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Transfer Students Continue To Struggle

By Maya Schubert
Staff Writer

As Brooklyn College heads into the heart of a new semester, the struggles for transfer students have been on the administration's mind.

"This is increasingly a concern if anybody's paying any attention," said President Michelle Anderson at the February 6th meeting of the council of administrative policy and the college personnel and budget committee.

The biggest concern regarding transfer students, who, according to BC's website, makeup close to half the school's student body, is the question of whether credits from their previous universities will transfer smoothly to Brooklyn College. BC's Transfer Evaluations Office processes courses from students' previous schools to fulfill equivalent BC credits. However, faulty or incomplete evaluations often lead to transfer students retaking classes they took at previous schools and face the possibility of wasted time and money, and even delayed graduation.

"I remember speaking to one of my advisors the first couple of days I got here, and saying, 'But I took this class,'" said Gloria Cruz, a transfer student majoring in Journalism and Media Studies. "The same things I learned here I learned there."

Some years ago, Cruz lost

most of her credits moving from Utica College, a private institution, to LaGuardia Community College, a CUNY. Two and a half years ago, she transferred to Brooklyn College to find, again, that most of the credits from her last college had not transferred.

"I pretty much started all over here with the same classes," she said.

The transfer credit page on BC's website promises that: "All courses taken for credit at an undergraduate CUNY college with a passing grade of D- or higher will be accepted for credit at Brooklyn College, regardless of whether a specific equivalency exists." The Journalism and Media Studies details page on the website, however, maintains that 36 out of 42 credits required for the major must be completed at Brooklyn College. Cruz had to retake journalism classes to fulfill the residency requirement.

"The transfer credits system here is fucked," said Chris Collins, a transfer student majoring in Anthropology. "It is messed up."

Collins only went to SUNY Potsdam for a year before transferring to Brooklyn College, but when most of his classes were given an inaccurate equivalency, he took initiative to have the mishandled courses re-evaluated.

To have classes re-evaluated, transfers must present course

descriptions for classes in question to the head of the department. After approving descriptions, the head signs off on a re-evaluation document, which the student then submits to the Transfer Evaluations Office.

The re-evaluation process heaps some responsibility onto department advisors.

"Some...like Chris, have very particular academic circumstances that should be dealt with by the department—with the workload of chairs and other faculty and administrators," said Professor Jillian Cavanaugh, head of the Anthropology department. "I feel strongly that departments should be the ones who are able to establish course equivalencies, with the support of the Transfer Office, which does so much of the heavy lifting in organizing how that happens."

But Collins wants to know why so many of his courses were mishandled.

"Why aren't they communicating?" he asked, referring to BC and Potsdam's Transfer Offices. "Why is it up to me to track down every single department head?"

His problem is larger than the two schools. Credits from non-CUNY institutions, like Potsdam, are channeled to BC's office through the New York State Board of Regents or even by a regional accrediting commission. A larger state

processing system leaves room for mistakes.

"I ended up spending two whole semesters at a community college just for half of my credits not to apply to any CUNY pathways," said Kelly Bannon, a Journalism and Media Studies major and a transfer student from Suffolk Community College, a SUNY. "Just an entire waste of time and money."

Cruz hopes to graduate next fall, after three and a half years at BC and seven and a half in college in total. So far, she has loved BC and her program, but regrets having to retake classes.

"It's a waste of my money," she said. "I have to pay back the three years at a private institution, plus what I'm taking now. That's money I have to pay back, and I'm not seeing any of it because I have to retake courses."

While the college's administration has not unveiled definite plans to tackle the transfer credit question, it is clear the issue is on the school's mind, from multiple references at the Feb. 6th meeting, to a presentation on credit issues last October.

"Overall, I think the transfer evaluation system is currently in transition towards a more centralized structure to streamline it," said Professor Cavanaugh.

The Transfer Evaluations Office was not available for comment.

A Statement from Brooklyn College

In relation to last week's story, "BC Volleyball Players Kneel During Israeli Anthem":

The Brooklyn College media relations office said a request was made to athletics to forward any media requests for an official comment coming from College administration and students are free to speak to whomever they like.

CUNY and SUNY Students Lobby for Funding in Albany

By Nasra Abdalla Khamis
Staff Writer

Hundreds of students from CUNY and SUNY traveled to Albany last week to get in legislators' faces and show them the pressing need for increased higher ed funding.

On Thursday, Feb. 27, students affiliated with the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) went on their annual "Higher Education Lobby Day" in Albany to share their personal stories with the legislators and express the need for more funding for higher education.

It was an early morning for those who took the journey by bus to the state capital. Brooklyn College students set off at 6:30 a.m., picking up students from the College of Staten Island along the way. Students on the bus were given instructions by a NYPIRG coordinator on how to behave during the platform event, and how to respectfully bring the message across. The students had to fill out forms that instructed the students where to go and what appropriate questions to ask the legislative officials. On the forms it told students "don't argue" with the officials.

The agenda was to put focus on providing more funds to public education without raising the tuition fee higher than it already is. According to NYPIRG, the college group would like to see "new deals, not another year of flat operating



Students with assemblywoman, Yuh-line Niou, in Albany / NYPIRG

budgets, tuition hikes, and increasing tuition." They would also like to see an "increase in state investment, not tuition." CUNY and SUNY students have paid at least \$2.5 billion in out-of-pocket increases since the State's current public college funding model was established. As of yet, no changes have been seen.

NYPIRG's agenda calls for the TAP Gap to be eliminated, and for the state to reinvest in CUNY and SUNY four-year colleges. The "TAP Gap" is the growing difference between TAP funding for students and actual tuition fee. Since the year 2012, it has cost public colleges nearly \$850 million. Stability and an increase in community college funding should be fixed, so that CUNY and SUNY community colleges do not face funding cuts due to enrollment declines.

According to the NYPIRG

list of demands, the money made should be invested in student success and expanding opportunity programs. CUNY and SUNY community colleges need an increase of at least \$41 million this year to reach the goal. The agenda aims at focusing on "The DREAM Act" which would help undocumented students.

After arriving at their destination, students and instructors gathered in the hall "Room 6," where they met the rest of the energetic CUNY and SUNY students and supporters who had come out. The room was crowded with people, chairs were filled and many were standing. In front of all, there was a stage for the speakers and for those that wanted to get up and tell their story.

Kailey, a SUNY student that spoke to the rest of her fellow college students said, "College is expensive, college is hard, not

everyone can make it into college for the simplest reasons. They can't make it because they do not have the money, they do not have the resources to get there and when they do get there, they can not stay there." She added, "It is terrible because once you are there, you should be able to stay there on your own terms. You should not have to drop out because you couldn't afford it, or you are going through homelessness."

After all students were put in groups, my group met with the first assemblywoman, Yuh-line Niou. It took her awhile to come meet with the group, but she did show up.

"I am one of your biggest advocates," she said. Niou, a Baruch graduate, confirmed to us that she is campaigning for everything that CUNY and SUNY fight for. She said, "I don't even want to think about cuts for our health

care safety net. I think you have so many champions here on the assembly side to raise revenue."

She continued, "I have a bill that would actually help us to raise revenue. It will help us raise \$3.2 billion in the first year."

The second assemblywoman that the group met with, did not have much to say. Linda B. Rosenthal was very welcoming. After the introduction of everyone in the group, the group's leader David Kahn explained the students' needs to her. She took the time to answer all questions asked about siding with CUNY and SUNY and she agreed, "Yes!" to everything in her power to help CUNY and SUNY students' tuition needs changed for the better.

It was a long journey to Albany, but the students left upstate confident that this time, their voices were heard by the legislators.

Chancellor Lays Out CUNY Response to Virus

By Ryan Schwach
Managing Editor

With New York City receiving its first case of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), and global fears beginning to grow, CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez e-mailed CUNY faculty and staff on the University's response to the outbreak.

"The risk to New Yorkers remains low," he said in

an e-mail sent out this Monday. "However, it has raised our level of concern and we are stepping up our ongoing preparations for the possibility of our city and campuses being impacted by the virus."

COVID-19 entered the five boroughs with a woman in her late 30s who had just returned from Iran, one of the countries hit hardest by the

outbreak. This respiratory illness has so far claimed the lives of six Americans, all in Washington state, four of whom were from a single nursing home. This continues the trend of fatalities of the illness being mostly among senior citizens, rather than college-age students.

"Please be assured that CUNY is taking this possible threat very

seriously and we are actively making and updating plans to ensure employee and student safety, as well as continuity of our business and operations across a range of possible scenarios," Chancellor Matos Rodríguez said in the e-mail. Some of the plans include restocking hand sanitizers, soaps, and other cleaning supplies, as well as having more

signage on hygiene. CUNY is also making sure that employees exhibiting symptoms stay home.

Although the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is preparing for a likely global pandemic, the agency still says that risk to Americans is still marginally low.

BC Community Handles Plastic Ban

By Gabriela Flores
Staff Writer

This past Sunday, March 1, Gov. Cuomo's Bag Waste Reduction law was implemented in many shops like supermarkets, bodegas, and retailers across New York State, including the Brooklyn College community. Under the new law businesses are required to cease free single-use plastic bags, and replace it with five-cents paper bags or have reusable bags for sale.

"According to Clean Ocean Action, the Ocean Conservancy and other organizations... plastic bags make up a significant fraction of the plastics in our waterways and along our shores," said Doctor Brett Branco, Director of the Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay, and BC earth studies professor. "It is important for data collection efforts to continue so we can see how policies like the plastic bag ban affect the amount of plastics we find in the waterways and along the shore."

As reported by Nature Communications, a peer-reviewed scientific journal, between 1.15 and 2.41 million tons of plastic waste enter from rivers to oceans, with larger plastic degrading into microplastic. Microplastic, or plastic fragments that are less than 5mm in length, exist beyond aquatic environments. They are found in organisms, the air,

soils, skin care products, and foods such as honey.

"Microplastics have been found almost everywhere that scientists have looked for them," said Branco, "The impact of microplastics in the environment and on human health is very much an active and emerging area of scientific research."

In comparison, paper bags decompose quickly in water and are recyclable. However, as mentioned in the New York State Plastic Bag Task Force Report, the switch from plastic to paper creates a "greater carbon footprint" that requires a "significant quantity of water." To Branco, no plastic bag ban can address the root of society's "disposable lifestyle."

"We have embraced a disposable lifestyle, partly because plastics have lowered the costs of so many things that we use in our daily life," he said, "People everywhere need to rethink the disposable lifestyle, because all that waste that is created does not simply go away."

The Bring Your Own Bag NY initiative (BYOB) aims to promote sustainability with zero-waste reusable bags to New Yorkers. NPR reported that one cotton carry-on must be used 20,000 times more than a film plastic bag to become "better for the environment." Furthermore, organic cotton bags create more air pollution, increase water usage, and inflict other



Paper bags replace plastic bags in Boylan Hall's Metro Café./ Gabriela Flores

damages to the ecosystem. Despite its environmental impacts, many BC students and sustainability advocates will comply with BYOB.

"In the beginning it is going to be inconvenient for everyone, but for the environment it is going to be a good thing," said student Chaya B., who did not want her whole name used. "I use reusable everything, and for me the ban is an extra push to carry my bag," she said.

Similarly, for Vice-President of Brooklyn College's Sustainability Club (BCSC) Galilea Matias, the reuse agenda is necessary to implement. "In last year's Sustainability Fair, BCSC had organizers giving out reusable bags and bottles. We intend to have more organizations doing the same thing this year," said Matias. "BCSC understands that the school doesn't have a campaign around plastic bags. As much as we would love to do more campaign work, we don't have the team or the time."

On the other hand, some students believe that the state-wide ban is ineffective in promoting its "reuse and recycle" agenda. "The negative reaction people might have can be due to ignorance," said biology-major Ivette

Solis. "Yes, we see excessive plastic waste on the streets, but this policy should inform us why plastic bags, in particular, are being banned. Why now?"

In compliance with the ban, and Brooklyn College's sustainability efforts, Metropolitan Food Services in Boylan Hall's Food Court has made the switch to paper bags and paper plates. "Gradually, we are removing all plastics because we are trying to be environmentally friendly," said Metropolitan Director Nita Mabasa. "With leftover plastic bags, we have sent them back to our supplier."

However, two days before the ban, the state decided to delay real enforcement of the law to April 1, after a last-minute lawsuit was filed by plastic bag manufacturer Poly-Pak and The Bodega & Small Business Association.

Sources from The New York Post speculate that the plaintiff will argue that the Department of Environmental Conservation is an agency without law-making power, thus the ban cannot be legitimate. Over 14,000 non-exempted store owners expressed the policy's lack of consideration for immigrant-run local businesses in low-income neighborhoods. Poly-Pak,

a plastic manufacturer, is against the new regulations regarding thicker non-film plastic bags, after their products did not match the Department of Environmental Conservation's size measurements.

"Every mandated cost increase adds up," shared Greg Biryla, Director of National Federation of Independent Business, with the New York Times. "Independent businesses are simply not able to absorb and adjust to new mandated costs the same as their big-box competitors."

In New York City, only 17% of total waste is recycled, according to Grow NYC. 7.5% of the city's waste stream, or life cycle of garbage from its source to disposal, consists of plastic film like former grocery bags. As a result, improper plastic disposal in New York can land in Atlantic Ocean gyres and cause marine plastic pollution.

Despite the delay of the ban's enforcement, and environmental concerns with plastic replacements, the Brooklyn College community is slowly but surely making the switch from plastic to paper.



Squirrel with plastic bag in its mouth climbing on tree behind BC library./ Gabriela Flores

7k or Strike Becomes Rank and File Action

By Quiara Vasquez
Editor-in-Chief

The 7K or Strike movement's commitment to adjunct pay parity hasn't changed - but their name has.

In a broad rollout of updated handles across social media, the activist movement formerly known as 7K or Strike changed its name to "Rank and File Action" (RAFA) on Feb. 22. According to several people in the movement, the rebranding isn't a reorientation so much as it is a confirmation of their ideals to a broad set of policy goals, both across and beyond CUNY.

"What we're trying to do is broaden things out," said Conor Tomàs Reed, a RAFA organizer and adjunct in BC's Department of Africana Studies. Reed moved to New York in 2006, where he's been involved in activism on- and off-campus the whole time, present at the inception of movements from Occupy Wall Street in 2011 to the Free CUNY campaign just last year.

Now, as an adjunct assistant professor, he's uniquely attuned to the challenges he and his untenured colleagues face.

"Adjuncts time and time again have been thrown under the bus in PSC [CUNY faculty union] contracts," Reed says. "We do the majority of the labor and make poverty wages." After the PSC reached a contract agreement in 2016 in which adjunct wages remained stagnant,

he and his peers realized that they needed to make an aggressive push for a raise. From this, the demand for "\$7K or strike" was born. The \$7,000-per-course figure was chosen to effectively double their salary and put them on par with other professors; the support for the idea of a strike began after an authorization for one passed with overwhelming support in 2016.

"At the moment when 7K or Strike was emerging, what we wanted to do was to polarize the issues," Reed said. "We would not be able to develop pay parity without the credible threat of a strike."

The threat of a strike fell on deaf ears within the union hierarchy - but nevertheless, the movement rumbled on. Eventually, the PSC adopted the \$7,000-per-course figure as the benchmark for their most recent contract negotiations in 2019.

"The power of '7K or Strike' is that it really pushed [PSC-CUNY] against the wall," said Stuart Chen-Hayes. "We still didn't get \$7K, but we're better than we were."

Chen-Hayes has taught at Lehman for nearly three decades, but on Twitter he's perhaps better known as one of the most vocal supporters of the RAFA movement. He wasn't always this way: up until 2018, he says he was "a well-behaved PSC member." It was adjunct activists like Reed, as well as the then-nascent CUNY Struggle movement, who opened his eyes.

"I did a lot of labor related reading, and realized that they [the PSC] were just doing the bidding of centrist corporate Democrats. PSC-CUNY adapted the rhetoric - hey, everybody should wear red clothes - but they continue to do lobbying. Lobbying is okay, but it doesn't have the capacity to get us what we want."

"I finally just got sick of it. That's how I found CUNY Struggle."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Hudson, adjuncts at Rutgers were finding themselves in a similar situation: adjuncts and graduate students found themselves lagging behind tenured faculty, and their union wasn't listening to their demands.

"In my experience what brings people into organizing is crisis, when your eyes are opened to your financial situation or well being being jeopardized," said Alexandra Adams. She's a full-time researcher at Rutgers Newark, finishing her PHD in Biology. "There was an alarming number of grad students in my department who had been waiting for reimbursement checks and hadn't been paid for a year, and the grad school wasn't giving any responses."

As her situation worsened, she got more and more involved in union work - and more and more aware of the broader context of her situation.

"My financial situation has continued to decline from not receiving raises and all this other bullshit

Rutgers does to grads. You look at the absolute travesty you're experiencing and you realize you're one of many."

It was here where she met Jarrod Shanahan, the founder of the CUNY Struggle movement. Shanahan approached Adams due to her work getting Rutgers faculty to sign "crush cards," documenting their willingness to go on strike. (Strike mobilization was, of course, a key tenet of 7K or Strike's activism.) Her experience with grassroots activism made Adams' perspective relevant at CUNY. Soon, she began to sympathize with the CUNY adjunct's plight.

"I wanted to start organizing with them because I wasn't going to watch these people get dogged on too," Adams said. "Our overarching goal was, since all of us are going through all the same struggles at all these institutions, we wanted to form a really concrete alliance between [Rutgers] and the people in 7K or CUNY Struggle."

Coalition building is at the heart of the rebranding from 7K or Strike to RAFA. And not just among instructors.

"We won't be able to achieve this unless we have the support of the students of CUNY," Reed said. "250,000 people across NYC? That's one of the best mobilization bases that exists in plain sight. Real attention to solidarity between students and academic workers is needed."

"One of the reasons for this new name is recognizing that this group all along really was open to all ranks," Chen-Hayes said. "Anybody who's interested in organizing with rank and file can join us. We're all about free college for all students, we want to make sure that every faculty member is making a living wage. Staff as well."

He notes that even as a tenured professor of twenty years, his pay is well below the national average.

"We're still horribly underpaid compared to most around the country," Chen-Hayes said. "That's one of the big reasons for the rebranding - it's never been only the adjuncts."

Of course, while RAFA aims to broaden their base, they don't intend to abandon their old tactics. Walk-outs, "sick-outs," and grade-ins will still be part of their arsenal of consciousness-raising tools in the coming semesters.

Time will tell whether this expansion will be enough for RAFA and their ilk to achieve their goals. Despite their growth since 2017, the movement may still fall short of the influence they desire. That won't stop them, though.

"We received a hard lesson that the membership of our union, which will be needed for a strike to be successful, is not yet convinced of its power to undertake a strike," Reed said. "The broad support for this contract shows that we still have a lot of work to do."

Hot take? We'll take it.

Our opinions section takes submissions from current BC students. For more info, write to thebcvanguard@gmail.com, or directly contact Allison Rapp (our current opinions editor) at allisonrapp22@gmail.com.

May Day Sets New Goals

By Ian Ezinga
Staff Writer

Gathered in the Political Science Student Lounge in James Hall, a small group of students met to discuss the formation of the Brooklyn College chapter of May Day. The chapter is the latest extension of the broader student activist group that formed in 2018 in order to organize against The New School management's decision to lay off cafeteria staff. With their success in helping the unionized workers keep their jobs through a sit-in occupation lasting twelve days, May Day is seeking to expand its membership and create a broader coalition.

The meeting was held on Thursday, February 27 and was attended by the editorial secretary of May Day, Jesse Gauger, and five Brooklyn College students. Three of the students present were in

line to take up leadership positions in the chapter once it received approval. This meeting served as a rundown for the new members for what sort of work they could expect to be involved in as well as the values that are inherent to the revolutionary student organization.

Revolutionary is entirely self-ascribed and fitting description considering the demands they have set forth and hope to achieve. Among these demands are free and open admission to public higher education, democratically governed universities, erasure of student debt, realization of full democratic rights for students, and for "bringing the politics of the socialist revolution to the student body, in solidarity with people everywhere fighting for democracy and progress."

The last demand is taken straight from the organization's program

which can be found in full on their website. This demand speaks largely to one of the organization's broader goals: to unite the needs and demands of students with other oppressed groups in order to obtain the greatest reforms.

"There is always going to be another lay off, there is always going to be another tuition hike, so we wanted to find a way to link these local struggles to a broader political project with revolutionary politics," said Gauger, calling for a united front. May Day hopes to act as the catalyst for uniting these struggles through collective organizing.

Building coalitions out of different factions in order to achieve maximum progress is not an old idea and has been a big talking point in recent mainstream politics. Especially in light of this year's presidential campaigns, politicians frequently use language

that calls for unity in order to defeat a greater social ailment. May Day, however, is firm about working outside of electoral politics.

"We understand the state not as an instrument of mediation through which people can actually advance their own interests, but rather as a tool of domination by the ruling class," said Gauger. So while they do not discourage voting, May Day sees their function as continually demanding reforms from whoever is in power, whether it is Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders.

"It is in our interest to develop that political power first to even say how we are going to use it," added Peter Cerallos, who is now the president of the chapter. This largely echoes one of the other major goals of May Day, which is to use the power built through organizing in order to extract reforms through school administrations.

Being in accordance with the minimum qualifications to become an official chapter, the Brooklyn College May Day chapter is now laying the groundwork for their organizing efforts here on campus. "We are going to focus on gathering members and coordinating in work with other clubs like the SJP, QSAA, and BCSU," said Cevallos when asked about the club's direction.

While being a dues-paying member of May Day requires full adherence to the revolutionary program, the organization wants to work with any individual or group who shares at least some common ground. Whether in organizing for free tuition, making spaces more accessible for people with disabilities, or kicking the cops out of CUNY, May Day wants to work with you.

Keeping the Dead Sea Alive: The Dead Sea Revival Project

By Moises Taveras
Features Editor

The eighth wonder of the world is under siege.

So says Noam Bedein, an Israeli photojournalist who has dedicated his life to the restoration of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is a body of water that sits between Jordan and Israel and is known for its high salt content, allowing anyone to float with ease. At a meeting co-hosted in SUBO's Penthouse by United 4 Israel, the BC Sustainability Club, and the Biology Club this past Tuesday, Mar. 3, Bedein discussed his findings, and whether the region could still be saved.

Bedein is the director of the Dead Sea Revival Project (DSRP), a non-profit organization trying to raise awareness of the problems and changes the "eighth wonder" of the world, as he puts it, has seen of late. Among these

are not only the recession of the Dead Sea, but also the ravaging of the area by sinkholes and curiosities, like signs of life in a place quite notoriously named after its inhospitality for any form of life.

"Look at that vegetation," Bedein said, pointing at a photo he'd taken. "The fact that you have vegetation growing out from the sinkhole, there's life coming out from these areas." According to Bedein, where there is vegetation, there is also further life, which he found in the form of fish. "The first time I went to explore the Dead Sea shores and a sinkhole, I actually saw a fish," he said.

These curious findings have inspired some big names to throw their weight behind the DSRP's vision. Notably NASA had this brought to their attention thanks to the DSRP and have collected samples in order to study the capability for something to grow

where their previously was evidence of an inability to. The next planned voyage to Mars purportedly will factor in this research.

When Bedein witnessed this impossibility, he took a picture and posted it, stoking curiosities worldwide about how such a thing would have occurred. This would spawn a fascination with the growing capabilities to spread a message and unite a generation in a movement.

This is apt because what Bedein seems to find himself doing most through the DSRP is "environmental education and advocacy" through visuals. As a photojournalist, he aims for representations that a willing audience could see and connect to, which lays out the situations both in and out of our control that have wrought havoc on the salt body. On a practical level, this involves boat tours that



Noam Bedein presenting on the Dead Sea Revival Project./ Moises Taveras

he administers himself, taking people around the Dead Sea and exposing them to his findings. The profit he makes off of these tours go directly into DSRP and further means of presenting their case. One such demonstration was a three-year timelapse taken in virtually identical spots, showing how salt formations that emerged from the water eventually solidified into completely new structures, making caves and shores that

previously weren't there.

Rapidly evolving technology has helped Bedein grow the ways in which he can use "visual arts to connect people." For now, he releases a photo daily on his Instagram, but his work has also included work done in conjunction with CNN VR to reconstruct the environment for audiences to get a firsthand look at the effects on the Dead Sea and a fully 360° documentary.

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“The Origins of Human Speech” & Dr. Jeff Laitman

By Ryan Schwach
Managing Editor

Out of the estimated 8.7 million species on Earth, humans are the only one capable of articulate speech. But while it sets us apart, talking is something we humans tend to take for granted.

Our ability to talk, one that developed through evolution over the course of millions of years, is riddled with mystery and conclusion-less hypothesis. One scientist, Dr. Jeffrey Laitman, has spent the majority of his life in search of that question, studying how the human throat and mouth have evolved to allow us our ability to communicate.

“This is where I live, in the middle of your throats,” said Dr. Laitman, with a diagram of the human pharynx behind him at the beginning of the lecture he gave in the Woody Tanger Auditorium on Monday.

Dr. Laitman currently works at his lab at the Icahn School of Medicine in Manhattan as a distinguished professor and is immensely decorated in his field. Dr. Laitman is also an alumnus of Brooklyn College, having graduated from the Anthropology Department here in 1973.

“This was my home as it is your home now,” he said.

Laitman calls the ability for speech a “defining characteristic of humans,” but admits that there are still a host of unanswered questions as to how or why evolution gave us speech; questions he has strived to answer for 45 years.

One aspect of Laitman’s research revolves around comparative anatomy, comparing bodily structures from species to species. What he discovered is that the larynx, also known as the voice box, sits low in the throat of humans, but high in the throats of other mammals like cats and even whales. Whales, Laitman says, are particularly fascinating because although they live in an entirely different environment to humans, their systems are similar, just with a blow-hole. The low-sitting larynx allows more space within the throat, which gives us the ability to manipulate and better articulate sound, thus, you have speech.

Ironically, this evolution has a catch. Although we gained the ability to talk, the lower larynx brings the eating and breathing tube closer together and makes it easier for us to choke on food. This also



Laitman stands in front of a model of the human throat./ Ryan Schwach

explains when something “goes down the wrong pipe.” So, evolution gave us the ability to communicate, but also gave us the ability to choke.

Laitman’s research has worked to find the answers to how, why, and when humans developed the ability to talk. This is accomplished through the remains of our early ancestors. Of course, all we have to go with is bones, so we have to recreate things from that. One thing that Dr. Laitman and his team have discovered pertains to the structure of the base of the human skull as opposed to other mammals and human ancestors. The skull bases of our early ancestors, such

as Australopithecus, who lived around three million years ago, and other non-speaking mammals have very straight skull bases when looking at it from the side. While, modern humans have incredibly bent skull bases.

This slight deviation is part of how Dr. Laitman and fellow anthropologists can tell that the larynx of our early ancestors was higher in the throat, so although they could create rudimentary grunts, they could not manipulate and articulate those sounds. Around the time of Homo erectus, the larynx was low enough we could begin to speak.

Laitman says “It is hard to pinpoint,” exactly when we

gained the ability to talk.

Why we made this evolutionary change to speech is still unknown. Dr. Laitman’s hypothesis is that at a certain point in human history, we resided in the Sahara Desert in Northern Africa, and we began to do a lot of running. Bipedal running in such hot and dry environments created a need to take in more oxygen, the lowering of the larynx allows for that. So, in a way, the human evolution of speech was somewhat inadvertent, or at least secondary to other functions. “We need to breathe, eat, and poop,” said Dr. Laitman, “And then we can talk about it.”

Keeping the Dead Sea Alive: The Dead Sea Revival Project

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360° work and virtual reality seem to be the latest field that the DSRP is largely working in, with Bedein going so far as to say that he wanted to “share Dead Sea stories however we can.” He later proved this with a demo of the VR recreation being made available to the audience at the talk through the use of Facebook.

Now though, Bedein is taking the concept and running with it. His latest idea: a virtual museum, preserving the history of the Dead Sea and building on it. The plan

for now is an exhibition that can travel while work is done on a state-of-the-art installation. The idea behind Bedein’s educational efforts is a simple one: unite people in the knowledge of what’s gone wrong with the Dead Sea in order to avoid it ever happening again. It’s a sort of unity that the region has been denied because of the complexities of existing geopolitical contention; conflicts which have aided along the drying up of the Dead Sea and that steps are being taken to prevent now.

These steps primarily include the introduction of the Red Sea-Dead Sea

Canal, an effort being made by Jordanto provide the freshwater that the Dead Sea is lacking to survive. Water being siphoned by pumps along the Jordan River, which would naturally supply freshwater, have been providing drinking water to the region at the cost of the Dead Sea’s health. The canal, which would bring freshwater from the Red Sea, aims to amend this and, as Bedein would put it, serves as the sole symbol of Middle-Eastern cooperation via water diplomacy.

By the time Bedein’s presentation was over, the situation for the Dead



Salt diamond found in the Dead Sea./ Moises Taveras

Sea looked dire. By 2050, it’s projected there will be only be a small portion of the salt currently there and Bedein’s efforts to present it to the world seem like cataloging the death throes of the body, rather than outright saving it. But while these existing plans to save

it are taking place, someone surely must be tasked with ensuring the world knows what happened and how to prevent it happening again. In this regard, the Dead Sea Revival Project instills some hope.

The Immigrant Story of BC Alum Daniel Menendez

By Makeet Finch
Staff Writer

Students and staff assembled at the Magner Career Center in James Hall on Feb 25. to learn the story of Brooklyn College graduate Daniel Menendez. An undocumented immigrant, Menendez has often led a challenging life but has worked his way up the workforce and continued to strive against all odds.

A first generation immigrant and a native of Honduras, Menendez came to the U.S at the age of 18 to learn English. He traveled with a sheet of paper listing points to help him communicate in English in case he got lost. "I think back and reflect, why did I even come here? It's just me, I didn't have my mom, I didn't have my siblings, I didn't have friends," said Menendez, who came with a tourist Visa and stayed with a neighbor.

Menendez traveled through a different town in Honduras to meet with his neighbor's uncle's girlfriend who was in Honduras at the time but was a U.S citizen. He traveled to America in her care so that at customs, she could serve as a representative of someone he knew in America.

"It was a very uncertain time and everything was a learning experience," he said.

"We were living in a one bedroom apartment, it was two other guys and me in the same bedroom and a bunkbed and a queen size bed and a big bathroom and we shared it and it was a different experience. There was a lot of uncertainty because I didn't know English," said Menendez.

He worked various jobs to support himself and pay for his education,



Menendez discussing his life with students. / Makeet Finch

which cost more as an international student. He worked at a junkyard, as a waiter and several construction jobs.

Menendez originally wanted to pursue film, but didn't have the resources or the luxury to choose a major he wanted to study. "First I needed to survive, I needed to get a job where I could potentially be in higher demand that I could go into so I could at least get a job. I'm very close to my mom and my mom said, 'No way you're going to be an actor, no way you're going to be a director of film. If you want to, fine, but go finish your bachelor, go finish your Master's degree and then when you do that and you have a job, if you want to go back and do it over again, go ahead.' Now I got the okay," he said, as laughter filled the room.

Menendez first attended BMCC before transferring to Brooklyn College where he studied business management and finance.

While working as a waiter his senior year at BC, Menendez met with Natalia Guarín-Klein, Director of the Magner Career Center, at a workshop for resume

building he called "eye opening." She helped simplify the process, giving him the one-on-one attention he required, answering his questions, guiding and coaching him for different types of interviews outside of his work experience. He eventually landed an internship at UBS Wealth Management.

After graduating he went on to be a replenishment team leader in Target, managing sixteen employees. This job gave him the management experience he'd need to begin his banking career at Citibank in 2009.

"I was so grateful I got the job that every time I would go, I would give it my best even though I was in a graduate development program to become a manager," he said, "I was still picking up garbage from the floor or I would clean the ATM screens every day...I was just trying my best to do the best I could with the little I knew," said Menendez.

Menendez's biggest challenge was learning to speak English and being receptive when clients would speak fast, or when placed on conference calls feeling shy and aware of his

accent.

"It was intimidating at times in terms of leading others, I think it was also good that I went through the construction and restaurant work," he said. "For 2-3 months we called it a day job, the people who stand on the streets to be picked up to do some construction work, if its demolition or whatever it is you just go, so I had that experience going into this role, I was just grateful every day."

After multiple promotions and transitions, which brought him to Maryland, Menendez eventually returned to New York for a stint at HSBC in downtown Manhattan for two and a half years, where he helped develop the bank's retail presence. Afterwards, he made the leap to Bank of America as an Enterprise Retail Sales Manager where he now leads the Home Lending Team for Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Chinatown.

As Menendez reflected on his time as a BC student, he wished he had been involved in a group on campus, touching on the importance of making connections with peers.

Today, Menendez says he has two mentors. One of these, he was a doorman for, the man eventually took a liking to him due to his educated questions and interest in his work. His second mentor is his current boss at Bank of America who was the head of home equity for Chase Bank country-wide.

Menendez is a resident in Brooklyn, East Flatbush where he resides with his wife of 14 years and his two children, which he says is his proudest achievement. "I'm human just as you guys are. I do ok in terms of what I'm doing now...I have a lot of goals as well and I face the same challenges you all may face day to day. I had the same uncertainties when I was a student, I still have some of those uncertainties now," said Menendez.

"Every time you walk out these doors you will have the opportunity to be an influencer in your society, in your community, and you will do well representing Brooklyn College," said Menendez.

An Encounter With A One Man Show



By Michela Arlia
Staff Writer

I sat down on the campus West quad on a rare sunny and warm weekday in February with a BC undergraduate student who wrote and directed a new show that debuted last night at the Hudson Guild Theatre for New York City's annual New York Theatre Festival.

There is an assumption that any undergrad on campus writing and directing their own original play are majoring in the arts and took on the project for a class or thesis, but there is a minor twist to this playwright.

Nolan Frontera, class of 2020, is a history major who has had this particular work sitting on his bedroom shelf for over four years, and just recently decided to take a shot with it. His play, *The Encounter*, tells the story of a boy and lady who are shackled to a table

in a cold and dark room without any knowledge of where they are or how they got there. This unusual encounter forces them to get to know one another after having never met.

"In its most simple form, it is about two lost spirits reconciling a once lost love. It's about the existential question of life and existence. It's about finishing one's own fate. It's about the unconscious." Said Frontera.

Frontera's journey to the world of theatre is a unique one. He is not a major in any arts department on campus, and his passion stems from his high school days. Performing in shows in various roles during his four years in high school taught Frontera to not steer himself away from a career in the theatre, just an education in it. After performing some theatre in Kingsborough Community College, he says he chose history

because it allowed him to expand his horizons.

"I chose History for my undergrad because I knew it would polish me as a thinker, keep me very cultured, and give me the research skills required to discover people, cultures, and voices that I would never have the chance to ever encounter." Said Frontera. "I think art school kills artists [...] So I figured that I'd learn something, rather than learn something... and yes there is a difference," said Frontera.

Stumbling upon the New York Theatre Festival after hearing about it through word of mouth, Frontera submitted his play and got very lucky. After working on the project for years, his many rewrites, artistic choices, and hard work paid off. He got a slot in a pristine festival.

While the high of presenting work to the general public excited Frontera, things did not always go smoothly.

In the beginning of the writing process, he took on director Wes Goodrich, fellow alumnus of the high school. Frontera attended and a film/directing alumni of Pace University. While the two started their journey together full of ideas and excitement, the audition process forced a wedge in their artistic relationship. "The previous director and I had creative differences with casting. He wanted two particular actors that I was not too fond of. We respectfully agreed to disagree, and I took over," said Frontera.

Another obstacle faced by what was now the director/playwright one man band was support from patrons, or lack thereof.

"Social Media is a blessing. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter. As for the department, they haven't really helped with promotion. But luckily, you guys [the Vanguard]

did, and I appreciate that," Frontera said of the promotion of his play.

Frontera has received some help from Maria Ann Conelli, Dean of the Performing Arts at BC in allowing him to obtain rehearsal space on campus free of charge.

"Without her, it would've been very difficult." Said Frontera.

The young director's reaching out to the department and having the Dean on his side should have been enough to send out some promotion out to the students and faculty of the college.

Despite all the obstacles faced by the production team, Nolan Frontera and his small yet mighty cast will take the stage for a limited time at the Festival.

The Encounter will be playing now through March 7th at the Hudson Guild Theatre on W. 26th Street in Manhattan.

Theater Review: Sunset Baby

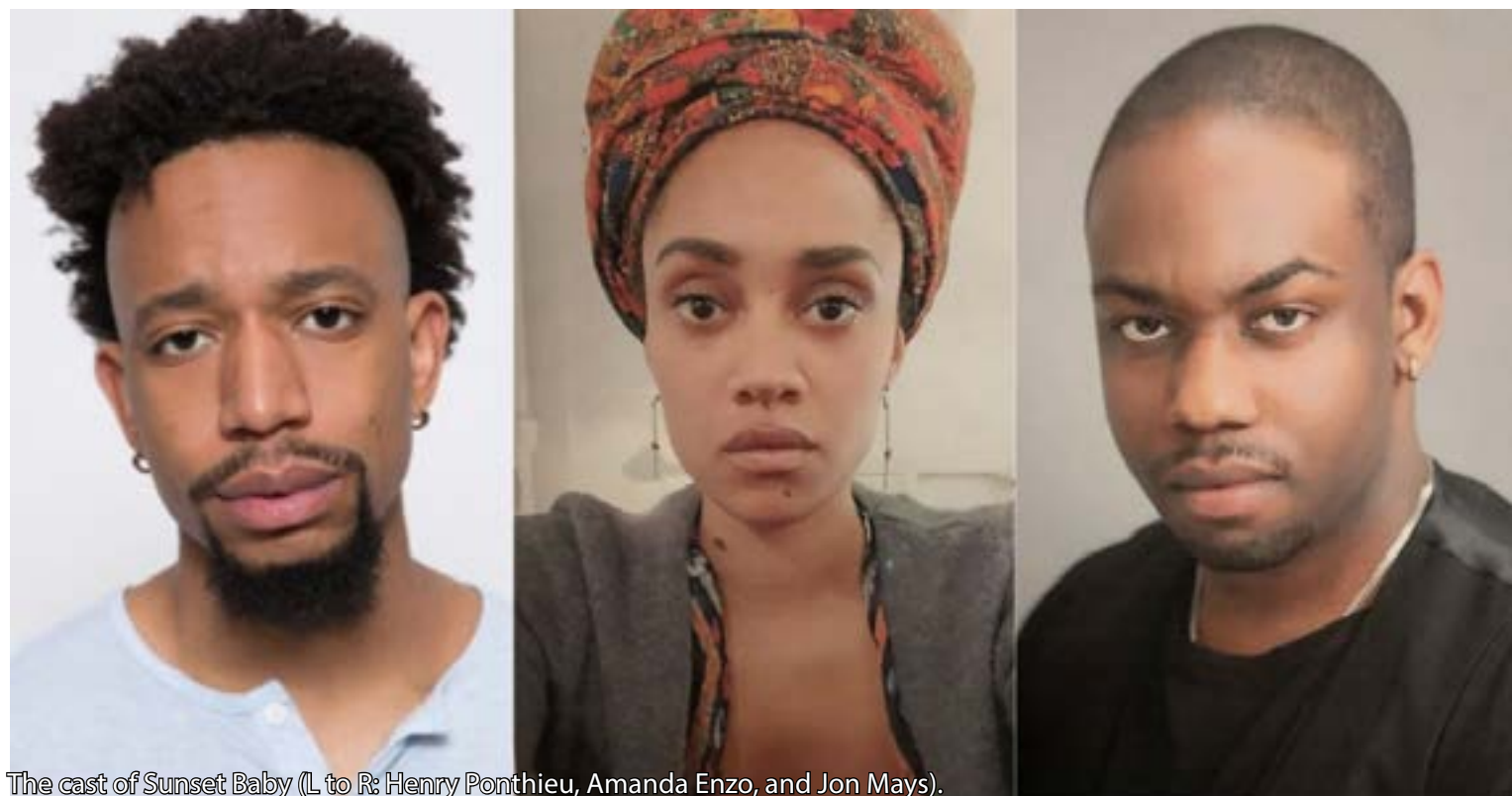
Raw, Excplicit, and Uncomfortable in the Best Possible Way

By John Schilling
Staff Writer

The overheated labyrinth of a building that is Roosevelt Hall played host to a production of Dominique Morisseau's *Sunset Baby* this past week for a quick three performance run.

Directed by Khrystal Agard, *Sunset Baby* focuses on the story of a drug dealer named Nina (Amanda Enzo), who lives in a New York City slum and is the daughter of distinguished black revolutionaries. In the aftermath of her mother's death, Nina's estranged father, Kenyatta Shakur (Henry Ponthieu), attempts to reconnect with her, but he returns with a specific request. It is revealed that Nina's mother wrote a bunch of letters to Kenyatta, but never sent them. Knowing Nina has them, Kenyatta desperately wants to read them, but Nina is resistant. Not only does she resent her father for his absence, but the letters are both the last remaining link to her mother as well as a link to a significant sum of money. Kenyatta's return sheds light on the often fraught relationship between the political and the personal and the complexities which surround Black activism. All of this makes Nina question if she can forgive her father and forces her to reevaluate what she wants most in life.

Let's be real. *Sunset Baby* is raw, explicit, and uncomfortable in the best possible way. For this production, the play was performed in 316RE, a dance studio/gymnasium turned black box theater, creating an intimate experience between the actors and the audience. Emotions



The cast of *Sunset Baby* (L to R: Henry Ponthieu, Amanda Enzo, and Jon Mays).

run high in this play, and the tight space created amplifies this effect.

Similarly, the play's events all take place in the same set: Nina's New York City apartment, where the audience watches the events unfold. Early on, it becomes evident that the audience is witnessing events happen in a fly on the wall-like scenario, a refreshing departure from elaborate sets that are constantly changing and often overlooked.

By framing the play in this way, the actors are able to thrive with the material and space that they are given. Emotions run high in this play, and this is especially true for Amanda Enzo as Nina. From her first line to her last, Enzo wasted no time tugging at the audience's heart strings and saying every line with power and purpose. Despite Nina's questionable actions, Enzo's portrayal allowed the audience to feel and empathize with her pain. Enzo succeeds especially in balancing Nina as strong and assertive yet vulnerable and conflicted with trust issues. Her occasional outbursts of crying and screaming adds a praiseworthy viscerality to Enzo's portrayal.

Enzo is supported by Ponthieu as Kenyatta, as well as Jon Mays as Damon, Nina's ride-or-die boyfriend. In the beginning, it seemed as if Ponthieu was holding back as he went through the motions, but as the play progressed, it became evident that this was intentional and rightfully so. Compared to Nina's emotive air, Kenyatta comes off as reserved, but it becomes apparent that he too is suffering. There is a notable scene between Nina and Kenyatta in which her words push him so far that the true, infuriated Kenyatta comes out.

The same is true for Jon Mays as Damon, who comes off as cool and collected, with visions of a better life. Similar to Kenyatta, however, the real Damon emerges when Nina pushes his buttons, and his own pain becomes apparent too. This pain is something all three characters share.

The entire play shows each character putting up a front, masking their true emotions and presenting a false identity. Each character builds a wall around their emotions, while the others try to topple it. It is in these scenes that the

audience finds out who these characters really are: characters playing characters.

This idea becomes especially evident in the scenes without any monologues or dialogues. There is one scene in which Nina removes her make-up and changes from her scantily-clad outfit. As she does this, her true self is exposed layer by layer, and she begins to break down crying. There are a few of these "silent" scenes (although they are accompanied by music), and they are arguably just as powerful and effective as the scenes with dialogue.

Despite these positives, *Sunset Baby* is far from perfect. The play's pacing is a huge struggle, as there are numerous scenes that either carry on for way too long or feel rushed. The pacing is almost soap opera-like with character moods shifting from one extreme to the next in a matter of minutes. In addition, there is a constant shift between scenes with dialogue and soliloquies from Kenyatta which get exhaustingly predictable to the point where the words fall numb and all power is lost.

The real problem with

Sunset Baby however, is that the story does not smoothly take the audience from point A to point B. The witch's hat plot diagram that you learn about in middle school does not exist in this play. The story just feels like one big climax, which goes nowhere and fails to offer any real resolution in the end. Much like some unresolved aspects of the plot, the play's title offers no real significance and is merely a brief, insignificant reference in a scene towards the end of the play. The play could have simply been called "Nina."

Overall, these imperfections are the result of the script, itself, and not the fault of this particular production. The powerful performances by the three actors and the uniqueness of the production's structure alone made seeing *Sunset Baby* worth it. *Sunset Baby*, which first premiered off-Broadway in 2013, is a refreshing shift from your stereotypical Cinderella story and adds more diversity to the theater, an industry that is often criticized for its lack of representation.

Theater Review: The Inheritance, Part I



The cast of *The Inheritance*. / Matthew Murphy, Deadline.com

By Jack Coleman
Arts Editor

It's a play that grapples with what it means to be a twenty-first century queer man in New York City after the peak of the AIDS epidemic. It's an updated, reimaged, gay-millennial stage version of the 1910 E.M. Forster novel, *Howards End*. It's a long one, with a run time of around seven hours, split between two parts, which in this way also bears the obvious comparison to Tony Kushner's 1991 *Angels in America*. As writer Matthew Lopez's Broadway premiere and director Stephen Daldry's sixth, *The Inheritance* is witty, a bit soapy, but an ultimately timely look at the current state of gayness.

Composed as a narrative within a narrative, Forster himself (perfectly embodied by Paul Hilton) appears before a group of thirty-something year old gay men as an almost omnipresent narrator in order to help construct the story, which is roughly *Howards End*, as it happens onstage. The subsequent narrative is told through the chorus of men whom Forster actualizes in front of, meaning that, give or take, each actor plays two characters. As the audience witnesses the

metropolitan queer love story unfold before them between the charmingly ordinary activist Eric Glass (brilliantly performed by Kyle Stoller) and his long-time partner, the troubled writer, Toby Darling (wonderfully rendered by Andrew Burnap), so do the original group of characters.

The year is 2016, and the couple resides in Eric's grandmother's rent-controlled apartment on the Upper West Side which is, unbeknownst to Toby, soon to be lost to eviction. While Toby is travelling around with Adam, the younger, naive, and handsome star of the theater adaptation of his novel (played by the sometimes stiff but somehow convincing Samuel H. Levine), Eric is left in New York with the knowledge that he'll soon have to vacate his childhood home. In his isolation and guilt for not having told Toby about the apartment's impending doom, Eric befriends their upstairs neighbor, the older and richer Walter Poole (Hilton again, this time no British accent, though I'm pretty sure I heard him slip a few times).

The power of stories, the need for storytelling, and the social imperative for an active remembrance

of history is what *The Inheritance* strives, and mostly succeeds, to get at. The most crucial scene to this point is the dialogue shared by Eric and Walter over a few whiskeys after the saddened Eric invites him to his apartment for a drink. The tale, which Walter tells a teary-eyed Eric, is of his country home upstate, where he would take people infected with HIV to comfort as they passed. Both Stoller and Hilton are at their best in this deeply affecting and poignant convergence of generations—one which bore the brunt of the AIDS epidemic, and the other which lives in its wake.

Soft sniffles and the sounds of hands rummaging around for a kleenex acts as a kind of score as the scene tugs and tugs (and tugs) for tears from the audience. But it does so, and without totally tipping into the valley of soapy sap.

As Toby's fame grows, the relationship diminishes. Interspersed between the often emotional plot development, are wildly entertaining group conversations, one of which is, of course, over brunch. Another is the 2016 election, where half the country was oh-so-sure of Trump's defeat, as were the characters. The friend group (who're played by the

chorus of men who Forster first comes to) is a dynamic set of professional, super educated, hilarious gays—the type I swipe right on but know I won't match with. While the chorus almost never leaves the subtlety inimitable minimalist set by the seven-time Tony award winning Bob Crowley, they often sit back and watch, make faces or yell-out, like a rowdy but helpful audience.

Central to these conversations, and to the play itself, is the question of what—or who—have we forgotten during our marriage equality-achieved, PrEP-ready, *Rupaul's Drag Race*-fueled, straight-suburban-white-girls-screaming “yas queen” era since AIDS ravaged the country? This, and other prescient questions, are what Lopez prompts his characters and viewers with.

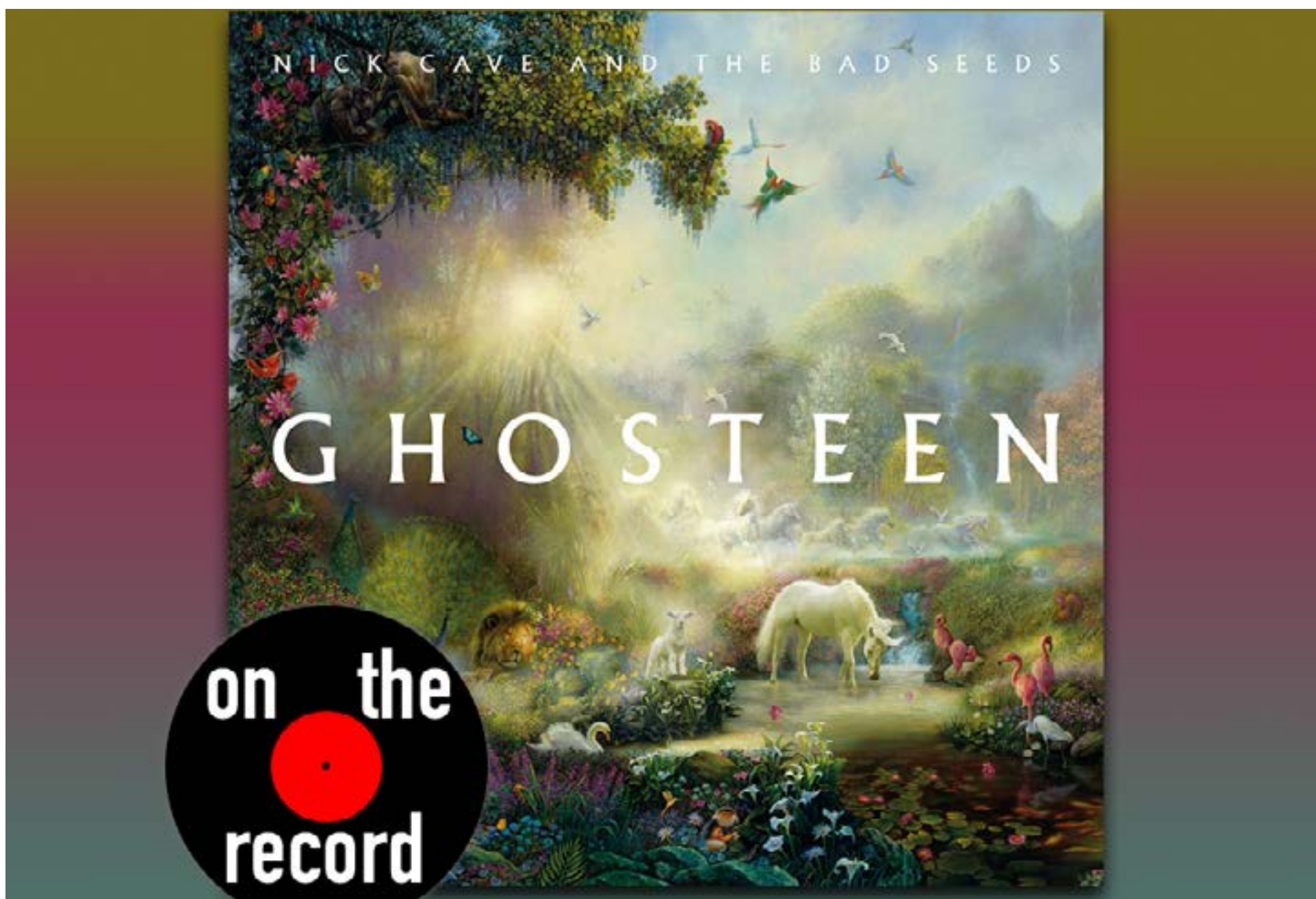
One major gripe that won't stop bugging me, however, is the aesthetic treatment and characterization of Leo (also played by Levine), a sexworker, as well as the one and only not upper-middle class or higher character. Scene: A penthouse in Hell's Kitchen, Leo comes onto the stage clad in baggy, ill-fitted clothing, hood up, and downtrodden. Forster tells the audience that poor

Leo had never seen such great heights (or something to that effect), and it is then insinuated that Leo has just transmitted HIV to the person that he slept with (no spoilers).

Why perpetuate the notion that people with HIV today are “dirty?” Why depict sexworkers as dirty? More research, more care, and more nuance to this character of Leo would have added a dimension to the play that is sorely missing from conversations about sex in general—that is—that a lot of people genuinely enjoy fucking for money. How that was lost on Lopez, I'm hard pressed to find out.

Despite the sexworker slip up, the four and a half hour long part 1 of *The Inheritance* grips and holds fast. That the degree of separation between the audience and the events happening on stage is doubled actually reinforces the weightedness of both narratives. And, at its most clever, the narratives start to bleed together, which is where the unfolding in-real-time concept becomes the most enticing. That, as well as the near perfect performances from each actor, is what sets it apart from most theater.

On The Record: Ghosteen,



By Allison Rapp
Opinions Editor

One of the most common questions I get asked is how I can afford to go to the number of concerts that I do per year. The assumption, of course, is that I'm somehow filthy rich, and that dropping hundreds of dollars on tickets doesn't phase me. Concert-going is not cheap, and an evening out at a venue can rack up some significant costs.

I'll start out by stating for the record that I'm remarkably lucky. Both my parents have had steady, decently-paid jobs for my entire life. They are by no means millionaires or anything even close, but their support over the years has meant a great deal. My dad took me to my very first concert (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers) at age 14, and it would be completely fair to say

that I've been hooked on the experience of seeing live music ever since.

But aside from the shows that my parents and I have attended together, the ones that I have attended on my own accord have been entirely on my dime. I shudder to think about the grand total I've spent over the years, but when I break it down, it doesn't seem so bad. Apart from the time I spent nearly \$300 to see Paul McCartney (worth it), I very rarely spend over \$100 for a ticket. (Who doesn't love a good nosebleed seat?) I dine out very little, and I don't remember the last time I went out on a shopping spree. I say this not to imply "You can do these things too!", but rather to note that I seem to have figured out a system that works for me and makes me happy. There's a Tom Petty lyric about rock 'n' roll: "They love it like you love Jesus, it does

the same thing to their soul." Not that concerts are the be-all-end-all of everything, and I admit I sometimes harbor guilt over the materialistic aspect of the situation, but my best advice for anyone who's young and questioning their future is to find what makes you passionate or fills you with joy and devote every fiber of your being to that thing.

That being said, the times they are a-changin' and gone are the days when you might spend your evening standing outside a venue hoping to score a last-minute ticket. At Grateful Dead shows, fans used to hold up a finger and declare "I need a miracle!" on the off chance that some kind soul would spare them an extra seat at the show. That still happens on occasion, but these days nearly everything has shifted online, and big-name ticket

distribution sites like Ticketmaster, StubHub, and Live Nation have come to dominate the virtual ticket market.

Anyone who has ever attempted to buy tickets to a concert, sporting event, or anything taking place at a bigger venue has likely run into the hot mess that is online ticket distribution. "Scalpers" (companies or individuals that use bots to buy up large quantities of tickets and then resell them at a far higher price) have unfortunately become a major reason why more and more people can't afford to attend concerts. What might start out as a 20 or 30 dollar ticket suddenly becomes 100 or 200 dollars, leaving hundreds of people out of the loop. The heart of the issue then finds its way back to the ticket distributors. You can't blame someone for wanting to make a profit

(well, ok, you can), but you can most definitely blame the companies like Ticketmaster or StubHub for standing idly by and allowing the tickets to be scalped. Why aren't these organizations doing anything about it? Technically speaking, the practice of using bots to buy up tickets is illegal, but the federal government doesn't seem to care too much.

Some people in the industry, including the bands themselves, have attempted to work around the issue. Nine Inch Nails tried eliminating online sales altogether, reverting back to the old-fashioned method of selling tickets in-person at box offices only — not necessarily a practical solution in the 21st century.

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Nick Cave + The Bad Seeds

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Others like Bruce Springsteen and the Grateful Dead (Dead and Company), tried implementing a lottery system in which fans enter their information and if their name gets selected, they are then eligible to purchase tickets, making the process fully and completely random and based on sheer luck. You really do need a miracle for that.

For people like myself, who attend gigs regularly, this is routine. But the real people who lose out are the ones where there may be one or two shows a year they're really excited about getting tickets for, only to find that because of scalpers, prices have soared to an unreasonable level.

This week, maybe to help relax, I spun *Ghosteen*, the latest record from Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. It's mystical, creepy, dreamlike, and full of ambient synths.



Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds live at Paladozza./ Wikimedia Commons

Fans of Brian Eno's airport music or Leonard Cohen's blunt, spoken-word lyricism can find common ground on this record. A few songs reach nearly 15 minutes long, leaving a whole lot of room for some reflexive thinking.

"If I could move the night, I would. And I would turn the world around if I could," Cave sings on the title track. "There's nothing wrong with loving something you can't hold in your hand." And since there's nothing wrong with

that, I caved (ba dum tsss) and bought a ticket from Ticketmaster to see Nick Cave perform at the Barclays Center in September. I may hate the system, but I have little choice.

There's nothing tangible or hard about *Ghosteen*, and that's likely part of Cave's message: that our experiences are very much about how we live them spiritually in the present, and not about how we plan them concretely.

"Everyone has a heart and it's calling for

something," he says on a track called "Bright Horses," "and we're all so sick and tired of seeing things as they are."

I am, indeed, sick and tired of seeing the ticket industry disregard the wants and needs of concert-goers. I'd like to think that everyone who gets involved in the business has the best interests of the fans at heart, but it simply isn't true. I'm reminded of another Petty lyric (I'm chock full of them): "All the boys upstairs wanna see how much you'll pay

for what you used to get for free." My ticket for Nick Cave wound up under \$40: a feasible price, but there's no telling how high those prices will go in the coming months.

"This world is plain to see," Cave continues on "Bright Horses." "It don't mean we can't believe in something anyway."

My advice for the concert-attendee of today: Keep your eyes peeled and keep believing in the music anyway.



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The Comp Sci Boys Club

By Michael Castaneda
Columnist

Have you ever walked into a classroom where a computer science class is being taught? The first thing you will notice is that it's almost all dudes.

I was talking to a female classmate last week who has been taking CS classes on and off for the past few years, and she said it has gotten better. There are now more women, but it is still predominantly men.

Of course, there are some academic circumstances where the situation is reversed. Walk into a social work classroom and there will be more women than men.

Does that mean that all things are equal? No, not really. Women's work has historically been seen as being worth less than men's. Fox News will tell you that this might have been true in the past but it is no longer true today. However, the data suggests otherwise. According to a US government report, women only earn 81% of what men earn.

Often, computer science graduates can earn six figures annually after graduating, while the professions like social work, which are seen to be women's work, might be lucky to earn half that. In addition, social workers are often required to have a master's degree on top of their undergraduate schooling.

In my experience as

a computer science student at Brooklyn College, I've noticed that men make up three fourths of the classroom and they do the majority of the speaking in class.

A recent CS graduate from a University in Virginia, who did not wish to use his name, said his experience was that the male to female ratio was even more than that, but it depends on the school.

This is a bit surprising if you consider that women have had a long and prestigious role in the development of computer science which we should all hold gratitude for. Grace Hopper was a military service veteran in computer science. She created one of the first compilers (a mechanism for a human to tell a computer what to do via code), helped create modern programming languages with COBOL, and built standards for computing and networks for the department of defense. Finally, she gave us the term "bug" for a software error, because there was literally a moth in her computer that caused an error. She wrote in a log file

One of my favorite computer scientists is Margaret Hamilton. She coined the term "software engineer." She is famous for many reasons, but most notably she was the lead developer of NASA's Apollo flight software. She is credited for saving the Apollo 11 Mission

by troubleshooting a computer issue right before Neil Armstrong landed the Lunar Module on the moon. She worked on other Apollo missions and Skylab. Before NASA, she was the Director of Software Engineering at MIT's Instrumentation Laboratory. There is a great picture of her from that era where she is standing next to a large man. Hamilton, a small woman in her twenties, appears to be fixing her hair. This picture directly contrasts with the fetishized masculine stereotype of what a leader should be.

Both Hamilton and Hopper were given the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama.

So what happened? Why aren't there more women in the field? What is the experience like today?

Earlier this semester, I was walking around the Duke campus in Durham, North Carolina. I picked up a copy of Duke's student newspaper "The Chronicle." In the February 6th issue, there was a story written by Paloma Rodney, a Duke student who was shut out of being on the development team of a popular student produced app. She was told that she wouldn't be aggressive enough to work on the app. When Paloma looked at the "Meet the Team" webpage from the project, she saw that there was not one female in the

group. Considering that she wrote an op-ed in the student newspaper, I doubt that she wasn't aggressive enough -- that alone was a bold move.

On a personal note, I have never seen sexual harassment until I entered the tech field. At a large financial institution, I saw a Indian man on a H1B visa get into the personal space of an Indian-American woman, who was right out of college and a junior software developer, when she was sitting down. He moved closer until his crotch was way too close. He later said to her from across the room "All you Muslim women are the same."

Donna Ballman is an employment attorney. According to her book "Stand Up For Yourself Without Getting Fired," it's almost impossible to win a human resource dispute with a racist or sexist coworker if that coworker is also not white. In tech, the managers are often not white.

Another woman, who wished to remain anonymous, who works as a software engineer, said being a woman in tech has its perks, but in a bad way. She said that since there is a push to move women along in her science classes, there was always someone to help her with her work or just do it for her. Some TA's advised her to cheat when she asked for help. She feels that sometimes women don't get the best education in

science because they are not allowed to fail. She also noted that being one of very few women, she was never left alone. Guys would never let her have a moment to herself while in break from classes. They would approach her and ask why she was by herself.

Susan Fowler was a software engineer at Uber, who wrote a blog post which detailed sexual harassment from her supervisor and the human resource department that couldn't care less. She eventually got the C.E.O. of the company to leave his position. It also got the conversation going about the women's treatment in tech.

There are organizations like Girls Who Code that have sprouted up in the past few years to help support women in the field. Most organizations have some sort of "women in technology" group as part of the corporate initiatives.

My computer classes at Brooklyn College have been diverse in some ways. The age of students ranges from 18 to 60 years old. There are full time students, part time students, and working professionals that come after work. Some of the students have transferred from community college. There appears to be such a mix of ethnic backgrounds that there is no visible majority. However, one thing is certain, there are not a lot of women.

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Low Qui Savage: A Sour Note from Union Brass

By Quiara Vasquez
Editor-in-Chief

Reader, if you're like me, you've probably skipped past all the news in this "news" paper and gone right to the hot takes in the opinions section. Well, your loyalty is much appreciated, but before you go further, I'd encourage you to read my article on the rebranding of "7K or Strike," and the state of adjunct organizing after last year's "historic" contract. It's a good example of the reporting that very few publications really bother with.

One publication that you certainly won't see a piece about adjunct activism in? PSC-CUNY's official newspaper, the Clarion.

I suspect when they chose to name their publication after a clarion, they meant it in an adjectival sense - "loud and clear" - or perhaps in the literal sense, as a war horn leading the masses into battle. But the name is also appropriate in a more sinister sense: for just as a clarion is a brass instrument, the Clarion is little more than an instrument of the brass - the means through which a handful of union bigwigs exert control over the narrative.

Over the four years I've been involved with campus news, the growing rank-and-file insurrection within the PSC has risen

to a fever pitch. The PSC has officially taken on some of their causes (most obviously, the push to raise adjunct pay to \$7,000 per course - an effective doubling of their wages), but they've never addressed the key complaint: that rather than engage with the rank-and-file, PSC leaders have pursued a top-down approach that's left behind the most vulnerable groups within the union.

The story I hear over and over again from rank-and-file organizers is that PSC president Barbara Bowen and her posse have disproportionate power over what the union wants and who gets a seat at the (bargaining) table. The key to this control is a powerful media apparatus which allows Bowen et al to shape the narrative, and spin the most modest of gains as "historic" accomplishments.

At the heart of this propaganda machine (and I don't use those words lightly) is the Clarion, which has been thoroughly scrubbed of anything resembling dissent. Consider the November 2019 issue, which sets out to "inform" union members of the terms of the not-yet-ratified 2019 contract. Every single page is dedicated to trumpeting the gains of that contract - sorry, the "groundbreaking tentative agreement that substantially lifts pay for

adjunct faculty." A center spread contains two years worth of glamour shots of PSC members protesting. If you look closely at a shot from a fall 2018 rally, you can see a pair of "7K or Strike" signs partially obscured by a man's head. (I was at that rally, and let me tell you, there were a hell of a lot more than two of those on display.) The copy doesn't outright say "vote yes" - but how could anyone come to a different conclusion, when every page is a nonstop deluge of accolades for the heroic bargaining team who toiled for two perilous years for the dispirited worker's sake; when the evidence suggesting the contract gains fall short of expectations is conspicuously absent; when the concerted effort by rank-and-file activists for a "no" vote is reduced to a scant reference to "a handful of member observers [who] attempted to disrupt the meeting with heckling" on page 12? Yes, the contract was ratified in a landslide - but how could it be any other way, when the PSC has effectively suppressed all rationale for a no vote?

And not just in their own literature, either. Mainstream outlets are all too happy to parrot the PSC's press releases; student media could fill this void, but labor reporting is well outside the wheelhouse of

most student journos, and even when folks like yours truly do report on the "opposition," we just don't have the reach to really influence the narrative. History, after all, is written by the winners.

Quite literally, in one case: consider the online "CUNY Digital History Archive," an allegedly open-source project dedicated to the history of left-wing activism within CUNY. You would think that the project would extensively document CUNY Struggle, 7K or Strike, or any number of adjunct-driven activist movements of the past five years. You would be wrong. There are plenty of photographs of a papier-mache head of former CUNY chancellor Matthew Goldstein - but the sole reference to 7K or Strike in this activist treasure trove is buried within an hour-long interview. What's the cause of this conspicuous absence of some of the largest intra-CUNY activist campaigns of the decade? Maybe - just maybe - it's because the head "archivist" for the CUNY DHA is Andrea Vasquez (no relation), the vice president of the PSC? The same Andrea Vasquez who, in an "Open Letter on \$7K or Strike" from the PSC's principal officers, accused the movement of "creating confusion and division [...] diminishing our power and creating potential legal risk" ? I'd

wager so.

I don't mean to tar every higher-up within the PSC with the same brush. (Brooklyn College's PSC chapter is run by James Davis, who has had many honest conversations with student reporters over the years.) And I certainly don't mean to imply that just because the Clarion suppresses these stances, they're correct de facto. (The PSC correctly notes that striking in New York is a dangerous proposition under the Taylor Law - although given that one of the penalties when public-sector unions strike is that the union president gets arrested, Barbara Bowen may not have entirely pure reasons for wanting to quash strike talk.) But I suspect that part of the reason why the PSC needs an iron grip over the narrative is that in a union where adjunct activists are given equal time to express their opinions, the union brass could not possibly convince the PSC membership that their agenda is sufficient.

The union brass and their media machine won in 2019. But if the uptick in adjunct mutiny continues unabated, pretty soon this decade, the PSC's higher-ups may find themselves accountable to a new clarion call.

Bullshit!

by Ryan Gleason

Coronavirus On Campus!

FALSE ALARM!

But see how scared you got? This thing is running wild through the world like Hulkamania. As far as I'm concerned, there is only one disease more scary and that disease is disco fever. Now, we are relatively safe. Those overseas dying of this outbreak are older with

compromised immune systems, they are delicate. But us? Americans? With our amazing health and super careful nature towards hygiene -- we are safe as can be!

We have been surrounded by beer farts at baseball games and have taken mucus filled train rides since birth. America is like

a germ party and everyone is invited. All this exposure has built up our immune systems to HEFTY strength.

I can't remember the last time I was seriously sick. Mostly because I can't afford to see a doctor every time I feel bad, so I just sort of wish it away. But that is besides the point. Those

of us in these amazing 50 states are practically invincible.

Conservatives think those traveling from Asia and its surrounding countries are bringing the disease here. That is CRAZY! When was the last time someone brought you something from their vacation that wasn't bought at the airport

they returned to. My mom and dad went to Italy and I got an "I love Italy!" magnet from a souvenir shop in JFK Airport!

Follow these simple rules if you are still concerned about catching the Coronavirus: Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your DAMN hands.

Women's Basketball Beats Hunter, Wins CUNYAC

By Conrad Hoyt &
Kwame Perez
*Sports Editor & Staff
Writer*

Brooklyn College's women's basketball team won the CUNYAC Championship this past Friday, with a 62-57 win over Hunter College in the finals.

Junior forward Chanel Jemmott was named the game's MVP for the second time in her career after finishing with 14 points and 24 rebounds. The Bulldogs captured their second CUNYAC Championship in three years (also winning in 2018), and will now face Bowdoin College in the NCAA Tournament.

Both Brooklyn and Hunter started off slow in the finals both implementing a 3-2 zone defense. Brooklyn certainly struggled, shooting only 20 percent from the field in the first quarter, but picked it up in the second with 35 percent. Brooklyn led 28-26 going into half time. The Bulldogs were able to hit enough shots with consistent three-point shooting from freshman Sarah James, who went 6-10 from distance, which broke the 3-2 zone and opened up



Bulldogs beating Hunter College. / Damion Reid

the paint. The Bulldogs had an answer for every run the Hawks tried to make in the second half and fed off the energy of their crowd.

As the game winded down, The Hawks never gave up, making three-pointers to keep the pressure on Brooklyn. To the credit of the Bulldogs, they showed composure and never seemed to let the moment feel too big for them. They went to the free throw line and clinched the game and the CUNYAC Championship for Brooklyn College.

In the semi-finals of the CUNYAC Championships, the Bulldogs hosted York College. The Bulldogs were animated before the game, chanting

loudly and encouraging teammates.

The tip went up, and Brooklyn opened the game with a three-pointer from forward Sarah James. Brooklyn's defense was tenacious, and it was evident early that York did not have enough solid ball-handlers to take advantage of Brooklyn's aggressive on-ball defense. On York's first few possessions, they turned the ball over every single time.

The Bulldogs had a lot of good looks early on, but were not converting at a high rate. Luckily, the three-ball was falling, the source of Brooklyn's first nine points. Brooklyn also had deep numbers, with ten players touching the floor in just the

first quarter alone. The score was 16-4 after one quarter of play. Graduate student Kailyn Richburg put together a great first quarter off the bench.

Brooklyn's two top scorers, Chanel Jemmott and Taylor George both did not have their offensive games going early on, but Brooklyn still dominated with its defense. Before the half, Jemmott did have one behind-the-back dribble to a pull-up three-pointer that made the crowd go wild. The score was 33-17 at halftime.

York came out of the tunnel aggressive in the third quarter, and cut the lead within single digits at 35-26. But Brooklyn got their flow back, bolstered by their free ball-movement

and solid three-point shooting. Brooklyn went on a 22-3 run and led 57-29 after three. The Bulldogs continued to cruise to the finish line, and won the game 72-45. Freshman guard Ericka James led the way with 17 points, hitting five three-pointers.

With the Bulldogs' CUNYAC Championship win, the team finishes the regular season and CUNYAC Championships with an astounding 21-6 overall record and 14-0 in-conference. The Bulldogs have also won five games in a row, and must feel extremely confident as they enter the NCAA tournament to face Bowdoin on Friday, March 6.

Men's Basketball Wins CUNYAC After Cinderella Run

By Conrad Hoyt
Sports Editor

The Brooklyn College men's basketball team defeated Baruch College 62-55 to win the 2020 CUNYAC Championship. After an up-and-down regular season in which they went 10-15 and 7-7 in-conference, the Bulldogs swept their CUNYAC opponents in the playoffs to win their first conference title since 2016.

The Bulldogs started off the season losing seven out of their first eight games. After then winning eight of their next ten, the Bulldogs lost six in a row before defeating Medgar Evers College to finish the season. Basketball is a game of runs, but the streaks, both losing and winning, that the Bulldogs went on were almost unprecedented.

The Bulldogs started off the CUNYAC tournament against

Hunter College, and defeated the favored Hawks 67-58. The Bulldogs then won a scrappy match against top-seeded John Jay College 57-55, sending them through to the final. In the climax of the Cinderella story, the Bulldogs defeated Baruch 62-55, with senior guard Anthony McClean claiming the game's MVP trophy after leading the way with 16 points.

"Seeing how we handled

the adversity leading up to tonight, I knew we had a great chance to win," McClean told the athletic department following the game. "It was another team win and I couldn't be prouder."

In the final, senior guard Jordan Wright chipped in 9 points, as did junior guard Noah Shy, and senior guard Michael Tesoriero added 8 points. The Bulldogs were led by their guards all season, and the CUNYAC tournament

was no different.

The men's and women's teams both won the CUNYAC Championship this year, and both teams were extremely supportive of each other. That support and the confidence taken from these past games will act as stepping stones for the Bulldogs to continue winning in the NCAA tournament. They face off against Swarthmore College on Friday, March 6.