COVID Rules Gone, Theater Carries On

BC Theater’s Upcoming ‘Concord Floral’ Closes Spring Season With COVID Rule Rollbacks

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Funeral Set For Deceased BC Student Diane Lake

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-In-Chief

Funeral arrangements for Diane M. Lake, a recently-transferred Brooklyn College student and University Student Senator, are set for Sunday, Mar. 27. Lake passed away suddenly at the age of 22, prompting many who knew her across CUNY and other local communities to voice the immense contributions she made while alive.

"Words cannot explain how I am feeling right now. I didn’t know that Diane touched so many people and been a blessing to everyone that she encountered," wrote Shelia Lake, Diane’s mother, on a GoFundMe page she organized for funeral expenses.

Lake’s funeral will be held at the Emmaus Seventh-Day Adventist Church next week, with her viewing beginning at 11 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. The service is scheduled for 1 p.m. later in the afternoon. Lake will be laid to rest at the Cypress Hills Cemetery the following day.

Before her unexpected passing on Mar. 4, Lake pursued an early childhood education degree at Brooklyn College after recently transferring from Kingsborough Community College, where she received her associate’s degree.

During her time at KCCC, Lake served as president of the Student Government Association and formed part of the USS Steering Committee as the Vice-Chair for International Student Affairs. On her way to becoming a school teacher, Lake became an active presence and advocate in her CUNY community.

"While in this chair, I plan to work with USS and all of our CUNY colleges [to] help our international feel like they are home while they are with us," Lake wrote on her USS website biography.

Despite having fractured her ankle due to a work-related accident, Lake accomplished many accolades. One of the many successes Lake’s family was most proud of was getting a driver’s license. In her local community, she offered food to those who were hungry and sang in her church. Though she did not live to see her long-term goals fulfilled, Lake made a mark on those around her.

The family has not confirmed the cause of Lake’s death to The Vanguard as of press time.

BC Removes Most COVID Protocols For On-Campus

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-In-Chief

As more students return to campus, in-person gatherings have grown at Brooklyn College with fewer COVID restrictions, prompting more clubs to host events that resemble pre-pandemic times.

"While many restrictions have been lifted, all events should still keep health and safety measures in mind in planning," Ron Jackson, BC’s Co-President for Student Affairs, wrote in a statement to The Vanguard.

The college’s Student Center had temporary COVID restrictions for in-person events this spring, including having rooms set up with tables and chairs spaced three feet apart. These restrictions were developed by the Reentry Review Board, an advisory team that assesses how the Brooklyn College community returns to campus, but the Student Event Management Team was allowed to provide guidance for events hosted by student clubs and organizations.

As of Mar. 8, clubs and organizations hosting on-campus events were no longer required to follow the restriction of individually wrapping foods, which was considered a significant protocol rollback for many dealing with outside food vendors.

"I think that this will be very helpful and hopefully will make it easier for student leaders to actually create these events because there’s less restrictions," said Aharon Grama, BC’s Undergraduate Student Government Vice President. "When you have a lot of restrictions, it’s going to intimidate student leaders from doing stuff - and it could be anywhere, with anything, not necessarily events."

For some organizations, the restriction to individually seal food limited their catering options, with many vendors who previously served food for BC events denying orders with such requirements, leaving about only five restaurants available. Other food establishments have also recently denied orders because of payment delays brought by the university’s new outside vendor payment process. Despite BC removing the requirement for individually wrapped food, some organizations like USG plan to continue practicing the former protocol for those with COVID concerns.

"Regardless, if students are ordering food, I am going to ask them possibly to individually wrap some of the food, if they can," said Grama. "Just until we get an understanding of those students who feel uncomfortable in the situation so they have the option."

Event guests must currently be from Brooklyn College or other CUNY campuses, and they must adhere to the university’s vaccine mandate before entering any college building. Club leaders interested in hosting an in-person event can file an Event Request Form through Bulldog Connection.
Upgraded BC Water Fountains Follow Plans To Make CUNY environmentally sustainable.

New bottle stations are set to replace older water fountains found across the Brooklyn College campus as part of an ongoing plan to make CUNY environmentally sustainable.

Starting in 2007, the Sustainable CUNY initiative oriented colleges to take action on climate change and evaluate how each individual campus can make sustainable improvements. Brooklyn College started its 10-Year Campus Sustainability Initiative in 2018 under former President Gould’s administration, and aims to continue increasing the number of bottle filling stations available on campus to combat the creation of plastic waste. The bottle stations around campus have already produced significant results, with 15 of these bottle filling stations being responsible for diverting over 375,000 plastic bottles from entering landfills, according to Pietras.

"Facilities has purchased over 150 filling stations, replacing fountains as resources allow. The stations deliver cold water from the New York City water system, which is considered to be one of the highest quality municipal water systems in the United States," said Pietras in an email to The Vanguard. BC has already installed 18 of these bottle filling stations, with nine installed prior to the pandemic.

In a poll conducted by The Vanguard to assess what BC students thought of the water fountains and bottle stations in general, nine of 16 total respondents answered that they were concerned about the maintenance and upkeep of the fountains and bottle stations on campus. Of those same 16 respondents, another nine also indicated that they trusted the drinking water that came from fountains and bottle stations on campus.

"I think they’re a good investment but I think they need to be tested a little bit," said Raizy Kipperman, a sophomore at BC. Kipperman noted that part of her skepticism about the drinkable water on campus is based on the lack of information available to students. "I have no idea whether there’s a filter or not. I don’t wanna drink something … that has absolutely no filter," she said.

BC is working to minimize the threat of contamination in accordance with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the DEP, and Department of Education, according to Pietras.

"The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulates and polices the watershed that surrounds and protects our reservoirs, and the water is tested more than half-a-million times a year at various points throughout the system," Pietras explained with regards to contamination concerns.

Some of this testing includes measures to detect lead, especially since young children are susceptible to lead contamination. "We are required to check lead levels in the drinking water associated with the early childhood center as a part of their license renewal," said Pietras.

On-Campus Conflict Rises, Safety Review Board Develop De-Escalation Training

By Matthew Hirsch
News Editor

BC President Michelle Anderson brought up a recent increase in “conflict” across campus during the last Faculty Council meeting on Mar. 15. In response to the situation, the Safety Review Board is developing de-escalation training for all members of the Brooklyn College community.

“With more people returning this semester to teach, learn, and work onsite, the College seeks to help people cope with a range of feelings they may experience as they return to campus,” said BC Media Relations Manager, Rich Pietras, in a statement to The Vanguard. “The Office of Diversity and Equity Programs offers free trainings that include information about how to de-escalate conflict, which started in January and will continue until May.” The Safety Review Board was established at the recommendation of Chief Diversity Officer Anthony Browne and the Implementation Team for Racial Justice.

The training programs are meant to help BC community members "manage stressful situations, as well as address issues of race, religion, gender, disability, and other protected classes that may arise," according to Pietras.

President Anderson noted that an area where conflict seems to be most present is at the campus gates. She said the gates “present their own opportunities for conflict.” At the moment, all students, staff, and faculty are required to show their Brooklyn College Digital ID with a green key icon or an Everbridge vaccination pass to enter campus.

Notably, now that CUNY Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodriguez has ended the mask mandate, President Anderson said there should be “no shaming” of students, faculty, and staff who choose to forego their masks. The signs on campus reflecting the old mandatory mask policy will be removed with new signage that encourages masking but affirms that it isn’t mandatory. Though the transition back to in-person learning has created an increase in conflict on campus, not all students have noticed the issue.

“I haven’t seen any conflict on campus. Everyone’s pretty nice, to me, at least,” said BC student Luis Flecha. “I haven’t seen anybody argue, everyone’s just walking.”

Despite this increase in conflict, there haven’t been any reports made to campus safety’s daily crime log since last October. Any issues around campus haven’t been severe enough to warrant campus security intervention.

Director of Campus Security and Public Safety Donald Wenz did not respond to The Vanguard’s request for comment in time for publication.

A new water fountain in Roosevelt Hall. /Gabriela Flores

BC develops conflict de-escalation training for campus officers. /Campus and Community Safety Services

May I Help You? /Gabriela Flores

Image 1/ By Matthew Hirsch

By Radwan Farraj
Staff Writer

On-Campus Conflict Rises, Safety Review Board Develop De-Escalation Training

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"With more people returning this semester to teach, learn, and work onsite, the College seeks to help people cope with a range of feelings they may experience as they return to campus. "At the moment, all students, staff, and faculty who choose to forego their masks. The training programs are meant to help BC community members "manage stressful situations, as well as address issues of race, religion, gender, disability, and other protected classes that may arise," according to Pietras.

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USG’s Purim Party Serves As Testimony To Inclusivity At BC

By Gabriela Flores & Serin Sarsour
Editor-In-Chief & Features Editor

Brooklyn College’s Undergraduate Student Government held its first in-person event of the semester on Mar. 14 to celebrate Purim, a Jewish holiday that commemorates how Jewish people living in Persia during the 5th century were saved from a massacre.

“We want to do a series of events that correlate with holidays our students celebrate, showcase our diversity, and show unity at BC,” said USG Co-President Aharon Grama.

With over 100 students in attendance, the BC community was able to step away from their academics and take part in the fun.

“We wanted to create an event that embraces the diversity of our student body. All were welcomed, not just those who celebrate Purim,” said USG Senator Lauren Zami.

Purim is kicked off with a day of fasting, where Jewish people later partake in a special feast called se’udat Purim while exchanging food and drinks with loved ones. Purim means “lots” in Persian, which translates to the grand spread of food presented on the holiday.

Additionally, the Book of Esther is read during the celebration since Esther is a prominent figure in Judaism. Esther was a Jewish girl who married King Xerxes of Persia and became Queen, according to Chabad.org. As Queen of Persia, she ordered for the cease of the attempted slaughter of Jewish people living in Persia 2,000 years ago. Since then, Esther has influenced the holiday of Purim and continues to influence the lives of Jewish people.

Purim is annually observed and celebrated on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Adar, which usually occurs in February or March. This year, Purim began in the evening of Mar. 16 and ended in the evening of Mar. 17.

During last week’s festivities at the Student Center, participants made gift baskets, ate from an array of different foods, dabbled in candy packaging, and at one point, broke out some dance moves. Given that more students were on campus and there are now fewer COVID restrictions, many felt the event was exciting to join after the BC community ran remotely for a while.

“I enjoyed meeting students from our campus, both the new faces and the ones I recognized from Zoom. It was so uplifting to meet them in person,” said Zami.

Though USG members faced time constraints and some challenges in spreading the word about their Purim Party, they were able to organize the event in less than a week.

“USG wants to promote future events earlier and try to get more students involved. Also, try to make it [events] on times that no classes are scheduled,” Grama said.

As the semester progresses, USG leaders hope to continue embracing the different cultural and religious backgrounds present on campus. In observance of Ramadan, a holy month of prayer, fasting, and reflection for Muslims, USG members will host an Iftar dinner on Monday, Apr. 11 for all BC students to join.

“We want to spread the word as much as possible to make sure all of our students know about the events happening on campus,” said Zami.
Women Of Color Hosts Panel With Black Women Leaders At CUNY

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-In-Chief

As Women’s History Month comes to a close, Brooklyn College’s Women of Color hosted a panel of three black women leaders to voice their professional, academic, and personal experiences becoming the people they are today. Whether it be undertaking challenges in their workplaces or being mentors for the next generation of leaders to follow them, the panelists laid it all out for participants to hear honest retellings of pivotal life moments.

The panel formed part of the many events Women of Color hosts since its start in 2013, when members began actively pushing the voices of BC’s minority women at the forefront, with an emphasis on black women.

“Our mission is to provide the necessary resources needed to succeed academically and socially,” said Samantha Saint Jour, the club’s president who hosted the panel alongside her advisor Isa Mitchell. Throughout bonding activities, such as retreats and sister circles, WOC has continued to uplift the community of women they serve.

In its latest discussion on Tuesday, Mar. 22, WOC was joined by BC Professor Lynda Day, who teaches Africana Studies and Women and Gender Studies; Crystal Schloss-Allen, a higher education associate at BC’s School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences; and Medgar Evers College President Patricia Ramsey.

Together, the three women delved into their past and imparted life advice to those who tuned in.

To kick off the discussion, the panelists discussed whether or not their college roots sprouted into their careers today, with most admitting that it somehow did. For Schloss-Allen, however, her work in science labs did not come about from her English bachelor’s degree.

As an undergrad, Schloss-Allen was adamant about not stepping foot in the medical field as her parents hoped. Though she was interested in anthropology, she settled for a major “that was acceptable” to her family. As time went by, she worked in different labs and eventually landed at the School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, where she currently works.

“I think this is what I’m supposed to do because, at the same time, I get to work with anthropologists and even do different things, like help design labs and even study different things [in] my free time,” Schloss-Allen said, noting that BC has enabled her to grow professionally.

On the other hand, Ramsey, who is the first woman and scientist to take on the president title at Medgar Evers, always carries on her botanical passions that she formed during her graduate days. Though she intended to become a medical student, she quickly left that possibility behind once she found out medical schools worked on dead bodies. After her undergrad years, she went off to Howard University, where she pursued her master’s in botany.

“That was when I really began to start my love for plants because I was in an animal physiology lab and discovered I could not stand holding the small animals in my hand with them wiggling when we were trying to do things to them,” Ramsey said, noting that those lab experiences pushed her to talk to Howard’s plant division head. “And I’ve been with plants ever since.” Today, despite her administrative role, she manages to incorporate her interests in plants throughout her career.

For Day, majoring in comparative history during her time as an undergrad, came after she did not find space in the political science department at Howard University, which was “full of men seeking power.” During those days, she found ease through her love of African history.

“But I loved reading African history. I would go to the library, to the sections with African history, and just sit there and read, and read. So when I went to graduate school, I said, ‘This could do. I like this - I could do this for a long time,'” said Day, who found that becoming a professor suited her skills the most. With her fortes laying in writing, reading, foreign languages, and other skills, Professor Day discovered that she belongs in front of the classroom early on.

“When I stepped in front of a classroom, I felt like this is for me. Because growing up, I used a lot of big words, a lot of vocabulary, and often people would say, ‘Why is she talking like that? She’s talking so white,'” Day recalled. “And when I was actually in front of a classroom, I’m not sure if I was actually talking ‘white,’ but in using all vocabulary words, it was perfect - it worked well.”

Despite leading the lives they envisioned and worked towards from the get-go, these three women tackled a variety of obstacles. Whether it be dealing with colleagues who were discriminatory against them on the basis of gender and race, or demanding a raise for the immense work they contributed in their former jobs, each woman was prepared to confront their issues head-on.

Ramsey, for instance, recalled a time when she worked at a different institution and was earning much lower wages than the male counterpart she replaced. When the time came to sign a contract with the unnamed college for her to remain employed, she was adamant on speaking with the president and making her case for a raise. After much discussion and pushback from administrators, Ramsey attained her raise.

“Well, I was thinking of what you write in your recommendation letters, but you want someone that's going to write something that they actually know about you and base it on what they see in you,” she said, mentioning that conferences could help with networking.

As the event came to a close, the ending note that participants received was to ultimately push for their respective goals and empower themselves to pursue what they want, just like the three panelists have done thus far.

“[...] Life is too short, and we really need to focus on those things that we are passionate about because we are going to be better at those things than someone else decided what we should be,” said Ramsey.
A Look Into BC Theater’s Upcoming ‘Concord Floral’

By Michela Arlia
Arts Editor

The latest production to hit the BC Theater Department stage is “Concord Floral,” which opens on Apr. 8 in the New Workshop Theater. Over the next two weeks, the cast and production team are preparing for another round of live performances.

“Concord Floral,” written by Jordan Tannahill, is a drama and horror fiction play that takes place in a one-million-square-foot abandoned greenhouse of the same name in Staten Island, which serves as a refuge for local teens. Hidden within the walls and floors of the greenhouse is a deep and dark secret, and when two teens discover it, they set off an unstoppable chain of events to follow.

For director Nicholas Browne, an alum from the class of 2021, the production of this show is a full-circle moment, as he originally pitched it pre-COVID shut down in March 2020 and is finally able to see it on its feet two years later.

“I think the idea of exploring how we’re all connected after being kept apart for so long is extremely important,” said Browne. “The inspiration for directing this story was the possibility of exploring the magic and questions of why we’re all connected after being kept apart for so long."

“This original song is supposed to capture not only a particular moment in the play but also puts you in the naïve realm of which these teenagers exist,” said Chiaviello.

As choreographer, Emily Hin was able to enhance the show’s themes by creating dynamics and texture through movement.

“All of the movement was created or inspired by myself or the actors,” said Hin. “A big part of my process is to give direction and allow the actors to take ownership of that movement in the way their character would.”

While these roles tend to belong to every version of “Concord Floral” that exists, it is a step in a different direction for the Theater Department, as it does not commonly put on shows with vocals or much movement.

For cast member Greta Rustani, a second-year BFA student who plays Nearly Wild, her role helped her realize how much she needed to work with and become her character for the rehearsal process.

“I have to admit that I wasn’t familiar with the character or play when I first auditioned, and I wasn’t aware of how much I needed her,” said Rustani. “I was at a point in my life where I was feeling very lost, and I still am, but I’m exploring myself right alongside Nearly.”

Rustani expressed how she is pushed to “be messy” with her character in rehearsal and enjoys playing someone so close to her own personality.

A big change comes for the Theater Department as CUNY recently announced the end of a mask mandate on campus, and “Concord Floral” gets to be the first production on campus that will be performed maskless.

“I will never forget when we got the email from CUNY lifting mask mandates and began screaming, hugging, and jumping up and down in rehearsal,” said Rustani. “It was such a huge milestone after a grueling couple years, being unable to fully connect with fellow artists again.”

With all the happy news that comes with the milestone of this production, Browne says he only wants audience members to take away thoughts of what their responsibility within their community is.

“This is a time of compounding crises, but when we take responsibility and think holistically about our roles in our circles, we can shape real change,” said Browne. “Even amongst crises, there is still hope. I think people will feel that from experiencing the show.”
Review: ‘Six’ Does Not Know What It Is

By John Schilling
Managing Editor

“Six”...feels less like a historical narrative with a modern twist and more like a spoof reminiscent of “Spamilton.”/Joan Marcus

There is no doubt that “Six” is an intriguing concept that has succeeded in what Lin-Manuel Miranda’s “Hamilton” did around the same time. It almost feels unfair to make this comparison, but the two have done nearly the same thing: each musical meets the youth halfway with a few rhymes and elaborate costumes in an effort to make learning history cool, all the while modernizing the going-to-the-theater experience.

It is where “Six” and “Hamilton” differ, however, that exposes the shortcomings of the former. “Hamilton,” while comedic as a concept and even with some comical moments, takes itself seriously and has a strong, clear narrative from start to finish. “Six,” on the other hand, is a self-admitted comedy that feels less like a historical narrative with a modern twist and more like a spoof reminiscent of “Spamilton.” This does not invalidate what “Six” gets right, but “Six” does not enjoy the same acclaim as “Hamilton” or other Broadway classics alike because the musical does not know what it is.

When watching “Six,” it becomes apparent early on that it has an admirable freshness. The six leading ladies, known individually as Catherine of Aragon (Adrianna Hicks), Anne Boleyn (Andrea Macasaet), Jane Seymour (Abby Mueller), Anna of Cleves (Uzele), each take the stage one by one in their shiny, vibrant costumes, state their fate, and seamlessly bounce off each other vocally as a pop group.

It is also worth mentioning that the creative team has an intriguing concept with each Queen acting and singing as her husband parallels the likes of Alicia Keys. Catherine Howard parallels a young Britney Spears with “All You Wanna Do,” and Catherine Parr’s “I Don’t Need Your Love” pulls from the likes of Alicia Keys.

You may ask: how could you take a play with six women acting and singing out of character about their shared husband seriously? When you put it like that, it is obvious that “Six” is a parody or completely satirical, but that’s exactly the problem. While it is supposed to be comedic, it isn’t supposed to be sarcasm or mockery, so why does it feel like it is?

When Anne Boleyn playfully sings “Don’t Lose Ur Head,” the title suggests, she pokes fun at the fact that her outspoken personality got her beheaded. When Katherine

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Review: ‘Six’ Does Not Know What It Is (cont’d)

Continued from page 7

Howard sings “All You Wanna Do,” however, it is more of an emotional cry for help that tells all about how she was abused by men, including Henry VIII, throughout her life.

This moment with Howard is no doubt compelling as it is performed beautifully, but within this song of desperation are sexual innuendos and double entendres sprinkled in for amusement. The show can’t help itself. It has to be funny even when it’s not necessary or appropriate.

Understanding each Queen’s song is crafted to represent what they went through historically and how they act and sing is reflective of that. In fact, this is quite admirable and helps emphasize their individuality that often gets overlooked by historians.

Not to mention, there is nothing wrong with having a show that lightens the mood with a joke here and there.

These moments in “Six,” however, are often the antithesis of what the show sets out to do: separate the Queens from Henry VIII and redefine their legacies. This is helped by the fact that all six Queens come to the consensus that they have been robbed of their individuality and relish taking it back with a song titled “Six,” the show’s closing number. “Six,” holistically though, has a tonal problem that makes the revisionist history element of the show hard to grasp.

If “Six” is truly meant to be a feminist retelling of history that can be enlightening, then much of the humor is overdone and poorly placed. If “Six,” however, was meant to be satirical, which it isn’t, then you could argue the show is a masterpiece.

Regardless, “Six” does deserve praise for how far it’s come even with the show’s identity crisis, which, along with the concert-like atmosphere it creates, begs the question as to whether or not it can stand the test of time.

“Six” will undoubtedly continue to welcome back the loyal following it has created over the years to the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, but like all concerts, it will likely come to an end at some point. Or perhaps more grim: the typical theatergoers will simply just listen to the soundtrack instead of coughing up $100 minimum for a ticket, which for this show, is the smart thing to do.

Brent Renaud, Filmmaker And CUNY Student, Was Killed In Ukraine

By Michela Arlia

Award-winning filmmaker and journalist Brent Renaud was shot and killed in Ukraine on Sunday, Mar. 13. He was 50 years old.

Renaud was the first American journalist on assignment in Ukraine to be killed amidst the ongoing war in the country by Russia. Killed in Irpin, a city next to Ukraine’s capital, Renaud was the first American journalist on assignment in Ukraine.

Michelle Valladeres, the program’s director, told The Vanguard that Renaud informed his nonfiction workshop professor that he would be traveling to Ukraine for work but would be back Thursday, Mar. 17 for an in-class presentation. He was killed the Sunday prior to his return. Valladeres stated that Renaud had profound respect and love for the MFA program on campus.

“We know that he loved being in our program,” said Valladeres. “He expressed that to his screenwriting professor last semester.”

In a statement made by Mikhail Dekel, the interim department chair of the MFA in creative writing, he highlights Renaud’s involvement in the college. Though his time with the college was very short, it was most definitely impactful.

“It occurs to me that a New York based artist who chooses to throw himself in the thick of things, would naturally end up in our program,” wrote Dekel. “Not in a secluded artists’ retreat, not in a rarefied private school, but at City College, where absolutely nothing is sugar coated and where people are deeply accepting [just] because, not despite, of the lives we live.”

Renaud originally set out to enroll in the MFA program to workshop a screenplay, taking one Zoom class in the fall semester and an in-person course this spring. He represents of the deeply human and personal pain that every life lost, in any conflict, triggers,” wrote Boudreau.

In light of the catastrophe, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine took to Twitter to share his condolences for the journalist.

“I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family of Brent Renaud who lost his life while documenting the ruthlessness & evil inflicted upon Ukrainian people by Russia,” wrote Zelensky. “May Brent’s life & sacrifice inspire the world to stand up in fight for the forces of light against forces of darkness.”
Rolling Rock Ramblings:
In Appreciation Of Our Relationship
To The Eastern Gray Squirrel

By Ian Ezinga
Opinions Editor

This week for a class, I had to give a report on an article about the urbanization of the eastern gray squirrel in American cities. If that didn't catch your attention, I do not blame you. But as I was sitting near Brooklyn College's koi pond watching fellow students interact with the turtles basking in the sun, taking videos of the fish making their rounds, and someone checking over their shoulder to make sure the sound of the squirrel wasn't anything more, I couldn't help but come around to my appreciation of the article I had read. In truth, learning about "wildlife" in the city has performed a miniature miracle for me as far as sharpening my perspective of the urban ecosystem and our role in it. Learning about the creatures you share the city with can have somewhat drastic effects on the way you view your professor, your neighbor, your boss, and your family. This is not supposed to be an ad for snake oil, or a plea for people to start reading more environmental history. It is more an extension of the report I gave for class and an offer for those in search of a deeper understanding of their environment.

We humans, regardless of what clothes we wear, what vehicles we pilot around town, or what food constitutes our diet, are animals. I've never studied environmental science or biology enough to lay out the most important steps in human evolution, but it really only takes a couple of YouTube videos featuring primates reacting to magic tricks to pass the point of no return and become unable to unsee our shared ancestral heritage engraved in the curious faces of our fellow primates.

That point may not be met with great contention, but the many different pools of thought such as that which spills into are vast and offer ample entertainment to roll around in. The perspective that can be gained by such thought experiments, or at least one of the infinite, is reimagining the space you inhabit as your environment. This thinking alone is not intellectually original by any measure, but the beauty in sharing it here is how differently each person reading can apply it to their lives.

In a few moments, you can reimagine your surroundings as a series of natural constructions that humans have built to alleviate their needs and, in the event of a surplus, their wants. We can observe all the necessities of life in the forms of delis, drinking fountains, places to sleep, and jobs, which allow us to afford to partake in such necessities.

The people in our lives can also be easily reimagined as meeting the needs belonging to the strange and curious creatures we are. This task can be a bit more uncomfortable at times, but with patience, we can see our professors as wise elders sharing bits and pieces about how they understand the world to work. We can see our friends and family as the circle of beings which look out for us, lick our wounds, and rally to our defense.

Our bosses? They are but hoarders of surplus, granting us a few grapes from their stockpile in exchange for our labor to replenish and expand their collection of expendable energy. This thinking can also be extended towards our partners and love interests, a subject which can give cause for several instances of uncomfortable shifting in one's seat.

But the uncomfortable is where we find the beauty of what makes humans different from other animals. In our self-awareness, we can augment how much of the inner animal we choose to project. We have the power to curb our instincts and choose instead to do something or be someone that is more aligned with our personal beliefs of what is good. We are able to go for a walk in our neighborhoods, not to hunt for food or check for encroaching predators, but simply to enjoy the spring air and watch the sun's light scrape across the city.

I write now in full appreciation of such affairs when thinking of the turtles basking in the koi pond, the eastern gray squirrels darting from the shade, and the countless human beings who tend to forget that although their species is planted firmly atop the natural world, we are also completely embedded within it.
Opinion: The CROWN Act Promotes Long Overdue Diversity In Hair

By Priscilla Mensah
Staff Writer

Recently, the United States House of Representatives passed the CROWN Act, which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair. Effectively, the act prohibits race-based hair discrimination on three levels: in one’s professional employment, in federal programs, and in public accommodations. This act still needs to be passed by the Senate for it to officially be law nationwide. Even with just the House’s passage, however, the act still represents an important step made by legislators to tackle head-on discriminatory practices regarding hairstyles and hair presentation that has existed in our nation for decades, if not centuries.

By confronting this discriminatory history and ongoing pattern of race-based hair discrimination, lawmakers are more fully embracing the great diversity of our country, which for me is a welcome and long overdue undertaking. It invigorates me to think that we are moving towards a moment in time where it is conceivably possible for one to wear their hair in twists, afro styles, braids, and the like without having to wonder if doing so will hurt their chances of being employed. In the best-case scenario, this act will lessen social stigmatizations associated with wearing ethnic hairstyles in addition to doing away with race-based hair discrimination in the employment sector.

Also, I hope this act gets the ball rolling on making religious head garb – such as the hijab or “scarf,” as I have always simply called it as someone who wears one - socially and professionally accepted. I know it is technically legal for people to wear religious head wraps, but often the line demarcating between what is legal and what is allowed and encouraged in practice gets blurred.

To make matters worse, many groups are often left out of this legal accommodation allowing for religious headwear because people sometimes fail to realize that the hijab is not just worn by one group of people or ethnicity.

For instance, African Americans - and other races and groups of people for that matter - are Muslims as well and thus eligible for such an accommodation. Despite this fact, I can remember being in grade school and being told by a school administrator to remove my scarf because “I ain’t no Muslim.” Adding insult to injury, I was also told in the same school by yet another school official to take my scarf off because they too did not believe that I was Muslim.

Being informed by my personal experiences, seeing firsthand how a law does not necessarily guarantee acceptance or practice, I’m well aware that the CROWN Act will probably not magically change the state of things overnight. Also, the study of history has taught me that the full and complete impact of laws often take time to be meaningfully felt. Nevertheless, it is my genuine hope that this CROWN Act recognizes more generally the greatly diverse and multiplicity of ways that hair can be professionally presented.

Supreme Court Justice nominee, Ketanji Brown Jackson, presents a perfect example of this. Brown Jackson’s locs are always immaculately styled and provide one example of the many ways that ethnic hair is and can be styled in both the workplace and in other realms.

Yes, the timing of the act’s passage may appear to some, myself included, to be somewhat suspect given that Brown Jackson’s Supreme Court nomination confirmation hearings are currently underway. Still, the potential benefits and far-reaching implications of the act far outweigh any eye raising, opportunistic political correctness associated with it. The importance of CROWN Act’s ability to, at the very least, lay the groundwork for a more diverse and accepting workplace cannot be understated.
Unvaccinated Mets And Yankees Barred From Home Games

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

As Opening Day creeps forward, uncertainty continues to loom over some of Major League Baseball's brightest. Unvaccinated players for the New York Mets and Yankees will be unable to participate in home games this season, as New York City still operates under a vaccine requirement for private-sector employees, including professional athletes.

Since 2020, MLB has been ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, starting with a surreal 60-game season. Then, in 2021, numerous players missed chunks of time due to health and safety protocols.

And yet, coming into the 2022 season, MLB and their fans continue to suffer from major COVID-19 fatigue. While fans in New York City unmask and enjoy a somewhat normal life, the vaccine requirement is a reminder that "normal" is a relative term.

So far, both the Yankees and Mets are staying tight-lipped on anything even remotely vaccine-related. In a recent statement to The Athletic, Yankees slugger Aaron Judge seemingly danced around the question.

"I'm so focused on getting to the first game of spring training. So I think we'll cross that bridge when the time comes," Judge said. The 29-year-old has been notoriously dodgy about the vaccine going all the way back to July 2021, when in a press conference, he said, "I'm not going to get into that."

As of last year, the Yankees were one of the first teams to meet MLB's 85% vaccine requirement for loosened regulations, but have not specified which players received the jab.

In Queens, Mets players are staying just as vague as their rivals in the Bronx.

"Right now we're still three and half weeks away, so a lot can happen," said Mets outfielder and union representative Brandon Nimmo to the New York Post.

While the vaccine requirement may shock some of baseball's fan base, New Yorkers are all too acquainted with the rule. In the NBA, point guard Kyrie Irving has been unable to play home games for the Brooklyn Nets because of his unvaccinated status.

Though he is barred from stepping on the court and suiting up, Irving was able to buy a courtside ticket and sit in the Barclays arena.

Now with COVID restrictions continuing to loosen, New York athletes hope for a significant change.

"Hopefully logic prevails," Mets pitcher Max Scherzer told the Post.

It is clear where New York’s star athletes stand on the issue, but where is Mayor Eric Adams in all of this? In a recent press conference, Adams told the media, "We're going to peel it [the vaccine mandate] back."

Adams has already done away with vaccine requirements for fans attending sporting events. Though the mayor seems content to end vaccine mandates, he is not going to bow to anyone in the sports world.

"I'm not going to be rushed in based on a season schedule," Adams said. Eric Adams took office in January of this year, inheriting these COVID policies that were created by Mayor Bill de Blasio.

While millionaire athletes battle career politicians over two-needle pricks, New Yorkers are left wondering when life will feel normal again. If there will ever be a day when the sports section isn't dominated by headlines referring to sickness and death, and though baseball seems to be trending upwards, reality looms just overhead, reminding fans and players alike: We're not out of the pandemic yet.
Men’s Volleyball Continues To Struggle

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

The Brooklyn College men’s volleyball team continues to slide down the CUNYAC standings after losing two contests this past week.

The Bulldogs traveled to Hunter College to square off against the Purple Hawks on Mar. 15. Brooklyn had a tough time right out the gate, dropping the first set 25-10. After that, the Bulldogs weren’t able to string together a comeback and dropped the next two sets (25-18, 25-13). The loss marked Brooklyn’s third straight loss against conference rivals.

The Hawks put together a strong performance, leading the Bulldogs in every statistical category, including aces. Hunter scored seven aces while Brooklyn only scored one. Junior Darren Roach led the team in kills with seven.

After a canceled game against Medgar Evers, the Bulldogs regrouped and hosted the Bearcats from Baruch on Mar. 19. Unlike their last contest, Brooklyn kept the first set close, but ultimately dropped the decision to Baruch (25-19). From there, the Bulldogs were unable to score more than their first set total, dropping the subsequent sets (25-17, 25-11). With the loss to Baruch, Brooklyn has now lost four straight games against CUNYAC rivals.

Much like the loss to Hunter, Brooklyn trailed in nearly every statistical category except for aces. The Bulldogs scored four aces, and the Bearcats only scored two. Junior David Li led the team in kills with five.

After these past two losses, Brooklyn ranks second to last in the CUNYAC, only above York College. The Bulldogs will have a shot to turn around their luck Mar. 22 against Lehman College.

Vinny The Goat

by Mo Muhsin an Gab Toro Vivoni