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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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Cover by Jocelyn Rios

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NYC Challenges U.S. Gov’s New Immigration Rule

By Emily Nixon
News Editor

A new immigration rule is set to take effect on Sept. 18. New York City (NYC) filed a lawsuit, in conjunction with cities across the nation, against the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in response to the rule on Sept. 14.

“The rule is the latest in the federal government’s relentless assault on immigrant families and their ability to live and work in the cities they call home,” said the NYC Mayor’s Office in its announcement of the lawsuit. “In its lawsuit, the coalition argues that the new public charge rule sweeps aside more than a century of settled law, as well as decades of federal guidance establishing clear limits on how public charge determinations can be made.”

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which is a collection of various immigration laws, contains provisions for justifying why an immigration applicant is inadmissible. One ground for a candidate’s inadmissibility is when an immigration officer considers the applicant as, or likely to become, a “public charge,” like those who are receiving aid from social programs.

The new rule expands the information immigration officers can use to determine whether or not a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) Status applicant would become a “burden” on local, state, or federal institutions.

“In its current form, this provision is known as the “public charge ground of inadmissibility,” stated a lawsuit filed by NY Attorney General (AG) Letitia James. “For over 140 years, the term “public charge” has been understood by Congress, the courts, federal agencies, and states to mean an individual who has become, or is likely to become, primarily dependent on the government for long-term subsistence.”

The previous rule allowed immigration officers to view “past or current receipt of the following public benefits in a public charge determination: Supplemental Security Income; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance; state, tribal, territorial, and local cash assistance for income maintenance; and long-term

institutionalization at government expense,” according to Congress. gov. The previous rule did not examine non-cash assistance program participation such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

NYC’s lawsuit will challenge “[...] the federal government’s attempt to deny green cards and visas to immigrants based on their use of means-tested, or income-based, local, state, and federal public benefits, without clear definitions or meaningful guardrails,” according to the NYC Mayor’s Office.

The lawsuits allege that this change disregards historical precedent in immigration cases and will result in discriminatory and unjustified immigration application rejections, according to the NYC Mayor’s Office.

James also filed a lawsuit with 21 other states and the District of Columbia (D.C.), on Sept. 14, alleging the rule “unlawfully removes any meaningful guidelines as to what individual immigration officers may consider in determining if certain non-citizens may be deemed a ‘public charge’—and therefore denied entry to this country or denied legal permanent residency.”

The new rule allows officers to consider any assistance at the local, state, and federal level as means to deny the green card application, which is unacceptable to James.

“Congress never intended for the public charge ground to be weaponized against immigrants and their family members who merely use supplemental or temporary amounts of public assistance to which they are lawfully entitled,” stated the lawsuit. “Yet that is exactly what [USCIS and DHS] now seek to do through the final rule challenged here.”

James previously won a lawsuit against the U.S. Government about the same “public charge rule,” which was later upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in Aug. 2020.

Certain immigrants filing for Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) status, also known as getting a green card, after Sept. 18 will be scrutinized through the new rule, according to the USCIS’s statement about the rule change. Applicants who are exempt include asylees, refugees, or victims of human trafficking, while

U.S. armed forces personnel and family members of U.S. citizens will not be exempt from the new rule, according to the USCIS.

Benefits received by applicants prior to Sept. 18 will not be considered by USCIS agents in their process, according to USCIS.

The rule change gives immigration officers “unprecedented, sweeping new discretion to deny admission, and to block pathways to lawful permanent residency, based on participation in public

programs,” according to the lawsuit. While a formal list of which programs are or are not considered public assistance by the new rule has not been released yet, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) has detailed that programs such as Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), SNAP, Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), among others could be considered by USCIS officers to deny applicants.

The NYC lawsuit rebukes the immigration officers’ discretion, rather than formal education on the topics.

“The Final Rule irrationally demands that officers – without training, information, or guidance – serve as de facto economists to research and apply ‘empirical data’ as well as ‘relevant statistics’ regarding ‘long-term outcomes for [benefits] program participants and impacts on health, employment, and employability’ in reaching their determinations,” stated the lawsuit.

“The Final Rule puts families in the untenable position of choosing between a U.S. citizen child’s access to healthcare, and their noncitizen parent’s ability to remain in the country,” stated the lawsuit.

Affected immigrants aren’t the only ones who will bear the burden of the rule change, according to James’ lawsuit.

“Plaintiff States will lose federal funding due to disenrollment in state programs, and public agencies will face substantial administrative costs as they attempt to mitigate confusion and fear,” prophesied the lawsuit. “As households forgo their legal access to benefits—such as preventative healthcare, nutritional assistance, and school lunch—public health, local economies, public education, and public safety will suffer. The Final Rule



NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani. /
Courtesy of the NYC Mayor’s office’s Youtube Channel
via Wikimedia Commons.

will increase the prevalence of disease, drive up the costs of medical care, and increase poverty.”

James, in her statement about the lawsuit, further explained that states and local governments would “bear direct costs, from new communications to staff training to information technology changes needed to manage the disruption,” “on top of the added strain of residents cycling on and off programs out of fear.”

Not every immigrant will be affected by this rule change, and even if an applicant is found to be a “public charge,” it will not “automatically result in a denial of the green card application”, according to the NYIC.

“The new Public Charge Rule only applies to individuals who are in the process of becoming LPRs (i.e., who are getting a green card). Public Charge may also apply to certain LPRs who leave the United States and then reenter, including those who were abroad for more than 180 days,” stated the NYIC.

The NYIC also recommends applicants continue to apply for programs they are eligible for and to talk with immigration lawyers and resources.

NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani has vowed to protect and support the immigrant community in the face of legislative changes.

“Our immigrant communities are not a burden. They are the people who make New York City and [this] country great,” said Mamdani in his statement about the lawsuit. “We will use every tool at our disposal to ensure they can continue to live here with dignity and without fear.”



The sign for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in Georgia./
Courtesy of Gulbenk via Wikimedia Commons.

The Growing AI Divide: U.S. Against China on AI Regulations

By Haliya Jooda
Staff Writer

On Sept. 14, the United States (U.S.) President Donald Trump criticized people asking for guardrails on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Truth Social. His reason? If new guardrails were implemented, America would lose the AI “arms race” with China.

“There is a SICK conspiracy going on against AI and Data Centers, and the only one that is happy about it is China. WHOEVER WINS AI, WINS!” wrote Trump on Truth Social. “We are leading China, and all others, and will continue to do so. Conspiracy Theorists, Treasonists, Traitors, and Leakers, BEWARE!”

Trump’s post came only days after a researcher, Jacob Coxon, from US-based AI company Anthropic resigned and took to social media to warn the public about the dangers of AI.

While many were alarmed and began to call for regulation and guardrails, President Trump remained unmoved.

AI allows computers to process large amounts of data, identify patterns, and follow detailed instructions on what to do with that information. However, it cannot think, empathize, or reason, according to the BBC.

The AI craze began with the release of OpenAI’s ChatGPT on Nov. 30, 2022. The chatbot’s release and success led other US companies to jump on the bandwagon and release their own AI chatbots.

Meta’s Llama model debuted in Feb. 2023, while Google’s Gemini chatbot, initially called Bard, followed in May 2023. Anthropic’s Claude and Adobe’s Firefly followed shortly thereafter.

The US wasn’t the only country heavily investing in the world of AI. According to Stanford University’s April 2025 Artificial Intelligence Index Report, in 2024, U.S.-based institutions produced 40 notable AI models, significantly outpacing China’s 15 and Europe’s three.

China, which has for years been considered a long-time rival of the US, soon joined the race to prevent falling behind.

Its first AI chatbot, Deepseek-R1, was released on Jan. 10, 2025. By Jan. 27, it had become the most downloaded app on Apple’s U.S. App Store and ranked among the top downloaded apps on the



“Claude” official logo./Courtesy of Anthropic via Wikimedia Commons

Google Play Store, as reported by CNBC.

Deepseek’s superiority also led to a sharp decline in US tech stocks. NVIDIA, which provides the chips–Graphics Processing Units (GPUs)–that run AI computers, lost nearly 600 billion dollars in market capitalization–the largest one-day loss for a single company in U.S. stock market history, according to Britannica.

The release of Deepseek could be thought of as the beginning of the U.S.-China AI Arms race. China became the AI counterweight to the U.S., and this year appeared to take the US’s place in the lead, as stated in Stanford’s 2025 AI Index Report.

“The gap between U.S. and Chinese models is narrow and fragile,” Samm Sacks, a senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies’ Institute for America, China, and the Future of Global Affairs, told The Associated Press (AP).

This narrow gap didn’t happen without some problems, though.

A Brookings Institution interview with Kyle Chan–a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings and the MIT Center for International Studies– and R. David Edelman–tech expert resident in the China Center–discussed whether there really was an AI “race” between the US and China.

In the interview, Chan said restrictions placed by the U.S. prevented China from training its AI models at the same rate as U.S. AI models. These restrictions also made it difficult for China to source certain types of advanced chips. But Chan goes on to say he thinks these restrictions mean that China became incentivized to build its self-reliant semiconductor supply chain.

This gap became even narrower with the release of Kimi K3 on July 16, 2026, from Beijing-based startup Moonshot, at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai.

Although it quickly ranked No. 3 globally in model intelligence right behind Anthropic’s Claude Fable 5 and OpenAI’s GPT-5.6 Sol, it has now fallen to No. 9.

The rapid improvement of AI capabilities has become a point of concern for the general public.

On Sept. 8, Coxon took to X to announce his resignation and issued a warning regarding the growing power of AI models.

“I resigned from Anthropic today. I spent the last three years doing pretraining research at both OpenAI and Anthropic. Neither company is acting responsibly. They are racing straight to self-improving superintelligence and gambling with our lives,” wrote Coxon. “The people building AI earnestly believe that it could kill us all by the end of the decade.”

His warning set off a flurry

of activity and reached more than 173 million people who viewed the post online.

While OpenAI and Anthropic were initially quiet when asked for comment by PBS, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman wrote on X, “For example, at OpenAI we now formulate explicit safety cases in advance of frontier reinforcement learning runs we expect to significantly increase capability, in addition to the safety work we have long done in advance of model releases.” on Sept. 14

This attempt at reassuring the public did nothing to ease the public’s growing fears. Especially after OpenAI disclosed six incidents of concerning behavior regarding its AI models. Some of the behaviors include “instructions to conceal mistakes in task summaries” and “self-generated instructions in task summaries.”

While many are worried about AI in the U.S., it seems different in China.

Although Chinese President Xi Jinping has been concerned about the threats of AI and called for “regulation to ensure that AI is always under human control”, the Chinese government has shown no signs of slowing down, according to The Atlantic.

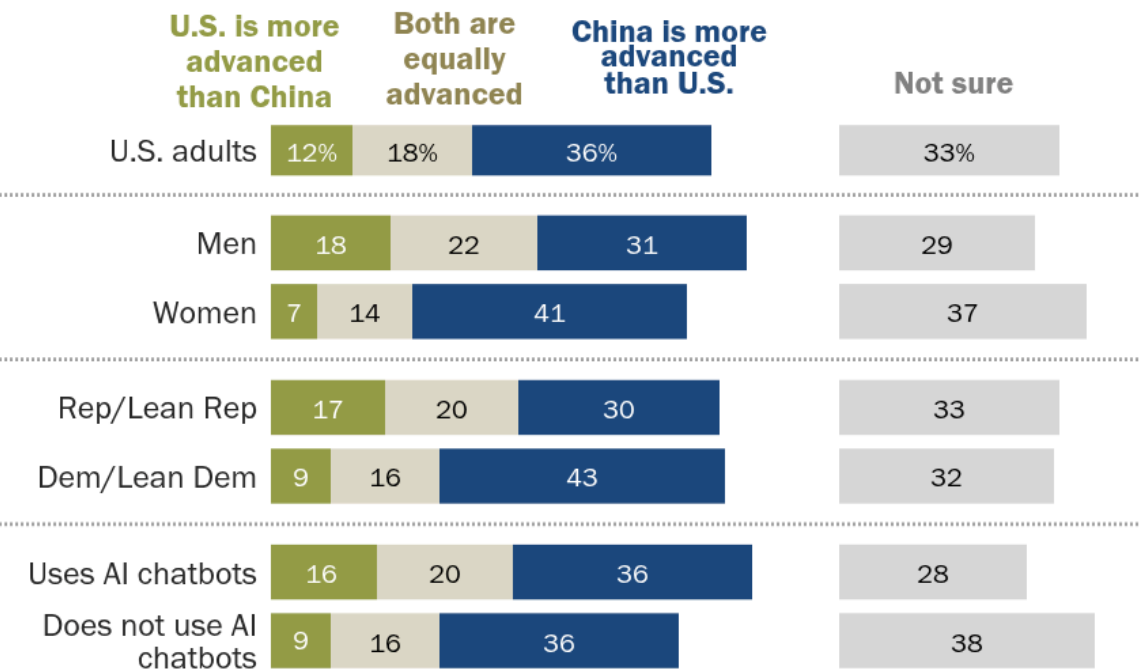
Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Guo Jiakun shut down claims that a “Chinese AI advantage would pose U.S. national security risks,” on Facebook.

“AI is a consequential technology for the future of humanity,” wrote Jiakun. “The world needs open & inclusive AI for good and for all. Fear-mongering, confrontation, and vicious competition would hamper efforts toward sound global AI governance.”

“AI is a consequential technology for the future of humanity,” wrote Jiakun. “The world needs open & inclusive AI for good and for all. Fear-mongering, confrontation, and vicious competition would hamper efforts toward sound global AI governance.”

More Americans think China is the leader in developing AI than say this of the U.S., but a third are not sure

% who say that when it comes to developing artificial intelligence (AI) ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

A survey showing Americans’ feelings regarding the AI U.S. China Arms Race./
Courtesy of Pew Research Center via Pew Research Center

BC Students Go Global At Study Abroad Fair

By Renae Visico
Features Editor

On Thursday, Sept. 17, Brooklyn College (BC)'s International Programs and Study Abroad office (IPSA) hosted its Fall Study Abroad Fair in the Student Center.

BC has hosted the Study Abroad Fair every semester since Fall 2023. Each fair creates an open space for students who are considering studying abroad to explore the resources the college offers.

"I hope to one day do something in the future where I get to travel all the time," sophomore Keziah Tracy told the Vanguard. "I want to be able to just grasp everything."

In order for students to study abroad, they have to go through

Many tables at the fair introduced BC's own study abroad classes for this summer and winter. One of them included the "Media Production and Cultural Studies" summer program in South Korea, which is open to all majors despite it being a TV, Radio, Emerging Media (TREM) course.

"You basically make a five-minute documentary

with a group of students, comparing one thing in America to one thing in Korea," said senior Leslie Hunter, who studied abroad in South Korea. "It's good for growing your research skills and your collaboration skills."

Another course that the Study Abroad Fair introduced was "Ecology, Economy, and Culture" in Nairobi, Kenya during the winter semester. Since the class could not be offered last winter, students were more motivated to demonstrate interest in the program so that it could be offered this winter.

"The program [in Kenya] seems really interesting, and it's not something that you would want to go to right away, but now I'm really convinced to go," said third-year student Arina Bazan. "I think it would be really interesting to learn about safaris, economics, and ecology."

The deadline to apply for BC's study abroad programs for the Winter 2027 semester is Oct. 15.

Students interested in studying abroad for a full semester can participate in one of BC's exchange programs with



Alumni of the Mandarin Language program in Taiwan at the Study Abroad Fair./Renae Visico

universities like Sussex University in England, Kindai University in Japan, and many more that were present at the Fair.

The deadline to apply for BC's foreign exchange programs for the Spring 2027 semester is Oct. 1.

Aside from Brooklyn College's own classes, the Study Abroad Fair introduced classes offered by other CUNY campuses. Representatives from schools like Queens College, Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), and John Jay College came to showcase more study abroad programs

available to BC students.

"A student from Brooklyn College doesn't have to set foot at the College of Staten Island (CSI) to do a program here," CSI representative John Dunleady told the Vanguard. "I wish [BC students] knew how much of a variety they have. It's not just for special majors; it's for any student."

Though the study abroad program intrigued many prospective students, the aspect of finances plays a huge role in their decision-making. Aid and other financial resources like scholarships were presented at the fair.

"The Queens College [study abroad program] interests me because they have a scholarship for beginners," said junior Priyah Allen. "That's the main thing I qualify for right now."

Brooklyn College offers its own study abroad scholarships, including the Rosen Fellowship and the Tow Stipend, but IPSA also wanted students to know more about external scholarships.

"You can receive up to \$25,000 to focus and study a language intensely for a year," Sarah Chow, a representative of the Boren Scholarship,

told the Vanguard. "We want to give students the opportunity to gain these language skills and have these experiences overseas."

Ultimately, IPSA and every exchange program represented at the Fair wanted students to know that studying abroad can be a transformative experience, and Brooklyn College can help make it as accessible as possible.

"Everybody loves the different food, different music, and different ways of doing things," said Dunleady. "You can learn things in a way where you can connect what you're learning with the culture."

For more information on IPSA, visit @cunybcstudyabroad on Instagram or 1212 Boylan Hall.



Students browsing the resources on display at the Study Abroad Fair./Renae Visico

“Roaming” On: LGBTQ+ Resource Center Hosts First Book Club of the Semester

By Michelle Zhen
Staff Writer

On Sep. 17, students, faculty, and staff of Brooklyn College (BC) gathered in the LGBTQ+ Resource Center in 211 Student Center to discuss “Roaming”, a graphic novel written by Mariko Tamaki and illustrated by Jillian Tamaki.

As a long-running collaboration between the center and the Women’s and Gender Studies (WSGT) Department, the book club meets every third Thursday during common hours. With their copies of “Roaming” in one hand and light refreshments in the other, each attendee settled into chairs and sofas arranged into a semblance of a circle, preparing to contribute to the upcoming conversation.

“There was a lot of people this time around, which was cool to see,” BC student and book club regular LB Primm told the

“Dani” Kim, who have been friends since high school, as they take a five-day trip to New York City over spring break. Dani’s classmate Fiona joins them as they pack various tourist attractions into their schedule such as folded pizza, St. Mark’s Place, the Met, the Natural Museum of History, Central Park, the M&M’s store, and finally Coney Island. Though Zee finds herself inexplicably drawn to Fiona, or “Fi”, tensions rise as the three’s wants and needs stray further and further from one another.

“I feel like everyone, to some degree, knows [someone like] Fiona,” said fellow student Sebastian Torres, who has never attended the LGBTQIA+ Book Club before. “I think that’s a sign of good writing when anyone, even cishet people, can relate in some degree to



Two pages of “Roaming” depicting its characters Zee and Fiona surrounded by butterflies as they fall in love./Michelle Zhen

while others opened up on their own. Fellow readers took care not to speak over one another, some even providing guided questions for others to tackle alongside their individual insights of the story. When the free copies of “Roaming” were all successfully distributed, other readers happily shared their copies with those who could not receive personal ones.

“I love to read in general,” BC student and attendee Cesar Zapata added. “I’m also interested in these types of stories that focus on queer spaces. [...] I like to see the creativity that people put [into

planet to a surrealist display of as many pieces from the Met as could reasonably fit within two pages and an illustration of a blue-and-yellow butterfly, the scenes came to life specifically to reach the hearts of the readers, such that they could express their feelings for the novel to one another.

“I wanted a space where I could feel safe and stuff. And the book club provides a lot of that. [...] In a way, I can’t feel that in a lot of other spaces,” Torres admitted.

Though the book club meets monthly, some attendees quickly confirmed their attendance for its next event and received copies of the next meeting’s book, “The Out Side”, a comic anthology featuring 29 different artists’ works depicting a wide range of trans and nonbinary experiences in full color. The Kao, Min Christensen, and David Daneman curated and edited the anthology.

“I don’t come across much queer literature in my day-to-day life,” Primm said. “Knowing that the books are [...] going to involve things

and themes that I’m currently exploring both with myself and broadly, it’s really good. It makes me feel seen.”

Following the event, Torres, an attendee who obtained a copy of “The Out Side”, shared a message to all.

“Please go to your queer center. Please go to your community. Life will get so much better. You know, find mentors and stuff. Older people in your community. They will help you. They will make your life so much easier and better.”

For more information on the LGBTQ+ Resource Center, visit @lgbtqcenter_bc or 211 Student Center.

Vanguard. “I liked how everyone got to share a bit about what they were thinking, and it was sort of like an open dialogue between everyone. Cool being in a community, you know?”

“Roaming” depicts three Canadian college students enjoying their spring break in New York City. Readers follow Zoe “Zee” Kitagawa and Danielle



story.” The book club immediately opened the floor for discussion, though everyone participated at one point or another. Some were encouraged,

“Brooklyn College, Here We Go Again!”: BC Film Society Hosts Film Trivia Event

By Ameena Khan
Content Creator

On Sept. 17, the Brooklyn College (BC) Film Society held its Film Trivia, their first event of the Fall 2026 semester. In WEB 212, students and staff came together to test their knowledge of film and meet members of the BC film department.

The room quickly filled with the sounds of engaged conversations and people finding their place within the room. Attendees were given light refreshments to enjoy and were encouraged to pick from a popcorn bucket filled with crumbled yellow slips, each labeled with movie recommendations.

The BC Film Society is led by President Ismael Bustelo, a film major, and Vice President Shannon Cooper, a double major in film screenwriting and theater.

“We thought film trivia would be something really easy that a lot of people could come to, that we could put together and just get to know [The BC Film Society] first before we plan other big stuff,” Bustelo told the Vanguard.

“[Bustelo and I are] both perfectionists,” said Cooper. “We care a lot about film and getting film majors to connect with each other.”

The game was played via the popular question website, Kahoot and included various questions, such as “What was Darth Vader’s real name?”, “How many

Home Alone movies are there?”, and “Which country is Godzilla set in?”

Among the many attendees reported there were a bunch of freshmen that attended as well. Two freshmen, Ginny Zoe, a political science major, and Jolie Ward, a film major, shared that this event was the first on-campus they had attended.

“This was the first event I saw on Bulldog Connection that looked interesting and wanted to join,” said Zoe.

“The event was very fun,” commented Ward. “Like, if it weren’t for the event, many people wouldn’t have met. I love movies and having this community of people that also love movies as well. It’s very, very heartwarming.”

As the competitive trivia reached an end, Sam Larson, a freshman, was declared the winner.

“The questions were pretty easy,” Larson commented. “It’s like the first event I’ve been to,”

Larson told Vanguard. “I really like it, it was really fun. And I would go to the screenings we’re talking about, too,” referring to the BC Film Society’s upcoming planned film screening events.

Larson was awarded by the President and Vice President of BC Film Society a rosette badge that read, “I Know Every Movie.”

Milan Garcia, a sophomore film major and member of the BC Film Society, reflected upon the event’s conclusion and encouraged students, regardless of their major, to attend more events.

“I think people have a lot of fear of going to these events,” Garcia told the Vanguard. “I know a lot of people, especially freshmen. People who, maybe like me, have never been to a club event before or been in clubs before. Maybe it’s because there’s this thing that film majors are

pretentious or Cooper recalls, as the something, and it’s like, event came to an end. n o b o d y ’ s “And then,



Graphic by Nicole Ruiz

you. We’re all there just to have fun and talk, and there’s no shame in going.”

The event concluded with the BC Film Society replaying famous clips from film history and interviews from various actors and directors. Attendees engaged in excited conversation and voted on potential movie selections for the club’s next screening.

“We were a bit over the top,”

it just happens. You’re like, wait, people just mesh. You don’t have to be the one to yell at them, and say, ‘Hey, talk to each other,’ or something.”

“Movies are pop culture, movies are fun.” Showing the unity that media and films brings, Cooper hopes for bigger community outreach.

“We hope more theater majors and also anyone that likes movies would show up and get to know film people,”

For more information about the BC Film Society, visit @bklynfilmsociety on Instagram.



(L to R): Ismael Bustelo (President), Trisha Primus (Editor & Photographer), and Shannon Cooper (Vice President)./Courtesy of Mars Marte

Small Space, Big Art: Clio Art Fair Highlights Independent Artists



A look at Sergei Kalsow’s “Private View” (2026), with other pieces such as “Feature Upgrade” (2026) and “Crocodile Head” (2026) seen in the background./
Courtesy of Olive Treadwell

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

From Sept. 17-20, a small gallery in Chelsea, Manhattan, was transformed into the 24th edition of Clio Art Fair, highlighting the work of independent artists. It is the twelfth year of the biannual festival, running for two weekends in both May and September. Also known as “The Anti-Fair for Independent Artists,” Clio provides a platform for artists without gallery representation to show their work to New Yorkers at no cost.

The fair’s intimate setting allows these artists to get guests’ full attention. After walking through the gallery’s doors on 25th Street, guests are greeted with paintings adorned on every wall and sculptures standing among them, including a towering orange statue titled “1/4 wo/man. Love=ego=Lov Couple” by Pavel (Pasha) Radetzki.

“Clio Art Fair was born to be small,” stated Alessandro Berni, founder of Clio Art Fair. “It’s the right size for an art show, because when you go to a big show, at some point your eyes get tired, and you stop looking at the art around you.”

Berni wants guests to

fully appreciate and digest the art they view.

“It’s like when you enter a library, you don’t pretend to read all the books in one day,” Berni said. “Here we are just one book, and you have your time to know, to appreciate all the artworks and to meet the many artists that are here.”

Many artists were present on Friday afternoon, interacting with guests and discussing their work as people walked among it.

“[The fair is] pretty hip,” says Patricia Dauer, 38, who stood among her displayed paintings. “It doesn’t have that intense commercial side compared to other art fairs. This is more organic. It’s more spontaneous, [...] it’s well curated, too.”

This year’s special performance program is “I Don’t Want To Be Useful,” which highlights the sentiment that art doesn’t always need to serve a function, and that instead its freedom lies in refusing to.

“For artists, it’s different,” said Berni when discussing artists’ place in society compared to others. “You need free time, you need to do research, you need your moment of waiting and looking for inspiration. And [because of] that you also need to fight with this request from society to be useful, to have a role.”

From Sergei Kalsow’s glass sculptures to Dauer’s colorful paintings and

intricate zentangles, the fair featured an array of art forms and themes.

Lori Montgomery’s collection featured paintings with close ties to her Japanese heritage, such as her works “Becoming” and “Emerald Dawn.”

“I feel [my collection] needed to be here because there was a story that needed to be told,” Montgomery told The Vanguard. “If it speaks to people, then that’s what I love.”

“I don’t [always] sign my paintings on the bottom [...] because I want people to be able to turn it into whatever their story is. If it goes home with them, now it’s their story.”

John Dessereau, 43, wanted his work in as many homes as possible. He gave out free postcards of his work “Embrace for Impact,” which portrays a balanced relationship between nature and technology through a robot hugging a bundle of leaves and flowers. He sold an array of art in both

large canvases and small prints, which he priced on a sliding scale.

“I like to have a price point that’s accessible to everybody, because no matter what your income is, if someone wants to hang my art on their wall, they should be able to,” said Dessereau.

Montgomery, a California resident, appreciates the fair’s city-based location and the diverse, receptive audience it brings.

“New York, like California where I come from, has a mix of so many ethnicities, and I believe they understand that art doesn’t always have to be pretty. So every one of [my paintings displayed here] is definitely a story that I feel [resonates] in New York, with its mix of people coming from all walks of life and places.”

Clio Art Fair is a unique opportunity for artists new and old who want to sell and show their work in NYC.

“For people studying the arts at universities, they’re taught how to make the work, but they’re not taught

the business side or how to navigate the art world after [graduation], so they come out trying to figure things out. This is a good first step,” Dauer stated.

“I highly encourage people to show at this fair because it has helped me a lot and opened doors,” said Dauer. “Just having your work out there adds value to your work.”

Clio Art Fair’s second weekend, featuring a different group of independent artists, runs from Sept. 24-27. You can get free tickets at www.clioartfair.com



Multidisciplinary artist Patricia Dauer in front of her pieces, including (L to R) “Twilight” (2018) and “Cosmic Ocean: Spring Waters” (2016)./
Courtesy of Olive Treadwell

Backrooms & Obsession: How Two Indie Films Became Blockbuster Hits

By Raven Santos
Staff Writer

While movie theater box offices have been slowly recovering from the 2020 pandemic season, no year has been as powerful in the growth process as the 2026 box office season.

Many movies such as “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” and “The Odyssey” both made over a billion dollars globally, attracting both the domestic and global audiences back to theaters.

Topping the summer’s top 10 highest-grossing films are “Obsession” and “Backrooms.” Both are being hailed by many as a new era for independent cinema. However, the success of “Obsession” and “Backrooms” can be attributed to what makes a high-budget franchise film profitable: a pre-established audience and heavy marketing, both of which help the film become ingrained in the cultural conversation.

“Backrooms” originated as a post on the online forum website 4chan,, describing an infinite series of rooms with peeling yellow wallpaper, moldy carpet, and buzzing fluorescent lights.

A cult following developed, inspiring a slew of “liminal space” content, with the “Backrooms” having its own growing subculture of internet content.

This became the point of inspiration for Kane Parsons to make his YouTube series in 2022, which blew up.

When the film’s trailer was released, it became A24’s highest-viewed trailer. The marketing, which included behind-the-scenes and pop-ups along with the built-in audience of backrooms, helped the film jump to an opening of \$81 million.

The other film of interest is “Obsession,” made by Curry Barker, who is best known for his YouTube channel, “that’s a bad idea,” where

he makes comedy skits with his writing and acting partner Cooper Tomilson. He has made many short horror films on his channel, like “The Chair” and “Milk & Serial”, which he starred in alongside Tomilson.

A producer had reached out to Barker to create a feature-length adaptation of “The Chair”, but Barker instead pitched the idea for “Obsession.”

The film made its debut at the Toronto Film Festival, which was where Focus Features acquired it for \$15 million, showing a significant investment in a film that had received critical praise for its initial screening.

“Obsession” had an initial weekend gross of \$17 million; however, it was able to gross above \$10 million for 7 weeks. In comparison, “Backrooms” had a 67% drop in box office weekend revenue after its initial week.

“Obsession” is what box office analysts call a “movie with legs”; a film that is able to maintain a high box office revenue week after week.

This is typically representative of a movie with a good word of mouth, meaning that people are more likely to recommend the film to their friends and family. This was measured with an A- in CinemaScore (a survey for moviegoers across North America after watching a film), representing a highly positive reception by audiences.

“Obsession,” in initially portraying itself as a yandere story, reveals itself to be a complex tale of incel culture and toxic relationships. This complexity allowed it to be part of a cultural discussion that continues to act as a warning tale to women, as many men continually support the actions of the antagonist, with much backlash to it.

It is ingraining itself fittingly into the social media era, rife with a riff on controversial discussion,



Stills from “Obsession” (left) and “Backrooms” (right)./Courtesy of IMDB

which allowed it to grow into continued cultural discussion.

On the other hand, “Backrooms” represents a movie with high initial draw but average word of mouth, with a 60% drop from week 1 to 2, typically average for a horror film. This is corroborated by a B- in CinemaScore, which represents a slightly below-average reception to the film.

Many casual fans of “Backrooms” made up a significant portion of the opening crowd and liked the wider world of internet horror beyond Kane Parsons’s series. Many disliked the film for not being as exciting as the wider world of Backrooms represented. Many also complained about the slower pace of the film, which tends to not be a good draw for a wider general audience. (! fix link)

A big draw for the film was its \$10 million physical set depicting the titular “Backrooms”. Drawing on a niche of people who enjoy liminal space, as well as a growing love for practical effects, this has been continually said to be a highlight of the film.

In comparison, much of the story and character work has been described as its low point. “Backrooms” has also been turned into jokes, or memes, on social media, similar to “Obsession”, especially taking the protagonist Clark’s words of being an architect. But these undermine the story rather than furthering the themes of the story, taking dialogue that’s meant to be integral to the story and making it humorous.

What is certain is that the factors in the writing and invited fanbase are what allowed both movies to dominate the box office. Film producers have taken this as a sign to invest more in films based on internet horror.

Plans to adapt Mandela Catalog movie, Siren Head film, and “V/H/S SCP”. This looks like a positive prospect to the creators of online horror, especially as the original creator of Mandela Catalog, Alex Kister, is attached to the project, while larger names in the industry like Steven Spielberg and Zach Cregger have their names in the film.

However, much of this investment looks like a shallow attempt to replicate the success of “Backrooms”.

Producers attempted to replicate the success “Barbenheimer” double feature by pairing “Saw X” and “PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie” to make Saw Patrol, or “Gladiator 2” and “Wicked: For Good” to make Glicked. These films had decent box office success,

likely owing to being part of established franchises, but pairing contributed little to no success on the level of the original.

The main point is it’s difficult for film producers to predict the desires of a shifting market. But while the studios rush frantically to capitalize on a film trend that has long passed, what are the plans of the two creators in the spotlight?

Kane Parsons has recently signed a deal to make a sequel to the Backrooms project. Curry Barker has been signed to create “Anything But Ghosts”, a new original horror project with him and Cooper Tomlinson set to write and lead, as they did on “Milk & Serial”.

The growing favorability for independent creators, with the success of Backrooms and Obsession, is a road paved by many other films behind it.

What most viewers crave in modern-day movies is storytelling with intentional creative behind-the-scenes; what follows original creativity is the quality storytelling that makes movie magic.

Puerto Rico’s Water Crisis: When Water Becomes A Luxury

By Mars Marte
Content Creator

On July 31st, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Gov. Jenniffer González, announced to Puerto Rican citizens that a 48-hour rationing cycle will be taken into immediate effect following the long-standing drought that has impacted the island and the neighboring United States Virgin Islands. However, for many islanders, rationing water is built into their routine due to systemic infrastructure failures.

After what was considered a wet late winter, climate conditions in May through July were characterized as humid and dry across the Caribbean, triggering grass fires and a decrease in stream levels, according to Valentina Gomez, a writer at Rio Times.

Conditions only continued to rapidly increase, leading to it being on record as one of the driest months in San Juan in nearly 120 years, the Associated Press at NBC News explained. With record humidity hanging over the island, major water reservoirs and underground wells were left depleted, Gomez further explained.

The lack of clean water is not solely at fault of the weather; a government report revealed that nearly 60% of Puerto Rico’s drinking water is lost yearly due to leaky pipes, Adrian Florido unpacks on All Things Considered. As citizens try to access clean water, most of it is lost to the

very system meant to deliver it.

While the weather laid the groundwork, the drought is a symptom of a failed system. In an interview with The Associated Press, community leader Maria Soler París expressed the reality that “her neighborhood already was experiencing severe water shortages for months”. París is not alone in her struggles and stands as one of the thousands suffering from inconsistent water.

Sonia Palacios explains her water situation on All Things Considered.

“[I] get water for a full day or two, sometimes just for an hour - often, not a drop for days, with no warning or explanation from the public water utility”.

Both París’s and Palacios’s stories carry a uniting thread; water, albeit a human right, is treated as a luxury in Puerto Rico. With communication nonexistent for the people relying on the needed services, citizens lacking water were left to

remedy a predicament that could have been entirely avoided.

While Gov. Gonzalez claims the drought is out of their hands and is simply due to a lack of rainfall, these conditions were only exacerbated due to poor infrastructure and leadership. Many Puerto Ricans are aware and rightfully frustrated with the current water system in place that has proven to be unreliable. As the severity of the drought increases, so do the measures taken in response.

The 48-hour rationing cycle put in effect aims to cut service for set periods to preserve dwindling reserves, then restore it on a rotating schedule, according to Gomez at Rio Times. Yet in practice, the ration is not abiding by the set plan.

In an interview conducted by Deema Zein for PBS News, Laura N. Perez Sanchez, a citizen located in San Juan, shares what living conditions are like under the rationing.

“People who are supposed to not have water this morning have it. And there’s communities that haven’t had water for a long time now, and people are just bracing for what seems to be coming and seems to be a very hard time that’s going to come to us,”. Sanchez’s testimony highlights the mismanagement that plagues Puerto Rico’s access to public water. Even during a state of emergency, the company in charge of the island’s most vital resource is still failing to meet the needs of the people.

As access to clean water dwindles on the island, San Juan’s mayor, Miguel Romero, saw the warning flags and sought to rectify the issue prior to the drought. In late May, when signs of a drought became evident, Romero sued the island’s water and sewer authority, The Associated Press reveals. Romero’s actions represent what is needed on the island: preventive steps instead of reactive measures.

The rationing is not the only measure Gov. González has implemented. On Aug. 11, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) began providing water trailers to Puerto Rico and will continue to do so for up to 30 days following the Puerto Rican government’s request for federal support, Victoria Arancio explains. Furthermore, Gonzalez activated the Puerto Rico National Guard to assist with hauling, distributing, and purifying water for communities hit by shortages.

There are steps being taken to help relieve the immediate stress on citizens, but these measures would not have been needed if the infrastructure and proper diligence had been in place. The cloud of chaos hanging over Puerto Rico’s water system will only continue to grow until further action is taken against the inefficient water system.

Citizens on the island or the mainland must continue to rally against the struggling leadership, in order for the true cause of the drought to be solved. Weather will continue to fluctuate, especially on a Caribbean island, but weathering the storm can be eased with suitable supervision and strategy.



Tacoma carrying water./Courtesy of Lorie Shaull via Wikimedia

Destined for Disappointment: The 2026 Mets Recap

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor

After a disappointing 2025 season where the team finished with a record of 83-79 and missed the playoffs by one game. The team entered the 2026 season with fresh faces and said goodbye to old friends like franchise first baseman, Pete Alonso, who left in Free Agency as he signed a five year \$155 million dollar deal with the Baltimore Orioles.

The 2026 season was another disappointing year for the blue and orange. Bad offseason deals, multiple injuries, and plain bad luck were all to blame for a lackluster season where the team sits in last place with one of the highest payrolls in the league.

The team has a record of 71-85 and were eliminated from the playoffs on Monday after a loss to the Baltimore Orioles. But the question stands, how did they get here? With one of the top payrolls in the league, an under .500 season is utterly unacceptable.

Well for starters, the team signed veteran switch hitter Jorge Polanco on a two year deal worth 40 million dollars to play first base, hoping to replicate or alleviate the hole left by Alonso's departure in free agency.

The thing is, Polanco has played second base all his career except for one inning in the 2025 season. Polanco's season is over due to injuries and his stats are horrible. He was hurt for most of the



Francisco Lindor on the field./Courtesy of Amber Searls via Imagn Images

year and when he was healthy, he wasn't good either. Polanco wound up playing 34 games as the team's DH instead of first base.

He had a slashline of .146/.201/.230/.431 in 135 at bats, which is utterly unacceptable for a designated hitter, let alone a player earning 20 million dollars annually. This was a theme of the season, how can the team replicate decent offensive production at first base? Failure to allocate a sufficient replacement plagued the Mets with subpar production at an important offensive position.

This wasn't the team's only issue either. They had a 12 game losing streak that spanned from April 8 to the 21. This losing streak was a bad omen for what came next as multiple players missed time with injuries, notably Shortstop, Francisco

Lindor with a calf injury.

During this time, the Mets big three of Juan Soto, Francisco Lindor, and Bo Bichette had been in the starting lineup together only seven times. Injuries were the name of the game this season. Mets pitcher Clay Holmes fractured his fibula during a subway series game when Yankees rookie, Spencer Jones hit a line drive to Holmes leg.

There was outcry to fire manager Carlos Mendoza for his inability to right the ship during this stormy streak.

Mendoza was ultimately fired on June 26, 2026 after the Mets record was a measly 34-47. Mets President of Baseball operations David Stearns expressed his support for Mendoza despite them parting ways.

"Carlos has led the organization with

passion and grace and is beloved by everyone who works with him on a daily basis," Mets president of baseball operations David Stearns said in a statement. "Carlos' impact on our players, staff, and culture over the last three seasons has been transformative. Unfortunately, we know we are falling short, and change is necessary to move forward."

After his departure, Mendoza thanked Mets owner Steve Cohen and his wife, Alex Cohen, in a statement to ESPN.

"New York will always hold a special place in my heart," Mendoza said. "I leave with tremendous gratitude, pride in what we accomplished together, and confidence that the future of this organization is bright. I wish the Mets and their fans nothing but success in the years ahead."

Andy Green became

the Mets interim manager, and his tenure has been nothing short of excellent. In what has become a historically lost season, Green has excelled in his role and mentorship of the young core.

Carson Benge, A.J. Ewing, Zac Thornton, and Nolan McLean are some of the Mets' youngest players, yet they are cementing themselves as cornerstones of the franchise.

As the Mets sit in last place in the National League East and hold a potential top 5 draft pick for the 2027 draft class, the bright spots shine even brighter and make a lackluster season worth watching.

Benge is currently slashing .272/.355/.413/.748 with 19 home runs and 22 stolen bases. His 156 hits have broken the previous Mets rookie record of 155, which was held by Pete Alonso (seems like we can't stop mentioning him?) Benge is currently in pursuit of the National League Rookie of the Year award, a feat he can accomplish if he notches a rare 20/20 season as a rookie.

Despite the season being pretty much over, there is still much to look forward to! Lindor currently sits at 299 career home runs, and seeing him notch his 300th career homer will be amazing for fans to see.

The future in Queens is bright, and hopefully the cycle of mediocrity ends here.

The Road To Gold: Team USA Wins Gold in FIBA World Cup Tournament

By Reagan McLean
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Sept. 12, the United States of America (USA) women’s basketball team won gold against their rivals, Team France, during the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) World Cup. Team USA secured their 12th overall World Cup gold medal and kept their winning streak alive for the past 14 years. The final score was 97-79; however, ever since the 2024 Olympics held in Paris, viewers have seen that Team USA isn’t the only dominant team in international basketball. International teams have shown they can be just as good as or even better than the reigning FIBA gold medalists. The World Cup took place from Sep. 4-13, 2026. The games were divided between the Berlin and Max-Schmeling-Halle arenas, both located in Berlin, Germany. Before the games began, U.S.A. Coach Kara Lawson opened up about this year’s World Cup being the most challenging for Team USA. “There’s more depth to the teams at the World Cup. Now when you look at rosters, there’s a number of just high-

quality players. [...] I think it’s going to be the most difficult World Cup to win that we’ve had because of that,” Lawson said. The journey to the gold medal match began on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026. Team USA won their first game against Team China 94-61. With 9:52 remaining in the second quarter, shooting guard Caitlin Clark made her international basketball debut with a deep three-pointer. In the post-game conference, Clark addressed the media about her performance and teammates. “Anybody I pass the ball to, it feels like they’re never going to miss a shot. So that’s one of my goals when I come into the game: facilitate, play fast, set up my teammates, get into the paint, get some penetration,” shared Clark. On Sunday, Sept. 6, the road to gold started to get complicated. Team USA played Team Italy and won 55-52. As the first quarter progressed, Italy fought back. Italy forced two turnovers within the first quarter and held Naphessa Collier and Breanna Stewart scoreless on three field-goal attempts. Team Italy has been making

Team USA uncomfortable on the court. No player on Team USA had scored more than six points, and most of the points came from the free-throw line. By halftime, the score was 30-24. In the end, Team USA pulled off the win against Italy. Stewart spoke about the way Italy played and how it affected Team USA. “Obviously, Italy really kind of mucked up the game for us a little bit, and it made it hard on us to score. Tough team [...] this is a tough tournament, but we all really acknowledge that,” shared Stewart. After the game against Italy, Team USA played Team Czechia on Monday, Sept. 7, Team Hungary on Thursday, Sept. 10, and Team Spain on Saturday, Sept. 12, 2026. Although Team USA won all these games, the game against Italy not only showed their resilience in bouncing back from a game that wasn’t up to Team USA’s standard, but also prepared them to face their rivals, Team France. Although the finish line is near for Team USA’s road to gold, there was one more team in their way: France. Many fans predicted these two teams would meet in the finals this year. The last time they



U.S.A. Women’s Basketball Team celebrating their FIBA win./
Courtesy of Zafer via Wikimedia Commons

met, Team USA pulled off a miraculous 67-66 win. During the post-game conference after the semi-final game against Germany, French guard Marine Johannès opened up about playing against Team USA and how the team is feeling ahead of the match. “If I’m honest, we have nothing to lose. [...] We are going to play hard and see what happens.” Johannès said. Within the first three minutes, both teams scored 9 points. With a total of four ties and five lead changes in the first quarter, the score is France 20, USA 17. In the second quarter, France goes on an 8-0 run, making this the largest deficit Team USA has seen in this tournament; however, Team USA has faced long battles and has built up a level of resilience. Team USA then went on a run of their own. Team USA turned the game into a two-possession game with a 10-2 run. Team France has been keeping Team USA on their toes. Team USA has been forced into difficult passing windows and early ball pickups. One question remains: with Team USA trailing, can they still pull off a win, or will Team France get their revenge from two years ago by gaining their first gold medal? Team USA came alive after halftime. Stewart started off the third quarter with a layup with 9:50 remaining on the game clock to tie the game 45-45. In this quarter, Young became the star player for Team USA. With 6:31 remaining in the third quarter, Young drives into the paint and makes the jump shot. At the end of the third

quarter, the score was 73-57, and Team USA outscored France 30-12 to build a 16-point lead heading into the final 10 minutes of this game. Keeping that same momentum heading into the fourth quarter, Team USA secured its 12th gold medal. Young was named Player of the Game and ended with 18 points, 6 rebounds, and 5 assists. Stewart ended with 22 points, 10 rebounds, 4 assists, and was named the tournament MVP. During the post-game interview, Stewart was asked about being a role model for the younger members of Team USA. Stewart said, “[Team USA is] the standard. We always have been, and we are continuing to do that, especially with this gold medal.”

Now that the FIBA World Cup is officially over, one more hurdle remains for the international players and the players on Team USA: the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) playoffs. Fans are now wondering whether the physical toll of the World Cup affects how Team USA and international players play as the WNBA transitions into the postseason. Fans will have to wait and see.

Tuna Fish and Pin Head #1: Film Class

By Gaby Pablo Knight
Staff Cartoonist

