions, which make everything more expensive and do nothing other than ensure the 'safety' of the workers—"

This was when McConnell's head fell to the ground with the sound of an overripe melon. The head rolled across the floor and continued to preach hypocrisy in the general direction of anyone who would listen until Senator Lindsey Graham scooped the head up and put it in a black bag with a bloody pentacle on the front. Senator McConnell's body was removed from the Capitol in a carriage drawn by two goats and has since been moved to an undisclosed location in the RNC building.

With the Republican supreme leader apparently dead, Democrats were poised to take control of the Senate, but an

unexpected standoff occurred when Senator Bernie Sanders suggested that maybe, just maybe, true communism had never been tried and the states should give it a go. At this moment, Senator Graham sprang to his feet and unveiled the head of McConnell, which immediately shouted, "I'm stronger than mule piss!" At this unusually specific declaration of power, Senator Sanders was dragged back to his seat by two "police officers" who were unusually red-skinned and appeared to be hiding tails beneath their coats. When Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren attempted to stand up for Sanders, one of the police officers hissed at her, revealing his forked tongue and long fangs. McConnell's head then started to float around the Senate chamber, rotating and shouting "All Lives Matter!" as the Democratic senators fled the room. The Republicans politely applauded McConnell's work before continuing to plot

more ways to cause human suffering.

Luckily, help is on the way for the Democrats: two demon hunters are being sent from Georgia to try and vanquish the satanic threat. Having successfully defeated two Republicans in their runoff elections, Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff are coming to Congress. Warnock in particular has experience with fighting the pathologically stupid due to his status as a reverend. The duo is equipped with holy Democratic spells and the one thing McConnell fears: the ability to turn the Senate blue. With their help, it's rumored that the Democrats are planning to unveil a banner at the Capitol reading "MINORITY LEADER MITCH MCCONNELL," which would hopefully exorcise the accursed head from the Senate chamber—a welcome relief, as it's been floating above the podium and filibustering for the past week.

A Note on Mental Health

By ASA MUHAMMAD

A message on behalf of the Stuyvesant administration:

Here at Stuyvesant High School, we are committed to the success of our students. While we spend a lot of time caring about your academic performance, extracurricular activities, and college admissions, we have been told that your mental health is

supposed to be important to us too. We recognize how difficult the transition to remote learning has been for all of you, and we see your struggle. We see it in your eyes which blatantly look at phones on camera, we see it in your 4:00 a.m. e-mails asking for extensions, and we see it in our slipping rankings on Niche.com. Your struggle is our struggle, so we extend to you these words of encouragement and a number of new policy changes

implemented through extensive student feedback.

We recognize the extraordinary circumstances you are all experiencing each day, and we are truly in awe of your perseverance. We know that the weight of isolation can be a lot to bear, and for that reason, we encourage you to keep your cameras on during live instruction. We miss seeing your beautiful disillusioned faces, and having your cameras

on is the best way to simulate the face-to-face interaction you so desperately need.

We know that many of you feel overwhelmed by everything going on in the world. We all have different coping mechanisms for our stress, and for many of you, that means distracting yourselves with video games, Netflix, and other forms of idle entertainment. Now, with our new and improved homework policy, you will have

a minimum of four hours each day to experience the wonderment of mental expansion, ensuring that none of the world's issues concern you during that time. For teachers who couldn't find homework they deemed "necessary" for their course, we've supplied various online resources that will automatically assign and grade menial work

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Humor

All Your Friends and Family Hate You, Admit Your Family and Friends

By JORDAN BARAKAT

In a series of anonymous one-on-one interviews, all your family members reported that you are their least favorite member of the family. Whenever you are around them—usually during dinner, because you're a lazy freeloader who only knows how to eat, sleep, and use the bathroom—there is an estimated 99 percent drop in their quality of life. When you go back to your room to waste your life away on the computer like the loser you are, their quality of life once again returns to its usual level. That's not to say it's a healthy one, mind you. The fact that you are even in their proximity is enough to bring down their overall happiness to life-threatening levels.

The reasons why your family members wish that you were aborted vary, but there are a few

apparent trends in their sheer rage at your existence. For the most part, they agree that you are a total loser who spends all your time trying to achieve validation on social media. Your family also states that you are

about it. They also asserted that you don't carry your weight in the house, instead expecting everyone else to dote on you and pay attention to your every need like you're royalty and not a pathetic teenager living in a small

apartment with your extended family, destined to flunk out of community college. Sources tell The Spectator that while you spend all your free time talking to your supposed friends online instead of doing anything productive, all these friends also hate your guts. Even though they act nice to you in the group chat, the only reason they do so is that they are under the false assumption that all your other friends love you; to mention that they actually think you're really ugly and annoying would be social heresy. Your friends do indeed talk behind your back in their DMs about everything you say that is considered even remotely horrific. They just don't want to mention it to you because they know you're such a horrific mental trainwreck of a human being that you can't even sustain the tiniest bit of criticism.

Your friends and family were forced to admit that maybe your existence wasn't a total detriment to the human condition, as they said you brought all of them closer

together. That is, their shared hatred toward you has brought the group closer. Your extended family has meetings every month when they eat dinner and pretend they're eating your dead body instead of pork. Your friends are currently planning a party on your birthday that they are actively not inviting you to because you'll just drag it down. They're buying a piñata with your face on it.

When you encourage your family and friends to simply share their feedback with you, they respond with a straightforward "no" because you're such an egotistical scumbag that you probably won't take any of their comments to heart. In fact, they say, you'll probably disregard everything said in this article after you read it. After you mope around for a few minutes about it, of course. Because you're a loser.

The fact that you are even in their proximity is enough to bring down their overall happiness to life-threatening levels.

somehow a nerd who spends all your time doing schoolwork, and at the same time, such an idiot that you thought the number two wasn't prime and got into a 10-minute argument

apartment with your extended family, destined to flunk out of community college.

Sources tell The Spectator that while you spend all your free time talking to your supposed

A Note on Mental Health

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to help you seek reprieve from this cruel, desolate world we call home.

While more homework may help ease the anxieties of our students, we know that you all eagerly await grades too. To make this process more personal, we're now requiring all teachers to grade submitted work using digital stickers. The stickers will be distributed based on student performance, with smiling rainbows representing exemplary work and crying

chinchillas given to our lower-performing students.

Regarding your final exams, we've made the process as straightforward as possible by allowing teachers to continue to teach during finals week! Continuing live instruction during finals week provides you all with much-needed structure, but that's not all. We understand that there is confusion over what will be on your final exams, so we've collaborated with each department in making mandatory review assignments to encapsulate your semester of learning into one

easy assignment. Though this assignment is comprehensive and will count for a project grade, it will not impact any of your preexisting cumulative assignments, as we know how dedicated you are to harnessing your creative spirits through in-class projects.

At Stuyvesant, we recognize the strength of our community and the collaborative spirit of our students. We, the administration, have received a multitude of comments regarding extracurricular activities, and we are aware that it's difficult to make new

friends while isolated. Still, we would like to clarify that you are not allowed to use ARISTA tutoring services as a means of soliciting human interaction. Our tutors are busy enough as it is, and these spurious requests are overwhelming our systems. Instead, our new student-led outreach team may be of interest to you. We want you to be a part of this process. Rather than taking away student voices by developing any ideas ourselves, we're enlisting your help to draft and implement new activities for your fellow students all on your own! This will be an exciting and

low commitment (five hours a week) opportunity to socialize with your peers and better our Stuyvesant community.

Though we only contact you through e-mail blasts, we want to assure you that your well-being is among our top priorities. We are doing our best to make this transition as comfortable as possible for you all, but there's only so much that we can do. We believe in the potential of each and every one of our students, and it's for that reason that we say all of you have the power to make the choice to be happy.

A Lost Voyager's Guide to the Outside

By KRISTA PROTEASA

It has been one heck of a year (or more, I'm not really sure at this point). Being inside a whole lot more than before is certainly rough, but your creaky joints should be able to get back into the groove. I know you miss committing various petty crimes with your friends or looking like a fool as you trip on a flat sidewalk in front of your crush (don't worry, it happens to the best of us). "But Krista, I can't just GO outside?" Fear not, young one, for you can! This seemingly simple task I'm asking of you might appear daunting, but I have taken the liberty of doing most of the heavy lifting for you. For your utmost convenience, I've compiled a truly riveting to-do list to get you grooving like it's 1972 again. Not to pat myself on the back or anything, but you see this little list I made for you? Yeah, you can complete it all by your lonesome self if you've become scared of your friends or something. Report back once you've had fun and felt an emotion because I'm not sure how long it's been since you've done that.

1. Wake up. This one's going to make completing the

- rest of these steps a lot easier.
- Put your right shoe on your right foot and another right shoe on your left foot. This isn't the order you remember, but it's the new fashion trend nowadays, so you need to get used to it.
- Step outside. Use whatever opening is available in your dwelling, whether it's a door (pretty overrated in my opinion, but go off I guess) or a window of sorts; as long as it gets you outside, you're good.
- Immediately start locating every red-eyed tree frog in the Amazon rainforest. This might pose a challenge, as you need to get to the Amazon rainforest first. Fortunately enough for you, 20 percent of it has already been deforested, so your task of locating frogs shouldn't be that hard.

- Befriend a large cat while you're in the Amazon. You look confused. Why? Mowgli didn't risk his life for you to not follow in his footsteps.
- Run the equivalent of a 10k three times around one tree of your choosing. By the time you're done, you'll forget what your name is, so if you hate your

name, I guess this is a plus for you.

- Complete a triathlon to get home. Oh, I forgot to mention that you should've brought a bike with you. That's not really my problem, so you better get inventive.
- If you happen to see Neil Armstrong walking down the street in your triathlon-induced delusions on your way home, wave hello. It's only polite.
- For every dog you see, do 15 burpees. Your articulations definitely need some lubrication, and what better way to give them that than to start exercising in the middle of the road? If you dare to tell me you saw no dogs, go back outside and find some. You've already located all of the Amazon's red-eyed tree frogs.
- You've made

it this far, and for that, I applaud you. Now repeat this sequence for three to four more rounds and then find a cure to every ailment on the planet.

I'm genuinely proud of you for having taken the time out of your day to go off into the world and be knockoff Bear Grylls. If you're reading down here and you haven't completed the list, congrats—you just made me sad. Anyway, now's as good a time as any to warn you about some things before you go on your quest, though by now you should have already come back in one to three pieces.

Firstly, you'll want to pack some bug spray. Not for bugs, but just to mask your own odor. Degree MotionSense Dry Spray can only last for so long. Next, it'd be nice if you could bring me back some mushroom samples (for no reason whatsoever). Oh, they're hallucinogenic and can be profited off of? Well, I'll be. I simply had no idea of such a thing. Lastly, maybe take a jacket with you. Who knows, maybe the Amazon's got some reverse global warming, creating a gentle breeze. Always take a jacket. That's the end of my spiel. I hope this guide serves you well, fair traveler. Bon voyage!



Samrat Khan / The Spectator

Sports Editorial

Aaron Rodgers: The 2020 NFL MVP?

By ROXIE GOSFIELD
and SUSIE MCKNIGHT

For some, football is a side hobby. For others, it is a passion that can turn into a career. But ever so often, a player comes along for whom becoming the best is inevitable. One of those lucky few came along in 2005, by the name of Aaron Rodgers.

Rodgers has played many great seasons in his illustrious 16-year career. He was named the MVP in the 2011 Super Bowl and has since consistently been one of the top quarterbacks in the league. Despite his sustained excellence, he has never been as precise, accurate, and successful as he has been in this recent season—and the statistics back him up.

For starters, Rodgers beat his own record for best completion

percentage in a season, boasting an incredible [70.7 percent pass completion](#). Not only is his record the best completion percentage in the league, but it reigns at least one percent higher than that of other serious MVP contenders. High completion percentage is one of the clearest indicators that distinguishes the great quarterbacks from the exceptional quarterbacks, and it is abundantly clear that Rodgers is a step above the rest.

In addition, Rodgers is known for having the best passer rating of all time. Rodgers has continued his dominance this season, as he has the second best single-season passer rating of all time, sitting at an astonishingly high [121.5](#). This record is topped only by his own from the 2011 season. Aside from his high statistics, Rodgers has many [notable feats](#),

including “the NFL single-season records for games with a 100-plus passer rating,” “games with a 100-plus passer rating and three-plus touchdown passes,” “games with three-plus touchdown passes and zero interceptions,” and “games with two-plus touchdown passes and a completion percentage of 70-plus.”

Due to his unmatched success this season, it is absolutely no surprise that reporters have hailed Rodgers as the frontrunner for MVP. According to [ProFootballTalk](#), “Others in the conversation were Bills quarterback Josh Allen, Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, and Titans running back Derrick Henry. This year, however, was Rodgers’s year.” In fact, [46 of the 50 Associated Press voters elected Rodgers to the All-Pro team](#), a common indicator of the season MVP. News outlets have

continuously stated with confidence that Rodgers is and will be named this year’s MVP, and we can be assured that executives will follow suit.

While Aaron Rodgers may seem irreplaceable, he is actually far from it. His team, the Green Bay Packers, drafted a quarterback who would potentially take his place as starting quarterback prior to the 2020 season. In an interview with sports commentator Kyle Brandt, Rodgers said that while he understood this decision, he was still disappointed by it: [“I wanted to play my entire career in Green Bay. I love the city.”](#)

However, instead of shriveling in the face of a possible replacement, Aaron Rodgers faced this changing team dynamic head-on. Clearly, the mounting pressure did nothing but motivate him, as he played one of his

best seasons thus far and will be headed to the divisional round of the playoffs.

If Rodgers is in fact named MVP, this will not be the first time that Rodgers has won the title—but the third—as he won this award both in 2011 and 2014. Winning a third time would be a huge accomplishment, making him only the sixth player to do so in NFL history. Though Rodgers faced some tough competition throughout the season, in the end, his personal statistics and overall team contributions have propelled him far beyond other players. As an all-decade quarterback late in his career, this MVP win and overall groundbreaking season is a testament to Rodgers’s unmatched talent and game-changing influence throughout the years.

Sports Editorial

The Downfall of Mesut Özil

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campaign in dreadful form, with three wins out of 13 matches. The club fired Emery in hopes of coming back from these losses, and he was eventually replaced by former player Mikel Arteta. Many loyal supporters hoped that the new coach would revive Özil’s dull form. However, Arteta’s appointment only worsened Özil’s prospects of a glorious return.

Özil spoke up about the cruel

treatment of the Uyghur Muslims in China in December 2019, criticizing other Muslim countries for not speaking up on the issue. Arsenal, which has a prominent fanbase in China, distanced themselves from his statement, declaring, “The content published is Özil’s personal opinion, [and] Arsenal has always adhered to the principle of not involving itself in politics.” Arsenal began to suffer financial losses, with Chinese broadcasters removing Arsenal

games and merchandise from the country. Since the pandemic began in March 2020, Özil has failed to make a single appearance for Arsenal. Unlike all the other Arsenal players, Özil refused to take a pay cut because of the virus, stating that “people have been trying for two years to destroy me.” His refusal caused the club to freeze him out, as they hoped he would request a transfer or wait for his contract to expire within the next year.

After Özil was left unregistered for the current 2020-21 season, many fans accepted that his time at the club is finally over. His attitude problems with the managers, political controversy, and loss of form are all factors in why he has fallen off the soccer scene. Looking toward the future, Super Lig club Fenerbahçe S.K. and MLS clubs DC United and Inter Miami CF have expressed interest in the German. Özil’s contract is set to expire in six months; alter-

natively, he might terminate his contract in order to get back to playing.

Both Özil and the club should have tried to communicate and work out their conflicts with each other. Arsenal has clearly suffered in the last few years, falling well short of expectations, and Özil is not the same talented player he was at his young age. For now, with Özil’s time at Arsenal all but over, fans can only wonder what is in store for his future.

Sports Editorial

College Women’s Basketball Stays Competitive During the Pandemic

By ALICIA YU

This season of women’s college basketball has been exciting for fans to watch, with many great matchups and an impressive freshman class. Here are some of the top teams to look out for as the race to the NCAA title intensifies:

Stanford Cardinal

Despite being down three players due to the pandemic, the top-ranked Stanford Cardinal have been dominant all season, going 7-0 in the PAC-12 and 10-0 overall in the NCAA. Coached by former Cardinal Tara VanDerveer, the Cardinal boast both a strong defensive and offensive game, recording a [+30.7 scoring margin, averaging 83.7 points per game, and allowing their opponents only 53.0 points per game](#). They have even won games against some of their most competitive opponents, such as the Arizona Wildcats and the UCLA Bruins, in double digits.

Sophomore guard Haley Jones has been a huge contributor to the Cardinal’s success, [averaging 15.2 points, 9.4 rebounds, and 1.1 blocks per game this season](#). Her excellent scoring efficiency, creative shot-making ability, and unique basketball IQ have allowed her team to flourish on both ends of the court. She has shined throughout her sophomore season and will continue to be a powerful weapon for the

Cardinal as the season progresses.

University of Connecticut Huskies

You can’t have a discussion about women’s college basketball without mentioning the University of Connecticut Huskies, better known as the “UConn Huskies,” who are currently ranked fourth in the NCAA. The team’s skillful playmaking has made them a threat in the Big East Conference, as they are 6-0 in the conference, and 7-0 overall in the NCAA. A team with many great scorers, [the Huskies boast a +37.3 scoring margin and an average of 87.0 points per game](#). The team has many young, developing athletes—six of the 11 players on the roster are freshmen—and incredible depth that extends beyond the starters.

Freshman guard Paige Bueckers has led the team, [averaging 18.9 points, 5.1 assists, and 2.7 steals per game](#). Her skillful court vision and IQ, combined with her exceptional scoring efficiency, have made her a huge threat to her opponents, as she can easily throw a quick pass to force an easy layup and shoot from anywhere on the court. Her awareness of the court and feel for the game have translated well into the college scene, as she’s already been given a chip on her shoulders by coach Geno Auriemma. Equipped with Bueckers’s rising talent and its talented roster, the Huskies will be poised to domi-

nate future seasons.

North Carolina State Wolfpack

The North Carolina State Wolfpack, dubbed the “NC State Wolfpack,” have shown why they are the top team in the ACC and one of the best teams in the country, ranked third in the NCAA. The team has been [averaging 82.1](#)

the best.

The Wolfpack are led by center Elissa Cunane and forward Kayla Jones and coached by Wes Moore. Cunane has been the star player of the Wolfpack, averaging [16.2 points, 7.8 assists, and 1.4 blocks this year](#). She plays like a true center—a dominant post up player who can gracefully catch and shoot, as well as score from

why they are not to be underestimated.

Louisville Cardinals

The Cardinals have gone 3-0 in the ACC Conference and 10-0 overall in the NCAA to place them at number two in the NCAA. The Cardinals have continued to be a competitive threat, as exemplified by their amazing scoring ([averaging 85.7 points per game with a +27.2 scoring margin](#)) and equally impressive defense.

The Cardinals are led by guard Dana Evans, who leads the team with [19.7 points, 4.2 assists, and 1.7 steals per game](#), and coached by Jeff Walz. Evans has great versatility on both ends of the court; she can do it all, from scoring the ball and running the offense to defending the ball and catching steals from opponents. Her aggressive style of play and hustle make her unstoppable and allow her to strengthen areas the Cardinals previously struggled to improve in. In addition to Evans, the team has great depth as many players are both accurate shooters and strong defenders, making the Cardinals a very formidable team.

These four teams have risen to the challenges of the pandemic by remaining resilient and competitive. As team positions shift throughout the remainder of the season, we will see which team is ultimately the best, making for a great basketball competition come the postseason.



Iris Lin / The Spectator

[points a game, featuring a +23.4 scoring margin](#). In addition to going 5-0 in the ACC conference and 11-0 overall in the NCAA, the Wolfpack celebrated a huge win against last season’s top-ranked South Carolina Gamecocks and solidified their position as one of

the three-point line. Jones has also been a great help, as her aggressive scoring inside the paint has turned her into a reliable option for Moore. The Wolfpack’s phenomenal frontcourt players have asserted their dominance all season long, consistently proving

Sports

Sports Editorial

Watch Out for These Five NBA Teams

By NAKIB ABEDIN

The 2019-2020 NBA season was undoubtedly one of the most unpredictable seasons in league history. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, commissioner Adam Silver decided to continue the season in a bubble in Orlando, Florida. Without in-person fans, home-court advantage, and many other conventional aspects of the NBA playoffs, many doubted that the NBA postseason would live up to its usual standard. However, these doubts were soon proven wrong, as the playoffs delivered some of the most epic and unforgettable moments basketball fans have ever seen.

With the start of the 2020-2021 season, it's apparent that the unpredictability on display last year has carried over to this year as well. With superstars such as Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant returning after missing all of last season, it feels like so much of this year is uncertain. What we do know, however, is that the league is filled with more talent and depth than ever before. With the first few games already in the books, the 2020-2021 NBA season is shaping up to be one of the most unforeseeable and enthralling years yet.

Looking ahead, here are the teams to watch out for this year.

Brooklyn Nets

This year's season marks a special new chapter in the Brooklyn Nets' franchise history. Since their last Finals appearance in 2003, the Nets have consistently found some degree of success in the regular season only to fall short when it matters most: the playoffs. As desperation reached a fever pitch in the summer of 2019, the Nets acquired two of the biggest superstars in the league out of the blue: Durant and Kyrie Irving.

Despite high expectations on their shoulders, the Nets started off their season on shaky legs. They stood in the lower half of the Eastern conference after losing four of their first seven games, and it took the team some time to get into a groove. After all, they're still adjusting to the novelty of Durant and Irving on the team, as well as the new head coach, Steve Nash. Despite Nash's lack of coaching experience, his unparalleled understanding of the game, stemming from his Hall of Fame career in the NBA, will surely boost the Nets' chances at a solid playoff run this season.

Another adjustment the Nets will have to make concerns the new addition of the 2017-2018 NBA MVP, James Harden. Known for his lethal offensive arsenal, Harden adds even more firepower to the already loaded Nets offense. Currently, both Durant and Irving are averaging over 27 points, and Harden's addition to the team naturally begs the question of whether the three ball-dominant players will be able to share the ball, or the overloaded offense will hurt the team. One downside of Harden's recent arrival is the loss of two very promising young talents, Caris LeVert and Jarrett Allen. Prior to the trade, both players added great value to the Nets' overall game. Allen played great on both sides of the court, averaging 11.6 points, 10.9 rebounds and 1.5 blocks per game, while LeVert was the team's third leading scorer, averaging 18.5 points while also tremendously aiding the team's shooting. Their absences will surely affect the Nets bench, which is looking dangerously lackluster after the trade. If Durant, Irving, and Harden can learn to play alongside each other, one can expect the Nets to be real title-contenders by the time the playoffs roll around. If not, at least the deadly trio will give Nets fans some exciting basketball to watch.

Los Angeles Lakers

It was only three months ago when the Los Angeles Lakers were crowned NBA champions in the Orlando bubble. Over the short 72-day offseason, they continued to improve their roster with the addition of the winner and runner-up of last year's Sixth Man of the Year award, Montrezl Harrell and Dennis Schröder, respectively, as well as seasoned veterans like Marc Gasol and Wesley Matthews. Harrell has been a great physical presence in the paint coming off the bench, grabbing eight boards a game. Schröder has been equally productive, starting alongside LeBron James at point guard and facilitating the offense.

With the best duo in the league in James and Anthony Davis manning the ship, the Lakers are going to be unstoppable this season. And if that pairing wasn't enough, the Lakers seem to have a hidden gem in second-year guard Talen Horton-Tucker. During the NBA preseason, Horton-Tucker showcased his well-rounded skill set, offering a glimpse into the bright future for the 20-year-old stud. Currently, the Lakers stand atop the Western Conference with

a record of 11-3. According to ESPN, they boast the fifth highest offensive efficiency in the league at 112.6. It's safe to say that as long as James and Davis remain healthy, the Lakers have a high chance of becoming back-to-back NBA champions.

Golden State Warriors

Oh, how the giants have fallen. Just two seasons ago, the Golden State Warriors were NBA champions. Now, they're a team in the midst of rebuilding, looking to develop young talents and manage their assets well in order to be in the best position for the future. The Warriors had a terrible start to the season, getting blown out by a margin of at least 25 points in three of their first five games. The Warriors' offense has been especially lacking in its abysmal efficiency. The team's 43.9 percent field goal percentage ranks them 26th in the league, and their equally poor 35.2 percent three-point field goal percentage puts them behind 18 other NBA teams.

Though it looks like the Warriors might not even make the playoffs this season, there are still a couple of reasons why they'll be interesting to watch this year. First and foremost, Curry is likely to have an MVP-type season. The three-time NBA champion is averaging around 28 points, six assists, and six rebounds while shooting 44.7 percent from the field and 37.6 percent from threes. Curry exploded for a career-high 62 points against the Portland Trail Blazers on January 3, finishing 18-for-31 from the field, 8-for-16 from three-point range, and 18-of-19 from the free throw line. His performance that night made him the second oldest player in history to score over 60 points in a game right behind the late Kobe Bryant.

Another bright spot for Warriors fans is the team's second overall pick, James Wiseman. The seven-footer is averaging 11.3 points on 48.3 percent shooting and leads all rookies with averages of 6.3 rebounds and 1.6 blocks. His numbers are especially impressive considering that the first-year center has only three games of college basketball experience under his belt and didn't have an NBA Summer League to gain experience before the start of the season, and yet was still thrown into the Warriors starting lineup. Given enough time, Wiseman surely has the potential to develop into the next great big man in the league.

New Orleans Pelicans

The New Orleans Pelicans have had a rough start to their season, holding a 4-7 record thus far. Though Brandon Ingram and Zion Williamson have averaged 23.5 and 21.8 points per game, respectively, the Pelicans' overall offense has been struggling, and their 105.9 points per game places them at 28th in the league. One possible reason for their stagnant offense could be their adjustment to their new coach, Stan Van Gundy, as the players are likely still getting used to his coaching style. However, Van Gundy has always been recognized for achieving offensive success, evident from his 2008-2009 season in Orlando when he led an offense ranked 11th in offensive rating (109.2) with a focus on quick ball movement, looking for the best possible shots, and a four-out, one-in (41) zone offense. Van Gundy's schemes have the potential to turn around the Pelicans' offense.

Coach Van Gundy's direction will not single-handedly make the Pelicans' offense more efficient, though—the entire team will need to step up as well. Two major setbacks to the Pelicans' offensive success have been the inconsistency of their bench and their three-point shooting. As of now, New Orleans sits near the bottom of the league in three-point percentage (32.4 percent), but this slump appears to be ending soon. Lonzo Ball started off slow but has drastically improved his three-pointers this season and is shooting a field goal average of around 40 percent. Furthermore, J.J. Redick and Josh Hart are also starting to provide more points from the bench, an area that the Pelicans have struggled in during their first few games.

One upside for the Pelicans this season has been their rebounding ability. With an average of 57.1 rebounds per game, the Pelicans maintain the third rank among the league in this category. Both Williamson and Steven Adams average around nine rebounds per game, giving the Pelicans plenty of second-chance opportunities on offense.

Dallas Mavericks

The Dallas Mavericks have finally found their groove after struggling during the NBA's first two weeks of action, in which they earned a record of 2-3. The Dallas Mavericks' 124-73 domination over the Los Angeles Clippers was one of the few silver linings during this stretch. Though Luka

Doncic averaged 24.4 points, 7.6 rebounds, and 6.4 assists across these five games, these numbers were a little underwhelming compared to his typical MVP-caliber stats. However, the Mavericks have bounced back from their slow start to an overall 6-5 record.

Since their loss against the Bulls on January 3, the Mavericks have shown that they are one of the top teams in the NBA with an impressive three-game win streak during the third week of the season. This streak included victories over the Orlando Magic, Houston Rockets, and Denver Nuggets. Coach Rick Carlisle made a few lineup adjustments in these games that drastically increased the team's success. Willie Cauley-Stein and Maxi Kleber were put into the starting lineup while Tim Hardaway Jr. and Dwight Powell were moved to the bench. Carlisle's decision to play with a bigger lineup has improved the team's defense, earning the team the second best defensive rating in the league behind the Los Angeles Lakers. Hardaway Jr. made the most of his new bench role, averaging 25.7 points per game and shooting 61 percent from the three-point line across this three-game stretch. Doncic also showed improvement by once again putting up his typical numbers: 30.3 points, 12 rebounds, and 11.2 assists per game. The Mavericks look to continue this success with the return of Kristaps Porziņģis, who scored 16 points and recorded four rebounds in 21 minutes during the Mavericks' victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

With only a little more than three weeks of games played, it might be too early to decide which teams are contenders. The beginning of the season has been filled with many surprises, including trades, teams surpassing expectations, and amazing performances from NBA rookies. Of course, the biggest change so far was the four-team trade that sent Harden to the Nets, Victor Oladipo to the Rockets, LeVert to the Indiana Pacers, and Allen and Taurean Prince to the Cleveland Cavaliers, which has drastically altered the landscape of the NBA. The formation of a new super team in Brooklyn is exciting, and only time will tell whether three superstar players on a single team can effectively win games. As the list of postponed NBA games grows due to COVID-19 and teams continue to shock fans, the 2020-2021 NBA season is becoming the most unpredictable season in recent years.

Sports Editorial

A Goodbye to Senior Seasons

By AKI YAMAGUCHI

Along with my fellow seniors, our time on The Spectator has come to an end, and has already been over for the sports teams we have come to love so much. Reflecting on my experiences, I have realized the opportunities we have lost this year and the memories that will never be made. I will always think back to playing one more game or having one more practice together. Being part of a team for any number of seasons leaves an impact on any athlete, who will never forget the camaraderie or simply the pure joy of playing. Even for me, managing basketball has been a place of connection where I could still contribute within the hard working atmosphere of a team. Calling on my comrades, here are some of the parting thoughts we leave in the absence of our sports seasons and reflections on what we will always remember.

"I felt like playing sports gave me a sense of purpose outside of my academic life at Stuy; sports gave me a chance to breathe and laugh [...] I'm devastated that we aren't going to have a season because since freshman year, everyone waits for their senior year where they will be at the top of the game and can finally dominate in the sport they play."
—Isabel Leka, senior (volleyball, basketball, softball)

"[Though] I'm disappointed that we won't get to continue our rivalry with Beacon and [that] all the progress we've made won't be properly showcased, all we can do now is work with our younger players to make sure next year is as good as it can be."
—Luca Bielski, senior (baseball)

"Missing my senior year of high school sports is truly disappointing because this was the last chance for many of the other seniors to play competitively before going off to college. I will miss the weekend morning practice and the late night practice when the building is just silent."
—Nicklaus Yao, senior (badminton, basketball, volleyball)

"I was really looking forward to meeting new team members and going to competitions with my team [...] I'll miss the chattering voices of my teammates intermingled with the clanking of swim lockers in the locker room—heck, I might miss even the gross tiled floor [...] Above all of this, I'll miss my team and Coach Choy [...] [and] I'm glad I've made a lot of memories since I was on the team freshman year."
—Stella Oh, senior (swimming)

"The biggest thing I miss is my teammates, with whom I would love to have more meals and practices [...] I really wanted to play in the playoffs in my last year for both basketball and volleyball [...] [I also] miss the team pictures, [which are] definitely one of the biggest highlights of every season."
—Nikkie Lin, senior (basketball, volleyball)

Sports Editorial

A Pandemic Postseason: NFL Playoff Preview and Predictions

By JEREMY LEE
and YAQIN RAHMAN

The National Football League (NFL) came into the 2020-2021 season with the arduous task of hosting a successful football season in light of a raging pandemic that continues to affect our lives. With limited fan attendance, COVID-19 protocols, regular testing, and masks, the NFL has defied the odds and completed a full regular season of football, now moving on to the postseason. But the COVID-19 regulations aren't the only thing different about this year's postseason. This year's "Super Wild Card Weekend" also changes the landscape of the NFL playoffs tremendously. Seven teams are now allowed to enter the postseason instead of six, and only the first seed team has the privilege of a bye week. The result was one of the most competitive and interesting playoffs that football fans had the pleasure of viewing, with three games both Saturday and Sunday (and one televised on Nickelodeon!). Here's the recap of this past Super Wild Card Weekend and our predictions for which teams will win their upcoming matchups.

AFC

Divisional Round:

Buffalo Bills (2) vs. Baltimore Ravens (5)**Winner: Buffalo Bills (2)**

This Bills vs. Ravens matchup will be one to remember. The Bills hadn't won a playoff game in 25 years until this year's wild card round, and they look to win another for their shot at the Super Bowl this year. Meanwhile, Lamar Jackson still has to prove to his haters that he can win playoff games, and after his first postseason win against the Titans, he is looking to continue his winning streak and cement himself as the Ravens' franchise quarterback.

The Bills have been dominating teams all season, led by quarterback Josh Allen, who went from still learning the works of the NFL to an MVP caliber passer in a single season. Led by Allen, the Bills have one of the best pass attacks in the league with newly acquired wide receiver Stefon Diggs cementing himself as a top receiver in the league and wide receiver Cole Beasley being right alongside him. While their run game isn't the greatest, their passing ability is what has carried them all season and what they will continue to rely on.

Jackson, fresh off an MVP season in 2019, hasn't seen as much hype as last year but is still the best rushing quarterback in the NFL, threatening defenses with his dual-threat ability to both pass and run it himself. When he's not running the ball, rookie running back J.K. Dobbins and running back Gus Edwards are leading the way on the ground, helping lead the Ravens to boast one of the most deadly rushing attacks in the league. Both teams have very solid defenses that dismantle opposing offenses as well. Both the Bills and the Ravens have great passing defenses; on the Bills, cornerback Tre'Davious White and safety Micah Hyde lead the way, while Baltimore cornerback Marlon Humphrey shuts down opposing wide receivers. Both run defenses have been below average this season, and the Bills showed that porous defense vs. the Colts, when Jonathan Taylor and Nyheim Hines combined for over 150 yards on the ground.

However, the Ravens proved to be effective in shutting down the run vs. the Titans, led by elite running back Derrick Henry. The Bills still have a good run game consisting

ning back Kareem Hunt. That tandem would be deadly against what's widely regarded as the Chiefs' Achilles heel: their below average run defense. The Browns

has thrown four interceptions, had his lowest passer rating, and been sacked seven times, a stark contrast to his usual performance. In essence, the Chiefs look very

NFC championship.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers (5) @ New Orleans Saints (2)
Winner: New Orleans Saints (2)

As of late, the Buccaneers have been playing some of their best football of the whole season. With their offense firing on all cylinders, Tom Brady in the playoffs is a force to be reckoned with, especially with weapons such as wide receivers Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, and Antonio Brown. However, there is a question over whether the Bucs defense will be able to sustain itself against a dangerous New Orleans offense, as they have had their struggles throughout the year. When we consider the previous matchups between these division rivals, the Saints have been dominant, and their second win of the season against the Bucs was a whopping 38-3.

The advantage that the Saints have at home against Tampa Bay seems even more significant when one considers that the Saints offense is still returning to full strength as they learn to play with one another once again. The deadly offensive trio consisting of Drew Brees, Alvin Kamara, and Michael Thomas is one that has only played 67 snaps together this season entering Sunday's game against the Chicago Bears, and they are only getting better. Coupled with a strong defense that pushed the Saints to victory during Super Wild Card Weekend, it appears as if New Orleans will simply be too much for the aspiring Tampa Bay squadron.

Conclusion: It is incredibly hard to beat the same team three times in a season, but with the trend of progression we have seen from this New Orleans defense throughout the season, along with an offensive unit that continues to make up ground as it returns to full strength, this matchup will likely be a very close one, in which the Saints go marching on to NFC championship.

NFC Championship:

New Orleans Saints (2) @ Green Bay Packers (1)
Winner: Green Bay Packers (1)

In yet another legendary quarterback battle featuring Rodgers and Brees, this game will likely be as competitive as they come. Two great offenses, paired with strong defenses, are sure to make this face off come down to the final minutes. With comparable weapons on the offensive side of the ball, this game could essentially come down to a quarterback battle between two hall-of-famers in Rodgers and Brees. The former has been playing out of his mind this year, with MVP caliber stats that include 48 passing touchdowns and just under 4,300 passing yards, with only five interceptions to his name. Meanwhile, Brees has come back strong—considering that he suffered 11 broken ribs and a collapsed lung just a few months ago. However, with Green Bay playing at home, the conditions will likely be favorable for the Packers, as the Saints' home field is indoors, which could play a major factor depending on mother nature. This game could truly swing either way, but ultimately, it is likely to come down to a quarterback duel, in which the soon-to-be MVP will emerge victorious.

Super Bowl:

Buffalo Bills (2) vs Green Bay Packers (1)

of Devin Singletary, Zack Moss, and Allen for QB runs, but if the Ravens can stop Henry and the Titans, they can stop the Bills run game as well. However, the Bills defense may have trouble staying afloat against the most effective run game in the league.

Conclusion: Both teams are coming into this game hot, but the Bills have the upper hand on this one. The Bills' high-octane passing game is lethal to any defense, including the Ravens, and can prove to be a game winner. The Bills already faced a run-heavy team in the Colts and, despite barely beating them, have that experience and momentum entering this wild-card game. The Ravens, meanwhile, haven't faced a team with that good of a pass offense yet. The Bills have proven themselves this season as one of the most complete teams in the NFL and are making a strong case to be a Super Bowl contender.

Cleveland Browns (6) vs.

Kansas City Chiefs (1)
Winner: Kansas City Chiefs (1)

The Chiefs have the best record in football right now at 14-2 and are deserving of the first seed. However, Patrick Mahomes and Kansas City are facing an unexpected team in the divisional round, and it's none other than the Cleveland Browns.

The Chiefs boast a terrific passing offense led by Mahomes, who is highly regarded by many as the best quarterback of this generation for his ability to pass the ball accurately, make decisions on the fly, and use his athleticism to extend plays that would otherwise be dead on the spot from any other quarterback. He is not alone in his greatness, as he has a wide supporting cast; Travis Kelce is a top tight end in the league, while Tyreek Hill is the one of the fastest wide receivers in the NFL. The offensive line is fifth in sacks allowed, and running backs Clyde Edwards-Helaire and, more recently, Le'Veon Bell, add to the Chiefs' newfound run game to complement the high-octane passing attack. This powerhouse of an offense would be lethal to the Browns defense, the same defense that let up 500 yards and 27 points in the second half alone.

On the flip side, the Browns have an incredible run game, with Nick Chubb having a career season alongside former Chief run-

ning back Kareem Hunt. That tandem would be deadly against what's widely regarded as the Chiefs' Achilles heel: their below average run defense. The Browns also have a decent pass game with Baker Mayfield and Jarvis Landry. But the brightest spot on the Browns offense, both carrying the run and pass offense, is the Browns' first ranked offensive line, who managed to let in zero sacks against the sack-heavy Pittsburgh defense in the Wild Card Game, even without their pro bowl guard in Joel Bitonio, offensive line coach, and head coach Kevin Stefanski.

Conclusion: For this game, we have the Chiefs coming home with the win. Their pass attack is too great against the Browns pass defense, and the Chiefs have proven time and time again how explosive their offense can be. Even the Chiefs' rushing attack can play a role and turn the tide of the game. As for their defense, the Browns' main strength is their run game, and though the run defense is below average, the Chiefs proved last year in the AFC Championship against the Titans that their run defense can still hold their own even against the likes of Henry. As for the Browns' passing game, the Chiefs' defense can hold their own on that front as well, especially with safety Tyrann Mathieu covering the field. It'll be tough for Cleveland to go score-for-score with Mahomes, so Kansas City has the advantage here.

AFC Championship:

Buffalo Bills (2) vs. Kansas City Chiefs (1)
Winner: Buffalo Bills (2)

If this matchup ends up being the AFC Championship, it would be one of the most exciting games to watch of the season. The two teams boast one of the most high-octane passing games in the league and would be a quarterback frenzy between Allen and Mahomes. The game would most likely be a shootout, as neither team has an incredibly tough defense, and the two teams have shown all year that they can score pretty much at will.

Conclusion: Both the Bills and Chiefs have proven themselves to be top NFL teams this season with very similar strengths and weaknesses. However, the Bills have a slight edge over the Chiefs, since the Chiefs barely won their last few games. Mahomes had six interceptions in the regular season, yet 16 of his throws could have been interceptions but were dropped instead. In the last three games, Mahomes

inconsistent, unlike the Bills who have consistently gotten the job done. The Chiefs did win this matchup in week six, but the Bills have become a different team since. The Bills, being the more consistent team, look poised to come out on top.

NFC

Divisional Round:

Los Angeles Rams (6) @ Green Bay Packers (1)**Winner: Green Bay Packers (1)**

Coming off of a strong win against the NFC West division rival Seattle Seahawks, the biggest question for the LA Rams is their offense. Against the Seahawks, we saw a lackluster offense carried by rookie running back Cam Akers. With the loss of backup quarterback John Wolford, the team turned to injured starting quarterback Jared Goff, who had received surgery on his right thumb of his throwing hand no less, just 12 days prior and struggled against a weak Seattle secondary. The defense is largely accountable for the victory last weekend, and as the Rams enter Saturday's game against the Packers, they will no doubt turn to their defense once again to pull them to a victory, led by superstar defensive tackle Aaron Donald. The first team All-Pro that recorded 13.5 sacks this season injured his ribs against Seattle, and despite no broken bones, his health will be a situation to monitor.

Boasting a healthy 13-3 record through the regular season, the Green Bay Packers had one of the most explosive offenses in the NFL. Led by the likely league MVP Aaron Rodgers, along with superstar wideout Davante Adams and the always dangerous Aaron Jones in the backfield, the Packers' offense was on a mission this year. Despite a talented defense featuring the likes of defensive back Jaire Alexander and pass rusher Za'Darius Smith, the rush defense was a question for the Pack this year, and Akers will look to expose this hole with a strong Rams O-line leading the way.

Conclusion: Though the Rams defense will prove a valiant opponent, the Packers offense has proven to be incredibly challenging to stop this season. With starting quarterback Goff's health in question, a shaky Rams offense will not be enough on Saturday, and it seems as if the Packers are shaping up to move on to the

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Sports Editorial

The Future Is Now for the Knicks

By PHILLIP PHAN
and PHILIP VON MUEFLING

Being a New York Knicks fan is tough. As a dedicated Knicks fan, you're forced to watch the team tank every season. You're made fun of by every other fan base. You watch young players develop improperly. You dream of signing stars like Kyrie Irving, Kevin Durant, and LeBron James in free agency every single year, but the front office doesn't take any decisive action. Every season, Knicks fans go through the same process of great expectations and equally great disappointment. They have the worst record of any team over the last 20 seasons. However, this year, Knicks fans have a reason to be excited.

After the departure of David Fizdale, one of the worst coaches the Knicks have had since Jeff Hornacek, fans are hopeful about their new head coach. Coach Tom Thibodeau, former NBA Coach of the Year, represents everything this city has to offer; he preaches defensive effort and diving for loose balls and has everything to do with the success

of the young Knicks.

The Knicks roster is younger than ever and it is buying into New York City basketball, so great basketball could be coming to New York sooner than most think. Promising young players like Immanuel Quickley, Mitchell Robinson, and RJ Barrett bring excitement to every game. Whether it's Barrett "wheeling and dealing," Robinson "posting and toasting," or Quickley "spinning and winning," all of the youngsters bring hustle to the floor. Barrett has continuously struggled with shooting, but his rebounding, defense, and drives to the basket keep him active. While Quickley has to work on shot selection, his incredible knack for drawing contact makes him extremely elusive and dangerous.

Julius Randle has also had a breakout year. Randle is averaging around 23 points and 11 rebounds per game, putting him in All-Star consideration. Though Randle still spins wildly into the paint, leading to many of his turnovers, he has greatly improved his

three-point shooting ability and playmaking, averaging 6.7 assists per game so far. Randle is leading this Knicks team so far, but he's not on his own. The Knicks picked up Austin Rivers this year in free agency for the veteran minimum. Rivers has



proved to be a great locker room player and a vocal leader, pairing with Randle to push the Knicks' young talent forward.

Year after year, the Knicks enter the lottery aiming to take another "promising" young rookie, but it never seems to pan out.

Kristaps Porziņģis has wanted out of New York. Frank Ntilikina is fighting for bench minutes. Kevin Knox is still a work in progress, and the Knicks' pick, Robinson, has proven to be a solid starter. Their 2019 lottery pick, Barrett, shows the most promise from this group. As a rookie, Barrett averaged 14.3 points per game in a terrible Knicks offense.

This year, Knicks fans can expect Barrett to thrive and other young players such as Knox to step up. Knox has shown a lot of improvement in the first few games of the season and is now a better three-point shooter. Most importantly, he shoots with confidence. "Shooters shoot" is one of the most influential sayings in the game of basketball, and Knox absolutely shoots.

The Knicks also drafted hometown kid Obi Toppin with the eighth pick this year. Weary Knicks fans once again have a rookie to be excited about. Toppin was projected as a top five pick but was still available at pick eight, a no brainer decision for

the Knicks as Toppin is a high-flying power forward from Dayton who won the Naismith College Player of the Year trophy in 2020. Toppin plays with grit and hustle, making highlight plays everywhere on the floor. He will help the Knicks build their culture, and most importantly, he wants to be a Knick and return the team to its former glory.

The Knicks have not had a winning season since the 2012-2013 season, but after all this time, true Knicks fans still proudly represent their team and city. That's what makes us Knicks fans. We take pride in our city and team no matter what. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Madison Square Garden filled up every night regardless of the Knicks' record or who they were playing, because basketball means everything to New York. From Rucker Park to Madison Square Garden, basketball is all New Yorkers really know. There's a reason why the Big Apple is the basketball mecca of the world. All Knicks fans want is to have meaningful games in the best arena in the world again, and it is closer to happening than ever.

Sports Editorial

The Downfall of Mesut Özil

By SHAFIUL HAQUE

Mesut Özil is widely regarded as one of the greatest soccer players of the 21st century. The attacking midfielder has racked up many personal and team accolades throughout his career, serving as a creative outlet to spark the attack. Özil won the 2014 World Cup with Germany and has ranked on top in the assists charts for La Liga and the Premier League. However, Özil's recent predicament at Arsenal is hindering his game ability and could draw his

career to an untimely end.

This season, Özil was excluded from Arsenal's 25-man Premier League and Europa League squad. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has said little to the public on the issue. Some worry that his exclusion was due to his activism on the harsh treatments of Uyghur Muslims in China. Others have speculated that the club's financial board is angered that Özil refused a 12.5 percent pay cut on his \$350,000 weekly salary amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it's important to recognize

that Özil's fall from prominence has been years in the making.

Özil's struggles at Arsenal began in the early stages of the 2018-19 Premier League season. After being named as one of the club's captains, he suffered from back and knee problems, which caused a dip in his form. Additionally, then-manager Unai Emery excluded him from the matchday squad on several occasions, leading many to believe that Özil would depart in the January window. However, no move for the German materialized, and

Özil's relationship with Emery continued to worsen. His role in the team changed from being a leader on the pitch to simply a role player. Disappointingly, Arsenal ended the domestic season in fifth place, failing to qualify for the Champions League for the second season in a row. Özil had one of the poorest seasons of his career statistically, with only six goals and three assists in 35 appearances.

After Arsenal's poor end to the season, Özil voiced his frustration with Emery in front of his team-

mates. His fallout with the manager led fans to once again believe that Özil would leave the club, but he continued to fight for his place in the team. At the beginning of the 2019-20 season, Özil was the victim of an attempted robbery and given a break before he could play games. Instead of discussing Özil's apparent issue, Emery continued to consistently leave him out of the match squad well after the incident. Arsenal began the

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Sports Editorial

The Battle of the GOATs

By NAKIB ABEDIN

Edson Arantes do Nascimento (Pelé), "The King of Football," seemed to have an untouchable legacy. The Brazilian goal-scoring machine led his country to an unprecedented three FIFA World Cup titles and was unquestionably considered the greatest soccer player of all time. Over the years, the likes of Johan Cruyff and Diego Maradona came close to Pelé's legend, but none close enough to legitimately challenge his throne. Pelé's status as soccer's clear GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) stood until the 2010s, with the emergence of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Recently, Messi and Ronaldo eclipsed two of Pelé's most impressive goal-scoring records. Pelé and his former club, Santos FC, have responded aggressively to Messi and Ronaldo's new feats, reigniting the debate about the greatest soccer player to ever touch the ball.

The dispute began when Messi scored his 644th goal for Barcelona on December 22, 2020, breaking Pelé's record for the most goals scored for a single club. Pelé,

who had once famously criticized Messi, saying, "Messi doesn't score headers," lost his cherished record to a header by Messi. Adding salt to the wound, Ronaldo scored two goals against Udinese in a 4-1 win to overtake Pelé in the all-time top scorers ranking just 11 days later. Losing two records that seemed insurmountable in the span of two weeks, Pelé's legacy faced strong challenges from Messi and Ronaldo. Knowing that his claim to the coveted Greatest of All Time title was at risk, Pelé fought back with the help of Santos FC. In a public statement, the [President of Santos said](#), "Pelé scored 1,091 goals for Santos. In the accounts of the specialised press, the King of Football scored 643 in competitions, and the 448 goals scored in friendly matches and competitions were ostracised, as if they had less value than the others." Santos argued that Pelé's records are still intact because the goals Pelé scored in friendlies and other unofficial matches were not taken into account. Pelé supported this narrative by reposting this statement in his Instagram bio. This action was seen as extremely distasteful because Pelé and his

club Santos resorted to cheap technicalities to defend Pelé's title.

Pelé's reaction to his records being broken has been met with ridicule by many soccer fans across the world. Historically, friendlies have never been taken seriously. They have often been used to test out new tactics, give young players a chance to play, and get players back in shape. Also, teams typically agree not to go for dangerous tackles to try to avoid injuries, which takes away from the intensity of the games. Therefore, soccer fans normally ignore the results of these games. When Pelé and Santos counted these unofficial goals, fans interpreted their actions as ridiculous; he even counted goals in military exhibition games on his goal tallies.

Pelé and Santos should not have tried to discredit Messi and Ronaldo in the manner that they did. Pelé's legacy is not based solely on his records, but rather on his unique style and incredible success in the World Cup. Pelé has won the tournament three separate times, a feat that neither Ronaldo nor Messi has been able to accomplish even once. Pelé didn't need those records to validate his legitimacy

as "The King of Football." He should've accepted that all records are meant to be broken and that someday, someone was bound to take his crown. Ironically, by attempting to protect his cherished

records, Pelé has harmed his own legacy. His attempts to discredit Messi and Ronaldo have inflicted more damage to his reputation than Messi and Ronaldo could have if they broke his records.

SPORTSBEAT

Professional figure skaters **Bradie Tennell** and **Nathan Chen** won the 2021 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in the senior women and men's divisions, respectively.

Minnesota Timberwolves center **Karl-Anthony Towns** tested positive for the coronavirus. The Timberwolves have since postponed their game against the Washington Wizards.

Olympic gold medalist **Klete Keller** was charged with three crimes for his participation in the **Capitol Hill riots**.

Professional tennis players, including **Victoria Azarenka** and **Sloane Stephens**, were immediately instructed to quarantine after two people on their flight to the Australian Open tested positive for the coronavirus.

Former Houston Rockets guard **James Harden** was traded to the **Brooklyn Nets**, adding to the already dangerous duo of guard Kyrie Irving and forward Kevin Durant.