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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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BC USG Presidential Debate: The Candidates on the College's Pressing Issues

By Victoria Keraj
News Editor

On March 19, Brooklyn College's Undergraduate Student Government (USG) held a presidential debate in the student center. The two presidential candidates included Cyle Paul and Damir Shavkatov, and their respective vice presidents, Fia Sanchez and Carmine Tepedino.

The debate was moderated by The Vanguard.

The parties first introduced themselves and their experiences in being involved on the BC campus.

Shavkatov, Paul, and Tepedino served as student senators in the USG with Tepedino also acting as student advocate. Sanchez is the president of the LGBT Alliance on campus and vice president of the Black Solidarity Day Committee. Throughout the debate, Shavkatov also spoke on his experience as a BC navigator.

Each party had 5 minutes to provide insight on questions submitted to by BC students. The questions covered topics of concern to students which the candidates expressed their stances on and plans to address.

The first matter addressed was increasing student involvement on campus. Both candidates had plans of increasing USG's reach to promote events and clubs. When addressing student involvement, the candidates expressed concern that since BC is a commuter school, it would take extra work to make sure that students are aware of events happening on campus.

"Something has to be shown really directly to students," Tepedino stated. "BC Students are very hard to reach," he later said.

Sanchez brought up that she was concerned with additional factors that would keep BC students from engaging with opportunities on campus.

"A lot of people are disconnected, because they feel so stressed out about their lives." She added that USG's would need to increase its reach with more forms, flyers, and information to reach those students. "We should go to classrooms on a regular basis to talk to people. I think we should put out way more forms, surveys, more flyers. We could do weekly flyer in front of the gates," she said.

The idea of USG hosting town halls where students could present issues was brought forward in the debate by Shavkatov. Paul also shared the same sentiment, adding that town halls would be held twice

every semester.

Related to the topic of student engagement are the candidates' stances on funding for student resources. Both candidates agreed that they wished for Referendums B and C to have been passed. Referendums B and C each proposed to increase the Student Activity Fee, included as part of each student's tuition, to fund the Athletics Department and student center improvements, respectively. B and C, along with all other proposed referendums on the ballot, were not passed. To both groups, the loss of funding for the student center and athletics resources are losses for student engagement which both parties say they are concerned with.

"It's tough when you want to balance affordability and also engaging student life and having an engaging campus," Tepedino stated.

Shavkatov said that even with the referendum not getting passed, he and Tepedino still are, "[...] willing to work with the athletics as well as the student center to make some changes happen."

"Ultimately it is up to the Brooklyn College body. We're willing to work with anything- anything that we have and unfortunately, it didn't get passed, but our vision was referendum B and C," Shavkatov said on the matter.

Regarding funding, Paul said he found it disheartening that Referendum B was not passed and mentioned that the student center is currently in a \$200,000 deficit.

"If we lose [the student center], we lose a large part of our student engagement and we don't want that," Paul stated. Paul said that despite the deficit they should still try to foster a sense of community. "We need to tap into our alumni and have a celebratory dinner [...] and just make sure that we have an engagement opportunity to create a community and build on top of that. [...] we have to think and move forward."

Sanchez echoed this sense of community, but through transparency regarding some elements of the school.

"I believe that students should be involved heavily in the administration process, and money, and what goes on in school," Sanchez stated. "If we were to be elected, our role would be to create more accessibility to those things for students."

Regarding plans for opening up the cafeteria, Paul and Sanchez spoke on the necessity



USG candidates at their podiums during the BC presidential debate in the Student Center./*Courtesy of @bcstudentgov*

of having food on campus and how USG could achieve this goal through collaborating with people on campus like Marcus Richardson, director of Strategic Initiatives, and Alan Gilbert, president of Finance and Administration.

"It's a matter of being approachable and being with people who can actually make this happen, Marcus Richardson, Alan Gilbert, these are people that really want to do good and that's why we need to [...] make sure that we have the opportunity to sit down and actually voice our concerns," Paul stated.

They also spoke about Albany trips where individuals spend the day advocating for BC to receive more funding for the cafeteria.

"We should go to Albany and talk to our representatives and say we deserve more, because we do," Sanchez said.

While Shavkatov and Tepedino expressed past efforts to revive the cafeteria and intentions for future plans, including to renovate the space, they emphasized the temporary solutions in place that they also found important to have for students, including the food pantry, food vouchers which they say they are working on renewing, food trucks, and free food offered at clubs.

"While we still will be working on the cafeteria, we do also want to realize that it's going to take a very long time. We're going to do the best we can, but in the interim, we do want to find intermediate solutions so that we're not just waiting around for a cafeteria that's going to take, frankly, a few years," Tepedino stated.

They were also keen on focusing on goals more achievable for the USG, such as the promotion of BC events and making sure that all students are aware of the resources offered at campus. They also mentioned reforming club training to make it easier for clubs to submit requests for funding.

"We would want to have mentor and club training for all e-board members," Tepedino said, later adding "We want to make sure that clubs understand where their money is coming from, how it's being spent, and how they can request more."

This same sentiment regarding student awareness of campus resources was also shared by Paul and Sanchez, who brought up reforming orientation to increase student awareness on resources and student involvement.

"Something that we wanted to start with, that Cyle had a great idea about, was reforming orientation. I've spoken with a lot of students who have told me they either didn't have orientation or their orientation was lackluster," Sanchez stated when answering the question on what the parties would do to increase student involvement.

The voting period for students will last until March 28.

Students interested in voting can do so via Bulldog Connection.

BC Wolfe Institute Celebrates New Faculty Book, “Faux Feminism”

Serena Edwards
Content Creator

The Brooklyn College (BC) Wolfe Institute for the Humanities held an online celebration for BC Professor Serene Khader’s book, “Faux Feminism: Why We Fall For White Feminism and How We Can Stop”. The conversation was moderated by Cindy Lin, a senior at BC, and Zeus Eugene, a Binghamton University alumni. The talk included topics surrounding white feminism and aimed to debunk any myths perpetuated about feminism.

Khader is a philosophy professor at BC and the CUNY Graduate Center. She has released three books: “Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic”, “Adaptive Preferences and Women’s Empowerment,” and her most recent, “Faux Feminism: Why We Fall For White Feminism and How Can We Stop?” along with many other pieces for various publications.

Khader began the lecture by talking about her thought process while writing this book. It differed from her previous books, which were more focused towards an

academic audience. She admitted that there was a bit of struggle transitioning to a different type of audience.

“One of the biggest struggles for me as an academic writer while writing this type of book, which was for like a non-academic audience was putting myself into the book more like because you can’t give all the advice when you’re trying to write a popular book, the people need to know who the narrator is,” said Khader.

Khader emphasized a movement of feminism that is often overshadowed when recounting the lengthy history of feminism. This history often places white women at the forefront of change, overshadowing women of color who made tremendous impacts in the movement.

“Feminism has always been partly a movement that has been led by women of color, women in the global South, as well as women in the labor movement,” stated Khader. Audre Lorde and Bell Hooks were her inspirations when writing the book.

She then delved into the issues with white feminism and how marginalized groups struggle to always want to fit into white spaces.

“Why do we assume that the path to a more inclusive feminism is to remain in white dominated spaces? [...] There are also other spaces. One path to a more inclusive feminism is to focus on spaces that are dominated by non-elite women and actually elite women could support non-elite women instead of non-elite women asking to be included in these elite spaces,” Khader explained.

Khader mentioned that feminism is about including all women in the conversation, and not just white women.

“What if we told the story of the right way to do feminism, not as a story of like white women learning over time about how to not include people, but instead a story that’s partly about how non-elite women have kind of always had a lot of it right,” Khader explained.

With the current climate of the world, Khader addressed the current attack on healthcare access for women and how right-wing “feminists” fail to realize the inclusivity of what real feminism is.

“Just last week, the Trump administration asked to join the state of South Carolina in a Supreme Court case that was supporting a law that excludes Planned Parenthood from receiving Medicaid funding [...] This is about excluding Planned Parenthood from receiving funding from Medicaid for anything, including things like cancer screening and prenatal care,” Khader stated.

In an interview with The Vanguard, Khader debriefed the events and dove deeper into how feminism is taught and how some harmful myths are perpetuated by society.

“Part of why I wrote the book is I feel like this narrative that says feminism was about white women and they excluded other women. The way that’s getting handed down to people as the narrative of feminism has a downside, which is that it still puts white women’s activism at the center and tells the story like there was this true origin of feminism.

Book cover for “Faux Feminism”./*Courtesy of Amazon*

It was the one by white women,” Khader told The Vanguard.

She did recognize that marginalized women were excluded from it, but doesn’t want that to be the only narrative that is given.

“Part of why I wrote the book is that I wanted to say there are ways to take seriously feminist activism by women of color or and poor women and working class women that don’t involve telling a story that’s just like there was one true feminism,” said Khader.

Khader also mentioned the modernism in feminism, like social media and memes, that have helped bring more awareness to these topics.

“I also think memes are really good. I think they can be a really wonderful form of consciousness raising. Like, sometimes you see a meme and it just, you know, it says what an entire essay could say in a small glance,” stated Khader.

Regarding this sentiment, social media has played a particularly informational role, especially in these positive formats. It has also proven to be a useful platform for spreading awareness and avenues for

activism. This, however, comes with a downside.

“One of the risks that I think we need to be careful to avoid is like thinking that clicking like is the same thing as showing up in the streets for a protest or calling your member of Congress,” Khader emphasized.

Khader also spoke about not always having to deconstruct and explain white feminism to others.

“It’s very difficult to not buy into some element of it and live in American society. So I think we need to encourage people in dominant positions to educate themselves more, right? It’s not fair that many of them are constantly asking people who don’t have their advantages questions that they could find out from Google or something like that,” she stated.

Khader reminded people that fighting for themselves is a fight for all.

“I think this is an important lesson of the book and of the Black feminist tradition in particular, there are times when fighting for yourself is fighting for all women.”



Headshot of Professor Serene Khader./*Courtesy of Brooklyn College*

Undergraduate Student Government's Pawsitively Cute Puppy Party

By Emily Nixon
Staff Writer

On March 18, the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) held a puppy party for Brooklyn College students to help them de-stress before midterm weeks in the Student Center.

"Especially this year, when it's midterm season," said USG president Noam Abrahams. "It's [the event] all about just providing a way for students to kind of de-stress a little bit while on campus."

The puppy event has been held previously, though some changes were made to it since, so as to ensure a smooth process. This semester, students were given tickets upon sign-in to redeem for time slots to spend with the puppies.

USG developed the ticket method of managing the number of participating students after learning from the first time they held this event, according to Abrahams.

"The very first time we did it, it was outside on the quad. There were five puppies. The line went from the front of the quad, all the way to West Quad Center, and then around the building. It was intense," said Abrahams. "We've learned and we've gotten more puppies, and we've worked out this ticketing thing. We've tried to move people through a little faster."

Even more students attended the event than expected by the

RSVP count, and it had a plethora of workers to ensure the event went smoothly according to Abrahams.

"I think, RSVP, we had 273 [students]," said Abrahams. USG later confirmed that 377 students attended the event. "I wanna say it's around 25 volunteers plus the USG members [working the event]."

This event should be coming to BC again next spring semester according to Melanie Tam, USG student senator since last fall semester.

The event has been held with Puppy Party for the past three years according to Puppy Party's manager and events designer David Barber.

"We do this college for three years in a row," said Barber. "It started out with one student looking for a particular, strange activity, I guess, and they were looking around for something to engage with the students for a testing phase in school to make it calm, something relaxing, a stress-free environment, and to do something different for the students they've never done before."

This event aims to help the puppies just as much as it helps the students who participate, according to Barber.

"Every puppy that was playing in people's homes were starting to get homes or being sold faster than any of the other puppies,"

said Barber. "What



Participants play with the puppies./Emily Nixon

learned was the puppies learned how to hug, dance, and be social and want love from the people and didn't hide or run away when people came into the room. So people bonded with them faster, and the puppies bonded with the children and the owners faster, so not only did this become a win-win-win-win situation for everybody."

"You don't see any sad puppies over here, right?" asked Barber. "If you go over, when you get a chance, look at every puppy and look at them directly, you'll see the happiness in their eyes and in their mouth, and their whole demeanor is like, 'Oh my god, this is the best thing to ever happen to me.'"

Puppy Party prides itself

on the ability to host these parties and the luxuries they're afforded because of the demand for puppy parties, according to Barber.

"The puppies were socialized and trained automatically, the children had a great experience in their parties, and it paid bills," said Barber. "So, now we can afford medical, housing, the government regulations, the insurance, the rent, the electric, the phone bills, the advertising, and more, and

food and so on."

Puppy Party is the only company certified to host puppy parties in the U.S., and the certifications list is lengthy and costly according to Barber.

"For us to do the event, we have to be certified by seven different authorities; Humane Society; ASPCA; Department of Health; Department of Agriculture; Circus Licensing; Travel Licensing; and Certified Bonded people, so to do that, costs thousands of dollars," said Barber. "Nobody else can do that. We're the only ones in the United States [...] We're the ones that are actually certified."

The puppies came from private kennels in Connecticut, Long Island,

and Florida.

Events like the Puppy Party are hosted often by the USG, giving students opportunities to socially engage with others.

"[The event] helped distracted me from my midterm," said Bran. "I think it gave me a good sense of calmness. I felt calm, I was able to forget I had like pages of papers to write."

Both Bran and Sara Poleselli, a junior political science major and Italian exchange student, offered that the event should contain kittens if the USG were to do the event again.

"You suffer more by being scratched by cats," said Poleselli. "It shows you the suffering of studying for finals is not really suffering."

BC's student life is overlooked by students and outsiders alike, according to Abrahams.

"Brooklyn College is really comparable to other CUNYs at the forefront of student activities in student life and innovating how that works and getting that done," said Abrahams.

Students interested in upcoming events from the USG can check their Instagram: @bcstudentgov.



Participants gather in the game and food room waiting for their ticket number to be called./Emily Nixon

Erin Reed Talks About Trans Rights and Activism in Today's America

By T'Neil Gooden
Features Editor

In a time of questions and uncertainty, Erin Reed, an American journalist and transgender rights activist, spoke with Brooklyn College students on March 18 in the Tanger Auditorium Library about the past and current history of trans rights. The panel was a collaboration between The Wolfe Institute, the Women's and Gender Studies program, The Women's Center, the BC chapter of Professional Staff Congress, the LGBTQ+ Resource Center, and We Stand Against Hate at BC.

Reed spoke about trans history from over 4,500 years ago to today. Authors, activists, and historians who lived during all the historical periods that we have learned from our classes all have transgender individuals whose stories are only told by those who truly took the time to learn their names.

"We've always been here [...] Transgender people have always been here," Reed told the audience.

Reed spoke about one woman in particular who had a ratifying reaction when telling her parents she was a girl instead of a boy at nine years old.

"Lucy Anderson told her parents at the age of nine years old, in the late 1800s, that she was a girl and not a boy, despite being assigned male at birth," Reed said. "Her parents didn't know what to do, so they brought her to a doctor. And the doctor, very progressive for the time, apparently said, let her be. She's not hurting anyone. She seems healthy. Let her be herself. And so they did."

Along with Lucy Anderson, students learned about the history behind the Magnus-Hirschfeld Institute of Sexology, and what this institute has done for transgender individuals for over 90 years.

"That institute did the first 30 years of research into trans and queer people. These would have been the first people to get hormone therapy. Some of the first surgeries occurred at that institute. And people who went to that institute could obtain legal documents," Reed told the audience. "They could have helped with our transition, they get to access clothing. It was such a foundational place for transgender people and our history. So we have always

been here. But just as we have always been here, we've always had to fight for our right to exist."

Reed told students about Stonewall and the history behind the books that were burned in the riots.

"While a lot of people know the general story about Stonewall, you know, they were raiding queer clubs, a lot of people don't know that the reason why they were raiding queer clubs is because they were looking for people that were not dressed as their assigned sex at birth," Reed said. "And these were called female impersonation laws or three articles of clothing policies, where if you weren't wearing three articles of clothing that match your assigned sex at birth, you could be arrested and charged under those policies."

"We've always been here [...] Transgender people have always been here."

Reed continued to explain how these rules led to people who are transgender fighting back during Stonewall.

"That's why trans people were among the top people that were fighting back at Stonewall. The leaders of Stonewall were trans in many ways. And that's how we got pride. And so we've always had to fight for our right to exist," Reed explained.

Reed continued to amplify how Stonewall's events led to even more movements for trans rights.

"This would go out through history in the 1980s with the AIDS and HIV advocacy in the 1990s with the X-gay movement and conversion therapy, and in the early 2000s with fighting for the right to marry," Reed said.

After transitioning from trans history, Reed went into the rights gay individuals received and the current state of experience for transgender people.

"This history then came to a point in 2015 where gay people were given the right to marry by the Supreme Court in the Obergefell versus Hodges case, which I might add is under threat right now," Reed told the audience. "And while this was a major moment for LGBTQ history, it was also the beginning of the modern reactionary movement against LGBTQ people."

Reed continued to touch on the subject of bills that have gone against transgender individuals. Students shook their heads as they listened to what trans people face today.

"There are more anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ bills proposed this year than any other year in history. And we are only three months in. And so we have two tension points that are sort of holding place right there. And as I said, LGBTQ people are up across the board. It's not just Gen Z, millennials seem to increase as well," Reed said.

While emphasizing the ridicule trans people are facing, Reed stressed the importance of having representation of trans people in our everyday lives.

"There's so many studies



Flyer for the event./Courtesy of @bc_wolfeinstitute

around how representation increases acceptance and how representation and seeing just mere exposure to an LGBTQ person or a transgender person can help you accept LGBTQ people and transgender people as well," Reed said. "And so we have people like Michaela Rodriguez, who won best actress of the Golden Globes, Laverne Cox from Orange is the New Black, Conor Schaeffer, Elliot Page, Amy Schneider went on an absolute terror in Jeopardy."

Reed spoke about her wife being one of the first transgender elected officials, Zoe Zephyr, along with Sarah McBride being the first transgender congresswoman. Reed then brought attention to how there has been additional resources to trans healthcare.

"Informed consent hormone therapy, which are clinics that

will believe that you are trans and they will help you with your medical transition. And they're not meant to gatekeep, you know, people who don't have tens of thousands of dollars out of transitioning," Reed said. Reed has an informed consent map that she updates when new centers are made for people to access hormone therapy easily.

As Reed spoke about transgender rights, she was updated in the middle of her speech that, "A court just overturned the Ohio gender-affirming care ban. That's good," Eric told the audience. This statement was joined with an applause by audience members.

Reed then spoke to the audience about the importance of having trans individuals in government spaces and how that could change the outcome of all the bills and bans that are happening within our current government.

Reed wants individuals to leave the lecture with the understanding that, "If you're going to go off into the world and you're not LGBTQ yourself, you're going to be working with LGBTQ people. They are going to be your friends, your colleagues, your peers. And so it requires learning," Reed said.

Students who want to learn more about transgender rights and activism can go to the LGBTQ+ Resource Center in the Student Center and Erin Reed's Page, Erin In The Morning.



Erin Reed listening to students express their opinions on trans rights and activism./
T'Neil Gooden

BSU and WOC Team Up To Host “The Goal Getter’s Vision Board Workshop”

By Jaida Dent
Arts Editor

To celebrate Women’s History Month, the Brooklyn College (BC) Black Student Union (BSU) and the Women of Color Club (WOC) came together to host “The Goal Getter’s Vision Board Workshop” on Tuesday, March 18. The event promoted a space for conversations surrounding their personal goals through the creation of vision boards.

“This event is designed to inspire the student body, reminding them that their dreams and aspirations are within reach. Women’s History Month provides the perfect opportunity to emphasize that our goals are not impossible—whatever we have in our ‘vision’ can be turned into something extraordinary,” said Dakota Mitchell, the president of WOC.

The event was created on the basis of celebrating Women’s History Month and providing students with the chance to think about goals they want to accomplish and the path they need to take to get it done. The approaching midterms mark the halfway point of the semester, and the event provided students with a break from academics and some time to think about themselves.

“We wanted to give students, especially women of color, a chance to really think about their goals and dreams [...] Vision boarding is such a fun and creative way to put your goals into perspective, and we thought it would inspire everyone to take steps toward achieving them,” said Kelsey Ganthier,

“We wanted to give students, especially women of color, a chance to really think about their goals and dreams.”



Students starting to create their vision boards./Jaida Dent



Students posing with completed vision boards./Courtesy of Kelsey Ganthier

the president of BSU.

The event featured guest speaker Zekiyah Joyner, a BC alumna and the graduate advisor for the WOC club. Joyner started with a “Find a Woman Who...” bingo game so everyone in the room could get to know each other. Afterwards, she spoke about her educational journey from BC to obtaining her master’s at Howard University while caring for her sick mother and combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Joyner emphasized how important it is to recognize the struggles you may face along your journey toward your goals.

“The struggles that I had were part of my identity, like being a caregiver for

my mother. I think it’s really important to recognize that. I had to incorporate that in my classes and even [in] building my schedule. I can’t build this unless I know I can go take care of her,” said Joyner.

Joyner’s attendance was impactful for the students who attended the workshop, and even more so for the members of WOC and BSU. While Joyner does support WOC as an advisor, they don’t always have an opportunity to be together in person. This event allowed the members of both clubs to have valuable one-on-one time with Joyner.

“Her presence not only enriched the event but also provided a rare opportunity for the current e-board

members to engage in deeper, more personal conversations with her—something our busy schedules often prevent,” said Mitchell.

For Mitchell and Ganthier, the collaboration between the clubs was a natural decision. Both clubs aim to support students of color on campus and this event further pushed their mission as they were able to reach students of all backgrounds and provide them with the opportunity to consider what their plans are for their college careers and beyond.

“Women of Color’s primary mission is to empower Black women, but we also strive to uplift a broader audience—whether they

are young, men, middle-aged, or seasoned. Similarly, BSU shares a commitment to empowering the student body. By bringing these two groups together, we can create an even greater impact, fostering unity and inspiration across our communities,” said Mitchell.

Joyner’s advice set the foundation for the event and presented a new way for students to tackle their goals. By recognizing the struggles that can hinder them from reaching their goals, the students learned that they can work with obstacles and overcome them.

“The biggest takeaway was that you can overcome anything if you stay focused and determined. Zekiyah’s story showed us that no matter how tough things get, you can still achieve your goals. It was also a reminder to dream big and take steps to make those dreams happen,” said Ganthier.

Ultimately, the event provided students with a new perspective as they step into their careers while incorporating a creative activity to visualize the desires they strive to obtain.

“I would hope that they take away that it’s possible. I think we know we always say like, anything is possible, but truly, not only just putting your mind to it, but having a sense of community,” said Joyner. “Some people kind of have an idea of what they want and a lot more people than you think don’t. So, it’s, ‘how do I find community even around that?’ and just knowing in a place where it feels like you should have it all together, everybody doesn’t.”

For information about BSU and WOC, as well as upcoming events, follow them on Instagram @bc_blackstudentunion and @womenofcolor_bc.

The Junction Highlights Students' Creativity with Spring Open Mic

By Margot Dragos
Staff Writer

On March 20, Brooklyn College (BC) students brought their creativity and enthusiasm to the Woody Tanger Auditorium. The Spring Open Mic, hosted by The Junction, the literary and art magazine at BC, allowed students to showcase their work on stage and gave them an opportunity to perform to an audience of their supportive peers.

"We had to reschedule a few times to get the library because so much stuff happens in here," Damien Nieswand, treasurer and intern for The Junction, told The Vanguard. The event was initially meant to happen in February, but was postponed due to scheduling conflicts with other events happening in the library.

Nieswand and other interns for The Junction were responsible for running the open mic. They took turns announcing each performer and their piece, with many like Nieswand performing themselves.

When asked what went into putting this event together, Nieswand explained that he and the other interns put up posters, created blog posts, and made announcements in their classes.

"It's a lot of networking, it takes a village," he explained.

This strategy worked, as the auditorium was filled with students and professors. While a large portion of the audience consisted of performers, many attendees simply came to watch and support the event.

"It was such a rich experience," Katie Williams, an audience member and professor in the BC English department, told The Vanguard. "I think it's amazing seeing students both being able to share their work, particularly what's stirring them in their daily life, their lived experiences, and everything that's going on in the world right now, and having a platform to express that."

Performances varied in theme and approach. Certain works tackled personal experiences with love and loss while others discussed the implications of worldwide issues prevalent today. Students performed poems, short fictitious works, songs, a scene from a play, and even a rap. Some performances were somber, while others were more comedic in tone.

Like the rest of the audience, Williams frequently applauded and cheered for each performer.



The audience claps after a performer finishes./Margot Dragos

"It was really beautiful seeing people come out and support one another," Williams continued. "Seeing people's reactions in the audience, it felt very convivial and just like a real space of support."

Wali Mohammed, a creative writing major and former intern for The Junction, also performed at the event. He read his poem, "About Hair," which discussed how people change the ways they physically express themselves when they go through a painful experience. He's been performing at The Junction's open mic events since 2022.

"You gain a community," Mohammed explained. "You get an audience to share your work with and you're able to get over stage fright because that's something that people struggle with a lot and just coming here every semester has helped them get over it a lot."

Nieswand had a similar outlook on what he hopes students take away from the open mics.

"I think it's a really good way for people who are performing to build their confidence as performers to get to be vulnerable in a space that is safe to be vulnerable in," Nieswand explained. "It takes a lot to get up there and share something that you made, like a piece of yourself with the world. So I just want it to be a place where people feel safe to do that and it's a positive experience so they feel more like they can attend in the future and it's less scary."

However, Nieswand doesn't think performers are the only ones who benefit from attending The Junction's open mics. He believes the audience can benefit from seeing how writing isn't exclusively for household names.

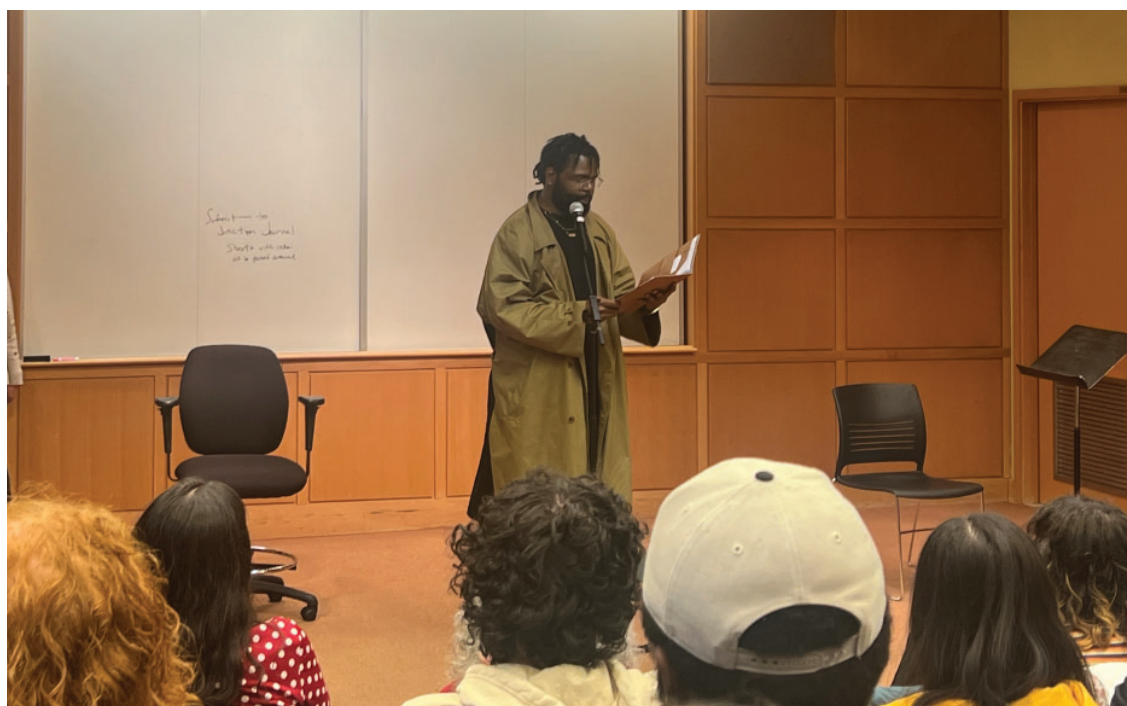
"I think it's really easy to think of poetry as

inaccessible or thinking of it only in terms of the established canon, like 'Oh, well poetry is just something that Keats does' [...] or for writing creatively that's Shakespeare and Joyce Carol Oates," Nieswand explained. "Yeah, it is those people around you, and a lot of these works are already very sophisticated, just really incredible works."

Since 1998, The Junction has hosted an open mic each semester. Nieswand is hopeful that this tradition will continue, as this is his last semester as an intern.

"There's always room for everybody. Even if you're not a performer, there's more than enough room for you in the audience and I just really recommend it to everyone," Nieswand said. "It's such a great way to find a community of people that support you and that make things that you feel really passionate about."

Students interested in upcoming events from The Junction can find them on their Instagram, @thejunctionbc



A student performs an original poem./Margot Dragos

Filmmaking Lecture and Book Promotion from Film and TV Director, Rob Spera

By Kira Ricarte
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, March 19, students inside the screening room at the sixth floor of Brooklyn College's Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema. At the very front, below a large white screen, two men sat and chatted with each other waiting for an audience to arrive: dean of the American Film Institute (AFI) Richard Gladstein, and Rob Spera, film and TV director of shows like "Criminal Minds," as well as an acting professor who teaches at the AFI in Los Angeles, California, and speaker for the night.

Spera's lecture focuses on his book: the "Film/TV Director's Field Manual," which distills his two decades' worth of filmmaking and directing experiences into a small black book of 205 pages. Copies were later distributed among the students with Spera's personal stamp on the third page.

Before Spera began talking about his book, both he and Gladstein told the story of how he became a film director. Spera once trained as an actor, but he wasn't getting hired. Still, he did not want to take on any job just to get by.

"I didn't want to spend my early twenties working at the

bar or the restaurant,"

So, he became an acting teacher for his acting friends. Due to this, he was able to make sure his "survival job" was still engaging with what he is passionate about.

Spera began producing theater, which introduced him to a lot of famous actors like John Turturro and Cathy Baker. But as he began directing, Spera switched to film, enrolling in the AFI Conservatory as a student. He would soon find out that the classes he was taking weren't teaching the basic concepts. So, Spera left the AFI and taught himself the basics of filmmaking with everything he could find about the subject: books, articles, and movies. Eventually, he created his own program he could teach to others that, to him, was "very practical and accessible, with far-reaching ramifications down the road in terms of depth and meaning."

In his "Film/TV Director's Field Manual," there are 70 maxims that Spera emphasized before the Feirstein students as "tools" to be used, instead of rules to be followed, regardless of what kind of film is being made.

"The maxims transcend genre," Spera explained to the students. "They transcend tastes. They transcend

sensibilities, and they transcend time." The same tools were used 100 years ago, and are still used now.

In his lecture, Spera laid out what he called "the director's toolkit": the camera, the actor, the light, production design, blocking, music, sound, and editing. He explained each element, which ended up teaching a few of his maxims in his book. He would explain how shifting the camera angle of a performance could turn a previously terrible scene into a great one. For example, adding light to an actor's face can elevate an inexperienced actor's performance. Spera also recommended that a director should adopt a "hands-off" approach towards their actors and be able to experiment, but also come prepared with multiple versions of the same scene to not get caught off-guard. Going in-depth on sound, Spera discussed how music and sound should punctuate a scene to emotionally enhance the scene, but not to overtake the film to the point that it's all the viewer can remember.

Spera touched upon dialogue, and how good dialogue is written after the script is completed. During all this, he would show stills from TV shows and films as old as Alfred Hitchcock's "Suspicion," and as recent as Celine Song's "Past Lives," allowing for students to analyze them and see how lighting, camera angle, and setting can tell the story of the film even in one scene alone.

To conclude the talk, Spera gave an assignment to the students, which was to open the Q&A and ask many questions to help further understand his teachings and to get grounded advice for their filmmaking. Among these pieces of advice, Spera mentioned always being a staunch supporter for your own work.

"You're the director...you want to remain an advocate for the material. That's your job, be an advocate," he stated. "You can't wait till your big movie to care. You have to care now"; and to not be afraid to fail, and to "try something".

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The availability of over-the-counter emergency contraceptives—like Plan B or the Morning After Pill—in wellness machines on campus will improve access to essential health care resources. In fact, emergency contraception may avert 60% to 80% of unintended pregnancies in women aged 18 to 24.

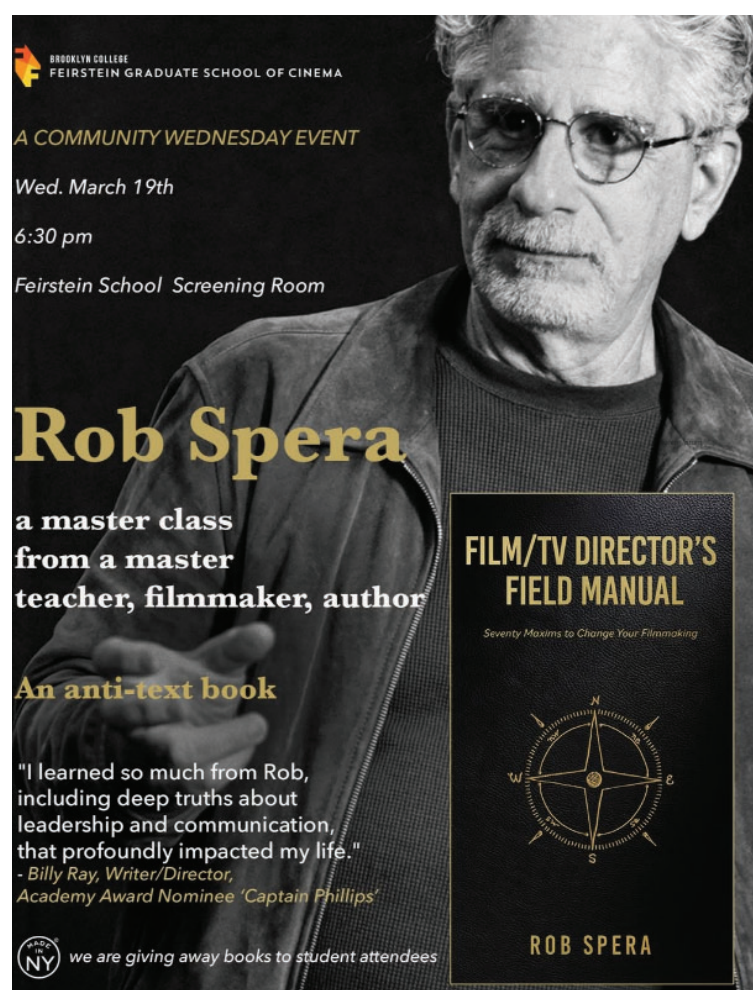
Brooklyn College is lucky enough to have a Health Clinic that supplies birth control, including emergency contraception. However, many students are unaware of the existence of the Health Clinic, and its hours may conflict with students' classes or jobs. By placing Emergency Contraceptives in vending machines on our campus, we can ensure its accessibility for all students for more hours than what our health center offers.

Vending machines on college campuses offer a convenient solution, allowing people to obtain low-cost emergency contraceptives discreetly. These machines can stock not only emergency contraceptives but also menstrual products and other essentials. Proof of concept already exists on 16 campuses in New York—including John Jay College, a fellow CUNY—and 129 campuses across the country, proving that this model can work effectively.

Having emergency contraceptive vending machines will provide peace of mind, ensuring that individuals can access the resources they need when they need them most, without hesitation.

To overcome barriers, address disparities, and enhance accessibility, we must prioritize placing emergency contraceptive vending machines on college campuses.

Sydney Cardieri
Associate Board Member
NY Birth Control Access Project



Flyer for the event./Courtesy of @feirstienschool on Instagram

By the end of the lecture, students left inspired and engaged, with a few falling in line to get their books signed by Spera. One of whom was Adia Braithwaite, a junior Feirstein student who is also a member of The Fireflies, a BC club centered around women in film.

"It's always nice to hear

when people in those spaces you want to be in are like 'Just start doing things,'" Braithwaite told The Vanguard.

"Like it's always reinforcing the idea that I just have to start [...] just starting and failing, and failing big, it was inspirational to hear."

Reading Between the Lines: The Banned Books “Hoax,” Anti-Intellectualism, and Historical Amnesia in Trump’s Reich

By Darlene Arvelo Almonte
Staff Writer

“U.S. Department of Education Ends Biden’s Book Ban Hoax” is the subject of a Trump administration press release dated Jan. 24, 2025. Five days later, Trump issued an executive order titled: “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling.”

According to the Trump administration and its newly appointed leadership in the Department of Education (DOE), these book bans are a “hoax” and a tool for indoctrination. On the other hand, several education experts argue otherwise and worry that an increase in book bans is the first leg of an increase in anti-intellectualism.

PEN America defines a book ban as “[...] any action taken against a book [...] that leads to a previously accessible book being either completely removed from availability to students, or where access to a book is restricted or diminished, either temporarily or permanently.”

Some examples of commonly banned books are “1984” by George Orwell, “The Color Purple” by Alice Walker, “The Handmaid’s Tale” by Margaret Atwood, and “Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White. With the highest number of banned book instances and, in context, almost triple the number of instances from the year before, PEN America reports 10,046 book bans in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Contrary to the hoax allegations, in both law and law enforcement, book bans are evident. Florida, the leader in book bans, passed the HB 1557 bill which prohibits the discussion

of gender and sexual identity in elementary schools and holds liable in court the school districts and educators found in violation.

Texas famously passed HB 900, or the R.E.A.D.E.R. act, which aims to require school districts to guide their book buying by vendor ratings, require parental notification and review of any sensitive content, removal of “unsuitable” materials, and punishment of non-compliant parties under the guise of child protection. These bills are advertised as protection for children, but the irony is palpable, considering that Florida and Texas are two of the lowest-ranked states in the U.S. for the well-being of children.

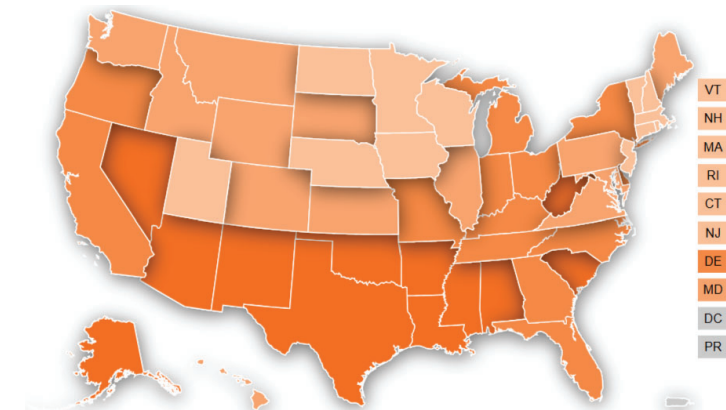
While the purpose of these book bans is questioned, it is also worth noting that there are several threads connecting the subjects, narratives and authors facing this censorship. PEN America’s Index of School Book Bans reports that, of the young adult books being banned, “59% address grief and death, 40% address substance use or abuse, 38% address mental health disorders and 37% address empowerment and self esteem.” Of 4,231 banned titles, “44% included characters or people of color and 39% included LGBTQ+ characters or

people.”

Hoax, new, or not, restricting access to books is not only a direct attack on education and worldly development, but also an attempt to erase and further marginalize the characters, subjects, and audiences of these works.

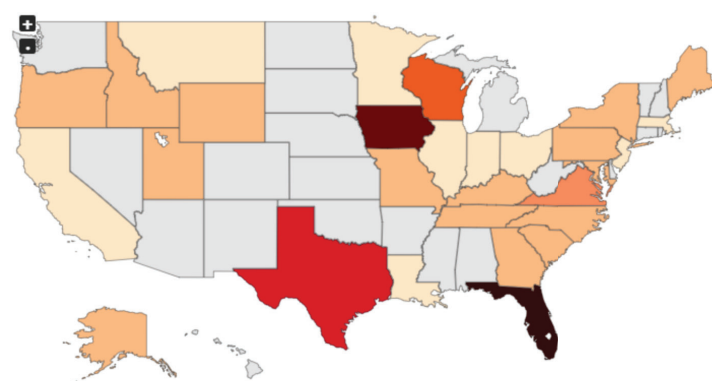
Along with this increase in book bans has come a decrease in literacy reflected in Trump’s incendiary quote: “I love the poorly educated.” These words are consistent with steep incline in support for Trump in states with the lowest education rates, the defunding of educational programs, and the rates of educational censorship in the form of book bans.

“1984,” mentioned above as one of the most banned books, presents a world ruled by an authoritarian dictatorship, features a politically dissenting main character and has widely been regarded as a warning against fascism. Fascism, described most often as a far-right, authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology, and social movement, seems to be tantalizingly close to what has been brewing in the U.S. for the past several elections. President Trump and his policies have and continue to be, by political historians, labeled as a fascist and this move toward anti-intellectualism seems like another step in that



2024 Child Well-Being in the U.S./*Courtesy of the Annie E. Casey Foundation*

2023-2024 Book Bans by State



MAP KEY



2023-2024 Book Bans in the U.S./*Courtesy of PEN America*

direction.

An article by political scientist Laurence Britt, analyzes 7 fascist regimes – Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Franco’s Spain, Salazar’s Portugal, Papadopoulos’s Greece, Pinochet’s Chile, and Suharto’s Indonesia – and posits 14 essential characteristics of fascism, among which is “disdain for intellectuals and the arts.” The eagle’s feather seems to run clear

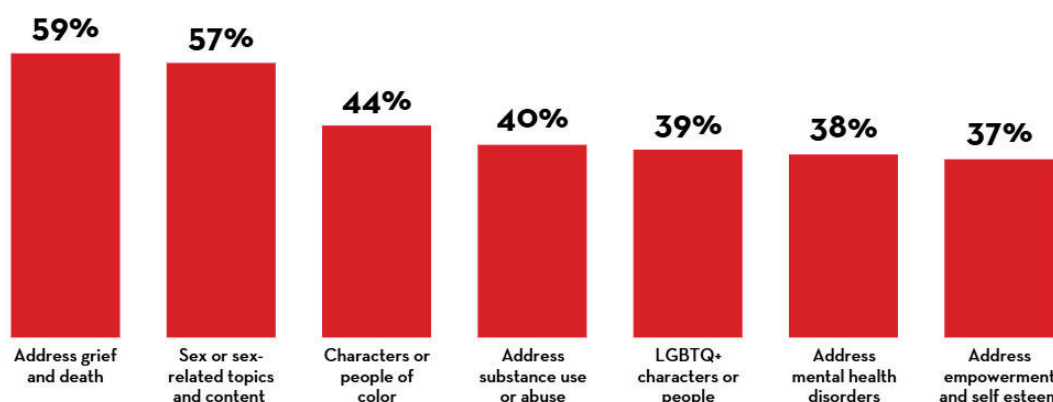
from banning books, growing censorship, distrust for empirical sciences, contempt for intellectualism and disparagement of the arts.

Britt opens his piece with a reminder that, “[...] the cliché that people and nations learn from history is not only overused, but also overestimated; often we fail to learn from history, or draw the wrong conclusions. Sadly, historical amnesia is the norm.”

Book bans aren’t just about the words on the page, but about the stories that are silenced. In the face of anti-intellectualism, I wonder who benefits from our collective amnesia. The answer is clear – those who fear a future of informed, engaged citizens. So which is it – “never again” or historical amnesia?

Subject matter of banned content

Of the 1,091 most commonly banned titles, July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



Data from PEN America Index of School Book Bans.
Note: many titles contain more than one type of content.

Most common subjects of banned books in 2025./*Courtesy of PEN America*

Opinion: Frozen in Place - Rising ICE Enforcement Wounds Minority Communities

By Mars Marte
Staff Writer

On Jan. 20, 2025, the official website for The White House released a reworked version of the nation's policy on immigration titled: "Protecting The United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats." In this lengthy titled order, the contents call for a mass deportation across the nation to better protect the citizens.

But, is that what's really going on? The mandate calls for a new relationship with immigration, one that's rooted in bigotry.

Deportation of undocumented immigrants is no contemporary concept in the U.S., but how they are being handled is. For the last decade, federal agencies have advised against raids in schools, hospitals, and other 'sensitive areas' on the premises that conducting enforcement efforts in these environments will deter people from seeking the essential services these establishments provide.

However, to ensure the success of the White House's new decree, President Trump has removed previous guidance protocols implemented to protect undocumented inhabitants who seek out these resources according to the National Immigration Law. The removal of these legal shields opens new avenues of policing for immigration law enforcers and further disempowers ostracized groups.

Now, with the removal of pre-established safeguards in place, those who hold power and prejudice can openly harass communities of color on the premises of carrying out the law.

How do officers identify if someone is a citizen or seeking legal status? Truth is, this is a matter that cannot be discerned by looking at someone. However, with the lack of laws to protect against profiling, Black and brown neighborhoods have gained the attention of law enforcers.

Days after the announcement of the discussed decree ICE officers brazenly rushed into a small-business warehouse in what officials are calling a "targeted enforcement operation at a worksite" according to NBC News.



Protests against ICE./Photo courtesy of Tim Burno

The officers arrested three employees and detained the rest including multiple U.S. citizens, one of which was a military veteran who happened to be Puerto Rican. An interview conducted by Pix11 with Luis Janota, the warehouse owner, shed light on how the conduct of the raids was rooted in bias.

"It looked to me like they were specifically going after certain kinds of people — not every kind. Because they did not ask me for documentation for my American workers, Portuguese workers or white workers,"

In a press conference held

"It looked to me like they were specifically going after certain kinds of people — not every kind. Because they did not ask me for documentation for my American workers, Portuguese workers or white workers."

in the wake of the incursion, New Jersey Mayor, Ras Bakara, shared that ICE could not produce a warrant

for the raid, highlighting the severity of the situation. This incident underlines the ignorant ideology that has been embedded into the states since its conceptions and that has only emboldened since the current administrative team made its debut.

With hate on the rise, marginalized groups find themselves further on the edge. Undocumented people now live in a constant state of vigilance as their future within the country and their families grows in uncertainty.

Corona, a neighborhood in Queens, has been home to generations of Latino immigrants, best known for their buzzing streets. This fact no longer stands to be true months after the heightened enforcement measures, the energy within the county has eerily disappeared as undocumented residents cling to the safety of their homes.

In an article by New York Times that unpacks the rising fear in Corona, resident and vendor Liliana Sanchez, a Mexican migrant, claims to have "[...] spotted ICE officers almost daily in the neighborhood after Mr. Trump took office." With residents shutting their doors, local businesses that once thrived in Corona Plaza risk closing theirs forever.

Within the same article, New York Times claims that a Colombian bakery across the

street from the plaza "[...] used to take in about \$1,600 most mornings selling soups and pastries, but now makes about \$900." As enforcement of immigration laws continues to tighten, marginalized groups find themselves further on the edge.

The path to becoming a documented immigrant is one paved with coins. As of April 1 of last year, the price to gain citizenship within the states could cost someone anywhere from \$150 to \$2,000 according to Rebecca Black Immigration Law. Luckily, there are waivers for some application fees but, there's no guarantee that the full cost can be covered.

Families and individuals who are financially struggling are put at a disadvantage when seeking asylum and a means of a better life. Locking documentation behind an expensive paywall backs immigrant families into a corner where they may feel the need to come to the States without the proper papers to pull themselves out of their economic pit.

A study conducted by the Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy revealed that undocumented migrants contribute over 96.7 billion dollars in taxes a year. The information provided by the study stands as a reminder that immigration, whether documented or not, is an integral part of society.

The data disclosed warns

that the new choices made by policymakers will have an outstanding impact on America's economy.

In order to protect its own students, BC's has doubled the hours of the Immigrant Student Success Office (ISSO) located in Roosevelt hall which offers support for undocumented scholars ranging from free legal services to one-on-one counseling.

So, what do we do if U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) comes knocking? The first step we want to do, before proceeding with any interaction, if possible, is to call an immigration lawyer. Now that we've done that, let's look at the alternative routes of engaging with the agents.

Ask the officers to present a warrant signed by a judge. If no signed warrant is presented, stay inside and do not open the door. It is your right to refuse entry without a signed warrant from a judge. If they do have a warrant, verify it by asking the agents either to slip it under the door or to hold it up to a peephole and/or a RING camera. Most importantly, it is your right to remain silent without a lawyer present.

Now that we know our rights, what do we do? We spread the knowledge and look out for neighbors facing intolerance.

Diet Culture—A Women’s Issue?

By T Abbatemarco
Staff Photographer

For much of my life, I have wondered: Why is it that so many of the advertisements I see about diet programs and products star a woman as its model? Why do so many diet products specifically target women? For a time, these questions slipped from my head, until I saw a product labeled “Skinny Girl Popcorn” in my pantry.

Unassuming at first, “Skinny Girl Popcorn” was something that I couldn’t get out of my head. Skinny Girl’s marketing is insulting. The direct selling point of their product is not only predatory, but also teaches girls that being a skinny girl is the standard, showcasing a discriminatory marketing practice. Why is something so blatantly sexist allowed to exist? Why do we set the standard that being a Skinny Girl is the goal? I was left wondering about all the other products preying on women and their insecurities, products with a simple tagline that manage to seemingly uplift its consumers. Aside from the obvious question of if diet advertising disproportionately targets women, how exactly does diet culture contribute to an already sexist society?

I was shocked to find a majority of the advertisements had women as the focal point of the ad. I knew that it would be disproportionate, but I didn’t realize or truly understand the weight of how many advertisements this applied to. Many of the advertisements I looked at, through Youtube.com and ispot.tv typically featured women as the main subjects of the 30-second segments. It was also difficult to find diet product and program advertisements where the subject was only men; it was either men and women, animated, or solely women.

I’d like to focus on a couple of advertisements in particular, these being major health corporations’ campaigns such as: Ensure’s “Nutrition in Change”, Goli’s “Jennifer Lopez x Goli Nutrition (Part 1)”, and Orgain’s “Real Nutrition for Real Life.” These ads showcased the predatory nature of diet advertising.

First, let’s look at “Nutrition in Change”, a commercial starring a group of animated food objects in a fridge, both healthy and unhealthy, with our star of the show at the focal point: a bottle of Ensure. In summary, the heroic Ensure bottle kicks the unhealthy foods out, claiming that “she”—the woman featured in the commercial—shouldn’t be eating them, and instead should opt for healthier options. Throughout the animated ad, the advertisers felt that they should subtly target women by having the only character in the commercial be a woman, despite her costars being personified food items. This

The women, however, are only seen in tight fitting athletic wear, while the men are wearing baggier items of clothing such as basketball shorts. The advertisement hones in on the bottoms of the women, emphasizing a feature that is often targeted on women. Out of the three men in this commercial, versus the eight women, only one of the men have their butt shown in all its glory, while all of the women have theirs highlighted.

The advertisement claims to focus on protein and wellness. The nicknames for the women, however, seem to focus mainly on their bottoms, including “Bubble

if the long term results of the programs or products they advertise are actually impacted by the programs themselves. Celebrities have access to many resources the average person does not, so these programs may not be the sole reason for their bodies.

Weight Watchers, established in 1963, has a stark emphasis on its point system, allowing a certain amount of points per week. While offering flexibility in what people can eat as long as it’s under the amount of points allotted, the focus on points can lead its participants to skip meals to save points, and can feel restrictive. Weight

Dieting Becomes a Role to Play.”

“Jenny Craig made me worry about my weight. Now the company’s gone – but skinny culture remains,” Alaina Demopoulos points out in an article for The Guardian. “Advertisements that did not feature former television stars were even more confessional: ‘real women’ shared their stories of humiliation at seeing their bodies in family photos, or struggling to fit into a wedding dress [...] Fatness was seen as failure.”

Goli, established in 2019, focuses their efforts into advertising through influencers, creating a feeling of relatability in their audience. Looking on TikTok, I found that a majority of Goli’s advertisers were women. Out of 30 videos, 17 were from female content creators, five were from male content creators, and the rest were faceless advertisements. Even though these are all sponsored videos, the brand still reached out to an overwhelming amount of women compared to men.

I grew up during the 2000’s and 2010’s when thinness was seen as something to achieve and maintain, through healthy or unhealthy means. Thinness in women has always been valued above everything else. I’ve experienced it throughout my entire life, including my childhood, and I’m sure that those of you reading this have experienced or witnessed it as well. Although diet products and programs claim to include everyone – which I don’t necessarily believe to be untrue – I quickly learned that this “everyone” are the insecure women who have been made to feel like their weight equates to their value as a person.

Just because society says you need to look a certain way doesn’t mean that you need to. You do not need to fit into any box or mold established over the course of hundreds of years, created by an already existing sexist society. One that has been built off of the idea that while yes, technically, you can achieve anything you set your mind too, it really helps if you fit within the beauty standard that has been set.



Graphic by T Abbatemarco

shows a purposeful targeting towards women, essentially saying: Hey women! You should be eating healthier! You should live up to a beauty standard that the industry has set for you!

Another egregious advertisement, “Jennifer Lopez x Goli Nutrition (Part 1),” stars acclaimed actress and singer Jennifer Lopez, hinting that Goli provides her with much of the support she needs in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Goli isn’t the reason Lopez looks the way she does, and her role as a spokesperson for this product conveys the idea that if other women take Goli, they could look like her.

Lastly, let’s look at “Real Nutrition in Real Life,” which stars both men and women.

Butt Bobby” and “Tara the Tush.”

Diet culture and self-image is also exacerbated by the influence of celebrities and public figures, who are often at the forefront of this advertising. This includes celebrities such as Jessica Simpson, American Idol star Jennifer Hudson, and Marie Hudson.

These celebrities have endorsed programs like Weight Watchers, Nutrisystem, and the Jenny Craig program. Celebrity endorsements like this are a double edged sword: on one hand, it makes a product seem more trustworthy since the people endorsing it are well known public figures, but on the other hand, consumers don’t know

Watchers is a subscription based service, meaning that the help they claim to want to provide as an accessible option comes at a literal price. This further contributes to an already constricting idea of an “ideal” body image for people in general, while also perpetuating an almost impossible beauty standard set for women.

Additionally, Jenny Craig has been built on tearing women down, making them feel like they aren’t attractive because they don’t live up to the standard of what we as a society have deemed beauty to be, they are notorious for their advertisements being mainly centered around women, in 2011 five of their six spokespeople were women, according to “When

Grace Martinez-Espina: Journey From BC Athlete to Professional Trainer

By Allen Mardakhayev
Staff Writer

The love for sport is what drives athletes to continue playing their beloved game. From different walks of life come different paths to cross, exemplified in Grace Martinez-Espina, alumna of Brooklyn College and student-athlete.

Martinez-Espina graduated from BC in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and Kinesiology. During her time at BC, Martinez-Espina was a student-athlete with a record career on the women's basketball team from 2016 to 2019. During her time with the Bulldogs, they won the 2018 CUNYAC Women's Basketball Championship and made an NCAA Tournament appearance, according to the Brooklyn College Athletics website.

Her fitness career did not stop after graduation, however, as she continued on to become a certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, working in physical therapy and

personal training.

Martinez-Espina had acquired her certification and became a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS) under the NSCA.

The years that followed after Martinez-Espina's farewell from CUNYAC play had her chasing her dream of playing basketball professionally. With the opportunity granted, Martinez-Espina was able to showcase her abilities for her native country, the Dominican Republic, and play professional

basketball in the Liga Nacional de Baloncesto Femenino (LNBF) for Águilas de Guachupita in August 2021, as previously reported by The Vanguard.

In an interview with The Vanguard, Martinez-Espina expressed her mentality from when she was just a senior at BC, as her ambitions of playing basketball professionally brought her closer to her innermost dreams.

"I feel like after my senior year, I always had it in my mind that, 'Hey, why not, I have nothing to lose,' and I wanted to use that time while I'm still young after college to pursue playing professional basketball," Martinez-Espina told The Vanguard.

"I pursued it because it's something I always dreamed of and I thought, why not take it a step further than college and play professionally. I made it up in my mind, came up with a plan, and I was ready for what stood ahead of

me," she said.

The sport that Martinez-Espina held dear to her heart pushed her to break boundaries and hone in on her aspirations.

"The game of basketball professionally requires you to tap into your network and if playing overseas is something you seriously want to do, then put yourself out there and network as much as possible" Martinez-Espina stated. "The second step is being able to ruthlessly self-evaluate. This would mean to identify your weaknesses and work on turning them into strengths in order for teams to look at you and deem you as a valuable player for their lineup."

The depth of Martinez-Espina's words holds truth from her experiences. She hopes that they resonate with women basketball players at the college level who are now in a place to take that step further as she did once before in 2021.

Following her professional career, Martinez-Espina would bring her tenacious outlook on athletics back to BC. In the 2023 to 2024 school year, she joined the staff and inaugurated the newly established Strength and Conditioning Coach

Program. This school year is her second as Head of Strength and Conditioning, where she is trusted to guide athletes into



Grace Martinez-Espina practices on the court./Courtesy of Grace Martinez-Espina

becoming better players in their respective sport.

"My mission is to provide the best care to hard working athletes and help them to achieve their performance goals, reduce the likelihood of injury, and increase their mental toughness and confidence (planting seeds to reap the harvest, the work will always show)," Martinez-Espina told The Vanguard.

Martinez-Espina considered it necessary that athletes should be training based on the needs of their sport during that time period. This includes several different styles of training, including plyometrics, which utilizes rapid movements, isometrics, which strengthens muscles, and strength training, which aims to build muscle strength and endurance.

"The way you train is based on whether you are pre-season, in-season or off-season, as well as if it not only fits the demand of your sport, but also if it fits the demand of your position," she told The Vanguard. "I am trying to set athletes up for a good general foundation to then target their specific demands for the types of movements that they will be exposed to on the court, on the field, in the pool and on the track"

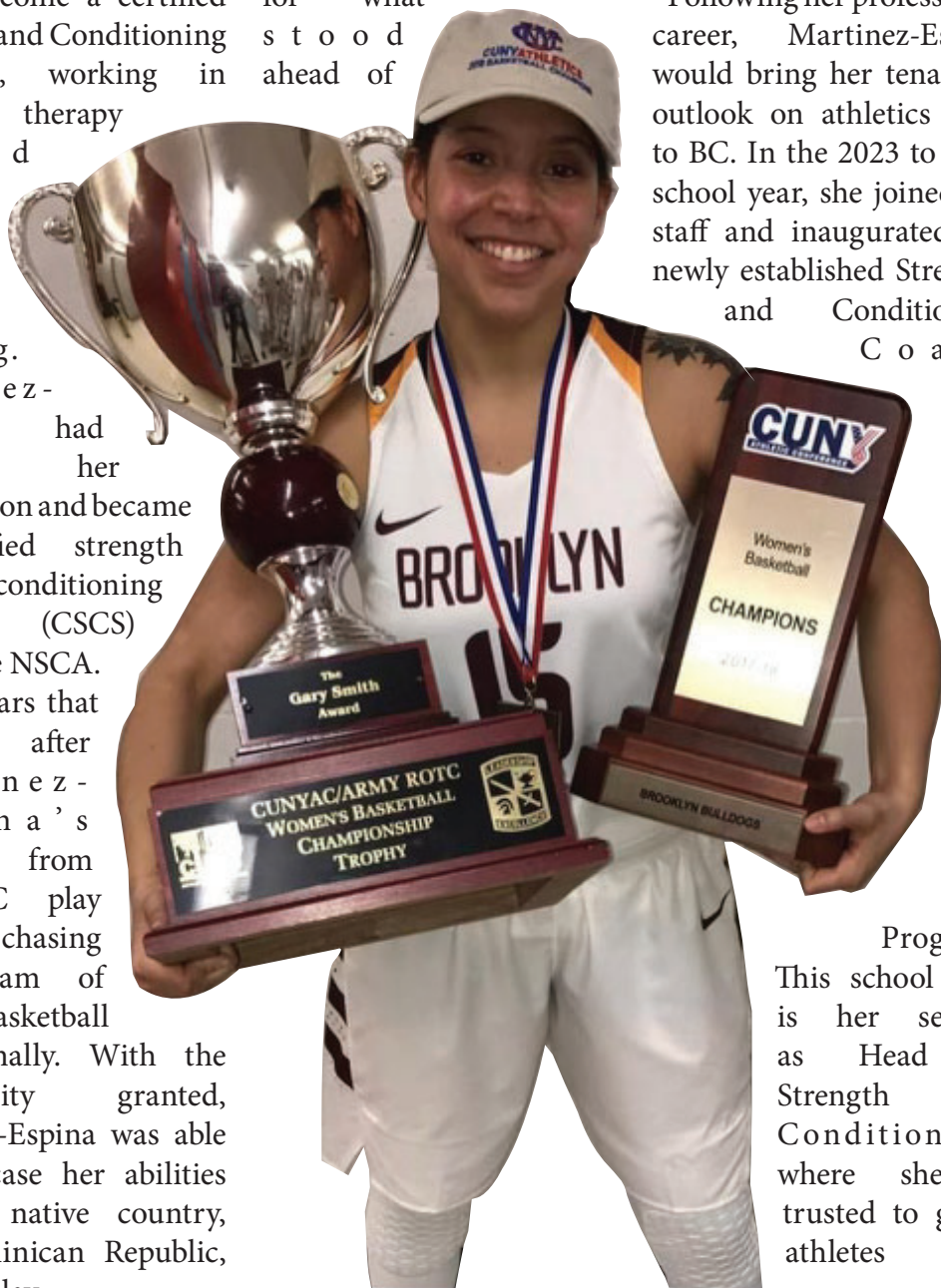
From a technical side, Martinez-Espina's

methods for training are to have athletes keeping themselves in a steady structured routine respective to their sport.

"Before I do anything, the first thing I ask is 'How are we feeling?' because I can have the perfect program written out for you, but if you come in and you are presenting to me any aches and pains then I would need to remedy that first," she stated. "I try to keep it as tailored to the individual person as much as possible to prevent strain and mobilize any discomforting movements."

Martinez-Espina understands that her role as a Strength and Conditioning coach is for athletes to be able to withstand their bodies' own discomforts within reasonable measures, as recovery is the center of what makes a healthy, mobilized athlete.

In 2025, Martinez-Espina goes into her third year as the head Strength and Conditioning coach at BC, and much is still to come as what Martinez-Espina has to offer pushes far greater than what she has already shown.



Grace Martinez-Espina poses with her awards./Courtest of Grace Martinez-Espina