BC’s Film and Theater Departments
Manage Hybrid Courses for Fall
Pg. 3

VIRTUAL CLUB FAIR
P. 7

ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL
P. 9

NFL WEEK 1
P. 16
BC’s Notorious Res Hall Closes Its Doors

By Maya Schubert
News Editor

After years, the Residence Hall at Brooklyn College has finally shut its doors. According to a former RA, the building at 1 Kenilworth Place stopped operating toward the end of July.

Though the building continued housing students after Brooklyn College’s campus closed, numbers dwindled significantly as many students moved back to their parents’ homes. Because the fate of the fall semester went unannounced for most of the summer, potential residents like freshman or transfer students were also not making definitive move-in plans.

For many, the residence hall’s quiet shutdown seems to deny its infamous reputation. Known across Brooklyn College’s campus for dirty conditions, floods, and a hostile environment, RHBC has attracted grimy conditions and reports of sexual harassment by employees at the dorms. The articles followed YouTube videos and a short film about the residence hall released by BC film student Chris Omar. Over the 2019 fall semester, The Vanguard repeatedly reported on floods at the dorms. Joann Johnson, the former bookkeeper at the residence hall, said that the owner didn’t share with her why RHBC is closing, or if the building would be sold.

“I guess [it closed] because of COVID,” Johnson said. “I’m not sure.”

All she knew was that it was shutting down.

“The residence hall is not opening back up,” she said. “It’s closed; it’s locked.”

In May, Brooklyn College let its advertising contract with the building expire.

“Brooklyn College is unable to provide any assistance to students interested or residing in the building,” Ron Jackson, Vice President of Student Affairs, wrote in an email on May 22nd. “Brooklyn College has no involvement in the management or operation of the facility.

The school’s conspicuous attempt to dissociate itself with RHBC came as the result of public complaints from students following the newspaper reports and Omar’s short film. Omar, who graduated in Spring 2020, is sure that RHBC’s closure is the latent result of generated publicity.

“I knew once we released the documentary -- and the media attention surrounding it -- they could no longer carry on their money-grabbing practice of exploiting Brooklyn College students,” Omar said. “While I wish this had happened years ago, I am glad they are finally out of business. All in all, I’m glad no one can be exploited further by RHBC.”

The owner of RHBC, Sefi Zvieli, declined to comment.
By Bobbie Bell  
Staff Writer

As Brooklyn College adapts to remote learning, how and when hybrid courses will begin for the fall semester is still up in the air for the theatre and film departments. There will be thirteen hybrids across all departments in the college, including the physics and earth and environmental sciences department.

“"We will be attempting to run a small number of hybrid engagements on the campus this fall to help with the performative aspects of actor training," said Kip Marsh, the chairperson of the theatre department.  
The department hopes to have five hybrid acting courses: Voice Production for the Actor I and III, Movement for the Actor I and III, and Acting for the Camera.  
Those pursuing a master in fine arts acting degree will most likely be placed in these hybrid courses due to their small class sizes. This will leave the classrooms less congested and therefore allow social distancing guidelines to be more easily carried out. Before any hybrid course can move forward, however, the department must submit their plans to the Reentry Review Board.  
Marsh has had to "submit a reentry plan [to the Board] that details how [they] would like to be able to use the campus for classes and performance engagements."  
"The Reentry Review Board is very thorough in its assessment of campus usage plans and often sends a department's plans back for modification or redirection," Marsh said.  
Marsh is uncertain of how long the process should take, but expects hybrid classes to span from early October to mid-November for graduate students in these courses.  
"My first class will be October seventh on campus with my second year MFA students, and October eight with my first year MFA students," said Judylee Vivier, a professor in the theatre department.  
Anne Lopes, the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs has joined the Response and Reentry Task Force.  
"It has been both exciting and challenging to be part of the Task Force," said Lopes. "The criteria we used for considering requests for a hybrid class was based on the need for students to use equipment or learn to use equipment that is housed on campus for the delivery of the degree program."

The undergraduate film department is only offering one hybrid class for undergraduates this semester, a cinematography class, according to Annette Danto, the chairperson of the undergraduate film department. Hybrid classes for the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School at Brooklyn College include 3D Computer Animation I, Computer Animation 3, Production Workshop 1, and Special Topics in Cinema Arts 1 and 2, as listed on CUNYfirst.

"Our WEB Film Department doesn't have the proper air filtration system, so we've been told that it's unsafe for students, faculty, and staff to spend time in the building during the pandemic," said Danto.  
Lopes listed a few things the Task Force takes into consideration when reviewing a proposal for a hybrid class, including "requested rooms and ventilation, number of times each student will be on campus, plans for disinfection of equipment, signage posting, and the cleaning schedule for the space."

Like the theatre department, Danto says the film department is still combing through final details of their hybrid classes. The class will be virtual for the most part, but will include "two hands-on lighting workshops."

"These workshops, as per the college's health and safety guidelines, will only involve five students at a time working with the instructor in a large studio space," Danto stated.

Everyone must also wear a mask and maintain social distancing.

"At the core, theater and performing artists are storytellers and communicators, and engaging with our community to tell stories and communicate difficult social dilemmas is the primary opersuit, regardless of the form in which it happens," said Marsh.

All theatre courses are currently online, but Kip sees online learning as a unique challenge that allows students to "produce work remotely," a necessary skill for actors in today's climate.

The same can be said for the film department. Students will receive their sound equipment kits, which will allow them to work on projects from their homes.

"We are most concerned about everyone's health and safety so we are doing our best to come up with creative solutions for our hand-on craft classes which rely on equipment usage," said Danto.

According to CUNYfirst, the Earth and Environmental Sciences department will have one hybrid course: Field Mapping. The Physics department will also have a hybrid course called Modern Physics Laboratories. Neither departments were available for comment.
Students worry new testing programs may infringe on privacy. / Edited by Humza Ahmad

Student Activities Fee In Question

By Paola Sacerdote
Staff Writer

CUNY students are unhappy with the university’s decision to permit live, online proctoring of exams. The frustration led to the creation of a petition on change.org called “Do Not Let CUNY Violate Student Privacy,” in the hopes to remove the proctoring rules implemented by CUNY. The petition so far has over 27,500 signatures.

Students specifically take issues with the programs CUNY is partnering with in order to administer exams virtually. “As the Fall 2020 semester begins, online classes are implementing various software services to curb potential academic dishonesty. While the intentions are in good faith, the implementation will be atrocious,” the petition reads. The petition is supported by the University Student Senate, “The guild, the student government at Brooklyn, John Jay, Baruch, Queens, BMCC, Hunter, York and CSI. According to CUNY, students will start seeing their exams being recorded by midterm season of this fall.

The AI driven programs CUNY is working with, such as Proctorio, Respondus, and Proctortrack, capture screen content on the users computer, and has features like one that tracks eye-movement, all to ensure that students can’t cheat. However, students fear this could be used to infringe on students’ privacy and safety. “CUNY, through its partnership with McGraw Hill Publishing, can use Proctorio to spy on students and violate their rights to privacy,” the petition says.

“Proctorio is a direct and abhorrent violation of privacy at every conceivable level...Full and unrestricted access to personal data from students (computers, private physical rooms, and other means of identification/monitoring) is a despicable overreach by CUNY, and McGraw Hill. It is unacceptable that students must surrender their civil rights, especially while attending a public institution, to complete their education.”

Students hope that all CUNY schools will involve student leaders in the search for alternatives to online proctoring and to notify the students that they are not required to accept the terms and conditions of any online proctoring software. “The data privacy, student liability, indemnification provisions, hardware compatibility, and cost considerations in question are quite complex and we are working as purposefully and thoughtfully as possible, fully understanding the sense of urgency involved;” the CUNY Guidance on Academic Continuity to campuses reads. Many students who signed the petition have left a comment on the webpage voicing their opinion of CUNY’s decision.

“Though I do not doubt the intentions of CUNY, this system has tremendous potential for abuse, not to mention the fact that this would disproportionately hurt neuroatypical students due to the eye-tracking feature,” a student commented. “I strongly urge CUNY to reconsider their use of this technology.”

By Ian Ezinga
Business Manager

At the end of last semester, Brooklyn College students saw a $28.35 “waiver” in their CUNYFirst accounts which accounted for a partial refund of the Student Activities Fee (SAF). This semester, with club events and the majority of classes held virtually, it remains uncertain if students will be seeing a similar waiver.

“Student Activity Fees are about $114 and go to different groups on campus that serve the students,” Iqra Naheed, press director for the Undergraduate Student Government’s executive cabinet, told the Vanguard.

With roughly 18,000 students enrolled, the fees generate a substantial amount of money well over a million dollars. All of the groups that receive funding through this pool of cash are still operating in some capacity, even with the gates to campus shuttered to students.

“It is understood that not all students may use the services that SAF provide, but a lot of students still do and that is why they are in place,” said Naheed. Vital services such as the health clinic and the food pantry are still operating remotely and are continuing to provide important resources to students in a city still weathering the effects of a pandemic. So while certain essential services are locked in, there are some funds in flux, particularly the $93,000 allocated to student clubs this semester. With no in-person events, which have served as the largest cost for clubs in the past, it remains a question as to how executive members of clubs will be spending their budgets.

“They have the opportunity to choose how to use their money to best support the BC community,” Naheed said. “The guidelines around what they can do is up to the school. Everyone is learning together what can be done online, and clubs are finding creative ways to interact with their members including virtual meetings, online panels, giveaways, and more.” However, the allocated funding for clubs is a relatively minor portion of the entire Student Activities Fees budget. The students at the helm of the undergraduate student government (USG) campaigned under a radical platform which sought to better organize the student body and extract concessions from the college’s administration to better the conditions for students.

While the end destination for much of the money is still to be determined, the USG president, Ethan Milich, and his cabinet want to eek out an equitable solution for Brooklyn College students. Naheed continued, “The executive office at USG has been working on finding ways to set up grants or charitable funds in hopes to financially support the student body... At each turn, we have found that we do not have the power to enact such measures. We are still hoping for a compromise with the administration to be reached within the next few weeks, where we can be allowed to spend the money in organizing and helping the student body have a successful semester.”

Since the student services funded by the SAF will remain open, albeit virtually in most cases, it is not clear how much cash the cabinet would be able to pull together for their goals of alleviating students’ financial stresses. The uncertainty about the outcome of future negotiations with the college’s administration rests upon the elected student’s commitment to changing the fundamental ways that funding is even raised in the first place.

“We think that once the student body is sufficiently organized, it will have the tools to accomplish their demands, including tuition freezes and eventually free tuition altogether,” concluded Naheed, who set out to make the case that the fight for helping students is only just beginning.

With the money in a sort of limbo and the administration seemingly set on a straightforward course of action, much is still to be learned about how the Student Activities Fees will come back to serving students.
The pandemic has presented several financial hardships and uncertainties for small businesses, forcing owners to grapple with revenue losses and potential closure. On Tuesday, Brooklyn College’s Koppelman School of Business invited three experts to discuss the Covid-19 response and recovery for small businesses. Throughout the webinar, panelists analyzed racial inequity, bank and business relationships, and the flaws embedded in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a business loan system enacted under the CARES act.

"Not only did it create a health crisis, it produced a severe economic shock," said Darline Augustine, Associate Professor of Business Management at Koppelman.

During the early months of the pandemic, large PPP loans were granted to not-so-small businesses like Shake Shack, Potbelly, and Ruth’s Chris Steak House. Though the loan program was initially capped at $350 billion, and available to all businesses with 500 employees or less, the funds soon depleted significantly. So much so, the second rounds of loans called for an additional $310 billion. The depletion in funding left many small businesses, like mom-and-pop shops, to receive little to no PPP funding to operate. During the early stages of the health crisis, " said Frias. "Sure enough the top concern that they had is their personal financial security. They live off their business, if their business is sinking, they feel like they are sinking as well," said Frias.

To further evaluate whether the PPP "hit the target" of appropriately allocating funds for small businesses in need, João Granja, Associate Professor of Accounting at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, presented three dimensions of the issues. The first was figuring out if funds were flowing to areas with the most economic dislocation before the establishment of PPP. The second dimension was determining whether appointing banks to handle and deploy PPP loans was actually more convenient for small businesses. And lastly, Granja questioned whether PPP accomplished its purpose in promoting employment or developing mechanisms to help firms operate.

Using new data on the distribution of the first round of PPP loans and employment data, Granja found that the four top banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Citibank, accounted for a total 36 percent of small business loans before the PPP policy. Meanwhile, during the first round of PPP, these banks severely underperformed and disbursed less than 3 percent of total loans.

"Regions with a larger footprint of underperforming banks are going to receive disproportionately smaller allocations of PPP funds," said Granja. "It was not the case that areas with higher PPP actually did better after the program launched, but rather pre-existing conditions are related to the allocation of PPP funds."

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought on a series of changes to our day-to-day lives, but most of all it has caused financial instability for small businesses. As the "new normal" continues, numerous small businesses will need to recover from their substantial revenue losses and looming shutdown to regain some stability.
By Tsering Zangmo
Staff Writer

During the COVID-19 pandemic, BC Business Professor Ngoc Cindy Pham has been a supportive force for her local Brooklyn and Vietnamese Asian communities, as well as her students. As a professor, Pham has been able to live her life’s purpose in using teaching as a “power to change the lives of students and inspire them to be the best they can be,” as she puts it. “When I was a kid I wanted to be super fast or super strong,” she said. “I do it everyday as a professor.”

Aside from her work in the classroom, Pham is a philanthropist, businesswoman, and Marketing Director of a New York Fashion Week show. She is well known by students as an educator who is passionate about every student’s professional well-being.

Pham has been featured in the Brooklyn Public Library’s Oral Histories Stories of COVID-19 and the Museum of Chinese in America MOCA OneWorld COVID-19 Special Collection. As a leader during this health crisis, she started a GoFundMe for Brooklyn College’s Class of 2020, which will pay for a delayed graduation celebration once they are able to come back to campus. She was recently presented the Faculty of the Year Award, which is given to a faculty member in recognition of their outstanding teaching contributions and dedicated service to student success.

Professor Pham has worked tirelessly, and her caring actions have extended beyond helping the students at Brooklyn College. Pham offers support in all sorts of ways to members of her community and her students, including providing mental and emotional support for friends and students, as well as donating homemade dumplings for those struggling.

Pham proudly said she has used her time to learn more about cooking, particularly her dumplings, which come from a recipe passed down through her Chinese lineage. Professor Pham is of Vietnamese and Chinese descent. “[Vietnamese people are] very positive, optimistic, caring. We are very loving people. We love to share,” she said. “My father always says we are from a small country. If you don’t work hard, how will people look at you in your country? I ask myself how people will perceive me as Vietnamese. I have huge pride in my nationality.”

Pham has indeed worked very hard during the COVID-19 pandemic, putting her educational power to use. She has written for the Vietnamese National Newspaper about the situation in New York from her own perspective. To stay productive in quarantine, she utilizes every moment of time. “Do something to take an opportunity,” she said. “Think of it as a way to get stronger. In life there are so many unfortunate events. Buddhist philosophy guides me to do better…”

Pham excitedly shared news for the future: she has been nominated to give a presentation on TED Talks. “My dream project is to give a TED Talk. It is a scholarly place for millions of people. I feel my country and my message will be heard more. I want to get involved in more politics, meet VIPs across the board,” said Pham. “I want to bring more gender equality. As a female professor, I had to walk up two to three times more. I want to see more successful female students. Men and women are equal.”

Through her selfless acts of kindness, Pham has demonstrated her deep-rooted connection with her students and ethnic communities. She has proven to be a resilient and proactive leader, willing to take on any challenge, including a pandemic.
Involvement Fair Moves Online

By Gabriela Flores
Features Editor

As most of Brooklyn College continues remotely, the Student Activities, Involvement, and Leadership Center (SAIL) hosted its very first Virtual Involvement Fair to give students and clubs a chance to interact with one another remotely. Though the event’s turn out was lower than in previous years on campus, participating BC organizations and students managed to engage across their devices and adapt to the move online.

“In-person you can interact with students and actually know who you are speaking to. Online it was a bunch of screens, that’s who you’re speaking to,” said Sheena Naser, President of BC’s American Sign Language Club, “but it was very engaging, like a lot of people surprised me. They come and they were very interested in being involved.”

Before the pandemic canceled the fair in-person, nearly all BC clubs would set up their tables to chat with students passing by. No student registration was needed to attend. But this year, participants had to register on Bulldog Connection to access the fair hosted on Zoom. 16 clubs joined the fair last Tuesday, September 8, with each having their own meeting room and a short description box introducing their organization to students scrolling by.

“We didn’t get the number of clubs we usually do on campus. Also, the aspect of just comradery that’s associated with having the involvement fair where it’s on campus and students interacting with one another presented sort-of a challenge,” said Hamilton Raymond, Associate Director of SAIL. “But overall, with the feedback I received, it was phenomenal. Students are looking for us to set up another one for them.”

Initially, many organizations expected low student turnout since accessing the digitized version of the fair required registration and more effort. With this in mind, many clubs prepared for this year’s event differently than they normally would. Some had a PowerPoint presentation ready to go, while others improvised. For BC’s Muslims Giving Back (MGB), preparation for this year’s fair was “more scripted than in-person.” When the fair was on-campus, MGB members could discuss their club with each student individually and share some candy or flyers from their booth.

Now online, one of the significant components in MGB’s fair preparation was the promotion of their Zoom meeting room. To better their expected turnout, MGB board members collaborated with the college’s Islamic Society, Muslim Women’s Educational Initiative, and other club board executives. Together the organizations used their social media to encourage students to join each other’s fair rooms.

“We do see a better turn out that way. It’s easier to promote each other like that, and it’s easier to reach out to more students, said Maryam Ahmad, Secretary of MGB.

Though student attendance was better than many anticipated, some aspects of the fair’s former in-person experience could not be replicated online. The ability to spontaneously start small talks or face-to-face conversations with students based on their interests or features, such as their clothing, was no longer available over Zoom. Nonetheless, the Phi Sigma Chi Multicultural Fraternity was still able to carry their chapter’s core principal of a lifelong brotherhood to those interested in joining. Through the Virtual Involvement Fair, the fraternity was able to gain prospective members.

“We really take our pride in knowing who our people are. We take the time to actually cultivate groups together -- people who eventually cross into the fraternity together,” said Mohammad “Big Brother Tonic” Tusar. “Where they are able to have a brotherhood at large, but a brotherhood at a minimal level too between each other and each person.”

For some clubs, like the Asian and Asian American Film Organization (AAAFO), the fair’s move to online proved to be more convenient and useful in connecting them to the BC undergraduate community. As a film group that started last year in the Barry R. Feinstein Graduate School of Cinema, AAAFO’s demographic was limited to the graduate student body. Through the Virtual Involvement Fair, members had the opportunity to bridge the college’s graduate and undergraduate populations, all while connecting students through their diverse cultural identity and interest in media.

“We had a couple of undergraduate Asian students coming in and showing up. And then by listening to them, being Asian in a community interested in Film, TV and Radio, at least they know of a sense of belonging they can confirm and acknowledge,” said Kosaku Horiwaki, Vice President of AAAFO.

“That’s a strong feeling that I felt from them, so it’s the feeling beyond that of our graduate school community.”

The fair indicates the college’s decision to move forward in the “new normal.” As digitized events like the Virtual Involvement Fair continue at BC, the community will likely adapt to interacting virtually for as long as the pandemic remains.
BC Contributes to Modern “Journal of a Plague Year”

By Chaya Gurkov  
Staff Writer

Back in August, Brooklyn College became the newest member to join A Journal of the Plague Year (JPY), an online submission initiative that aims to provide the community an opportunity to document their experience living alongside the coronavirus.

Named for Daniel Defoe’s 1722 novel, “A Journal of the Plague Year,” which chronicles the 1665 Great Plague of London, JPY is meant to be a collection of stories to record the time of Coronavirus.

When we look back at a time when the great COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 is merely a figment of the past, who’s going to tell the story? Who is going to relay the difficulties of isolation or the palpable fear and tension in the streets? Who's going to document the endless Zoom meetings and the new routines we had to pick up? The JPY aims to answer those many questions.

In March, history professors at Arizona State University began the project, and as of now, it includes submissions from institutions in Australia and the Philippines to Canada and New Orleans.

“[I]n a sense, this is kind of guerilla history,” Associate History Professor of ASU Mark Tebeau said. “We want stories from everyone: those who are not as digitally active, older folks who are at the greatest risk, communities of color which may be impacted differently than others. The best archives are those which are most representative,” he said.

The archive welcomes any form of a contribution to its site, whether its personal narratives and family stories, interviews, artwork, photos, or social media posts. The goal is to gather as much documentation of our lives during this pandemic as a record of how we face and continue to face an unprecedented time in modern American history.

As of print release, five submissions are available on BC’s collection. One contribution, entitled Fighting for Equality during a Pandemic, documents creator Jada Benjamin coming to grips with the fight for equality despite the ongoing pandemic. She writes underneath a video of an ongoing protest, “For the first time in months, I choose to get up and leave my little street, and join the people who were fighting for Black Lives.”

Another submission comments on how the pandemic has brought light to the educational inequities in New York City public schools. While one video, carrying a more humorous tone, shows a Zoom meeting in which two dogs named Mabel and Olive visit the screen.

While sparse, the stories within the Brooklyn archive are unique to its curator, an advantage BC Associate Librarian Miriam Deutch and Director of Open Educational Resources (OER) see’s specific to Brooklyn students.

“Because the Brooklyn College community is so diverse, we can give a voice to people from a wide range of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds and create an inclusive archive,” she said.

Deutch told the Vanguard that they are looking to expand the archive, commenting that in the future, “historians will want to hear from everyone that has been impacted by the virus.”

No story is too small, no submission too simple. Every person living through this time has a distinct perspective that will only add to the thousands of contributions already made, as Deutch pointed out, “We are all witnesses to history.”
"Alienation Sogai" at the CUNY Asian American Film Festival

By John Schilling
Arts Editor

Over the summer, CUNY’s Asian American/Asian Research Institute (AAARI) hosted the 17th Annual CUNY Asian American Film Festival featuring a variety of short films made by CUNY students. Among the featured filmmakers was Nobuhiro Futaki, a recent graduate of Brooklyn College and the director of Alienation Sogai.

Alienation Sogai tells the story of Kenji, a combat student in New York who receives a surprise phone call from his father in Japan. The film focuses on Kenji’s inability to connect with his father as he masks his true feelings over the phone call and deals with his own personal struggles.

The film stars Ken, who goes by first name only, as Kenji with Nathaniel Velez, George Eliseev, Myu Hayashi, and Sakarou making up the supporting cast. It also features original music by Yuriy Lehki, another alumnus of Brooklyn College.

After the film’s screening, Futaki joined the live streamed event to speak with CUNY AARI about Alienation Sogai. Despite the film being completely fictional, Futaki applied some of his own real life situations when writing the screenplay. “I was an international student who studied something in New York while experiencing many obstacles including [a] language barrier,” Futaki said. “I also share some of my psychology with the protagonist.”

For Futaki, this includes Kenji’s struggle to connect with his father, as well as a fear of both failure and the unknown. “My actual father is not like the father in the story, but it is kind of tough on me to express my honest feelings to my father for some reason,” Futaki revealed. “I don’t want to show my weaknesses to my family, but on the other hand, I have been scared of hearing some bad news about my family in Japan…[which] happens to my protagonist.”

Despite this internal conflict, Futaki praised New York City as an inspiration for filmmaking and cultural diversity. “New York City is definitely inspiring for writing and filming with many inspiring filmmakers and cinematic-looking locations,” Futaki shared. “Cultural diversity of the city helps me to see my background in the bigger picture and dig deeper into my psychology as Japanese while comparing it to psychology in other cultures.”

Psychology is a major factor for Futaki when it comes to character development in filmmaking, and this is something he wishes he explored more of in Alienation Sogai. “If I had an opportunity to make another version of this film, I would focus more on the protagonist’s psychology,” Futaki shared. “Maybe employ a little abstract and experimental expressions to express his mentality.”

This is something Futaki plans to do in his next project: a film about a screenwriter. “The next film will be another short narrative about a Japanese guy who wants to be a screenwriter in the United States and there is conflict between the protagonist and his own character who is also a screenwriter in the story,” Futaki teased. “It’s a conflict between reality and ideal, and it’s also a conflict between his ego and self in psychology.”

Futaki revealed that it was the beginning of quarantine when he began writing the script for this next project. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, did not affect the production of Alienation Sogai. “I don’t think Covid-19 affected my production a lot since I didn’t have anything to shoot at the time, Futaki shared. “I was writing a short script for my next project, and I am a person who needs to go to a coffee shop to write something. So the closure of coffee shops has slowed down the writing process to a great degree, and I haven’t finished with the script yet.”

At the end of the film’s screening, Alienation Sogai was awarded “Runner-Up” in the Fiction Film category.
By Michela Arlia  
Staff Writer

On September 10, Michelle Hecht from the Brooklyn College Foundation along with other professors and faculty within the Theater department hosted a virtual discussion with director Joel Zwick. Famous for many sitcoms and box office hits, Zwick is also a member of the BC family.

Having graduated from Brooklyn College in 1962 with a B.A. in Television and Radio and with a Masters in 1968, Zwick is most famous for directing hit television shows such as Mork & Mindy, Laverne & Shirley, Full House and K.C. Undercover as well as the highest grossing romantic comedy of all time, My Big Fat Greek Wedding. He is also the benefactor of the annual Brooklyn College Theater Department Scholarship in Directing that bears his name.

The original event was supposed to take place on campus last semester but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 shutdown. For this semester, the event was rescheduled and made into a virtual discussion.

The event began with an introduction by Thomas Bullard, professor and head of the M.F.A. Directing program on campus, as well as a welcoming address by B.A. student, Nia Blizzard, who served as the moderator of all the questions for the event.

Following Zwick's address, B.A. student Nia Blizzard, moderated a question and answer session with him. He commented saying it was time for him to leave the scene and make room for “fresh faces.” Zwick’s best piece of advice following most of his questions was “If you don’t like laughing and having fun, don’t direct comedy.” Another question posed by Michael Hairston, technical director for audio and lighting at BC read, “What were the challenges you faced learning to direct differently between theater, TV, and film?”

In response, Zwick’s advice was that learning how to talk to actors was key for any medium, whether it was television, film, or theater. According to Zwick, keeping actors happy and allowing them to feel respected was the greatest challenge.

Concluding the event, Zwick left his viewers with a piece of advice. “Take opportunities,” said Zwick. “Don’t turn them down thinking something better will come along. Get into the opportunity and work hard.”
NYC’s Whitney Museum Reopens, But Draws Controversy

By Stacy Fisch
Staff Writer

Summer has almost come to an end, and you won’t be able to walk in Prospect Park or ride your bike down Ocean Parkway to visit Brighton Beach anymore. Remember when it was cold, and the only free place to stretch your legs was a mall or museum?

Well, good news came after Governor Andrew Cuomo approved the reopening of museums in NYC beginning on Aug. 24. Among these museums was the Whitney Museum of American Art, which opened on Sept. 3 with a few exhibits extended until Jan. 31 due to the quarantine.

“Great news! All exhibitions that were on view when we closed have been extended,” the Whitney Museum tweeted on Aug. 19. “You’ll have the chance to visit (or revisit) each of them when we reopen on Sept. 3.”

However, despite the positivity of reopening, the Whitney Museum quickly drew ire with a new exhibit centered around Black Lives Matter and COVID-19.

But keep in mind there are new visitor policies. Visitors should be prepared for the new reality. Tickets must be purchased in advance to maintain social distancing and avoid overcrowding and could likely sell out fast due to limited capacity.

While visiting, there is a face covering mandate -- everyone must abide by this rule or be dismissed from the museum. As stated on the Whitney Museum’s website, “The Museum reserves the right to remove any person acting in an unacceptable or inappropriate manner.”

The Whitney Museum of American Art has extended muralist exhibits “Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925-1945” with Frida Kahlo and her husband Diego Rivera, through January 31. This exhibition conveys the influences on the Mexican muralists had on their counterparts in the United States and builds narratives about American history. The artists utilize their art to comment on economic, social, and racial injustices.

American art is a significant piece of our history; it expresses revolutions, triumphs, social and racial injustices. As of now, America is going through chaos with racism scrutinizing people of color. Protests across the country have fought for change through the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Directors of the museum, Adam D. Weinberg and Alice Pratt Brown, expressed their opinion of BLM in a letter. “Devastating racism and inequity are all too prevalent across the United States,” they wrote in a statement. “As a museum of American art, we have sought to make visible and condemn, through the voices of the artists and art we present, the injustice, systemic racism, and violence aimed at people of color in our country.”

The Whitney Team is trying hard to re-examine any paintings that they feel might be racist or go against BLM. They will also make sure there is enough art that expresses positive political movements with people of color.

“We have increased the racial diversity of our collection, exhibitions, educational programs, performances, and audiences, and staff. But we must go further and do more still,” the statement continued. Ironically, however, this is where things got messy.

The museum put itself in hot water, after purchasing discounted BLM artwork for their new exhibit unique from the others called “Collective Actions,” a response to the BLM movement and COVID-19. The exhibition opening was originally planned for this Thursday, Sept. 17, but it was officially canceled due to this misstep.

Outcries reached Twitter when a BLM photographer, Gioncarlo Valentine, received an email from curator Farris Wahbeh thanking Valentine for his inspirational artwork that was purchased at a fundraising organization. In the email, Wahbeh asked Valentine for his biographical information to cite the painting that was to be placed in “Collective Actions.” However, Valentine and his peers were not having it. They wanted permission for paintings to be displayed as well as compensation. Instead the exhibition was canceled.

“I’m speechless,” wrote Valentine, in a tweet. “People DREAM of having their work shown in the Whitney, and y’all out here trying to grab the s--t on sale? Like the tear gas s--t wasn’t tarnished enough? @ whitneyuseum F---ing unbearable.”

“My sincere hope in collecting them was to build on a historical record of how artists directly engage the important issues of their time,” Wahbeh wrote in his apology email to all artists. “I sincerely want to extend my apologies for any pain that the exhibition has caused.”

So, if you plan on a change of scenery and a visit, this is what to expect.
Online Schooling’s Other Options

By Michael Castaneda
Columnist

News to no one is that Brooklyn College is online for the Fall 2020 semester due COVID-19. Yeah, so was Spring 2020, but we didn’t know that coming into it. This time we do. Now going totally online probably wasn’t the worst idea considering that as of September 3rd, there were 51,000+ COVID-19 cases in 1,020+ colleges, according to a New York Times survey.

If we are going to be learning remotely anyway, we must remember that we have more options than an online version of a brick and mortar institution. There have been online institutions offering coursework for years now, with online curriculums designed for virtual learners. Compare that with Brooklyn College, which seems to be making it up as they go along. So what should we do?

In his book, Feynman’s Tips on Physics, Richard Feynman writes: “This is a matter of fact, the way you start on any complicated or unfamiliar problem: You first get a rough idea; then you go back and do it better and do it more carefully.” So with that, I would have needed a few perquisites to help me along. So what should we do?

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Online Schooling As A Lifelong Homeschooler

By Maya Schubert

News Editor

While most agree that online learning is the only way to return to school safely this semester, few are excited about it. Many dread a repeat of last semester: a haze of information in the form of never-ending Zoom meetings and evasive Blackboard links—perhaps overshadowed completely by personal struggles, physical and emotional.

At the very least, students this fall fear a lack of motivation. It seems to come with the ability to simply sit up in bed and grab a technological device to receive a college education. This past March, I found myself in a familiar position. Not only had I returned home (with campus closed, I had no reason to stay in Brooklyn and returned to my parents’ upstate house,) I was schooling from home. Again.

My mother homeschooled me from Kindergarten through my junior year of high school. In middle school and high school, I took English and Math classes online. So, as most of my friends groused about lack of motivation for the rest of the spring semester, I found myself—literally—at home. I had known how to use the chat function, mute my microphone, and navigate Blackboard for years. I knew how to budget online homework and wake up “on time,” when there was nowhere to go. I even knew how to stay in the house all day without going crazy. I wasn’t particularly happy about being thrust into the position I had left years ago, but I still tried. I knew there was worth in it.

I probably first discovered that worth after I entered college. Over my homeschooling years, I faced stereotyping from adults and kids alike that quickly left me with a suspicion of my own intelligence.

“How exactly does it work?” an adult would ask, beaming down at me with concern. “I mean, how do you learn?”

“You must be stupid,” a kid once said to me, after I told her I was homeschooled. (We later became friends, and she remains a close friend to this day.) I liked to think that I was smart, but there was only so much evidence I could scrounge up.

Most of the grading was done by my mom, who said I was smart, but could be just flattering me. Sure, my mother made detailed quarterly reports to our school district, and I took state testing at the end of every year. But the testing results, which Mom always presented to me proudly, were always strange graphs and irregular numbers, not As or 100s.

It was only when I started college that my doubts began to recede. They were tempered by receiving grades—definitive grades, letters, and numbers scrawled in red ink—from people I barely knew. I relished my grades, even the bad ones. To this day, I have every graded college paper and project stuffed into a folder under my bed. They are proof, not of my faultless intelligence, but of my education’s legitimacy.

I have thrived in some subjects. I have pursued the same passions I had as a homeschooler and succeeded. I have found new interests and explored them.

I don’t mean to glorify grades. I only want to say that I received everything I needed from my early education.

There are so many parts of campus life that I will miss this semester, and I’m not overjoyed to return to a method of education I thought I left years ago. I know, however, that I can learn, and that I will learn. I may zone out sometimes during Zoom meetings. I may wander around my apartment between classes because I’m tired of sitting in my room. My computer will overheat, I will undoubtedly lose Wi-Fi a few times. I will, nevertheless, learn. There are worlds to be explored in books and videos, and even in a professor's droning voice behind a computer screen.

It is possible to learn from home, from a room, from anywhere. All that is really needed is the desire to learn, which is hopefully why most people are in college anyway.
The Closure of the Residence Hall Is A Win, But Students Still Need Safe Housing

By Chris Omar, Corrine Greene, & Zainab Iqbal

Guest Contributors

The Residence Hall at Brooklyn College (RHBC) has finally shut down. Students have been sounding the alarm on the conditions of the dorms for years. Make no mistake; we won.

Two of us lived at 1 Kenilworth Place on our own and experienced the hostile environment, outrageous cost, mold, and fear of promised Residence Assistant support. And one of us wrote about it all. Together, we collaborated and created a short award-winning documentary film telling the story of a young woman named Christine DeLisser, who was sexually harassed not once, but twice by an employee at RHBC and the school’s administration told her they couldn't do anything.

She encountered endless bureaucracy when she simply needed an advocate—like so many other students on this campus who run into hurdles when they just need a map with the path forward. In a span of two—yes two—years, we exposed rampant sexual harassment in the Residence Hall and created a short award-winning documentary film telling the story of a young woman named Christine DeLisser, who was sexually harassed not once, but twice by an employee at RHBC and the school’s administration told her they couldn't do anything.

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The bureaucracy of Brooklyn College doesn’t serve those who make it run, and leadership doesn’t align with position or title. Why did we have to FOIL to get a copy of the infamous contract they always referred to as being their biggest boundary to obtaining justice? Why was the student government unable to get results for constituents living in housing advertised on their campus? As Chris’ documentary, “You Found A Home” highlights, even when it came to direct survivor support, the campus administration did not act without significant pressure, an indication that student housing security was not their concern.

We’ve now graduated and new student leadership is in place. In the middle of a pandemic, how do we make student housing a priority in time for the eventual return of students to our beautiful campus—a place we value now more than ever? How does the university and campus administration protect the diversity it so prominently celebrates? How does a college president with a legacy in championing survivors of sexual assault in her legal career live up to that reputation in her current role? There’s a void now that there are no dorms available for students—a void that needs to be filled right away. It is vital that the campus leadership finally steps up and rights the wrongs committed during the era of their exploitative contract with RHBC. There are steps to be taken to turn this arguably tragic failure into something for CUNY and Brooklyn College to be proud of.

What if CUNY acquired RHBC? What if elected officials pulled together some money? What if the money that is allocated for President Anderson’s, as well as all of the other CUNY presidents’ housing, was used to acquire the building? Now that would be a huge win for the community, wouldn’t it?

We propose the following measures to support students seeking housing: Reinstatement of a full-time housing coordinator to assist current and prospective BC students in finding a place to live and people to live with near campus.

In the absence of any CUNY-affiliated student housing in Brooklyn, we call on CUNY to reach out to aggressively source capital funding to develop CUNY-run student housing in Brooklyn. We propose, as has been raised to the CUNY Chancellor and CUNY University Student Senate in the past, that CUNY build a centrally located dorm to serve the students of Medgar Evers College, New York City College of Technology, Kingsborough Community College, and Brooklyn College.

Finally, we call for Financial aid reform that considers the needs of students utilizing scholarships and loans to pay for housing costs: specifically, disbursement dates must align with housing payments during the school year.

We also call for a better representation of women & the full scope of campus diversity in campus governance. Further, there needs to be a (well-functioning) Title IX office on the Brooklyn College campus. We also call on Student Government and the University Student Senate to step up Title IX and housing support advocacy for their constituents. While in large part a commuter school, this university is (proudly) composed of students from across the state, country-- and the world. Every stakeholder of the campus community can appreciate the need for housing conducive to study and work after this pandemic, so let’s support our students now.

Is CUNY about selling poor students out to enrich foreign millionaires at the risk of their health and safety? Will CUNY live up to its ideals of being the “greatest urban university in the world,” or will it continue to seek to privatize its essential services and shut the door to those who don’t have the good fortune to have a safe home environment within commuting distance & an ability to commute to campus with ease?

The closure of RHBC is a victory in that it stopped the bleeding; the simple reality is that not every student is equipped with safe housing or financial support to acquire it in a traditional apartment setting, within commuting distance of the borough of Brooklyn. Now, CUNY and campus administration must step up and heal this gaping wound. It is vital to the future health of this valuable institution.

So leaders, what’s it going to be? Your hands are no longer tied. Let’s take the lessons learned and turn them into action in time to make sure CUNY really is a welcoming home for all—before it’s too late.

Zainab Iqbal (’19) is the former Editor-in-Chief of the Excelsior newspaper, Chris Omar (’20) is the Director & Producer of the documentary “You Found A Home,” and Corrine Greene (’20) is a Public Education advocate & former Brooklyn College club president.
New Sun Rising: Legend Stave Nash Nabs Nets HC Job

By Conrad Hoyt
Sports Editor

After short search for a replacement, Steve Nash was announced as Head Coach of the Brooklyn Nets on Sept. 3.

Nash, an eighteen-year NBA veteran, eight-time All-Star, two-time recipient of the NBA’s Most Valuable Player award and Hall of Famer, is known for his keen basketball mind, silky-smooth jump shot, and leadership qualities.

After retiring from the league in 2015, Nash largely took a back seat from the limelight. In addition to infrequently commenting on soccer matches (both domestic and abroad), he took on a part-time consulting position with the Golden State Warriors.

As most of us sports junkies know, 2015 was the Warriors first title this millennium, and Warriors star Steph Curry has been compared to Nash in his ball-handling ability, shot, and leadership intangibles.

Because superstars run the NBA, and in many senses, they always have. Marks needed a coach that, the moment he steps into the building everyday, commands the respect of his star duo, especially concerning the enigmatic nature of Irving and to a lesser extent, Durant.

On sharpshooter (I’m sensing a trend here) J.J. Reddick’s “The Old Man and the Three” podcast last week, Durant commented on the Nash hire.

“Every time I’m in the gym with him, I was always like a sponge,” said Durant.

“I’m looking forward to this man. I always feel like I’m a student of the game. Somebody who has experienced so much and played in different eras, I’m looking forward to him teaching me some more things about it as well.”

Sean Marks made a high profile pick with the Nash hire to a four-year deal. It’s not the mecca of New York, but Brooklyn isn’t Indiana.

Expectations will be sky high for this group next season.

When Nash was hired, a side story of the move was people noting that this hire was an example of white privilege. “What black retired NBA star would get a four-year deal right off the bat with no experience?”

pundits pondered.

The NBA, a league made up of roughly 80% Black players, has only five Black head coaches. So even if one argues that Nash’s relationship with Durant and overall basketball acumen made him the right move for the Nets, the hiring still opened up a conversation about equality in the league and more savvy Black men (and women) deserving a fair shot.

Whatever the case, New York and the world alike will be giddy in anticipation to see how Nash, Durant and co. will do.

Who The Knicks Can Take With The 8th Pick

By Elijah Hamilton
Staff Writer

After an abysmal shortened season, the New York Knicks are again drafting in the lottery, hoping to find another cornerstone player to turn their fortune around.

And though the Knicks have dropped to the number eight pick, failing to get in the top three, there’s still plenty of valuable prospects in this year’s draft that the Knicks can fit alongside RJ Barrett and Mitchell Robinson.

One of the players on many mock draft boards for the Knicks is Auburn forward, Issac Okoro. The 6”6” freshman was outstanding during his time at Auburn, Averaging 12.6 to go along with 4.4 rebounds and two ast.

He is a versatile wing where some of the main strength is exceptionally high IQ, knack to get the rim, and explosiveness driving into the paint. He is a player who can defend wings and even some small-ball power forward.

Though he has many upsides, Okoro struggles with shooting from 3, averaging 28 percent from deep.

One of the many significant needs on this Knicks roster that can be filled in this draft is the guard position. One player who can fill that need is Iowa State Point Guard, Tyrese Haliburton. Haliburton, who played two years at Iowa, is 6”5” and, at times, has drawn comparisons to Lonzo Ball due to his length and defensive capability.

He is a solid playmaker averaging 6.5 assists, and a pest on defense with 2.5 steals a game. Like Okoro, Haliburton is still a work in progress as he needs to improve at shooting from 3-point territory.

Snagging Haliburton at number would be beneficial for R.J Barrett as it will allow him to play off the ball.

Another option for the Knicks is trading up into the top 3. The Knicks have enough assets and moveable contracts to make a trade to get up to LeMelo Ball. Melo, who played overseas, showed a glimpse of greatness while playing for the team in Istanbul. Unlike his brother Lonzo Ball, The 8”8” point guard’s biggest strength is his shooting ability during his time he was able to shoot off to dribble, while also being really good from downtown. Ball is an all-star and is someone who can come in and become a franchise player for the Knicks day one.

Though the NBA Draft has moved up from the start date from Oct. 16 to as late as Nov. 18, it’s still something many hoopers fans look forward to.
NFL Week 1: Bills Win, Jets & Giants Can’t Get Off Ground

By Jose Rohdin
Staff Writer

New York Football is back. With the coronavirus canceling the preseason, we had not seen New York NFL football since January 4th, 2020, when the Bills lost to the Texans in overtime in the wildcard game.

With no preseason, the first few weeks of football have the potential to be rocky, but there is hope among fans that some of the New York teams will have decent seasons.

The Buffalo Bills are a team that could make a huge jump this season, having already made the playoffs as a wildcard team last year. Josh Allen is not the most accurate thrower of the ball, but he has shown an ability to throw deep passes, and he is most deadly with his legs.

He showed that week one against the Jets, rushing for 57 yards and a touchdown. However, even with John Brown and Devin Singletary, the offense still needed top tier weapons. The Bills traded for Stefon Diggs, who made a big impact. Diggs had 8 receptions for 86 yards and a touchdown in the Bills’ season opener against the Jets, to fill the power vacuum, but that dream quickly faded.

The Bills started week one against the Jets and pretty much was the defense that had, which isn’t a good thing. Le’Veon Bell picked up an injury that looks like he might be out a few weeks, which now puts time lord, Frank Gore, as the lead back, which makes things worse on offense.

The defense looked terrible, and you can tell that trading away Jamal Adams was a mistake. He pretty much was the defense last season, and with him not there, the Jets’ defense was compensated for by the only offensive weapon the Jets had, which isn’t a good thing.

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All in all, it does not look like the Jets will have a very fruitful season.

However, the other MetLife Stadium teams, the New York Giants, seemed to be on a different path, with first-time head coach Joe Judge and a young roster. But they still found themselves 0-1 after a week one loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The offense, led by the second year starting quarterback Daniel Jones, is filled with talent. Saquon Barkley, Sterling Shepard, and Darius Slayton had big games receiving the ball, catching 6 passes each. Slayton put up the best numbers with 106 yards and catching Jones’ 2 touchdown passes. However, the offensive line once again seems to be the Achilles heel of the team. Jones was always under pressure, leading to inaccurate passes and one interception (the one to T.J. Watt was Jones’ fault). However, the biggest issue was not getting running lanes for Barkley, who had a horrible night of 15 rushes and only 6 yards.

But the defense was able to hold its own throughout the game. Surprisingly, the defensive line was able to get a lot of pressure on Ben Roethlisberger, having 3 sacks and 21 pressures. But Roethlisberger still managed 3 touchdown passes, and Benny Snell Jr. gained 113 yards rushing.

With free-agent signings such as Blake Martinez, Logan Ryan, and James Bradberry, Giants fans had hoped the defense would play better, and they did, but only because last year’s defense was horrible.

The Giants still have the right man in charge with Judge, but Offensive Coordinator Jason Garrett’s play calling on offense was not exciting. On the other hand, the Giants are a young team building for the future and don’t expect to see many wins, just progress, and only go up.

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