AI ENTERS DIGITAL ART

Anime Club and Computer Science Club Host “A Study of the Soul of AI”
Pg. 6

In Photos: Grand Iftar,
Pg. 7

NYPIRG Gathers Period Product Donations,
Pg. 8

A Night of Metaphors and Community: The Brooklyn Poetry Slam,
Pg. 9

Cover by Tony Lipka
Manhattan Congestion Pricing Moves to Final Stages

Weekdays from 5 A.M. to 9 P.M., most passenger cars will be charged $15 a day under the new congestion pricing. / Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

By Shlomie Katash
News Editor

On Mar. 27, the board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) voted 11-1 to approve the tolling rates for motorists entering at 60th street and below in Manhattan. This is part of the country's first congestion pricing system that is nearing the final stages of implementation to make efforts to reduce traffic and raise over $1 billion for public transit improvements successful.

According to The New York Times, nearly all the toll readers have been already and may begin automatically charging drivers for entering the zone, mostly using the E-ZPass system. The approved tolls are based on a November 2023 study from the Traffic Mobility Review Board, an advisory committee that reports to the MTA.

On weekdays between 5 A.M. and 9 P.M., most passenger cars will be charged $15 a day, small trucks and charter buses $24 a day, large trucks $26 a day, and motorcycles $7.50 a day. The same fares will apply on weekends, but the hours will begin at 9 A.M. instead; entering the congestion zone outside of the specified hours will reduce the charge by 75%.

Taxi and black car services will be charged $1.50 extra; Ubers and Lyfts $2.50 extra. These costs will apply directly to passengers, who are expected to approve it, according to The New York Times. If enacted, the plan will take effect by June. However, six lawsuits, including from politicians, residents, and the State of New Jersey, have been filed against the program, citing the high costs and potential environmental effects. Lisa Daglian, executive director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, referred to the legal challenges as “baseless last-resort lawsuits,” according to The Times.

“Put simply, congestion pricing is happening,” Daglian said.
“Diaspora Discussions”:
ASU Hosts Talk on African Diaspora

By Yassir Azzam
Podcast Manager

On Wednesday, March 27, the African Student Union (ASU) hosted a discussion regarding issues of the African diaspora in the modern world with a focus on women’s voices from the diaspora.

ASU created the panel from different walks of life that “resonated with special corners of their [e-board members] lives,” President of ASU Fatoumata Soumahoro told The Vanguard. They looked into communities they are a part of and created a panel focused on the lives of the women of color in them.

The panel included various successful African women, each with a diverse and rich culture and career background: educator Ifeyina Anako; Abayomi Are, a chef in and entrepreneur of Mariam’s Kitchen; Aissata Cisee, a student at BC; and Deborah Denis, a researcher and advocate in maternal and public health at New York University. The goal of the event, according to organizers, was to uplift women of color from the region by sharing their experiences.

“BC students should know that women in the African diaspora are making waves and creating a ripple effect for communities here in the United States. From street vending, to African restaurants, push back against lack of medical resources for women of color, education, clubs […] African women are paving the way and encouraging their sisters to join movements that caters to our needs and to not let a moment linger for too long,” Soumahoro told The Vanguard. “With this event, we hope to empower and uplift women who hail from the African diaspora.”

The panelists highlighted the sacrifices and contributions that women made in Africa, and the creation of communities for African women in the United States who face barriers while immigrating. In addition, they shared their experiences trying to make progress in their personal, academic, and professional lives.

“The panelists shared the cultural traditions rooted in their family histories, and spoke of the difficulties of what it meant to be a woman, to be secondary, and to learn how to hustle to make your mark,” Soumahoro said. “This, they mentioned, made it difficult to operate in their respective career paths in the beginning, but they eventually created a community of like-minded individuals to help them see through the traditions.”

According to a study conducted by Mary J. Osirim Professor of Sociology at Bryn Mawr College, solidarity is created by women in the “New Diaspora” in America through a recreation of their culture from Africa. Events such as these help to shed light on the African diaspora as well as the valuable support it creates in the lives of immigrant women of color. The event also created opportunities for BC students attending the event to connect with other women of color.

“Women are the biggest pillar of the African Diaspora: they’re the mothers, the older sisters, the support system of the entire African Diaspora,” Wisdom Obadofin, treasurer of ASU, told The Vanguard. “ASU will continue to put the spotlight on African students at BC, as a few of the E-Board members will be graduating this semester, we are gladly passing the torch to other enthusiastic and passionate students.”

ASU aims to continue to uplift the women in their communities, and allow women of color to have their stories be heard that are all unique and individual to their lived experiences.

“Women deserve to be heard and regarded importantly, and it is time they are treated as so,” Soumahoro said.

To be a part of more events and conversations regarding the African diaspora, follow the African Student Union on Instagram @brooklyncollege_asu

(L to R): Panelists Aissata Cisee, Abayomi Are, Deborah Denis, Ifeyina Anako / Edwina Laurent
Budget Deadline Officially Extended to April 4

By Shlomie Katash
News Editor

On March 28, the New York State legislatures passed a spending extender offered by Governor Kathy Hochul that will keep the government running until April 4, past April 1, the end of the fiscal year and traditional budget deadline. This move signaled that, for the third year in a row, another late budget would be coming, though how late depends on the speed of the continued negotiations.

“We are working hard to reach agreement on billions of dollars of spending and revenue,” said State Senator Liz Krueger in the Senate Session. “Since we are planning to go home today, with Good Friday tomorrow and Easter on Sunday, it is not realistic that we will get a complete budget done by April 1.”

The budget is split into ten separate bills, all reserved for different issues and spending targets. According to City & State, the bill reserved for paying state debts is usually passed without negotiation before the April 1 deadline, to ensure that the state does not default on its loans. This year, the bill was successfully passed on Mar. 28 along with the extender, though Assembly Republicans forced floor debates surrounding ideas of fiscal responsibility that lasted hours, according to The Daily Gazette.

Since the beginning of her tenure, Hochul has made housing a primary concern of hers during the budget process, pushing for the state to fund the building of more homes.

“Housing unsheltered New Yorkers, long-term residents, and new arrivals alike remains a challenge as long as we lack sufficient affordable housing options,” Hochul said in her Budget Address on Jan. 16. “Our state still needs hundreds and hundreds of thousands of new homes to solve our housing crisis. The answer, my friends, is not blowing in the wind - it’s shovels in the ground.”

She has repeated similar statements this budget process, and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said on March 26 that the leaders were “on the same planet” when it came to negotiations and added that “there is an understanding” that tenant protections must be included as part of any housing deal, according to City & State. Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins echoed similar sentiments on March 27, referring to the budget process as being “in the middle of the middle,” according to PBS.

“The housing deal, as we’ve always indicated, must be holistic and must include tenant protections,” said Stewart-Cousins to reporters. “I do believe, again: we are all on the same planet, we are all working towards trying to get that grand plan that will not only address affordability, but address the needs of supply as well as the needs of tenant protections.”

Amid negotiations and the ironing out of details, several stakeholders have attempted to make their voices heard and protested several aspects of the budget process. This includes thousands of health care workers, per NY Daily News, teachers unions, according to NYSUT, and CUNY and SUNY students, as previously reported by The Vanguard.
LGBTQ+ Center Hosts Anti-Violence Training Workshop

By Giovanni Ravalli  
Staff Writer

In honor of Trans Day of Visibility, the LGBTQ+ Center hosted the New York City “Anti-Violence Project for Upstander Intervention and De-Escalation” training on Tuesday, March 26.

The workshop was presented by Delilah Seligman of the NYC Anti-Violence Project. The aim was to empower people to become effective upstanders in circumstances of hate violence. Hate violence is any form of violence to a human being belonging to a marginalized group resulting from biased prejudices. It can occur anywhere—on the street, public transit, work, home, places of worship—even over the internet.

Trans people are on the receiving end of a rise in reactivity and violence due to being hypervisible. As a result of being so easily seen, the transgender community experiences a disproportionately higher rate of violence. “Visibility without protection is still violence. Since coming out as a transwoman, I’ve absolutely dealt with a ton of street harassment and violence,” said Seligman. “Definitely a lot of anxiety and hypervigilance out in the streets. The lived experience makes it really important for me to want to do more to help people.”

A bystander is someone who witnesses hate violence and doesn’t get involved. In contrast to a bystander, an “upstander” will intervene in support of the victim of being harassed, intimidated, discriminated against, attacked, bullied or otherwise dehumanized. This is done by utilizing the project’s five D’s of upstander action: “Direct-confronting the perpetrator; Delegate-assess the situation, risk level and assign tasks to others; Distract-taking attention away from the perpetrator, victim or the situation; Delay-checking in with the victim; Document-record the incident on your phone for evidence purposes.”

During the visualization and role play exercises, participants were able to practice deep breathing along with a self scan of internal thoughts and feelings as well as environment scan techniques to assess the scene for safety. Not all tools are appropriate for every situation. Distraction may work in some instances, while other times being direct is a better approach. Best to use discretion when discerning the safety of getting involved. If it isn’t safe, then delegation is a better option. The priority is to ensure you and the victim get out of the scene safely.

The NYC Anti-Violence Project has provided a 24-hour crisis hotline service since 1985. Trained volunteer counselors offer option clarification and assist by connecting survivors with needed resources, help with accessing law enforcement, counseling and legal assistance.

The Anti-Violence Project is involved in policy legislation and education to recognize hate speech as a crime. “I’ve been in the LGBT non-profit world for many years now,” said Seligman. “The work that we do, it’s so important to practice what we preach, and so this is stuff that we’re trying to do and that’s part of the reason we go into the community is to train folks to try and do better in the world and take care of each other.”

The NYC Anti-Violence Project started as a volunteer organization in 1980 as a response to an alarming increase in violence against gay men at that time. Their mission is to empower LGBTQ+ communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, supporting survivors through counseling and advocacy. The NYC Anti-Violence Project is now the largest anti-LGBTQ+ violence organization in the country and coordinates the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs to facilitate systemic and social change.

“The idea for the workshop originally came from an Art Department professor Christopher Richards, who often experiences ridicule or worse for his outwardly flamboyant clothing choices, and unapologetically ‘gay’ appearance,” said Kelly Spivey, director of the LGBTQ+ Resource Center. “He experiences verbal harassment on the subway and on the street, not necessarily on campus, but he wondered if we could all benefit from learning skills to help if we are targeted or if we witness someone being targeted, thus the workshop title ‘bystander’ training.”

Everyone has their own experiences with discrimination in some way. When a social identity overlaps with another one, or more, this is called intersectionality. As Seligman explained, “We all have different identities. Different identities have different privileges.”

“I think it’s a really important conversation to have because I myself have often felt unsafe and because of my own experiences I thought it’d be a good event for us to have,” said Richards. “I think it’s good because sometimes students don’t want to verbalize the feeling of being unsafe, so I think it’s a nice way to allow them to have that conversation and give them some really thoughtful tactics which are really helpful.”

Understanding intersectionality is crucial for encouraging diversity, equity and inclusivity, according to organizers. It allows us to recognize and address the unique experiences and challenges faced by those with intersecting identities.

“Hopefully we will have more events that really celebrate who we are and make us feel safe, accepted, and seen,” said Richards.

Students interested in learning more about The NYC Anti-Violence Project can visit https://www.AVP.org and students interested in learning more about the LGBTQ+ Resource Center can visit https://www.brooklyn.edu/lgbtq-center/ or visit their office in 219-221 Student Center.
Anime Club and Computer Science Club Host “A Study of the Soul of AI” Event

By Emmad Kashmiri
Digital Editor

Kate Dempsey
Editor-in-Chief

“Is AI-generated art actually art? Should we give AI human rights once it becomes sentient?” The Computer Science Club, in conjunction with the Anime Club, organized “A Study of the Soul of AI” to answer these questions and more on March 26.

To organizers, the goal of hosting the event was to engage in the larger conversations around AI, as well as its impact on the anime industry. In our homes, workplaces, and almost every facet of our lives, the benefits of AI’s omnipresence in society is still subject to debate.

“We are all having that dichotomy where it’s like, ‘Is AI bad?’ ‘Is AI good?’ ‘Should it write my essays?’ [...] It’s like what are we going to do now because everything is chaotic now that we have a new form of developing people in a sense,” Gianni Cooper, president of the Anime Club, told The Vanguard.

The concerns are particularly relevant for artists, whose work may be under threat by AI generators. An AI generator can be programmed to create art, but its source material may lead to plagiarism of existing art.

“It’s a very vivid nightmare that’s very much in your face out content quickly or saved, often leading to moral ambiguity if it was warranted to do so. Because before anything often results in burnout one of the worst things and exploitation, with about what AI has animators sacrificing become nowadays isn’t their well-being for the that it’s able to do the sake of their product. work for you, that’s not a lot of the anime the intrinsic problem,” industry is akin to like said Cooper. “The sweatshops: they do not problem is that it’s doing respect people when they the art for you and AI go into that industry you can’t create art without a are basically working substance to base it off, day in day out. It’s very one of the many factors rough on the body and being they copy off of the soul,” said Cooper.

“AI has taken the world As AI technology by storm, and companies evolves, animators are naturally want to save as finding it a challenge much money as possible, to compete with AI so the two mixing would generated content, be disastrous for the on top of the normal animation industry.” pressures of making AI can have major in the industry. The implications for algorithms within AI are musicians in the anime able to rapidly generate industry as well. Much animation sequences, like graphics that AI posing a threat to could copy from artists, traditional animators AI could learn and who often labor for hours recreate music made by to bring characters to life musicians and declare it as being original.

“We all remember Besides the animation when AI first came out, part of the studio it couldn’t draw hands. music that’s developed What’s the first thing that in anime also uses a lot a lot of people struggle of artificial programs with when it comes down and that could just make to art? Hands,” Cooper either songwriters that said. “When we get to produced that type of art that point where they and that genre obsolete,” are able to animate stuff said Angellide Leon, even more complex than vice-president of the hands, you’re going to Anime Club.

have multiple showings At the event, club of people’s art getting leaders used anime itself stolen from.” to illustrate the potential Global appeal of have if used in real life. Despite the popularity harm that AI could global appeal of have if used in real life. Despite the popularity harm that AI could even endure harsh working from “Psycho-Pass,” a Those are questions conditionsandlonghours sci-fi dystopian anime to meet demanding where their AI weapons production schedules. determine for them if ourselves into becoming.

The pressure to churn someone should be killed obsolete?”
Brooklyn College Muslim Student Association, the Undergraduate Student Government, and Brooklyn College Muslims Giving Back hosted the Grand Iftar on March 28.

Photos by @flixbymoe on Instagram
NYPIRG Hosts Menstruation Drive to Support Women’s Center

By T’Neil Gooden
Features Editor

The New York Public Interest Group (NYPIRG) Brooklyn College chapter hosted a menstrual product drive to support the Women’s Center on March 25 and March 28.

The NYPIRG community went into the Flatbush district around Brooklyn College to ask for menstrual product donations to the BC community. As previously reported by The Vanguard, the Women’s Center and other areas within BC have had a product shortage. Budget cuts have cut many resources within the Women’s Center, and the distribution of menstrual products is one of them. This is why NYPIRG decided to step in and assist the Women’s Center in restocking these goods.

“It was really great helping out. I was even able to make a donation myself, which I really appreciated,” Leila Tazi, a NYPIRG intern, told The Vanguard. “It doesn’t take much, but it could make a huge difference because in a pack of pads there are 18 pads that could potentially help 18 students.”

The students within the NYPIRG community look forward to this event as it continues to spread light on the issues within the BC walls. Going into the community to spread awareness on menstruation and the lack of products within the BC campus allowed for the influx of many products and attention towards the stereotypes behind period products.

“I really love that this is one of my favorite events that NYPIRG does, because it is really such solidarity and unity within the campus,” Tazi told The Vanguard. “It’s so geared to help students and I really love that it is student-focused.”

For other organizers, openly talking about donations and the need for period products is working to eliminate the stigma and taboo about the need for women to have access to these types of hygienic products.

“I really liked advocating and asking for menstrual products specifically because I think there is a historical connotation with shame and taboo and [people] don’t talk about menstrual products in our society, specifically in the US,” Daniella Gostev, a NYPIRG intern told The Vanguard. “It just felt really important to be using proper words for the [products] that we were asking for and asking everyone, and normalizing the idea that this is a need. We’re not just going to be quiet about it because of some outdated claims with menstrual products.”

According to organizer and NYPIRG Project Coordinator Brooklyn Darling, the drive was able to provide 1,146 menstrual products to the Women’s Center from the donations received from the Flatbush community. Another leading cause for the making of this event was to combat “period poverty” – which researchers define as the inability for women globally to have access to proper menstruation products that leaves them unable to go about their daily lives, according to the National Library of Medicine (NLM). NLM determined that 1 out of 10 menstruating girls miss school during their cycles due a lack of necessary products, and many women allocate money meant for food towards proper sanitary products.

“Period poverty is very severe, especially because a lot of people are very unaware of it,” Tazi told The Vanguard. “New York City being such a rich city, poverty can look very different from suburban poverty or rural poverty in this country, and current poverty definitely comes up, especially for youth, girls, women, and people who have menstruation in their youth and in their school years.”

While organizers stress that supply drives like this are just the start to combating period poverty, it can make a huge difference for a woman to have what she needs in order to thrive.

“It’s very serious, we’re all struggling and at the end of the day, one pad can be the difference between getting to class on time or not,” Tazi said. “So, anything helps, and I think this is just such beautiful work and it really heals my inner child to be able to do this and give back to others knowing that this is something I’ve needed help with myself.”

NYPIRG will continue to accept donations, with every product creating hope that no student will have to face this type of poverty any longer.

“[We] need these products more than ever before, so if you are able to give anything at all, now is the time,” Darling said. “One single box of 12 products will be able to help potentially 12 different students, so that’s why we really need to be all stepping up our game.”

To learn more, visit NYPIRG on their Instagram @brooklyn_nypirg and visit the Women’s Center at 227 Ingersoll Extension.
A Night of Metaphors and Community: The Brooklyn Poetry Slam

By Jaida Dent
Staff Writer

Tuesday, March 26 was marked with powerful words shared throughout the night as BRIC Arts Media hosted their annual “Brooklyn Poetry Slam.” The event saw those of all ages in the audience, gathering to hear the words of local poets who came to compete. It was hosted by its founders Mahogany L. Browne, Lincoln Center's first ever poet-in-residence, and Jive Poetic, a poet, educator, and DJ.

Poetry slams are a form of competition between poets, but it is ultimately a showcase of material. Losing isn't seen as failure, but rather motivation to continue performing. This slam held importance to its founders because it is the ten-year anniversary of the Brooklyn Poetry Slam. This slam also comes right before National Poetry Month, which has been recognized every April since 1996. To the founders, the night is not just about “selling” poetry; it’s about bringing poetry fans together.

“The reality is there are very few spaces where poetry is just for the people. There are no attempts to sell merch, or drinks, or coffee. We’re not squeezing people into a space and just telling them to be happy with it. This is truly poetry for the people, a large stage, a beautiful production, and it’s free,” Browne told The Vanguard.

The event consisted of an open mic with featured poet Ibi Zoboi, a New York Times Bestselling Author. Afterward the slam began.

The slam consisted of seven poets who ended up being chosen by a lottery, primarily due to the amount of people who signed up to compete. To continuously promote community at the event, the judges were members of the crowd who were chosen at random by Browne. Each judge was given a score card they used to score each poem on a scale of one to ten. The final score was calculated by dropping the lowest and highest scores and then dividing the total by three, where the maximum score for a poet was 30. Based on the scores, the three poets with the best scores proceeded to round two, where the slam champion is determined.

The winner of the slam and the only woman in the competition, Jerica Deck “Jeri Rae,” won the slam by obtaining a perfect score of 30.

“I feel like the audience validated a lot of my feelings. I don’t always put myself in my pieces like that, I kind of struggle with the vulnerability. I feel like my first piece is really the first piece that’s really like, ‘Oh this is me’ and to feel the love and the reception of both pieces, it means a lot, regardless of the score,” Rae said.

Her pieces were centered around her personal struggles in relationships. Her second round poem described how “Mac and Cheese” is a better side dish, and the metaphor alluded to how individuals might always return to the “side chicks” rather than the “ mains,” or those who they are meant to be in a committed relationship with. Not only does poetry serve as a space for expression, but also personal growth.

The night served as an opportunity for Rae to not only grow her confidence, but her performance skills as well as she will advance to the Brooklyn Poetry Slam’s finals in June.

“I’ve always been a very shy kid, and poetry kind of allowed me to be a better speaker and meet more people. So I think it just helped me to express myself especially like, again with the vulnerability and the darker points of myself,” Rae said.

While slams are competitive in nature, it is not winning that drives people, it is simply being heard and having a chance to share ideas. The night hosted a display of the affinity that people have towards poetry and the connection it creates between the audience and the poets.

“If we don’t write our stories, who will? So, poetry is that nucleus of self-preservation, self-storytelling, and narratives that exceed our expectations,” Browne said.

For more information about BRIC and the Brooklyn Poetry Slam, follow them on Instagram: @bricbrooklyn and @bkpoetryslam.
Queen B: “Cowboy Carter” And The Ironic Underestimation of Beyoncé’s Artistry

By Rami Mansi
Opinions Editor

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter is more than a singer; she’s the matriarchal essence of music and artistry incarnate. The extent to which her impact has spread far and wide outwards into culture, music, entertainment/performance, and various social constraints such as gender norms and race, is undeniable. With her unchanging destiny and powerful acts of her musical virtues, each album brings us one step closer to understanding who Beyoncé, continuing with her latest creation, “Cowboy Carter.”

Beyoncé’s newest album is set within the country genre. The lyricism spans all of Beyoncé’s personas with perspectives of being a mother, daughter, wife, and woman all coming to a cohesive sonic marvel.

“Cowboy, Carter” is the second album within Beyoncé’s trilogy of albums that is dedicated to reclaiming originally Black genres. The first installment, “RENAISSANCE,” claims the electronic genre with house, dance, and ballroom as its majority. The second installment, “Cowboy Carter,” introduces country into the mix with the origin of the genre residing within bluegrass and Black folk music. The last album, expected to be released in 2026, has been highly suspected of channeling the rock genre.

Beyoncé is no stranger to being a multifaceted artist, with her entire discography ranging dramatically from genres such as R&B to Hip-Hop, pop to blues, soul to electronic, and many more.

Beyoncé previously used the country genre on her fan-favorite song “Daddy Lessons” off her 2016 critically acclaimed “Lemonade.” However, even though Beyoncé was born and raised in this genre and has used it in music, the world hasn’t been ready to experience and welcome Beyoncé within the country genre.

The world has truly never been ready for Beyoncé and the cultural resets she has created. For example, her controversial performance at the 2016 Super Bowl which led to the #BoycottBeyoncé movement, when police districts and politicians called for a national boycott against Beyoncé. This is due to her vocal political stance in her support for the Black Lives Matter movement and her commentary on police in America.

Another is her Country Music Awards performance with the Dixie Chicks, another controversial show due to the political notions surrounding it. Another underestimation was of her debut album “Dangerously In Love,” assumed to have zero hit songs and ended up having five hits.

Beyoncé has constantly and consistently been underestimated as a performer, artist, and all-around person. Constantly fighting against various racial and gender barriers as a Black woman, Beyoncé has broken down many of the barriers and extended the viability for Black women in music. A political pioneer within music and a feminine voice in an industry that runs on controlling masculine figures, Beyoncé became the first in many aspects of her career and influenced multiple generations of musicians and artisans alike.

When it comes to “Cowboy Carter,” the underestimation of Beyoncé hasn’t changed as many people didn’t agree with the artist’s journey into country music. As seen in The Week, country radios refused to play her music due to Beyoncé herself not being a “country singer,” and fans also not appreciating country music and constantly attaching Beyoncé to her old music.

The underestimation of Beyoncé is extremely ironic because as huge of a superstar and legend as she is, Beyoncé is constantly undermined by both her fans and the public. Her fans take to Twitter and make attempts at being her creative director, by creating fake setlists or simply rushing the creative process by listening to leaks. While many communities within the mainstream public listen to her singles and make full assumptions about her art and musical ethics, seen through the impact of the lead single of “Cowboy Carter”: “Texas Hold ‘Em.”

“Texas Hold Em” went viral on various social media platforms and became a widely diverse song, with many people either falling in love with Beyoncé’s new song or struggling to grasp the concept of this song. Those people who fall into the latter, refuse to listen to the new album as they’ve already created their assumptions on the album through its one single.

However, if Beyoncé has taught us anything about her career, it is that she always has a plan. Listening to her singles is not merely enough; to truly appreciate Beyoncé you must listen to her albums in their entirety, as the experience of listening to the album will completely transform your understanding of her artwork.

Beyoncé will forever be your favorite singer’s favorite singer. From powerful lyricism to visual albums and genre-smashing artworks, Beyoncé truly is that girl forever and always.
Kendrick Lamar Fires Back At Drake: 
Rap Battles Remain a Part of the Industry

By Manuel Polanco
Staff Writer

From Biggie Smalls feuding with Tupac, to Jay-Z and Nas's iconic beef that continued for years, rap feeds off of two rap powerhouses in the industry fighting. Rap as a genre is defined by artists feuding (beefing) with one another. There is now another iconic feud, and Kendrick Lamar comes out on top.

Metro Boomin and Future's collaborative album “WE DON’T TRUST YOU” finally dropped, and it included subtle jabs to Toronto native Drake. When the album was released, many of the features were hidden, and to many people's shock, one of the tracks included a Kendrick Lamar feature where he dissed both Drake and J. Cole.

Kendrick Lamar is one of the great pillars of the rap genre. You could say the same for Drake, but the storytelling Kendrick Lamar invokes in his music is bar none to other rappers. “To Pimp A Butterfly” is one of the greatest rap albums ever made, and solidified Kendrick Lamar as one of the best rappers in the game. Hearing him diss Drake and Cole was shocking, but also brought back this feeling of old-school rap beef, and it is another example of how the rap genre creates spaces for rivalries and rap disses.

Kendrick Lamar absolutely flamed both Drake and Cole in this track with his wordplay and flow. J. Cole once made good and engaging music that rivaled Kendrick in their storytelling, but his latest projects just put you to sleep simply because they lack good substance and a good story. Rap beef isn't new to Drake, who has had some great beefs over time going back to his legendary feud with Meek Mill which resulted in Drake dropping his legendary diss track, “0-100.” The most iconic however is Drake's beef with Pusha T, which still has ripples in music to this day since he and Drake are enemies and have bad blood. I guess it makes for good music!

The first song, titled “We Don’t Trust You,” included a diss by Future towards Drake, in which he called him fake and accused him of sneak dissing first. Sneak dissing is a part of rap beef, and rappers usually do it when they want to diss someone without mentioning their name. This holds since Drake did throw jabs at the future in his last album “For All The Dogs” in his song titled “What Would Pluto Do?” This has been a long time since both rappers have thrown subtle shots at each other throughout the years, and it finally culminated in a great diss by Kendrick Lamar where he hails himself the “Big Man.”

Kendrick Lamar asserts himself as the best and stands alone at the top without Drake and Cole near him. A lot of people were shocked he dissed Cole since many would think the two are good friends, but Cole's verse in “First Person Shooter” must have rubbed Kendrick Lamar the wrong way.

Cole equated both Drake, Kendrick Lamar, and himself as the modern-day Greatest Of All Time (GOAT), and Kendrick Lamar wasn’t having that. On top of that, Cole was praising Drake a bit too much in ‘First Person Shooter.' For example, Cole said “The Spider-Man meme is me lookin’ at Drake.” I mean this is just an insane lyric to say. When I first heard this song I knew it was gonna be a banger, because Future started off whistling in the track (and everyone knows when Future starts whistling it’s an instant classic).

Drake is currently on tour and has made some remarks here and there about the disses, and as I’m writing this, J. Cole dropped an album in which he responded to the diss and it was the most lackluster response ever. In his song ‘7 Minute Drill,’ Cole went on to say that Kendrick Lamar’s ‘To Pimp A Butterfly’ was boring, and criticized the fact that Kendrick has released four albums in 10 years (which I don't get why it would be a big deal). You can't have good rap beef if the other side drops boring disses and falls flat on their face! Drake may make better music than Kendrick Lamar, but he is not a better rapper than him. I personally don't see him out rapping in a diss.

All Bets Are Off: Sports Betting Has Taken on a Life of Its Own

By Sean Markisic  
Sports Editor

The practice of betting on sports games was always viewed as a taboo and unethical activity by sports leagues in the past since it was illegal. Sports gambling was first made legal in the United States in May 2018, and since then, it has slowly become more commercialized and even embraced by sports leagues. Betting on sports has created an entire new avenue of revenue for leagues, and as a result, it has altered the fan perspective on the games they watch, changing the relationship between fans of their games.

Sports betting truly became a phenomenon in the early to mid 1990's which appended to coincide with the rise of internet access. As explained by Delasport, the 1990's saw the first online sportsbook that was created which allowed for a larger audience to interact with it. Fast forward to the 2000's, people were able to place bets with each other, and in addition place bets while games were going on; in theory this gives them a better chance at making the right bet. By the time the early 2010's arrived, sports betting was available for any and all sports, which opened the door for more people to get in on the action.

Tuning into any game for American sports leagues will lead to the average viewer having sports bets thrown in their faces. Commentators always give the betting at the start as well as throughout the game. Some might just see these bets and ignore them, whereas others will see it being fed to them and will want to get in on the action to see if they can make a profit from a quick bet. Sports gambling has become commonplace in society and led to the growth in a large number of sports betting apps such as FanDuel, DraftKings and Bet365. Additionally, there are a variety of bets that people can make. Instead of making one bet, people have the option of wagering their money on multiple bets. Even though it decreases their chance of winning, it can lead to high rewards. People subconsciously jump at the idea of this option without thinking of the risk, which can lead to losing out on a large sum of money.

People were persuaded by sports betting because it provides them with an adrenaline rush, and the sports leagues are profiting off of it no matter what. Sports leagues have embraced gambling and partnered up with them in order to advertise it since it's now legal. In addition, players becoming involved in sports gambling has started to become quite controversial. In Major League Baseball, star player Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Dodgers was accused of paying off gambling debts for his Japanese interpreter Ippei Mizuhara.

“I never bet on baseball or any other sports or have never asked somebody to do that on my behalf. And I have never went through a bookmaker to bet on sports,” Ohtani said in a press conference on March 25. “Ippei never revealed to me that there was this media inquiry. Ippei told the media and to my representatives that I, on behalf of a friend, paid off debt.”

This controversy unveils a whole new side of gambling that viewers rarely see. It creates a whole new dynamic in sports leagues, which is that they are perfectly fine with fans betting on games, but look down upon it when players do so; it’s a double standard for those in the sporting world.

Sports gambling was at one point an illegal practice that was kept under wraps. While no longer illegal, it remains to be seen if it will end up creating illegal practices itself.