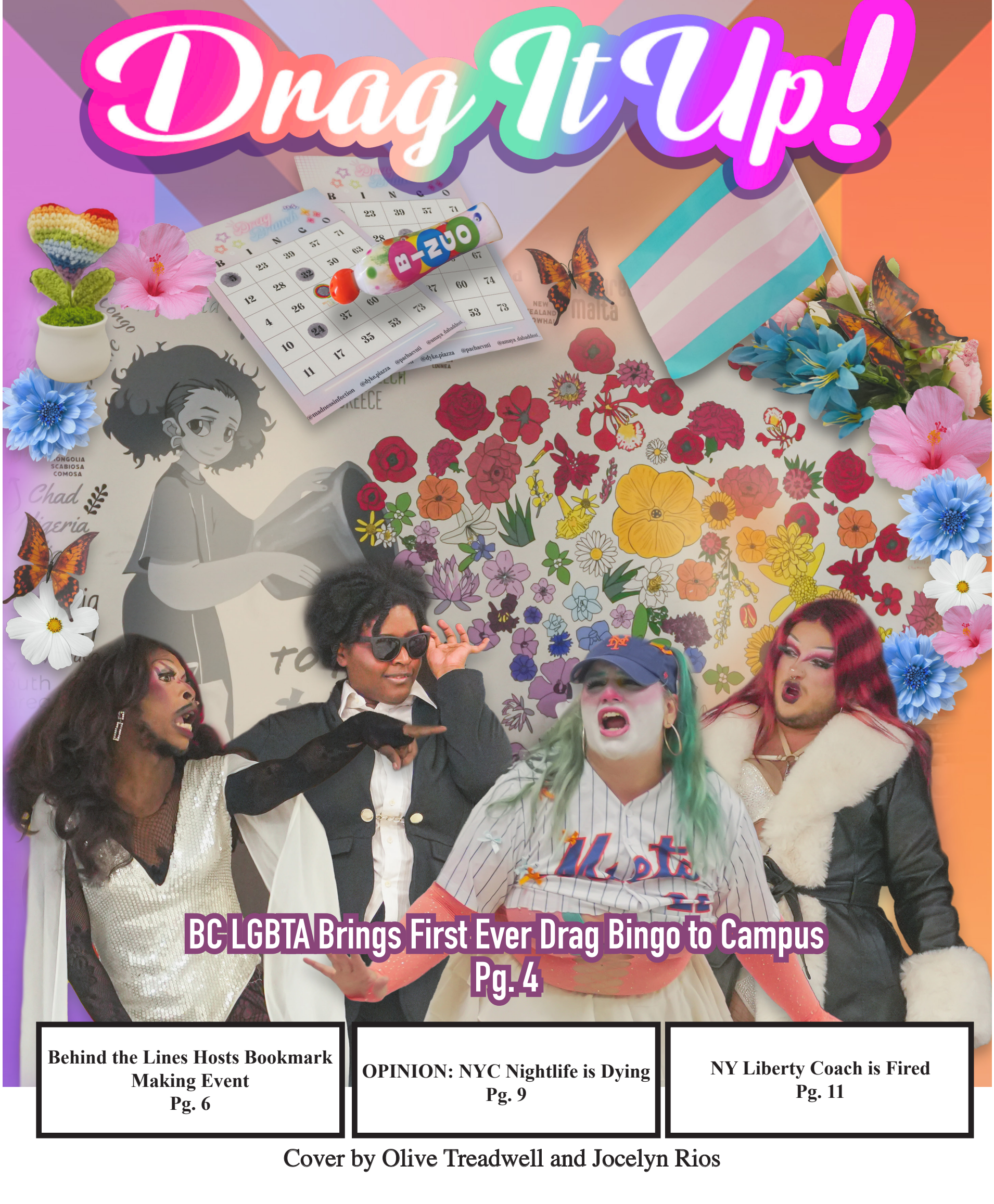
USG Seeking to Impeach President Robert Echevarria
Pg. 2

Wolfe Institute Holds “Sovereignty in Balance” Discussion
Pg. 5

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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Drag It Up!



BC LGBTA Brings First Ever Drag Bingo to Campus
Pg. 4

Behind the Lines Hosts Bookmark Making Event
Pg. 6

OPINION: NYC Nightlife is Dying
Pg. 9

NY Liberty Coach is Fired
Pg. 11

Cover by Olive Treadwell and Jocelyn Rios

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Undergraduate Student Government President Accused of Misconduct

By Emily Nixon
News Editor

In recent weeks, multiple Undergraduate Student Government (USG) senators have alleged that USG President Robert Echevarria committed various acts of misconduct, ranging from making Islamophobic comments to recording USG meetings without consent from senators.

"These allegations and everything are being brought up in a space that's not the appropriate space," said Echevarria. "What's not appropriate is to bring out dirty laundry in a sense at a cabinet meeting. Cabinet meetings, this is where we conduct the business of USG, and we want to keep it productive as much as we can."

Echevarria alleged that a mediated discussion was declined between himself and the senators accusing him of misconduct the weekend before the Oct. 29 meeting, where the allegations were first launched.

"[The accusers and I]'ve never had a mediated discussion," said Echevarria. "There was an offer saying, 'hey, let's do some kind of mediation', and that mediation was declined."

Echevarria recording the meetings was a point of contention for multiple senators.

"I think when it comes to recording and also being in a position of leadership and power, there needs to be a level of sensitivity and boundaries in order to create an environment where students feel comfortable," said Mahnoor Ahmed, the student advocate at USG. "At the very least, students and representatives should be informed they are being recorded, if not, it makes it seem as if the recording may be some type of weapon to use against them, which creates a hostile environment that leads students to be wary of their president."

While New York's open meetings law allows any party to make recordings of public portions of public body gatherings, four members of USG drafted an executive resolution to prohibit recordings without the full informed consent of USG members present at the meetings.

"My concern is not about the legality of recording. It is simply about being informed," said Katherine Hepburn, USG Treasurer, in a statement to The Vanguard. "I believe that when individuals are participating in a Cabinet meeting, they should be made aware if the meeting is being recorded. To me, this is a matter of basic transparency, professional courtesy, and mutual respect."

The resolution was sent by Chief of Staff Deborah Bernfeld, Press Director Amnerys Taveras, Treasurer Katherine Hepburn, and Student Advocate Mahnoor Ahmed. The allegations against Echevarria have primarily been shared through these students as well, according to official meeting minutes posted on the USG website.

In minutes published from the Oct. 29 USG meeting, Bernfeld alleged that Echevarria's communications to USG senators were lengthy and often ill-timed.



Headshot of USG President Robert Echevarria./
Courtesy of Brooklyn College Student Government Website

"Mr. Echevarria shares an excess amount of information with his cabinet regardless of relevance on a daily basis," said Taveras in a statement to The Vanguard. "Therefore, I personally believed that Mr. Echevarria should've shared the fact that he would be recording, not because he was legally obligated to, but because I believed that he had respect for me as a cabinet member."

The delay between the incidents and the accusations was a point of suspicion for Echevarria.

"I've spoken to them over the summer, and I had those long messages, and this was going back before we got into office in July," recounted Echevarria. "Nobody ever shared that they felt the way that they felt [...] they only started sharing this in October."

In the Oct. 29 meeting minutes, Hepburn and Bernfeld alleged Echevarria made an anti-Semitic remark. Anti-Semitic means "a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews," according to the U.S. Department of State. The remark, as stated in the minutes, was, "This food was promised to [the Jewish people] 3,000 years ago."

"Antisemitic remarks should not be dismissed as harmless jokes simply because they are delivered casually or in a joking manner," said Hepburn. "I believe the President should be held accountable for the example he sets through his words and actions."

Echevarria refuted this allegation in an interview with The Vanguard, claiming that he did not say "3,000 years ago."

"I never acknowledged food, even in that meeting," said Echevarria. "The statement was that 300 sodas were not promised to them." For transparency, the club mentioned in this incident is a Judaic cultural club.

In screenshots of messages provided to The Vanguard, Echevarria can be seen addressing this incident.

"Also, 100 cans of each of these 3 different beverages?" state the messages. "So, 300 cans in total? That's a crazy ask."

In the same text thread, Echevarria states, "300 cans of soda were not promised to [a BC club president]."

Ahmed alleged multiple incidents revealed a pattern of Islamophobia and racism exhibited by Echevarria.

"In regard to the comments he made about the [Muslim Student Association (MSA)] brothers being sexist, he had admitted that this was speculation, which to me shows he has a bias against Muslim men, as he again repeated similar comments about the GSO president who is also Muslim," said Ahmed.

In screenshots of messages provided to The Vanguard, Echevarria is seen addressing an incident that occurred between Graduate Student Organization President Adil Hussain and USG members.

Hepburn can be seen telling Echevarria that Hussain "made a weird look when [Hepburn] mentioned that [Hepburn works] with [Echevarria]."

In these messages, Echevarria can be seen stating, "[Hussain] doesn't like women in leadership roles," to which Hepburn replied, "makes sense."

Echevarria refuted the allegation in an interview with The Vanguard.

"These observations were based on different pieces of information, and there was never a hasty generalization made, saying that, 'oh, all men or all of the people of this religion-' that never occurred," said Echevarria.

In the Oct. 29 minutes, Echevarria claimed that the interpersonal relationship between Ahmed and him provided enough comfort to share these speculations about character.

"I trusted them. I've known Katherine for three years, and I've known Mahnoor for a whole year," Echevarria told The Vanguard. "With that trust that I had in them, that was why I was comfortable in the cabinet meeting to say, 'okay, if this is how we want to do it, that's perfectly fine.'"

Ahmed rejected this notion in a statement to The Vanguard.

"I did not believe we had grown a personal relationship as all our conversations and experiences together surrounded USG," said Ahmed. "Furthermore, no friend or individual has ever made these comments to me, no matter how close we were to each other, so in my opinion, this is not a justification for these comments and actually sheds light on Mr. Echevarria's true thoughts when he feels comfortable enough with someone."

Taveras alleged in the Oct. 29 minutes that Echevarria "code-switched" when speaking with them.

Code-switching is when someone adjusts their identity to blend in and conform to a larger group. Most often, this is done to draw attention away from an individual's race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation, among other factors, according to Cleveland Clinic.

"Mr. Echevarria and I commonly spoke on only USG-related matters," said Taveras. "In some of Mr. Echevarria's responses he would, in a way, either begin to speak in a way that resembles my accent or use words that I didn't normally hear him use with other cabinet members, words such as "finna" and "gang" [...] micro-aggressions like these is what allows for bigger things to stem in the future."

Echevarria refuted this claim in an interview with The Vanguard.

"I've never code-switched with her," said Echevarria. "I said [to Amnerys], 'And if it has ever occurred and you felt that way, it never occurred intentionally, but I always make sure that I'm always coming off as myself.'"

Other Senators such as Andy Ramos Herrera question the validity of the allegations against Echevarria.

"I believe that most of their approach at this whole matter is to steamroll and to lead with emotions and to bark, bark. Bark," said Ramos Herrera. "But there is no substance to said bark. There is no bone to bite on [...] I don't really see much substantial evidence."

This is a developing story. The Vanguard will continue to report as new information emerges.



Brooklyn College Undergraduate Student Government Logo./***Courtesy of @bcstudentgov via Instagram***

"Log kya kahenge?": Inaugural Pakistani-American Artists' Convention Held in Brooklyn

By Ameena Khan
Content Creator

Pakistani music boomed across speakers at Rollin Studios in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, as attendees drank chai and mingled with other creatives at the inaugural Pakistani-American Artists' Convention (PAAC) 2026 held on Nov. 14.

Presented by the American Pakistani Public Affairs Committee (APPAC), PAAC held its first-ever, one-of-a-kind convention and platform for Pakistani creatives to present their work, share their creative journeys, make connections, and to foster a community within a culture where pursuing creative passions is commonly looked down upon.

"Log kya kahenge?" is an Urdu phrase that translates to "What will the people think?" Pakistani artists across the diaspora are all too familiar with the rhetorical question.

The phrase "Log kya kahenge" is commonly directed at artists in the Pakistani diaspora, asking what others would think if one chose an unconventional, creative path within the constraints and judgments of a traditional culture.

PAAC's team included Filmmaker, Organizer, and Director Ali Malik; Creative Strategist and Head of Marketing Zak Zaidi; Event Coordinator Neha Zuberi; Panel Coordinator Aneesa Khan; Art Curator Hassan Khan; and Zayn Ahmed.

"The convention is open to anyone interested in Pakistani and Pakistani-American art, culture, film, music, entrepreneurship, and creative communities," according to the PAAC website.

Curated by Hassan Khan, the convention began with an art gallery exhibition open throughout the event, featuring the artwork of various Pakistani artists across the diaspora, as well as a mixer.

Artists featured in the exhibition include Siara Abid, Javiera Ahmed, Aleena Ahmed Asi, Aneela Choudhary, Seema Shakti Choudhary, Hera Jhaveri, Hassan Khan, Javaid Nayyar, Laila Pathan, Simal Sami, Adam Waheed, Fatima Zaidi, and Shamya Zindani.

"This show does not try to define what Pakistani American art looks like," Khan said in his overview of the gallery. "It makes room for the many ways it can exist."

"Fourteen Pakistani-American artists fill the space with paint, photography, digital illustration, clay, fabric, and mirror," Khan stated. "Connected by cultural histories, each artist brings a different practice to life, shaped by their own experiences. PAAC may be just one day, but the connections made here will outlast it."

When asked about how he got involved with PAAC, Khan told The Vanguard how a friend connected him with the director. Initially, Malik and Zaidi, two filmmakers, had focused on the film aspect of the convention, until Malik proposed a fine arts component of the convention and the addition of an art curator, a role which would be given to Khan.

"The hurdle of learning how to share your art is very challenging," Khan expressed to The Vanguard. "Especially when you're from a Pakistani family, especially when you are told to be a doctor, especially when you're like, 'Ugh, I'm making stuff and it's supposed to represent who I am!' I don't want people to walk in and be like, 'This is what Pakistani-American art looks like.' I wanted people to walk in and be like, 'This is so insane.'"

Khan referenced their own piece as part of the exhibition, titled "Nani, log kya kahenge?" (Grandma, what will people say?), an unfinished oil-on-canvas piece depicting Khan's grandma wearing traditional Pakistani clothes known as shalwar kameez, with the New York City subway map as part of her outfit.

"It's actually unfinished, because Nani always wore gold, and she always had henna. And what the people are saying is that it really reminds them of their grandma, that this reminds them of their cultural lineage of coming to New York," said Khan.

"I didn't know these things were coming through. I just felt like this is something that needed to exist. And it was one of the first pieces, I think, in a long time that I made that really feels like I was discovering something about myself and the work."



Art gallery exhibition curated by Hassan Khan, featuring the artwork of select Pakistani artists./ ***Ameena Khan***

The convention featured four panels: "Build Your Own World" featuring Jahanzeb Khwaja, Saks Afridi, and Usman Riaz, "Conquering the Machine" featuring Taurees Habib and Alisha Zafar, "Making Your Own Noise" featuring Shahjehan Khan, Natasha Noorani, and Misha Japanwala, and finally, "Finding the Frame," featuring Saleem Nasir Gondal and Aidha Amin Ammad Shaikh.

As a panelist for "Build Your Own World," Mano Animation Studios Founder Usman Riaz spoke on his decade-long experience directing Pakistan's first hand-drawn 2D animated film "The Glassworker."

Riaz said the idea for "The Glassworker" emerged from "a sense of dread growing up" in Karachi, Pakistan, due to conflict and war in neighboring countries following 9/11 and the War on Terror.

"I would draw all the time and play music all the time," Riaz expressed to the audience, as an animator and composer.

"But I was always questioning, 'Why am I doing this when the world is falling apart?' I would say, ["The Glassworker"] came from that feeling, that feeling of being surrounded by conflict and being a creative person and really undervaluing it for yourself because you're seeing all these things happen around you, and you're saying, 'Well, how will this help anything?'"

Yet, Riaz shared a message from Mariam Riaz Paracha, the co-founder of Mano Animation Studios and his wife: "To be an artist, one must create because without art and music, what do we have in this world full of conflict and war," which is also a line included in "The Glassworker," highlighting its themes of anti-war and focusing on the suffering humans must endure as a consequence.

The convention also screened three short films: "Post Term," "Rumi," and "Just Friends."

Towards the conclusion of the convention, the closing act featured a live performance by Natasha Noorani, a Pakistani musician and singer from Lahore who archives 20th-century Pakistani music in her archival project, Peshkash, and is the festival director of Lahore Music Meets.

Many attendees expressed satisfaction with how the convention surpassed their expectations, and they look forward to future conventions.

"I wanted to attend and see talented Pakistani artists because I feel like we're super unrepresented in the media, and I told my friend so we decided to come," Hajra Muzammal, a graduate student at Baruch College studying statistics, told The Vanguard.

"My favorite panel was getting to see Alisha Zafar. [...] Her talking about how, because she's half Pakistani and also half Irish, how difficult it was getting support from our Irish side was pretty interesting because I thought it would just be Pakistani, but just going into the entertainment industry is difficult for everyone."

"Being a Pakistani creative, it's very reassuring to see that people have had, if not the same journey or even similar journeys, you know what they've been through and how they've endured," said Fatima Izzat, a wedding photographer who expressed her appreciation of panelists sharing their creative journeys and struggles that resonated with her.

"I wish people knew that Pakistani American art really transcends the game," said Sania Ilyas, a chemist, who emphasized the importance of Pakistani artists having spaces to share their work and connect with other creatives.

"

People don't give enough credit for how much South Asian culture, especially Pakistani culture, occupies other creative and artistic spaces in the most [unexpected] ways ever."

For more information about "Pakistani-American Artists' Convention," featured artists, panelists, and upcoming events, you can visit https://paacnyc.org/



Natasha Noorani, a Pakistani musician, closes PAACNYC '26 with a live band performance./***Ameena Khan***

“We Need Some Drag!”: LGBTA Hosts First Ever Drag Bingo



Brooklyn College LGBTA president Ahmed Fall delivering opening remarks during Thursday’s event./ ***Courtesy of Olive Treadwell***

By Renae Visico
Features Editor

The pouring rain and gloomy weather didn’t stop Brooklyn College (BC) students from having fun playing bingo. On Nov. 12, the BC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Alliance (LGBTA) hosted BC’s first-ever Drag Bingo at the SUBO Basement in the Student Center. This year’s Drag Bingo was organized in preparation for Transgender Awareness Week.

Occurring annually from Nov. 13-19, Transgender Awareness Week is observed to increase awareness of the transgender community’s contributions to society and the prejudice they face in heteronormative societies.

The week leads up to Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov. 20, which was created in 1999 by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith to honor transgender lives lost to violence after transgender woman Rita Hester was murdered in her home.

“We decided to open up [Transgender Awareness Week] with this bingo because we wanted to have a fun event, and I think drag is one of those things that really tests gender norms and plays around with gender expression,” LGBTA President Ahmed Fall told The Vanguard. “We wanted to do something that’s a little bit more upbeat and fun to get people engaged.”

The Drag Bingo was hosted by LGBTA Secretary Andy Ramos Herrera, who engaged BC students with jokes and audience interaction.

“How do we go bigger? How do we go grander? What do we need at this time when it’s raining outside?” Herrera asked the audience. “We need some drag!”

The four drag queens who performed at BC were all local to New York City (NYC), and they especially had a strong connection to Brooklyn. Coach, a BC student and drag performer, gathered the drag queens to perform at the bingo.

“[These drag queens] are some of the best, most talented people I have ever worked with. They’re truly stars in the way that they are so confident and assured in their performing styles,” Coach told The Vanguard. “It’s really inspiring to me. So if I’m going to show Brooklyn College, they better see the best.”

Pacha, a Jewish-Peruvian drag queen, set the mood for the Drag Bingo by opening with a dramatic choreography to RAYE’s hit “WHERE IS MY HUSBAND?” mixed with Wendy Williams’s viral “Your husband is gay!” clip.

Next to take the stage was Amaya Dabaddest, a born-and-raised Brooklynite who pulled the audience in with a simple yet comedic routine before building up to some more intricate choreography.

“I always try to make everybody laugh because I feel like that is needed right now. We all need to laugh,” Amaya told The Vanguard. “We all need to come join together and just have a good laugh, because the world is crumbling.”

Amaya wanted BC students to feel safe watching her performance, and she hoped she inspired them to feel more comfortable with expressing themselves.

“I hope [BC students] feel a sense of belonging, because I feel like the world puts us into these specific categories,” Amaya added. “When I found drag, I found that community and family that kept encouraging me to do what I was doing.”

This sentiment was shared by the other drag performers, including drag king Noir Malady. Noir, who is also a BC student, performed to a mix of Los Del Rio’s dance hit “Macarena” and Mother Mother’s “Problems.”

“I heard the mix, and I was like, ‘This is Noir.’ I define Noir as being an infection of sorts,” said Noir Malady. “He’s everywhere. You can’t escape him. And with ‘Macarena,’ everyone knows how to do the Macarena.”

Noir also emphasized the importance of representation in LGBTQIA+ and drag communities, as drag shows aim to be a safe space where queer people can see and express themselves.

“I also thought it was really important for shows like this not only to showcase queens of color and different sizes, but also showcasing drag kings because drag kings do not get booked as often as their queen counterparts,” Noir told The Vanguard. “Especially if you are black or disabled, you have to fight twice as hard for the recognition.”

Between the drag performances, students were treated to brunch and given the chance to play bingo. Each of the four rounds was hosted by each drag performer alongside Herrera, and prizes included a crocheted Pride flag flower, an otter nightlight, and a bat plushie.

“I think that [the Drag Bingo] was important for the drag community,” said attendee Brandon Rivera. “I think it was really cool that [the transgender community] gets a whole week of remembrance.”

The organizers of this year’s Drag Bingo aimed to create a space where students could express themselves freely, knowing there are communities on campus willing to accept them.

“I don’t want [my performance] to be a one-note thing,” said Noir. “I hope that one person in the crowd who was scared or unsure of themselves was seeing me and thought to themselves, ‘If they can do it, I can, too.’”

“I hope that one person in the crowd who was scared or unsure of themselves was seeing me and thought to themselves, ‘If they can do it, I can, too.’”

For more information on the LGBTA, visit @brooklyn.lgbta on Instagram.



(L to R): Noir Malady, Amaya DaBaddest , and Coach./***Collage by Olive Treadwell***

“Sound Familiar, Puerto Rico?”: The Wolfe Institute Hosts Talk of the Caribbean in These Times



L to R: Professors Aleah Ranjitsingh, Gabriel Hetland, Hyacinth Miller, Jean Eddy Saint Paul, and Alan Aja./***Courtesy of Gaston Alonso***

By Michelle Zhen
Staff Writer

On Nov. 12, in the Jefferson-Williams Room of Brooklyn College (BC)’s Student Center, three BC professors sat alongside two professors based outside New York City: Hyacinth Miller and Gabriel Hetland. These five panelists spoke about their dedication to the Caribbean, its people, and its politics.

“Sovereignty in the Balance: The Caribbean in These Times” reflected the severity of the United States (U.S.)’s foreign policy and its effects on the Caribbean and Latin America. This speaking event is the third of the six-part “Series on The Global Caribbean: Deep Waters, Strong Roots” and the final part of the series for the Fall 2026 semester.

The series is hosted by the Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute in collaboration with the program in Caribbean Studies, and is co-sponsored by Black Faculty and Staff, the Departments of Political Science, Puerto Rican and Latinx Studies (PRLS), and Sociology at Brooklyn College.

“A lot of our students are Caribbean people, or first or second-generation Caribbean immigrants, so the Caribbean is right here with us,” Aleah Ranjitsingh, an assistant professor in the Africana Studies Department and Caribbean Studies Program who helped organize the event series, explained. “The series seeks to publicize the Caribbean Studies program [and] our classes and let people know that […] with Caribbean studies, even minoring or majoring in it, you can get into any number of fields. The Caribbean is right here. The diaspora is right here.”

Ranjitsingh began the event by holding a moment of silence in recognition of the deadly building collapse on Flatbush Ave the day prior. She noted that, of the entire event series, this event’s topic was the very first they wanted to speak on, before presenting a video of Venezuelan political unrest and citing how it has been over 313 days since Nicolás Maduro was captured by the U.S. government. She explained that the U.S. has conducted 41-100 interventions in Latin America, a number that fluctuates depending on how strict or loose one’s definition of “intervention” is.

“I thought [this event would] just focus on the Caribbean, but it also spread to Latin America,” Keanna Benjamin, an administrator of The Wolfe Institute, said. “It was about modern-day things that are happening, […] so it was easy to follow along with, like them talking about the elections in Brazil. I followed that news story.”

Alan A. Aja, chair of PRLS and co-director of the Mellon Transfer Student Research Program at BC, claimed that 56 U.S. military interventions took place in Latin America, many of which enforced the neocolonialism that the U.S. placed upon Latin America, notably Cuba through an embargo. He also emphasized the climate’s importance in politics, as fossil fuels and energy depend heavily on the climate.

Miller, an Assistant Teaching Professor in Rutgers University’s Department of Africana Studies and Political Science at BC, recalled her time in Jamaica, when the country experienced a nationwide power outage. She claimed that the outage coincided with the second New York Knicks game in June, yet the cause was cited as “severe weather and lightning”, to much scrutiny from Jamaicans. Miller looked around the room as she spoke.

“Sound familiar, Puerto Rico?”

Jean Eddy Saint Paul, a Professor of Sociology at BC, focused on Haiti’s historical relationship with the United States. He described the Haitian Revolution and its motto, “liberty or death”, in relation to Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams’s sanctions of Venezuela in Oct. 1804 and U.S. occupation of Haiti between 1915 and 1934.

Hetland, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at SUNY Albany, said, “Latin America has always been a very important region, especially for the U.S., [which has], unfortunately, often treated [Latin America] as a ‘backyard’, and there’s been a reassertion of interest in the U.S. of the U.S. towards Latin America recently. So I think that having events focused on Latin America and the Caribbean is very important, and so I’m always more than happy to speak at such events.”

Hetland reiterated Aja’s point on climate change and Ranjitsingh’s mention of the ongoing Venezuelan conflict. He showed a photo from the New York Times captioned “Rubio is effectively running Venezuela now” as he noted Delcy Rodríguez’s role as acting president and her relationship with the U.S. as the Venezuelan public grows disillusioned by the force that the U.S.’s current administration exerts on the country for oil companies’ sake.

“The Caribbean, for the past several years, has been under a lot of [stress] as dictated by this current administration,” Miller told the Vanguard. “For example, they are all agreeing to host migrants removed from the U.S. [in] temporary sites before the migrants are sent elsewhere, [but] this is not something that they would normally be comfortable doing.”

The event concluded with final words from all five speakers regarding the future of the Caribbean and the U.S., noting the effects the recent “Blue Wave” may have on foreign policy. In response to a question from the audience, Miller also noted that people from the U.S. exert a lot of control over Caribbean sovereignty, even over Caribbean citizens.

“The [Caribbean] is resilient,” Miller said.

“There are a lot of people that [. . .] continue to work toward peace, and justice, and sovereignty, and as Black Americans say, ‘trouble don’t last always’, and so many people are working toaward a time where they can realize the goal of a sovereign nation.”

For more information on the Wolfe Institute, visit @bc_wolfeinstiute on Instagram or their website: https://www.brooklyn.edu/wolfe/

Reading For Pleasure, Not School: Behind The Lines Hosts Bookmark-Making Event

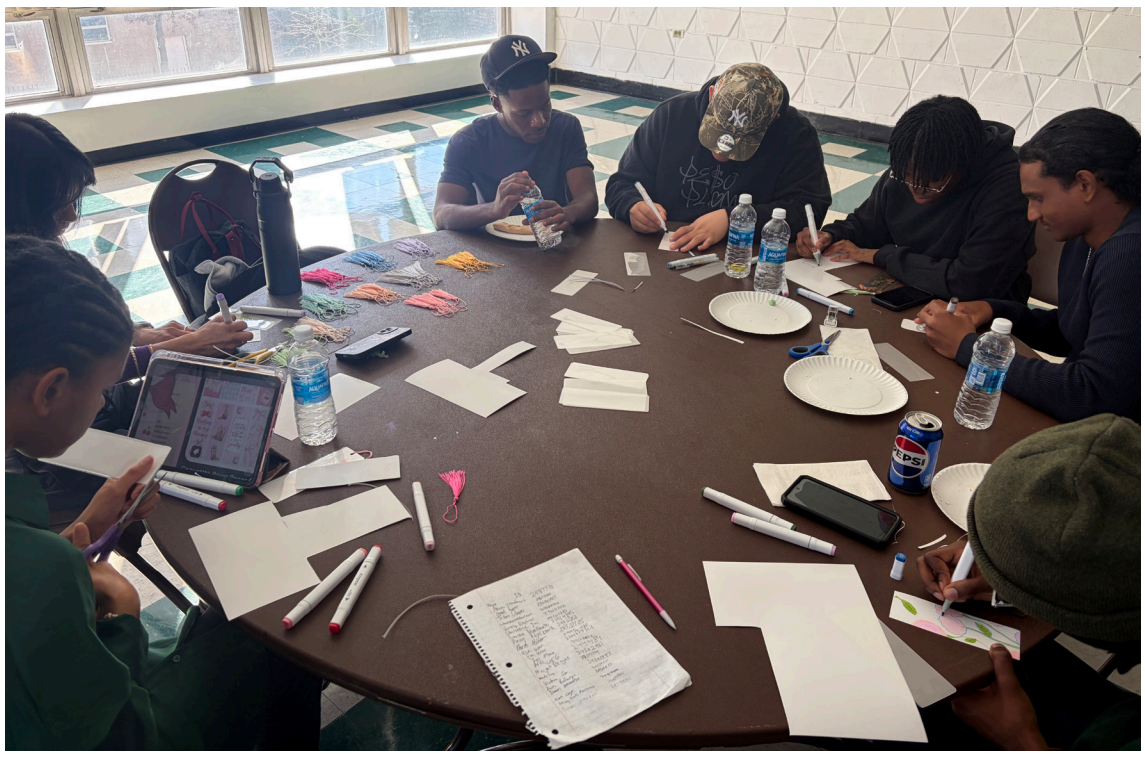
By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

A new Brooklyn College (BC) club, Behind the Lines, turned the page on its first chapter with a bookmark-making event in the Student Center's Glenwood Room on Nov. 10. The club encouraged BC students to create bookmarks for literature beyond their required class textbooks.

Behind the Lines is a literary-focused club that "aims to foster community, open dialogue, and shared learning through thoughtful discussion, cultural exploration, and personal reflection," according to their club constitution.

"Our mission is to create an inclusive and welcoming space where students come together to read and discuss diverse forms of literature—including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and memoirs—in a supportive, student-centered environment," according to the club's mission statement on Bulldog Connection.

Students were provided with plain white sheets of paper and could cut out rectangles to create bookmarks. The club supplied markers, dried flowers, and leaves that guests could use to customize their bookmarks.



A group of students decorating bookmarks during the event./***Margot Dragos***

Attendees ate pizza and chatted as hits from Olivia Dean and Bruno Mars played in the background.

Sasha Vakhrushev, BC junior and president of Behind the Lines, says she inherited the club from a friend and is trying to make her "idea into reality."

"The entire point of our club is to create a space for people that like to read [and] like to talk to other people about their current hyperfixations, or just get more people into reading as a hobby outside of their academic field," Vakhrushev told The Vanguard.



Four bookmarks decorated by Umeiko McFarlane./***Margot Dragos***

BC Sophomore Umeiko McFarlane said she believed the event would be "a great way to spend some time being creative, because I'm not the most creative person."

"I'm a reader, but sometimes, like when school gets started, I focus on academic reading less on my own reading," McFarlane told The Vanguard. "So I figured if I made a cute little bookmark, it would motivate me to read on my own."

Vakhrushev says her club wanted to host a bookmark-making event "to pretty much try getting people to come and socialize with other people that might like to read."

While many attendees chatted among themselves as they created colorful bookmarks, McFarlane enjoyed being able to spend some time alone.

"I can put on my headphones, I can eat, and I can just be creative," McFarlane said. "And there's not a limit to how many bookmarks I can make [...] I like that [making bookmarks can be] a creative outlet."

Emily Espinal, a BC junior and psychology major, said she loves reading and thought the event would be fun to attend.

"I normally read e-books, but recently I've gotten physical copies from free libraries outside of houses [the Little Free Library program]," Espinal told The Vanguard. "I have [a Little Free Library] near my house and got a few physical copies [from there], and I was like, well, I would want a bookmark for them, and thought it would be fun [to attend the event]."

Behind The Lines hopes to create a community for BC readers to bond over a love of reading outside of the classroom. Vakhrushev knows how important libraries are for fostering connections among NYC residents and wants to create a similar opportunity for students at BC.

"You can do a lot of free activities [through your local library], and it's like a way to get to know your community," Vakhrushev said. "I would hate for the world to lose that. And so our [club's] job is to just try getting more people to read outside of school."



Graphic by Jocelyn Rios

For more information about Behind The Lines, visit their Instagram @bcbehindthelines.

"Stitching Together": BC Women's Center Hosts Crochet & Chill Event



Sazia Khan, President of the Women's Center (WC) helping an atendee learn to crochet./***Kaniz Samiha***

By Kaniz Samiha
Staff Writer

The Crochet & Chill event has been a longstanding tradition at the Brooklyn College (BC) Women's Center since it began as a summer initiative in 2022. This event provides students with a welcoming and relaxing space to unwind between classes, get creative, and connect with others through knitting and crocheting.

Originally introduced by former Women's Center club member Luisa Pira, the event was initially created to challenge the perception that crocheting is limited to older generations while also encouraging students to explore the craft as a creative expression. Since then, Crochet & Chill has continued to provide students with an opportunity to learn new skills, connect with others, and take a break from their busy schedules.



Different crochet designs made by attendees./ ***Kaniz Samiha***

The initiative also came at a significant time for students as colleges were starting to adjust to in-person campus life following the COVID-19 pandemic. Creating opportunities for students to socialize and build connections outside the classroom became especially meaningful during this period.

On Nov. 10, this year's gathering continued that tradition, bringing students together yet again.

Whether students were experienced crocheters or complete beginners, everyone was welcome to participate. Women's Center staff members walked around throughout the event, offering guidance and helping attendees learn the basics of crocheting.

Among the attendees were two friends, one with six years of crocheting experience and the other just beginning to explore it.

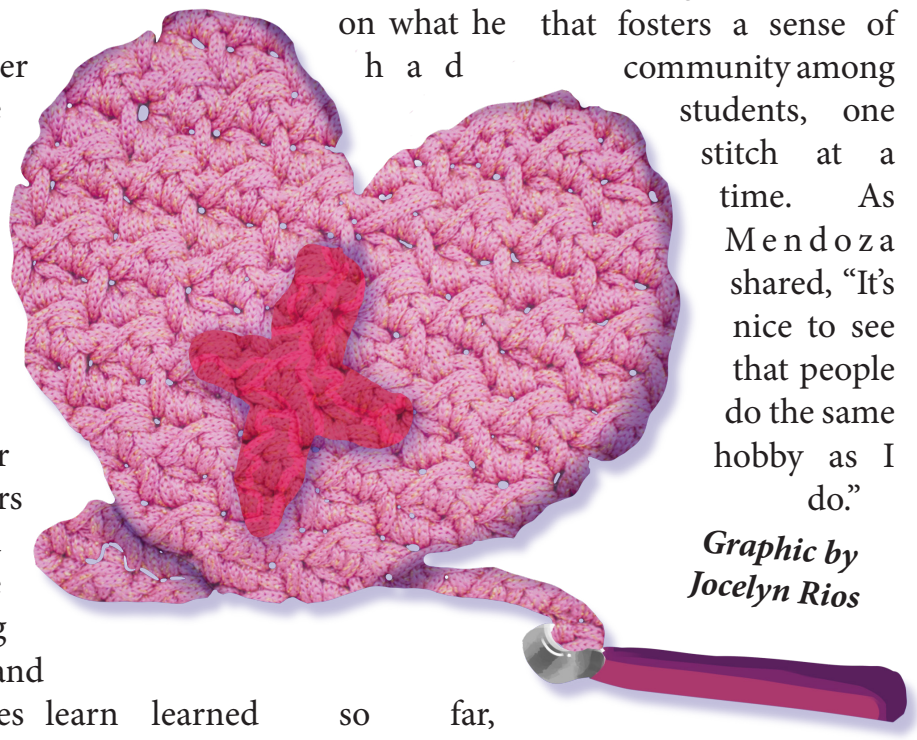
Bonnie Mendoza, a BC student, said she attended the event because she wanted a space where she could connect with others who shared her interest in crocheting.

"I came to this event because I felt like I really wanted to be in an environment where I could relate to other people, especially because I know not many people crochet," Mendoza explained.

Mendoza's experience with crocheting also led her to introduce it to her friend, Miguel Mancanillo, who was attending as a beginner, had never tried it before, and shared his perspective on trying something new.

"I feel like doing new things makes you the person you are," Mancanillo expressed.

Mancanillo shared that his grandmother also crochets, giving him another reason to become interested in crocheting and knit her something. When asked about his experience, he reflected on what he had learned so far, expressing, "I am pretty good at doing those little strings, I learned a bit today, and I hope to learn more."



Graphic by Jocelyn Rios

As the event continues to bring students together year after year, its significance extends beyond the activities themselves. Sazia Khan, president of the Women's Center, shared her perspective on organizing the event and what makes this tradition meaningful. Khan shared that "I was a little worried because we got approval for the event last Thursday. I don't know if anyone's gonna see the flyer, but the turnout was good. A lot of people came by."

As a tradition that has continued for many years, Crochet & Chill highlights the importance of creating spaces where students can connect beyond the classroom.

Whether they were experienced in crocheting or trying it for the first time, attendees had the opportunity to learn, socialize, and enjoy a creative break from their busy schedules. Through events like this, the Women's Center continues to provide a welcoming environment that fosters a sense of community among students, one stitch at a time. As Mendoza shared, "It's nice to see that people do the same hobby as I do."

For more information about the Women's Center and upcoming events at Brooklyn College, visit their Instagram: The Women's Center | Brooklyn College (@womenscenterbc) • Instagram photos and videos

Midterms Put An End To "Vibe Shift" Myth



Graphic by Samuel Mortel

By Samuel Mortel
Opinions Editor

After President Donald Trump won his bid for reelection in 2024, political journalists, analysts, and experts rushed to unpack exactly what happened. When the smoke started to clear, and statistics came to light, a certain narrative materialized: a "vibe shift."

For starters, Trump dominated his Democrat challenger Kamala Harris in not only the Electoral College, but in the popular vote. This was the first sign that something had shifted in this election, since a Republican presidential candidate hadn't won the popular vote since George W. Bush in 2004—even when Trump beat Hillary Clinton in 2016, he did so without winning over the majority of Americans.

The data from this election painted a concerning picture; large swaths of the country seemed to be shifting toward the Republican Party. In comparison to the 2020 presidential election, basically every demographic in terms of age, race, gender, and education level saw a swing, with some of the biggest gains being amongst Hispanic voters and voters aged 18-29, both moving towards Trump by percentage points in the double digits.

To many, these shifts marked the beginning of a societal switch towards conservatism. The American people had spoken, and it was time to act accordingly. That was definitely the attitude of the Trump administration, which was very open about interpreting the election results as a "mandate," and for the next two years, we saw the results of this mindset in full effect. The confidence displayed by Trump in his second term was due at least in part to this perceived mandate, acting under the impression that voters had given him carte blanche to do things like deploy ICE to terrorize cities, launch a sweep of costly tariffs, and start a war with Iran.

Numerous CEOs also saw the election results as a sign to desperately get on Trump's good side, with figures like Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk attending his presidential inauguration. Other CEOs rushed to align their companies with Trump's agenda, like Target announcing an end to its DEI goals and programs, and Paramount's decision to appoint The Free Press founder Bari Weiss as CBS' Editor-in-Chief—a move NPR called a step "in shaping the network's editorial direction, at a time when it is looking to expand its appeal among right-leaning viewers."

Countless think pieces were written speculating what this election meant about the future of American society and where our culture would be going in the long term, with an infamous article from New York Magazine titled "The Cruel Kid's Table" becoming a foundational text in the "vibe shift" narrative.

"But a massive cultural realignment is taking place, and now this set of shitposters is in the same league as an entirely new establishment, which includes not only the tech overlords… but also a growing number of celebrities…(Meanwhile, all the progressive institutions—Hollywood, college campuses, the mainstream media — feel like they're collapsing simultaneously.) 'We were the underdogs for so long. Now every last foe is a friend,' [Arynne] Wexler tells me. 'Trump winning is the first step of the real work we have to do. It'll culturally trickle down.'"

The concept of a cultural, societal turning of the tide became a media fascination. Articles were being written in The Los Angeles Times, Vox and The Financial Times directly addressing the "vibe shift" discourse. Journalists were citing conservative moves in industries like beauty, tech, and entertainment. For a few months, it seemed like we were witnessing the beginning of a new world. However, it didn't take long for this new world to unravel.

Just a year into his second term, President Trump's approval rating had already plummeted to 36% according to a Gallup poll from Nov. 28, 2025. The president had been failing in several areas where he promised he'd deliver. He pitched himself as capable of handling immigration, and his brash, violent deployments of ICE agents that resulted in the deaths of multiple American citizens resulted in just a 37% approval rating for his approach. He constantly criticized inflation under the Biden administration, and then, under Trump's second term, inflation either persisted or worsened due to tariffs, earning him a 36% approval rating on the economy—and this was only the beginning.

After a politically disastrous 2026 for the administration, plagued by an unpopular war with Iran and high gas prices, President Trump received the lowest approval rating of his career at just 30%, according to a Pew Research Center poll from Oct. 8. Heading into the midterms, Trump was the most hated he's ever been, and somehow his message to voters was to pretend his name was on the ballot. Unfortunately for him, it seems like they did.

Every demographic that swung toward the Republican Party in 2024 ended up swinging back to Democrats in the 2026 midterms, especially Gen Z. After Trump clinched his second term, there was a palpable fear that the left had squandered the trust of young voters. In just two years, this demographic went back to voting blue.

This leads to the question: did the vibe shift ever even exist? Well, maybe there was a vibe shift amongst the rich and powerful. As I mentioned earlier, there were multiple examples of CEOs and corporations being quick to bend the knee to Trump in an apparent effort to be at the front of a seemingly turning tide. When Target chose to dismantle DEI, they didn't cite the president, rather crediting an "evolving external landscape."

However, while CEOs and celebrities rushed to switch sides, civilians were more apprehensive. Biden's term as president was unsuccessful in many ways, and many Americans were upset with the economy in particular. Rather than read the room and accept that people were tired of the status quo, the Democratic Party decided to ride with Joe Biden as their nominee for the 2024 presidential election. And then, only when it became unavoidably clear that the aging incumbent was unfit to serve another term, they quickly switched to Vice President Kamala Harris. Harris offered little to potential voters who were desperate for change, especially considering that she was already a part of the deeply unpopular administration. Then came Trump, claiming he was going to shake things up and get the economy back on track. Voters were faced with the choice of either going in the same direction that they knew wasn't working, or taking a risk with Trump.

However, as many expected, the risk of a second Trump term did not pay off, and many of the same voters who took a chance on him in 2024 voiced their regrets at the ballot box in 2026. Because of the disasters that Republicans were inflicting on the federal level, voters chose to challenge the GOP at the state level, resulting in historic victories and surprising upsets benefiting the Democratic Party in historically red states like Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Alaska, and more. The brief turn towards conservatism in 2024 was not a full-on pivot; it was a trial run.

The midterms are a sign the people are having buyer's remorse. At least, if there was ever a vibe shift, the vibes have firmly shifted back.

Is The Party Over?: Lights Out On NYC Nightlife



People riding a motorcycle on a night out./
Courtesy of Arun D. Wikimedia Commons

By Victoria Marte
Content Creator

I have a confession to make: I love the club.

But more importantly, I love New York's nightlife scene. Yet despite my endearment, I don't think this relationship is sustainable given the economics surrounding the scene. A trend of price hikes has swept through the United States, especially in a big city such as New York, impacting all areas of life, including entertainment. With costs such as rent rising, businesses are left to sustain the added expense, which is reflected in the cost for consumers.

Venues often charge an entry fee known as the "cover", which only ensures your entrance. Often the cover ranges between $10 to $50, heavily influenced by factors such as performers' notoriety and the venue's reputation across the nightlife scene. For example, sites such as TAO Downtown and House of Yes have strong reputations among the industry and club patrons alike, resulting in cover charges that sit in the higher bracket of the range. For institutions like these, tickets for special events like Halloween double in price, turning a $30 ticket into $60 before even purchasing drinks.

For those who aren't planning to buy drinks, this price tag may not be a bother, but those who would like a drink must factor in this additional cost that can range anywhere from $15 to $20.

Yet this isn't where the bill ends for many. For communities where no trains are nearby, ordering an Uber home is a necessity. Areas like these have buses meant to fill the gap, but at night they run on a limited, late-night schedule.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has stated the schedule goes into effect daily at 12am until 5am, noting commuters should account for longer wait times ranging from 20 to 60 minutes. The late-night schedule also impacts trains, nearly doubling travel time, so when individuals like me finally make it to the last stop on their way home, it is a concerningly late hour. Thus making the additional $15 to nearly $50 charge for an Uber essential in ensuring a safe end to the festivities.

Even as prices continue to reach new heights, the spirit of the party stays present. As costs for clubs and other event venues continue to climb, so does the ingenuity of party-goers. In recent times, a pregame, a small social gathering prior to the main event, has evolved from a get-ready ritual to a necessity in ensuring a night out that doesn't leave you dreading your bank statement. A pregame can take many forms; whether it be sitting in front of a mirror with a drink mixed with whatever was available or it's at a local dive bar surrounded by new and old faces. Regardless of what shape it takes, the pregame has become a solution and, in turn, further facilitates the community building that comes with the club, but in an intimate setting.

So when going out starts to add to the stressors of life, why would one even want to indulge? When it comes to the club scene, those who choose to bask in the moonlight do so for the community that comes along with it.



Stills of Nightlife./***Courtesy of Helgi Halldórsson via Wikimedia Commons***

Angel Arias, current curator for NYC nightlife, unpacks her experience and thoughts on the fellowship found within the scene.

"Nightlife exists as an act of radical joy, radical honesty, and radical acceptance of everyone as they are," she explains. "The dance floor is a space where we command our freedom and separate our identity from monoculture."

Arias' description of the scene outlines an environment where there are no expectations other than respect, curating a space they deem as "radical acceptance." The principle of acceptance, of being able to come as you are, remains a pinnacle of the club community.

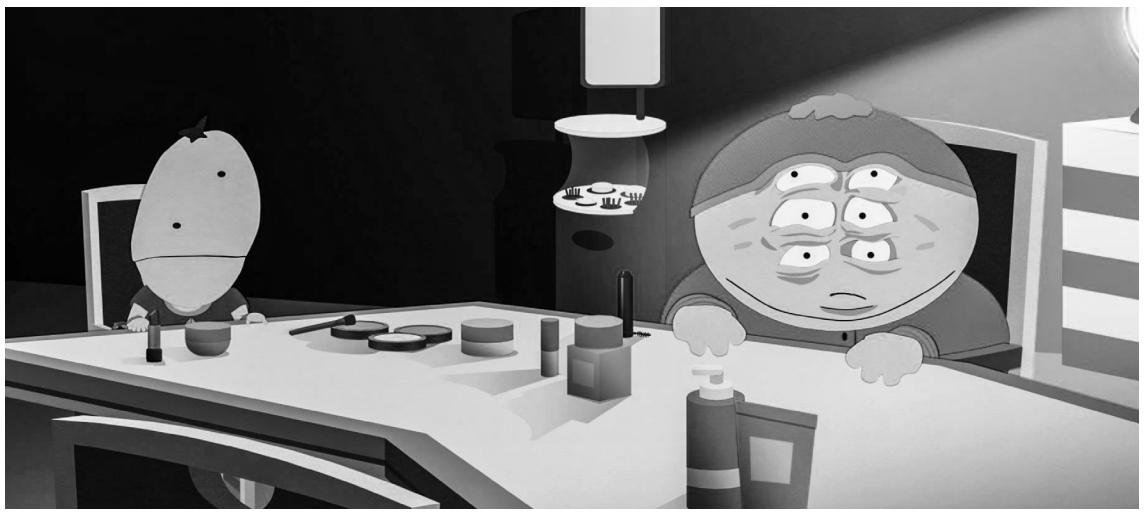
Those who choose to participate in nightlife are not simply paying for a drink or a few hours of music; they are paying for the opportunity to experience a space where they can let go of the expectations that follow them throughout everyday life. The club becomes a place to meet strangers, share a moment, dance without judgment, and create memories that cannot be replicated anywhere else. In a city that can often feel isolating, that sense of community is part of what makes nightlife worth fighting for.

Even though times are changing, the city's nightlife scene will continue to remain steadily afloat. Although economic challenges add strain to the scene, there is no denying the memories are made on a night out. With the everyday chaos of life, sometimes the best remedy is some after-hours activities that allow you to fully live in the moment.

As Angel Aria simply puts it: "Life is supposed to be fun; when isn't a good time to celebrate life?"

Beyond the 'Brain Rot': South Park's Take On the Looksmaxxing Generation

By Jackson Rios
Staff Writer



A still-Image of Ike and Cartman in the "Sephora Backrooms" from Season 29, Episode 3, "You Like That on Your Face."/***Courtesy of South Park's Offical Website***

Nowadays, if you've been around a child for at least five minutes, your ears have likely been subjected to complete nonsense: the plaque of "skibidi," "rizz," or the more recent "67," that the TikTok algorithm had cooked up for the week.

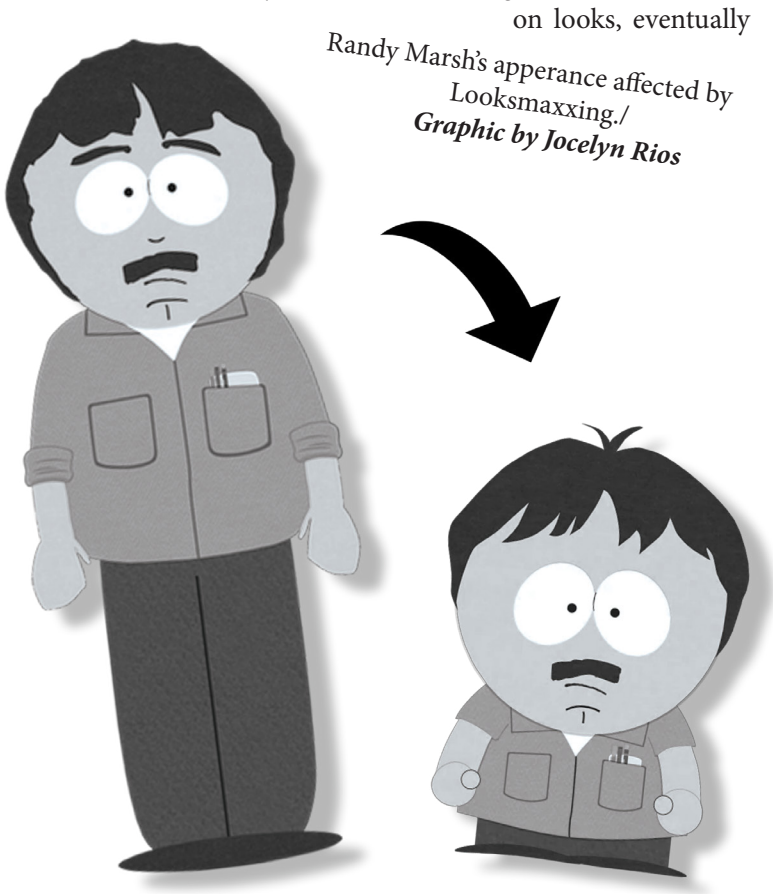
For those of us who didn't grow up with an iPad glued to our hands, keeping up with the ever-changing vocabulary of Generation Alpha feels like learning a completely new language.

Even though it's easy to write off much of this internet culture as "brain rot", understanding it has become increasingly important, especially to engage with the generation while growing alongside it.

Strangely enough, the television show South Park seems to understand this remarkably well.

Created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, South Park is an American adult-animation sitcom on Comedy Central that follows the adventures of four elementary school boys: Stan Marsh, Kyle Broflovski, Eric Cartman, and Kenny McCormick, in their fictional town based in Colorado.

Since premiering in 1997, the series has become infamous for its profanity and dark humor, never shying away from making fun of just about anything.



Randy Marsh's apperance affected by Looksmaxxing./
Graphic by Jocelyn Rios

Season 29, Episode 3, "You Like That on Your Face", which premiered on Oct. 14, 2026, satirizes one of the internet's most controversial topics: looksmaxxing.

Looksmaxxing is the practice of maximizing one's physical attractiveness. It originates from male-dominated online communities dating back to the late 2000s and early 2010s, and has since spread across mainstream social media.

Its vocabulary feels like a language of its own: there's "mewing," which refers to a tongue-positioning technique supposedly used to define the jawline; there's "mogging," which refers to the act of outshining someone in physical appearance; to be a "Chad" means to be the ideal masculine man; and then, of course, there's "aura," which describes a person's perceived coolness or social appeal.

Looksmaxxing can range from ordinary grooming and skincare to often dangerous practices like "bone-smashing": intentionally striking facial features to change their shape.

While there's nothing wrong with taking pride in how you look, the culture often leaves young audiences feeling insecure, treating physical attractiveness as the sole measure of their worth.

The episode follows two connected storylines, both about the pressures to look attractive and maintain a certain level of social status. Kyle's little brother, Ike, becomes obsessed with competing with other students on looks, eventually finding himself up against Chase Chadwick, a parody of American influencer Clavicular.

Meanwhile, Stan discovers Chadmaxx, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) I app that rates users' attractiveness.

What began as a harmless curiosity quickly spirals into an obsession with his appearance.

After the episode aired, fans praised it online, with some calling it one of the show's best episodes in years. One Reddit user particularly appreciated how South Park introduced them to current internet trends without having to engage with them firsthand.

I personally respect that the writers didn't just throw in Gen-Alpha language for cheap laughs, but did the research to understand the culture well enough to make fun of how absurd it is while creating humor that longtime viewers could also enjoy.

As we move into a world where AI becomes more part of our everyday lives, it's unsettling but not difficult to imagine AI being used to encourage people to be critical of their own appearance.

In the episode, Chadmaxx, the AI-powered rating app, evaluates Stan's facial symmetry, rates his attractiveness, and, in other words, turns beauty into a numerical measure, making Stan feel as though there is an objective standard he's failing to meet.

What I found particularly satirical about the inclusion of Chadmaxx is that, rather than simply poking fun at people who want to appear attractive, it exposes how easily insecurity can be turned into a business: the more flaws someone believes they have, the more products they're recommended to buy.

While Chadmaxx is fictional, the pressures behind it are real.

A 2024 study by Common Sense Media, Harvard's Center for Digital Thriving, and Indiana University finds that 51% of American teenagers reported feeling pressure to look their best or present a certain way. Among teenagers who experience appearance-related pressures, 79% said social media made it worse at least some of the time.

Social media is already filled with appearance-related content that encourages users to compare themselves to others, often leaving them feeling as though they need to change something about themselves.

Chadmaxx just takes that to an absurd extreme: users are told exactly what is supposedly wrong with their faces.

The episode then makes one of its best pop culture references through Stan and his girlfriend Wendy's trip to Sephora; what starts as a simple search for skincare products turns into a nightmare when Stan gets lost and eventually finds himself roaming around the store's seemingly endless maze.

What makes this sequence especially funny is that it draws on the internet-famous Backrooms, a horror phenomenon that eventually inspired its own film adaptation, which is then referenced throughout the episode.

But not only is this funny, but the show plays with a reference that many of its fans and non-fans, regardless of age, are likely to recognize.

However, I think there's another reason the joke works so well: there's something universally relatable about shopping with someone who seems to take forever to browse. And like Chadmaxx, South Park takes it to an absurd extreme.

It's a ridiculous comparison, but that's what makes it so funny; even if viewers don't recognize the Backrooms reference, they can still get the humor of being stuck in a store with someone who takes their sweet time.

I also believe that the setting works perfectly alongside the episode's criticism of beauty culture.

But what makes the episode absolutely comical comes from the storyline of Stan's father, Randy.

As a father, Randy is initially quick to criticize Stan's interest in Chadmaxx, arguing that looking good should come from exercise and a good diet rather than letting an app decide your attractiveness. Yet, Randy proves to be just as vulnerable to the pressures of appearance when he becomes drawn to Sephora's anti-aging products. If anything, his storylines make the episode's commentary more relatable to its older audience.

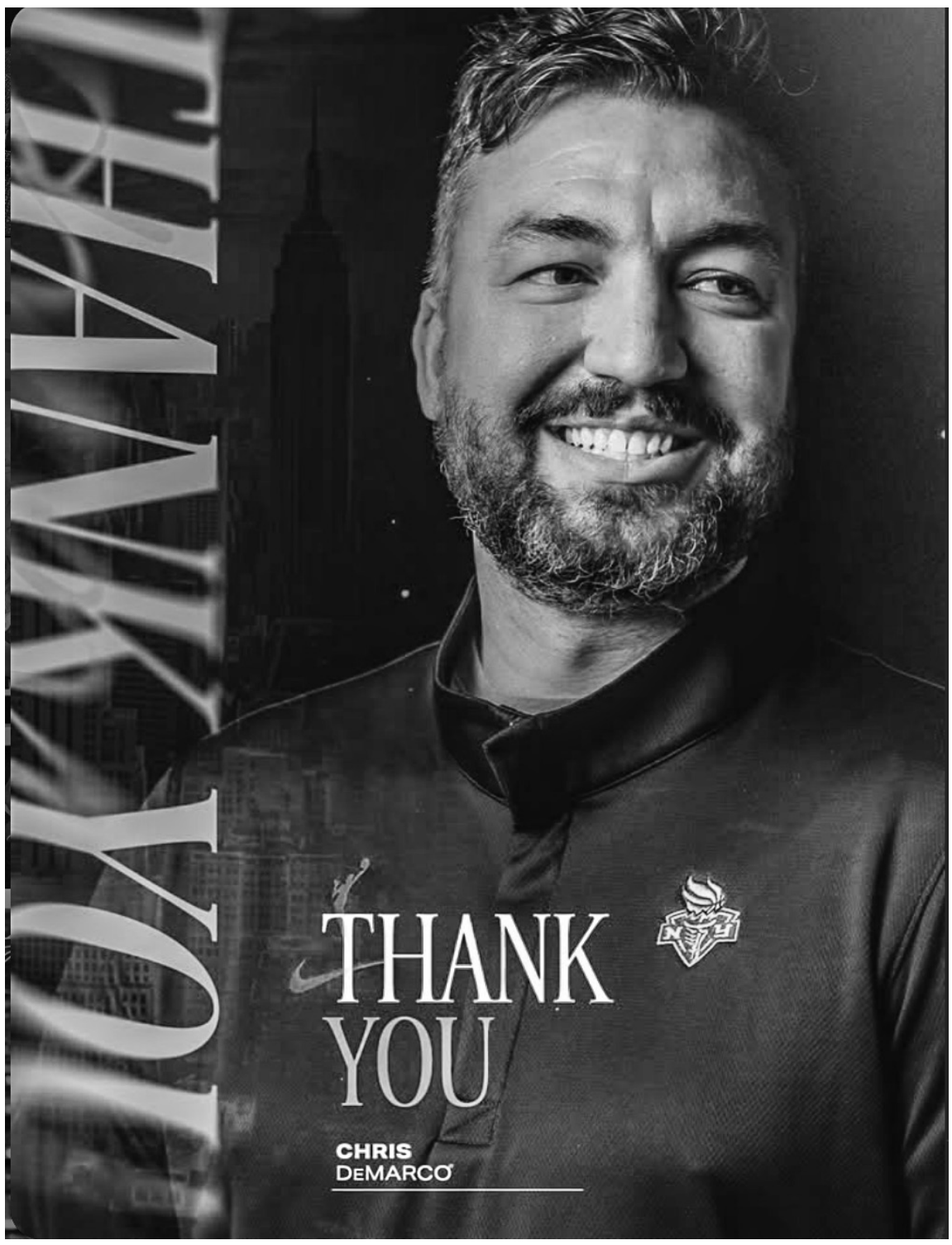
It's a joy to say that viewers don't need to understand every piece of internet slang to enjoy it. Younger viewers may recognize the trends and references, while older audiences can still laugh at the children competing over jawlines or the show continuing to satirize our political climate.

But beyond the comedy, I believe the episode offers something important: it highlights a concerning issue young people face today. When social media constantly encourages people to compare their appearance, and even AI can rate it, it's easy to see how these trends can affect someone's self-image.

South Park makes an otherwise uncomfortable topic easier to identify and talk about by transforming these pressures into comedy.

Time To Go: Why Chris DeMarco's Departure Is Beneficial For The Liberty

By Reagan McLean
Staff Writer



Chris DeMarco's "Thank you" post./***Courtesy of @nyliberty via Instagram***

On Tuesday, Nov. 3, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) team, the New York (NY) Liberty, posted a note of gratitude to former head coach Chris DeMarco on Instagram.

With DeMarco's departure, the Liberty is searching for its third head coach within a span of three consecutive seasons.

Based on the Liberty's performance with DeMarco as their head coach this past season, General Manager (GM) Johnathan Kolb's decision to let DeMarco go is beneficial for the team in the long run.

DeMarco's predecessor, Sandy Brondello coached the Liberty from Jan. 2022 to Sept. 2025. Brondello helped the Liberty win their first-ever Commissioner's Cup championship in 2023 and the franchise's first-ever WNBA championship during the 2024 season.

On Sept. 23, 2025, the Liberty announced that Brondello's contract would not be renewed for the 2026 WNBA season; however, on Dec. 3, 2025, the Liberty announced DeMarco would take over as head coach. When Kolb hired DeMarco as head coach, he spoke about the hiring process and why DeMarco was the best fit.

"Throughout the process, our goal was clear: identify a leader who could elevate our culture, implement elite-level systems, and bring a modern vision to the court. Chris is a proven winner whose approach has been shaped by more than a decade inside one of basketball's most successful dynasties." Kolb mentioned.

Before DeMarco was hired as a head coach for the Liberty, DeMarco was a development coach in 2012 and an assistant coach from 2015 to 2025 for the National Basketball Association (NBA) franchise, the Golden State Warriors. However, DeMarco lacked one thing: experience coaching women's basketball.

When fans learned DeMarco was taking over as head coach, the Liberty fanbase had mixed emotions. Some fans welcomed DeMarco and couldn't wait for the 2026 WNBA season to begin; however, others were upset since the Liberty didn't hire a female coach of color.

The Liberty's season was off to a great start. On May 8, the Liberty played against the Connecticut Sun with a starting five of Pauline Astier, Marine Johannès, Jonquel Jones, Betnijah Laney-Hamilton, and Breanna Stewart. With this lineup at the beginning of the season, they were 3-1.

As the season progressed, the starting five was inconsistent, and injuries were worse this year than in the 2025 WNBA season. The planned starting five (Stewart, Jones, Sabrina Ionescu, Leonie Fiebich, and Satou Sabally) played together for only 25 minutes.

On the other hand, the Liberty's most frequent lineup (Stewart, Jones, Ionescu, Astier,
and Rebecca Allen) shared the court for 157 minutes, making them the playoff team with the fewest minutes played by any starting-five unit.

As players returned from overseas commitments and injuries accumulated throughout the season, this caused an unexpected turn for a team with championship aspirations.

Despite the starting five changing throughout the season, one thing stayed consistent: the depth of the Liberty's bench. During the regular season, the Liberty were in the top five for most points scored by the bench players in a game.

With Johannès's ability to play on and off the ball, create show-stopping passes, plus her iconic one-legged three-pointer and Han Xu's presence to block shots and create extra point opportunities, the Liberty were in great hands, or so many fans thought.

Although the Liberty swept the Minnesota Lynx in the first round of the 2026 WNBA playoffs, the road wasn't smooth sailing against the Atlanta Dream in the semifinals.

After a well-deserved break for a week, the Liberty lost Game 1 of the WNBA semifinals against the Atlanta Dream on Oct.4. Throughout the game, the Liberty struggled with turnovers, passes that were not executed properly, and overall not the best demonstration of basketball for the team that was supposed to be the most rested.

After the game, fans on Threads were upset over the amount of minutes Johannès received when Ionescu struggled to shoot all game.

One fan commented, "As a fan of the Liberty and Johannès, it is so frustrating to watch. He pulls her as soon as she makes a mistake, yet keeps others in to keep making mistakes; he never lets her get into her flow, and when we lose, MJ is always blamed, yet she plays the least, so damn frustrating!" In Game 1 of the semifinals, Johannès only played for nine minutes and scored three points.

During Game 2 of the semifinals on Oct.7, Johannès' playing time on the court dwindled to only three minutes; however, there were much bigger problems throughout this game. There was miscommunication between Stewart and the referees about whether the Liberty had a reset timeout to advance the ball. Stewart addressed this in the post-game conference.

"I asked Kevin (referee Kevin Fahy). I said, 'Do we have a reset timeout?' And he said, 'I'm going to check with the table.' So then he goes to Fatou (crew chief Fatou Cissoko-Stephens), and she said no. So he told me, ' No, of course, who knows what would have happened to end the game, but we would have had hopefully a better shot on goal." Stewart said.

After a devastating sweep to the Atlanta Dream on Oct.9, Ionescu, Jones, and Stewart were asked about DeMarco's expectation to return to the Liberty next season. When asked this question, Ionescu, Jones, and Stewart did not vouch for DeMarco to stay.

Ionescu said, "Obviously, that's not our decision. We're thankful for everything that he's done for us this year." After this season, many fans questioned the reasoning behind letting go of Brondello.

The future of whether Liberty fan favorites will stay on the team or take their talents elsewhere during free agency is uncertain, but one thing is for sure: there will be a new coach for the Liberty in the 2027 WNBA season. With DeMarco gone, the organization can take a fresh approach to bring out the talent and potential fans see.

The Future of Baseball: The Impending MLB Lockout

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor



MLB lockout graphic./***Courtesy of SportingNews.com***

When the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Tampa Bay Rays and won the World Series for the first time in franchise history, it caused two things to ring in fans' heads. One (if you're a Brewers fan) is: how can the Brewers get better in the offseason and defend their championship? Second, will baseball be played next year?

The impending Major League lockout has fans and players alike wondering if a full season will occur next year. But first, why is there a hypothetical lockout in the first place? For starters, the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between Major League team owners and the MLB Players Association is set to expire on Dec. 1.

The bargaining agreement, CBA, was an agreement between both sides that came to terms with player salaries, working conditions, and employment. They last reached an agreement during the 2021-2022 offseason, where the lockout lasted from Dec. 2, 2021, to March 10, 2022. This lockout delayed the start of the season by one week and lasted 99 days.

Even though it took 99 days for them to come to an agreement, both sides still got a deal done, but why is 2026 the outlier? Simple: the debate over implementing a salary cap in the sport. A salary cap is a league rule that limits how much each team can spend, essentially evening the playing field in free agency.

The National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Hockey League (NHL) all have a cap in place to either encourage spending or to limit high spending. MLB, however, does not have either cap in place, and many people feel that implementing one will limit big-market teams from spending egregiously.

Proponents of a salary cap believe it will give every team a fair advantage in spending. In an article titled "Details of MLB's proposed salary cap and floor system", writer Mark Feinsand notes, " Under the league's initial proposal, the 2027 salary cap -- a hard limit on how much a team can spend on its player payroll -- would be set at $245.3 million, while a salary floor -- the minimum each team would be required to spend -- would be set at $171.2 million. No Club would be permitted to exceed the cap, while all 30 Clubs would be required to comply with the floor. On Opening Day 2026, 10 of the 30 Clubs would have fallen in between the proposed cap and floor."

This seems good in theory, but who does it help out except owners who don't spend? The then Oakland Athletics had to abandon their Oakland Coliseum because their owner, John Fisher, had a history of cheaping out on deals and investing in the team. Note: Fisher has a net worth of $2.1 billion dollars. Owners want to implement a salary cap to avoid paying players large amounts of money.

This whole dilemma stemmed from the Los Angeles Dodgers and their monumental spending over the last couple of years. It started with their insane 10-year $700 million contract with superstar Shohei Ohtani that had $680 million dollars deferred until the end of the contract. Ohtani's base salary with this deferment is two million dollars annually. When Ohtani won MVPs in 2024 and 2025, he earned two million dollars each season (wow.)

They kept on spending when they signed Japanese pitchers Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Roki Sasaki to lucrative deals in the same offseason they got Ohtani. This upset fans because they felt it was unfair that the Dodgers essentially spent $1 billion in one offseason, something not many teams can do. But the opposite of that is clear: spending doesn't equate to winning.

Another high-spending team is the New York Mets, who are usually at the top when it comes to team payroll, and yet they haven't made the playoffs since 2024, and even then the team's payroll wasn't as high as it is now. The MLBPA doesn't agree either. "The MLBPA's position remains unflinching: The two dirtiest words in the English language are salary cap. Though the size of the league's proposed floor initially intrigued some on the players' side," an article from ESPN reporter Jeff Passan states.

"They also believe the system MLB is proposing would be actively worse for them and that addressing competitive balance does not necessitate a salary cap."

As Dec. 1 looms, so does the inevitable lockout that will come from it. Fans, reporters, and players alike feel like a lockout is coming, and as both sides try to come to an agreement, the future is uncertain.

Chicken Biryani Recipe

By Ameena Khan
Content Creator

Chicken Biryani Recipe

Ingredients :

For the masala:
- 2 large onions
- 2 medium tomatoes
- 2 tbsp ground ginger
- 2 tbsp ground garlic
- 3 to 4 dried plums
- 3/4 cup yogurt
- 3 to 3½ tsp salt
- 1 to 1½ tbsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1½ tsp crushed coriander seeds/powder
- 1/2 to 3/4 tsp cumin (zeera)
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 3 black cardamoms
- 7 green cardamom
- 2 finger-sized thin cinnamon sticks
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 4 to 5 green chilies
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup oil (preferably olive oil)

For the meat:
- 2 lbs chicken meat
- 1/2 cup water

For the rice:
- 3 cups basmati rice
- 2 to 3 tbsp salt

For presenting the dish:
- 1/4 tsp yellow food coloring (mixed in 2 tbsp milk or water)
- A few handfuls of fresh coriander and mint leaves
- Fried onions (half



Instructions :

To make the masala:
1) Grind up 2 tbsp of ginger and garlic, then dice the tomatoes.
2) Slice the onion vertically and sauté the slices in a large pot (preferably a pressure cooker) over medium heat until browned.
3) Remove half the slices and add the ground ginger, garlic, and diced tomatoes, then place the lid on top, allowing the masala to reach a mushy texture.
4) Once everything has broken down (after about 4 minutes), stir in the yogurt, remaining spices, and green chilies until everything is evenly coated.

To cook the meat:
1) Pour enough water to cook the meat into the masala.
2) Add in the meat and stir, then place the lid on top again.
3) As the mixture boils, turn down the heat and let it simmer until the meat is tender.
(This takes 5-7 minutes for chicken)

To cook the rice:
1) Bring a large pot of water (with the salt and bay leaves added) to a boil.
2) Tip in the (washed) rice.
3) Cook until the rice is parboiled (the outside of the grains must look clear while the very center still has a bit of white to it).
4) Drain the rice in a colander and set it aside.

To present the dish:
1) Take a separate pot.
2) Spread half of the rice on the bottom, add all of the meat masala over the top, and cover it with the remaining rice.
3) Sprinkle the yellow food coloring over the rice.
4) Put the lid back on, set the heat to low, and let it steam for 15 to 20 minutes.
5) Finish by sprinkling the fresh coriander and mint leaves (along with half of the fried onions from earlier) over the top before serving.