

East Quad Construction Creates Frustrations for BC Community
Pg. 2

Wolfe Institute Hosts Annual Konefsky Memorial
Pg. 5

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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Broadcast of Love



ISSO Presents New Mural Painted by BC Students
Pg. 7

BLMI Highlights Student-Owned Businesses in "Roots To Riches"
Pg. 6

Guggenheim Museum Unveils Carol Bove Exhibition
Pg. 8

Who is Going to Take "Best Picture" At The Oscars?
Pg. 10

Cover by Jocelyn Rios

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Complicated Commute: East Quad Renovation Causing Inconveniences for the Student Body

By Emily Nixon
News Editor

On Feb. 26, the Brooklyn College (BC) administration sent out an email to students warning that the sidewalks between the Library, Ingersoll Hall, and Boylan Hall would be closed until further notice for the next phase of the East Quad Renovation Project. Alternate entrances to campus have been provided via a map on the fencing surrounding the quad.

“The temporary partial closure of the walkway will help accelerate construction, reducing overall disruption and allowing the campus community to enjoy the renewed East Quad sooner,” stated Alan Gilbert, senior vice president for finance and administration, in the email.

“We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we invest in the safety, beauty, and long-term future of Brooklyn College.”

In the email, Gilbert acknowledged the impact this closure would have on students.

“We recognize that these changes will be inconvenient, particularly during class transitions. Please allow extra travel time when moving between buildings on the east side of campus,” stated Gilbert.

An advocacy club for disabled students, Student

Organization for Every Disability United for Progress (SOFEDUP), feels that this closure has a larger impact on students who use mobility aids.

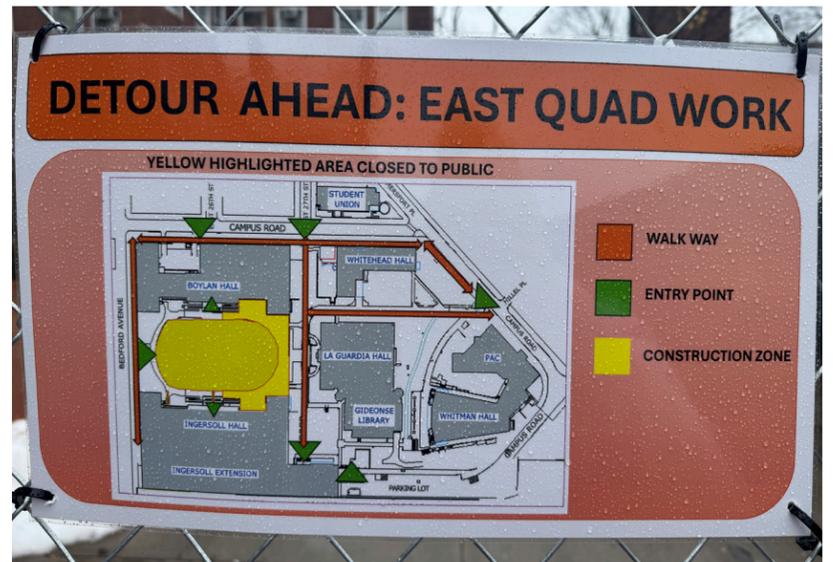
“The recent choice to entirely cut off the library from the Bedford Avenue entrance is much more significant of an issue,” Jett McHugh, president of the SOFEDUP, told The Vanguard.

“For an able-bodied student, travel time from Boylan or Ingersoll to Whitehead, for example, has been tripled, but for a disabled student—students such as those with canes or wheelchairs that need to use accessible entrances — travel time has quadrupled, perhaps even quintupled.”

The lack of clarity in the BC administration’s communication about the renovation project’s consequences has been a point of frustration for McHugh and SOFEDUP members.

“One of our own eboard members is in a wheelchair and severely impacted by the further restricting of East Quad,” said McHugh. “And given that it came with so little warning, and is meant to last for as long as it is, I personally find it rather unacceptable.”

The transition between classes has become a point of aggravation for BC



A map shows students alternate entrances and routes throughout the campus./
Emily Nixon

Students.

“I have most of my classes in Boylan, so that whole curvature - I mean, just walking in the quad just to get to [Boylan], or just going to the art gallery. It’s kind of been difficult to say the least to navigate, like damn, there’s these sharp twists you got to do. It’s like, man, I don’t want to have to do that, bro,” said BC junior Zach Walker.

Some students, like Carolina Crosby, a junior majoring in American Studies, have found a workaround to the closures.

“Since I know about Ingersoll, it doesn’t take me as long, but if I didn’t know how Ingersoll worked, I feel like it would take me twice as long,” said Crosby. “You already kind of have to know how the campus works to kind of get your way around.”

Despite having a workaround, Crosby remains displeased with the project as a whole.

“I just think it’s terrible. I understand why they’re doing it because the roots, there was some issue with the roots of the trees, but to just do it during the school year and having people graduating this year not even being able to enjoy the quad is just really frustrating,” said Crosby.

Crosby felt disappointed when marketing banners lined the fence in the middle of the East Quad.

“I’m in the Student Advisory Board for the

School of Humanities, and we were talking about what we could do with the boards, and someone said that we could, like, draw on them or have students create art for that,” said Crosby.

“Then [the BC Administration] just put pictures of students, it’s just like branding. So, it’s just, I don’t understand, it’s like, we’re already in the campus. We don’t need to see that. [...] The students could be involved in contributing to the board.”

The timeline for the project remains a point of suspicion for BC students.

“Why couldn’t we do this later in summer? When it’s during the summer classes, when most people are not in summer or summer classes,” said Walker. “I kind of feel like doing it now in spring is kind of an awkward time, considering students anticipate the weather getting warmer and just hanging out with their friends on the quad. I feel like it’s an inopportune time.”

There is one question commonly found buzzing around the student body at BC.

Asked by Crosby,

“When is it going to end?”



The fencing cuts off the Library pathway and Ingersoll Hall and Boylan Hall./Emily Nixon

U.S. and Israel attacks Iran: What We Know So Far

By Ameena Khan
Staff Writer

U.S.-Israel and Iran War: Prelude Timeline

On Feb. 28, 2026, the United States (U.S.) and Israel launched a “large-scale offense” on Iran, coordinating strikes while targeting military and nuclear sites, along with killing the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini.

According to the New York Times, these strikes have had serious domestic and global effects.

“Already, six Americans have been killed. Gulf allies are under attack. The stock market wobbled. Gas prices are rising. The U.S. military is spending, by some estimates, hundreds of millions of dollars per day. In Iran, an airstrike on a girls’ elementary school killed 175 people, according to local health officials and Iranian state media, and the Trump administration says it is investigating who was responsible.”

This war’s goal is to change Iran’s regime.

But what events had led towards violent attacks and the need for regime change in the first place?

The Iranian Revolution, also known as the Islamic Revolution, took place in Iran from 1978 to 1979, and united many Iranians through the goal of overthrowing the monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah, who was in charge of modernist reform programs in Iran.

“In addition to mounting economic difficulties, sociopolitical repression by the shah’s regime increased in the 1970s [...] Social and political protest was often met with censorship, surveillance, or harassment, and illegal detention and torture were common,” according to Britannica.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini gained the approval of many Iranians due to his critique of the Shah’s modernist reform programs, as well as the Pahlavi regime’s economic policies and dependence on foreign nations.

After months of protest, violence, and disorder, Khomeini officially declared that Iran would be an Islamic republic, which led to a “return to conservative values,” suppressing any Western cultural influence, establishing itself as a religious government and militia, and ending U.S.-Iran ties.

As of recent years, the start of the Gaza-Israel conflict on Oct. 7, 2023, would escalate tensions with the U.S. and Israel, along with several Arab countries, and Iran striking U.S. military bases.

“The Pentagon and U.S. officials say U.S. fighter aircraft conducted airstrikes on locations in eastern Syria involving Iranian-backed groups, likely causing casualties and destroying weapons stored at the two targets that were struck — a training facility and a safe house,” according to Associated Press (AP) News.

Following a series of attacks between Iran and Israel throughout 2024, the Twelve-Day War went from June 13 to June 24, 2025.

According to Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), Israel has done more than strick military and facilities in Iran.

[...] disrupted the daily lives of millions of civilians—ranging

from prolonged internet outages by the regime and disrupted banking services to partial suspension of public transportation and reduced capacity of medical centers.”

Furthermore, HRANA predicts a total of at least 5,665 casualties as a result of these attacks, as well as 1,596 individuals arrested by Iranian security forces.

Late Dec. 2025, a series of nationwide protests erupted in downtown Tehran against the Iranian government, demanding regime change had started to occur after the nation’s currency had plummeted and had encouraged merchants to strike against the plummeting refining.

“Monday’s protests were the biggest since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Jina Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. She was arrested by the country’s morality police for allegedly not wearing her hijab properly,” according to AP News.

In Jan. 2026, nationwide protests spread across nearly the entire country, now the largest demonstration since the 1979 revolution. Protests resulted in thousands of Iranians dead in a “state-orchestrated massacre,” according to The New York Times.

“On Friday, Jan. 9, Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ordered the Supreme National Security Council, the body tasked with safeguarding the country, to crush the protests by any means necessary, according to two Iranian officials briefed on the ayatollah’s directive. Security forces were deployed with orders to shoot to kill and to show no mercy, the officials said. The death toll surged,” according to The New York Times.

Armed security forces had attacked protestors “in at least 19 cities and in at least six different neighborhoods in Tehran in early January,” reaching a death toll of around 5,200.

“This is not merely a violent protest crackdown,” Raha Bahreini, a lawyer and an Iran researcher at Amnesty International, told The New York Times. “It is a state-orchestrated massacre.”

Yet, what do all these events have to do with U.S. involvement?

“If we didn’t do what we’re doing right now, you would have had a nuclear war and [Iran] would have taken out many countries,” President Trump said in a meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on March 3, 2026.

Trump has emphasized the threat of “nuclear war” efforts being eliminated by

degrading Iran’s nuclear and military capabilities and political leadership.

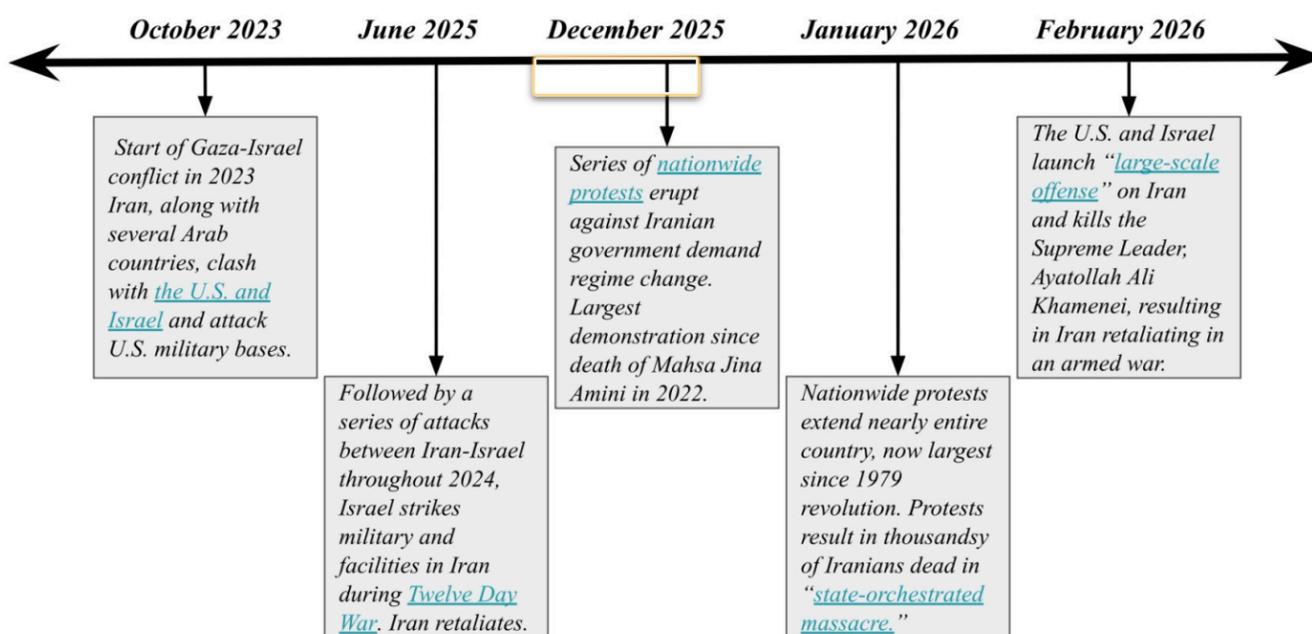
Protests have spread nationwide across the U.S., opposing military operations in Iran, as seen by demonstrations held in Manhattan.

“Chants of ‘Hands off the Middle East’ and many others could be heard at a protest and march Saturday that started in Times Square, as hundreds of demonstrators came together to express outrage and other concerns that stemmed from this weekend’s massive military strikes by the United States and Israel against Iran,” according to Spectrum News.

Additionally, an anti-war protestor and Marine Corps veteran, Brian McGinnis, had interrupted Montana Sen. Tim Sheehy on Capitol Hill, according to the Daily Montanan.

“No one wants to fight for Israel,” the veteran had shouted, as Sheehy and Capitol Police had attempted to remove him, breaking his arm when prying McGinnis away from the door.

“It seems pointless,” Army Veteran, Forest Gray, told NBC San Diego. “They change the reason for aggression against Iran daily.”



Prelude Timeline by Ameena Khan

Kristi Noem Fired, To Be Replaced by Senator Markwayne Mullin

By Gabrielle Oudkerk
Staff Writer

As of March 31, Kristi Noem, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), will be terminated from her position. Now former DHS secretary Kriti Noem has just gotten fired from her position. Trump reports in a tweet that her employment will officially end on March 31.

United States (U.S.) President Donald Trump stated in a social media post his feelings on the termination.

"The current secretary, Kristi Noem, who has served us well, and has had numerous and spectacular results (especially on the border), will be moving to be special envoy for The Shield of the Americas, our new security initiative in the Western Hemisphere we are announcing on Saturday in Doral, Florida. I thank Kristi for her service at Homeland."

However, Trump was reported by NBC News to be "frustrated" and "incensed by her performance," referring to the recent hearing performed by the Senate pertaining to DHS oversight.

The hearing lasted over four hours and had Senate members questioning Noem's management of DHS. The hearing, which

lasted over 4 hours and covered various issues having to do with the management of the DHS by Noem, had in which members of the Senate questioning questioned her on.

Minnesota Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar asked Noem if she had anything to say to Alex Prett's parents about her claims of him being a "domestic terrorist" and if she wanted to apologize for that claim. Referring to the man who was shot and killed by DHS in Minnesota in January.

Noem responds "I did not call him a domestic terrorist. I said it appeared to be an instance of" domestic terrorism."

"I think the parents saw what it was," Klobuchar responded."

Noem continues "When you perpetuate violence against a government because of ideological reasons and for reasons to resist and perpetuate violence, that is the definition of domestic terrorism."

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin continues on the subject. "Do you retract these statements identifying these individuals as domestic terrorists?" Durbin asked.

Noem responds, "When we have these situations happen, we always offer our condolences to these families. These are tragic situations,"

Noem continues, "We always work to provide the American people with

as much information as possible. We're relying on reports on the ground and agents who are there."

"Is it so hard to say you were wrong?" Durbin asked.

In which Noem responds "I absolutely strive to provide factual information."

On Oct. 2 of last year the government shut down, Nome shot a television ad funded by "200 million" taxpayer dollars according to Pro Republica. This specific use of taxpayer dollars concerned members of the Senate in which she was questioned about.

Republican Sens. Tillis and John Kennedy of Louisiana questioned Nome on their concerns.

"How do you square that concern for waste, which I share, with the fact you have spent \$220 million running television advertisements that feature you prominently?" Kennedy asks.

Nome responds "Sir, the president tasked me with getting the message out to the country and to other countries where we were seeing the invasion come from with putting commercials out that told them that if they were in this country illegally that they needed to leave or we would detain them and remove them, and they'd not get the chance to come back to America the right way."

The campaign for the sake of the president was "Extremely effective" Noem says.

Senator Kennedy then asks Nome about the company's used to fund and produce the ads including the bidding process and contracts.

"Safe America Media was a company formed 11 days before you picked them and The Strategy Group got most of the money and the head of that is married to your former spokesperson." Says Kennedy.

Kennedy continued to argue about the waste of spending. He says \$220 million dollars "troubles me"

"I just can't agree," Kennedy says.

Throughout the hearing members of the senate expressed that she should resign.

"A 14-month old dog is basically a teenager in dog years," Tillis said. He is referring to a book written by Nome, and she tells a story of her shooting her 14 month year-old dog dead.

Tillis continues "You decided to kill that dog because you had not invested the appropriate time and training, and then you have the audacity to go into a book and say it's a leadership lesson about tough choices," Tillis said. "And you killed a goat because you said it was behaving badly. You are a farmer. You don't castrate a goat, they behave badly. You should have probably done that before."

Tillis refers back to the accusations that the senate had against DHS on arresting and killing American citizens.

"We're beginning to get the American people to think that deporting people is wrong. It's the exact opposite. The way you're going about deporting them is wrong." Tillis adds.

The senator then tries to get Nome to admit her faults with the management of the DHS and the deaths of US citizens Renée Good and Alex Prett "Law enforcement needs to learn," he said, "that you don't protect them by not looking at the facts."

NBC news reported about the DHS's purchasing of luxury planes for the purpose of deportations, but later revealed Cabinet members as well including Noem.

Democratic senator Sheldon Whitehouse presents a photo which shows a picture of a

bedroom in which it is the inside of one of the luxury private jets that the DHS spent US taxpayer dollars on. Approximately \$70 million.

"What kind of deportee justifies being flown out of the country in a luxury jet with a bedroom and accommodations?" Whitehouse asked

Nome denies the accuracy of the photos that the senator used talking about how the room is being remodeled.

"The department has found that in purchasing our aircraft we will save the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars," she said.

Senator Kennedy then spoke again on the issue by saying "I want to see her succeed, but I'm not going to sit here and watch this kind of spending porn of a cabinet secretary putting herself on TV to the tune of \$220-plus million dollars without saying anything, and the advertisements are still running."

While it isn't clear as to whether Donald J Trump was already considering firing Nome based on the speculation and comments made by the president himself, a new person has been appointed to her role.

Markwayne Mullin, Trump's new appointee to DHS secretary is a former MMA fighter who attended Missouri Valley College and Oklahoma State University. According to Reuters, Mullin is a close friend of president Trump. Trump also described him as the "MAGA warrior". Senate leader John Thune called Mullin a "Senate whisperer" who can influence Trump on the inside.

Senator Mullin currently serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Environment and Public Works committee, The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and Indian affairs committee.

However Mullin has also faced a multi-year ethics investigation over his involvement with his family's plumbing business while serving the House of Representatives, a case which is causing speculation towards his new appointed role.



Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem speaks at the Border Security Expo in Phoenix, Arizona, April 8, 2025./Courtesy of DHSgov via Wikimedia Commons

The Battle In The Courts and Beyond: Wolfe Institute Hosts 2026 Konefsky Memorial Lecture

By Serena Edwards
Opinions Editor

The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute annually hosts a lecture in memoriam of Brooklyn College (BC) alum and former professor Samuel L. Konefsky.

Professor Konefsky served as a constitutional law professor at BC from the 1940s to the 1970s. Every year, they award a student at BC for their hard work within the legal system and contributions to the community. This year's recipient was BC Student Calvin Jean.

This year's lecturer was Lee Gelernt, an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyer working for the Immigrants Project. During his lecture, he broke down the latest actions from the Trump administration regarding immigration.

Gelernt spoke with The Vanguard before the event to provide his insights on the latest actions against immigration, what he wishes for the event, and what to expect.

"I think that we're in a situation now where there's a feeling that it's okay to attack immigrants. And the Trump administration has pushed that," stated Gelernt.

He emphasized the power of people and communities utilizing their voice when they see injustice.

"It's important to be in the courts, but the courts can't do everything, and we can't accomplish everything we want to accomplish through the courts, and that the most critical aspect in any movement is the public speaking out, and that the importance of young people in particular speaking out, and resisting, and not feeling like things are hopeless," stated Gelernt.

Speaking to his intentions

Samuel J. Konefsky Memorial Lecture



Promotional Picture of Samuel L. Konefsky and Lee Gelernt./Courtesy of the Wolfe Institute

for this speech, Gelernt hopes the audience will gain greater awareness of the policies affecting immigrant populations today.

"I'm hoping to give people a sense of the work that I'm doing in the ACLU [...] as well as all of our colleagues out there who are working on immigrants' rights and broaden the discussion a little bit to what it means for the values of our country," said Gelernt.

Gelernt acknowledges the overwhelming amount of information that is given on a day-to-day basis.

"There's a ton of different policies, and I think maybe we'll talk about that later, but that is one of the Trump administration strategies, it's just to overwhelm us with a new policy every day," said Gelernt.

The beginning of the lecture dissected the Trump administration's use of the Alien Enemy Act (AEA) and its effect within the Immigration

and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids.

Gelernt is actively working with the ACLU on the case against the Trump administration for their use of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. He argues that President Trump's use of this act is unconstitutional and attacks immigrants and their right to due process.

The AEA was a war crime act that was invoked during the War of 1812.

"The Alien Enemies Act of 1798 is a wartime authority that allows the president to detain or deport the natives and citizens of an enemy nation. The law permits the president to target these immigrants without a hearing and based only on their country of birth or citizenship," according to the Brennan Justice Center.

This act, however, is only permitted under war circumstances and has been invoked three times in history.

Gelernt talks about the process of the ACLU building a case against President Trump's use of the AEA.

"The minute he started talking about it on the campaign trail, the ACLU began digging into the law and doing enormous historical research, talking to as many people as we put it to be ready for it [...] all of a sudden, we heard, on March 11, March 12, March 13, that Venezuelan men, were being rounded up from all over the country and brought to a detention center in southern Texas," stated Gelernt.

Through his work, Gelernt has worked closely with the courts and even went to the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) to present and expedite their case. Since March 11, 2025, Gelernt and the ACLU have filed a case with the local courts.

Issues arise from the Trump administration's actions that Gelernt

suggested would affect the future of America's legal system.

"The Trump administration is trying to eliminate due process, in any way they can, so that they can detain as many as possible without due process. So they can afford as many immigrants as possible without due process," says Gelernt.

He also focuses on "understanding human dimensions" and bringing personal stories to the forefront. "We need to continue doing is getting these stories out there, getting the human dimension of it out there. So people can really understand, you know, concrete way, what are these policy means, so they can say, 'What, you're not going after the worst or the worst?'" said Gelernt.

Gelernt highlights the power of people through history and now as his last point.

"Lasting systemic change can't come strictly through the course; it takes the public pushing back, and that's very absolutely critical, right? It was critical in the 60s, the civil rights open, and it's, I think, critical now."

Throughout the lecture, Gelernt reassures students that they still have the power. He urges students not to be fearful but instead to utilize the voice and power they have to advocate, no matter how small it may be.

Gelernt said, "What I hear a lot of people saying is, 'Well, these problems are so big, what can I do?' Yes. Do it, no matter how small, it really matters."

Roots to Riches: Celebrating BC Student Entrepreneurs

By T'Neil Gooden
Features Editor

Brooklyn College's (BC) Black and Latino Male Initiative (BLMI) celebrated BC student entrepreneurs with their very own Roots to Riches tabling and paneling event. BC students got to spend their common hours on March 3 buying from their fellow students' personal brands and learning about the rights and wrongs when starting their own businesses.

This event not only showcased student businesses but also celebrated Black History Month, as most of the businesses were Black-owned.

BC alumnus and business owner, Imani Atwell, worked with BLMI to create an event, "where other students on campus can showcase their brand, help promote it, support them, and possibly market their brand."

"That was my main goal, and everything else just came from me writing down on Google Docs and literally seeing it

come to life,"

Graphic by
Jocelyn Rios

Atwell told The Vanguard.

Over 10 student businesses shared their art with other BC students: clothing, makeup, everlasting flowers, bakery goods, hair braiding, and books of poetry. Each business displayed its products with its own designs and marketing strategies. Students had business cards, QR codes, and social media as ways they can stay connected with their audience.

Attendees not only viewed the products they were able to buy, but also got inspired by those who have decided to share their products with the BC community.

"I'm happy to support all of the students on campus, especially if it's for a good cause and there's no issue

ever spending money," said Maria De La Cruz, a senior at BC.

Alani Gonzalez, a junior at BC, shared the same testament.

"It's really inspiring just to know that people are able to take something that they're very talented in or something that they have a passion for and really be able to exalt that and lighten that for themselves. I think it's something I want to start doing."

This experience was important for these young entrepreneurs, "because I don't believe that spaces like this were created for Black and brown minority students," Atwell told The Vanguard. "So we have to be able to create those spaces for ourselves. The fact that I'm a young Black woman who was able to create this space and invite other people who need a space like this, I

business owners will be impacted to showcase their brand and possibly do an event like this for themselves."

Students who are consumers of these brands and products are also learning about entrepreneurship as they are, "seeing other people do it, you know, just playing that supporting role. I feel like it will be very beneficial to them [students], no matter what side of the spectrum that you're on," Atwell said.

After buying from students' businesses, everyone at the event had the opportunity to hear about what it takes to be a business owner.

"You can't wait to perfect the craft. You just have to

start it and then perfect it as you go," Octavia Cornwall, owner of iPicnix, told the audience.

"So I felt

like I was

definitely being delayed with waiting for the perfect name, the perfect logo, the perfect business card. You can change those things as you go. So, as long as you have the passion for something, I say channel that passion, that energy into a plan. Jot it out and just attack it."

Cornwall continued by stating, "There's no right time or no better time than the present."

Angela Oakley, a sophomore at BC and owner of GlitteredbyAng, explained that, "you can definitely start [your business] off wherever you're at. Start off with whatever skillset you have, product, draft, whatever you

have. Just put yourself out experience.

"Nothing is going to be perfect. You're only going to learn as you start your business. And what does starting your

business look like? That could look like if you have an idea, saying, I think I want to do this. Write it down and plan it

L to R: MoneyInBloom, Angiesbakerymobile, and GlitteredbyAng./Courtesy of T'Neil Gooden/Collage by Jocelyn Rios



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BC business owners at BLMI's "Roots to Riches" event./T'Neil Gooden

“Beyond Boundaries”: Immigrant Student Success Office Debuts New Mural

By Rami Mansi
Editor-in-Chief

A class of 11 students, an experienced professor, and one office dedicated to the campus’s cultural community, the Immigrant Students Success Office (ISSO), held the grand unveiling of their new mural on March 3.

The mural, titled “Beyond Boundaries,” was painted and supported by a network of offices and members of the Brooklyn College (BC) community. Led by the Fall 2025 ARTD. 3414 course, this mural was supported by the BC Art Department, ISSO, Office of the President, Office of Finance, Office of Diversity and Equity Programs, Office of the Provost, and Dean of Visual Media and Performing Arts.

ISSO’s headquarters, Roosevelt 117, was filled to the brim with Brooklyn College students, faculty, staff, and colleagues of the artists. Light refreshments and pizza were served to guests, but many of the attendees chose conversations as their entree for the evening. On the room’s smartboard, a time-lapse video played showing the artist’s efforts to paint the mural over the course of an entire semester.

Dr. Jesus Perez, Director of ISSO, communicated in starting remarks about collaboration with your neighbors in uncertain times.

“The students who made this wonderful image really understood what the students want [...] in terms of care. [...] More and more we are faced with difficult times and challenges, the communities [around us] are gonna get us through.”

Introduced by Dr. Perez, leader of the mural project, Art Professor Julia Cocuzza brought up to the front the award-winning CUNY Presidential Professor of Art, Archie Reed, who had prepared a few words.

“[Murals] are serial broadcasts of love,

eponymous discussion, and duty that flew into the hallways our students hurry by each day. [Murals] are the most positive and sustaining kind of propaganda, or in this case, security, medicine, the manual care, the skill, and discipline, evidently in these builds,” Professor Reed shared with the crowd who were listening with open hearts.

The mural itself takes up the exterior wall of ISSO’s headquarters. The color palette is expansive: crimson red blends naturally onto the canvas alongside sunset orange, bright yellow, grass-like green, and midnight blues. Imagery of birds flying and butterflies fluttering away is as scattered along the artwork as the linework is precise. In the center lie almost luminescent flames with sunflowers and purple flowers, but one must look down in the center for the thesis of this piece. Two dark-skinned hands hold a baby bird in their palms. The baby bird, all black, except of their red beak and red-orange-yellow ombre chest, sits in the seemingly larger-than-life hands. Geometric shapes line the background of this mural, in contrast to the realist forefront painted by the students and their brushes.

Professor Cocuzza proceeded to invite the student artists up for a round of applause and to have them share personal reflections on their experience.

After a handful of students shared their time spent in the classroom, they were all gifted a sunflower, and the happiness of one became the shared joy of all in the room.

With the formalities officially completed, the room’s population was led outside to where the artists were lined up in front of the mural and behind a single line of ribbon. The ribbon was cut by the class in awe, the applause was heard from across the hall, and the pizza boxes were opened for all.

Professor Cocuzza discussed how important trust was in collaborating with ISSO when



The new mural outside of ISSO’s office./Rami Mansi

“I adore ISSO, and they were an ideal partner on this project. A community mural like this is always a uniquely complicated creative problem with many partners to accommodate and even more voices to amplify into a single cohesive artwork. Trusting the artists is crucial, and ISSO showed us that warmth and confidence throughout.”

When approached with the idea of having a mural based on ISSO, Director Perez was emotional.

“Our office exists because of the stories, courage, and resilience of immigrant students, so the idea that students wanted to interpret that experience through art felt incredibly meaningful.”

The mural is directly aligned with ISSO’s mission at BC.

“At its core, ISSO’s mission is

creating a sense of belonging for immigrant students and ensuring they know they are seen, valued, and supported at Brooklyn College. This mural helps make that mission visible.”

Perez continued, “Murals have always been powerful forms of storytelling, especially in immigrant communities. They celebrate history, identity, struggle, and hope. This mural does exactly that: it reflects the journeys of immigrant students and reminds everyone who walks by that their presence on this campus matters.”

The mural is described as an idiosyncratic project to be tasked with leading. Professor Cocuzza describes how, although she has been doing this for multiple semesters, she is still

its final form, Director Perez can’t help but feel overwhelmed by the message it conveys.

“Seeing the mural completed was an emotional moment for me. I felt a deep sense of pride, gratitude, and reflection. Pride in our students, who bring so much strength and brilliance to this campus. Gratitude for the artists who took the time to listen, learn, and translate those stories into something beautiful. But I also felt something deeper: a sense that this mural captures the spirit of what we try to build every day in ISSO: a space of hope, resilience, and possibility. For many immigrant students, higher education is not just about earning a degree; it represents sacrifice, family dreams, and the courage to build a better future.”

Perez reflects on the mural as a reminder to why he is working in higher education and supporting the students who utilize ISSO.

“Together, we agreed that the mural should be something powerful, something that sends a message to the Brooklyn College community and to New York City that our doors are open and that we are inclusive of all who seek knowledge, care, and opportunity. This mural reflects our commitment to serving and supporting our students and their families.”

Continuing, Perez states, “More importantly, it invites the broader Brooklyn College community to see us, to join us, and to help build the kind of institution we all hope to be part of, one that truly shows up for everyone.”

For more information about ISSO, please visit their office at Roosevelt 117 or check out their Instagram: @issobc.



Class of muralists posing in front of the newly unveiled mural./Courtesy of David Rozenblyum

learning about the process alongside her students. “Fall 2025’s mural is our fourth project completed to date. Previous experience always informs and improves my approach, but honestly, every year is a unique creative problem to solve with a new wall, new community partner, and new squad of students to lead.”

When observing the mural in

speaking with The Vanguard. about

The Finishing Touch: Carol Bove Challenges Museum Conventions in New Guggenheim Exhibition

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

On March 5, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum unveiled its newest exhibition from artist and sculptor Carol Bove. It is the largest exhibition and first museum survey of Bove to date, chronicling her career of over 25 years.

Carol Bove was born in 1971 in Geneva, Switzerland, and currently lives and works in New York City. In the early 2000s, she began her career drawing soft depictions of nude models from Playboy magazines. Now, her well-known “pipe monsters,” which are sculptures of large, crumpled steel tubes, sell for upwards of \$1 million.

Constructed by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1950s, The Guggenheim is known for its non-traditional layout. Taking the shape of a spiral, the museum consists of a series of ascending ramps, culminating with a glass skylight at the top.

The museum survey, or broad overview of an artist’s work, is loosely organized in a reverse-chronological order. As guests ascend, they are brought further back in Bove’s career, beginning with her most recent work and ending with compositions from the early 2000s.

Bove also incorporated other artists’ work into her exhibition,

frequently using the rotunda’s unique layout to her advantage.

In a wall on Ramp One, a diamond-shaped cutout reveals Joan Miró and Josep Llorens Artigas’s “Alicia,” a mural for Harry F. Guggenheim’s late wife, Alicia Patterson, that was hidden behind a wall for decades.

Recycled from Bove’s work for The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), six polished aluminum disks form a vertical line ascending ramps one through six, creating a mirror effect that

draws the viewer’s attention to the rotunda’s glass ceiling.

Throughout the exhibition, Bove’s art takes on multiple mediums, such as illustrations, collages, and her celebrated pipe-like steel sculptures

“Sweet Charity,” made in 2026 for the Guggenheim exhibition, is a towering example of Bove’s signature sculptures. Located in the High Gallery, “Sweet Charity” consists of seven tall, crumpled steel tubes in lush shades of orange, green, yellow, or white urethane paint. Guests entering the gallery can walk among the tubes, getting up close and personal with Bove’s creation.

Bove’s pipe sculptures are displayed throughout the museum, such as in “Vase Face I / The Ascent to Heaven on a Dentist’s Chair” on the rotunda floor.

“I thought [Vase Face I] was inflated,” Virginia Thomas, an Upper West Side resident, told The Vanguard. “It looked like air to me— and that satin sheen, I just wanted to touch it.”

In a way, guests can. Situated in the Aye Simon Reading Room on Ramp Two, a tactile library invites guests to touch the materials used by Bove in her art. Its shelves are made of peacock feathers, steel, bronze, and anodized aluminum.



Installation view, Carol Bove, March 5, 2026–August 2, 2026, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo: David Heald © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

tactile library, my nephew and I were like, ‘Woo-hoo!’ lifting [the materials] up,” said Thomas.

“I think a lot of Carol’s work is really mysterious,” Maddie Jewesson, a studio assistant for Bove, told The Vanguard. “I think that it’s really wonderful to be able to demystify those experiences and let people carry out their urges to touch things.”

Many of the materials Bove uses aren’t immediately recognizable.

Some say the

tactile library during the exhibition’s opening day. She says many guests returned to the library after walking through the museum, wanting to touch the materials used in the art they viewed.

“People will come back throughout the day, and [say] ‘I wasn’t initially interested in the peacock feathers, but now that I’ve seen the piece upstairs that has the peacock feathers in it, I want to understand more what that feels like,’” said Jewesson. “And I think that’s incredible as well.”

According to Jewesson, the idea for the tactile library came from one of Bove’s previous exhibitions.

“She did an exhibition in Geneva where she 3D printed miniature models of the sculptures that she had on display, so people can handle them and get a sense of the grooves and everything,” said Jewesson. “And she had that in mind when she was conceptualizing this space and kind of wanted to scale it up.”

Bove has incorporated spaces for rest, reflection, and play throughout her exhibition. On the rotunda floor, guests are encouraged to use chessboards with pieces made by Bove. The artist

has also installed lounges in galleries usually reserved for art, allowing guests to sit or even lie down as they travel up the ramps.

“One thing I love so much about Carol’s philosophy and art is that she feels that a lot of museums ask us to just be a body that carries around a mind,” said Jewesson. “Spaces don’t consider the fact that we are human and we have bodies that need rest, that have the urge to touch, that need play.”

“She wants to make the museum a less hostile environment in that way and make space and say, it’s okay to have a body.”

Bove’s exhibit challenges what guests may expect from a museum.

“I really hope that this experience, specifically in the tactile room, can start a revolution,” said Jewesson. “I hope it inspires other museums to take that leap and implement more projects like this.”

Thomas, who was previously unfamiliar with Bove’s work, called the artist “remarkable.”

“This is just eye-opening to me. I absolutely love it,” Thomas told The Vanguard. “And I want to keep touching.”

Those interested in viewing the Carol Bove exhibition can see it at the Guggenheim through August 2, 2026.



Trays of materials used in Bove’s art in the tactile library, such as steel and seashells. / Margot Dragos

The space also includes a table with trays of beads, cubes, and pliers, which guests can cut and assemble.

“To be able to walk into the

urethane paint on Bove’s crumpled steel sculptures “almost looks like fabric,” according to Jewesson.

Jewesson was stationed in

Diaries Of A High-Functioning Black Girl: Sacrifice in The Name of Society



Two Black women leaning on each other./Courtesy of Jabari Timothy on Unsplash

By Serena Edwards
Opinions Editor

Humans are trained to be machines that are able to go through life without fully processing the traumas we experience. High-functioning behaviors have become so normalized that we live on energy drinks and caffeine in fear of falling behind. Society has pushed the narrative of “hustle culture” and has placed exerting yourself as the standard.

For Black women, being high functioning is engraved into our areas of work, schools, and even personal relationships.

With the context of emotions being deemed as a weakness and there being a lack of emotional intelligence within the younger generation and Gen Z, nonchalant attitudes have become the precedent. ADHD within the Black community as a whole has been diminished, creating a level of ignorance on ways it shows up in both men and women, causing more damage long-term when growing up. When not given the chance to fully understand and process their emotions, opting to succumb to society’s pressures to subdue their own emotions, humans are left in a constant state of emotional confusion and further thoughts of self-

hatred.

Anxiety is commonly discussed, yet presents itself differently for Black women. Many times, Black women are seen as “superheroes” or “always on 10” and are high-functioning adults. Striving for perfection and never having a chance to breathe is exhausting, to say the least.

Exhaustion isn’t something that comes instantly; it is built over time from not listening to your body. When your eyes start to shut more often or when your body is telling you to rest, and you keep pushing yourself, you start to run on fumes, lacking the same creativity and personality you once had. This is something that happens to many Black women.

Regulation needs to be a priority; learning the ways you function, what triggers you, and when to take a break is important to ultimate success personally. Setting a day aside where you either do nothing or pour back into yourself is important. These practices detach you from society and help you tap into yourself. You unlearn generational patterns and societal pressures and get back into what is truly of the utmost importance: yourself.

Specifically in marginalized communities, there is a push for us to work 10 times harder than the next person and to never get tired. It is

embedded within us to work, and that when we rest, we are “lazy”.

Working like a machine that never has an off switch and never has malfunctions leads to ultimate mental destruction that is left unaddressed.

Black women have inherited the “strong” stereotype, where social presentation matters more than the actual state of mental health. Feeling like your world is falling apart because you can’t fix everything around you, or the weight of the world is actively crushing you, is draining. Constantly working to overcompensate for their parents’ hard work. But what happens when enough is enough?

Burnout, an effect of over-exertion that results in exhaustion in life, is seen as a failure in the eyes of many Black women when it should be taken as a

lesson of guidance from the body. We tend to feel like prioritizing yourself instead of others is villainized as selfishness, however, heroes need rest too. We often sit and cater to the wants of others, and by the time we look at our reflection, we are being pulled in the next direction.

Specifically in America, we battle narratives depending on the situation. If it is a case where we are needed in protest and activism, or helping others, we are seen as superheroes

For Black women, success came at the expense of their sanity. Wanting to please their parents and let them know that their sacrifice meant something can lead them to overwork.

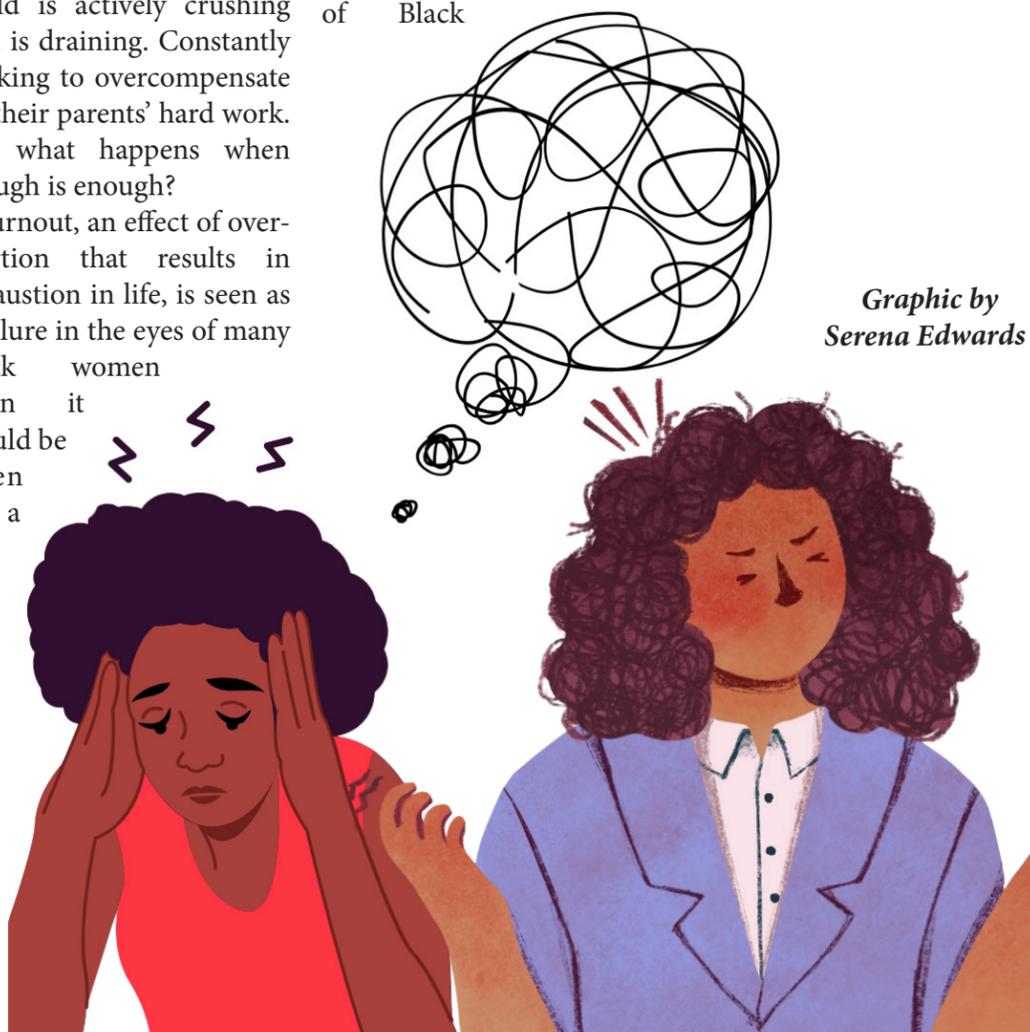
The oppression the Black community has faced pushes us to work harder because those before us fought for the opportunities we have today. This includes taking on multiple tasks to compensate for others or to get a head start because the anxiety of falling behind comes at a cost in the future.

The villainization of Black

women’s emotions promotes the narrative of Black women being aggressive, which produces the way that they express themselves. This also causes a level of overthinking about themselves and the way that they interact within relationships.

Advice for my fellow Black women, we can not be everyone’s savior. We are only in control of ourselves.

Be loud, be emotional, you are a human, not a robot, regardless of the norms society continuously pushes on us.



Graphic by Serena Edwards

Pre-Oscar Power Ranking: What Film Has the Best Shot at Best Picture?

By Samuel Mortel
Staff Writer

2025 was a spectacular year for movies, and on Sunday, March 15, we'll see the directors, actors, and crew behind our favorite films receive their flowers at the 98th Academy Awards. This is set to be a historic year in more ways than one, with a newly added award for Achievement in Casting and a new rule requiring members of the Academy to watch all nominated films in a category before casting their votes.

On top of this, it looks like we're in for a truly formidable race for the most important award of the night: Best Picture.

There have been numerous years when it's been pretty safe to say which film will end up winning Best Picture months ahead of the live award ceremony. This year, however, several films are reasonable contenders, and while the public has a decent understanding of what films have the strongest and weakest chances, we won't truly know until the envelope is opened on Sunday night.

Nonetheless, even though there are ten films nominated for the award, there are only five films that I feel have a real shot at taking the statue home. After watching the nominated films, acknowledging the general consensus, and considering the history of the Oscars, here's a list of the top five films most likely to win Best Picture.

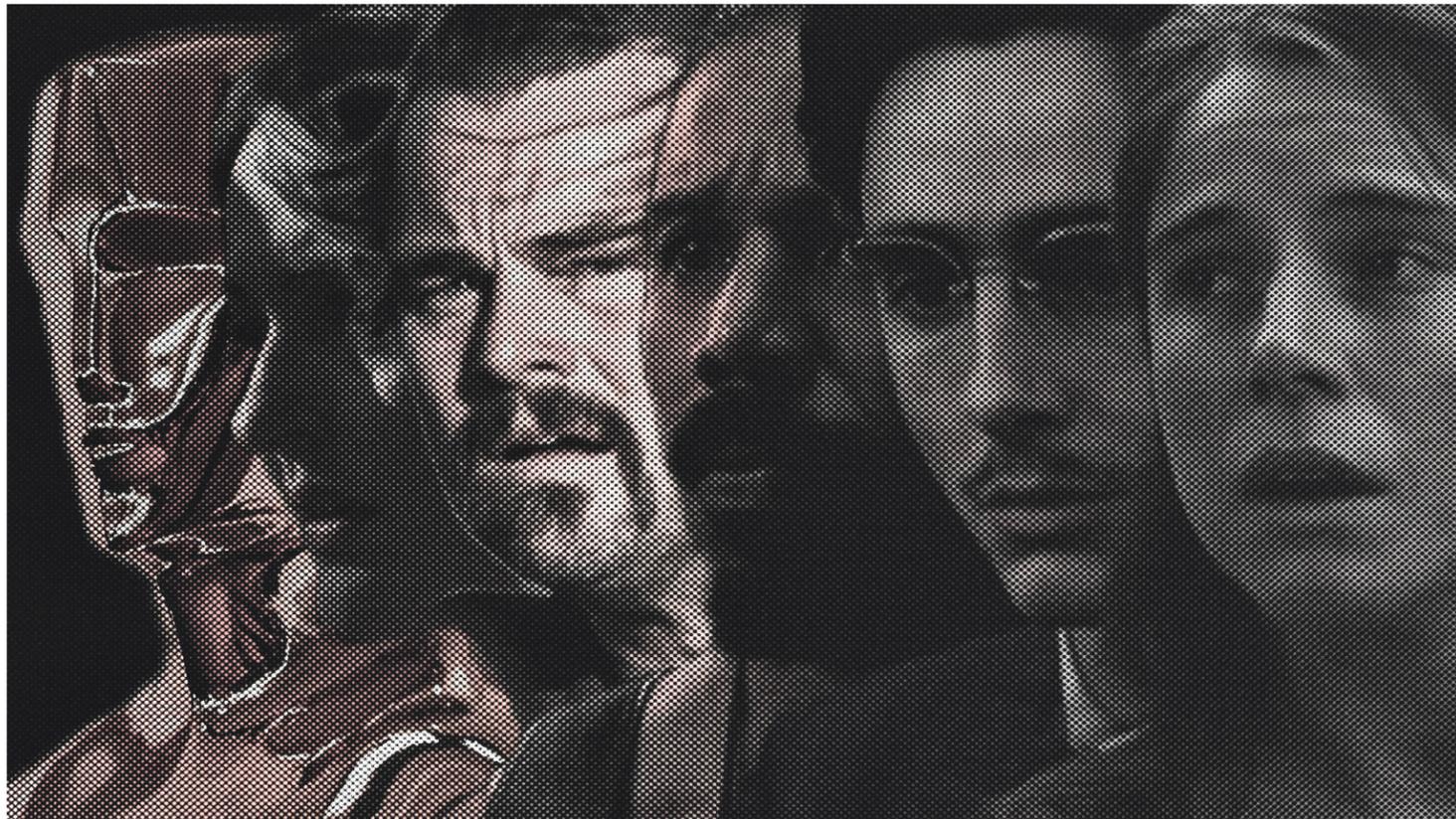
5: Sentimental Value

Norwegian director Joachim Trier and actress Renate Reinsve first broke through to Western audiences with their 2021 film "The Worst Person in the World," an independent (indie) romantic comedy that garnered major critical acclaim and earned nominations for Best International Feature and Best Original Screenplay at the 94th Academy Awards.

The pair have reunited for Trier's sixth feature film "Sentimental Value," a story about the pain of being an artist, the unifying and healing nature of art—themes that voters in The Academy can't help but fall for.

By no means am I slandering the film; it's impossible to doubt that "Sentimental Value" has some of the best acting you'll see in any movie across the Best Picture category. This is evident in the fact that Reinsve is nominated for Best Leading Actress, Stellan Skarsgård is nominated for Best Supporting Actor, and both Elle Fanning and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas are nominated for Best Supporting Actress.

The final 30 minutes are also absolutely crushing, with an



Collage by Samuel Mortel

ending that is incredibly poignant and emotionally powerful. Still, it's so small in scale that it may fade into the background when put against some of the truly grand movies that it's competing against.

4: Marty Supreme

I'll be transparent; I'm personally a member of the Timothée Chalamet fan club.

In the span of about a decade, Chalamet has amassed a body of work and collaborated with a collection of directors and actors that could already be put against some household names in his profession.

The only thing missing was a real king-making performance—something undeniable, something that would really cement him in history as one of the greats.

Chalamet has made this a clear goal of his, particularly in his now-infamous speech at the 2025 SAG Awards, where he announced that he's in the "pursuit of greatness", comparing himself to the likes of Marlon Brando, Viola Davis, and Michael Jordan.

This was seen as a cocky statement, but when you watch "Marty Supreme", it's hard not to think that Chalamet may have been on to something.

The film is loosely based on the life of Marty Reisman, a table tennis player determined to use his talents to go beyond his mediocre, somewhat troubled life in 1950s New York and rise to true stardom. "Marty Supreme" was marketed as a thrilling tale of a man chasing his dreams and believing in himself, but it's really a portrayal of being dumb, reckless, immature, and slightly psychopathic in your early 20s. It's filled with the sort of chaotic and anxiety-inducing energy that

anyone familiar with the work of director Josh Safdie would expect.

"Marty Supreme" definitely takes a lot of chances, but it all comes together for a stunning piece of art. Still, it's up against some tough competition at the 98th Academy Awards.

3. Hamnet

An intimate period piece about love and loss.

Definitely checks boxes for what a lot of Oscar voters like to see. In the film, Paul Mescal plays William Shakespeare (yes, the William Shakespeare). But the perspective is really centered around his partner Agnes, played by Jessie Buckley.

Buckley's performance is without a doubt the headline of the film, and it's no surprise that she's nominated for Best Actress and is considered the frontrunner in the category. She's tasked with demanding physical acting, and a large amount of the film's emotional weight lies solely on her shoulders. I'd also be remiss to not mention that the film is directed by Chloé Zhao, who first rose to fame with her 2020 film "Nomadland", for which she took home the awards for Best Director and Best Picture at the 93rd Academy Awards.

Like "Sentimental Value," "Hamnet" also features those same tried-and-true themes about artists and the unifying nature of art.

Still, with all this going for it, "Hamnet" lacks a certain "oomph"—whether it be a grand, singular message, perspective, or display of filmmaking prowess that would guarantee Zhao another Best Picture trophy, especially when compared to some of the other nominees.

"Hamnet" is strong enough that it would very likely be a winner in

some weaker years, but it's facing tough competition.

1a & 1b: Sinners/One Battle After Another

Yes, I know this is a bit of a cop-out, but this genuinely may be one of the closest Best Picture races we've ever seen.

Including Best Picture, Sinners is nominated for 16 awards, which makes it the most nominated film in Oscars history. This historic level of recognition could translate into the film winning the biggest award of the night.

"One Battle After Another" (OBAA) director Paul Thomas Anderson and lead actor Leonardo DiCaprio are two of the most respected people in Hollywood, but are also considered some of the most underappreciated people in Hollywood. DiCaprio has won one Oscar despite having eight nominations, and Anderson still hasn't won an Oscar despite receiving 14 nominations. This presents an opportunity to show some long-overdue appreciation for these two titans of cinema.

Both of these films also have some pretty heavy themes at their cores.

Sinners has a lot to say about the spiritual power and unifying nature of Black art, with the most notorious scene of the movie literalizing the way Black art connects people throughout time and space. There's also a hard-to-miss metaphor for how industries (and white people, generally) have a desire to take control of Black artists and use their art for personal gain. Especially when taking into consideration Ryan Coogler's historic deal with Warner Bros. that will grant him full ownership over the film's rights in 25 years, he's clearly using "Sinners" to make

a statement to the film industry. If the film wins Best Picture, the Academy will show they were listening loud and clear. But they could also easily choose to (and are more incentivized to) reject it.

The main villain of OBAA is Sean Penn's Colonel Lockjaw, a Greg Bovino-type figure tasked with commanding the arrests and detention of undocumented immigrants. The first sequence of the movie shows Leonardo DiCaprio and Teyana Taylor freeing dozens of people from a detention center. One of the most crucial characters in the film is Sergio St. Carlos, played by Benicio del Toro, who runs a sort of Underground Railroad for undocumented immigrants. It's quite a politically bold film to make in our current state as a nation, and it's only becoming more relevant as time goes on. Still, these bold themes and striking relevance can easily hurt the OBAA's chances when you consider the potential backlash that such a film winning Best Picture would get from the Trump Administration.

All of this is to say that at this point, it's still hard to tell which of these two films will come out on top when the Oscars come around.

I'd say there's about a 51/49 chance in OBAA's favor, but on March 15, we'll know what message the Academy wants to send.

Opinion: Queer Spaces Are Dwindling Rapidly

By Key Jones-Ford
Content Creator

As of Feb. of 2026, four different queer spaces in New York City announced their final days between then and April. Four different spaces in which queer nightlife and joy were fostered and housed, in which the safety and affirmation of their identities were guaranteed. The situation is looking grim.

Queer bars, clubs, and similar spaces have existed for a long time now in the United States. New York City is known particularly for being the home of the historic gay bar The Stonewall Inn. These were places for queer people to gather safely and dance, protest, share a drink, or just exist without threat.

However, the rapid number of closures has impeded that ability.

It isn't just a loss for the patrons. Drag artists, DJs, and burlesque performers are the blood of queer nightlife, joy, and entertainment; if they lose these spaces, they also lose their livelihoods and their ability to showcase their art. These spaces are integral to the survival and gathering of the community.

Queer spaces like Elmo.

Elmo, a restaurant with over 25 years of expertise and a heavy queer clientele, announced its closure on Instagram.

Located in the Manhattan neighborhood of Chelsea, the restaurant had survived Sandy, blackouts, blizzards, and the COVID-19 pandemic. They had even opened a hidden speakeasy known as the Coby Club, which had nightly jazz performances and burlesque on Saturday evenings. Bob Pontarelli, the owner of Elmo, explained how the building was sold to make way for a residential condo.

He described the years and experiences he had while the restaurant was open and his sadness to see it come to an end.

"To own a restaurant that has enjoyed the astonishing success and iconic stature that Elmo has is a privilege and an honor," Pontarelli wrote. "It has been a wonderfully exhilarating ride."

To some, it may have been just another restaurant that can't survive in an expensive city. But to the clientele it



The exterior of Chelsea restaurant Elmo./*Courtesy of GayCities.com*

served, it is yet another loss of a beloved space to celebrate with friends and community.

Located in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and just a few blocks away from gay nightclub 3 Dollar Bill, Pink Metal was home to the Superstar Open Set—often called S.O.S.

S.O.S was the starting point for many local performers in New York City (NYC); Hosted and produced by drag performers Xaddy Addy and Pacha Cvnti, it served as a safe space to debut a new persona or a new act.

Pink Metal was also home to many other productions with monthly shows. The bar may have been small, but it offered a variety of events. There was something for everyone.

On their Instagram, they cited being unable to make ends meet and thanked the community for supporting the bar for the last six years.

"Endless gratitude to the community, our amazing staff, and performers who poured their hearts into this place to make it what it was." They will officially close their doors on March 15.

Similarly, queer bar The Holler was a home for drag performers to host shows and events. A weekly watch party for the long-running reality television show RuPaul's

Drag Race occurred there, alongside drag bingo, trivia nights, karaoke, movie nights, and other fun events for the community to gather together. After nine years of business, they announced on Instagram that their final day would be April 25.

Brooklyn's Club Lambda, which closed at the end of February, was particularly hard for queer patrons of color, who already face difficulties because of their racial identities. Club Lambda hosted events that focused on black and brown members of the community, with dark rooms and dance nights, and events for the leather community.

Charles Hughes and Richard Solomon, a married couple, told amNY in 2022 that their goal was to curate a space for urban queer communities to go to and enjoy themselves.

As rights and protections for transgender individuals are being rolled back at alarming rates, as queer history is actively being suppressed and erased, and as drag is labeled as "sexual" for public consumption, it is no exaggeration that the loss of these spaces is being felt harder than ever. The rising cost of rent versus the cost of living is one contributing factor. When

your primary worry is keeping food on the table and keeping a roof over your head, leisure activities start to matter less and get put on hold. Bars and entertainment venues, which rely on patronage, begin to suffer from this.

The effects of gentrification and private equitization also play a role in the closure. While several of the neighborhoods these bars and clubs were in had already pushed out the initial communities that lived there, gentrification doesn't stop there. Instead, it continues further by pushing out the next community. Private equity then takes these businesses and buildings and trades their stocks among a select few, with the goal of eventually selling the business for profit, according to Harvard.

Once the businesses are sold, it is harder to return or to build something new in their place when you take property taxes and the cost of rent into consideration.

Pink Metal, Club Lambda, Elmo, and The Holler are only four of several bars that have closed in the last few years in NYC. It doesn't account for the bars across the United States that are also closing for similar reasons, as talked about by Mathew Rodriguez

in queer newsletter, them. In addition to Club Lambda, he mentions Ginger's in San Francisco, California, Eagle Houston in Houston, Texas, and Denver Sweet in Denver, Colorado.

There are groups dedicated to documenting and preserving these spaces, and smaller actions are being taken. The Lesbian Bar Project aims to document all the lesbian bars across the United States and help them stay open. Several other bars have turned to mutual aid and GoFundMe pages to help keep afloat with business expenses. The question remains, though: is it enough? What other work needs to be done so that more isn't taken?

NYC drag queen Megami was laughed at for her 'Protect Queer Art' posterboard during her season of RuPaul's Drag Race. Looking back now, perhaps we owe her an apology for laughing too hard.

The queer art she implored us to protect on television needs help, now more than ever.

Pride, Passion, and Glory: The Return Of The World Baseball Classic

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor

Since its inception in 2006, the World Baseball Classic (WBC) has become one of the biggest preseason tournaments in sports. Players have the opportunity to represent their home countries, and fans get to root for their nations and fellow countrymen. This not only grows the sport of baseball worldwide, but also brings more people to the sport.

Some of the powerhouses in this tournament range from the Dominican Republic (DR), where baseball is not only a sport but a cultural icon and symbol of national pride. Japan and their ever growing talent and presence in MLB. The United States (U.S.), whose rosters often nets future Hall of Famers and MVPs. Lastly, two underrated powerhouses in Puerto Rico (PR) and Venezuela, whose national pride makes their players ascend during the tournament.

In 2023, Japan won its third WBC and further cemented itself as a baseball powerhouse. They beat the USA team, led by captain and future Hall of Famer Mike Trout. This was the first time the WBC had been played since 2017, as the COVID-19 pandemic barred them from playing in 2020. Many fans were excited to root for their home team again and witness new talent on the big stage.

Japan has won three WBC titles, the most in tournament history,

and are favored to win again! The U.S has won one back in 2017. DR won back in 2012, and this year's winner could be anyone! The new addition to this year's tournament is team Brazil, which qualified after beating Germany in the qualifiers.

But what about this tournament makes it so special? Simply put, representing your nation means a lot to many players, and it's their way of giving back not only to their communities but to the country as well. During the 2017 WBC, team PR all dyed their hair blonde and were nicknamed "Team Rubio". This gimmick stuck with the Puerto Rican fans as they, too, dyed their hair blonde to support their fellow countrymen.

Baseball has often been criticized for being "too white" or lacking substance when it comes to the way many American baseball players play the game, but when you contrast this to Latin American players, their passion for the sport blows the U.S. out of the water.

DR values baseball like religion, and its players will always take the opportunity to represent their home country whenever given the chance. Dominican fans fill the stadium and bring massive amounts of energy, joy, and passion to see their favorite players win and represent them on the big stage.

To many Latin American baseball players, it's an honor to represent their home and continue the tradition that the ones before them created. Many players celebrate every hit, homer, and strikeout differently. The passion and love for the game are some things they have carried with them since they were kids.

Former St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Adam Wainwright was a part of that '23 team, and he noted his battery mate, Yadier Molina's experience in the WBC.

"I'll never forget Yadier Molina saying [one of the biggest moments] of his career was in the [2017] semifinal game that put [PR] into the finals," said Wainwright.

"That stuck with me."

This is the pride and passion many players bring to the tournament. Many players are leaders in their communities, and others look up to them as mentor figures. Something new that the WBC is doing is holding games in San Juan, PR, where Team PR will play two games.

Imagine going to your local stadium and watching players from your background and watching them represent you and win. This type of passion and love is what makes baseball great and what makes rooting for your country special.

One issue, however, is that in order to play in the WBC, many players need to get insured, and if they're not able to, then they cannot represent their country. Multiple players were denied insurance and were very vocal about the hypocrisy of approval, seeing as many players from Team USA and Japan got fully insured.

Miguel Rojas, a Venezuelan player for the Los Angeles Dodgers, was denied

insurance for this year's WBC.

"Like, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, we've seen a couple Dominican players. I don't see that happening with the United States or happening with Japan. I'm not trying to attack anybody, or attack what's going on, or seeing what's happening behind the scenes. But at the end of the day, it feels like it's just happening with the players that want to represent their country from Latin America," said Rojas in a Sports Illustrated article.

On top of this, Team PR was threatening to withdraw from the tournament when multiple players were being denied insurance even though they never had a vast injury history. Javier Baez, for some reason, was suspended for this year's tournament because of a positive marijuana test in 2023, which is ridiculous to say the least.

It's 2026, and the WBC is back, and we're in store for new memories and big moments for each country. Team DR is already looking like a favorite to win the tournament, as their top stars were nicknamed "The Dominican Avengers" to encapsulate how much of a god squad this year's team is.

Team USA has multiple Hall of Famers and two Cy Young winners on their roster, but their bland style of play and lack of sauce are one reason many see them as faulty.

Team PR may be missing its heavy hitters, but their love of PR and baseball will carry them far this year.



Darrell Hernández celebrating a walk-off home run against Team Panama./
Courtesy of Conor Liguori, World Baseball Network