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# THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

Spring 2026, Issue 12

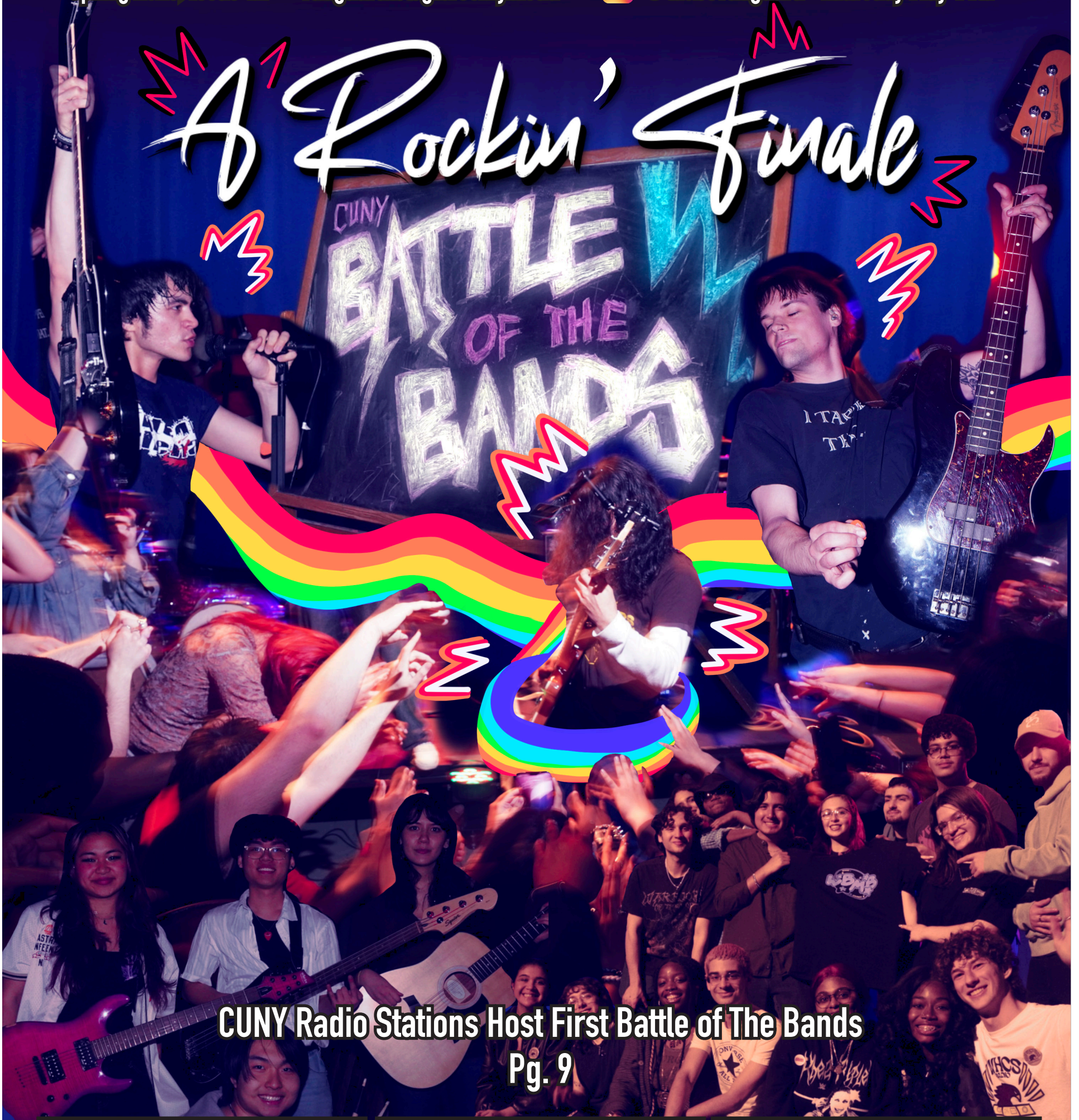
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# Two Bronx Landlords Ordered to Pay \$31 Million Penalty to NYC

By Emily Nixon  
News Editor

On May 6, New York City (NYC) Mayor Zohran Mamdani, in conjunction with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), announced that two Bronx Landlords now owe NYC \$31 million in housing regulation penalties, a new record for HPD.

“For years, tenants at Robert Fulton Terrace and Fordham Towers have been forced to live with vermin infestations, chronic elevator outages, and a lack of heat and hot water – while their landlords met their suffering with silence. Today, that neglect is finally met with consequences,” said Mayor Mamdani in a statement. “This administration secured the largest penalty in HPD’s history because no landlord is above the law.”

In addition to the \$31 million penalty, NYC froze \$900,000 from the owners, Karan Singh and Rajmattie Persaud, according to a press conference held by multiple housing officials, featuring Mayor Mamdani. Singh and Persaud will be required to appoint a “Chief Restructuring Officer” (CRO) who will use the \$900,000 to ensure “critical repairs” are made to the “nearly 500 units” within the two buildings.

Mamdani and HPD aim to provide a long-term solution to the potentially dislocated tenants, according to their press release.

“The Mamdani administration is also calling on the Federal National Mortgage Association, Fannie Mae, which has initiated foreclosure proceedings on the buildings, to work with HPD and tenants to identify a preservation buyer who will serve as a responsible, long-term steward of these homes,”



NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani speaking at a press conference on May 6, 2026./  
*Courtesy of NYC.gov/Mayors Office.*

stated the press release.

Singh, ranked 22nd, made it onto the 2026 worst landlords list, which is compiled by the number of properties and open complaints against the landlord by the NYC Office of the Public Advocate.

If left unpaid, the \$31 million penalty will convert into a lien on the properties, forcing future owners to deal with NYC, according to The Gothamist.

A lien is a “legal claim placed on a property by a creditor to secure repayment of a debt [... that] gives the lender or creditor the right to take action against the property if the debt isn’t paid,” according to Academy Bank.

During the press conference, a tenant of the building asked the panel if any of the money confiscated in penalties would go to compensating the tenants.

HPD Commissioner Dina Levy responded that with the CRO appointment, frozen funds, and the penalties, tenants should see the

condition of their buildings start to improve immediately.

“Right now, we’re thinking about emergency repairs, which the tenants have been waiting for. The \$900,000 will be part of that. We’ve also been already in direct communication with Fannie Mae [...] So, I would expect the building to start seeing that immediately,” said Commissioner Levy. “We’ve been very clear that we are going to be working with [Fannie Mae] to identify a responsible owner for the first time in a very long time for these buildings and one that can work very collaboratively with the tenants and with HPD.”

This is not the first time change has been promised to tenants in the Robert Fulton Terrace and Fordham Towers.

“The story, as the mayor said, is personal to me because I was a tenant organizer in these buildings nearly 20 years ago when real estate speculators first took them out of the Mitchell-Lama program,”

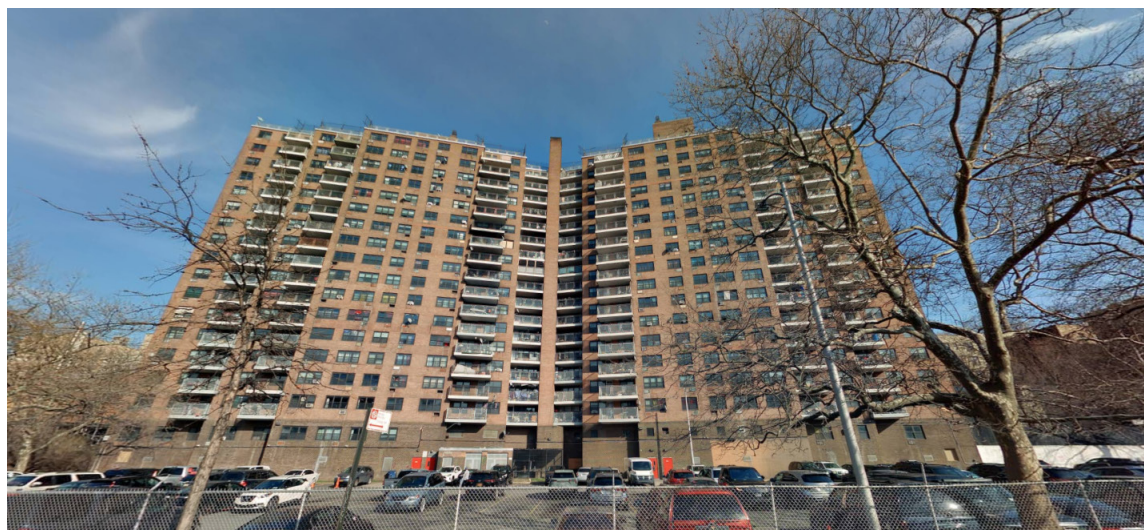
recounted Commissioner Levy. “Since that time, nearly 500 families have seen their homes flip from one bad actor to another, landing with the current owners, as the mayor said, Singh and Persaud, who, in addition to racking up 1,600 code violations, have also been featured on the city’s Worst Landlord [Watchlist] year after year.”

This case marks a new stepping stone on the path to a safer housing system through changing the status quo between the landlords and the mayoral office, according to Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

“I’ve always said that until [unsafe and unchecked conditions are] no longer the cost of doing business, until people are losing their buildings [and] until bad landlords, worse and worse, are spending time in the jail system, this is not going to change,” said Williams. “With an administration committed to housing justice, tenant support, and using all of the tools available to deliver, I’m invigorated by the change that we can create.”

The path to this future has already begun unfolding, according to Williams.

“I have now seen this [change] starting to happen. There are landlords who have spent some time behind bars. There are people who are losing their buildings, and we are finally seeing it no longer being the cost of business,” said Williams. “So, I’m thankful to be in a time and space where tenants’ voices are finally being heard and addressed.”



The front of Robert Fultron Terrace./*Courtesy of NYC.gov’s Property Information Portal*

# Landing The Plane: Spirit Airlines Announces Immediate Company Closure

By Serena Edwards  
*Opinions Editor*

Imagine you're in the middle of your work shift and you receive an email about the termination of your position. This was the reality for many Spirit Airlines workers across the nation as the airline terminated its services on May 2.

A statement from Spirit was released the same day, without prior communication to their workers and travelers.

"[Spirit] regretfully announced that the Company has started an orderly wind-down of operations, effective immediately. All Spirit flights have been canceled, and Spirit Guests should not go to the airport," stated Spirit.

Spirit was famously known for allowing budget-friendly travel to many Americans.

In the statement, Spirit mentioned the increase in oil prices, as well as other resources, led to the decision to shut down its engines.

"The recent material increase in oil prices and other pressures on the business have significantly impacted Spirit's financial outlook. With no additional funding available to the Company, Spirit had no choice but to begin this wind-



Spirit Airlines Aircraft in the sky./  
*Courtesy of Forsaken Films on Unsplash*

down," stated Spirit.

The airline's decline led the company to file for bankruptcy twice in 2024. Spirit sought \$500 million in funding from the White House, but the deal never grew to fruition, leading to the airline's shutdown.

But for many travelers, the closure posed a bigger concern for the state of the economy. Cities like Pittsburgh have lost one of their only commercial airlines.

"The only commercial airline to fly out of Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Latrobe has ceased operations after two bankruptcies and mounting financial challenges," according to Pittsburgh Magazine.

After the statement was released, flights were cancelled immediately, leaving airport workers scrambling to find a solution for travelers already at the airport.

"No Spirit flights were in the air as the shutdown took effect, but the closure has had an immediate impact on those who were set to travel, as well as those mid-trip with return flights booked," according to NBC.

Along with flight cancellations, travelers are left with non-refundable travel expenses as a result of the abrupt company closure.

"Passengers will not be reimbursed for costs incurred as a result of the flight cancellations, such as emergency hotels, unless otherwise covered by their travel insurance plans," reported NBC.

But the travelers aren't the only ones getting stuck with this abrupt message, as pilots and flight attendants had to adjust quickly to the unexpected unemployment status. One pilot

even expressed his devastation through the plane's intercom after receiving the news mid-flight.

In a TikTok video posted by a passenger of the flight, the distraught pilot stated, "We got a notice from our union right, that we are going to be ceasing our operations at 3 a.m.[...] We've been in the air since 1983. What is that, 43 years? And unfortunately, that's over. So thank you for your support over the years."

Spirit Airlines attempted to provide a sense of comfort in other ways, such as reimbursements for direct flight costs.

"The airline said it will automatically process refunds for any flights purchased through it with a credit or debit card, but passengers who did not book directly will need to request a refund via their travel agent," stated NBC.

But some people have looked at the closure as a new business opportunity. Frequent Spirit flyer, Hunter Peterson, took to TikTok to propose starting a community fund to buy the company.

"His initial pitch was to run the airline like the Green Bay Packers, the only publicly owned team in the NFL. It has more than 5 million shares split among more than 530,000 owners," stated NBC.

Though many people questioned the ability to run a successful campaign, the crowd raised sufficient funds.

"A TikTok campaign to buy and revive Spirit Airlines has secured more than \$132 million in pledges, just days after the budget carrier suspended operations," reported The Independent.

As the airline has ceased its operations, it has closed the door on an affordable airline option for passengers, opening new questions about what the future of airline costs can look like for prospective travelers.

# Farewell From Key Jones-Ford, Content Creator

By Key Jones-Ford  
Content Creator

Three years ago, I made the decision to finally finish my degree in the midst of several life-altering events. It took everything in me not to rip my hair out semester after semester. However, I can say The Vanguard was rarely a reason I wanted my hair to be ripped out.

I wanted to write and create, even when I was in high school. I find joy and desire in writing and capturing the stories around me. I'm not the most social or tech-savvy, and neither have I had many chances to show off who I could be. So when I was offered the position as content creator by previous Vanguard Editor-in-Chief Kate Dempsey, I jumped at the opportunity, and what an opportunity it's been.

I've been to see Rico Nasty, Pokemon GoFest, and was bold enough to apply for press badges to Comic Con because of this position. I've taken my skills from here and transferred them to my secondary projects and hobbies, and in doing so, I've found that I want to continue it.

While I'm still waiting for my big break, there's much about BC I won't look back fondly on, but I have a short list of appreciation and the people I will miss.

Mars, my fellow content creator: I'm so thankful I got to do this alongside you. It was a joy to bounce ideas off

of you and capture the joy and radiance of the team. While I'm sad to go, I know you'll be just fine, and I leave you in more than capable hands.

To Jocelyn: Where would we be without layout? Your graphics add life and color to everything we publish, and the covers are always top-notch. I'll miss our bonds over fandom and TADC, and our

To Luis: The content team would not have been what it was without your video skills and direction. You were a silent assistant through it all, and while I can't do a lot, I can publicly shout you out and thank you. I hope one day we get to work together again.

To Jaida: my fellow senior and Drag Race aficionado. I remember how much you lit up the rooms you were in and how happy you made everyone around you. And though we're going our separate ways, I'll never forget admiring that sunniness. Don't lose it; we need more of you in the world.

To Serena: I've loved seeing you grow into each position you took, and I was glad that I got to be a content creator with you. You're more than fitting for the role of Managing Editor.

To Rami: I'm going to miss your pop culture opinions and your music recommendations. You've been a delight to be around, and I still remember writing my very first piece with you. I have it archived



Photo Courtesy of Stanley Ligon

in my room for the memories.

Admittedly, there's not a lot I'm going to miss about school itself; graduating will be a well-appreciated break until I go back for my Master's and eventually, PhD. But there are smaller things that I will miss that I took for granted.

I'll miss going to Jupioca before and after every class; a mango green tea with mango popping boba was my usual order almost every day for three years.

I'll miss the excuse to just "browse" the beauty supply shops on Nostrand Avenue

on my way home from class.

I'll miss the convenience of having access to a gym and dance studio for free.

And of course, I'll miss Thursday's meetings and faces. The Vanguard will always have a special place in my heart. It's been an honor and a joy to serve as the first of many content creators. There's so much I got to do, and there's so much that could be done; I look forward to seeing it years down the line.

Finally, I'll leave you all with a secret. Almost every recipe made for the paper was one that a family member

gave me or one I developed and tested myself. Food is as important to life as it is to community and sharing with each other. To the writers who come after me, remember that. You never know who's going to want to try a new recipe, so make sure it's something you know comes from the heart.

~ XOXO, Key Jones-Ford

*Key Jones-Ford*

# BCAP Hosts Third Annual Tea Ceremony In Celebration of AAPI Heritage Month

By **Renaë Visico**  
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, May 5, the Brooklyn College (BC) Asian American & Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) Project (BCAP) held the third annual Tea Ceremony in the Tow Center Atrium.

The Tea Ceremony was co-hosted by the Bangladeshi Student Association (BSA), the CUNY Uzbek Society, Dream Team, Korean Culture Club (KCC), Pakistani Student Association (PSA), The Asian Pacific Islander Organization/Club Alliance (TAPIOCA), BCAP, and the Women's Center and the Office of Student Activities Involvement & Leadership (SAIL).

In honor of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, the annual event highlights cultures from all regions of Asia: East, West, South, Central, and the Pacific Islands.

"The point of the Tea Ceremony is to increase people's curiosity about these art forms and cultural traditions," BCAP Program Coordinator Jamie Chan told *The Vanguard*. "You get a little taste of these traditional art forms, and you get to think about how these traditions are passed on."

The Tea Ceremony drew an influx of BC students who were curious to learn about the



Freedom Dabka performs a traditional Palestinian group dance./Renaë Visico

diverse cultures on campus, regardless of whether they were regulars at BCAP or had never interacted with Asian cultural clubs before the ceremony.

"I'm Belarusian, but I can say that I've learned a lot about Asian culture," sophomore Vanessa Tseytlina shared with *The Vanguard*. "I just love how diverse it is, and how I got to expand my taste palate and everything. [...] This will definitely factor into my conversations with my Asian friends and other Asian people I meet."

"The turnout is a lot bigger. I think people are just getting way more acquainted with BCAP now," said junior Alexius Petit-Frere, who is a regular at BCAP. "I really feel the energy, the

performances will be amazing, and every year it gets better."

As students entered the ceremony, they were greeted with lively 90's cantopop music presented by Chinatown Records, an archive of DJ Yuiyui's inherited family record collections from China.

The performances at the Tea Ceremony, true to the organizers' goals, represented various regions across Asia. From the Pacific Islands, a Hawaiian & Samoan duo composed of Kawena and C. Ulualoifaiga "Alo" Fepulea'i Toomalatai Coleman performed their traditional music and dance inspired by the phrase "o'ou mama na," which means "my breath is yours" in Samoan.

"We thought it was appropriate to tie [this phrase] to our performance today in the spirit of resistance," Alo told the audience. "It's all about taking and sharing one another's breaths, but we continue to do the hard work. We continue to fight, just one more time."

From East Asia, the Buryat-Mongolian ensemble Zerd performed traditional Mongolian throat singing, with some artists playing the Mongolian instrument Morin khuur, also known as a "horsehead fiddle."

From South Asia, the BSA, represented by Vice President Shabrin Juthi and Secretary Marowa Begum, performed a contemporary Bangladeshi dance.

From West Asia, Palestinian dance ensemble Freedom Dabka took advantage of the spacious Tow Atrium to perform the traditional Palestinian Dabka, which many BC students enjoyed.

The student clubs that co-hosted also contributed to the diversity of Asian representation by presenting their own cultural foods, including pakora from

PSA and bichak from CUNY Uzbek Society.

"We're not all really that different because we all drink tea. We all eat stuff with our tea," PSA treasurer Zara Kabir told *The Vanguard*. "Each culture has its own beautiful history and background, so it's important to learn that history and just appreciate it."

Of course, the Tea Ceremony could not have proceeded without addressing the elephant in the room: BCAP's future remains uncertain, but there is a glimmer of hope.

In September 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) announced it would end funding to several Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) across the nation, including AANAPISIs and many other institutions that serve Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

Initially scheduled to end operations by July 2026, Undergraduate Student Government (USG) President-Elect Robert Echevarria announced at the ceremony that BCAP has been granted an additional extension to run until September 30.

"My USG Vice President, Illan Saji, and I envision running a USG that will restore recent federal funding cuts to Brooklyn College," Echevarria addressed the audience.

"We need to put pressure on our NYC Council to agree to fund BCAP and all of the AANAPISI Projects across CUNY."

Throughout the ceremony, eighty students signed a letter to be sent to NYC council speakers, campaigning to redirect funding to BCAP, using templates provided by Echevarria.

"I signed the letters and scanned the QR code [for USG's email campaign], and I encourage every student to do the same," said Tseytlina. "BCAP

is essential to campus student life, and it needs to continue to live on as long as possible."

This year's Tea ceremony was a valuable celebration of Asian cultural diversity across the BC campus and a reminder that everyone, regardless of cultural identity, has their role to play in creating spaces where any culture can be appreciated.

**"We all have to be there for one another, which is something that you have to actively do. You can't be passive about it,"**

Sociology Club President Tyana Dixon told *The Vanguard*. "Even if you're not Asian or Pacific Islander, you should still show up regardless because we're humans at the end of the day."

Organizers wanted students to realize the defunding of BCAP is only a reflection of what's happening to Asian communities across the nation. It's also important to start by appreciating and being present for local communities, including those on campus.

"One special moment at the [BCAP] office that stuck with me in particular is finding a fellow student who speaks the same dialect as me: Taishanese," said Tea Ceremony Master of Ceremonies (MC) Natalie Wu.

"It feels endearing being able to connect with students who come from the same background as me, as well as students who come from different cultures. I truly believe that is what makes BCAP so special."

For more information about BCAP, visit the office's Instagram: @bcap.brooklyn



Alo performs a traditional Samoan song./Renaë Visico

# Brightening the Vase with BC's Classical Society



Brooklyn College Student poses with their decorated vases./  
*Courtesy of Emma Bodzin*

By T'Neil Gooden  
Features Editor

With finals quickly approaching, Brooklyn College (BC) students were greeted with an event to calm their nerves. The BC Classical Society held a vase painting event for BC students to relax before finals on May 5.

**“Especially during times of final papers and exams, having this event allows for students to unwind and give themselves a few hours of fun and creativity!”**

said Khadija Fall, Vice President of BC's Classical Society. “It introduces students to Classics and Classical Studies in a fun way that also gives them a little piece of the club to leave with!”

Students had a plethora of options for painting their vases; they could even paint more than one if they wanted to.

“I love seeing how everyone's creative side comes out! Whether they use some of the inspiration we provide or not, everyone's vases always turn out so unique and gorgeous!” said Fall. “The way students interpret and decide to use the blank vases to create little masterpieces is always so fun to see every semester.”

Emma Bodzin, President of the BC Classical Society, followed Fall's statement, “My favorite part was greeting people to the event! It was great seeing familiar faces and to know that this event consistently has attendees who are excited to paint a vase,” she said.

Students also had the opportunity to share their vase-painting experience.

“My favorite thing about the event was how calm and relaxed it was; it offered my friend and me the opportunity to take a break from our busy schedules and do a fun activity together!” said Jasmine Alleyne, a sophomore at BC.

Students were greeted

with information about Ancient Greek Vases and how it was used in those times, along with the different painted designs that were used during that time for some inspiration.

“Pottery is a very important part of the discovered archaeological history of ancient Greece. There were so many types of vases meant for different purposes, events, and activities, which were all so intricately decorated and made. Ancient Greek vases also represent the evolution of the culture in the society; it's so

interesting the many aspects of ancient Greece that are reflected in these ceramic pieces,” said Fall.

“While we encourage students to paint whatever they'd like on their vases, we also provide a little history and some inspiration for vases to give students an introduction into the versatility of these vases, and of their creativity and ability!” she continued.

E-board members host

this event annually; as such, students always have something to look forward to at the end of their Spring semesters.

“While we always choose vases to paint each semester, sometimes little things like the shape or size of the vase change. It helps keep the same theme of the event, but also gives it something slightly new and different,” Fall said.

Attendees get to use this time to not only relax but also to express their thoughts and feelings through the designs on their vases.

“It's always fun giving students a creative outlet to enjoy and express themselves. Even students who claim they “aren't artists” end up leaving with such beautiful and unique vases! It can give students the ability to creatively tell a story in a very interesting medium,” said Fall.

Students also got to weigh in on how events like these create a community on BC's campus.

“I think this event gave students a calm space to unwind and to do a fun, creative activity in a welcoming space on campus. I think events like these are especially important during those stressful weeks before finals and the end of the semester,” Alleyne said.

This event not only helps BC students but also puts BC Classical on their radar.

“The event brings exposure to the Classics department. Since the Classics department is so small, it can be difficult to share the importance. This event relates the BC students' body to an ancient tradition from Ancient Greece and the Classics,” Bodzin said.

Alleyne followed this message: “Events like these offer students a free and accessible opportunity to explore new hobbies and activities, step out of their comfort zones, and meet new organizations on campus. It's a part of our campus culture that makes Brooklyn College so great.”

Club leaders also wanted to remind students that it is okay to be expressive and share their knowledge through art.

Fall shared, “It's always a fun time and a way for students to get to know us, each other, and themselves! Our e-board always goes above and beyond to make the Classical Society a space for students of all majors and departments to be able to come together and engage in fun and informative activities, and vase painting is no different.”

*For more about BC Classical Society's upcoming events, visit their Instagram @bc\_classicalsociety.*



Brooklyn College students and their decorated vases at BC's Classical Society Painting Event./  
*Courtesy of Emma Bodzin*

# Our Very Own Wide World Of Research: Brooklyn College's 35th Annual Science Day

By Raven Santos  
Staff Writer

On May 8, the Student Center was filled with posters lining the rooms, and students who exuded creativity and innovation. The students were hosted by the student center at the 35th Annual Professor Louise Hainline Science Day, where undergraduates and graduate students present research projects to a panel of judges.

The topics traversed all avenues of the sciences: biology, chemistry, psychology, ecology, and computer science. While assisted by the college staff, all the presenters were driven by the unrelenting curiosity and drive that each of the students brought to their research.

One of the presenters was Mariam Bekhet, a Health & Nutrition Sciences undergraduate student, who worked with the Brooklyn College Cancer Center to research methods for improving body image and self-esteem among cancer patients and survivors.

Bekhet initially “wanted to focus on breast cancer survivors, but there was not a lot of research that focuses on the survivors, and a lot focused on the patients.” The experience of reviewing all the



Students presenting their work to attendees and judges./Raven Santos

studies had been new and overwhelming for Bekhet, but after her systematic study, she “was surprised at how many interventions focused on the quality of life for patients and survivors.” Bekhet shared that the research changed her perspective on “that the research was [entirely] focused on treating the actual disease.”

The presentations weren't limited to undergraduate students, as some presenters were students from Midwood High School, students like Zuvi Quang.

Quang was researching protein interactions relating to the BRCA1 and PALB2 genes that both increase the risk of breast cancer. By creating 3D protein models made from observed DNA sequences, she was able to analyze how

these interacted. She says that, in knowing this, she hopes to show that “these interactions between BRCA1 and PALB2 are extremely specific in interactions, and how the mutations could lead to an increased risk in breast cancer”.

She had wanted to conduct this project because the news of one of her favorite actresses, Angelina Jolie, possessed a gene that increased her chances of breast cancer, and this had inspired Zuvi to conduct research with her mentor, Dr. Shaneen Singh. Carrying on after high school, she'd wish to further test the models and hope to see more progress in the field of cancer research.

Another presentation was given by biology senior Jean Marseille, who focused on the ASH1L and SETD2 genes, which, when mutated, are likely causes of Autism

Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He was analyzing whether these genes were affecting the cells' metabolic pathways in the brain, which in turn would likely be a cause of ASD.

This was a massive research project conducted at Brown University with the help of the Leadership Alliance. By creating 2D and 3D models of brains with mutations in the ASH1L and SETD2 genes, Marseille was able to test for specific proteins to assess whether this metabolic pathway was affected. Before stepping into the project, Marseille didn't have a full understanding on what the autism spectrum disorder was. Upon completion, he has a better scope on the topic and aims to further his research in hopes to “provide a framework [to show] that the metabolic pathway could be an

area to look at within the autism spectrum disorder phenotypic behaviors.”

At the end of the event, all the presenters and judges gather in a lunchroom to present awards. Zuvi Quang had won the award for best presentation in the High School Students Division. Peter Tolia, the Dean of the School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, said that a continued pursuit of Brooklyn College is to “increase [the school's] research profile across CUNY and across the country”.

Tolia said that steps have been made to support the students by “getting resources to rebuild the campus [...] renovating buildings, replacing all science equipment and research equipment, and bringing in younger new faculty, with innovative new science programs to help the [students] build fruitful careers in the sciences.”

# Farewell From T'Neil Gooden, Features Editor

By T'Neil Gooden  
Features Editor

I never want to say goodbye, so for now I will say, see you later. I cannot begin to understand how time has moved so quickly, and I am now the person writing this farewell message. It feels like just yesterday I built up the courage to step into the walls of Roosevelt 118 and begin my writing journey, and now I am ending my years as The Vanguard's Features Editor.

To those who are reading this, I want you to know that sometimes we all need a little push to get a little closer to our dreams, and for me, The Vanguard was that push. A mere Instagram post from a dearest friend and former Editor-In-Chief, Paulina Gajewski, about The Vanguard, was my opening. I took a leap of faith, and I have never looked back since.

When I look at my time at Brooklyn College (BC), the memories would not be complete without The Vanguard being in the front and center. I have evolved as a person, friend, editor, and writer because of my time here. I am eternally grateful to those who have come before me and who have currently stood by me, as they have taught me everything I have ever needed to know to be successful within

my future endeavors.

To those of you who have read, interacted with, spoken about, and even written within The Vanguard at least one time in your years at BC, I want to say a special THANK YOU because without the students, there is no Vanguard.

The Vanguard has seen every single part of what makes me T'Neil, and I would not want it any other way. I have gotten to speak about every single interest I have ever had, including my love of gaming and esports. Now tell me, where else would I be allowed to be a nerd... exactly, crickets. I thank this community for giving me an outlet that makes me and others be seen for the hard work and efforts that go into the BC community.

To all the clubs, club leaders, event coordinators, students, and faculty who have put up with my long messages, conversations, questions, and nagging, I truly thank you all for your patience and willingness to let me be the person to share your creative stories. I have enjoyed every single event, activity, and space you have let BC students and me take part in; you all are the beating HEART of Brooklyn College.

Those of you who are coming into college, and for those of you who are finishing, please be someone who



Photo Courtesy of Bert Eugene

uses their voice, just like the clubs, students, and The Vanguard have done since before we were born. Brooklyn College is great because we have all used our voices, and play deaf to those who are constantly trying to silence our greatness. Be the change you want to see within your community. Never back down from societal pressure, and don't be afraid to stand out. My Caribbean family always says, "Closed mouths never get fed," and I want you all to live by this motto as well.

Speak up and speak out when you are not heard; do not be a follower in this world because we truly need more leaders, especially now. We have seen how strong BC students have been in the past two years; we have changed CUNY history multiple times, and I want to be an alumnus who continues to hear

about BC's student power through The Vanguard's coverage, of course.

There is no "I" in Vanguard, there is no "I" in Brooklyn College. We are a team and a family that marches to our own drums, and I will continue to push this narrative for the rest of my life. Continue to speak, fight, and write about the world you want to see and the community in which you live.

I want to send a special thanks to Jaida, Rami, Serena, Key, Kate, Paulina, Serin, Ezae, Renae, Jocelyn, Reagan, Amira, Jason, Adrian, Yassir, Mars, Eden, Luis, Victoria, Khalailah, Manny, Emily N, Margot, Tony, Zoe, Shania, Salimata, Leslie, and everyone else who has been with me throughout my four-year journey within The Vanguard and at BC, because I truthfully owe you

all everything I have. I thank you for your patience, kindness, understanding, care, and support in everything that I have pushed forward and given to our ever-growing community.

I also want to say a "big up" to my family. Thank you for letting me follow my dreams in my college career and for becoming the writer I am today, with your constant support, love, and care. Love you all!

I have had a great college experience because of every single event, encounter, and individual I have met within the walls and surrounding areas of BC. I will continue to let these relationships flourish, mark my words. See you all later, T'Neil Gooden.

*T'Neil Gooden*

# Rock And Roll All Nite: CUNY Radio Stations Collaborate on Battle of the Bands

By Margot Dragos  
Arts Editor

“How many of you guys have ever seen a hardcore band before?”

That’s how singer Will Torres and the band Majunche opened their set at the City University of New York (CUNY)’s 1st Battle of the Bands on Thursday, May 7. Hardcore is a subgenre of punk rock characterized by its heavy, fast, and aggressive music.

Majunche, a Venezuelan slang term for inferior or mediocre, is an all-Latino hardcore band that pushes for more hardcore representation in NYC.

“We wanted to introduce people to the hardcore scene,” said Justin Medina, Majunche drummer and Brooklyn College (BC) senior. “Not just the genre, but the overall scene and what comes with it: community, passion, and in my opinion, controlled chaos.”

Their set prompted the formation of a large mosh pit in the middle of Hunter College’s Black Box theater, where attendees could be seen moshing, headbanging, and even doing the worm.

A mosh pit had

previously formed for Ten Fold, a band broadly defined as alt-rock, that played three original songs as well as a cover of “Be Quiet and Drive (Far Away)” by Deftones.

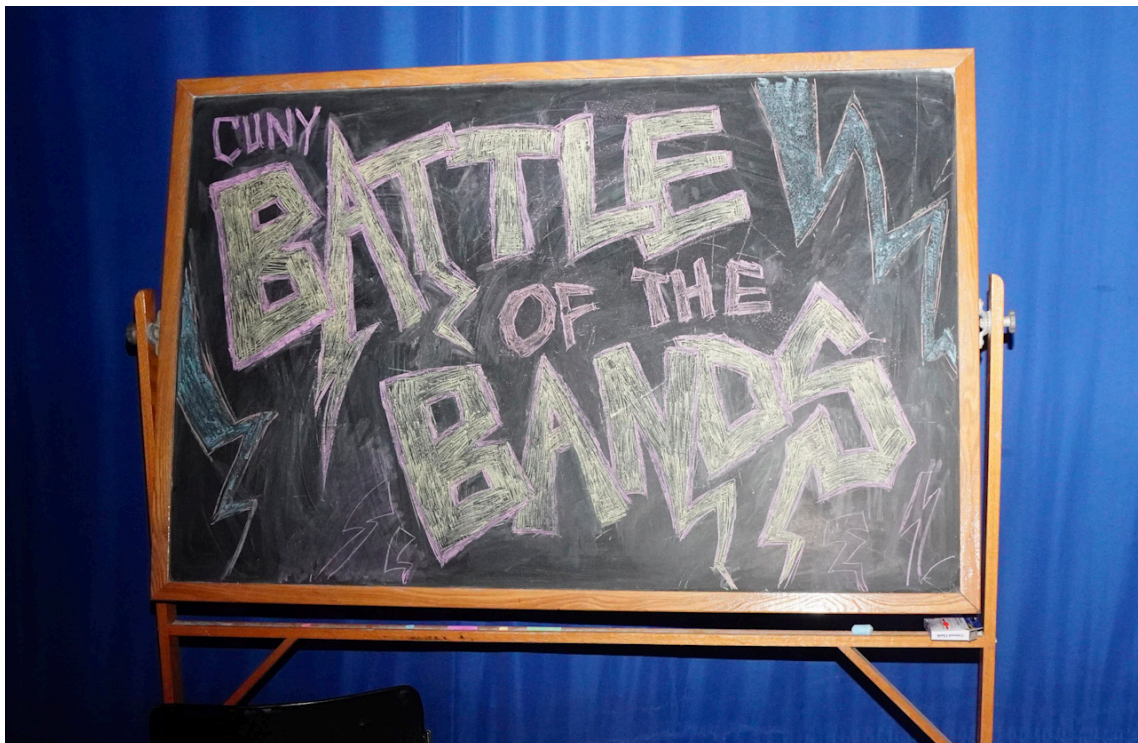
“I think our main goal in the band is to write really good songs and also to expand the scene around New York,” said Michael Vigil, Ten Fold drummer and LaGuardia Community College freshman.

“We’re trying to bring more energy into the music here,” singer Omar Griny, Baruch freshman, continued.

The event was hosted by a collaboration of CUNY radio stations, such as Hunter College’s WHCS, BC’s WBCR, Baruch College’s WBMB, and College of Staten Island’s (CSI) WSIA, as well as CUNY By Students. All bands had at least one CUNY student in them, and seven CUNYs were represented overall.

Hunter has hosted its own Battle of the Bands for the past two years; this event marks the college’s first collaborative effort with other CUNY campuses.

“We wanted to make sure that we had a wide



A chalkboard with the event’s logo./Courtesy of Allen Espinal

arrangement of CUNY bands representing a lot of different schools and genres,” said David Horn, WHCS general manager and Hunter senior. “We didn’t want to have the same performance over and over again.”

“Freak Out,” a five-person band with Hunter College’s Julia Waters and Baruch College’s Joshua Chung, opened the event with covers from 90s artists such as Jeff Buckley and Mazzy Star.

“Nobody’s Nothing” featured Queens College senior Malcolm Seaton, who brought original raps and electronic music to the stage. He was

accompanied by guitarist and City College senior Andrew Braithwaite.

In between each band taking the stage, campus radio stations and CUNY By Students threw merch into the crowd. There was also a raffle where four students took home bags of CUNY By Students merch.

“Pawn Promotion,” last year’s winners, rocked the stage with original songs and ended their set with a cover of the classic heavy metal song “War Pigs” by Black Sabbath.

The band “2/14,” also previous winners, ended the night with a punk-rock set full of energy.

The winners were determined by the audience, and votes were measured by how loudly the crowd screamed for each band’s name at the end of the night. “Pawn Promotion,” “Ten Fold,” and “2/14” were the respective top three.

“We have such talented musicians within the CUNY system, and we wanted to hold a space that’s reflective of that,” Horn told The

Vanguard. “We wanted to give a space where people can just relax, have fun, and not have to worry about classes.”

The event not only encouraged CUNY students to enjoy a variety of live music acts but also gave these bands a platform to share their art with a college demographic.

“I think it’s important for an all-Latino band, regardless of genre, to be up on stage and representing,” said Will Torres, singer of Majunche. “Because I know, for me, growing up, I would have loved to have seen that.”

“We don’t have enough good live music events in New York,” said Zahir Lara, an attendee and Hunter junior. “I feel like the culture has kind of gone a bit away from that, and it’s cool to see any sort of event that celebrates it.”

Students can check out the college radio stations and CUNY By Students at their Instagram accounts: @brooklyncollegeradio, @whcsradio, @wbmbradio, and @cunybystudents.



Ten Fold performing on stage./Courtesy of Allen Espinal

# Farewell From Jaida Dent , Managing Editor



**By Jaida Dent**  
**Managing Editor**

As a writer, it isn't an often (or welcomed) occurrence when you can't find the words to say, but for one of the first times in my life, I can say that I am at a loss for words. To say the phrase, "My time at the Vanguard is over," is a tough pill to swallow. To imagine a reality where I don't get to send announcements in our WhatsApp group, see everyone at our weekly meetings, and get to learn more about each of you in your pieces, is a reality I can't even believe I will be stepping into.

The Vanguard has given me so much: joy, love, community, and purpose. I've always had my eyes set on joining a campus club when I first started college; it was a toss-up between The Vanguard and WBCR, but my confidence (and maybe the fact that I was juggling a new job and an immense workload) held me back. I remember attending a meeting on a whim, in support of my fellow JAMS sister and graduating senior, T'Neil Gooden. Though I didn't understand the process of what I now know as the "budget overview," I still felt welcomed, safe, and SEEN. It was okay for me to share my ideas and even help someone cultivate their own. This was the beginning of my purpose.

I wrote a few pieces as a staff writer before being offered the position of Arts Editor at the end of the Spring 2024 semester. I remember being home on the

phone with my best friend when I got the message. You could've told me that I won the lottery because this felt like a jackpot to me. For the next year, I produced some of my proudest work and grew as a writer. I found my voice in the arts section. I brought creativity to the paper and pushed my boundaries as a young journalist. I was the face of the section, but more importantly, I was a guide for other writers wanting to take a stab at the arts. I had scratched the surface of my purpose.

Now, the journey of the Managing Editor was definitely not an easy one. Lord (and my mama) knows I've been through ups and downs, felt pushed around left and right, and at times been at my lowest points. At times, I didn't know if I was actually meant for this job. I didn't know if my peers saw me as someone worthy of this title. I didn't know if I had the strength to endure the late, late, LATE nights of editing every week. But the reward of being a leader overshadowed the hardships I faced. I felt so much joy seeing how proud each of you was when your pieces were published, and I was honored to be a part of that process. I felt joy in learning each of your unique writing styles and figuring out how to give you the best support possible for your pieces. I felt joy in knowing that each of you trusted me to guide you through each issue.

But I felt the most joy when I finally reached my purpose. To be a friend, a confidant, and a motivator. To be a journalist with unbridled enthusiasm

for this industry. To be a catalyst for growth in student journalism. I found myself as a person in my four years at Brooklyn College, and I have every single one of you to thank for that.

No journey in life is taken alone, and I have so many people to thank for being a part of my story.

To Kate Dempsey, Paulina Gajewski, and Serin Sarsour: Thank you for creating the foundation for The Vanguard that I've been able to be a part of, and thank you for allowing me to continue this legacy. I'm honored to have been a part of the Managing Editor club.

To the incredible staff writers and cartoonists I've worked with, Reagan, Renae, Sammy, Mia, Anastasia, Ameena, and Josiah: Thank you for your energy and your commitment to this paper. Thank you for bringing all of your individual expertise to each of your pieces. Each of you has made me a better writer and leader, and I hope I've helped you in some way. Thank you for letting me be a part of your college life.

To Manny, Luis, and Alfonso: Thank you for being my literal bros. I love the bond that we have and our shared love of wrestling, and I couldn't ask for any other crew to sit through Sports Reporting with. You'll always have me as a friend and creative ally, and I hope we can make more memories together in our new lives.

To Emily: Thank you for your dedication to journalism. Your work radiates your love and tenacity for this job and paper. It was beautiful to see you find yourself as News Editor and be willing to take on hard-hitting topics. I'm excited to see what new stories and voices you will highlight.

To T'Neil: Not only do we share a major, but we share the experience that is being a Macaulay student, and I'm so happy that we connected. Your pieces have always brought me such joy to read and edit, and I'm glad that we have been able to start and end our journey

in The Vanguard together. I'm so excited to see you bring your talents to the world of publishing, and I hope you continue to bring your positivity and whimsy to your future projects.

To Yassir: My other fellow Macaulay student. Thank you for being a rock to me and allowing me to vent about all the hardships we encounter as students. I'll always cherish our laughs and the free time we've spent inside the office or at WBCR. Your energy is so contagious, and I always feel put in a better mood when you come around. I know our paths will cross again (hopefully not when I need medical attention), and when we do, we will both be better at bowling without the bumpers.

To Key and Mars: My content creator duo, thank you for bringing whimsy and fun to The Vanguard! Mars, I love how you've been able to take on this role and bring so many social media ideas to the table. Your writing has also been so amazing to read, and I can feel how strongly you feel about each topic you've spoken about. Key, I always love being able to talk to you every week about the most insane and random topics. I love how you always help other people with their pitches and are able to bring new ideas to our meetings. I will miss reading your recipes, and I hope you release some type of cookbook to keep sharing them with the world.

To Margot: I feel so much pride and joy seeing you continue the work of Arts Editor and how you've absolutely taken charge of the section. You bring such radiant energy to the section, and I'm truly honored to have guided you through your first semester as Arts Editor. From the moment you joined The Vanguard, I knew you

were special and full of potential, and I think you've only begun to scratch the surface of who you are. Keep pushing yourself and being open to exploring your art. I know you have so many great things headed your way.

To Jocelyn: I'm so proud to see you bring your artistry and creativity to every single issue and graphic you have worked on. No matter the challenge we've thrown at you, you've been able to do it and exceed our expectations. I love how you've found your voice and been able to express your own interests, and I hope you have felt safe to be your complete self within the office. Keep being your authentic self and keep your sparkle!

To Serena: I'm just thankful to have met you. I feel like our friendship has been so valuable to me as a person and a writer. You've made me feel seen and valued, and I've learned so much from you that I have helped me be a better person. You are such a shining light, and never let anyone try to dim you or silence you. Your voice and your passion are your most powerful tools; continue to use and cultivate them. You will always have me as a confidant and a friend to figure out this crazy life with, and I hope you'll allow me to remain a part of your journey. I'll forever be your biggest champion and ITTSO's number one fan.

To Rami: This is the hardest part to write because I literally don't know how to tell you that you changed my life. We already had a great relationship, and to know that you wanted me by your side in leading this paper, I feel forever indebted to you. You are one of the purest souls I've ever met. I love how you love the people around, you make them feel seen and understood. I had the best experience doing this job, and a majority of it is because of you. You are such a force to



be reckoned with, and truly, no one can play with your pen. Never change, Rami Mansi, and keep cranking it like the fierce diva I know you are.

It's bittersweet to say goodbye, but I'll never be far away. Each of you will always be in my heart, and I hope you'll keep me in yours. Keep student journalism alive and never be afraid to use your voice.

XOXO,  
Jaida Dent



# Blue Hair, Blue Tie, Performing in NY: Hatsune Miku Concert Tour Visits NYC and New Jersey

By Michelle Zhen  
Staff Writer

On May 8, bars and restaurants near New Jersey's Prudential Center blasted music featuring virtual idol sensation Hatsune Miku. The next day, a line speckled with Miku cosplayers and other fans decked out in merchandise from small pins to stuffed toys of Miku wrapped around a corner of the music venue, Racket NYC.

Miku Expo hosts official tours outside of Japan featuring Hatsune Miku and some of her fellow Vocaloids, synthesizers of contracted singers' voices (also known as vocal synths) produced by Yamaha Corporation. This is the 23rd Miku Expo tour event and the sixth in its North American tour series. The fifth-to-last concert of this tour took place in Newark, NJ.

"You go to Miku Expo more for the experience of seeing everybody in the community come together," said Edmund Huang, an attendee of Miku Expo. "But going to a concert, it's its own experience, right? When you listen to your favorite artists, you want to be able to support them the best way you possibly can."

To advertise Miku Expo, music circle FLAVOR FOLEY composed the theme song, "CONNECT:COMMUNE." Furthermore, indie pop

producer nostraightanswer's "Room for a Fantasy" received the Miku Expo 2026 Song Contest's Grand Prize, which allows the song to play at every Miku Expo concert. These two songs appeared in every concert's setlist alongside songs published between 2008, a year after Miku's release, and 2025.

"I've been into [Vocaloid] since 2014, so 'magnet' [a song by Takahiro Minato] in that era was in my prime," said Kite Harrison, an attendee who cosplayed as Luka in her outfit from "magnet" for the first event. "When I was little, [I wanted to] dress up and go to Miku Expo, do a silly dance, and be in the community. So, this is just something that was [in my] bucket list."

As Miku is not a physical person, she has been displayed on an LED screen since the controversial Miku Expo 2024 North America tour, particularly due to the poor blending of the screen with the black background. In Japan, Miku tours typically utilize a glass screen hologram that portrays Miku clearly at every possible angle, due to the shorter distances they travel and the higher budget available. As Japanese Miku concerts are also moving on to LED screens, this year's Miku Expo has received praise for improving its screen to imitate the 3D Miku that a glass screen would create.



Final message shared with attendees at end of concert./Michelle Zhen

"I think the best thing that stands out is the fact that [Miku Expo's creators learn] from their mistakes, and they improve their concert every year," said Huang. "This year, they definitely learned from [the previous North America tour], made a bigger screen, made her more fluid, and it was just way better. It made her feel like she was actually popping out the screen."

Similar to K-Pop concerts, fan-made merchandise such as prints, stickers, and a collaboration CD were distributed at both venues, particularly on merchandise lines or by the performers themselves. Attendees took pictures of cosplayers, taking photos with them as well. Vocaloid producers were also seen signing anything from prints to tomato packets. Among official merchandise, pen-shaped lightsticks consistently sell out at Miku Expo, as both concerts encourage fans to wave them in sync while they glow in Miku and other Vocaloids' signature colors.

"You're in [Miku concerts] for a big community, a lot more than just [liking] how Miku looks [and wanting to see her] dance," said Hana Pham, another attendee who cosplayed

as Miku's appearance in the 2026 version of "magnet." "The fun we're having right now [before the concert] is doing an interview, meeting [fellow fans, and] taking pictures. I don't get this community at all where I'm from, so right now I just feel like this is a concert."

Digital Stars is a supplemental DJ set for Miku Expo featuring various music producers known for songs utilizing vocal synths like Miku. As the expo's branded club event, New York's set featured headliner FLAVOR FOLEY alongside nostraightanswer, Monochrome Menace, isidore., suzie-P, and Creep-P. Monochrome Menace and isidore's song "FEEDBACK" featuring Vocaloid Megurine Luka won runner-up for the Miku Expo song contest.

"But this one was special; New York is a place I call home. The club scene here raised me in my early 20s, and to be able to show that off to a community I was such a big part of, and being able to show off so many different artists and genres outside of Vocaloid was something I aimed for, and it was such a huge honor," Creep-P said to The Vanguard.

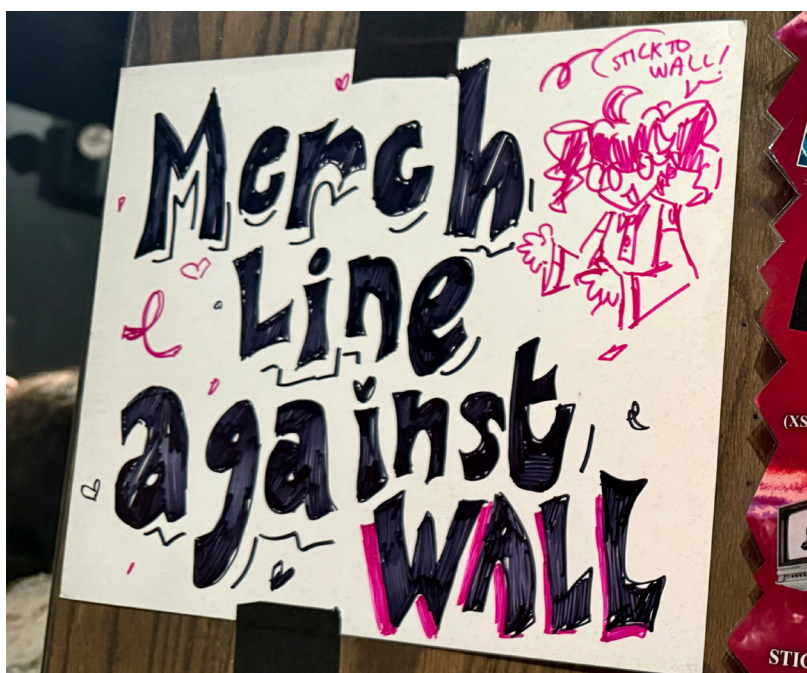
This year's North American tour will have four more concerts, the final one

taking place in New Mexico on May 19. Miku will continue to reach her fans on the other side of the globe, and Miku Expo shows no signs of slowing down.

Music producers utilizing vocal synths may hope to perform for Miku Expo or Digital Stars someday. To these types of people, Creep-P offered simple advice: to have fun along the way.

"It sounds cliché, I know, but please know that it only matters to have a good time. People can tell, as I said from experience. Once I started having fun with music again, people immediately caught notice and were captivated. Use your favorite vocal synth, explore genres, but make sure you're writing things for yourself and not just to see if you can make something go viral."

For more information about Miku Expo and Digital Stars, visit their websites: <https://mikuexpo.com/> and [https://digitalstars.club/index\\_en.html](https://digitalstars.club/index_en.html)



Sign shown at the merchandise line at the expo./Michelle Zhen

# Farewell From Jason Lin, Business Manager

By Jason Lin  
Business Manager

To everyone reading this, thank you for being along and witnessing the biggest journey this newspaper has offered.

It wasn't anything I had ever expected. Truly. Stepping onto the campus of Brooklyn College (BC) as a wide-eyed freshman, I was only just learning what it meant to be a college student. Juggling assignments, classes, and the strange new world around me – and wondering, perhaps, where I belonged. Writing has always been a cornerstone of passion that I carried within me, like a silent flame that burned brightly. But making my passion contribute to the community – that seemed almost impossible. Yet through some persuasion and a whole lot of heart, here I was in the BC Vanguard at the beginning of the 2023 spring semester.

Right from that first step into the door, something told me that this was where I would stay and belong all this time. Throughout the course of my time here, I have had the distinct pleasure of witnessing generations of extraordinary people dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to this group. There was Gabriela Flores, the pioneer who breathed life back into the Vanguard after returning from Covid when it needed it most, who stood at the beginning of something fragile and made it real.

After her departure came Serin Sarsour, who laid down the last, careful stroke of paint that completed the foundation Gabriela had rebuilt upon, making the Vanguard whole in a way that still stands today. Then there was Kate Dempsey, a fierce guardian of everything the Vanguard represented, who protected our image and our dignity during some of the roughest and most uncertain patches BC had gone through. She never flinched. She never let us fall. Following her was Paulina Gajewski, who saw beyond the page and pushed us into a new era, elevating the Vanguard into something more dynamic, more interactive, and more connected to the student body than ever before. At last, to seal it all, Rami Mansi arrived: expanding our reach, amplifying our voice,



Photo Courtesy of Bert Eugene

and cementing the Vanguard's reputation and influence far beyond the walls of BC. To each of you: you are not just leaders. You are legends. And to each one of the E-Board members and staff writers who have shouldered the burden of leading this group over the past four years – everyone who edited, took their time to write, attended meetings, and put in effort beyond what was asked of them – thank you. Truly. The Vanguard did not run on ink and words alone; it ran on your dedication, your creativity, those countless late nights, and your love for storytelling. You are the backbone of everything we've built, and the Vanguard is as much yours as it is anyone's. Yet I won't pretend this journey was easy either. As I spent my three years here, I became, in many ways,

the longest-standing member here, which meant that I was there through all challenges, all the struggles. I was there when we navigated a brand-new stipend process that none of us had a roadmap for. I was there when we worked through an entirely new supplies system, learning as we went, sometimes stumbling, always pushing forward. I was there during the difficult, uncertain periods that tested not just the Vanguard but student journalism at large. It was not always glamorous. Some days it was hard. Some days, it felt like we were holding the whole thing together with sheer willpower and a dream.

And I would not trade a single one of those moments for anything in this world.

Through those battles, I discovered my voice and found my people. I became a person whom

I didn't even recognize when I came in as that timid freshman three years ago. The Vanguard not only gave me bylines and assignments, but also a purpose, a community, and a refresher course on why words have weight.

As I write this farewell, I am not sad; rather, I am brimming with gratitude, with pride, and with optimism. More than anything else, I would like to see the BC Vanguard flourish not merely for another year, or a couple of decades, but for as long as BC continues to thrive. May it remain a place where students discover their passion, their courage, and their community. May it be a dynasty – a legacy passed down from hand to hand, generation to generation, each one leaving their own brushstroke on something bigger than themselves.

To the next chapter of the Vanguard: Carry it forward, protect it, fight for it, and love it the way we did. Just know that somewhere out there, we graduates are rooting for every single word you write.

Jason Lin, Signing out

Through those battles, I discovered my voice and found my people. I became a person whom

I didn't even recognize when I came in as that timid freshman three years ago. The Vanguard not only gave me bylines and assignments, but also a purpose, a community, and a refresher course on why words have weight.

# Farewell From Luis Angel Perez Martinez, Videographer

By Luis Angel Perez  
Martinez  
Videographer



Photo Courtesy of Stanley Ligon

It's crazy that four years have passed since I first started at Brooklyn College, not knowing a thing about it. I didn't even plan to join any clubs; I thought I'd just be by myself the entire time, without much of a social life.

When I first heard about The Vanguard, I was hesitant because I deal with social anxiety around people I don't know. But after consistently attending the meetings for a while, I felt a sense of purpose for the first time in my college career.

Journalism wasn't something I wanted to take seriously at first; I was more interested in sports broadcasting, which, funnily enough, requires a journalism degree (thanks, Google). The Vanguard helped me focus better on journalism as a whole and made me want to do more with other forms of media, like video editing.

My time at The Vanguard can be described in a few ways: it was spent with some of the best and smartest people I know, the most dedicated team, and the most family-like group(s) I know.

I won't forget how I started as a Videographer at the

Vanguard, thanks to Kate Dempsey. After the presidential election in Nov. 2024, the room felt a bit off. Everyone was sad or had no words; some were in denial, and others were just very angry but hopeful for change. From there, I pitched an appreciation video to Kate because we all just needed some positivity. As many would say: "The Rest Was History."

One of the best memories I have from The Vanguard was coming into the office just three days after I sprained my ankle. When I limped into the office, I saw the staff giving me a standing ovation as I powered through to get to campus. People coming up to me, asking what happened and how I felt about

my injury, was very wholesome and something I will cherish. For a couple of weeks after that, I came in with a cane, and everyone rejoiced, and we all had fun with it.

As a videographer, I always had the privilege of creating the end-of-semester video, which I enjoyed because it let me express my vision of storytelling, even in a simple recap. Other fun times included covering the Pokémon Go Fest and the Vessel for graduating students.

While working on videography, I also wrote some pieces—my main focus—about my passion for pro wrestling. Writing these pieces really helped me improve as a writer. My favorite wrestling piece is

definitely "How WWE fans are Paying the Price," where I talk about the logistics of watching pro wrestling week to week and the fascinating history behind it. I remember doing my first piece and thinking I knew better, but it turned out I had lots to learn.

Manny, Fonso, and Jaida—all of you have been a part of both my pro wrestling journey and my journalism journey. We took many different classes together, which I won't forget, as well as the many, many things we did outside of class, which I could go on and on about. We've all been through a lot over the years, and I hope we can keep being friends and do more crazy stuff after graduation. You all bring out the best and my purest self in me.

I also want to shout out to Mars for helping me with video projects and being the person I could relate to most, helping me on some of my video journeys. You are the person I see most eye-to-eye with when it comes to video making and editing. When I needed advice for my first film courses and for recommending my first-ever camera, you were there for me. I want to say thank you very much for all your work and help.

There are so many others I want to shout out, so I quickly want

to mention Tony Lipka, Oscar, Amira, Key, Serena, Rami, Paulina, and Kate. You all were a huge part of building the journalist I am today and helping me understand the world we live in.

To all the Guardians, my peers, and everyone reading this, thank you all very much for being a part of my journey, even in a small way. I will never forget the memories we made both inside and outside the Vanguard; they were some of the most memorable moments not only of my college life but of my life in general. As many others and I graduate, I want all of you to keep The Vanguard legacy alive and keep reporting so everyone has a voice.

I embrace all that was done, and I embrace Brooklyn College for what it has done for me personally. To end it all, I wanna say "Thank You For The Adventures".

Best from your videographer,  
Luis A.P.M

Luis A.P.M ☆

# Right-Wing Extremism is Intruding into Underground Rap

By Samuel Mortel  
Staff Writer

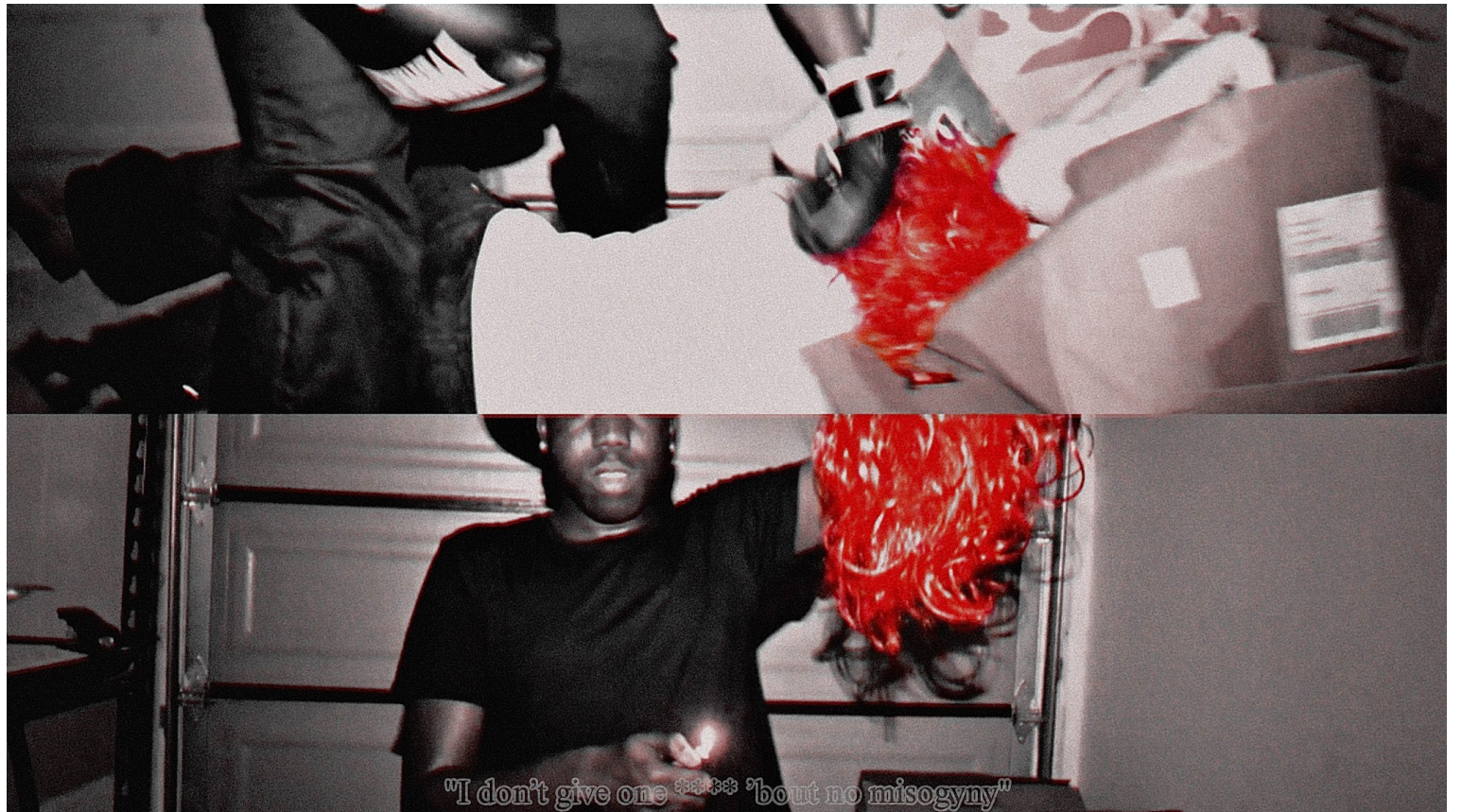
If you're a young man obsessed with your looks and physique, you can turn to Clavicular and the looksmaxxing community. If you are interested in mixed martial arts and want to learn how to one day become a millionaire, you can watch Andrew Tate and pay to attend his online "Hustler's University". And, of course, if you're looking to get into actual politics, there's Nick Fuentes and the Groypers (if none of these names are familiar to you, congratulations. I'm very envious).

It's becoming increasingly hard to communicate this in a way that's digestible for the average person and doesn't come off as exaggerated or overly concerned, but reactionary politics has begun to infest every corner of the internet.

For the next generation of boys, there's an endless roster of influencers and streamers waiting to prey on their insecurities and use their interests to funnel them into right-wing or even extremist ideology.

The underground rap scene has had relatively prominent influencers who've fully embraced the right for a while, including names like Adin Ross and N3on, both of whom have collaborated with influencers like Clavicular, McRae, and Fuentes numerous times. In 2024, Ross hosted a notable stream in which he joined President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago, endorsed his second-term campaign, and gifted him a Rolex and a wrapped Tesla Cybertruck. These streamers have substantial credibility in the rap scene. When they aren't collaborating with right-wing extremists, their streams often feature stars in underground rap and the occasional mainstream icons like Young Thug, 21 Savage, and Drake.

Musicians of various ethnicities, sexualities, and gender identities have found success within the



Collage of photo stills from Young Dabo's music video./Graphic by Samuel Mortel

underground rap scene. When you look at artists who've graduated from the underground and are fully mainstream, rappers like Young Thug, Lil Uzi Vert, and Playboi Carti have been notorious for experimenting with their gender expression and femininity, with Thug famously wearing a dress on the album cover of his 2016 album "JEFFERY" and Uzi Vert coming out as gender-nonconforming in 2021.

There are countless queer producers and rappers within the subgenre who've been accepted and launched into micro-celebrity. Still, even though the underground rap scene can usually be more accepting than mainstream rap, artists who are queer or fall outside the confines of traditional gender expression or sexuality are often met with scrutiny as they become more successful. This has increasingly become a problem due to the aforementioned pervasive conservative politics that have come to grab hold of anything with a fanbase mostly consisting of young men, including underground rap. One of the most glaring examples of this friction within the culture occurred this past week.

Young Dabo is a Twitch livestreamer who has

amassed over 500,000 subscribers on the platform over the past 4 years, first gaining notoriety for his humorous and over-the-top reactions to rap and R&B albums. Over the past 4 years, he's grown into a well-known figure among rap streamers, often featuring underground rappers, who he'll invite to his house to converse, interact with his chat, and occasionally make a song live on air.

According to trans-femme artist and electronic producer Jane Remove, Dabo invited them to join his stream earlier this month, a request the artist declined. Jane would go on to reference the offer on a single uploaded to their Soundcloud account on May 4, rapping "F\*\*\* I look like hopping on the Dabo stream?"

Dabo later reacted to the line on his livestream and was offended to the point of rage, responding, "You could've kept your mouth shut like a good b\*\*\*\*. Instead, you want to talk to me, about me. Stupid wh\*\*re," along with several other misogynistic comments.

Remove received a barrage of misogynistic and transphobic hate from fans of the streamer across social media, with Twitter/X users flooding the rapper's

comments with slurs and typical insults that are often hurled at gender minorities by right-wing extremists.

On May 6, Young Dabo posted a diss track and accompanying music video on his YouTube titled "BLEED." The track features several offensive transphobic lyrics, opening with the lines "I swear it's f\*\*\* that n\*\*\*\*, I swear it's f\*\*\* his family tree. I chopped the whole s\*\*\* down like you did your —," seemingly a vulgar way of alluding to gender-affirming surgery.

Although Remove has publicly said they're fine using any pronouns, Dabo appears to intentionally use masculine pronouns in the song to disparage their gender identity, especially since he referred to the artist using feminine pronouns in his initial reaction to their song and used misogynistic slurs against them. The music video also shows Dabo and an associate assaulting a figure clearly meant as a stand-in for Jane Remove, wearing a red wig resembling the artist's current hairstyle.

Following the diss track, multiple underground rappers who've done livestreams with Young Dabo in the past have unfollowed him on social media, including Prettifun,

Slayr, and Jane's deadAir Records labelmate Lucy Bedroque.

Young Dabo's extremely bigoted response to Jane Remove, as well as the response of his fanbase, showcases why they were opposed to collaborating with the streamer in the first place. Anyone with a cursory knowledge of streamers like Dabo is aware of how reactionary, immature, and often hateful their fanbases can be. It's no coincidence that the demographics of a Young Dabo subscriber also tend to overlap with those of Adin Ross or N3on subscribers, and may similarly overlap with the audience of Andrew Tate or even Nick Fuentes.

It seems that everywhere a young boy turns, they're at risk of being indoctrinated into a hateful, far-right, bigoted community by some influencer. As someone with a teenage younger brother, it's something I often find myself worrying about, and anyone with a young boy in their life has probably had the same concerns.

# But Is It Fashion?: Rami's Reviews for Met Gala 2026

By Rami Mansi  
Editor-in-Chief

An assistant in a basic black dress, a yellow crossbody bag, and bold red flats went viral after a video of her directing traffic and running up and down the street resonated with and entertained viewers and fashion fans alike. The assistant's rush is felt not only by her but also by many other assistants and team members who attended the 2026 Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) Gala.

Welcome to Rami's Reviews, a place for all things pop culture. Today, we're honoring our annual tradition of deep-diving into the grand waters of The Met Gala.

An invite-only fundraiser for The Met's Costume Institute, the Met Gala is one of the most exclusive events in the world. For every gala, a new exhibition is presented to the attendees. Titled "Costume Art," the exhibition is centered on the human body and the fabrics that dress it, according to The Met's official website. The dress code attendees had to follow was deemed "Fashion is Art," where the intersection between clothing and visual art collides.

Co-chairs of this year's gala were actress Nicole Kidman, athlete Venus Williams, Anna Wintour, the previous Editor-in-Chief of "Vogue", and legendary musician Beyoncé, who returns to the star-studded event after an almost 10-year hiatus.

The guests' outfits seemed to fall into three categories: those who followed the dress code "Fashion is Art," those who followed the exhibition's theme



L to R: Kim Jisoo, Hudson Williams, Connor Storrie, Bad Bunny, Rihanna, Asap Rocky, Emma Chamberlain./  
Graphic by Serena Edwards

"Costume Art," and those who chose not to follow either. Let's begin exploring the attendees who followed the dress code.

One of the first celebrities to arrive on the carpet simultaneously wore one of the best outfits of the night. Emma Chamberlain, Vogue's Red Carpet correspondent and the internet's favorite it-girl, wore a dress made by the legendary fashion house of Mugler. A dress inspired by her family's tight-knit history and the "Butterfly" Mugler dress, circa 1997, the skin-tight gown was designed with paint applied to the fabric itself; truly a vibrant display of high couture.

Another highly constructed garment came from multi-hyphenate Yu-Chi Lyra Kuo. Designing her own look, with the team at Jean Paul Gaultier executing the idea, Kuo was inspired by the "Winged Victory of Samothrace". A stunning show of craftsmanship and exquisiteness, the wedding-white gown incorporated the inspired statue as its centerpiece. The K-pop idol-turned-

Dior muse, Jisoo, made a fabulous Met Gala debut. Pale pink flowers lined the purple-pink dress, designed with sequins galore and bouquets to match; Jisoo was a vision, with fans making multiple viral posts regarding her beauty and outfit. But it's not just the fans obsessed with Jisoo; Dior and Cartier got into a contract battle over her being the ambassador for their newest campaigns. Needless to say, the lead vocalist and visuals of Blackpink have undeniable relevance in music and fashion.

Jisoo, Kuo, and Chamberlain left fans, fashion fans, and fanatic fans with enough eatery to last till next year. However, some attendees were not lucky enough to receive praise from the coveted judges, who are the anonymous accounts that comment on every pop culture moment, otherwise known as Stan Twitter.

One celebrity who split the masses was rising star of "Heated Rivalry," Hudson Williams. Dressed in a Balenciaga baby-blue suit with a

cropped jacket featuring a black lace overlay, Williams received controversial opinions about his outfit and his contrasting asymmetrical makeup. His makeup artist received massive backlash, which led other makeup artists to rally to their support. Nonetheless, he and "Heated Rivalry" co-star Connor Storrie shared the limelight at the Met Gala with praise and memeification galore, rallying behind the dynamic duo.

Other guests had their outfits based on the exhibition, so the category was body after body!

Starting strong with Queen B herself, Beyoncé was put into a custom look designed by Olivier Rousteing. Described as "a skin-toned mesh base [that] was embellished with a diamond skeleton that traveled all the way down to her fingers," by Vogue, the look was a phenomenal comeback for the queen to take her place right back on the Met Gala throne.

One star that had all the rage over their look was none other than the king

of everyone's hearts: Bad Bunny...who was dressed as an old guy?!? Well, it's not as black and white as it seems. The theme of "Costume Art" includes the body in all its shapes and forms: pregnant, naked, large, small, young, and old. Bad Bunny's black tuxedo was a lovechild of his own mind and Zara's fashion ideas; it was accessorized with a cane and a timepiece.

Closing out the runway for another year, global icon Rihanna stepped into a couture gown by Maison Margiela creative director Glenn Martens, adorned with a tasteful matching hairstyle and headpiece; 40 individually curled metallic pieces.

With the final star shooting its way into the museum, the carpet was closed, and attendees were treated to the new exhibition and a performance by pop star Sabrina Carpenter, who was fabulously dressed for the night.

Until we meet again, this is Rami's Reviews signing off.

# Supporting Independent Animation: Looking Back and Moving Forward

By Jocelyn Rios  
Layout Editor  
& Key Jones-Ford  
Content Creator

Independent animations have come a long way from the genre's humble origins.

In particular, The Amazing Digital Circus (TADC) has opened the door for indie animation to compete with larger animation companies like Disney.

However, fans are opposing the niche genre's rise to popularity, as their desire for independent animations to stay underground is as strong as ever.

TADC explores the story of a woman trapped in a digital game alongside five other humans. The characters face off against personal traumas and an Artificial Intelligence that toys with them and their journeys.

Created by Gooseworks and produced by Glitch Productions, it debuted on YouTube Oct. 13, 2023. TADC stood out not only for its surreal visuals and internet-style humor, but also for proving that independent creators could achieve mainstream-level success.

The pilot rapidly exploded across social media platforms like TikTok, X, and YouTube, gaining hundreds of millions of views and becoming one

of the notable indie animated projects online.

The show's success eventually expanded beyond YouTube, partnering with Netflix to stream episodes of TADC starting from Oct. 4 2024. This expansion included expanding the show's reach to other regions and adding languages such as French, Spanish, and Russian.

TADC is nearing its end, with the ninth and final episode set to premiere on June 19, 2026. It was announced on April 10 that Gooseworks and Glitch Productions partnered with Fathom Entertainment to release the finale early in theaters, from June 4 to June 7, combining both Episodes 8 and 9 to be a full feature film titled "The Last Act."

For many longtime animation fans, this was a huge moment. Independent animation has not always had the same opportunities as the animations of larger studios. They often have to contend with smaller production teams, streaming delays, and slower release schedules; they also risk their pilots failing.

However, not all fans were excited. Several expressed outrage over the theatrical release announcement, particularly regarding the two-week gap between the cinema premiere and the official YouTube release.

Many viewers feared spoilers would spread rapidly online without consideration for fans unable to attend screenings early. Others criticized Glitch Productions directly, accusing the company of "selling out" or of becoming "too corporate," despite its continued independence.

Discussions across Reddit, TikTok, and X quickly became heated, with some fans even threatening to pirate the finale if it becomes unavailable in their region.

Still a growing genre, TADC is a special success story. To compare TADC with a contemporary in its category, Vivienne "Vivziepop" Medrano's animated adult series Hazbin Hotel had its initial pilot released in 2019, yet its first season did not come out until 2024. Medrano has discussed the differences and learning curve of going from an amateur pilot to a full-fledged studio production. Hazbin Hotel was picked up by Amazon; its sister show, Helluva Boss, was not so lucky and was not picked up until 2023 by Amazon as well. Until then, Helluva Boss episodes were posted to YouTube with long gaps in between releases, not unlike TADC.

To see a popular YouTube show make its way to the big screen is a dream come true. However, not all fans are as excited.

Their fears aren't entirely unfounded, as the culture and practices around spoilers have shifted. In the past, there were unspoken, but respected rules around posting spoilers. Marvel fans, for example, had a general rule around posting or even speaking about spoilers openly; you didn't do so until the film was out of



"The Amazing Digital Circus: The Last Act" movie poster./  
Courtesy of AMC Theatres

theaters. It not only allowed people time to see the film, but it was a community measure that was under the broader spectrum of using a tag system.

The tools that allowed that culture to exist are no longer common. Tumblr and DeviantArt offered a measure of anonymity and group responsibility; this internet culture is harder to exist with the disappearance of chronological feeds, working tags, and most importantly, anonymity. Films going straight to streaming platforms during the pandemic meant that uploaded clips and stills were picked up by algorithms that prioritized popularity and views.

Other fans were upset that the theaters picking up the release were limited, as seats sold out quickly. Extra theaters were added with more viewings, and it was recommended that fans reach out to their local theaters to pick it up, but that didn't cut it for some fans. The response from TADC fans was very effective.

CEO of Glitch Productions, Kevin Lerdwachagul, released a statement regarding "TADC: The Last Act,"

where he emphasized that the release was not simply for profit, but rather an opportunity that could impact the future of Indie animation as a whole. He also discussed the two-week gap between the theatrical and online debuts of the episodes.

"If this works [...] it opens the door for not just [Glitch Productions], but for many creators, many projects, and the future of original, creator-led storytelling." Lerdwachagul wrote in his statement.

Monroe and Gooseworks are just two of many artists who want their independent stories to see success. Shows like TADC and Helluva Boss live off of their fandom's passion and viewership. Being posted on YouTube for free means their revenue is lower than what they would earn on a major platform. This is a test for the industry, and the fans are the litmus.

If TADC does well and the cinemas agree that such a release is beneficial to them, then future independent creators will have opportunities previously thought impossible.

Hey everyone,

Kevin, CEO of GLITCH here. I wanted to jump in and talk directly about the theatrical release of the Digital Circus finale, and it being two weeks before its YouTube release.

The reason we're pushing for this at all is because **this one event has the potential to change how the entire industry views indie animation.** If this works, if we get a YouTube animated series into thousands of theatres globally, it opens the door not just for us, but for many creators, many projects, and the future of original, creator-led storytelling.

To be blunt, getting to this point has been a massive uphill battle. The traditional film industry has never really done something like this before at global scale. Like a lot of the bets we've taken over the last 8 years of running GLITCH, it takes a bit of a risk to truly push into new territory, but we really believe it's worth it.

The two-week gap came out of a lot of back and forth. Theaters were originally asking for a minimum of a month. I pushed hard to get it down to just one week or less, but they weren't willing to budge that far. Two weeks was where we finally landed, and even that was apparently "unheard of" for them.

I get that it's not ideal for everyone, and I genuinely hear the frustration. But if this works, it changes the game for us and for a lot of other independent creators down the line.

I also hear those of you who are frustrated because there isn't a theater near you yet. We are working around the clock to fix that. We're currently in active talks with several theatre chains in many countries around the world. We're pushing for more screenings and more locations every single day. Also, we REALLY want to get into theatres in our home, Australia, trust me we do - we're just waiting for someone to respond to us.

For those of you who have been respectfully reaching out to your local cinemas, thank you. It is actually working. Those emails are the best leverage we have to show theaters that there is a massive audience waiting for this.

We're doing everything in our power to make this as accessible as possible while still trying to move the needle for indie animation as a whole. Thanks for sticking with us.

Kevin Lerdwachagul,  
CEO



Glitch Productions CEO Kevin Lerdwachagul's statement regarding "TADC: The Last Act"/  
Courtesy of [Stuffy\\_stuf on Reddit](#).

# Farewell from Yassir Azzam, Podcast Manager



*Photo Courtesy of Stanley Ligon*

**By Yassir Azzam**  
**Podcast Manager**

To our readers and listeners, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of such a special community and to be at the forefront of student voices on campus. Thank you for allowing me, alongside the rest of our incredible staff, to help tell stories that mattered and create spaces where students could feel heard, represented, and connected. It has truly been an honor serving as your Podcast Manager, Staff Writer, and member of the Vanguard Team.

Coming into this role, I knew absolutely nothing about podcasting. But I dove in headfirst, gave it everything I had, and learned alongside some of the most

talented and passionate people I've met during my time here. What started as something unfamiliar became one of the most meaningful parts of my college experience.

To the people who made this journey unforgettable:

Rami - thank you for being unapologetically yourself. Thank you for always showing up for me and for all of us, no matter what. Your energy, humor, and authenticity made every stressful moment lighter.

Jaida - thank you for being such a bright light and bringing positivity everywhere you go. Your warmth and spirit never failed to make people feel welcomed and valued.

Serena - WBCR royalty and our future Managing Editor! Thank you for always

opening your doors to us, our chaos, and our antics. You gave us a space to grow, collaborate, laugh, and support one another through both stressful deadlines and happy moments.

Mia - Thank you to one of my podcast hosts who has been so helpful in making many connections happen, and your impact on campus is seen!!!

Anastasia - to my future podcast manager, I am so proud of your passion and your creativity, and you will continue to do formidable things for the podcast under the guidance of our EIC and ME. Keep shining, you will make it far.

To everyone at Vanguard and Guardian Voices: thank you for the memories, the lessons, and the friendships. I'll always carry this experience with me. Although this chapter is ending, I know the stories, voices, and impact of this team will continue long after us.

With gratitude,  
Yassir Azzam

## Fonso Interlude: Outro

By Alfonso Abreu  
Staff Writer

It's difficult to find the perfect structure for this farewell.

I can easily list everyone integral to my journey, like I'm Jay-Z on "My 1st Song" or go in depth on my origin story akin to Mr. West on "Last Call." I want to give Fonso's Interlude the ending it deserves, seeing as I am walking away from something so important to me.

I started this column during a time when I felt lost in life, unsure of my ability to be a journalist, and overall, in a lethargic state of mind. Fonso's Interlude was my wake-up alarm, a reminder as to why I am aspiring to be a journalist in the first place. It was a tiny win I could celebrate during a time when everything was bleak. Quickly, I have to mention my first piece for The Vanguard, despite not being a part of this column, as the quality of the work is the reason why I was given the green light to create the column.

The column may have had a short run, only 10 published entries (I personally like to compare it to YT's slew of great releases in 2023), yet I am proud of every single one, even the first few ones I cringe at every time I revisit. Each installment showcased my growth as a writer in the span of a year. The one thing I wanted as an introverted Dominican kid was an outlet for me to passionately nerd out about my favorite niche artists and give lengthy tirades on the music industry.

I want to give my thanks to my close friend and Sports Editor, Manuel (Manny). He pushed me to join the Vanguard and write for them. When I lack confidence in my writing or ever think about calling it quits, he will immediately bring me back down to earth. There was a time before my time at Vanguard when Manny would always mention my name at the weekly meetings, in hopes of throwing my name in the hat as a possible section editor, like when Lil Wayne strenuously tried to make Gudda Gudda a star, and I appreciate him for that, as he truly believed in me.

I will also be giving my thanks to the Editor-in-Chief, Rami Mansi, who showed nothing but support for my column and constantly encouraged me to write more. From day one, Rami had nothing but praise for my work. They may have always had a dumbfounded face whenever I'd pitch a piece about "obscure underground rapper number 200," but never shut it down. I'll never forget the day I pitched a Fonso's Interlude to a confused yet interested Rami, on Dragnutz (still the hardest out!).

I'd like to extend my gratitude to my friends and fellow Vanguard writers, Luis, Jaida, and Serena, with whom I have shared amazing memories and inspired me as a writer. The jokes we shared in the Vanguard office or at WBCR were the highlights of my day.

To the loyal readers (I hope I had some) of Fonso's Interlude, I truly hope a part of you was able to feel seen, the same way I felt while writing these. Now, as someone preparing to walk the stage in less than 2 weeks, I can truly say I became the writer and person that I thought was impossible a year ago thought was impossible. And it's all thanks to Fonso's Interlude.



# WNBA Opening Weekend: The Liberty's Dominant Win Against the Connecticut Sun



Ellie the Elephant (left) embracing Maddie (right) in Barclays Center./Courtesy of Hoopfeed on X

By Reagan McLean  
Staff Writer

Not only was the weather nice on May 8, but it was also a nice day to be a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) fan. The New York Liberty hosted its season-opening game against the Connecticut Sun winning with a massive lead of 106-75.

Since the end of the 2025 WNBA season, many changes have been made to the Liberty roster. The Liberty announced that Chris DeMarco, a four-time NBA champion assistant coach, had been named as their head coach last December. This news comes after the controversial firing of previous head coach Sandy Brondello, whom the Toronto Tempo has since hired. Sonia Raman, former assistant coach of the Liberty, has since been named the head coach for the Seattle Storm.

During the off-season, the roster saw some restructuring, as well. The Liberty lost one Sabally sister to the Toronto Tempo, Nyara Sabally; however, they gained another, Satou Sabally, in free agency. Isabelle Harrison also signed a one-year contract with Tempo. The Sun signed Kennedy Burke to a one-year contract. At the end of the first quarter, the Liberty played a tribute video to Burke, highlighting her time with the Liberty. At the end of the video, the crowd gave

Burke a standing ovation while tears were streaming down her face.

During the free-agency period, there was a lot of controversy around Natasha Cloud not being signed by the Liberty and where she would land in the league. Cloud is a very outspoken player. She advocated for the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) to be signed and spoke heavily about social and political issues on her social media. Fans were speculating whether it was due to how outspoken she was, or because she got blacklisted, or due to how long she has been playing in the league, she's looking for the best deal.

At the end, Cloud signed with the Chicago Sky on a

one-year contract. Once you lose players on a team who made a significant impact on the team last season, you try to get players who can "fill their shoes" in the role that they had. Sometimes a player can execute plays well and have chemistry with the team; other times, the player doesn't make an impact on the team at all.

Despite losing players, the Liberty roster includes returning players and newly acquired players. Some key returnees include the "Core Four" (Breanna Stewart, Jonquel Jones, Sabrina Ionescu, and Leonie Fiebich, who is playing overseas). Marine Johannès and Rebekah Gardner have both re-signed their contracts with the Liberty.

With all of these moves made in the off-season, one question remains: can the Liberty win a championship under a new head coach?

For the WNBA's 30th anniversary, the Liberty brought back retro-chic uniforms and a hardwood court from when the team first came on the scene in Madison Square Garden (MSG) in 1997. Maddie the Dog, the original Liberty mascot, also made her debut at the Barclays Center alongside Ellie the Elephant.

The energy was high at Barclays Center.

Although the Liberty were short-staffed with nine available players, once the

ball tipped off, they had their feet on the gas. With 8:15 left in the first quarter, Pauline Astier was fouled while making a layup by Sun's Sanijah Rivers. Johannès made a crowd-rousing three-pointer shot with 6:27 left in the first quarter, making the score 13-4. With 22.5 left on the regulation clock, Julie Vanloo passed the ball to Jones to drive the ball into the hoop, making the score 36-13.

After the end of the first quarter, the score was 13-36, and Stewart ended the quarter with 10 points. This was the highest-scoring first quarter the Liberty had in a game since 2023. With 8:30 remaining in the second quarter, Betnijah Laney-Hamilton did an intense crossover against the Sun's rookie Gianna Kneepkens and made the long two-point shot. By halftime, the score was 66-37. The Sun was able to close the gap in the third quarter by making a run of 11-2, but it wasn't enough to beat the Liberty.

With only 8:20 left in the third quarter, the Sun's Diamond Miller got a steal, and Stewart made the block of the night. With 38.2 left in the third quarter, Stewart was fouled while making a layup by the Sun's Olivia Nelson-Ododa. At the end of the third quarter, the score was 87-60, with the Liberty still maintaining their lead.

Johannès made another

crowd-rousing three-pointer with only 8:12 remaining in the fourth quarter. Han Xu made her first three-pointer with 4:58 remaining in the fourth quarter. Stewart finished the game with a double-double of 31 points and 10 rebounds. Stewart also became the second-fastest player in WNBA history to score 6,000 career points in her 293rd game. Johannès finished with 17 points, five rebounds, three assists, and three steals in 28 minutes. Vanloo came off the bench and scored 12 points with seven rebounds and a game-high 11 assists for the first points/assists double-double by a reserve in Liberty history. Laney-Hamilton ended the night with 12 points on 57.1 percent (four-for-seven) shooting from the field in her first regular-season game since 2024. Jones had 10 points, five rebounds, two steals, and one block in 25 minutes. Rookie Astier and Aubrey Griffin both made their WNBA debuts and scored the first regular-season points of their careers.

This is just the start of a new chapter for the Liberty with DeMarco as their new head coach. After one dominant win, how long of a winning streak can the Liberty go on? That will be answered as the season progresses this summer.



Liberty facing off against the Suns./Courtesy of WNBA

# Flipping into A New Chapter: Highlighting Graduating BC Cheerleader Maya Nicole

By Manuel Polanco  
Sports Editor

Sitting by the lavish East Quad of Brooklyn College (BC), senior Maya Nicole ponders what comes next in her life.

A part of the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) program at BC, Nicole majored in Political Science with a minor in Philosophy.

Her magnum opus at BC was her time spent as a BC cheerleader. “I did sideline cheerleading in high school, but that doesn’t come close to what cheering in college [is]. High school gave me my first taste of school spirit, and I knew this is something I wanted to keep doing,” shared Nicole.

Cheerleading is no sideline joke; the sport deals with high-intensity flips, tightly choreographed movements, and the ability to uplift the mood of any setting.

The BC cheerleaders are a staple of campus life, which is clearly evident if you have ever attended a BC sports game. The energy they give to both the attendees and players is unlike any other. Nicole was inspired to cheer by the cult-classic movie “Bring it On” starring Kirsten Dunst and Gabrielle Union. This resulted in her looking up cheerleading videos online and watching a couple from



Maya Nicole for Brooklyn College Cheerleading./  
Courtesy of Maya Nicole

cheerleading all-stars.

The BC cheer team has an amazing coaching staff, and Nicole credits them for inspiring her and striving to be better every day.

“We wouldn’t be here without them. If she didn’t believe us, we wouldn’t be here.”

Nicole joined the team during her freshman year of college, and like a caterpillar going through

a metamorphosis, she shed her shyness and blossomed into a leader who not only inspired her fellow teammates but also gave back to the community.

“I was petrified at the thought of becoming cheer captain. I can’t lie. The responsibility was just something I felt like I couldn’t live up to at the time. My coaches and teammates, however, showed

me I was in fact ready for that responsibility. It was a great honor to be cheer captain.”

Nicole recounts excitedly doing a heel click when she received the honor.

One of the highest honors for a BC cheerleader is participating in the UCA College Nationals, which is a tournament for collegiate cheerleaders across the country and documented on a live broadcast. Nationals take place in Florida, with teams unwinding at Disney World before going on the big stage.

Since joining the team, Nicole has participated in four national conventions and has taken home a medal each time.

She recounts the feelings she had before her first convention and how it didn’t hit until she landed in Florida.

“It felt like my inner child was achieving her goal, and I felt my love for cheer grow after competing,” said Nicole. “It was a little nerve-racking because these are live competitions, but doing it as a team was special. Seeing my teammates celebrate felt like it brought us together and encouraged me to keep going.”

One of the most impactful things about the cheer team is that it is primarily made up of women of

color, specifically Black women.

The BC cheer team works with Team Impact, a program that helps children with debilitating health conditions feel represented and included in sports. The cheer team has worked closely with young girls, helping them cheer and feel included in the Bulldog family.

“I feel like more teams should do it. It’s very heartwarming to see kids experience sports and feel included when they may not usually feel like it,” Nicole said.

After four years on the cheer team, Nicole has grown and experienced the ups and downs of life and grew stronger with each experience. When asked how she would want to be remembered for, she said her persistence. Whether it was healing from a cheer related injury or trying to better a cheer, giving up wasn’t on her agenda.

Her parting words for her remaining teammates are subtle but sweet: “In times of turmoil, please remember you guys are not only a team but family. Lean on each other on days when you don’t feel 100%.”

For more information about the BC Cheer Team, check out their Instagram:

@cunybrooklyncheerleading

