

Don Lemon, Among 8 Journalists,
Arrested for Protest Coverage

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Vanguard Alumnus Joel Issacson
(‘52) Passed Away

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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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Citizens' Conflict: The State of Minnesota

By Emily Nixon
News Editor
& Gabrielle Oudkerk
Staff Writer

On Jan. 31, Liam "Conejo" Ramos, age 5, and his dad returned to their Minneapolis home after being released from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention after multiple protests and calls for their release.

"Yesterday, five-year-old Liam and his dad, Adrian, were released from Dilley detention center. I picked them up last night and escorted them back to Minnesota this morning," stated a post on X by Texas Congressmember Joaquin Castro. "Thank you to everyone who demanded freedom for Liam. We won't stop until all the children and families are home."

During his detention, Texas Congressmember Jasmine Crockett visited Ramos and found the boy to be "lethargic," having fallen ill in ICE Custody, according to a CNN interview with Congressmember Crockett.

Congressmember Castro, who accompanied Crockett on the visit to the detention center, recounted that Ramos' father said that Ramos has "been sleeping so much" and "is barely awake" because he was "depressed [...] and asking to go home," during an interview on "The Briefing with Jen Psaki" from MS Now.

There has been an outpour of protests and a call to protect children from ICE after images of Ramos' detention went viral on the internet, according to the segment.

"Law Enforcement clashed with around 100 protestors who were demanding ICE stop detaining children," said Jen Psaki, the host of the segment and former White House Secretary. "The symbol at the center of that protest were images of bunny ears and Spider-Man. A reference to

the bunny ear hat and Spider-Man backpack worn by Liam Ramos when ICE detained him and his father."

Ramos and his father's detainment drew criticism from various sources. In a statement from the Superintendent of Ramos' school district, Zena Stenvik, to The Guardian, the ICE agents were "essentially using a five-year-old as bait," to lure unsuspecting family members out of the home. "An agent had taken Liam out of the car, led the boy to his front door and directed him to knock on the door asking to be let in 'in order to see if anyone else was home,'" said Stenvik.

In addition to the controversial tactics used by ICE agents during the incident, the detainment itself was a point of added controversy.

"The family had an active asylum case and shared paperwork showing the father and son had arrived to the US at a port of entry, meaning an official crossing point," Marc Prokosch, an attorney representing the family, told The Guardian. "They did not come here illegally. They are not criminals."

In the interview with Psaki, Congressmember Castro mentions that detainees at Dilley were not criminals.

"There isn't a single criminal at the Dilley detention center," said Castro. "ICE told me that. You can't have a criminal conviction to get sent there."

Liam's detainment wasn't an isolated incident, with three other students from the same school district being detained by ICE agents, according to an article by the Minnesota branch of ABC 5, KSTP.

"A 17-year-old high school student on his way to school was taken by ICE agents with no parents present. [Superintendent Stenvik] said the student was reportedly removed from their car and taken away," stated the



Protestors in Tucson, AZ, holding signs during a National Day of Solidarity with Minnesota on Jan. 23./Courtesy of Dyan Bone via Flickr.



Liam "Conejo" Ramos being detained with his father in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Jan 20, 2026./Courtesy of The New York Times

article. "A 10-year-old child in fourth grade was taken by ICE agents on her way to school with her mom. [...] A 17-year-old Columbia Heights High School student and her mother were detained by ICE agents in their apartment."

Minnesota is not the only state faced with children being swept up by ICE agents.

"At least 3,800 children under age 18, including 20 infants, have been booked since Trump took office," according to The Marshall Project.

Unrest in Minnesota has been compounded by the fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by ICE agents, which have led to more protests across the country.

The discontent in Minnesota has not been solely aimed at ICE. On Jan. 27, during a town hall, Representative Ilhan Omar was sprayed with an unknown substance, later confirmed to be apple cider vinegar, according to a NY Times article.

The attack came after Omar mentioned abolishing ICE and calling for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem's impeachment, and her attacker, Anthony James Kazmierczak, 55, has been charged with third-degree assault, according to an article by The Guardian.

While anti-ICE protests were held in Minnesota, United States President Donald Trump questioned the motives of the protestor themselves

on Truth Social, then went on to claim that Minnesota was out of control.

"In Minnesota, the Troublemakers, Agitators, and Insurrectionists are, in many cases, highly paid professionals," said another post on Jan. 16. "The Governor and Mayor don't know what to do, they have totally lost control, and our currently being rendered, USELESS!"

In a letter to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz from the United States Attorney General, Pamela Bondi, she states, "Unfortunately, you and other Minnesota officials have refused to support the men and women risking their lives to protect Americans and uphold the rule of law."

and goes on to request that Governor Walz utilize "common sense solutions" such as "shar[ing] all of Minnesota's records on Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Service programs," "repeal[ing] the sanctuary policies," and "allow[ing] the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice to access voter rolls to confirm that Minnesota's voter registration practices comply with federal law."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey continued to criticize ICE actions in his city in an interview with the NY Times.

"This is not about ICE doing regular ICE stuff," Frey told the NY Times. "What we have seen feels like an invasion."

Don Lemon, Journalist and Former CNN Host, to be Arraigned After Covering Protests

By Emily Nixon
News Editor

On Feb. 4, a federal judge ordered Don Lemon to appear for their arraignment on Feb. 13.

Charged on “conspiracy against [the] right of religious freedom at [a] place of worship” and to “injure, intimidate, and interfere with [the] exercise of [the] right of religious freedom at [a] place of worship,” according to the indictment documents.

Lemon is one of eight people indicted on these charges, including one student from Philadelphia that assisted in Lemon’s coverage of these protests. But Lemon remains one of two independent journalists arrested in separate locations after the incident.

Lemon is a Brooklyn College (BC) alumnus and an award-winning political journalist. As a long-standing reporter for CNN, Lemon now stands as an independent reporter.

“Last night, the DOJ sent a team of federal agents to arrest me in the middle of the night for something that I have been doing for the last 30 years, and that is covering the news,” said Lemon in an Instagram post the day after his arrest. “I will not be silenced. I look forward to my day in court.”

Lemon and Georgia Fort were two independent black journalists arrested for “simply reporting the news,” according to Fort’s interview with CNN.

Lemon and Fort were covering an anti-ICE protest held in Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, allegedly, “where a



Journalist Don Lemon addressing a crowd after his arrest for covering a protest in Minnesota./
Courtesy of Lemon's Official Instagram, @donlemonofficial.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement official is a pastor,” according to the Associated Press (AP).

Lemon livestreamed the protest and aftershocks for six hours on his YouTube channel.

During the beginning of the livestream, Lemon interviewed Nekima Levy Armstrong, a civil rights attorney and former president of the Minnesota chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who was seemingly leading this part of “Operation Pull-Up,” a “clandestine” protest tactic which has “had a lot of success,” according to the livestream.

“We show up somewhere that is a key location. They don’t expect us to come there,” said Armstrong in the livestream. “Then, we disrupt business as usual.”

In the indictment documents, the United States (US) alleges that, “while inside the church, defendants

ARMSTRONG, ALLEN, KELLY, LEMON, RICHARDSON, LUNDY, CREWS, FORT, and AUSTIN oppressed, threatened, and intimidated the Church’s congregants and pastors by physically occupying most of the main aisle and rows of chairs near the front of the Church.”

During the livestream, Lemon broke off and entered the church first, recording audio in which an unknown individual asked Lemon if he was part of the group protesting. Lemon responded, “I’m not part of the group. I am just here photographing. I am a journalist.”

While moving through the church during the protest and conducting interviews, Lemon mentions that, “I’m just going to be as respectful as possible. I’m not here to intimidate anybody.”

Multiple times in the livestream, Lemon moves away from the group as they discuss details of the impending protest, claiming, “As Nekima

said, this is a clandestine operation, and then we can tell you what happened afterward.”

This decision to shield information in the livestream was quoted in the indictment documents in support of the conspiracy charge.

“In furtherance of the conspiracy and to accomplish the object thereof, defendants [...] LEMON, [...] committed various overt acts,” states the documents. “[Lemon] took steps to maintain operational secrecy by reminding co-conspirators to not disclose the target of the operation and stepped away momentarily so his mic would not accidentally divulge certain portions of the planning session.”

US Attorney General Pamela Bondi made multiple posts on X, alluding to the incident in Minnesota and condemning the protests there and across the state. “If you riot in a place of worship, we WILL find you,” said a post on Feb. 2

by Bondi.

“At my direction, early this morning, federal agents arrested Don Lemon, Trahern Jeen Crews, Georgia Fort, and Jamael Lydell Lundy, in connection with the coordinated attack on Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota,” said another post on Jan. 30.

Fort was later arrested at her home in Minnesota by ICE agents and has also been indicted alongside Lemon; however, she is only mentioned as the sole offender twice in the overt acts of “interviewing,” according to the indictment documents.

Like Lemon, Fort has been outspoken since her release about the dangers her arrest and indictment hold for the world of journalism.

“As journalists, we never want to be the story, but unfortunately, I did find myself in a predicament where I felt that I needed to be able to tell my own story,” Fort told CNN.

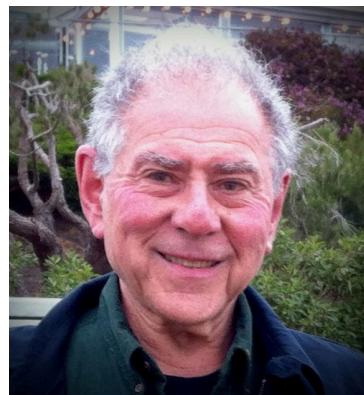
“I needed the world to see that journalism is on trial.”

In his statement on Instagram after his release, Lemon emphasized the importance of journalism in the US political climate and vowed to continue his fight for the truth.

“There is no more important time than right now, this very moment, for a free and independent media that shines a light on the truth and holds those in power accountable,” said Lemon in an Instagram post. “I will not stop now. I will not stop ever.”

Joel Isaacson, Brooklyn College and Vanguard Alumnus, passes at 95

By Jaida Dent
Managing Editor



Joel Isaacson./Courtesy of David Isaacson

Brooklyn College alumnus Joel Isaacson died on Jan. 26 in Berkeley, California. He is survived by his wife, Helen, his children David and Elisa, and his grandchildren Chaityn, Jack, and Jacob.

Born to Romanian

and Ukrainian parents in Brooklyn, New York, Isaacson would pursue a fruitful academic career, made possible by the free college education available at the time.

“Joel always considered his free college education—first in the free New York City college system, then with the GI Bill that funded his years at Oberlin, and finally in the (then) free University of California system—as a magnificent ideal that has since been lost in this country,” according to his private obituary written by Isaacson and his family.

His time at Brooklyn College was impactful, as he met his wife, Helen, on campus at a Vanguard meeting and was introduced to the world of

art and art history.

“When Joel learned that The Brooklyn College Vanguard was picking up the spirit of the college newspaper and carrying it forward, he was overjoyed, as was I,” said Helen Isaacson.

The two would get married as Isaacson served in the Army’s Exhibit Unit at Fort Myer in Virginia for two years, then moved to London, where Isaacson studied at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1954 to 1955. Once the couple returned to the U.S., Isaacson would obtain his master’s in painting from Oberlin College. Afterwards, the Isaacsens would head to San Francisco after friends and BC alumnae Marvin Friedman, Philip,

and Gladys Leider had “discovered the Garden of Eden” there. Isaacson would continue his education and earn his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley’s Art History department.

After raising their children in California, the family moved to Ann Arbor, where Isaacson would begin teaching at the Department of the History of Art at the University of Michigan. During his tenure, Isaacson organized a teach-in to protest against the U.S. involvement in Vietnam in March of 1965. The event would encourage others to do them around the country.

[...] It was soon followed by teach-ins at Columbia, Wisconsin, Penn, and more, spurring a wave

of campus activism and creating awareness of the situation in Vietnam, the Tonkin Bay Resolution, and bombings, all of which were not well understood at that time by the public,” according to his obituary.

The couple retired in California in 1996, where Isaacson would paint full-time. He would have solo exhibitions, including “Walls,” which explores the concept of borders between the U.S. and Mexico, and Israel and Palestine.

In his free time, Isaacson enjoyed reading periodicals, watching the Warriors and 49ers, spending time with friends, family, and former students, and “reflecting his lifelong sense of justice and determination not to look away.”

Partial Government Shutdown Comes to an End

By Elianna Tsigler
Staff Writer

On Saturday, Jan. 31, the federal government was partially shut down due to Congress’s failure to pass a spending bill for the 2026 fiscal year on time, according to an article by NPR.

Senate Democrats withdrew their support for the funding bill designed for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after a second fatal incident in Minnesota gained national attention and ended in the passing of Alex Petti on Jan. 24.

Petti was a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse from Minneapolis who was fatally shot in an incident involving alleged Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents, according to an article by ProPublica.

In response to the death, the Democratic Party called for ten specific changes regarding ICE regulations,

namely: “Targeted Enforcement,” “No Masks,” “Require ID,” “Protect Sensitive Locations,” “Stop Racial Profiling,” “Uphold Use of Force Standard,” “Ensure State and Local Coordination and Oversight,” “Build Safeguards into the System,” “Body Cameras for Accountability, Not Tracking,” and “No Paramilitary Police,” as stated in a letter from Jeffries and Democratic Senate Leader Charles Schumer to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson and the Senate Majority Leader John Thune.

“We need dramatic change in order to make sure that ICE and other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security are conducting themselves like every other law enforcement organization in the country,” Jeffries told AP.

To avoid another prolonged shutdown like the one in

2025, President Trump signed a bill that funds most government agencies for the remainder of the fiscal year, securing funding through Sept. 30; however, a ten-day window for DHS funding was imposed while Democrats and Republicans debate which regulations will be enforced on ICE agents, according to the NY Times.

“It is critical that we come together to impose common sense reforms and accountability measures that the American people are demanding,” states the letter.

Speaker of the Republican Party, Mike Johnson, says he believes an agreement will be reached by the deadline, according to an AP article.

However, with the Feb. 13 deadline fast approaching, negotiations regarding the DHS have not yet begun as of the end of last week. Both parties are at a stalemate as Republicans do not

agree with the Democrats’ requests. Senator Katie Britt called their list “a ridiculous Christmas list of demands for the press,” while other Republicans see it as unserious.

If there is no agreement “on how to rein in federal law enforcement, specifically Immigration and Customs Enforcement,” another shutdown is likely to occur and will impact agencies such as TSA (Transportation

Security Administration), FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), and the CBP (Customs and Border Protection), according to an article by CNN.

“The administration can’t just talk the talk, they need to walk the walk,” said Jeffries on “This Week,” an ABC segment. “That should begin today. Not in two weeks, today.”



President Donald Trump Signing Bill that Ends Partial Government Shutdown./Courtesy of Alex Wong/Getty Images

From the Block to the Diaspora with BHMC

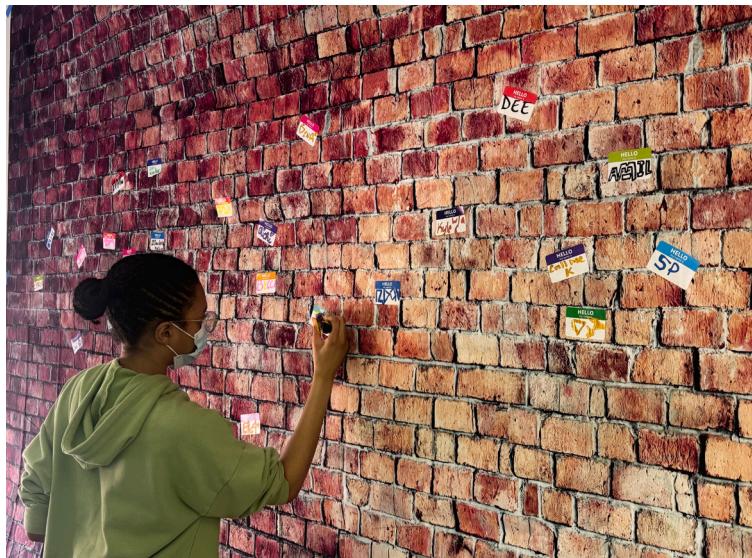
By T'Neil Gooden
Features Editor

Brooklyn College's (BC) Black History Month Committee (BHMC) hosted its very own kick-off for BC students to celebrate the beginning of Black History Month, which they titled "From The Block To The Diaspora". This year was quite significant for Black people because this Black History Month marks the 100th anniversary of honoring black culture.

"Black history was not recognized in classrooms, not preserved in institutions, not centered in public consciousness. It had to be fought for. It had to be carved into the narrative, this nation, and the world by people who refused to be raised. And today, we stand here because they did not give up," said Jenessa Jasmin, the President of BC's BHMC.

Jasmin not only spoke about the history of Black culture, but also brought attention to the kick-off's title "From The Block To The Diaspora".

"This year's theme reminds us that Black identity is both deeply rooted and boundless. It begins in neighborhoods, families, traditions, music, language, and memory," Jasmin told the audience. "But it does not end there. It stretches across oceans, cultures, and histories. It lives in the Caribbean, Africa, in Europe, South America, and right here in our communities. Our



BC Student writing a sentimental note on BHMC's Reflection Wall./Courtesy of T'Neil Gooden

stories are not singular. They are layered, global, and interconnected."

Students used this time to listen to their peers and leaders speak about the importance of black culture and the continuous need to uplift those who inspire them.

"Black history is not confined to a single place or time. It lives across borders," said Yasmin Ali, the Interim Vice President for BC's Student Affairs. "It exists in our languages, our creativity, our energy, and our brilliance. The diaspora reminds us that while our stories may begin locally, their impact is global."

Ali also emphasized students speaking love into themselves and making sure that they are building themselves as people and students.

"Black History Month is not just a moment to look back. It is a call to move forward with attention, pride, and purpose," said Ali. "As we begin this month-long celebration, I encourage each of you to engage deeply, listen generously, reflect honestly, celebrate the diversity within the black experience, and remember that your story, your roots,

are not something to leave behind. They are something to stand on."

Guest speaker, Dena Yoba, President of the Yoba Development Foundation, spoke about black excellence and understanding that people of color can make a difference, no matter their age.

"When [Black people] cross borders, our culture crosses with us. Our fashion becomes language. Our music becomes movement. Our swag becomes currency. Our homes become sanctuaries, and our being transcends the generations of struggle," Yoba told the audience. "What began as a local struggle became a global influence. Because our lives, our creativity, and our resistance have always been connected."

With meaningful words shared, students were greeted with foods from many cultures served at this event, including: Rice and peas, Jerk Chicken, Plantains, Cornbread, and Mac and Cheese.

Jasmin took the time to explain that even within this month of celebration, there is still a struggle occurring in the community.

"Around the world, Black communities are

still facing injustice, displacement, erasure, and violence," Jasmin said. "Their attempts to silence our histories question our community and divide us from one another. But history teaches us something powerful. Whenever the world has tried to dim black light, we have responded by shining brighter. Black history has never been just about survival."

Yoba shared the same testament within her speech, "The diaspora isn't just history, it's a living, breathing relationship. There is no we without us," she stated. "Understanding that your freedom is tied to mine, even oceans apart. And in a world that often teaches us to stand alone, to move with hyper-independence rooted in fear and adversity, our power has always been collective."

BC junior, Imani Dickens, followed with a performance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing". Students also had the opportunity to participate in an activity while at the kick-off event.

BHMC had a map of all the countries in the world, and students

placed a sticker on the country they are from. Along with this activity, students were presented with a "Reflection Wall" where they were able to place a nametag on the wall with their names, messages, and opinions about anything, including Black history.

Students left this event with messages that filled them with enthusiasm for the years to come. Ali shared this sentiment with the audience.

"The struggle was real. But it was necessary. It taught us all resilience, perspective, and strength. But through every challenge, one lesson remains clear. Never lose sight of who you are and where you come from."

Students interested in the BHMC can check their Instagram: @bhmc_bc



Students placing a sticker on the country they are from./
Courtesy of T'Neil Gooden

Protect The Beat, Prevent The Risk: Health Programs Lead Panel on Heart Health

By Rami Mansi
Editor-in-Chief

With a dress code of red and a guest list packed with speakers and representatives, Brooklyn College (BC) Health Programs Office collaborated with the Black and Latino Male Initiative (BLMI), the Department of Children and Youth Studies, the Health Clinic, and the BC Cancer Center to host “Protect The Beat, Prevent The Risk: Heart Health & Cancer Awareness.”

After a brief confusion about the location, guests settled into James Hall 3403, where snacks, crafts, and light refreshments lay waiting.

“Heart disease remains the number one cause of death in the United States. With the theme ‘Your Health, Our Priority,’ the Health Programs



Attendees watching tutorials on how to crochet./ *Courtesy of Mia Muskan*

Office aims to educate and empower participants with practical tools to reduce risk factors and prevent becoming a statistic,” said Dr. Lisa Millsaps-Graham, Adjunct Professor for the Health and Nutrition Sciences Department at BC and the Assistant Director of the Health Programs Office.

“By sharing knowledge and resources, we continue working toward building a healthier future for all,” she added on.

The theme introduced as of the Health attendees crocheted Programs their pieces. This was Office’s new followed by speeches events and from two attending initiatives is organizations.

“Your Heart, Some of the Our Priority.” organizations Millsaps- introduced were the Graham BC Veterans and explained Military Program, this further. the National Council

“With the for Negro Women theme ‘Your (Flatbush Section), Health, Our and the Coalition of Priority,’ Concerned Medical the Health Professionals

Programs Office (CCMP).

Office aims to educate and empower participants with practical tools to reduce risk factors and prevent becoming a statistic.”

The event was also in collaboration with the BC Fiber Arts and Crafts club, which led attendees through a crochet lesson of their choosing. latter

Four tutorials were provided, as well as deliver the materials needed a presentation to crochet one of four toward the end of heart-themed items. the event, along with another organization.

Many speakers and organizations were Dr. Millsaps-

Graham highlighted the Health Programs ambassadors who helped shape the event to its final outcome.

“Our newly formed Health Programs Student Ambassadors—Mia, Ardit, Badriah, Max, and Enisa—continue to do a tremendous job advancing health

promotion initiatives on campus for both undergraduate and graduate students in a non-clinical environment.”

Looking towards the future, Dr. Millsaps-Graham shares the Office’s commitment to the community it serves.

“As we promote ‘Your Health, Our Priority,’ we remain committed to building a healthier future for all members of the Brooklyn College

*Your Heart,
Our Priority*

Graphic by Jocelyn Rios

community.”

For more information regarding the Health Programs, BLMI, and the BC Cancer Center, please visit their respective Instagrams: @bc_hpiro, @bcblmi, and @bccancercenter.



Attendees, speakers, and representatives from “Protect The Beat, Prevent The Risk.”/ *Courtesy of Dr. Millsaps-Graham*

Brooklyn College Musical Theater Collective Returns With Musical ‘Sondheim on Sondheim’

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

Brooklyn College's Musical Theater Collective (BCMTC) returned to Studio 312 in Roosevelt Hall Extension from Jan. 23 to Jan. 24 to perform the musical "Sondheim on Sondheim," which encompasses American composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim's 60+ year career.

Sondheim is revered as one of the most prominent and innovative figures from 20th-century musical theater and is known for musicals such as "Into the Woods," "Company," and "Sweeney Todd." "Sondheim on Sondheim" contains 41 songs from 19 different musicals composed by Sondheim, featuring his greatest hits as well as lesser-known deep cuts. It also includes video interviews and archival footage of Sondheim himself projected on a screen throughout the performance, adding a personal account of Sondheim's life story and writing process.

Studio 312 in Roosevelt Hall Extension was transformed for the performance. In the lobby, walls were adorned with Sondheim's famous quotes and pictures from his life, such as when he won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015. For the performance area itself, risers were used to elevate the audience section to mimic the look of a real theater.

"[There's] something about the way they set up the space," said Santana Rios, a BC alumnus, who came to see her friend, Shier Benhamou, act in the show. "Going to class here and then seeing it



Posters of Sondheim's musicals and pictures of Sondheim./

Courtesy of Margot Dragos

transformed differently is like, wow, they really made this so nice!"

The performance featured a live orchestra, who were also on stage throughout the duration of the musical. Cast members occasionally went through the aisles and interacted with audience members, such as during the song "Pretty Woman" from "Sweeney Todd."

Various audience members discussed how they enjoyed the last song of act one, "Sunday," which comes from Sondheim's "Sunday in the Park with George" and featured a majority of the cast members.

"So far, my favorite part [was] Sunday, the end of act one," said Joseph Whittle, a Brooklynite who came to see his friend Eloise Brown perform.

"There were so many good moments, like the opening was really cute, even the last song [of the first act], Sunday in the Park with George was really nice, too," said Rios.

BCMTC previously performed "Sunday in the Park with George" in 2024 in the Tow Center's Don Buchwald Theater, which was their first licensed musical production. Recently,

the collective has had to relocate its productions to Studio 312 after being told that in order to rent out any theater in the Tow Center, they'd have to pay a steep price.

"[...] We were boxed out of the Tow Center entirely," said Ryan Scott Martin, the music director, conductor, and president of BCTMC. "And that's because they were trying to charge us close to \$10,000 to use the theaters, which is obviously something that the students can never do."

It is now uncertain whether or not BCTMC will be able to use

Studio 312 for their next production as Roosevelt Hall undergoes renovations.

"We're now being told that, apparently, they're overhauling the HVAC system in 312, and it's looking like we're not gonna be able to use 312, either," said Martin.

"The answer is not officially 'no' yet, it's that [The Conservatory] is not getting any straight answers, so we can't move forward with anything."

However, BCTMC is confident they will continue to perform despite these setbacks.

"The reason our group still exists is because our team has been so persistent. We've been told no so many times, and we have never stopped," said Martin.

The collective aims to allow collaboration between BC's Music and Theater Departments, as there is currently no musical theater major at BC.

"[...] We're in New York City, and this is the heart of musical theater in the world," said Martin. "The reality is a lot of these students that are here studying classical music or other things are going to go on to perform [in musicals]. And we don't really give them the opportunity to train here at Brooklyn College."

Despite its fourth show on Sunday, Jan. 25, being cancelled due to the snowstorm, BCTMC's "Sondheim on Sondheim" sold out all three of its performances.

BCTMC is hopeful that no matter what obstacles they encounter, they will continue to bring musical theater to the BC community.

"We care so much about this art form," said Martin, "and we care so much about giving the students and the community this opportunity that whatever gets in our way, we're gonna make it work."

Students interested in supporting or joining BCTMC can follow and contact their Instagram at @bcmtc.



The cast breaks out ribbons and boas for one of their musical numbers./

Courtesy of John Gilley

Gone But Never Forgotten: What Happened To The Black Panther Party?

By Serena Edwards
Opinions Editor

During the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement was transformative.

From notable figures like Malcom X, Shirley Chisholm, and John Lewis, there was a sense of activism and speaking against racist regimes. Among many of the notable greats, a group that is often forgotten is the Black Panther Party (BPP).

The BPP challenged the government and stood on the foundation of their constitutional rights and unity among all demographics. Looking at today's divisiveness within the United States (U.S.), the fearless behavior of the Black Panther Party burns deeply within us now more than ever.

The Black Panther Party was a political party based on the mission of uniting diverse communities and educating and providing back to communities. The organization was founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The

government on its division tactics.

Many people know the Black Panther Party for their outspoken use of the 2nd amendment, but they were more than that. The BPP held over 60 free programs to assist the community, such as free breakfast and afterschool programs, as well as the sickle cell health clinic, which provided free services to help lift some burdens off low-income families.

For something that promoted so much unity and service, the government skewed the narrative to paint them as domestic terrorists. Even going as far as personally targeting chapter presidents and arresting members for minor infractions. This played a huge part in the party ultimately being dismantled in 1982.

The BPP has faced many obstacles in having its legacy displayed properly. From having their digital history toppled after a current-day search of the term

“Black
Graphic by Serena Edwards



The Black Panther Party protesting. / Courtesy of National Museum of African American History

movie, to even being surveilled when the group was alive by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Counter-Intelligence program (COINTELPRO), their destiny seemed dim.

COINTELPRO was a program designed by the FBI to “disrupt the activities of the Communist Party of the United States. In the 1960s, it was expanded to include a number of other domestic groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Black Panther Party,” according to the FBI.

Protests have been spreading around the nation against the brutal tactics of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We have, on multiple occasions, seen the

government many times utilize weapons against the same citizens they are supposed to protect and provide for. We have the 2nd Amendment to

our advantage in cases where we feel like the government is turned against us and in many

circumstances of self-defense.

According to the United States Congress, the 2nd amendment states, “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

For further understanding, this means that we can obtain and carry a weapon for our protection against the government.

The BPP used the 2nd Amendment to prove to the government and racist organizations that they have rights too.

Founder of the BPP, Newton once said, “Sometimes, if you want to get rid of the gun, you have to pick the gun up.”

But more importantly, the principles of the BPP reflected the importance of unity within other marginalized and oppressed communities through their community outreach.

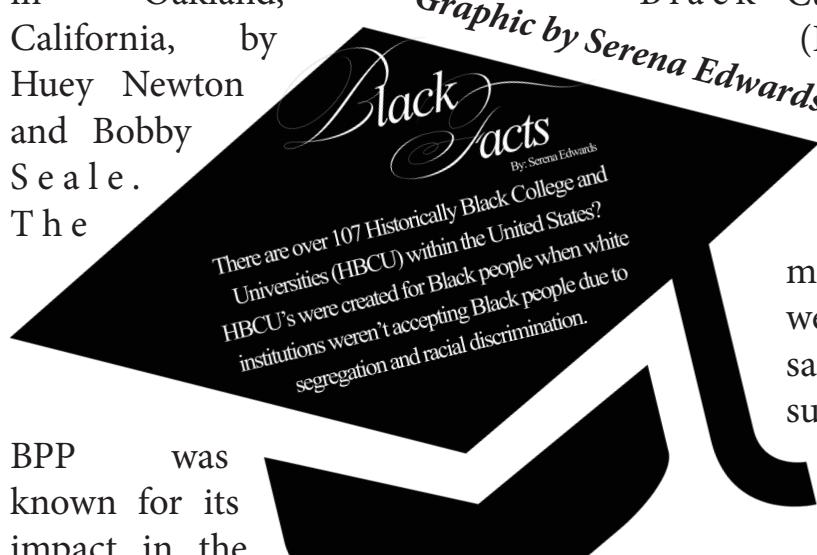
But the legacy still lives on through the protests and actions we see today. When

many marginalized groups band together, the government has no other option but to change. When we start to realize that it is less about the color of our skin and more about the similarities in struggles we all face, we become a united front that can not be broken.

Notable members of the BPP, such as Fred Hampton, also exemplify what it means to come together as a community. Hampton used public speaking and personable skills to talk to groups that were once divided due to the government's use of division tactics. However, through communication and understanding, there was a wide spread of banding together for equity.

As we look at the state of the world today, we must look back at the patterns that are now repeating and follow the steps of our notable change makers. There is power in numbers.

The Black Panther Party may have been dismantled in the 80's, but their fire burns bright through the actions of people who live today.



BPP was known for its impact in the community through free programs and challenging the mainstream media. Panther” results in the mainstream Marvel

Nicki Minaj's turn to MAGA: Was it Unexpected or Inevitable?

By Josiah Sanon
Staff Comic Artist
 & Rami Mansi
Editor-in-Chief

People often say to “never meet your heroes”, but nowadays it might be best not to search them up either.

In our current political climate, it is arguably true now more than ever that a person’s politics and what they support and stand for says a lot about them. So it says a great deal when someone like the once-revered “Queen of Rap,” Nicki Minaj, who supposedly always supported marginalized communities, starts siding with far-right politics.

Minaj is objectively one of the biggest rappers in all of music history, and anyone who even tries to dispute her title as “The Queen of Rap” runs the risk of getting doxxed. However, her latest decisions have shown that the “Queen” has obviously forgotten who her subjects are. If you ask me, she hasn’t forgotten; she just doesn’t care anymore. By really breaking down Nicki’s behavior over the past few years, even before she shook hands with the President, it’s clear she’s been in a historic decline in both her career and her integrity.

The term MAGA is derived from Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again” and is now used to refer to the conservatives who have fully changed what it means to be conservative, as



Erika Kirk interviews Nicki Minaj at Turning Point USA's AmericaFest on Dec. 21.
Courtesy of the Rolling Stone and Caylo Seal/Getty Images

Trump’s presidency has emboldened them to make their ignorance and prejudice public, and the glue that holds their heavily cultish movement together.

It is MAGA who is particularly in support of the deployment of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents who are terrorizing, kidnapping, and even killing people from these same marginalized communities.

Nicki started to show her true colors when Cardi B came onto the rap scene and took the spotlight. When a physical altercation turned online rap beef into a real-life feud.

Another black female artist who has gotten the displeasure of crossing Nicki is national treasure Megan Thee Stallion. The two were actually on good terms for a while, until a successful collaboration with Cardi B and a rumor that has since been proven false pushed their relationship to

a boiling point after a string of diss tracks reignited a hate-fueled feud.

In Megan Thee Stallion’s song, “Hiss,” she says, “These hoes don’t be mad at Megan // These hoes mad at Megan’s Law,” in reference to Nicki’s husband, Kenneth Petty, a registered sex offender.

Wait a minute, though, what exactly is Megan’s Law, and why is Petty practically banned from even looking at a school building? A quick Google search or a quick chat with a law student will tell you that Megan’s Law is a federal law that makes information about sex offenders available to everyone to keep their communities safe. Nicki’s response is barely noteworthy, but in summary, she stooped

so low as to talk about Megan’s dead mother, showing her pettiness and desperation to tear down other female artists instead of recognizing she used to be in their same

position and providing even a semblance of all the love and support she got from many other artists when she came onto the scene.

This quick trip down memory lane shows Nicki’s stance on basically every controversy she’s either created or been associated with has always been aligned with the conservatives she is currently shaking hands and walking on stage with now.

Her willingness to tear down other female artists complements Trump’s new policies surrounding abortion and his restriction of women’s reproductive rights. Nicki’s marriage to Petty also makes ignoring all 34 of Trump’s felonies a walk in the park.

It is also important to note the possible benefits Minaj and Petty would receive from Minaj’s public support of MAGA, including getting closer to having her

citizenship approved. This transaction of support for citizenship defines not only the wavering integrity and personal ethics Minaj has, but the desperation for support from public figures on MAGA’s behalf. The far-right has been seeking out young spokespeople and influencers to promote their beliefs and agendas. Minaj is yet another spokesperson added to the list.

Overall, when looking at Nicki Minaj, her previous loyalty to her former fanbase may have been inauthentic to begin with. Nicki’s music has always been a big part of many people’s childhoods, particularly Black and queer youth who now have no choice but to watch one of their favorite artists show her true colors and turn her back on them. Although some cannot let go of nostalgia and insist on remaining her fans, which now means supporting a political movement that is taking away the rights of anyone who isn’t a white, straight, cis man.

Nicki’s decision to join MAGA might’ve been a long time coming and after all the bridges she’s burned and her destroying her own legacy and career she’s also all out of options but her fans aren’t, while some follow in her footsteps and choose to stay ignorant it is important now more than ever to support people who truly want to uplift you and your community.

“Heated Rivalry” Is The Joy We All Needed Right Now

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor
 & Renae Visico
Staff Writer

Who would've thought that a gay hockey show from Canada would take over our social media feeds and alter our lives forever?

“Heated Rivalry,” out of the thousands of shows available at our fingertips, has become a massive success. This is because watching a show about pure, queer joy gives us a much-needed reprieve from the world. In a time where political uncertainty, discrimination, and sexism run rampant, *Heated Rivalry*’s optimism and representation are super refreshing and important now more than ever.

“Heated Rivalry,” created by Jacob Tierney, is a fictional television series about the steamy, enemies-to-lovers romance between the rival hockey players Shane Hollander, played by Hudson Williams, and Ilya Rozanov, played by Connor Storrie. It is based on and named after the second book in Rachel Reid’s book series, “Game Changers.” However, the show’s popularity has extended far beyond the fans of the books.

Originally supposed to have a small release on the Canadian streaming service, Crave, the show exceeded expectations across the border and was picked up by HBO Max to begin streaming in the States. Now, fans across the world are posting about the show and even hosting watch parties in local bars.

What makes “Heated Rivalry” so refreshing overall is that it’s an unabashedly queer story that doesn’t end in tragedy.

That doesn’t mean that homophobia isn’t present or a real threat. Shane and Ilya play for the National Hockey League, a notoriously conservative sports league, at a time when queerness wasn’t as normalized as it is today. But ultimately, Shane and Ilya don’t let these circumstances stop them from being true to themselves and to each other. Their journey, of course, wasn’t linear, but that only made it more realistic and emotionally rewarding when they finally decided to devote themselves to each other.

Too many queer people, whether youth or adults, feel unsafe coming out to their parents for fear of rejection or abandonment. But Shane’s parents, Yuna and David Hollander, are unconditionally accepting of him and Ilya right off the bat.

“What I love about this particular story is that it’s also showcasing what is possible and maybe taking the shock value out of it,” said Christina Chang, who plays Yuna, in an interview with TV Guide. “It’s not to underline that moment. I think it’s more to normalize it. That’s my hope, anyway, for any parent watching the show.”

And it’s not just queer people being represented by this show. Shane is also half-Japanese and autistic, and “Heated Rivalry”’s showrunners weave all of his identities together as subtle yet meaningful parts of his character.

Tierney expands on the novel’s exploration of Shane’s Asian identity, especially in regard to showing the added pressure he faces to succeed. Asian athletes will inevitably look up to the only Asian hockey player in a predominantly white sport, and



Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov riding off into the sunset at the end of Episode 6.

Courtesy of Los Angeles Times

while Shane usually succeeds on the ice, it’s beautiful to see him also succeed on his own terms without ignoring his feelings.

While not autistic himself, Hudson Williams clearly put lots of love and care into his portrayal of Shane as a high-masking autistic, shown in the way his eyes communicate his true intentions, or the way he responds to Ilya’s flirting a little too literally.

Autistic people in media are mainly portrayed with exaggerated movements, so it was very refreshing to see the equally important subtle ways that autism presents itself through Shane.

Ilya Rozanov is an immigrant from Russia who lives and works in the USA on a work visa. He reflects experiences of navigating a foreign language and familial pressure to succeed shared by many first-generation immigrants. During an administration that threatens the existence and rights of immigrants, it’s important to see Ilya receive unconditional love for every part of himself that he didn’t know he needed.

The love and care put into “Heated Rivalry” have made queer people feel seen and understood. Hudson Williams shared on Andy Cohen Live that closeted pro athletes have anonymously reached out to Rachel Reid with messages of gratitude, sharing how the show has mirrored their own experiences.

Jesse Korteum, a hockey player who took a long break from the sport because he couldn’t feel accepted, recently came out as gay and cited “Heated Rivalry” as an inspiration for that decision.

“I want [queer

athletes] to know that there is hope and you’re not alone,” Korteum said in his Instagram post. “There is a life and a deep happiness waiting for you on your path. You will get through this, and it is going to be okay.”

The depiction of Shane and Ilya’s relationship has resonated with women as well. Their relationship is one where both men aren’t afraid to express their love for one another and show their vulnerability. The intimate scenes between the two characters are ones where both parties practice consent, and neither party is made to feel degraded or uncared for.

Cosmopolitan further explored this topic when they asked women why they couldn’t get enough of *Heated Rivalry*.

“Women in heterosexual relationships are so used to being devalued by their partner, and their sexual pleasure isn’t always prioritized,” said Annie, one of Cosmopolitan’s surveyees. “It’s just nice to watch smut where nobody is being degraded or devalued, and the pleasure of both parties is the top priority.”

“At a time when women’s sexuality, identities, and bodies are policed and surveilled to the utmost extreme, ‘Heated Rivalry’ provides what we all yearn for: meaningful, exhilarating intimacy full of tenderness and desire,” Sarah, another Cosmopolitan surveyee, told Cosmopolitan.

Women aren’t used to being fully valued in their sexual relationships and even their daily lives. Particularly for straight women, it is rare to see men be vulnerable in relationships when toxic masculinity is so prevalent.

“Heated Rivalry” allows women to suspend their disbelief for the duration of the show and explore a world where male athletes are able to be vulnerable with each other, and sex is always pleasurable and consensual for all parties involved.

“Heated Rivalry” also allows us to take a much-needed break

from the news and politics. The show aired in late 2025, a year where 51% of Project 2025 had been implemented throughout the United States. Fans have expressed this sentiment on Reddit, saying that “Heated Rivalry” is “the best distraction from U.S. politics ever.”

While there continues to be uncertainty throughout our country, finding something else to obsess about that isn’t whether or not democracy will exist tomorrow is necessary in keeping our sanity. As DEI is ridiculed and threatened, it is increasingly important for the media to represent those from diverse backgrounds in an accurate, meaningful way.

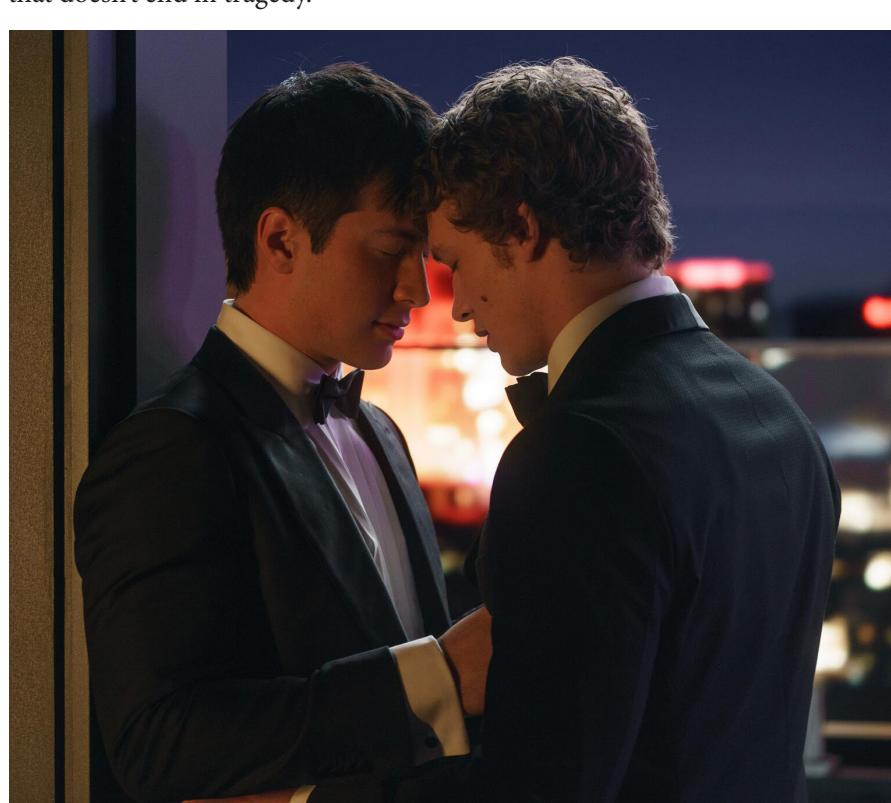
We wish that more queer youth could experience the joy that is Shane and Ilya’s journey. But while “Heated Rivalry” isn’t targeted towards adolescents, it communicates messages that many adults have needed to hear.

Shane and Ilya met at seventeen and only committed to each other at twenty-six. In the span of nine years, they have struggled to grapple with their identities in an environment where they’re pressured to have everything figured out, and they have emerged victorious.

“Heated Rivalry” is a warm hug to anyone who has ever felt like they’re falling behind or that it’s too late to embark on a journey to figure themselves out. It shows us that it’s never too scary or too late to create the life for yourself that you love.

In the last episode of the series, Shane and Ilya spend their summer in a secluded cottage in Canada, where they can embrace their relationship without worrying about the outside world or what others may think of them.

In a way, “Heated Rivalry” is our cottage: a place where we can be a fandom, see true diversity, and experience queer love without the reality of our world getting in the way.



Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov in Episode One./

Courtesy of Los Angeles Times

Racial Bias In NFL Coverage: The Lamar Jackson Double Standard

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor

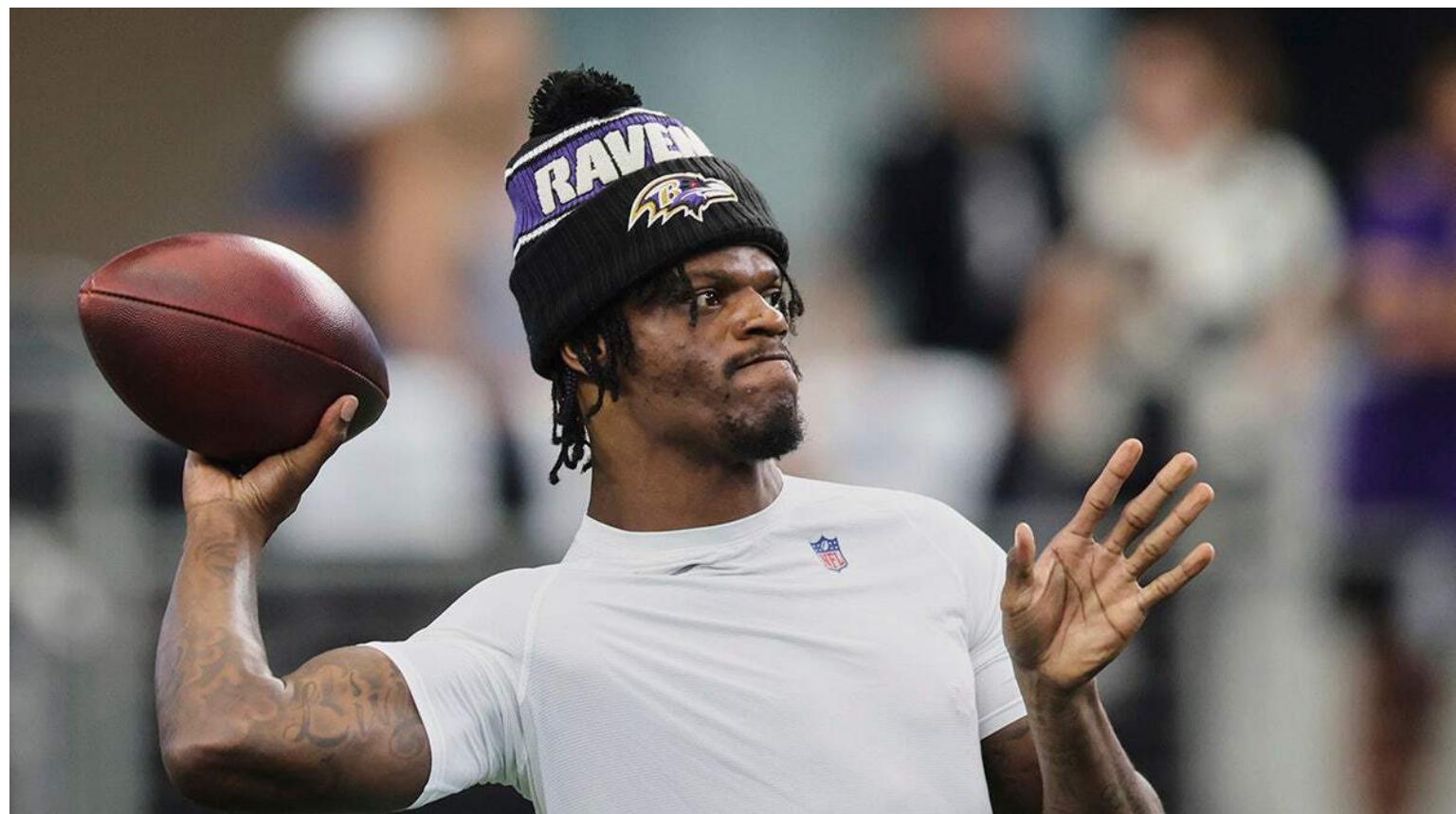
Back in 2022, Lamar Jackson was on Lebron James' interview show, "The Shop," and noted how racial bias against Black quarterbacks (QBs) still exists in the NFL. Jackson had already won an MVP award, when he said this, but felt like he needed to prove himself more.

James noted how racial bias has been historically used against Black QBs, and Jackson responded by saying, "It's still there. That's why I need a championship."

Historically, the NFL has viewed Black QBs through the lens of racially coded stereotypes, and in Jackson's case, most of his critiques came from that same rhetoric.

This is a two-time MVP winner, yet when he fails, the media talks about him as if he were Jay Cutler, a failed star who couldn't lead his team to the Lombardi trophy. During the 2025-2026 season, this became more apparent when the media began criticizing everything Jackson did while praising the Buffalo Bills QB, Josh Allen.

When Jackson declared for the draft, many comments about whether he could transition into a QB position loomed. Critics thought he would play better at the running back position, showcasing the racially coded language aimed at diminishing his success. But this is the NFL we're talking



Baltimore Lamar Jackson warming up./Courtesy of AP Photos Patterson

about, a notorious racist organization that blackballed Colin Kaepernick for kneeling during the anthem, in protest of police brutality and racial justice in America.

It's glaring how Jackson's faults are put front and center for everyone to see, so those who hate on him can feel vindicated in whatever criticisms they have. This is where Josh Allen comes into play. The former MVP is often glamorized or propped up as the NFL's golden boy who can do no wrong and is seen as the face of the league.

Both Jackson and Allen have failed to make deep playoff runs in their careers, as the Kansas City powerhouse was in the midst of their dynasty run. Allen's kryptonite was the Chiefs; he faced them three times and lost all three times.

He got close in the 2021 AFC divisional game as the game went into overtime, but lost because of an

old overtime rule that stated any touchdown called the game. Allen was upset at this rule because it didn't let the opposing side get a chance, causing the rule to be changed because of him (pay attention to this.)

What I mean when I say that Josh Allen is the NFL's golden boy is that he's the favorite. No real criticism comes his way, and the league more often than not posts him more than they do other QBs. Allen had an easy ride to the Super Bowl this year, no Mahomes, no Kansas City Chiefs.

The Bills were set to face off against the Denver Broncos and Bo Nix, in the 2026 AFC divisional game. What should have been an easy win for the Bills turned into an embarrassing performance, especially from Josh Allen. Allen finished the game with a 47.7 QB rating, three

touchdowns, and two interceptions that led to the Broncos coming back in the game. He was sacked three times

while only completing 64% of his passes. But why is this important?

Allen was scrutinized more by social media than actual NFL media; many fans were quick to point out that if it were Lamar who had a game like this, then he would've been dragged through the mud. They would be right in that assertion because, looking at Lamar's postseason record of 1-3, he is often criticized for his playoff losses, but these are team stats collectively.

One of the polarizing moments in Jackson's playoff career was during the 2025 AFC divisional game against none other than Josh Allen and the Bills. The game was 25-27 in the fourth quarter with a minute and 30 seconds left; all he needed to do was complete the two-point conversion to tie the game.

Jackson passes it to teammate Mark Andrews, and he drops the ball, sealing a loss for the Ravens. Jackson

did the best he could and still couldn't get through that hump, again getting mass critiques for things he could not control. When you're a two-time MVP and one of the best QBs of the late 2010s and 2020s, what more do you have to prove?

This all comes to a head during the 2025-2026 season, and the Ravens are in disarray. A disappointing season and one where Jackson dealt with hefty injuries, yet through it all, he still went out and played the best football he could. All the team's troubles were blamed on him. He was called a clubhouse cancer, and yet during the last game of the season, he suited up, still injured, and tried to get the Ravens to the playoffs.

Valenti-ZINE

By Jocelyn Rios Layout Editor, Key Jones-Ford Content Creator, & Ameena Khan Staff Comic Artist

