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**THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE**

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# SCOTUS Overturns Roe v. Wade, Raises Concerns Over Abortion Access

By Radwan Farraj  
*News Editor*

In a historic move, the Supreme Court repealed Roe v. Wade and its constitutional protections of a woman’s right to an abortion on June 27. Nearly fifty years after its passing, the repeal of Roe leaves state legislatures responsible for the legality of abortion within their state.

The decision comes after a leaked draft of Justice Samuel Alito’s majority opinion made its way to Politico on May 2, sparking outrage and protests throughout the country. In a statement published a day after the leak, Chief Justice John Roberts described the leak as a “betrayal” and “egregious breach of that trust that is an affront to the Court and the community of public servants who work here.”

Following the repeal, CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez issued a statement.

“In effectively denying access to safe and legal



The six Supreme Court judges whose majority decision overturned Roe v. Wade./Washington Post

abortions what will likely be more than half the states, the ruling is likely to lead thousands of women to seek the kind of dangerous back-alley abortions that routinely killed women prior the 1973 Roe decision,” the statement read.

Chancellor Rodríguez went on to add that the major concern of this decision is its effect on disadvantaged

and low-income women. “We must resolve to join forces in collaboration and begin the work of mitigating the damages. This work is aligned with CUNY’s unwavering commitment to social justice,” he stated.

Since the decision, many states have already seen bans go into effect, with as many as thirteen states initiating bans that would go into

effect as soon as 30 days after the ruling, according to The Washington Post.

Some states like New York have expanded protections since the repeal, with measures meant to better protect the identities of those seeking reproductive care and providing access to those from out of state who are not already New York residents.

# BC Prez Anderson Recaps CUNY’s Trip To Israel And Palestine

By Radwan Farraj  
*News Editor*

CUNY college presidents and deans joined Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez on a week long tour of Israeli and Palestinian cities, cultural sites, and educational insitutions this past April. In a Faculty Council meeting on May 5, Brooklyn College President Michelle Anderson discussed the trip in further detail and spoke about the individuals that shaped their experiences, ranging from undergraduate and graduate college students to Israel’s current president Isaac Herzog.

“I went on this study tour to learn, to hear directly from people with diverse viewpoints, and to enhance my understanding of the complexity of the region in order to better serve our college community,” Anderson said during the meeting.

Chancellor Matos Rodríguez explained in a statement on Apr. 26 that his delegation looked to better their understanding of how educational systems play a role in how the university can deal with complex political and social issues, and hoped to, “gain an enriched perspective on the bridges that could be built by members of communities

as diverse as ours here at CUNY.” The trip was a part of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York’s “Scholars as Bridge Builders” program.

As a part of the trip, Anderson toured around key religious sites in Jerusalem and to cities such as Tel Aviv and Ramallah in the West Bank.

A large focus of the visit was touring through several of Israel’s institutions of higher education, including Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and Sapir College, which is known for being Israel’s most diverse and largest institution of higher learning.

Considering the tour as a whole, Anderson recalled an abundance of “academic values” ranging from open-mindedness to new ideas and the importance of “empathy for people from very different backgrounds.”

Last May, BC’s Students for Justice in Palestine and others condemned CUNY’s trip. The visit was also backdropped by new restrictions on Palestinian institutions that limited the number of foreign academics and exchange students allowed to lecture at or attend Palestinian universities.



# BC Welcomes Back Some Alums In ‘Comeback Commencement,’ Others Miss Out

By John Schilling  
*Managing Editor Emeritus*

A day that many Brooklyn College alumni thought had passed arrived on Tuesday, July 12 as members of the classes of 2020 and 2021 returned to campus for “Comeback Commencement,” an in-person graduation ceremony held in the Claire Tow Theater in Whitman Hall.

Despite the obvious departure from Brooklyn College’s traditional commencement format at the Barclays Center, the ceremony carried on as it normally would have with the Brass Ensemble serenading the now-alumni. The “Comeback Commencement,” however, still proved to be even more unique as each student had their name and the degree they earned read aloud as they processed in, an honor that took just under an hour before the commencement ceremony officially started.

The two classes combined for 9,161 new alumni with 6,793 bachelor’s and 2,231 master’s degrees, as well as 137 students who received advanced certificates.

In opening remarks, Brooklyn College President Michelle J. Anderson acknowledged the passage of time by emphasizing that this was the first commencement where she saw “alumni” seated before her who have already faced the challenges of post-college life and on an even larger scale.

“[...] Unlike most graduations where I see students who are going to become graduates, this time around I see alumni who have spent one or two years in the working world or pursuing graduate degrees,” said Anderson. “Not only did you have to spend time overcoming the obstacles that the pandemic presented... but also you had to navigate a career landscape that in many ways was radically different than the one that

awaited you when you first entered Brooklyn College.”

Two students in particular who faced this challenge were Roby Daniel and Asma Awad, the valedictorians for 2020 and 2021, respectively.

In a brief address to the alumni in attendance, Daniel, a triple major in chemistry, psychology and business administration who is currently studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, recalled graduating in the midst of the lockdown and how it was challenging to “see the finish line.”

“But even with all the cards stacked up against us, we made it,” said Daniel. “Our struggle has forged us into the leaders of tomorrow as we have learned a new way to learn, a new way to teach, and, most importantly, a new way to succeed.”

Awad, who earned her bachelor’s in computer science and now works as a software engineer at JPMorgan Chase & Co., concurred with Daniel’s sentiment, drawing upon her coding experience and three important lessons she learned: “Embrace the unfamiliar,” “There are always multiple ways to solve a problem,” and “The importance of representation.”

“None of us are immune to making mistakes,” added Awad. “It’s one thing to be perfect and another to be your best, and I think that the latter says more about someone than the former.”

Shortly after, keynote speaker Rachel Strauss-Muniz took to the stage, focusing on the positives of the day and not just the dark time that preceded and ultimately delayed it. Strauss-Muniz, who graduated from Brooklyn College in 2001 and went on to work across various projects as an actor/performer, producer, writer, and podcaster, felt the challenges of the pandemic early on but did not let it discourage her from moving



The Comeback Ceremony was hosted in Whitman Hall for the classes of 2020 and 2021./Brooklyn College

forward.

“[...] I lost my footing on the stages of New York City and across the country, but I once again gained the strength to pivot just like you,” said Strauss-Muniz. “You had a choice to plummet or pivot and you did it... We all made the decision to shift, adapt, and overcome.”

In addition to Strauss-Muniz, the “Comeback Commencement” also featured Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Randy Peers (class of 1996) and CUNY Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Denise Maybank (class of 1978) as speakers, as well as a surprise video message from New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams (classes of 2001 and 2005). Each speaker praised the recent alumni for their accomplishments and recalled their own time as students at Brooklyn College.

Peers, in particular, praised the alumni for their resiliency throughout the pandemic and remarked that their degree goes above and beyond what they learned in their classes.

“[...] The degree you now hold helps to tell that story of resiliency,” said Peers. “It is part of the story that

demonstrates that light still shines even through the darkest days, and while dreams can be interrupted, they cannot be denied. Even this commencement day is an example of that. Delayed. But not denied.”

While powerful in the moment, Peers’ comment would be seemingly deemed inaccurate later that day as alumni from the classes of 2020 and 2021 noticed posts of the “Comeback Commencement” on social media and claimed to have not been aware that it was even taking place.

“Not everyone got emails or were told about this...,” commented user @lucid.dreamerx3 on an Instagram post from Brooklyn College (@bklyncollege411). “I cried today, I’m beyond upset [that] I missed this because they chose not to communicate with everyone...”

“Was the invite randomly generated?” questioned user @girl\_from\_ipanema. “I didn’t get an invitation and I’m [from the] class of 2020.”

Upon further investigation and comments from other users, The Vanguard found that a “Save the Date” email had been sent by Brooklyn College Commencement Team to alumni nearly two

months prior.

“I received a general email that the ‘Comeback Commencement’ was happening on May 20,” Shanika Carlies, a 2020 undergrad journalism graduate who attended the ceremony, confirmed to The Vanguard. “There was a link to reserve my spot in the email.”

This became evident as comments began to pour in from alumni thanking Brooklyn College for having the ceremony and mentioning the email they received back in May. Despite this, however, other comments continued from other alumni claiming they never received the email and demanding answers as to why.

“I get wanting to make up for [lost] causes but if everyone who graduated during the time frame was not invited, what was the reason?” commented Landa (@lovelandab) on the post. “Because now I’m even more annoyed and reliving this whole experience again.”

The Vanguard reached out directly to multiple alumni who claimed to have not been notified about the “Comeback Commencement” and did not hear back in time for publication.



# Fall Offers More In-Person Classes, Students Prefer More Online Options

By Gabriela Flores &  
Michela Arlia  
*Editor-In-Chief & Managing  
Editor*

CUNY rolled back its 70% in-person course capacity, prompting colleges to add more on-campus options to their course schedules. Many Brooklyn College students, however, think more online options should be offered come fall, while others prefer in-person learning.

“I believe that online class options should remain available because they are convenient for those that don’t have time to be in a physical setting,” Nathan Reder, an upcoming senior, told the Vanguard. “I believe that if we can and have accommodated an at-home, online setting, why should we [...] not accommodate it again.”

About 63% of students want more online offerings, according to a poll conducted by the Vanguard on Facebook. While another 27% prefer the university’s boost of on-campus courses, and 8% of pollers prefer having in-person classes recorded for absentees.



Many BC students prefer to have more remote learning options./Paola Muñoz

“[...] People are just wasting their money if they are taking online classes,” opined Muyinjon Turobov, a student who prefers in-person classes. Turobov noted that he felt “disconnected” from his peers and professors while studying remotely.

At Brooklyn College, department chairs

determine what courses are offered online since there is no longer a college-wide policy in place. This policy rollback is backdropped by the global spread of the “most transmissible Omicron variant, BA.5,” and New York City’s COVID-test positivity rate of 15%, according to the New York Times. In comparison

to previous case peaks, however, hospitalizations and case counts remain low.

CUNY requires all students enrolled for in-person or hybrid classes to be fully vaccinated if they do not have approved medical or religious exemption. Only 6 of 223 at Brooklyn College’s COVID testing site tested positive during

the week of July 3-9.

“I feel that if there are classes this fall that are going to bar those who are willing to pay, but not able to or willing to change their health regimen in order to meet new COVID requirements, then online classes are a necessity,” Reder added.

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# BC Reacts: Roe v. Wade Overturned

By Serin Sarsour  
Features Editor

America was set back about 50 years when the Supreme Court reversed Roe v. Wade on June 24, terminating the constitutional right to get an abortion. This decision has left many at Brooklyn College feeling uncertain about how people all across the U.S. will be affected.

“I do not agree with the Supreme Court’s ruling because it is a violation of human rights,” said rising BC junior Amaya Hunt. “Telling women or anyone with ovaries they do not have the right to choose what happens with their body is extremely alarming and puts our other basic human rights in serious danger.”

In 1969, a woman from Texas named Norma McCorvey, also known by her pseudonym Jane Roe, wanted to end her unwanted pregnancy. However, at the time, women in Texas were only allowed to get an abortion if their lives were in danger.

Roe and her attorneys later filed a lawsuit against Henry Wade, the district attorney of Dallas County, on behalf of Roe and every other women who

wanted to get legal and safe abortions. In a 7-2 decision, the Supreme Court legalized abortions across the U.S. on Jan. 22, 1973.

Fast forward almost 50 years, six out of the nine current members of the Supreme Court ruled to overturn Roe v. Wade, leading state legislatures to implement abortion bans that will impact about half of America’s states.

“This is arguably one of the biggest attacks on a right that was won in the past, in the past like 50 years. It’s a huge attack on our right to our bodies, and I think that it’s a basic right. I think abortion is healthcare. Healthcare is a right that we should all have,” said Tatiana Cozzarelli, a student at the CUNY Graduate Center, an adjunct at BC, and one of the founding members of the CUNY for Abortion Rights organization.

CUNY for Abortion Rights serves as a safe space where university staff, faculty, and students can fight for reproductive rights and against systemic problems that are intertwined with reproductive justice, such as sexism, racism, homophobia,



Protests grow after Roe v. Wade hearing./Crosscut

transphobia, and others.

“This decision will impact America in extremely scary ways. Many women and non binary people will die because they do not have access to safe abortions,” said Hunt. “Whether it is because they are unable to physically carry the child safely, have been assaulted, or just do not want to have a child, losing the right to choose will kill many people.”

Although there are many against the illegalization of abortions, others agree with the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. “I believe life starts in the womb. Only unless

medically the woman needs to abort the child, then all means abort it. Other than that, I believe the choice starts in the act,” said BC junior Musa Esa.

On the other hand, others believe women should have complete control over their bodies since the Supreme Court’s ruling could also lead to other rights being revoked. “It may start a domino effect where various other laws and cases that protect human rights are overturned,” said Yahia Elhag, a BC junior.

In response to the Supreme Court’s decision to reverse Roe v. Wade, CUNY

for Abortion Rights is currently in the process of making a list of demands that will be specific to the university regarding reproductive rights, requesting funds, healthcare that everyone at CUNY should have access to, along with academic and mental health resources.

Cozzarelli highlights that CUNY for Abortion Rights wants to support students and is open to their thoughts and suggestions. “If someone has an idea for something, what they want to do around reproductive justice, I think that’s something that we would support,” she said.

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!  
@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA



# Dr. Saadi Ghatan: The Surgeon Who Saved My Sister's Life

By Owen Russell  
*Sports Editor*

Dr. Saadi Ghatan is a preeminent voice in neurosurgery. He is the Chair of Neurosurgery at Mount Sinai West and Mount Sinai Morningside. He serves as Director for Mount Sinai's pediatric neurosurgery program. He is a professor. He is an author. He has been featured on the Netflix show "Diagnosis." He has received awards and acclaim from around the world. His picture used to hang on my family's fridge; because in 2004, he saved my sister's life.

Grace Russell was born on Jun. 25, 2004. She was on all accounts a healthy baby. She was the youngest of three children born to Jim and Jeanette Russell. Aidan was nearly six, and I was only three. From the moment Grace entered the world, she made our family complete. Her parents now had a daughter, and her brothers had a sister. Like an image from some cheesy catalog, the Russells were a picture-perfect family.

Nov. 14, 2004 was a typical Sunday. Grace had been fussy, but nothing totally unusual for a five-month-old baby. As my mom prepared to bathe both me and my brother, Grace became more irritable. Her color seemed off as well. Setting Grace down in her pack-and-play, my mom hoped she'd catch some sleep to hopefully lift her spirits and regain some color.

Things only got worse. After sleeping for just a short while, Grace vomited. Her color faded even more and she became listless. Both my parents were worried—something was off.

At first they assumed it was nothing more than a stomach bug. So like any concerned parent would do, my dad called the pediatrician. Since it was a Sunday night, nobody was in the office but there was a doctor on call. The doctor listened as my parents described Grace's symptoms, and after hearing everything suggested that someone take her to the emergency room, just as a precaution. The situation quickly became more uneasy.

My family is from Pearl River, New York. A town of around 16,000 people, located just 30 miles north of Manhattan. While being close to New York City, the nearest hospital is Nyack Hospital, while only a small trauma level III hospital, was about 10 minutes away. That night my Dad walked in unaware of the whirlwind about to take off.

Grace received a series of diagnostic tests, in hopes of explaining what could be the matter. Shortly after the results came in, things became a blur. The doctors at Nyack confirmed that there was a brain bleed, but couldn't explain why.

Grace was suffering from internal bleeding and she needed to be transferred to another hospital, one more equipped to help her. From there everything moved with a frightening sense of urgency. Doctors at Nyack pushed for Grace to be transferred to Columbia.

My mother rushed to the hospital. She was greeted by a nurse who informed her that Grace was "with the priests." At five months old she was receiving last rites. It became clear that Grace was dying. They were able to get her into Columbia. My mom and dad went with Grace into Manhattan, hoping that a miracle waited for them across the bridge.

At this point the story becomes two fold. Described by two different parties, parents and doctor. Speaking with Dr. Ghatan everything seemed so clinical, so matter of fact. Grace was brought "in extremis." Ghatan and his team ran tests on Grace and discovered that she had suffered an aneurysm, and the pressure on her brain caused a stroke. He was able to operate on Grace, performing a surgery which relieved pressure on the brain. And on Nov. 15, my mom's birthday, Grace came out of surgery alive. A medical procedure performed successfully.

But there is also my parents' perspective. And if you asked them, this was no mere surgery; and Ghatan was no mere doctor.

"When the elevators opened,



Owen Russell, Vanguard's sports editor, with his sister Grace Russell./Owen Russell

and he came out, a ray of golden light flooded the room," my dad, Jim Russell, remembered. My parents compared their meeting with Dr. Ghatan to that of a chance encounter with a superhero. He charged off the elevator and took control, guiding my parents through the hospital's winding maze. My parents claim he was kicking open doors, and clearing the path like an action movie star. Once in the operating room he didn't just perform a surgery, but he worked a miracle. "He gave me the best birthday present I could ever ask for," my mom, Jeanette Russell, said.

...

That is how I have always heard of Dr. Ghatan. A man who was more myth than mortal. The genius surgeon who saved my sister's life when all seemed hopeless. On my fridge, surrounded by family photos and Hershey Park magnets was a picture of Dr. Ghatan and Grace when she was no older than five. For my entire childhood, I can remember seeing this picture and wanting to know more about the man on my fridge.

On Jun. 25, 2022, Grace turned 18. Nearly two decades after the surgery, I found myself still so curious about the surgeon who saved her life. In the days leading up to Grace's birthday, I reached out to Dr. Ghatan. We spoke twice, and after our conversations I feel like everyone should get the chance to know him.

Dr. Saadi Ghatan grew up in Washington, but did his undergraduate at Princeton. There he studied both English and pre-med. Ghatan competed for the Tigers' swim team, earning All-American honors in 1987 for the 800M Freestyle Relay. According to the man himself, it was all in an effort to keep himself "well-rounded." But while Ghatan's achievements in the pool were nothing short of spectacular, his pre-med grades were not the best.

"My pre-med work was not typically meeting the standards that were necessary to get into med-school," Ghatan admitted. Acknowledging that he devoted his energy in an effort to be well-rounded, Ghatan finished his undergraduate program unsure of what to do next.

After some debate, he returned home to Seattle, Washington. There he moved in with his brother, and the two of them sold cars for awhile. And while things were fine, the call to medicine never ceased. Ghatan worked hard to enter a post-baccalaureate pre-med program. A program which would allow him to improve his grades and become a more desirable candidate for medical school.

"That was probably the hardest gauntlet I had to pass," Ghatan said. The program had GPA standards which Ghatan did not meet, leading him to apply twice before being accepted. Once in the program, Ghatan cut no corners. He worked as an orderly in a hospital and even worked in a lab to gain basic science skills. After advancing his GPA and MCAT score, Ghatan's resume was strong enough to warrant admission into the University of Washington's medical program.

The path was never straight for Ghatan, and at times it seemed impossible, but he achieved what he set out for by never giving in and having a "nose to the grindstone" practice. In

*Continued on page 7...*



*Continued from page 6 ...*  
a way it mirrors the lives of many of his patients.

“The unique thing about pediatric neurosurgery is that when we do an intervention, we have to live with the consequences of that intervention for a long time,” Ghatan remarked. Some of his patients will come out of surgery with deficits, which make life more challenging. However, Ghatan stresses that his patients can still live a fulfilling life. That with perseverance, anything can be overcome. As he told my parents, “It’s going to be okay, but it is going to be tough.”

While Grace was in the hospital, however, the situation did not seem okay for my parents. Grace suffered an aneurysm which led to a stroke. Doctors at Nyack Hospital swore that Grace couldn’t have suffered an aneurysm—they don’t occur in patients her age, or so they thought. Dr. Ghatan admits that the odds are rare for a baby to have suffered an aneurysm.

“Children in general have very few strokes and aneurysms make up a fraction of those strokes,” Ghatan said. In most children, strokes are caused by something called an Arteriovenous Malformation, a tangle of blood vessels which disrupts normal blood flow. And while AVMs are rare, Grace’s case was one in a million.

What my parents probably did not know at the time was that Dr. Ghatan may have been the perfect surgeon to handle Grace’s case. During his time in medical school, Ghatan developed an interest in neurosurgery. He worked a research job calling families of patients who just received surgery for epilepsy. It was eye-opening how positive their outcomes were. He studied in Seattle and England doing clinical training along with scientific research.

His first job out of school was at Columbia, where he met Grace only a year or so on the job. “I had significant training in the type of problem she [Grace] had,” Ghatan shared. “As rare a problem as it is for a baby to have an aneurysm, I had intensive training in how to manage aneurysms during my time in Seattle.” While in residency, Ghatan worked on 100 aneurysm cases in a period of six months. He had the training necessary to handle the situation calmly, while also assuring my family that Grace would be alright.

Dr. Ghatan performed a hemispherectomy, removing part of Grace’s skull in an effort to reduce intracranial



(L to R) Owen Russell’s mother, sister, and Dr. Ghatan about 15 years ago./Owen Russell

pressure. To an outside party, this procedure may seem grim, especially when performed on such a young child. This is why Ghatan stresses the importance of communicating effectively with parents. In emergency cases, such as Grace’s,

**“...GHATAN MAY ONLY HAVE FIVE MINUTES TO SPEAK WITH THE PARENTS BEFORE OPERATING. IN THAT TIME HE URGES PARENTS NOT TO LOSE HOPE AND TO FOCUS ON THE MOMENT...”**

Ghatan may only have five minutes to speak with the parents before operating. In that time he urges parents not to lose hope and to focus on the moment.

“The discussion requires

an honest description of the gravity of the situation, with the critical discipline not to cause people to lose hope,” Ghatan explained. “You have to focus on the fact that the situation is dire, and that without an intervention there is no chance of survival, but with an intervention a baby is resilient.”

My parents will always remember Ghatan and how reassuring he was throughout everything. At one point he cautioned my parents about Grace’s recovery before leaving the hospital saying, “This is going to be a marathon, not a sprint.” Recovery is a winding road, with peaks, valleys and plateaus. The arduous process of recovery may become discouraging for some, especially when it seems like progress has come to a stand still, but Ghatan offers a different perspective.

“If you’ve already faced and overcome that challenge, then the sky’s the limit,” said Ghatan.

It is that sense of hope and optimism which has helped Grace blossom into the person she is. Had Dr. Ghatan not

taken the time to speak with my parents and encourage them to treat Grace like she had endless potential, then she may not have succeeded like she has. Children like Grace will see dozens of doctors throughout their young lives. Each one of those doctors is going to have an opinion on what a patient will be capable of.

“[Parents] will probably hear many mixed messages,” Ghatan said, “which can be daunting”.

While parents will get opinions from all sides, Ghatan warns them not to be bogged down by it. Parents need to look at recovery in a broader view, he explained, and focus on the small victories. Then a decade or so later, the results may be surprisingly positive.

...

Grace Russell is an example of everything Dr. Ghatan said. Despite the naysayers and pessimists, Grace has thrived. She is the type of person who makes everyone around her happier. Her infectious laugh and slick sense of humor

keep people smiling. She has overcome her disability and done things which some doctors said she never could; like rocking out on stage with her band. Grace’s recovery has been a long winding road, but luckily no one ever tried to hold her back.

It is obvious to see why my family has such reverence for Dr. Ghatan. He radiates a sense of hope which sets his patients up for a successful recovery. His comforting words and encouraging presence keep parents from collapsing under the weight of such traumatic experiences.

“I always think about that case, and about Grace, and about your parents in the annals of my experience as a neurosurgeon,” Dr. Ghatan shared with me. “So when I received your email and understood how good her quality of life is... it is incredibly gratifying”.

Words cannot describe how grateful my family is for Dr. Ghatan and the work he did. As it turns out, he is much more than just the man on my fridge.



# Patch Me Studios: How BC Alumna Manuela Surillo Flips Thrifted Fashion



One of the customized jackets from the MOSCOT COLLECTION./@patchmestudios via Instagram

By Gabriela Flores  
*Editor-In-Chief*

While she searched through the city's thrift and vintage troves, Manuela Surillo became a budding entrepreneurial force to be reckoned with. After a few months of tinkering with the idea of owning a brand, the Brooklynite looked for denim, fabrics, and what some consider fashion's tattoos: stitched patches. Once she graduated from Brooklyn College this past spring, Surillo hit the ground running to make her brainchild, Patch Me Studios, come to life.

"With 'me' being in the title, it's all about who you are, how you express yourself, and I just thought of it as tattooing your own clothes. That's what my brand is based on," Surillo

told the Vanguard.

Stepping into the fashion industry wasn't always part of Surillo's plans. Before majoring in business at BC, she thought of being a gynecologist and studied biology before realizing it wasn't her forte. After taking a year off from academia, she reset the button and worked in retail, eventually showcasing her stylistic eye on windows, mannequins, and throughout different stores like Banana Republic.

Though she finds fashion a form of self-expression, it's not what defines her.

"I'm always very fierce but at the same time [...] I would say that I bring that within my energy. I don't need to do much as far as fashion for me to be present in a place," Surillo said. "I dress to the occasion. To

a couple of people, I may overdress for whatever occasion it is – but that's just how I am."

Patches have been a part of Surillo's wardrobe throughout the years. Through Patch Me Studios, she's created pieces representative of her own hobbies, allowing fashion lovers to customize their pieces with stitched symbols. Though the brand's concept was born a year ago, its groundwork started after she had a tough day at work and came across teddy bear patches that later became the focal point of her first drop: the MASCOT COLLECTION.

"Through hard times, I had to remind myself to be my own companion. I myself got this – that I could go through anything," said Surillo,

recalling her college days when she pushed herself to be her own mascot and support her degree pursuit. "And nobody can do it better than you. Push yourself even further to do whatever it is you need to do. And that's what the bear symbolizes – a true mascot."

Drawing inspiration from the 70, 80s, and 90s, she's taken snippets of the past and blended them with current fashion trends on denim jackets. As Surillo sought from the get-go, all her inventory is thrifted. She consciously aims to reduce her brand's environmental impacts by sourcing her products from NYC's thrifting hubs.

"I've seen how much fabric goes to waste. I've seen how much paper is put into use," Surillo said. "So what better way than to go to your local thrift and pick up something that is still in very good condition—at times even new still—you know? There's a lot of people who put so many clothes to waste, so why not try to reduce the fast fashion and stop manufacturing new products, and just flip fabrics that already exist?"

Channeling the groove and fun times of decades ago, she hopes her brand will encompass a similar momentum through its products and transfer to those who wear them. As a budding entrepreneur, Surillo focuses on in-house marketing and keeps up with the latest fads and upcoming holidays to curate her new drops. She's currently on the hunt for patches that commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month and is looking to improve her stitching skills to design her own patches eventually.

No matter the products she releases, she ensures that they all meet her brand's high standards.

Though she's faced challenges like website crashes, she's taken them on with stride and learned the finer details of taxes and other legal paperwork. With the support of other entrepreneurs like her cousin, who owns an online candy shop called Chile Babe Dulcería, she's picked up tips from her inner circle. Surillo also remembers the push she received from her professors at Brooklyn College.

"They gave us the courage to just go for it, and I really do appreciate that. I feel like I needed that the most to just go ahead and start my business," Surillo said, mentioning her time with Dr. Ngoc Cindy Pham.

"She definitely helps her students tremendously in putting their resume out there, pushing you forward to go ahead and find a job. Not only that, if you're starting a business, she'll go ahead and put your stuff out there," said Surillo. "I really do appreciate her because you don't get a lot from a lot of people."

As she continues growing along with Patch Me Studios, she envisions her brand taking off. Though she's not where she initially planned, Surillo remains open to learning from her mistakes, building toward her goals, and leaving her comfort zone as a newly-graduated business student.

"For me, I worked retail for five years, and I had my last trigger where I was like, 'Okay, I'm tired of working for other people. I'm not good for this,'" Surillo noted about what fueled her entrepreneurial drive. "But you know, everybody has their own moments. You cannot force things to be there. If you're not ready, you're not ready, and that's completely fine. Everybody has their own timing."



# Feirstein Welcomes Distinguished Actor And BK Native John Turturro For Master Class

By Samia Afsar  
*Staff Writer*

Brooklyn College’s Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema brought in distinguished stage and screen actor John Turturro for an end-of-year master class seminar held on May 25.

In a screening room at the Steiner Studios film lot packed with eager Feirstein participants, Turturro spoke with the school’s executive director and two-time Oscar-nominated film producer, Richard Gladstein, to detail his five decades in film. The conversation also marked the beginning of Turturro’s partnership with the school as he is set to serve as an advisor to Gladstein and a mentor to the students at Feirstein beginning this fall.

During the seminar, Turturro recalled being passionate about cinema from a young age, accrediting acclaimed actors like Barbara Stanwyck, Sidney Poitier, and Ossie Davis as his influences growing up. However, it wasn’t until Turturro saw a clip of Dustin Hoffman in the 1969 drama “Midnight Cowboy” during the Academy Awards did he feel seen and encouraged to pursue acting.

“That’s when the door opened for a lot of ethnic actors at that time,” he said.

Following him earning a BA in Theater Arts at SUNY New Paltz, Turturro went on to pursue his MFA at the prestigious Yale School of Drama where he studied alongside Angela Bassett, Charles Dutton, and Sabrina Le Beauf. Despite his impressive school record, Turturro counseled the students



John Turturro during his master class with Feirstein./*Craig Stokle for Brooklyn Daily Eagle*

that the most effective acting methodology is to do “whatever helps you.”

“The Sandy Meisner approach, the Uta Hagen approach, the Commedia dell’arte approach. A life around you, and of course your imagination,” he said.

Shortly preceding his graduation from Yale, Turturro earned an Obie Award for his performance in John Patrick Shanley’s play “Danny and the Deep Blue Sea,” which kick started his career ahead. Turturro went on to work with Spike Lee in “Do The Right Thing” (1989) and another nine films. He also went on to launch a well-established collaboration with the Coen Brothers, being featured in films such as “The Big Lebowski,” “Miller’s Crossing,” and the lead role in the 1991 film, “Barton Fink.”

Throughout the span of

his career so far, Turturro has been nominated for 56 awards and won 19, including a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series for his role in the early 2000’s TV show, “Monk.” And in the words of Gladstein, “many directors who work with John, often do it again and again.”

At the seminar, Turturro also went on to detail his experiences with being “grouped” based on his physical appearance, inexorably resulting in him having to play the “bad guy” in multiple productions despite his general disinterest in doing so.

“The whole idea of doing something creative is to empathize with other people and to have different experiences,” he advised the patrons in attendance. “Put yourself in other people’s shoes.”

More recently, the “Do The Right Thing” actor has starred in the recent blockbuster film “The Batman,” where he plays mob boss Carmine Falcone, and in Apple TV+’s hit series “Severance” where he can be seen playing Irving, one of four core Lumon employees whom the story revolves around.

As for the foreseeable future, Turturro claims to have three projects that he is keen on launching: a screenplay, mini-series, and play. Although he did not mention what these projects will consist of, it is safe to assume that in respect of the legendary reputation he has earned throughout these past fifty years, Turturro will most certainly not disappoint.

Turturro is one of many eminent cinema personnel and creative forces to be welcomed at Feirstein. The graduate

school has already worked with the likes of Ethan Hawke, Gus Van Sant, as well as with the writers, directors, producers, editors, and composers of the Netflix smash hit “The Queen’s Gambit.” More recently, Academy Award-nominated cinematographer, Stuart Dryburgh, was appointed as the school’s spring 2022 filmmaker-in-residence, where he offered collaboration seminars, lighting workshops, and one-on-one mentorships to the students.

All this has been a part of Gladstein’s efforts to “bring the industry to Feirstein,” a plan which has proven to provide students with valuable connections to well-respected actors, directors, producers and cinematographers straight from the industry.



# ‘The Girls In Queens’: BC Alumna Debuts First Novel Reflective Of Her Roots

By Michela Arlia  
*Arts Editor*

Christine Kandic Torres (‘08) is the latest Brooklyn College alum to break through in the literary world. Her first novel “The Girls in Queens” published in June, telling the story of a strong friendship between two Latinas in the borough.

The two protagonists, Kelly and Brisma, have their friendship challenged when a mutual friend is accused of sexual assault.

“Each friend is forced to decide not only what justice means to each of them, but who deserves it—and whether their shared history can sustain their future,” Kandic Torres told the Vanguard.

Kandic Torres is no stranger to the field of writing. Throughout her career, she has had multiple short stories and

personal essays published in journals including “Catapult,” “Fractured Lit,” “Newtown Literary,” “The Sonder Review,” and many more.

Her start to writing began at a young age, becoming her outlet to manage anxiety growing up. Being an avid reader also allowed her to access an abundance of literary creativity

“I’ve always loved creating stories in any art form,” she said. “I was also a kid who experienced a great deal of anxiety, and without much other support, I discovered early on that writing gave me the power and control to be heard and understood in new ways.”

While becoming the author she is today, Kandic Torres was intrigued by BC’s creative writing program, but along the way she stumbled across the psychology department, ultimately earning her

degree in the field. A proud product of the NYC public school system from kindergarten through undergrad, she says her love for writing never fled amongst all her psychology courses.

“I did take wonderful writing and literature courses there [at BC], though, which inspired and encouraged me to continue developing my craft,” she noted. “I have very fond memories of writing in the library and the coffee shop in between classes.”

Hailing from Queens herself, with Puerto Rican and Croatian roots, Kandic Torres reflects her views of the world she lives in through her stories, especially in the novel.

Her background inspired much of the book, including its blended use of Spanish and English, or “Spanglish.” Characters in the book are also of Latinx and European mixed race.

“I think the kids in ‘The Girls in Queens’ all feel like an outsider in different ways, and to different degrees; I am always an outsider to somebody, always and never enough of anything—except Queens, except New York,” said Kandic Torres.

She further described how her heritage has influenced much of her work in writing and creating characters that hit close to home.

“I think that’s one of the more pronounced ways my heritage has influenced my work, and this novel; these first and second generation immigrant characters are like me, pulled between various cultures and countries of their families of origin, but the one true constant is the urban multicultural community that raised them,” she wrote. “In some ways, it’s their truest sense of a



Courtesy of Christine Kandic Torres

‘homeland.’”

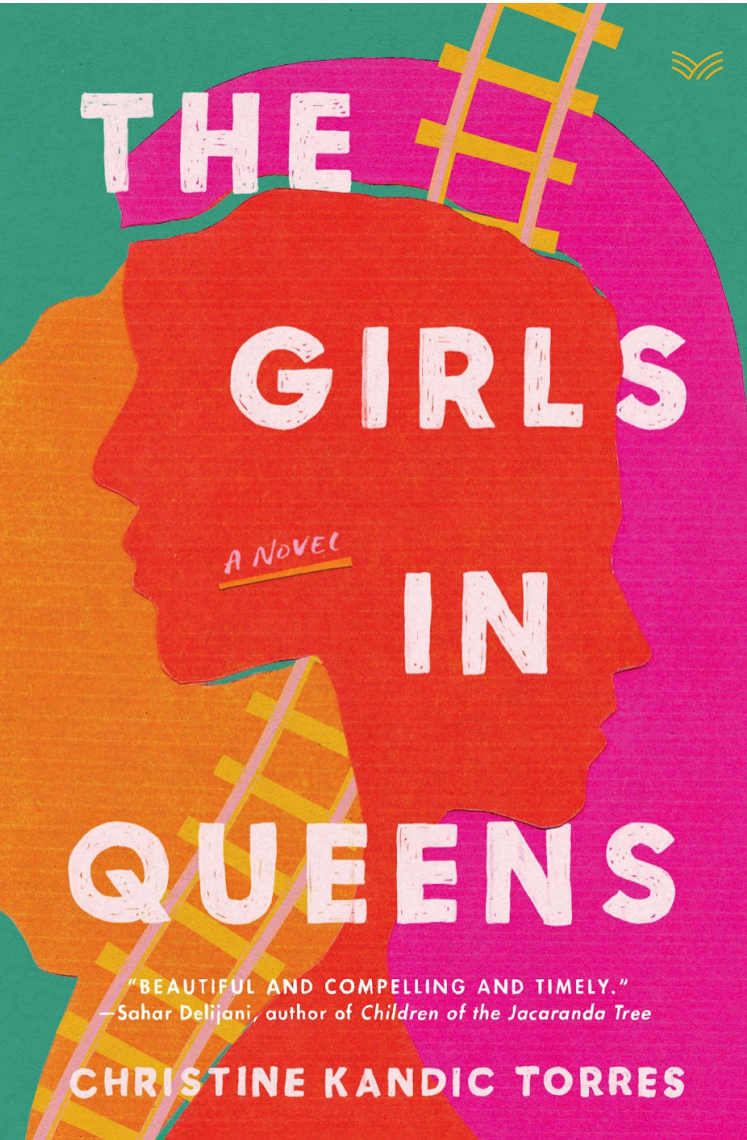
The initial inspiration for this novel was not one you might hear everyday, as Kandic Torres explains how two particular events in her life brought this story of two Queens girls to life. After the Mets played in the World Series in 2015, she recalled the last playoffs the Mets had joined in 2006, with its then “heavily Latinx team.” Her attention was also on the case of Brock Turner, a former Stanford student who was convicted of sexual assault for raping an unconscious woman behind a dumpster. Eventually, the two seemingly polarizing ideas meshed to form her first novel’s innerworkings.

“[...] My interest and focus zeroed in on how and why women—especially women who’ve survived violence themselves—go on to protect and defend other abusers in their

lives. I realized then that I had a novel-length story that married these two preoccupations beginning to take shape,” said Kandic Torres.

Kandic Torres’ life both personally and culturally have blended to create a story of representation and heritage. For aspiring writers who she had once stood in the shoes of at one point in her life, she puts a message out for them: that rejection can and will happen, and that it is all a part of the process.

“The writing is what will bring meaning and connection and community to your life... Writing sometimes feels like a lifelong commitment to the practice of revision,” she said. “So keep going, keep revising, keep submitting, if publication is what you want.”



Book cover of the alumna’s debut novel./HarperVia



# Where Plot Lacks, Actors Shine Through: 'ChaChaRealSmooth' Review



By Alexandria Woolfe  
Staff Writer

"Cha Cha Real Smooth" was released on Apple TV+ along with a limited release in theaters. The movie, which runs just under two hours, deals with various themes, but the most striking being what comes next for post grad students?

The title is a lyric taken directly from the party song "Cha Cha Slide," setting the tone for the story of Andrew (Cooper Raiff), who is fresh out of a bachelor's program and fighting to keep the fun, youthful energy of college after graduation.

Andrew returned to his hometown New Jersey after his years at Tulane University in Louisiana, taking a fast food job to keep money in his pockets. On an outing to a bar mitzvah with his little brother, opportunity rises and his dreams come true when he becomes a "jig conductor," as he

The award-winning film, "Cha Cha Real Smooth," released this past June./*Apple TV+*

cheerfully dons.

During his first gig as jig conductor, he meets Domino (Dakota Johnson) and her autistic daughter Lola. As they sit in the corner, locals spin the rumor mill about Domino's history and what kind of mother she is, prompting Andrew to want to get to know her even more. As the film goes on, he takes on other jobs centered around the girls as an occasional babysitter to Lola and shoulder to cry on for Domino.

Other themes explored are raising a child with a mental disability, living with a loved one who has a mental disorder, as well as fertility issues. In a scene in which Domino has a miscarriage and is severely ashamed of discussing it, coincidence strikes as the hushed tone of the scene feels more intense with the fact that the film's release came one week before Roe v. Wade was overturned by the Supreme Court.

Though the film has a

general feel good energy, there are still numerous plot points that fall short. Domino is regarded as the town "slut" even though she has a fiancé (Raúl Castillo) she apparently cares for and doesn't come across half as loose as others portray her.

Domino and Andrew's relationship also carries a strange tone. For Andrew, she's intriguing and more adult than him so the appeal as a fresh adult is there but Domino's interest in Andrew is left almost completely up to interpretation until the end of the movie. At that point, she is also not willing to explore the obvious feelings she has for Andrew because he's not mature enough in her eyes and her fiancé can do more to help her support Lola.

Circling back to Domino's fiancé, Joseph, he is introduced as a hardened lawyer based mostly in Chicago with allusions to cheating on Domino. This inference

is made through Andrew's eyes as his perspective is the sole view we get to see.

Another major flaw that is brushed over is that Andrew's mother is bipolar, which is mentioned in passing for the first time in the third act of the film. Even when Google searching the film, the plot doesn't reveal that everyone treats her like a glass object because of her diagnosis.

The ending as well feels poorly constructed. Andrew and Domino go their separate ways like they never met, with Andrew now having a more stable footing in life and Domino as well, being able to commit to and marry Joseph. It is thought that the two never see each other again, even though they each have a relative attending the same school.

The film could have been stronger in terms of plot but where it lacked in plot strength it definitely made up for

in characterization. The characters are all very easy to love and laugh with. A highlight of the film is the child actors. Especially Evan Assante and Vanessa Burghardt who play Andrew's brother David and Domino's daughter Lola, respectively.

The portrayal of Lola as an autistic child didn't feel gimmicky or like she was a token character. She is an autistic child, played by an autistic actress, alienated by the students in her grade for it but also a really beautifully written character in a film that would fall a bit flat without her addition.

"Cha Cha Real Smooth" ends up being very heartwarming in the end, despite its flaws. It doesn't have to be a strict and complex storyline to be enjoyed. It felt fresh and fun given the state of the nation currently and really relatable to myself as someone soon to graduate with a bachelor's degree.



# Opinion: Was This Fourth Of July Worth Celebrating?

By David Glanzman  
*Staff Writer*

“I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope,” Frederick Douglass, 1852.

In recognition of this recent Fourth of July, I decided to take a brief reflection over American history and our nation’s current events to answer one important question: Is there anything we collectively have to celebrate?

Independence Day is traditionally a prideful holiday with firework spectacles thundering across the night sky, people draped in patriotic clothes and American flags, and a day off from work or school.

Lately there has been a bombardment of back-to-back news headlines, especially those surrounding the Supreme Court’s actions. In 2022 alone, America’s legislative landscape has changed shape following the decisions in overturning Roe v. Wade and the NYSRPA v. Bruen case.

While writing this, I cannot seem to think of two more controversial decisions that could have been determined by a handful of unelected officials. It seems anyone I know or have known has opinions on abortion or gun laws, and these are two topics that lead to sensitive, personal responses—and rightfully so.

The highest downside in America today is the apparent overreach of government power, having a couple of elites make decisions that affect the entire population as the “supreme law of the land.” Sensitive issues such as these should ultimately be left up to people to decide, and when in doubt always resort to more liberty to the people, not the ivy league people.

The bright side I’d argue will be taking us back to a Fourth of July speech delivered by a man who

lived a life that would by no means have been legal in today’s world—the freed slave and brilliant man Frederick Douglass.

“While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age,” he said back in 1852.

Mr. Douglass faced horrors no person in today’s United States could ever legally experience yet he delivered words with hope. Hope that the promises made in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence would be honored for all American people. One of these promises lists that any power not delegated to the federal government will remain with the states, the people.

With all this said I close my ramble by saying that with all things considered there is celebration due for America’s independence, as we can all celebrate the progress being made and that will be made. There is a clear genius to American institutions when the founding documents are what lead to successes of movements such as those for civil rights, women’s rights and LGBTQ+ rights in dark times when the documents were better than the people in power. The First Amendment alone allowed Martin Luther King Jr. the ability to publish his famous letter, the freedom to assemble in Washington D.C., and the freedom of speech that ended segregation with a dream.

As Americans and more importantly, humans, we must remember the overturning of Roe v. Wade does not outlaw abortion,

so states do still have the power to determine their abortion laws in a more direct democracy. The Bruen case does decide more rights for individuals’ personal protection outside their homes (this is coming from someone who doesn’t feel particularly safe with the idea of over 6.3 million citizens carrying firearms in a crowded city, but I will stand by the stance of supporting liberty when in doubt for an argument’s sake).

If these decisions shine a light on any problem, it’s the problem that comes with controversy being decided for everyone. Perhaps the rights reserved by the states should stay reserved, then citizens of New York can decide the laws that best suit their lives, and those of Chickasaw County, Mississippi can determine theirs. We are a diverse 50 states with different needs

and wants, and controversial issues aren’t appropriate to be decided as the “supreme” law.

I am arguing not for celebration of the nation’s past, and certainly not for nationalism (I find it ridiculous to have pride in the nation you were born in since that’s something you had no control over). Instead, I’m arguing for celebration of the United States’ part in this evolving world. We are merely people of one nation in a large blue world, and there’s more for us all to work for.

As Fredrick Douglass said, “Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference.”



Sparkler image./albanyvisitors.com



# Mets’ Pete Alonso Loses Home Run Derby, Nationals’ Juan Soto Puts On Show

By Owen Russell  
*Sports Editor*

Three-peating is hard to do. Just ask Tom Brady, LeBron James, and now Pete Alonso. The Mets’ slugger came up short Monday night during his quest to win a third straight Home Run Derby. The event featured today’s brightest baseball stars, a living legend, and an eventual champion who doesn’t know where he’ll be playing next month.

Alonso was the odds-on favorite coming into Monday, July 18. He had won the past two years in dominant fashion. In 2019, he overcame Toronto Blue Jays’ young star Vlad Guerrero Jr. to win his first ever title. After a hiatus in 2020, Alonso entered 2021 as the clear favorite and won handily. He hit 35 home runs in the first round and didn’t look back, rolling to an eventual win over Baltimore Orioles’ Trey Mancini.

The Home Run Derby operates as a bracket system. Eight sluggers go head to head and compete until there are only two participants left. This year the eight competitors were Kyle Schwarber (PHI), Pete Alonso (NYM), Corey Seager (TEX), Juan Soto (WAS), Jose Ramirez (CLE), Julio Rodriguez (SEA), Ronald Acuna (ATL), and Albert Pujols

(STL).

In the first round Alonso squared off against division rival Ronald Acuna from the Atlanta Braves. Alonso beat Acuna 20-19, and afterwards told ESPN he was “in the zone.” Alonso also shared that he wasn’t just competing for himself, but for the charities his winnings would be donated to.

Alonso seemed poised to put on a show in his second round, but ultimately came up short against newcomer Julio Rodriguez, who set the tone. Rodriguez went first and hit a whopping 31 home runs. Alonso couldn’t match that kind of performance, hitting 23 home runs. He walked off the field bowing and gesturing to Rodriguez, later stating, “I thought I put up a great performance, but J-Rod [Rodriguez] was just better tonight.”

Mets fans may be disappointed that Alonso could not three-peat, but the Home Run Derby was still a special event. Julio Rodriguez put on a dazzling performance, where the 21 year old rookie blasted more than 80 home runs, including two rounds over thirty. He becomes only the fifth player ever to hit 30 home runs in a round, and the first to do it twice.

While everyone was in awe of the young sensation, 42 year old Albert Pujols proved that age is just



Juan Soto wins the Home Run Derby 2022./Getty

a number. Pujols was expected to be no more than a ceremonial entrant. In his 22nd season, he has been reduced to bit player for the St. Louis Cardinals. Despite his diminished statistics, he shocked the baseball world by eeking past top seed Kyle Schwarber in a first round swing off. Pujols hit 20 home runs in the first round but eventually lost in the semifinals to Derby Champion Juan Soto. His performance, however, was for sure a feel good moment.

With all of the hoopla, it’s easy to forget that neither Rodriguez or Pujols actually won the derby. Juan Soto, a 23 year old phenom, pulled out the victory. Soto cruised past Jose Ramirez in round one, outlasted Pujols in round two, and took down Julio Rodriguez to win the whole thing.

Soto’s win comes at an interesting time for the young star after rumblings that his team, the Washington Nationals, are considering moving their franchise player. “Right

now I don’t even think about it,” Soto said when asked about his future directly after winning the derby. He took the moment to celebrate, a well deserved one at that.

After a stunning derby this year, there is still hope for Alonso to capture a third title. The Mets first baseman is only 27, and has plenty of juice left in the tank.

# Lifeguard for Hire at BC, 20 Dollars an Hour!

With the West Quad’s pool likely opening in the fall, Brooklyn College Recreation is looking for eight to nine lifeguards. Those interested must be certified by the Red Cross or New York City’s Municipal Lifeguard Training Program. Applicants can send their certification along with their resume to Ken Broman, the center’s assistant director and events manager, via email (kbroman@brooklyn.cuny.edu). The position is currently paying \$20 an hour. BC students are welcome to apply.