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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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WELL-OLILED MACHINES



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Cover by Jocelyn Rios

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BC Reacts: New York Removes Regents Requirements for High School



East Quad of Brooklyn College./Emily Nixon

By Emily Nixon
News Editor
& Sayles Kaliszewski
Staff Writer

The New York Board of Regents, a sector of the New York (NY) State Education Department (NYSED), voted to remove the Regents testing as a graduation requirement for high school students across the state on Sept. 14. This decision has led to debate on campuses across New York, including Brooklyn College (BC). The NY State Regents examinations are statewide standardized tests developed by the NYSED. Since the late 1990s, students at NY public and charter schools have been required to pass five specific Regents exams, one for each core subject, to earn their high school diploma.

This new plan will go into effect for the Class of 2028 and is part of a larger effort to reform graduation requirements and increase equity in public education.

Some students, like Marcus Malivert, a senior studying Psychology at BC, feel that the Regents are necessary to ensure students are being adequately prepared for life after high school.

“If you can’t complete the prerequisite, how are you gonna complete the advanced course? It’s not a roadblock, it’s a skill check,” said Malivert. “Things happen. Sometimes you’re not prepared for things, sometimes you’re not ready, but the point is we cannot glorify inadequacy.”

Despite his own struggles with the Regents, Malivert feels the decision will hurt students more than helping them.

“I’ll admit, I hated the Regents in high school, but it’s a necessary part to show your academic prowess,” said Malivert. “You need to have consequences in life, and if you are not capable of going to the next level, sometimes you need to stay behind and work on yourself, because we shouldn’t be glorifying incapability for the sake of sparing everyone’s feelings because that’s not gonna help anyone in the long run.” Other students, like Ryan Eliezer, a junior studying Biomedical

Informatics, feel that the Regents were helpful to review material during the year, an opportunity future students will miss out on.

“I believe that Regents are kind of like a standpoint of how you were doing throughout the school year. It’s just a great way to look back on information, make sure you understood it, and I feel like removing that only, not only takes away that, it takes away students’ ability to understand the concepts that they learned about in their class,” said Eliezer. “But, I also feel like it just makes it easier for them to graduate and move on and not actually testing their knowledge of their skills.”

Joe Scarpetta, a college assistant at the LGBTQ+ Resource Center at BC, feels that the tests are unfair to students having a “bad day.”

“I think that the Regents going away ultimately is a good thing because it’s eliminating barriers of entry for students,” said Scarpetta. “It’s allowing more students to have a fair shot, and at the end of the day, I don’t think standardized testing is a good qualifying agent to require students to achieve a certain score to have access to a classroom.”

Although the exams will no longer be mandatory, they will remain available to high school students as an option. According to the NYSED, “[the Regents examinations] will continue to serve as rigorous measures of academic achievement but will no longer be a separate diploma requirement.”

Instead, the NYSED plans to focus on alternative evaluations of student success, with the goal of creating a more well-rounded and fair system.

“The Department will move forward with the development of high school accountability assessments specifically designed to provide comparable statewide evidence of student achievement and create opportunities to better measure academic growth,” stated the NYSED.

One example of these assessments is the Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs), which include “analytic essays on literature,” “social studies

research papers,” and “lab reports of original science experiments or engineering designs,” among others.

The Board of Regents Chancellor, Lester W. Young, Jr., emphasized the effect this decision will have on promoting equity in public education reform.

“Advancing this work moves us closer to a more equitable system, one that upholds high expectations for all while ensuring that a student’s zip code, background, or circumstance never determines their opportunities for success,” according to Young.

Some, like Scarpetta, feel that inaccessibility is one of the main factors limiting student success on the Regents.

“Some students are better at taking tests than others, and a significant factor in a student scoring high on their Regents is access to resources, such as tutoring,” said Scarpetta. “There are plenty of parents who don’t have even a high school education. New York City is filled with immigrant families who come from different countries. Maybe English isn’t their first language. So, to have this standardized test where everyone is being tested at the same level is fundamentally unfair.”

Malivert feels the removal takes increasing accessibility too far.

said Malivert. “At some point, [students] are gonna suffer for it.”

Scarpetta and Malivert agree that the money saved from removing the Regents requirement should be invested elsewhere to help support students.

For Scarpetta, this reinvestment should go into free lunch and student metrocards, among other things.

“I think that that should be invested into advanced training, into training for safe allies to ensure all students on all campuses feel that their needs are being met holistically, not just in terms of academics,” said Scarpetta.

Malivert feels that the money should be diverted to increasing resources for schools to better teach students.

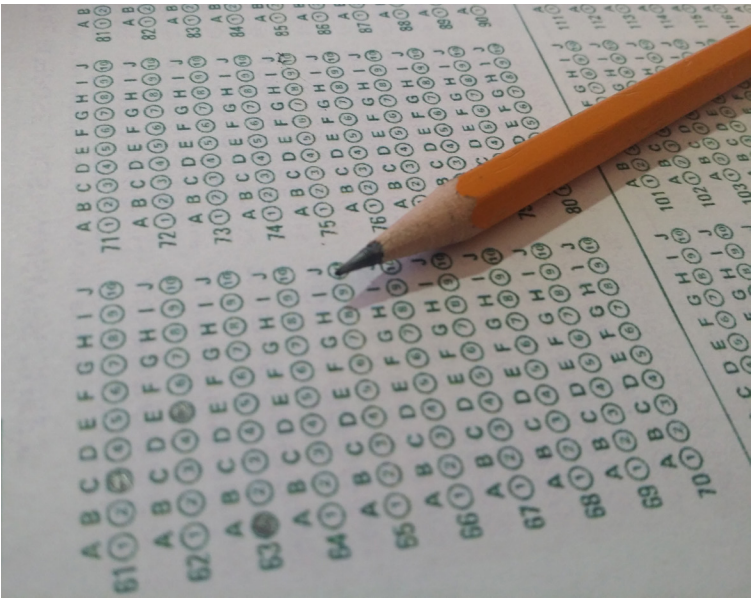
“[In high school,] I think my teachers were excellent, and they did the best they could with the resources they had, but the school definitely let certain things slip for the sake of keeping the numbers high,” said Malivert.

Malivert feels this is the latest in a decline of the American education system.

“Effort is important, and we can’t just give up on our education system and just make it easier to let everyone get through it for the sake of whatever,” said Malivert. “We need to try harder.”

As the Board of Regents decides on a new plan for graduation requirements, NY City Council Officials warned The Gothamist, that without clear guidelines, schools may be stuck in “educational ‘purgatory,’” unable to clarify for future graduates.

“It’s important to be inclusive. It’s important to cater to everyone, but catered doesn’t mean limitation.”



A pencil rests on a test answer document./
Courtesy of lecroitg via Wikimedia Commons

The Power of Courage: BC President Leads Discussion With Women’s Rights Advocates

By **Renae Visico**
Features Editor
& **Kaniz Samiha**
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Sept. 23, Brooklyn College (BC) President Michelle J. Anderson sat down with women’s rights advocates Leymah Gbowee and Thelma Ekiyor at the Claire Tow Theater commencing the first Presidential Lecture of the academic year.

During the Presidential Lecture Series, President Anderson hosts conversations with high-profile leaders throughout the academic year in order to inspire students to spark civic change in their daily lives.

Gbowee, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, is known for the successful “Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace” movement, which united Christian and Muslim women to advocate for an end to the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003.

Ekiyor is a lawyer and social entrepreneur who co-founded many organizations to help underprivileged women develop entrepreneurship and peace-building skills, including SME.NG, the West African Civil Society Institute, and Afrigants.

The lecture started off

with Gbowee and Ekiyor discussing the inspirations behind their work. Gbowee explained how her experience organizing young women in Liberia during the 2003 Civil War influenced her current peace-building strategies.

“In Liberia, specifically, we had a saying that everything [in] politics belonged to a man,” said Gbowee. “Peace building felt like dirty politics. [...] so we took the women’s building network concept back to Liberia, localized it, and we started that organization basically to empower women.”

Ekiyor was particularly inspired by the women’s peacebuilding networks she has seen in Nigeria. Although she and Gbowee have been close collaborators, they have different responsibilities in building peace networks, which she highlights to convey that activism is open to people of many different capabilities.

“If you are a brainiac or you are a nerd, don’t feel bad. There is a place for you in activism,” said Ekiyor. “I enjoy the writing, research, and the putting together. [...] You have to respect everyone’s strength and what everyone brings to the table. If you are a troublemaker, make trouble, and I will write about it.”

Gbowee and Ekiyor both

emphasized the importance of increasing women’s access to economic resources so they can be politically empowered. Ekiyor shared how her work co-founding and leading women’s entrepreneurship organizations was inspired by her experiences educating Nigerian women about civics.

“[Nigerian women] were telling me about their lives and I was so emotional,” said Ekiyor. “Somehow, they knew the language of rights and equity, and they’re still poor. And I said to Leymah that this is what we have to change. That’s what made me go back and get an MBA.”

Following the lecture, students and attendees had the opportunity to stay and connect with one another over refreshments.

Rebecca Turay, the daughter of Sierra Leonean immigrants, shared that her parents came to the United States primarily to escape the civil war that began in 1989. She expressed that growing up, she witnessed the war’s effects on women in her community and recognized the need for greater empowerment.

“I had noticed that women’s rights, or I guess the need for women empowerment, was needed because of how all the women around me were so defeated because of the war,” said Turay.

After hearing Gbowee and Ekiyor speak about their experiences, Turay states that she hopes to bring what she learned back to Sierra Leone.

“I want to ignite the motivation within them,” Turay said, referring to the women she hopes to inspire one day through what she learned from the lecture.

Other audience members reflected on the lecture with totally different perspectives. For Janet Elise Johnson, a former endowed Chair for Women and Gender Studies (WGST), and now a professor of Political Science at BC, what changed was not her perspective, but the world that we live in.

“The world has changed so much. When this institute was about a decade ago, we were optimistic about the possibilities for change, and things have gotten very scary right now with a lot of major wars,” said Johnson.

Building on Professor Johnson’s reflections,



Thelma Ekiyor and Leymah Gbowee presenting Ekiyor’s newly released book./*Renae Visico*

Berneardita Llanos, the interim director of WGST at BC, shared broader observations about her students’ fears, especially now, when they see things as very dark.

“[For those who are] particularly uncertain regarding the future, I think the relationship of peace and building peace and how it aligns with hope was super clear,” said Llanos. “I think students don’t always realize how close we are to the UN General Assembly, and what happens there, and the community that this community has to people making real important changes.”

As the conversation came to a close, attention turned towards the message that President Anderson hoped students would carry with them.

President Michelle J. Anderson hopes students are inspired by the experience that these women have had personally and generated in the world. She emphasized that creating change does not always require taking on a huge global role; it can begin within one’s community.

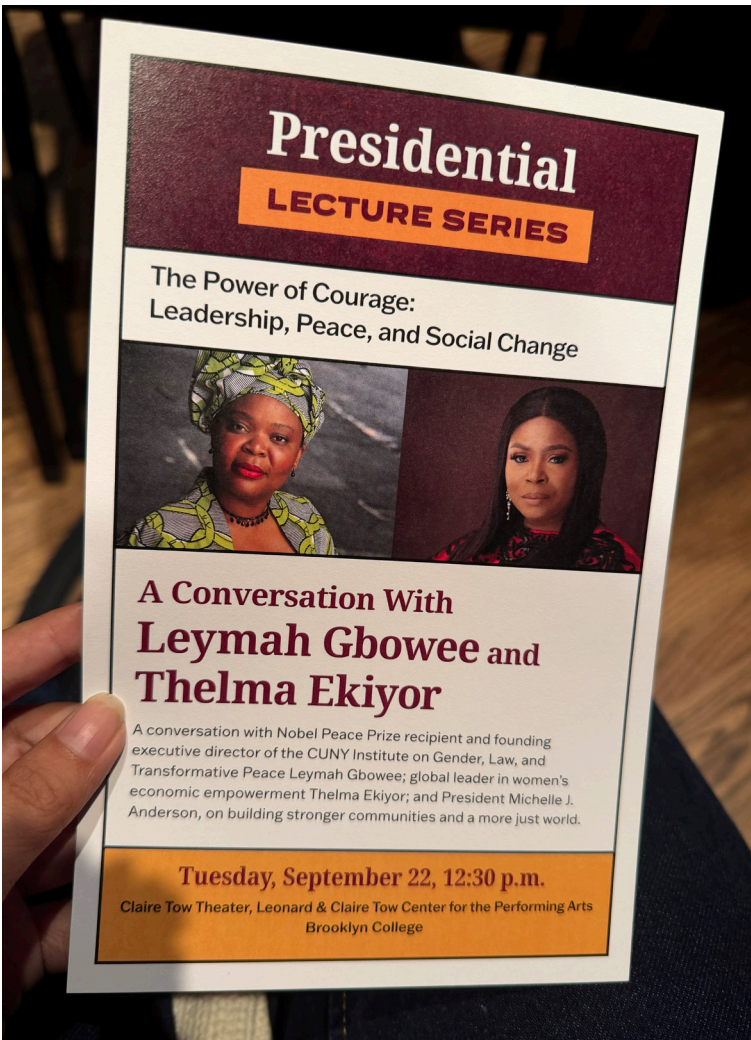
She encouraged students to recognize the influence

they can have in their own “backyards” and to use that to inspire others.

For the attendees, the lecture offered more than stories of the past. It left the audience with a reminder that courage, hope, and action can begin with believing in what we stand for.

“They aren’t just passive participants in the world; they are actively making things change, and they’re committed to it,” said Anderson. “It requires a kind of perseverance, commitment, and hope.”

For more information regarding the Presidential Lecture Series, visit BC’s official website.



Presidential Lecture flyer that was handed out to attendees./*Renae Visico*

Vibe Check: Student Affairs Host “Bulldog Check-In”

By Vanessa Archer
Staff Writer

On Sept. 22, Brooklyn College (BC) students gathered in the Student Center to attend the Bulldog Check-In. The Student Affairs Office and Undergraduate Student Government (USG) collaborated with Student Affairs, Center of Academic Advisement and Student Success (CAASS), Magner Career Center, LGBTQ+ Center, Student Activities Involvement & Leadership (S.A.I.L.), and other offices to share information and resources with students.

Office administrators and BC students greeted attendees and offered resources. Students had tables from various centers to the study abroad office; these resources were spread across two rooms.

USG Club Director and junior, Vanessa Tseytlina, played a vital part in making this event happen, sharing her role of making sure that attendees were engaged.

“I am going around checking in on people, hoping that they will also get to meet the people that might connect them to resources [...] or



Attendees visit various tables within the fair./Vanessa Archer

in general just talk about all the things Brooklyn College has to offer,” said Tseytlina.

Providing a new perspective, Tseytlina offered her advice to the freshmen: “Make sure to make good friends; they will stay with you for a long time.” She emphasized the unique student body BC has to offer, “Brooklyn College has a very diverse community, and there is a space for you and your interests.”

Member of the LGBTQ+ Center and transfer student Raymond Jones explained why the center was motivated to table this event.

“[We want] to make sure that people know that there is a place [BC students] can come to be themselves,” Jones explained. “We have a nice space to feel welcomed and make new friends.”

Upon arrival, attendees received a bingo card that was completed by

asking questions to the tables. Prizes such as Bulldog plushies, pens, and water bottles were awarded to people who completed their bingo cards.

Dunkin’ Donuts participated as a sponsor, giving out free sample-sized refreshers and gift cards in room one, a place where students can engage with one another and eat pizza.

USG Press Director and sophomore Amnerys Taveras gave some insight into her freshman experience.

“I felt like I was so alone, and then events like [resource fairs] helped me feel like there are people. I’m not by myself.”

Many members of the BC community shared this sentiment and reflected on their personal experiences.

Mentor health program

ambassador and intern at BC Cancer Center Mia Muskan is very connected in the BC community.

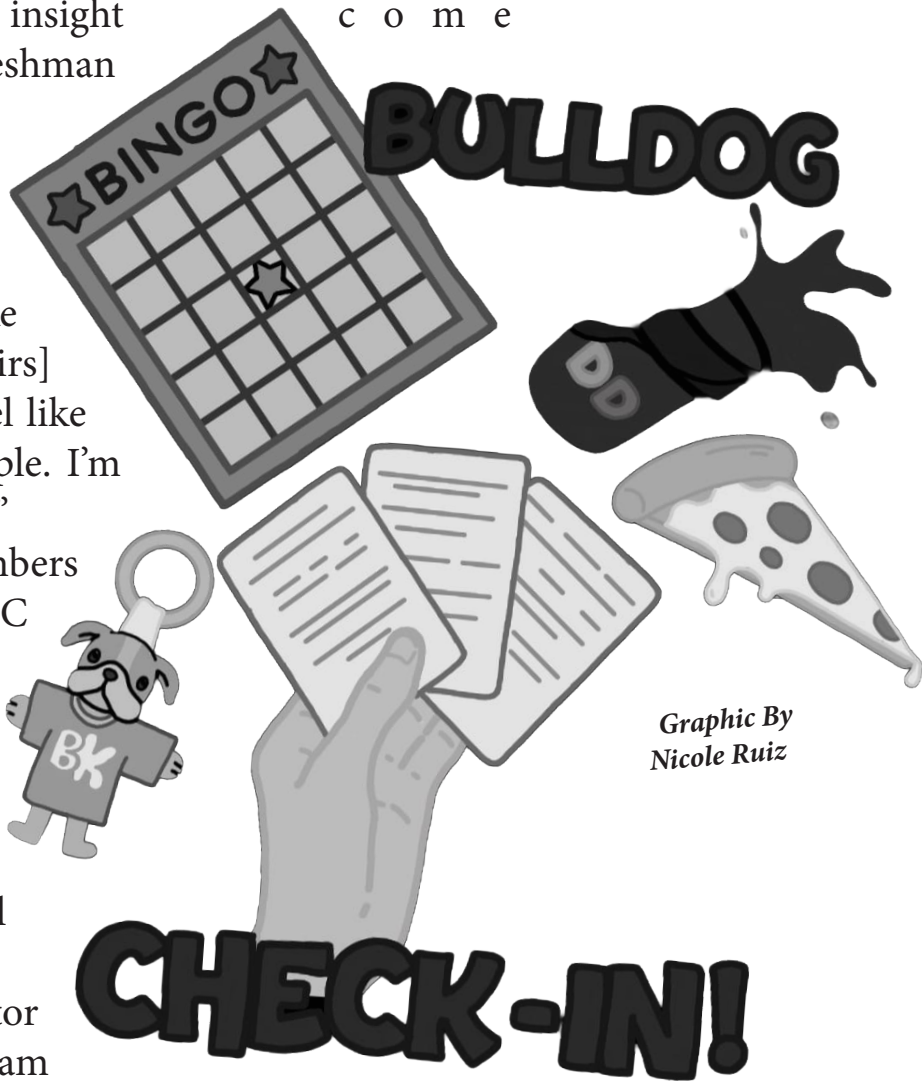
“I would tell them to make as many connections as they can, to go to different offices on campus, make friends, make connections because you don’t know where you’re going to be in the next year or so,” said Muskan.

Overall, this event was a place where students of all grades can come

together to connect and build a positive BC community.

“Don’t be afraid [...] get to know people or try at least one thing,” Assistant Director of Student Activities Da’Nashja Davis said. Davis continued, sharing her message: “We always look for opportunities to be able to showcase what we offer, what our office offers to students.

Students interested in future events by BC Student Affairs can check out their Instagram: @bcstudentaffairs.



Graphic By
Nicole Ruiz

Brooklyn College Fall Sustainability Showcase

By Amani Nelson
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Sept. 24, as part of New York City’s (NYC) Climate Week 2026, the Brooklyn College (BC) Sustainability Showcase was held on the West Quad. The showcase collaborated with on-campus clubs and NYC organizations, displaying various ways for BC students to get involved in sustainability practices.

The BC Sustainability Club collected ceramic yogurt cups from faculty and let attendees repot a plant.

The organization collaborated with another organization, Climate Cafe NYC, a volunteer project dedicated to getting people involved in climate activism. The organization hosts events such as park-cleaning in Canarsie Park, where volunteers can tend to the trees and the local environment.

As a co-sponsor of the event, BC TREEage tabled at the event as well. TREEage is a community of 2500+ students in both high school and college all over NYC promoting a more climate-friendly future through organizing and campaigning for more eco-friendly policies.

President of the BC chapter of TREEage, Joey Schneider, and Vice President Helen Zambrano

shared their plans for a new program designed to educate students on climate activism. “There’s gonna be a lot of different student bodies, including some of the newest schools that we just got on board with, including NYU and Columbia. [...] This is going to be sort of a prep and introduction for people maybe unfamiliar with TREEage’s mission to get prepared for our annual trip to Albany,” stated Schneider.

“Every year, TREEage takes a trip to Albany. It is at no cost to students. [We] focus on getting students activated in an equitable way. [It’s] an introduction to all the different things that we do, all of our different partners and who we talk to and collaborate with. It’s a great opportunity just to get familiar with TREEage a little bit more, aside from just on-campus occupations,” Schneider added.

Attendees were in for a fluffy surprise at the next table. Senior Environmental Science student Noah Hopkins displayed a series of popular Pokémon characters made of pipe cleaners in an artificial habitat.

“This project is Project 151. This has kind of grown into an idea where I’m going to build all of the original 151 Pokémon out of pipe cleaners to scale with one another, all at one-ninth scale, and then take photos of each in their natural habitats around New York City,” Hopkins shared the origin of the concept of the project. Hopkins expressed his goal to get people interested in sustainability through Pokémon.

“What better way to get people involved

[with sustainability and conservation] than with the most popular franchise in the world, and one that I know very much?”

There was a lineup of opportunities for students to get involved in public policy because, following Hopkins’ display, attendees were greeted by student representatives of the New York Public

Interest Research Group (NYPIRG).

Intern Alroy Knight shared the importance of letting your voice be heard in your community.

“We know that Governor Hochul recently issued a one-year moratorium on permitting hyperscale data centers. And now we have an opportunity as New Yorkers to weigh in on how our communities should be protected. We’re looking for students who would want to get involved,” intern Alroy Knight chimed in.

While learning about sustainable policy engagement, attendees could shop at the NYPIRG “free store” pop-up. The free store offered a small selection of clothing for students to choose from. Students were also encouraged to drop off clothes at the office in Ingersoll 1433.

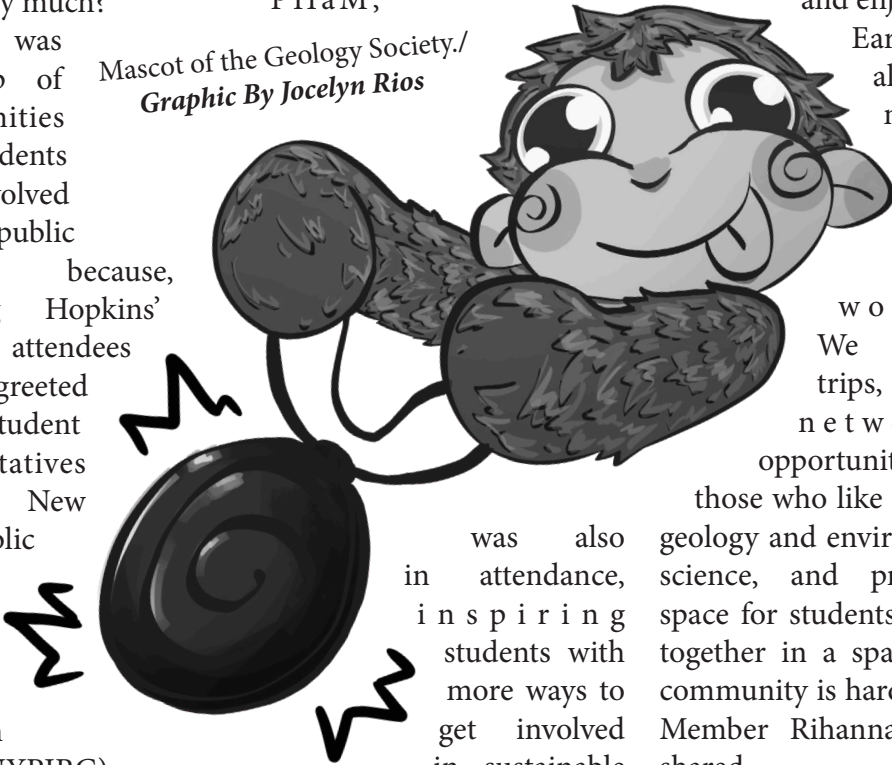
Passing through attendees could view some soil samples from the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department while learning about the Urban Soils Lab.

“The Urban Soils Lab is a lab associated with the Earth and Environmental Science Department in Ingersoll Hall — and we are a soil testing lab. [We] also have student research projects going on in the lab.” Kyla Shorr, adjunct professor of environmental and earth

sciences, shared.

The Public Health and Medicine Club, more commonly known as PHaM,

Mascot of the Geology Society./
Graphic By Jocelyn Rios



was also in attendance, inspiring students with more ways to get involved in sustainable

stewardship. With Earth fresh on the brain, students were drawn into the world of Geology Club.

“Geology might be the first word in our name, but it’s basically where everyone who loves the earth kind of congregates,” Camryn Ames, treasurer of the geology club, mused.

“The Brooklyn College Geology Society is dedicated to building

community through nature. We are a group of students from all majors who are passionate about protecting and enjoying the Earth and all of its natural

wonders. We go on trips, offer networking opportunities for those who like to pursue geology and environmental science, and provide a space for students to come together in a space where community is hard to find,” Member Rihanna Seeram shared.

As the event neared its end, attendees were introduced to Brooklyn College student Kayla Drakes’ nonprofit, “From Plastic to Protection.” The nonprofit aims to reduce microplastics going into waterways.

The showcase ended with pamphlets handed out, sign-up sheets filled, and the sun shining on the Sustainability Fair.

For all interested in the Sustainability Department, please email sustainability@brooklyn.cuny.edu.



Soil Samples from Urban Soil Labs./
Amani Nelson



Jade Banham, founder of Earth Stewards NYC./Amani Nelson

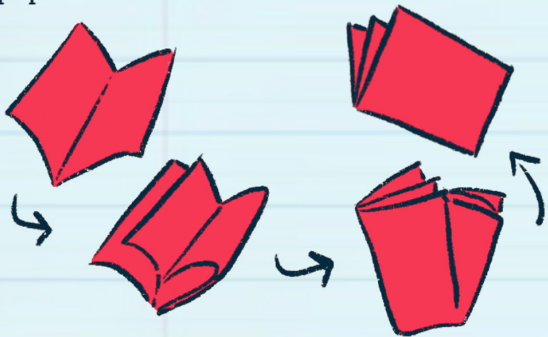
Hispanic Heritage: How to Make Papel Picado Banners!

By Ameena Khan
Content Creator
& Jocelyn Rios
Layout Editor



- Materials:
- Colorful tissue paper (8.5 x 10 inch)
 - Scissors •String
 - Tape • Hole puncher

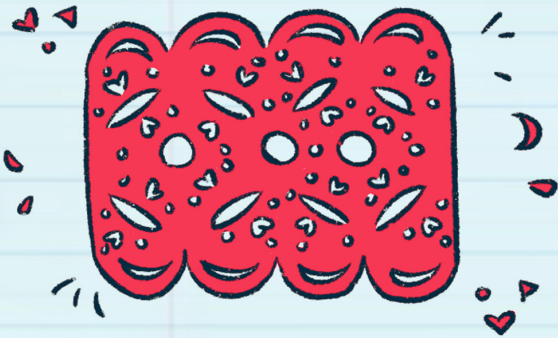
Step 1)
Gather a piece of tissue paper and fold the paper into 8 sections.



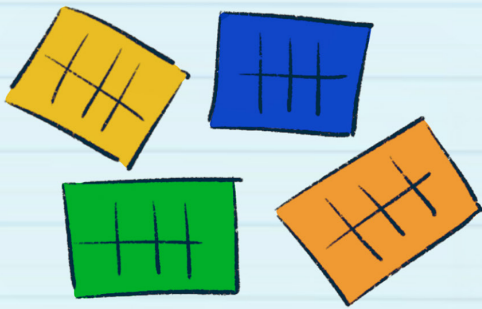
Step 2)
Cut out shapes on the folded paper to make your own pattern.



Step 3)
Unfold the paper to reveal your design.



Step 4)
Repeat Steps 1-3 as many times as desired.*
*Recommended amount: 3 times



Step 5)
Afterwards, tape your designs onto a string to make your banner!



Bonus: Paint the tissue paper to resemble hispanic flags!

Enjoy!

“In Service”: A Love Letter to MTA from Photographer Christopher Payne



Photographer Christopher Payne speaking at the press preview./*Courtesy of Olive Treadwell*

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor
& Ameena Khan
Content Creator

On Sept. 22, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Arts & Design presented “In Service: MTA Photographs by Christopher Payne,” a new behind-the-scenes photography exhibition located in multiple subway stations, centering on New York City’s (NYC) transit system and capturing the people who maintain it.

The event was held in Grand Central Madison, featuring photographer Christopher Payne and MTA Arts & Design Director Tina Vaz. This marks the first system-wide photography takeover where all 52 lightboxes, illuminated display fixtures throughout five subway stations, are equipped with just one photographer’s work. These stations include Grand Central Terminal, 42 St-Bryant Park, Atlantic Av-Barclays Center, and Bowling Green.

Each station reflects unique themes spanning from human service and presence at MTA’s five operating agencies to the manufacturing and maintenance of buses.

“Most people never see the inside of these workplaces until now, until

[Payne] captures what is going on there,” stated Janno Lieber, Chair and CEO of the MTA.

“To capture this infrastructure and its intricate networks, Payne often creates composite images built from multiple exposures taken over extended periods,” according to the MTA Arts & Design website. “This meticulous approach gives his photographs the calm, still quality that his sitters and industrial subjects often convey, despite the activity and sounds of their industrial surroundings.”

“I grew up in Boston, and as a kid, I’d take the subway there from one end of the city to the other,” Payne expressed. “I’ve had this

lifelong fascination with trains and subways because I spent so much time on them.”

Payne’s photographs span all of the MTA’s operating agencies, such as NYC Transit, Metro-North Railroad, and Bridges and Tunnels. He traveled from across NYC and Yonkers to MTA manufacturing facilities in Lincoln, Nebraska, and St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Payne further expressed how being able to receive access to MTA operating agencies “you don’t normally get to go into” intrigued him most regarding his photography project.

“I felt a little bit like a kid in a candy store. And when you show up, let’s say, at a place like Kawasaki, Lincoln, Nebraska, you know, no one has any idea that the subway cars they ride are made in the middle of the country.”

Payne recalled how most workers who build the transit system New Yorkers ride and rely on every day have never visited NYC.

“When I go [to the manufacturing facilities] and I say, ‘This is the bus that I ride every day with my daughter’ [...] that forms a connection with these people,” stated Payne. “They want to visit New York. They realize that what they’re working on actually has an impact thousands of miles away, and that’s a wonderful feeling.”

When asked about his creative process while working with employees at MTA operating facilities, Payne tells The Vanguard, “Usually, the best compliment I get is when [the workers] look at the picture I’ve taken and see it on my computer screen. They’re like, ‘Oh, my God, I never thought I could look like that.’” These photos can be seen in the worker portraits featured in the Grand Central Terminal Dining Concourse.

The installation comes at the end of the 40th anniversary of the MTA Arts & Design program, which encourages subway use through visual and performing arts.

“We thought that in celebration of the 40th anniversary this would be a great opportunity to pilot this kind of takeover,” Tina Vaz, MTA Arts & Design director, told The Vanguard. “Each station is a unique experience, but if you see multiple stations, it’s part of a larger story. So we thought from a narrative and visual perspective it could have a greater impact.”

Payne’s photographs tell the story of MTA workers in and outside of NYC that keep transit running for millions of riders.

“This is really a love letter to the MTA,” Lieber said. “And, most importantly, to the people who make our system possible.”

“We know that art can

brighten the journey for people,” said Vaz.

“And so to be able to deliver that as part of their experience and to have the opportunity to reach so many people through art is really unprecedented at this scale.”

“In Service: MTA Photographs” by Christopher Payne is on view through March 29, 2027.

For more information, you can visit <https://www.mta.info/agency/arts-design/collection/in-service>.



Various works by Christopher Payne displayed in Grand Central Station./*Courtesy of Olive Treadwell*

Maha Hashwi Shares Her Poetry and Wisdom With BC Students at Women’s Center

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

Brooklyn College (BC) Women’s Center and The Muslim Women’s Leadership Development Project hosted “Words of Becoming: A Poetry Reading and Book Launch” on Sept. 24. The event featured author Maha Hashwi and her book “The Pomegranate is a Grenade.” This is the first college visit by Hashwi, and the first in a series of book events hosted by the organizations.

Hashwi is a Lebanese-American poet whose work explores the complexity of her identity as an Arab-American and Muslim woman. “The Pomegranate is a Grenade” is her debut poetry book, and its title comes from her poem “The Pomergranate,” which discusses the resemblance between the fruit and a grenade. The word “grenade” was derived from the French translation of pomegranate due to its seeds resembling grenade shrapnel. It is also a sacred fruit in the Muslim religion and is mentioned in the Quran as an example of God’s creation.

“I felt like this would be a good title because it’s bold, it’s kind of confusing, you don’t really understand it,” Hashwi told the audience. “But it’s also like the two lives that I’m living as being Arab and being American.”

The talk featured Hashwi in conversation with Hanan Yafai, Program Coordinator of The Muslim Women’s Leadership Development Project. The project relaunched this year and is “dedicated to empowering women, and Muslim women specifically, by centering their rich and diverse experiences,” according to Yafai.

The two discussed Hashwi’s poetry in depth, touching on how Hashwi found the confidence to write as well as how she came into her identity as a Muslim woman.

“For me, when I’m on stage, when I’m able to share my poetry with people, it’s also sharing my religion and sharing my culture and my faith,” said Hashwi. “I feel like because I’ve written this

and put it out, it gives people an opportunity to read it and get a glimpse into what my world is.”

Hashwi read a selection of her poems aloud, such as “I Speak to God in Public” and “If You’re Muslim, Why Don’t You Wear That Thing On Your Head?”

The latter addressed a question she’d answer from her peers before she made the decision to wear a hijab, a headscarf worn by many Muslim women as a sign of modesty and religious devotion.

“I feel like it wasn’t until I went to college and started meeting other Muslims at NYU and in New York that I felt comfortable enough to actually wear [the hijab],” Hashwi said.

“I actually changed the ending of this poem. It used to say ‘To me, the Muslim women who wear it are queens and I’m still a princess,’ and so it was like me just saying ‘I’m not ready yet,’” Hashwi explained. “And then I remember reading it back and feeling like ‘Oh no, I think I actually am ready for it,’ and I changed the ending to what it is now.”

Hashwi encouraged attendees to find their voice through writing just as she had.

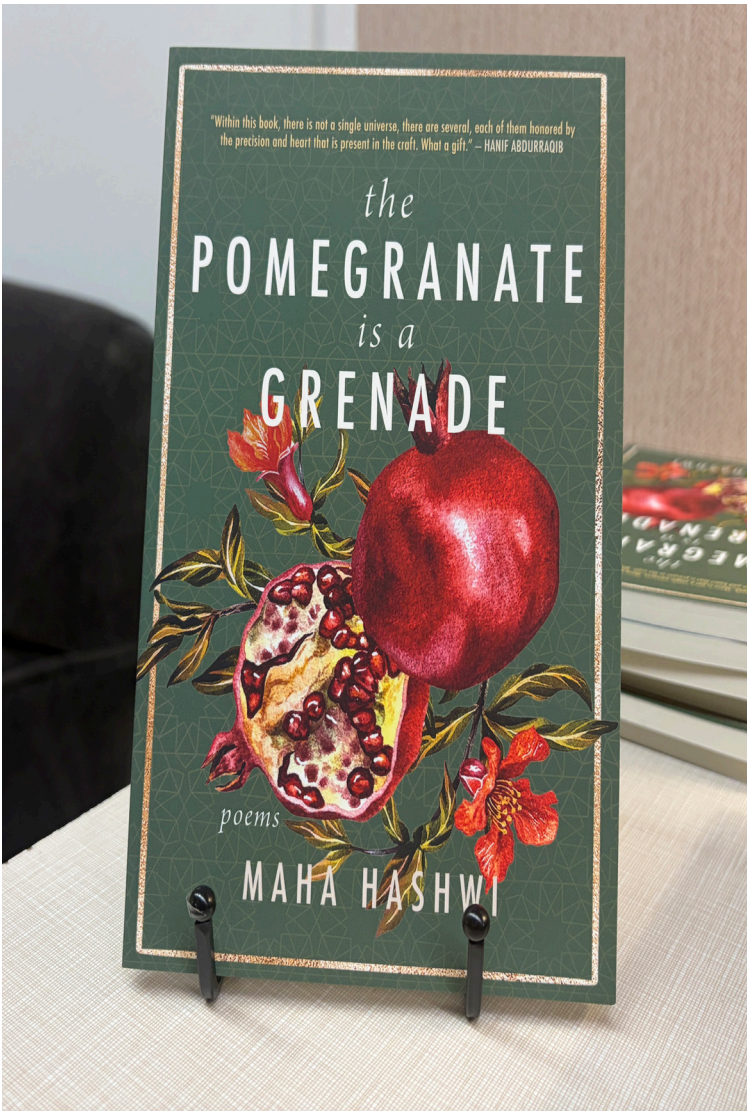
“If you have any interest in writing, you just have to write. That’s the only answer,” Hashwi told the audience. “And so that means [write] whenever, when you’re on the subway, when you’re at home, anytime you feel like inspiration is coming.”

“I want to be a writer, and I think it’s really important to listen to how other writers get to where they are and why they also write,” Angela Zapata, a BC junior majoring in creative writing, told The Vanguard. “It gives a lot of encouragement for me and my own work.”

Hashwi and Yanafi emphasized the importance of being confident in your identity and being unapologetic about where you’re from.

“My hope for [the event] and the mission of our program is to empower students to self-express, to be confident visibly, and to just take up the space that they think they’re worthy of and not to be afraid of being in those spaces,” Yafai told The Vanguard.

Hashwi spoke to attendees individually after the talk, answering questions from students and writing personalized notes while signing books. She even invited students to write a



The display of Hashwi’s book “The Pomegranate is a Grenade”./
Margot Dragos

note to her in a guest book she provided.

“I felt like it was so important for me to come to a college campus, in New York specifically, and speak to the Muslim women there,” Hashwi told The Vanguard.

“I was a Muslim woman at a college campus, and I felt like it would have been so amazing to have another writer come speak to us.”

“It means a lot to me to be in this space and be able to support these women and hopefully inspire them to do what they want to do.”

For more information regarding Hashwi and her work, visit @mahappinessiskey on Instagram. For more information about BC’s Women’s Center or The Muslim Women Leadership Development Project, visit their respective Instagram accounts @womenscenterbc and @mwldpbc.



L to R: Yafai and Hashwi discuss “The Pomegranate is a Grenade”./Margot Dragos

Why Gen Z Started Going to The Movies Again This Summer

By Renae Visico
Features Editor

Hollywood has been on a generational run this summer. With the release of big-name blockbusters like “The Odyssey” and “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” as well as pleasantly surprising indie hits like “Obsession” and “Backrooms,” there was certainly no shortage of people lining up at their local movie theater. It wasn’t just the box office that was thriving; there seemed to be a shift in the way Gen Z interacted with movies.

This shift signifies a larger pattern of Gen Z craving the human connection that was stolen from them during the pandemic.

The battle for movie theaters to stay relevant is far from new. There used to be a time when there was no other way to consume video media without going to your local cinema.

Future technological advances like TV, VHS tapes, and most recently streaming, have each brought their own challenges to movie theaters’ relevance. However, theaters always found ways to differentiate themselves from competitors, whether through the movies themselves or business practices like AMC subscription services.

But during the 2020s, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, streaming promised a unique level of convenience for the movie-watching experience that was



Group of adults watching a 3D movie in a movie theater.
Courtesy of Tima Miroschnichenko on Pexels.

hard for theaters to overcome.

Why commute all the way to watch a movie when you can watch the same one from the comfort of your own home? Why spend \$20 on a movie ticket now when you can watch the same movie on Netflix in three months?

Even years after the pandemic, around 91% of American households were subscribed to a major streaming platform like Netflix, Hulu, or Disney+. In that same year, only 53% of Americans reported going to the movie theater at least once.

But as time passed, Gen Z made it clear they’re not satisfied staying by themselves at home. It seemed like every other industry, not just the film industry, was shifting towards convenience at the expense of community.

Despite being more connected than ever, Gen Z has reported an increase in loneliness compared to other generations. It’s not hard to explain this contradiction: many

have been robbed of crucial opportunities to socialize in person outside of avatars on a screen. With 67% of Gen Z reporting regular feelings of loneliness, it’s clear that they crave feelings of human connection that were taken from them during the pandemic.

Cinemas are one of the only places where people can turn off their phones for hours and experience the same thing with total strangers. Unlike watching a movie on a streaming service, going to the theater demands someone be physically present alongside everyone else.

In a world where information is constantly being thrown at them, it seems like Gen Z has remembered how refreshing it is to spend time in a place that only requires attention to a single story.

Around 87% of Gen Z reported going to the theater during 2026, with their increased enthusiasm for cinema being a key factor in

the success of movie theaters since 2019.

Gen Z’s desire for connection, in a way, is thematically reflected in the blockbuster movies they supported and raved about this summer.

In fact, the term “blockbuster” largely came from the 1977 film “Jaws,” which attracted an audience so large that they had to line up around the blocks to get tickets. Part of the film’s appeal was the sheer spectacle the movie promised, which is not dissimilar to the way Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey” lined up large audiences with the promise of an immersive practical experience free from CGI.

Despite my personal grievances with the changes Nolan made from the source material, “The Odyssey” is a compelling cautionary tale that warns against taking advantage of hospitality. Nolan took one of the oldest recorded stories and reinterpreted it to resonate with modern

younger audiences. “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” which is currently the third highest-grossing movie of all time, depicts Peter Parker as he learns how self-destructive it is to isolate yourself from forming a community. The movie would have drawn a large audience just by virtue of being a Spider-Man movie, but to see that the highest-earning Spider-Man movie is also the most vulnerable is telling.

All the movies released this summer sparked larger conversations long after they were released. Discussions about Bear’s morality in “Obsession,” Peter’s unwavering empathy in “Brand New Day,” and Odysseus’s characterization in “The Odyssey” demonstrate that movies aren’t just passing moments to Gen Z.

This is just scratching the surface of the Q effects movies had on Gen-Z this summer. Who knows how many more people will line up for “Avengers: Doomsday” or “Dune: Part Three” in the winter?

Until then, it’s been nothing short of refreshing to see a shift this summer that Gen Z has been leading not just towards the revival of movie theaters, but towards human connection.

Are We Allowed to Enjoy Anything?: The Scalper Epidemic

By Elianna Tsigler
Staff Writer

The popular trading card game Pokémon celebrated the 30th anniversary of its Trading Card Game (TCG) on Sep. 16. A big milestone brought together fans from all over the world, of all ages. But what happens when those fans aren't allowed to participate? This is the reality for many current fans, and it's known as the age of scalping.

A scalper is someone who stalks a product and rushes to buy it instantly, whether online or in person. They focus on high-demand items, such as concert tickets, limited-edition items, and, in this case, Pokémon merchandise. After acquiring these products at the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP), they resell them for often more than five times the MSRP.

But what exactly is the market, and who manipulates it? The market price is what many second-hand vendors sell their products for, and what many people are forced to pay if they want to participate in the hobby, since all MSRP products are sold out. However, scalpers manipulate this price. Since they buy up all the product and no one else can, they can control how much it sells for. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this issue was not nearly as prevalent as it is now. The revival of Pokémon started around this time period as well. Since many people

were stuck at home with nothing to do, they rummaged through old things and eventually stumbled onto Pokémon, hitting a wave of nostalgia.

However, because people couldn't leave their houses, everyone turned to buying products online. As predicted, this led to products selling out with no real way to get them anymore, unless you bought them from an indirect seller. People saw the new wave of nostalgia as a way to profit, and they most definitely did.

Let's take a look at Scarlet and Violet (SV) 151 poster collection. For the products, MSRP is \$14.99; meanwhile, on other credible websites such as TCGplayer and Price Charting, it currently goes for around \$86.

It was released a mere 3 years ago, on Sept. 22, 2023. The reason for this massive inflation is quite simple; since the set included the Pokémon nearly everyone grew up with, many older fans returned to the hobby.

The same is true even for sets released just last year. With another SV set, Prismatic Evolutions, prices have surged tremendously, although they have been lowering in recent months. To keep the comparison similar, the MSRP price of

a Prismatic Evolutions poster collection is also \$14.99, but its market price is around \$40.

This is a tremendous jump compared to 151. It's mainly because the "chases"—the most sought-after/rarest cards you can get from this set—are so expensive.

The community's disapproval stems from the fact that the chases aren't as expensive or as pursued. Everything is categorized by what makes a profit and what doesn't.

Additionally, even though the market price is already inflated, many sellers raise it even more, often going nearly \$20-30 above.

More often than not, especially on the day of a new set drop, people will line up outside of stores and camp out overnight, then fight to acquire the new product. When asked about the 30th anniversary craze, a Best Buy employee shared his perspective on the night.

"It was crazy; people were here all night, and we sold out in nearly 15 minutes after opening."

The question is: if this behavior isn't new, why wasn't there already a limit?

This issue doesn't apply only to stores; it also applies to Pokémon TCG vending machines. Despite the sign that says no loitering, people will camp out and form lines to grab any products they can. Many track the machines' restock timers and make sure

to clear out whenever that time hits. Since people be limited to MSRP for modern sets.

Understandably, vintage products will increase in price, but items still in print should be restricted in this way.

Within the overall community, stores that sell products for MSRP, like Sam's Club and some Target locations, limit customers to one item per person. Despite some workarounds, this is still a strong start to solving the problem.

However, at the end of the day, this is a hobby, which we lose sight of too easily in this community. At what point does value become subjective as opposed to monetary? When is enough, enough?

Scalpers have even gone so far as to complain online and claim that they are "losing out on profit" because the large supply of 30th anniversary products has prevented them from hoarding it.

With Pokémon's clear popularity, two card shows were hosted very recently on the Brooklyn College campus. Both were incredibly successful, and I even attended the first one and can attest to the friendly environment; but the overall problem still persists.

Many sealed products were still priced at market and above, even from the modern era, which consists of SV and ME.

So what exactly can be done to combat this, especially in our own community?

Since our campus has TCG card shows, the least we can do is advocate for the products sold to

stay

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Scarlet & Violet Prismatic Evolutions Poster Collection./Courtesy of Pokémon Center



The Knicks Lackluster Off-season: Is Dolan Willing to Spend the Cash?

By Schonn Elcock
Staff Writer

The New York (NY) Knicks tactically strung together one of the greatest playoff runs in NBA history, leading to New York's first NBA championship in 53 years. Knicks President Leon Rose built the team's core through years of planning and strategic trades, so any Knicks fan would assume that Rose would bring back key members of that run. However, two crucial parts of this story have led to a rather lackluster offseason for the Knicks: Center Mitchell Robinson and Knicks owner James Dolan.

Although re-signing key pieces like Jose Alvarado, Landry Shamet, and Andre Drummond were good damage control, I can't offer them a higher grade than a B- due to how easily they could have gotten an A.

Robinson just came off another dominant rebounding and defensive season. Averaging 8.8 rebounds and 1.2 blocks with a staggering 4.2 of his rebounds being offensive rebounds. Robinson offered New York well-needed second-chance opportunities and diverse defensive looks.

At the time, Robinson was the longest-tenured Knick, being drafted to New York as the 36th overall pick in 2018. He developed as an athlete and honed his offensive rebounding skill under the Knicks development staff; keeping him was, for the most part, an absolute must.

Being the backup center for the Knicks, Robinson added a layer of well needed defense and aggressive rebounding, in both the offensive and defensive end. With Robinson on the court, Karl-Anthony Towns's offensive skillset was unlocked.

However, with Robinson playing that well



James Dolan (Left) and Karl Anthony Towns (Right)./Graphic by Rami Mansi

consistently and a new eligible player, or free agent, coming into this season, his presence demanded the same level of compensation.

Entering this season, the only way the Knicks could have re-signed him was if they went over a threshold considered the second apron.

Think of this as a money barrier. Given the players on the team, each of their salaries summed up must be under a certain number. Otherwise, the Knicks suffer various forms of consequences like losing draft capital.

Here lies James Dolan's issue.

According to ESPN, Dolan said on WFAN radio in New York, "I cannot go into the second apron. I'll write as big of a check as possible, but I can't write a check that goes into the second apron." Although the concern is legitimate, I believe the short-term grievances don't compare to the long-term stability of the team.

For defending champions like the New York Knicks, these sorts of moves are what define generational runs, especially if there was an effort to negotiate the team's salary cap under the second apron before

the start of the 2027-28. In losing a younger and more athletic center like Robinson, New York immediately suffers from a lack of depth, defensive pressure, and rebounding.

Karl-Anthony Towns (KAT) contract ends next season and is eligible for a max contract extension going into the 2027-28 season. Instead of losing Robinson, they could have re-signed him. Then reevaluate KAT's contract before the end of the season to remain under the second apron. Signing KAT to a reduced contract would give the team ample room to sign key players and round out their bench.

KAT has a deep appreciation for New York and wants to stay here. In a quote from The New York Times, Towns said, "You know you're stepping into holy ground," he said of playing at the Garden. "It's called the Mecca for a reason."

However, recent talks revealed that Towns and the Knicks organization have stalled on a contract deal, according to CBS Sports. With the team's core weakened and a stronger Eastern Conference, KAT's hesitation is completely real.

With the offseason

winding down, the Knicks have made a handful of moves. First, signing free agent John Konchar was an interesting move because he is a defensive-minded guard who could slide to the small forward position. However, like most people, I have never seen a highlight of him in my life, so it's a gamble.

Former Denver Nuggets guard Bruce Brown and Indiana Pacers center James Wiseman were also signed to the Knicks' summer training camp, fighting for the last roster spot.

If I were the Knicks, I would go to Brown. Not only was he a key member of Denver's 2023 championship run, but also highly credited as an energetic 3-and-D guard/wing. Signing Brown would also give us a very guard-dominant team, which could open up some doors for future trades.

The Knicks should pick up Brown because of his resume. Although James Wiseman helps address our lack of depth at the power forward/center position, he has shown little ability to adapt to the pace of the NBA.

Coming into the 2026-27 season, I have confidence that the Knicks can be a

competitive team. However, with a stronger Eastern Conference, going back-to-back seems like a much harder task.

Still, the Knicks have the Finals MVP (Jalen Brunson) and seemingly the open person to lock down Victor Wembanyama: Karl-Anthony Towns. The moves have been good in terms of damage control. However, if the goal is to win back-to-back championships, the question lies in whether James Dolan is willing to spend the money to maintain a championship roster.

BC Recaps 09/14- 09/24

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor

Another week has passed, and we have a lot to cover, so let's get to it!

This week's lineup includes Women's Volleyball and Soccer, in addition to Men's Soccer. A notable player, sophomore Saule Okeke-Ziburkus, earned CUNYAC mentions for the second time this season for her hot start to the season.

Women's Volleyball

On Sept. 15, BC faced off against United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) at home and lost 3-0. The sets went as follows, 25-21, 25-23,25-16. Okeke-Ziburkus had a good game with eight kills, three aces, and one block. Senior Olivia Fan ended her night with four kills. Senior Malia Reyes had three kills, one ace, and 14 digs.

Junior Rose Kory had a great game with 35 assists and 10 digs. Sophomore Olive Carroll ended her night with five kills and one ace. Overall, the team ended this game with five blocks.

Continuing at home court, the Bulldogs took on Farmingdale University in a non-conference match and lost 3-0. The sets went as follows: 25-12, 25-12, 25-14. Leaving the Bulldogs with no bark or bite, Farmingdale came out of the gate strong. Fan had six kills in her performance. Okeke-Ziburkus finished with seven kills.

Reyes had 10 digs, Kory wrapped up with 13 assists, and Carroll had four kills with two aces.

Facing off against familiar foe, John Jay College, at home, BC beat JJ 3-0 in their CUNYAC opener; A good conference

debut for them. The sets went as follows: 25-21, 25-21, 25-22. A close and intense game throughout.

Notable players of the match were Okeke-Ziburkus, who had seven kills and 10 digs, and Kory, who had another great game with 10 assists and three aces. Reyes had a great game with four kills and one ace. Fan had a great defensive game as she ended her day with four blocks and three kills. Finishing off, Carroll led the way with eight kills and three aces.

Next up, BC hit the road to play against St. Joseph's University in a nonconference match and lost 3-1. The sets went as follows: 25-20, 25-15, 18-25, 25-21. They may have pushed it to four sets, but unfortunately could not come back and win this one.

The team tallied 42 kills, 61 digs, seven blocks, and 34 assists altogether. The players of the game were Carroll, who had 12 kills and one ace, and Okeke-Ziburkus, who had 12 kills as well and one block. Junior Sophie Galchus had four blocks and four kills. Junior Meadow Andrews had a solid night with five kills and one block.

BC will look to start a new win streak during their next game on Sept. 29 at home against Baruch College.

Women's Soccer

On Sept. 16, BC took on Albertus Magnus College and lost 3-0. BC had seven saves this game. Going up against Kean University on the road, BC gave up three goals in the first quarter and lost 3-0.



BC women's volleyball team celebrating their win./Courtesy of BC Athletics

Freshman midfielder Alondra Vega Varela had two shots and two shots on goal during her performance.

Next up, BC went on the road to face off against Penn State Brandywine but couldn't complete the comeback and fell 2-1. Brandywine scored two goals in the first quarter but were held scoreless thereafter.

Freshman Aissa Santos Lopez had one shot and one shot on goal, but her one assist helped BC score in the second quarter. Junior forward Gianna DiPronio scored the lone goal for BC in the 56th minute.

Due to the expected impact from the Nor'easter, the next scheduled game for the women's team will be on Oct. 6 against Bard College.

Men's Soccer

Playing against Purchase College, BC rallied in the second quarter to take a 3-2 win and boost their winning streak to two games. Purchase scored early, but BC answered right back with a penalty kick from sophomore Forward

Gustav Krueger. Krueger had a good game with three shots, three SOG, and one goal.

In the second quarter, Purchase took the lead again, despite Junior Goalkeeper Juan Carlos Solis Cazares making three saves. In the 79th minute, senior midfielder Adam Moharam scored the game-tying goal.

Just as quickly, senior forward Hugo Sauriat scored the game-winning goal, sealing the win for BC.

On the road for their next match against Pratt Institute, BC won 4-0 in a convincing victory. BC limited Pratt to only two shots in the first half, showcasing their elite defense. In the 20th minute, Junior midfielder Alejandro Barreto scored the first goal of the game thanks to an assist from teammate Nathaniel Xavier Liebling.

Sauriat had a great game with two goals of his own. Freshman midfielder Bryan Lorenzo scored a goal as well. Solis Cazares had one save in the second half. This ran up

BC's winning streak to three games.

In their CUNYAC debut, BC would have their three-game win streak broken by City College (CCNY) in a 3-1 loss; with the only goal in this game coming from Krueger in the 85th minute, his fifth of the season.

After a tumultuous week, the Bulldogs are set to have their next game on Sept. 30 at home against Medgar Evers College.

Expectations vs. Reality: East Quad Fall 2026

By Adam Magwood
Staff Cartoonist

