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# **THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD**

Spring 2023, Issue 8

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Wednesday, March 22nd

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# Launch Date Set For BC's Composting Pilot Program



BC members can soon drop off compostable materials on campus./Gabriela Flores

By Gabriela Flores  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Those at Brooklyn College who practice composting, or have yet to pick it up, can soon drop off their compostable materials on campus starting Tuesday, Mar. 28. As of press time, the college's composting program will begin with one bin outside the Boylan Hall Cafe between 11:15 AM and 2:30 PM in approximately two weeks. For student volunteers who helped develop the initiative for its upcoming opening day, the

new drop-off site for scraps gives BC an alternative to how waste can be discarded and diverted from landfills.

"There was a time in history when people didn't separate out their paper, plastics, metals, and glass materials for recycling, and now it's a regular everyday habit. It could be the same with people separating their food waste for composting," wrote Nathalie Huang, the president of BC's Sustainability Club, in a statement to The Vanguard.

The college will be partnering with GrowNYC, an

environmental non-profit that works with mid to large-scale composting facilities across the city. With its partnered organizations, GrowNYC collects and processes 25 tons of food scraps weekly from 50 drop-off sites. Soon, BC community members can bin their scraps during collection hours, specifically fruits and vegetables – including peels and pits – rice, bread, beans, nuts, potting soil, and houseplants, such as plant trimmings. Those with yard waste, like leaves and thin-cut branches, can bring in their materials in a separate bag. To avoid contamination from non-compostable items, the BC site will not accept animal meat or bones, seafood or its products, coconuts, dairy like cheese and butter, animal waste, charcoal, insect-infested plants, and overly greasy foods.

"I hope the composting program encourages the community to participate in more sustainable action and to take advantage of the resources available,"

wrote Mark Hachicho, a BC health and nutrition sciences student, in a statement to The Vanguard. Hachicho noted that investment in BC's composting will be beneficial since it contributes to the college's "sustainability mission of improving waste management and recycling."

Compostable materials that are dropped at Boylan's bin will be transported to the local Midwood/Flatbush site that is set up on Fridays at Flatbush Avenue and Hillel Place, where Huang and other GrowNYC compost coordinators work. The initiative at BC will be carried out by volunteers who will ensure the dropped goods are free of contaminants. Students interested in volunteering during the program's future collection hours can stop by the site on Mar. 28, or fill out this survey: [bit.ly/BCComposting](https://bit.ly/BCComposting).

# BC Hires Video Platform For Easier Online Instruction

By Michela Arlia  
*Managing Editor*

Business Wire recently announced Brooklyn College's selection of YuJa Enterprise Video Platform to serve its over 15,000 students.

YuJa is a digital media management platform with a vision to "serve learning enterprises within all sectors, including higher-ed, K12, government, healthcare, non-profit and corporate," according to its website. Among its functions, the platform provides storage for digital materials, including audio and video recording. The move towards YuJa at BC comes after Blackboard, the college's current technological platform for education, announced it will soon no longer support key features needed for instruction.

"Currently, Brooklyn College uses Illumira/NJVID as its digital media management platform," wrote

Mary Mallery, chief librarian and executive director of Academic Information Technology, to The Vanguard. "In future releases of the Blackboard LMS, Illumira will no longer be accessible, so a change was necessary. As we phase in implementation and migrate current digital assets over the next six months, YuJa will replace Illumira/NJVID."

The selection of YuJa for Brooklyn College came over the course of a year's worth of contracts, negotiations, and testing of various digital media platforms. Since YuJa is currently used by many other CUNY campuses, including Hunter and Baruch, Mallery told The Vanguard that it was always "our first choice."

The YuJa platform is not a replacement of the Blackboard LMS system, but rather a needed addition, according to Mallery. YuJa will be implemented by fall 2023.

Its main use for BC will include the ability for digital



YuJa is a platform that will be implemented at BC in fall 2023./Gabriela Flores

media materials to be "created, stored, and accessible through Blackboard as well as for digital media material in the BC Archives and Special Collections," wrote Mallery.

Positives to come out of this new partnership with BC and YuJa is the ability for videos and other digital content in the classroom to be easily accessible for students and faculty alike.

"Among the positive course-related outcomes will be the ease and ability of instructors to post course-related videos for their students to watch, as

well as for students to create videos for assignments and have these videos accessible through Blackboard," said Mallery.

For students who wish to learn more about operating this platform, as well as other information on technology used on campus, you can visit the AIT department's website at [https://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/library/about/events2/?view=zoom\\_workshops](https://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/library/about/events2/?view=zoom_workshops).

# Students Lead March Across BK Bridge For New Deal For CUNY



Supporters for a New Deal for CUNY first rallied at the steps of Brooklyn Borough Hall./Gabriela Flores

By Gabriela Flores  
Editor-in-Chief

CUNY student leaders led a march on Sunday, Mar. 19, calling for the funding of the New Deal for CUNY, a bill that aims to make the university tuition-free, more equipped with mental health counseling, and increase salaries for adjunct professors, among other demands. Students from the University Student Senate spearheaded this year's annual rally across the Brooklyn Bridge alongside faculty, staff members, and allies from city and state legislature. The rally came 12 days before Governor Kathy Hochul's state budget finalizes in Albany.

"I know my colleagues are here – we're going to do everything we can up in the capital, the people's house, to fight for this New Deal," said State Senator Andrew Gounardes, one of the bill's sponsors, during the rally. "But we need you guys having our backs, we need you marching on the streets."

The New Deal for CUNY was first announced in 2021 by the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents all the

university's faculty and staff. Today, it's become an ongoing struggle to implement and lobby for in Albany, with supporters participating in several efforts such as banner drops across CUNY's 25 campuses to demand the bill's funding by the state.

Several supporters of the New Deal showed up on the steps of Brooklyn Borough Hall on Sunday, where the march began. Elected officials Brad Lander, the city's comptroller, Senator Iwen Chu, and Assembly Members Harvey Epstein and Zohran K. Mamdani, were also present. Together with leaders from the university and union, they echoed similar calls for implementing the bill in light of the governor's proposal to raise tuition by 3% at CUNY and SUNY. Supporters argued that more funds for CUNY can lead to more success for students and by extension New York.

"We advocate for the New Deal For CUNY because CUNY is one of the best institutions we have in our state for economic mobility, it pulls students out of poverty, it allows students the opportunity to learn and grow," Ayesha Schmitt, a Hunter College

alumna and coordinator for NYPIRG's Higher Education Issue, told The Vanguard at the rally. Having parents who graduated from CUNY, with her father teaching as an adjunct professor across three of the university's campuses, Schmitt also advocates for better wages and resources for faculty. "So making sure we're supporting our professors to the best of our abilities as well is super important," she said, noting that she previously met professors who were homeless and living out of their cars with the low pay they receive.

Hochul's recent proposals to increase tuition have been met with pushback by elected officials, who question if the governor's executive proposal for the fiscal year 2024 is enough for the multi-million dollar deficits on several campuses, as reported by NY1. CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, and SUNY Chancellor John B. King Jr., testified in late February supporting the hikes. Matos Rodríguez reasoned that the potential tuition hikes could be offset by financial aid.

"We need to start caring more about the students who fall through the

cracks because we are the heart of CUNY, the underdogs, the nobodies fighting despite the odds to make it in this city," said Enrique Peña-Oropeza, a USS representative, during the rally. Peña-Oropeza explained how he fully funded his own education at CUNY as an immigrant student, navigating through the personal and financial challenges after falling "through the cracks." "And we are tired of the lack of support and lack of humanity and empathy. We need a New Deal for CUNY," he said.

For most in attendance, the proposed tuition hikes, underfunding of CUNY by the state and city to address the infrastructure problems on campuses, lack of readily available personal counseling, and other issues pushed them to rally across the Brooklyn Bridge and into Manhattan's Foley Square.

"CUNY is supposed to be a program that gives opportunities to those who might not have them, and those tuition hikes are stripping these opportunities," Avrohom Malachowski, a USS delegate representative from Baruch, told The Vanguard. "Many people who are coming to CUNY are from disadvantaged backgrounds, single

parents, who an extra \$300 to them is a difference between education and not having an education."

Among those leading the rally was Jamell Henderson, the USS legislative director and a CUNY student who is set to earn his fifth degree from the university once he completes his doctorate. Organizers from NYPIRG, PSC, Young Invincibles, the CUNY Rising Alliance, Young Democratic Socialists of America, and other organizations, also shared their experiences learning in the CUNY system. In the rally's final call to fund the New Deal for CUNY, USS Chairperson Salimatou Doumbouya noted that the university's main concern now is boosting enrollment and retention. Serving as a student trustee in the university's top-deciding body, she has shared demands for improving mental health services, faculty pay, and other resources to better the university.

"This is about education. This is about growth. And if you care about us, you need to give us the resources for us to grow. And we won't stop asking until we get it," said Doumbouya. "Fund CUNY now, fund CUNY yesterday, and fund CUNY forever."



BC's USG leaders, past and current, with USS Chair Salimatou Doumbouya (center)./Gabriela Flores

# Head-To-Head: USG's Remaining Prez Slates Have Debate



The two remaining USG presidential slates were in debate last Thursday. */Radwan Farraj*

By Radwan Farraj  
Staff Writer

Last Thursday, Mar. 16, two of the remaining presidential slates in the 2023 Undergraduate Student Government presidential elections came head-to-head for a debate. Candidates Asma Ramisa and Yafa Abulawi, who had the third ticket in the race, did not meet the required 400 signatures needed at the end of the petitioning period that closed on Mar. 13.

As of press time, students are able to vote in all USG elections on the BC WebCentral Portal starting Monday, Mar. 20 through Mar. 31 at 5 PM.

Carrie Ebbin and Huda Ayaz make up the first slate, coming to the debate as incumbent candidates. Ebbin currently serves as USG vice president and Ayaz is USG's club director. The second slate has Malak Yafai and Hozifa Sowkat, both of whom are student club leaders. Yafai is currently the vice president of the Bridges for Yemen club and Sowkat is the vice president of the Gift of Life club and secretary of Muslims Giving Back.

The debate was hosted in partnership between USG and the BC Forensics Speech and Debate Team, with Sumbal Asghar, debate captain of the Speech and Debate Team, as the moderator for the event. Candidates were asked approximately ten questions

and given one to two minutes to respond. They also had the opportunity to ask each other questions near the end of the debate. Audience members were given time to pose questions about topics that were not already discussed.

Questions were related to student life, discrimination and anti-semitism, budget cuts and enrollment, student engagement, and other topics. Both tickets talked about how they would address key issues and why they would be the best possible choice for BC students.

Candidates had the opportunity to describe how they would fill Cabinet positions and what they looked for in potential picks. "Huda and I have been expecting to run for these positions for quite some time, so we've had time to talk to people, and do our due diligence to find people to fill Cabinet positions and other committee positions," said presidential candidate Ebbin. Potential Cabinet members were in attendance at the debate, including Noam Abrahams, who was recently appointed as USG's current treasurer.

Yafai remarked that her Cabinet selections would be made with campus diversity and unique student expertise in mind. "I want to put time and to choose people who I would work with precisely. And my choices would reflect the diversity

of Brooklyn College," said presidential candidate Yafai. "And because I chose diversity, I want to bring a different perspective and experience to the table." She elaborated that she would want students from different majors to fill her Cabinet, who would be committed to serving the student body's interests.

Discussion shifted to the partnership formed between CUNY and Hillel International to combat anti-semitism on CUNY campuses, where candidates provided their opinion on the collaboration and additional steps for creating more inclusive campuses.

Creating clear policies and procedures that prohibit anti-semitism and developing dialogues between different groups on campus is a priority, according to Yafai. "It is important to know that overseeing issues of discrimination requires ongoing effort and commitment from all members of the Brooklyn College community, including leaders, faculty and staff and students," she said.

Ebbin welcomed campus initiatives that would target anti-semitism and promoted student government as a way of combating discrimination. "Our body of student government will not stand for any sort of discrimination, anti-semitism, anything at all," said Ebbin. "We will support

in any way students who come to us and keep the conversation open. Students should know that our door is always open and they can always come to us."

Both candidates were asked about student advocacy and representation, and how USG planned to act as the voice of BC students. "If I feel against something and the entire student body feels something else, it is my duty to represent the study body as best as possible," stated Ebbin. "With that, means transparency, keeping conversations open, having office hours so that people can come in whenever they need to, having our email out there, and just keeping the door open overall."

Yafai wished to make USG more of a prominent presence in students' minds and actively engage with BC students more. "I want students to know that we exist - not only through email or social media, but physically there for them on campus. I want them to know or to come to us to feel that we are part of them and they are part of us," said Yafai. "I want them to come with struggles or issues because we are students just like them."

Candidates shared what they believed were the most pressing issues currently facing BC. Yafai's outlook on the most pressing issue on campus is the limited amount of extracurricular classes and programs

available for students. "Their limitation have a negative impact on how students overall view the school. The extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to develop new skills and to explore their new interests and to build their resumes and future education and career opportunities," stated Yafai. Her running mate, Hozifa Sowkat, expressed concerns about the difficulty of developing social connections and making one's degree useful.

"Me personally, I'm doing a biology degree as a pre-med [student], but what happens after," said Sowkat. She continued, noting that additional opportunities would make it easier for students to network and feel more secure about their choice of degree.

Ebbin noted that after talking with students both before and during her campaign, there were a variety of issues facing BC students that all needed to be addressed. "I think that if you went out on the quad right now, and you asked 1,000 students what the biggest problem at Brooklyn College would be, they'd probably give you 500 different answers," said Ebbin. Her running mate Huda Ayaz talked about the scale of issues USG actively addresses and its ongoing work to connect students with the administration and the necessary resources.

"There is so much out there and so many resources out there that are hard to access - sometimes you send an email and don't get a response, sometimes you simply can't find the right office that will help you with your issue," said Ayaz. "Something that we've been really focused on is trying to make sure that we have those resources accessible to students by having clear ways that they can make out to people, and also if you just come to us to ask us, so we can know the right people to connect you with."

# LGBTQ+ Resource Center Explores Queer Acceptance In Religion

By Serin Sarsour  
Features Editor

Religious scholars, thinkers, and storytellers were invited to discuss the intersection of religion, race, and LGBTQIA+ acceptance last Wednesday, Mar. 15. Guest speakers presented present-day and historical concerns and successes that took on the question of queer acceptance in religious institutions. The event was hosted by BC's LGBTQ+ Resource Center in the Woody Tanger Auditorium at Brooklyn College.

Darren J. Glenn, the panel's moderator and a librarian based in New York City, kicked off the panel by inviting the audience to "think inwardly about our interactions with religious institutions" and their experiences in "the world of organized religion," such as memories of being in a house of worship at a young age. He then asked attendees to think about the feelings that come with those memories, whether that be joy or exasperation. In this, Glenn highlighted the complicated relationships and interactions many people have with religious institutions, including himself as a Christian who is an intersectional environmentalist, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ rights advocate. He noted that he has felt judged, excluded, and even unsafe at times within Christian social circles, especially as a child, because he is queer.

The event aimed to explore and remove the theology and scholarship pertaining to religion, along with how established belief systems interact with gender, race, and sexuality. The panel also examined the human impact of these interactions, and the emotional and spiritual consequences of religiously-informed racism, sexism, and anti-LGBT sentiment.

"Is there room for us? No, but we make room," said Wazina Zondon, the first presenter of the panel, as she answered the question within the title of the event: "At the Intersection of Religion, Race, and LGBTQIA+, is there room for Acceptance? A Discussion." She later noted that as a queer Muslim, she is not offered the same "multiplicity and variation in existence" as other queer people when she reveals her religious identity to people. She described this as a "limiting experience" and questioned "how much spaciousness you are given even in your own identities."

Mengia Tschalaer, another presenter for the event who is a legal and social anthropologist, focused on the asylum system in Germany that has to deal with the intersection of sexuality and religion. She discussed how the system relied on western stereotypes about things like gender identity and anti-Muslim attitudes.

"In Germany, the right for asylum is enshrined in the German basic law [...]

The LGBTQ+ Resource Center presents:

## At the Intersection of Religion, Race, and LGBTQIA+, is there room for Acceptance? A Discussion

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023, 12:45-2:40 P.M.**  
**Woody Tanger Auditorium, Brooklyn College Library**  
**1st floor (and via YouTube Livestream)**



Bringing together LGBTQIA+ religious scholars, storytellers, and thinkers for a conversation on the intersection of religion, race, and LGBTQIA+ acceptance. Presentations will cover historical and present-day concerns and successes.

				
<b>Presenter:</b> Wazina Zondon, an "undisciplined" performer and Afghan raised in New York City, Wazina is the co-presenter of <i>Coming Out Muslim: Radical Acts of Love</i> , a storytelling performance capturing the experience of being queer and Muslim alongside her creative counterpart, Terna Tilley-Gyado.	<b>Presenter:</b> Matthew Moore joined the Brooklyn College Philosophy Department in 2003. Ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in 2017, he now serves as diocesan Missioner for Environmental Justice and as Priest Associate in two parishes in Midwood. He and his husband Tom recently celebrated their 42nd anniversary.	<b>Presenter:</b> David Brodsky, Associate Professor and Department Chairperson of Judaic Studies and author of <i>A Bride without a Blessing: A Study in the Redaction and Content of Massekhet Kallah and Its Gemara</i> (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).	<b>Presenter:</b> Mengia Tschalaer is a legal and social anthropologist whose work examines how Westernized conceptions of human rights affect the access to justice of minority groups at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality & religion. She is the co-founder and coordinator of the Queer European Asylum Network.	<b>Moderator:</b> Darren J. Glenn is a Trinidadian-born, American intersectional environmentalist, racial justice and LGBTQ+ rights advocate, and librarian based in the New York City area. Darren immigrated to the United States in 1993, and is Programs Director at the NY-based LGBTQ+ advocacy non-profit the Caribbean Equality Project.

Brooklyn College

For more info, send us an e-mail: [LGBTQCenter@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:LGBTQCenter@brooklyn.cuny.edu)  
Instagram us: @lgbtqcenter\_bc



This event is made possible through the generous support of LaGuardia Community College and the New York City Council LGBT and Queer Caucus.



Courtesy of @lgbtqcenter\_bc on Instagram

and is granted to anyone who can establish a well-rounded fear of political persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political views, or their membership of a particular group, which includes individuals who have fled their countries due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity," Tschalaer said.

The third presenter of the event, Brooklyn College Associate Professor and Department Chair of Judaic Studies David Brodsky, started his segment by addressing that for the most part, LGBTQ issues are no longer a problem in the Reform movement, the Reconstructionist movement, and the Conservative movement of Judaism. However, he noted that there is still an issue that resides in

some Orthodox Jewish communities.

"[...] The larger problem is not with Jewish law or Christian law or Muslim law. The larger problem is with the challenge that LGBTQ issues pose on people living in gender-rigid structures in societies," said Brodsky, explaining that this has to do with the range of options available within each religion in terms of the forgiving of sins.

Brodsky went on to say that the way to gain acceptance in religious communities and institutions isn't by arguing about the law, it's by making people see the human in you so that they are able to relate to you in some sense and may eventually come around.

Matthew Moore, a philosophy professor at BC, as well as a missioner

and a priest, was the final presenter of the day. He turned the main question of the event on its head and asked the audience: "Does religion leave room for rejection of queer people?"

As a Christian, Moore offered two answers to his question. "If you're talking about religion as an institution, my answer is not forever. And if you're talking about religion as a living spiritual force, my answer is not now and not ever."

However, Moore noted that with the violent political and physical attacks on the queer community, especially trans people, he would be "delusional" to believe that all is well for queer people. There is still a long way to go.

# Bridges For Yemen Screens “Hunger Ward,” Hosts Q&A With Director



(L to R): Hanan Yafai, Eric Tien, and director Skye Fitzgerald (on screen)./Kate Dempsey

By Kate Dempsey  
Staff Writer

Yemen is facing what has been described as the world’s “worst humanitarian crisis” by the United Nations, yet the crisis is also a forgotten one. Nine years into the civil war, more than 21 million people, about two-thirds of the country, still need humanitarian aid. The crisis has had an especially devastating impact on an extremely vulnerable population: children. 2.2 million children under the age of five need treatment for acute malnutrition, and millions of Yemenis are on the brink of starving to death.

To raise awareness, Brooklyn College’s Bridges for Yemen club, in collaboration with the non-profit Humanity for Relief and Development, hosted a screening of the Oscar-nominated documentary “Hunger Ward” on Tuesday, Mar. 14. Following the film, the organizers hosted a Q&A discussion with its director Skye Fitzgerald.

The documentary follows Dr. Aida Alsadeeq and nurse Mekkia Mahdi as they work in hunger treatment facilities for children in the northern and southern parts of Yemen.

“We try to spotlight what’s going on in terms of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the ongoing starvation of the children, and we had this opportunity to collaborate with Humanity for Relief and Development,” said Hanan Yafai, president of Bridges for Yemen and a senior at BC.

Humanity for Relief and Development, which operates in Yemen, Pakistan, and Turkey, has created “Mercy Bakery” and “Mercy Kitchen” in affected areas, creating a self-sustaining means of providing daily food for impoverished communities. The project, which started with Yemeni friends and families coming together in America to help those abroad in Yemen, has now served 26,322 people total in the country, according to their 2023 January Project Report.

“Our focus is just on humanitarian aid, so it just started with giving out free bread,” said Eric Tien, community engagement coordinator for HRD. “I think that’s what we should all try and take away from this movie is what can we do here in America.”

The documentary was distressing and heart-breaking for those in

attendance. Multiple children are seen suffering from wounds or extreme malnourishment, and after many children die in the documentary, the viewer is taken directly into a family’s grief after losing their child. For viewers of the documentary, it’s a difficult watch but also a necessary one.

“It was really emotional, I almost cried, but I think it’s also very important to spread knowledge on what’s going on,” said BC freshman Basamat Hamdan. “If you don’t know what’s going on, as sad as it is, change is never going to happen.”

Yemenis at the viewing wished that their “voices could be heard.” The lack of attention on the crisis has left many feeling neglected by the global community. Director Fitzgerald, in the Q&A portion of the screening, explained that the purpose of the documentary was not only to raise awareness about the crisis and provide a platform for the voiceless, but to also spark change by getting more people to help the cause.

“These stories need to be heard, they need to be seen,” Fitzgerald said. “Change starts with each of us. It’s hard to think about the

scale of suffering in Yemen, where so many children are dying every day [...], but what you can do is you can save one child and you can save another child.” The director encouraged the screening’s participants to use the tools they have readily available to make a difference.

Fitzgerald reflected on the physical and mental challenges of filming the documentary. Getting permits to film took eight months, and he became

the first western journalist to be in Yemen in six months. Traveling to and from territories controlled by different belligerents in the war was dangerous, and many were hesitant to speak with a foreigner from the west. Coming back to America, Fitzgerald felt it difficult to walk into a supermarket having just seen so many people starving. Nonetheless, his persistence to create the documentary has inspired many to continue the effort to ensure Yemeni voices are heard.

“Yes, your voice can be heard. Every single one of you here,” Yafai said. “Small thing you can do is just keep it going. Keep talking about it, just don’t get discouraged. That’s one of the roles that you have to take it upon you as a human. You don’t have to be Yemeni, you don’t have to be even Muslim or any religion [...] this is your responsibility as a human.”

To view “Hunger Ward” and learn more about the film, visit [hungerward.org](http://hungerward.org).



The Yemeni flag was displayed on a window during the event./Kate Dempsey

# 'Justice Or Just Us?' BC Hosts Panel On Queer Agenda

By Jason Lin  
Staff Writer

Brooklyn College's LGBTQ+ Resource Center hosted a panel titled "Justice or Just Us?: Defining a Queer Agenda" in the Woody Tanger Auditorium on Mar. 15. Hosted by the center's director, Kelly Spivey, the event defined and acknowledged the community's needs with several inspirational guest speakers.

Speakers included Lorie Byrant, a member of the organization Southerners on New Ground; Paisley Currah, a professor of political science and women's and gender studies at BC and the CUNY Graduate Center; Jason Wu, an attorney and community advocate; and Barbara Smith, an American lesbian feminist activist who's the college's current Hess Scholar-in-Residence.

"I wanted to bring the human element into these issues, and I felt these stories that would be invisible but also very important [...]," said Attorney Wu. "We know that bad things happen; we know that some policies and laws need to be changed. But at the end of the day, we can't forget that this is about real people with real struggles."

Panelists aimed to express desirable changes for the queer agenda, as well as bring attention to such a forgotten term. The term "queer" is often used to describe the political and social goals of the LGBTQ+ community. These goals can vary depending on community members' specific needs and challenges. Still, they often focus on equal rights, access to healthcare and education, and freedom from discrimination and violence.

The queer agenda is

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## JUSTICE OR JUST US?

### Defining a Queer Agenda

with Barbara Smith, Lorie Bryant, Paisley Currah, and Jason Wu  
Moderated by Kelly Spivey

**Wednesday, March 15th 2023**  
**from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM**

Woody Tanger Auditorium, Brooklyn College Library

Also livestreamed on the Wolfe Institute's Youtube Channel:

**If you do not have a Brooklyn College ID but would like to attend in person, please RSVP: <https://bit.ly/3JOWNAR>**

Co-sponsored by Brooklyn College's LGBTQ+ Resource Center



Photo Credits:  
Joanna Chattman



Promotional flyer for the event./Wolfe Institute via Facebook

rooted in a long history of activism and resistance against oppressive systems that have marginalized and harmed communities. Advocates of the queer plan believe in creating a world where people of all gender identities and sexual orientations can live freely without fear of persecution or discrimination. In acknowledging the queer agenda, the panel wanted to promote equality, acceptance, and human rights for the LGBTQ+ community.

"I think it important to uplift these voices, and especially in college, where it [is] about learning different types of people and learning about different ways of life [...]. So uplifting these voices in an academic space, it helps to bring different

people together and learn about queerness," said Fia Sanchez, a freshman at BC.

Stories told by Wu and Smith immediately gained the attention of everyone in the audience because the difficulty to be accepted by others as a queer person is not unheard of. Yet, once they finally cross the border of acceptance, they will be hit with another harsh reality. For example, a documentary based on a true story called "Call Her Ganda" was mentioned during the event. This film was about Jennifer Laude, a transgender Filipina woman, who was killed by a U.S. Marine named Joseph Pemberton for being trans. The charge was demoted from a murder to a homicide, and Pemberton was pardoned in 2020. Laude was highlighted as

a demonstration of queer, feminist, racial justice, and an anti-imperialist agenda at Brooklyn College, showing the unfairness of personal status in the world.

The event also expressed the need for more funding that could go towards conducting research on the unique health needs of the queer community and creating a safe space for queer individuals in schools and workplaces. "Imagine what we can do with 842 billion dollars to advance justice and build the kind of world we wanted," said Wu, noting the importance of providing resources to support legal challenges to discriminatory policies and practices. Additionally, this funding could be used to support community organizations that advocate

for the rights of queer individuals and promote greater acceptance and understanding of the queer experience. With such a significant investment, progress toward achieving greater justice and equality would be more attainable.

"I think events about like queer discourse are important to have at Brooklyn College because it shows that even though our school is not perfect, it still strives towards having a better conversation and more inclusive conversion when it comes to queer people and queer life in our school," said Gabrielle White, a BC alumna who graduated last semester.

*THE VANGUARD*

# 'What I Believe,' A Keynote Address By Hess Scholar Barbara Smith

By Gabriela Flores  
*Editor-in-Chief*



*Photos courtesy of Tia Cross and Mount Holyoke College/Brie Underwood*

Working to dismantle racism, homophobia, classism, and other repressions is no easy feat. From organizing as a teen in her native Cleveland, Ohio, to forming coalitions that broke down systemic barriers, activist and author Barbara Smith has undeniably become a trailblazer. Throughout her week-long stay at Brooklyn College, she shared her experiences as a Black lesbian feminist, whose life's work included giving women of color the space to have their thoughts published and heard. As this year's Hess Scholar-in-Residence, Smith's lessons culminated in a keynote address delivered on Thursday, Mar. 16 at the Claire Tow Theater.

"So many of us in this room wouldn't be here without Barbara Smith – many of us came into our own as students, as scholars, reading and learning from Barbara Smith," said Distinguished Professor Jeanne Theoharis, who introduced Smith before her speech began.

The college's Wolfe Institute annually hosts a nationally-recognized scholar to share knowledge in their respective field, provoke critical thoughts among BC members, and participate in public discussions. This year, Smith was named Hess Scholar-in-Residence after facing health complications prior to her nomination. Her back arthritis and other challenges, however, did not stop her from coming downtown to Brooklyn. Throughout her appearances on campus, Smith delved into topics ranging from the LGBTQ+ community to identity politics, a concept that she and her colleagues at the Combahee River Collective defined as systemic oppressions being shaped by the intersectionality of a person's several identities. Together with her twin sister Beverly, and Demita Frazier, Smith founded the CRC, a Black feminist socialist coalition that formed in 1974.

Smith has made numerous contributions to modern-day thoughts and organizations related to race, gender, sexuality, and class. In continuing to uplift feminists, Smith formed the Kitchen Table Press in Brooklyn with poet Audre Lorde, named after the most common place where women's ideas spark. There, the

Hess Scholar and her fellow authors aimed to give feminist lesbian women of color the control and publishing rights of their content rooted in lived experiences. From works like "Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology" to "This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color," Smith assumed the role of editor, author, and publisher.

For Professor Gaston Alonso, the director of the Wolfe Institute, Smith's work was the crux of his thesis while in college and remains highly impactful.

"Thank you for teaching us how to transform our university and our community in ways that point us towards a more loving, a more beautiful, a more just world," Alonso said prior to Smith beginning her keynote.

In warmly welcoming the Hess Scholar, BC President Michelle Anderson and former Wolfe Director Rosamond S. King delivered their remarks early on. Student poets Tishana Chapman and Julianna Salinas soon took the stage with original pieces. Each delivered two works true to their identities as writers and women of color, pushing to evolve unapologetically or go against the status quo. With his undeniable musical talents and Smith's sharp lyrics, Professor Malcolm J. Merriweather conducted BC Conservatory of Music singers, drum accompaniment, and played on the piano himself. The performance was the world premiere of "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," which pays respects to Smith's book of the same name. As the voices of lead singer Lucia Bradford and a 10-member choir filled the room, they carried direct messages of not letting segregation, homophobia, book-banning, white supremacy, and Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis stop them from "marching on the freedom land."

Channeling Smith's spirit, all introductions to her keynote address carried a similar sentiment of doing something against the oppression or systemic limitations communities may face.

"And the question tonight, as we take this keynote to heart, must be: 'How will we be brave? What will we create at our own kitchen tables,'" said Theoharis.

At the onset of her speech, Smith recollected memories of her grandmother reading "The Little Match Girl" to her and her sister Beverly. The story's protagonist was an impoverished little girl who sold matches and eventually

froze to death because she was afraid of going back home to face her abusive father for not making any sales. From an early age, Barbara and Beverly were upset with the circumstances that the match girl faced, and as they have done throughout their lives, they sought to change things for the better.

"Be it as it may, but I think we grasped early on that life can be scary and unfair, and we did not like that," Smith said.

Smith's grandmother was her primary disciplinarian, showing her key lessons like greeting adults in their Cleveland neighborhood the southern way by asking, "How do you do?" Her mother was hard at work, coming back from long hours usually near bedtime. Although she died when Smith was only nine, she taught her the importance of appreciating kind gestures after the Hess Scholar and her sister did not like presents from their aunt LaRue decades ago.

"My mother never disciplined me, never. She didn't raise her voice to us, as I recollect, because my grandmother did all of that," Smith said while chuckling. "So having my mother die so early, having the fact that she was not my primary disciplinarian, but my grandmother was – on steroids – I, of course, idolized her in a way."

After her mother's death, Smith and her only sister were taken care of by their aunt, who led by example how to lead with kindness. With their female role models, the Smith sisters were taught to be compassionate of others, which eventually lit the activist in them. Hailing from a family with roots in Dublin, Georgia, Smith's knowledge of their experiences living in the south during high lynching and hostility towards Black people was limited. That was until she was scouring the web while preparing her speech for last Thursday. While researching, she found that her native small town Dublin had a race riot in 1919 during the Red Summer, the outbreak of racial violence. At the time, Black community members guarded African-American Rob Ashley from getting lynched by white locals, after he was accused of murdering a white man and wounding another. Smith wonders if her family had any involvement in the action. Although they did not pass on their pasts to her, Smith's family background remains etched in her identity.

"I think I took what they had experienced down home

through my pores without them having to say anything," she said.

Smith's relatives were in tune with the latest efforts to secure basic rights for the Black community. If they did not catch updates on televised news, they would do so through sermons at their Baptist church. Growing up in the last years of legal segregation, as well as coming to age with the Civil Rights Movement and key moments like the murder of Emmett Till in 1955, Smith found herself admiring activists of her time. In April 1964, the then-budding activist attended her first protest demonstration where she and other young people boycotted schools against school racial segregation. Having tasted the feeling of making fundamental change happen, Smith and her sister were adamant about becoming more involved, later joining the Congress of Racial Equality in 1965 after graduating high school – all with the support of their aunt LaRue.

"The person responsible for raising me from the age of nine was very much a woman of the world. Aunt LaRue was open-minded, incredibly smart, sophisticated yet down to earth, with a sly sense of humor," Smith said. "None of my friends ever meet aunt LaRue, but I always say that she was my role model and that whatever good qualities I had was because I wanted to be like her." Although Smith's aunt was supportive of her nieces' activism, she did not let them march on Washington in 1963 for jobs and freedom, which the scholar "never got over."

Wearing her loved ones' teachings and values on her sleeve, Smith faced a moment of divergence when she came out as lesbian. Although she noticed her attraction to women in her teenage years, she came out in the mid-1970s after her aunt LaRue and most of those who helped raise her had died.

"There was no visible gay community that I was aware of. Being queer in those days was an insult, not a name we had reclaimed. And it was viewed as a mental illness, a mortal sin, a crime, and usually all three," she said. Smith graduated from Mount Holyoke College in June 1969, a few weeks before the Stonewall Rebellion, where members of the gay community protested against police raids that happened at the Stonewall Inn in NYC. Two years later, LaRue passed away. Today, she still wonders if her aunt had not died in 1971 if

she would've come out later in life or not at all.

"My grandmother, in particular, raised me to be a good little girl, which on a number of levels, besides being queer, I never really achieved," Smith said with a chuckle. But being raised with her family's integrity and "habit of telling the truth," she felt encouraged to come out as lesbian with her living relatives, including her uncle.

After remaining seated for the bulk of her keynote due to her arthritis, Smith stood up and walked to the podium to deliver her beliefs in sum. There, she addressed the crowd with her utmost important belief in political struggle.

"Struggle requires organizing, that is coming together with other people who are similarly motivated to work on a problem, or a set of problems, caused by systemic oppression and exploitation," Smith said. "Struggle does not primarily mean fighting with people within your own organization, or people who are on your side with whom you disagree." Considering on a case-by-case basis who she lets into her life's lens as a Black lesbian feminist, Smith noted the importance of sharing insight without judgment of those who do not share similar experiences of oppression or identity. To enact material change, she echoes the words of Olúfẹ́ mi O. Táíwò, who pushes his readers to take a "constructive approach" to address problems by actually doing something about it.

As she's noticed throughout her career, coalition building and action are vital to enact on the streets, not simply in dialogue. In closing, she quoted Bernice Johnson Reagon's work titled "Coalition Politics," emphasizing the importance of not confusing "home and coalition."

"I am just so gratified that people here saw fit to bring me into your community, and for this moment in time, but hopefully not just a moment, to be in the struggle together and also for me at least to experience incredible joy," Smith said, concluding her keynote.

Professors Lawrence Johnson and Donna Lee Granville from the sociology department, as well as Ingrid Thomas-Clark from secondary education, welcomed Smith to BC's Black faculty and staff family at the event's end with gifts.

# A Musical Delight, BC Conservatory's Afternoon Chamber Music



(L to R) Samuel Braiman (violin), Yuxin Feng (piano), Mary Beth Castaño (violoncello), and Jayda DeLeon Duran (viola)/Paulina Gajewski

By Paulina Gajewski  
Staff Writer

Conservatory students delighted audience members with Afternoon Chamber Music on Thursday, Mar. 16 in the Don Buchwald Theater. The concert featured collective musical pieces that allowed musicians to work collaboratively. Coordinating the musical bliss was Brooklyn College Professor George Rothman, who has guest conducted throughout the Far East, Europe, South America, and the United States, as well as taught at universities across New York.

Chamber music is a specific form of classical music that is generally composed for a group of instruments, enabling them to fit into a chamber or a large room. Given the genre's nature, the conservatory students had to learn how to play individually while

also keeping tempo and rhythm with the rest of the instruments.

The show was set in motion by Matthew Garcia and Sasha Jamal with their violin duet. Their piece, "Two-Part Inventions," was composed by J.S. Bach. The melody presented itself as a challenge with Garcia and Jamal engaged in a competitive duel, as their violins continuously participated in a seemingly back-and-forth conversation, transforming from shrill and impatient to low and muttering. Together through their tunes, they conjured images of a quarrel, such as that of siblings taking part in an argument or parents debating over dinner.

"The inventions were meant for the piano, yes, but we got to add our own feelings into it, and I learned a lot about chamber music through it," Jamal told The Vanguard post-

show, noting she and Garcia made the initially intended "solo musical experience" their own. "Matthew and I had to really learn how to listen to each other and connect in an almost telepathic way."

The final melding of the two melodies makes for an impactful denouement of the piece, a resolution to the disputation.

The stage was next seized by a series of string instruments in a quartet performance by Fauré called "Piano Quartet No. 2 in G minor, op. 45: I. Allegro molto moderato." This performance included Samuel Braiman on the violin, Jayda DeLeon Duran on the viola, Marybeth Castaño on the violoncello, and Yuxin Feng on the piano.

Feng's grand piano was situated at the back of the stage, symbolic of the background melody it provided for the performance. Braiman and Duran were situated

facing each other, with Castaño in between them and facing the audience. Feng stole the show with her quick pace and strong moments of intensity, providing a euphonious backdrop for the other three instruments. Each of the remaining three performers had their own moments to showcase their expertise. Duran, in particular, portrayed moments of sorrowful melody, moving the audience members with her slow and steady, yet packed movements. The instruments proved their skillful independence, though intermittently coming to periods of melded melody.

With a rearranging of the stage, four became two once again. The audience could feel the apprehension within the moments of silence as the musicians settled themselves onto the stage, like a deep breath longing for release.

Closing the show was Ajin Kim on the violin and Maxwell Hinton playing piano in their performance of "Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major, 'Meistersinger,' op. 11: I. Allegro amabile" by Brahms.

These performances not only serve as a wonderful way to listen to live music but to also view the proficient technicalities in the physical movements of the musicians, as their hands knowingly glided up and down octaves. The smooth tune was punctuated by periods of musical urgency, keeping the audience members at the edges of their seats.

The show was originally meant to culminate with "Trio in G minor für Klarinette, Violine, and Klavier," by Khachaturian, but due to unforeseen circumstances, this last piece was rescheduled for the next Afternoon Chamber Music show that will take place on May 4.

# Combining Styles And Worlds: Conservatory's Electroacoustic Music Festival

By Samia Afsar  
Arts Editor

The Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College hosted its 32nd Biannual International Electroacoustic Music Festival this past week. Held in the Don Buchwald Theater, and under the direction of BC Professor and Director of Music Technology George Brunner, the festival spanned over the course of three days, with guest performances on Thursday, Mar. 16, an all-faculty concert on Friday, Mar. 17, and a student concert featuring original compositions created by emerging composers on Saturday, Mar. 18.

Among the Saturday performers were Gidong Kim, Ashley Ortiz, Francois DeVille, Zhi Chen, Chris Lutsker, and Paolo Lembo, presenting a cornucopia of sundry electronic music for an afternoon celebrating cutting-edge work.

"The diversity of the festival – it's vast and brings not only different styles of music together but from different cultures and different parts of the world," Brunner told *The Vanguard* following the concert. "They're worlds apart, but they come together through the commonality of electronic music, and that is just beautiful [...] that's the thing that keeps me going with this [festival] because I love to see the variety."

From instructing



(L to R) Francois DeVille, Prof. George Brunner, Paolo Lembo, Chris Lutsker, and Zhi Chen./Samia Afsar

music technology and recording courses to facilitating the longest-running emerging composers concert in the country, Brunner's presence in the music department is one that has proven to be vital to the community since he arrived at Brooklyn College over thirty years ago.

In his classes, Brunner focuses on teaching his students the fundamental concepts of music theory and recording, explaining how various instruments and equipment function without dictating or propagating a distinct style of music.

"I think the worst thing you can do is teach a style because the best you'll get is a clone of yourself," said Brunner. "That's not productive for the students, it's better to teach them as much technique as you can and guide them without affecting their own aesthetics."

When discussing the challenges that arise from pursuing electronic music, Brunner emphasized the importance of an audience appreciating and honoring the work that is created.

**“The diversity of the festival – it's vast and brings not only different styles of music together but from different cultures and different parts of the world.”**

"The hardest thing is reaching out to an audience," said Brunner. "But what I have learned over the years is to provide people not interested in electronic music with a reason

for them to come to a concert."

To combat low attendance and to spark an interest in the genre, Brunner incorporates an array of the arts into the festival and other concerts, ascribing the importance of merging the arts to promote electronic musical compositions. In the past, Brunner has held concerts where musicians composed pieces based on "The Tempest" by William Shakespeare, which drew in an audience of 250. Similarly, by encompassing dance in another event titled "Tempest Fuge," Brunner welcomed over 500 patrons.

"It's through that kind of synergy of joining with other forces, whether they're visual art forces or film collaborations that you are able to get it [electronic music] out to an audience," said

Brunner.

As of now, Brunner is hoping to direct an all-alumni concert for the upcoming fall 2023 semester, where he hopes to provide, but more importantly, encourage the graduates with a space to reignite passions that may have been lost in the hectic upkeep of their own lives and responsibilities.

"This is a way to say, if you still have it, compose something and come back," said Brunner. "It's an attempt to deal with people who had the passion at one time, but life may have forced them in another direction."

The Conservatory of Music will be hosting its next Electroacoustic Music Festival in November of the upcoming fall semester.

# Opinion: How To Order Coffee From A Barista's POV



Courtesy of Shea Stevenson

By Shea Stevenson  
*Opinions Editor*

I've noticed a lot of concern among my peers regarding how to "properly" order coffee, and as a former professional barista myself, I think the answer may be as enlightening as it is terrifying. It's a new frontier of communication, one you might never practice besides when you need to order something. But for a barista, who's forced to hear and speak this language for hours a day, they have no choice but to notice, hone, and perfect how to articulate orders. It has mores and folkways, high class and low class, it has everything you would need to know about a person in their first sentence.

First, to lay the groundwork, there is only one useful metric of an

order's success: did you get the thing you wanted? Maybe you want it fast, maybe there's no rush. The only thing that actually matters is that you made some utterances at me, I properly interpreted them, and was able to fulfill your request within a timeframe you found reasonable. Everything else I am about to say is towards a more clear actualization of that idea: what do you want? When do you want it? What kind of person are you?

There are two axes regarding order-starters: pathetic to demanding and appreciated to discouraged. We'll get to extremes in a moment, but for now, the bottom line: what is the most normal and invisible way to order?

If you don't know what type of order-starter works best for your personality, the exact midpoint of this

spectrum is "I'd like a -." As a shortening of "I'd like to have a -," this is an easy to understand, not too demanding (completely normal amount of assertiveness) but not too pathetic (you know how a coffee shop works, you aren't asking a question, you're telling me what you want). Overall, it's a useful go-to. Not to mention, it revolves around a nice word! "Like!" It has an heir of agreeability, of pleasure in this interaction to some extent, or at least enjoyment of the product. Solid "A" for most people.

I find myself, much to my dismay, using one of the most dangerous order-starters out there when I'm on the dark side of the cash register. "I'll just have -" has two main forms, one where you're only ordering one thing (this one is good), and another where you're ordering multiple things

(this one is unforgivable). You will not "just" have a cappuccino and... uh... hm... maybe a cortado. Ridiculous! You can often get away with two things if at least you say them fast and act as if they're essentially linked, for example, "I'll just have a small coffee and a roll." Beautiful.

The most pathetic and also most discouraged way to order is "is it possible to get a -." Unless you're talking about something you either haven't found on the menu or is genuinely bizarre as a thing to be asking for, then yes, it is possible to make a cappuccino. I do have green tea. If it's on the menu you can have it, and if it's not, I'm sure it's still possible. It is couched in rhetoric so unsure of itself that it can't even declare its desire, framing it as some perverse half-question where it takes

the form of an uncertainty but we both know that it's a demand. And as a demand, I am code-bound to fulfill it. This starter does not accept its own role in the interaction. It is scared of itself.

This last one I urge my readers not to try at home without rigorous practice and forethought, both towards delivery and towards whether or not your demeanor is fundamentally fit to handle it. My favorite way to order is also the most demanding; no preamble, just the order. I say "Hello," and you say, "small black coffee." Superb. We're done. It is totally sure of itself, understanding of its position in the conversation, and leaves no room aside from delivery to be rude or polite - it is what it is. Only an order. Done properly, this is invisible. I don't think about it at all, I only set to work on the order. If done too carefully or haltingly, I realize the act; you are not so sure of yourself. Perhaps you're trying to sound decisive and cool, but now your bid for expediency betrays you, and you've outpaced your ordering thoughts. If done too quickly or without enough information to complete the order (i.e., "coffee"), then the whole thing breaks down again. I snap the illusion by asking a question to clarify the order, the only thing you even said, and now you have to say something else.

Consider carefully and order well. Remember, the best order is one I forget as soon as I give you the drink. Explore, find your proper order, and use it until it sounds stupid.

# Opinion: Are Class Breaks Getting Shorter Because Of COVID?



Class breaks are noticeably shorter to writer Jada Simon./CollegeBasics

By Jada Simon  
Staff Writer

Since we began the first semester of 2023, I've noticed that class structure has incurred a few changes at Brooklyn College.

All of a sudden, the longest classes have shorter breaks, and many students have no clue why. At BC, the longer classes range from three to six hours. I remember starting college in 2020 and getting at least three breaks that total to about 50 minutes in a three-hour class, but now I'd be lucky to get thirty minutes worth of break time in most classes of comparable length.

According to Mobina Hashimi, a gender studies professor at Brooklyn College, when she has a class

that lasts around two hours and 45 minutes, she tries to "budget at least ten minutes. There probably should be more, but at least ten minutes, ideally fifteen minutes for a break."

Besides breaks, professors seem to be overestimating how much content they have to fill up class time. There are instances where professors will go through all their activities, question what to do next, and just give students something to fill up the time.

JD Duncan, a BC alum and teaching assistant, said that they find it to be a disservice for professors to keep students for longer if they don't have the content to fill that block of time. "It's a waste of my time, it's a waste of yours. If you do not

have content to fill the entire time block, that is completely fine, don't waste my time stretching out a lesson, it is clearly evident that it is just a performance at this point," they remarked.

This makes me think, could it be possible that the public sees COVID-19 as practically done, and this is a way of getting back to normal?

There are students from various backgrounds and financial classes at Brooklyn College – one thing we'll always be known for is our diversity, but that also means that we have students that are lower-middle class and some students that are a little more well-off. Some students don't always get enough food or sleep for a class, having to juggle

both their classes and other outside activities, such as jobs and home maintenance.

Hashimi suggests that if students were to take two or three classes rather than five classes and follow the schedule of a full-time student, "then you can focus better and engage better because you have more time" and she thinks "that goes into the structure of financial aid at CUNY. We need better funding for part-time students."

Why are long classes with short breaks a problem? I'd say it's because of retention. While schools have been slowly going back to normal, the change in breaks was not something that needed changing to achieve this normalcy. A lot of lives have changed since COVID,

so that may mean that the structure of post-secondary education needs to change.

"There has been a lot of conversation lately about how students learn best through doing things, discovering things, and learning things for themselves and the role of teachers is to create an environment and situations where they can do that. Then, that involves a real rethinking of the structure of a course and the duration of a course," said Hashimi.

I know it may seem like the pandemic is over, but those that lived in the moment of that era will forever be affected, especially students. So many people lost their jobs and loved ones, forcing them to redirect their lives. COVID or not, students need sufficient breaks to breathe and eat in between classes so that their minds are not clouded. Just like professors, students juggle a lot of responsibilities too, and they should be treated based on that consideration. The education system is nowhere near perfect, but it's ultimately for students – it's time we accommodate them better.

# Opinion: Appeal To Finding Knowledge In College



College is still for learning, Isabelle Cachia-Riedl opines./Puget Sound College and Career Network

By Isabelle Cachia-Riedl  
Staff Writer

I first enrolled in college at Portland State, which lasted probably a month. I put it on my high school graduation cap and everything. Then, I ended up running away to Arizona with my best friend instead. When that fell through, I went to University of California in Santa Cruz for maybe three months. UCSC, if you don't know, is one of those hippie schools gone tech, so you find yourself around a lot of self-proclaimed deadheads (about 30 years too late) who do press pills and happily tell you all about their effective altruism plans and cryptocurrency. After, I did community college and loved it, but found out that being a landscape architect was way less cool than studying to be one, and it was back to square one. Now at 23, I've found myself at Brooklyn

College studying creative writing of all things, with mostly elective credits under my belt and two more years ahead of me until I get the famed "piece of paper."

I tell you all this because I think it makes me one of two things: the most reliable or the least reliable voice on the topic of college, and specifically why we go (and even more specifically, why I am going). This is something I've been thinking about for years. And I got one thing terribly wrong; I thought whether I was going, where I was going, and what I was going for said something about who I was as a person. People told me that I should go to college to get a better job, to go for the experience, to find myself, to form connections, or to go because simply not going was out of the question.

What they didn't say was that I would enrich myself with knowledge and find time to write,

think, and read; time that for many is only kept sacred during those four years at college. The problem is that the colleges are less and less concerned with this aspect of the experience. They focus on post-graduation employment rates, campus life, and star-studded faculty (who are way too busy to pay you any mind). And it costs so much! I think one of the reasons why is that they are selling us a better version of ourselves: a post-grad employee with plenty of happy memories to look back on and friends to show for it. It is harder to sell classes on art history for such an exorbitant price, but to be a happy and successful adult is invaluable. And so we empty our pockets for that piece of paper.

The professors are just about as screwed as we are. They are paid next to nothing to teach folks who are squirming in their seats, convinced they

have something better to do. For the most part (with few exceptions), professors are invested in teaching you something they find worthwhile and think you would benefit from knowing. But colleges aren't looking for good teachers in their professors, they're looking for careerists who bring prestige to the school's faculty page. Teaching is a different skill set than writing, researching, or whatever other career path teaching is a detour on. A person can certainly be good at both, but that is an exception.

I have found that the only way to keep myself attending college is to be hopeful for a full and exciting experience learning things that I wouldn't get a chance to otherwise. I am still going for that piece of paper of course, I suppose I might need it down the line, but in the meantime, I am going to try and enjoy myself while using

everything this place has to offer.

Think about why you are here, what you are doing with your time, and maybe try to get something out of it that isn't just the credits. The privilege of an education is something to be cherished. Some of my favorite classes were in subjects I was required to take outside of my major, and I think I was only able to enjoy them because I engaged with them. I thought about them and cared about them all for just learning something, however "useless" and extracurricular it might have been.

I am not interested in telling you what to do, but I am interested in pointing out that we can still choose to go to college to learn. Even if we initially came here for the piece of paper, maybe we can stay for the education.

# BC Sports Recap (Mar. 11 – Mar. 18)

## MEN'S VOLLEYBALL FALLS TO JOHN JAY, HUNTER

By Owen Russell  
Sports Editor

The men's volleyball team dropped two matches this week, making it three straight losses for the Bulldogs.

Brooklyn's first match of the week came against John Jay on Tuesday, Mar. 14. For the first time this season, the contest did not end in a sweep. All of Brooklyn's matches so far have been decided in three sets, regardless of

win or loss. The Bulldogs struggled in the first two sets, losing both by double digits (25-12, 25-15). In the third, Brooklyn found a second gear, avoiding the sweep, and beating the Bloodhounds 25-18. Unfortunately, the Bulldogs could not replicate that success in the fourth set, losing by double digits yet again (25-15). Brooklyn found themselves at the mercy of John Jay's serve, allowing 15 aces. Sophomore David

Lema led the Bulldogs with 22 assists. Junior Tommy Min led the team with 13 kills.

In their second loss of the week, Brooklyn came against Hunter on Thursday, Mar. 16. The Bulldogs suffered a three-set sweep for the 10th time this season. Hunter won by double digits in the first two sets (25-12, 25-10). Brooklyn battled back in third, but still suffered a loss (25-18). Brooklyn got hammered on kills in this



Tommy Min./BC Athletics

match. They allowed 43 kills to the Purple Hawks, while only scoring 17 of their own. Tommy Min scored seven of those 17

## WOMEN'S SOFTBALL KNOCKS IT OUT OF THE PARK

Stats on women's softball match against Yeshiva University./BC Athletics

By Owen Russell  
Sports Editor

The women's softball team kicked off its season this past week with a double header

against Yeshiva University on Thursday, Mar. 16.

The Bulldogs dominated both games of the double-header, winning by a combined score of 28-3. In game one, the Bulldogs

jumped out of the gate with four runs in the first inning, but allowed two runs to Yeshiva. After the first, Brooklyn blanked the competition. Pitcher Danielle Guzzardi held

the Maccabees scoreless for the final five innings, striking out 12 along the way. The Bulldogs piled on from there, scoring six more runs to blowout the home team. Catcher Kaitlyn Belfield was lights out from the batter's box. She recorded three hits in three at bats, while knocking in two runs and crossing the plate three times herself.

Brooklyn blistered their opponent even more in the second game of Thursday's double-header. The Bulldogs scored 18 runs while only allowing one to the Maccabees. Pitcher Danielle Guzzardi pitched another phenomenal

outing, striking out ten batters and giving up just three hits. Brooklyn's offense exploded in the fifth inning, scoring nine runs on eight hits. Center fielder Isabelle Frank and third baseman Yesileidy Paulino both accounted for four RBIs (runs batted in) each. Catcher Kaitlyn Belfield led the team with four hits.

## MEN'S TENNIS SWEEPS YORK

By Owen Russell  
Sports Editor

The men's tennis team walloped York College on Friday, Mar. 15.

Securing their first win against the Cardinals, the Bulldogs swept the competition in nine

different matches. In the three doubles matches, the Bulldogs won by a combined score of 24-3. In the six singles matches, Brooklyn astoundingly almost shutout the Cardinals. York scored one point across six matches. Sophomore Ryan Sham scored a victory in both #1

slots. He won #1 doubles 8-1 with junior Craig Pazarecki by his side. In #1 singles, Sham beat his opponent 6-0 in the first set, and 6-1 in the second. The Bulldogs kicked off their conference schedule with a statement victory. The CUNYAC has been put on notice.



Men's tennis sweeps York./BC Athletics

# Reporting Live: Game Changer Wrestling Comes To NYC



Masha Slamovich raises her world champion title after beating Nick Gage by submission./Owen Russell

By Owen Russell  
*Sports Editor*

New York is often referred to as a pro-wrestling holy land. The WWE has used Madison Square Garden since the company's foundation, and have run some of the greatest shows from the Big Apple. On Saturday Mar. 18, I attended the most recent chapter in NYC's iconic wrestling storybook, but it wasn't what most people would expect. Game Changer Wrestling, commonly known as GCW, stormed into New York with its brand of independent wrestling that has taken the world by storm. GCW hosted "Eye for an Eye" from the Melrose Ballroom in Astoria, Queens.

Gone are the glory days of the WWF (WWE prior to 2002), where bodybuilders jacked up on steroids ran around in bright neon spandex waving the American flag. Wrestling has diversified since the late 90s, creating space for smaller promotions to captivate dedicated fan bases. Perhaps no promotion represents the independent surge more than GCW. What started as a local New Jersey based

company running shows in backyards, has grown into an international sensation. New York, Los Angeles, Canada, and Japan are just some of the places GCW has sold out shows in the past year. It travels the globe with an eclectic roster, showcasing an array of unique styles.

Like I said, pro-wrestling has changed since Hulk Hogan ruled over the ring. GCW has been known to push the boundaries, specifically with their deathmatch style. Deathmatch wrestling usually involves sharp objects and a lot of blood. And while pro-wrestling is predetermined, the injuries are real, and often quite gnarly. You have to be some type of sick to enjoy a deathmatch... but I think they're great. If you're squeamish don't worry, GCW is much more than blood and guts.

There's a law in New York prohibiting deathmatch wrestling. It's odd but true, New York won't allow any blood in the wrestling ring, much to the chagrin of extreme GCW fans. However, due to the limitations, GCW flexed their creativity this past Saturday. Some of the world's greatest wrestlers

faced off against GCW originals.

No better example of this was the second to last match of the night: a tag team bout. In one corner, GCW favorites Jordan Oliver, a 23-year-old whiz kid from Newburgh, NY, and Speedball Mike Bailey, a popular Canadian pro-wrestler with an MMA background. In the other corner, the TimeSplitters — Alex Shelley and Kushida, who formed as a duo back in 2013 while competing in New Japan Pro-Wrestling, where they won the tag

**GCW proved once again that wrestling continues to evolve.**

team championships. Both Shelley and Kushida have held championships across the globe, appeared in WWE, and have built reputations as some of the top pro-wrestlers around.

The match highlighted the teams, as Kushida and Shelley went back and forth with Oliver and Bailey. Both teams exhibited high-flying

offense, diving outside of the ring. The TimeSplitters won, but Oliver and Bailey performed well in defeat. As a fan, it is special to see superstars as big as Shelley and Kushida in a smaller venue rather than on TV, especially when they're elevating their opponents.

Oliver and Bailey vs. TimeSplitters wasn't the only notable match on the card. My favorite match of the night happened between two independent wrestling legends. Joey Janela has become a household name for most wrestling fans. He became viral in the 2010s for falling off of roofs and jumping from chandeliers. He signed with AEW, the world's second largest pro-wrestling company, when the promotion formed in 2019. He has since left AEW to resume a hall of fame worthy independent wrestling career. Janela's opponent is noticeably less known. Grim Reefer hails from East New York; he's been an NYC wrestling icon since the early 2000s, and as his name suggests... he loves smoking weed.

Reefer vs. Janela opened comedically. Reefer lit a joint and smoked it while trading blows with Janela. The two took turns fighting for the joint, stealing it from one another. Then the intensity picked up. The match spiraled outside of the ring, Janela suplexed Reefer onto the ring apron. The crowd went ballistic when Reefer got up and dove to the outside. He crashed into Janela. Both men hit the floor. When Reefer arose, the joint laid perfectly between his lips. The crowd loved it. Despite ricocheting Janela's head into a chair from a springboard position (absolutely incredible by the way), Reefer could not pick up the win. Janela won the match, but grabbed a

microphone giving props to Reefer as an NYC legend. The crowd applauded, giving Reefer the flowers he rightfully earned.

The night ended with GCW crowning a new world champion. Masha Slamovich defeated Nick Gage for the world title, becoming the first woman to hold the GCW World Championship. Slamovich, a native New Yorker, had her parents in the front row. After successfully choking out Nick Gage, a reformed felon who has earned a reputation as one of the most dangerous men in pro-wrestling, she celebrated in the ring with her parents. Gage, a man who once died from blood loss during a match only to be revived in a helicopter on the way to the hospital (very real and very absurd), congratulated Slamovich and embraced her.

My girlfriend Julia, not a massive wrestling fan, attended the show with me. When Gage rose Slamaovich's hand calling her "the realest Mfer in the locker," allowing Masha to celebrate with her mom and dad, Julia cried. Wrestling can be funny like that.

I don't want to leave anything out, so I just wanted to shout out a few more wrestlers who put on a great show. Bandido, Gringo Loco, Effy, Allie Katch, Sawyer Wreck, Rina Yamashita, Los Macizos, Tony Deppen, and Willie Mack all crushed it.

GCW proved once again that wrestling continues to evolve. You cannot pin it down, and label it as "simply this" or "just that." The roster features wrestlers from around the world, of different genders, races, and sexualities. Even if you're not the biggest wrestling fan, I suggest popping out for a GCW show. It's practically one big party.