

# THE KNIGHT NEWS

JULY 22, 2020



VOLUME 27, ISSUE 2

## QC CLOSES ESL DEPARTMENT AMIDST BUDGET CUTS



**ESL Department Closed**  
*Effective Immediately*  
**1945-2020**

**SEE PAGE 3**

English Language Institute faculty dismissed despite serving the large, diverse population of students at QC

Photo by Queens College

### PRESIDENT HOSTS TOWN HALLS



**SEE PAGE 3**

QC President Frank H. Wu hosts virtual town halls to meet students, faculty

### QC ALUM WINS LOCAL ELECTION



**SEE PAGE 5**

QC Alumnus Khaleel Anderson becomes youngest assemblyman for NYC District 31

### SENATE ELECTS FIRST POC CHAIR



**SEE PAGE 6**

Read about Simone Yearwood's inspiring life story and involvement in the community

# Letter to the Editor: CUNY budget to be slashed at the expense of incoming freshmen

Dear Editors,

We're writing as the Directors of First Year Writing and the First Year Experience with support from the Chair of the English Department, because we see plans evolving for the fall that trouble us greatly. We think our students will be troubled, too, when these plans become public, so we want to tell you about them now, while we still have time to change them.

As the college considers how to cut its budget for the fall, it's weighing a proposal to raise the class size in English 110 from twenty students to twenty-five. That increase may not sound significant—we're talking about five students, or an increase of 25%—but the research from scholars of higher education tells us otherwise.

Small class sizes are crucial in introductory writing classes, which lay the foundation for subsequent years of writing and research. English 110 is a required class for every student at Queens College, because it introduces new freshmen to practices of writing they will need to graduate and thrive in the careers they pursue. With this important job to do, it needs small class sizes to work.

In English 110, new college students work closely with their instructors and each other to increase their ability to ex-

press their own thoughts clearly in words. This kind of closeness helps them develop an audience for their work within and beyond the college, and it helps keep them in school.

English 110 is also the linchpin of the First Year Experience, where students make friends and establish writing groups by traveling from one class to another together. We know from our research that these kinds of communities make students much more likely to complete their degrees and graduate. And we know from our experience in the classroom that communities become harder to create as the class size grows.

We know also that our communities will face new challenges this fall as we practice social distancing by some definition. It seems unfair to our incoming freshmen to diminish their opportunities further by growing their class sizes, too.

Help us help them! The best thing you can do is also an easy thing: Go to Fund-QC.org, and call the phone numbers listed there for our state and local representatives. Tell them that you care about QC and you care about CUNY, so you think it's important that the college keep its funding. You might explain what QC means to you, and you might also note that 73% of our student body identify as people of color, so funding it advances racial justice for New Yorkers, too.

Sincerely,

Annmarie Drury, Director of First Year Writing

Gloria Fisk, Director of First Year Writing

Megan Paslawski, Director of First Year Experience

Amy Wan, Director of First Year Writing

Karen Weingarten, Acting Chair of the English Department

Christopher Williams, Associate Director of First Year Writing

## A message from the Editor in Chief:

Professor Sheryl McCarthy has retired from Queens College after 13 years of teaching. She was a wonderful colleague to the paper and provided The Knight News with insightful critiques. As a mentor and a teacher, she went above and beyond the call of duty to serve the QC community well. We thank her for her service, and wish her all the best.

Secondly, due to the Journalism department being closed for the foreseeable future, The Knight News will now work with the English department going forward. Thank you to Dr. Glenn Burger & Dr. Karen Weingarten for helping to ensure that journalism has a place on the Queens College campus.

Lastly, be sure to check out our newly revamped website for the latest stories at <https://www.theknightnews.com/>.

Best,

Siddharth Malviya

Editor in Chief, The Knight News  
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## THE KNIGHT NEWS

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# NYC's oldest language institute closes at Queens College

Serene Klapper  
Staff Writer

Amidst the disorienting effects of the coronavirus pandemic, many seemingly smaller personal tragedies have gone unnoticed. These encompass a number of harsh economic blows, such as nearly 110,000 small American businesses shutting down, or even closer to home - the ESL (English as a Second Language) department of Queens College closing its doors.

The English Language Institute (ELI) of Queens College, also referred to as the English as a Second Language department, is the oldest language institute in New York City, and the second oldest in the entire United States. According to their webpage, they have been active since 1945 and serve to provide an easier transition for immigrants seeking to join the American workforce, as well as for current college students looking to hone their English skills. The department has serviced students of all ages from 47 different countries, and provides supplementary courses for people currently employed in New York, such as members of the DC 37 Union and United Nations personnel. The department's individualized teaching methods have enabled nearly 35,000 im-

migrant students to conquer one of the most difficult barriers of their integration into the American workforce: language.

As the demographic of immigrants in the U.S. has shifted, so has the typical ESL student. In 1945, 80 percent of new immigrants to New York City were from Europe. More recently, the department has serviced mainly students from China, Korea, and South America, providing both full-time and part-time English programs. Queens has been an ideal location for the department due to the diverse neighborhoods surrounding the college. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 56 percent of Queens residents speak a language other than English at home. 48 percent were born outside of the U.S.

"The bottom line is that closing it will have a bad impact on the community who don't understand the language and are trying to be part of your program," says David Montero who studied in the ESL department in 2012 and 2013. "Thanks to the program, I was able to achieve a B.S. in telecommunications engineering technology 2016 and a M.E. in Telecommunications Engineering 2019. I've worked for the DOE, and I'm currently working for the NAVY."

According to the ESL Department's

employees, the announcement for the department closing was sent to them via email on May 20th, about a month before the actual implemented closure. The news was delivered with little to no explanation; Department members do not even know who made the final call.

"I cannot believe I am writing this letter" the email read. "The English language Institute is closing its doors at the end of June. This is extremely devastating for all of us. Many of you have spent many years here as I have. A flood of memories of the years here and of all the people who have crossed my path overwhelm me as it will for many of you when you read this unimaginable news."

"We were informed around the end of May that the ELI would be closing its doors as of June 30th" says Ann Larios who has been with the department for 27 years. "It came as a shock to all of us. We're like family. The average number of years that the teachers have been teaching in ELI is about 30 years. It has been devastating for us to lose [both] our jobs and income"

While the actual reason for the closure is uncertain, many have come to theorize. Some believe that there has been less demand for the services due to new immigration policies. Others have taken



the stance that the coronavirus has impacted both the college's budget as well as the flow of students from other countries.

"We were not given any reason as teachers, but I suspect it was due to lower than usual student registration over the past few years as a reflection of the change in student visa policies," Larios contemplated. "Numbers have always gone up and down, but it's important to keep the doors open."

Many discussions surrounding the topic have been similarly enigmatic. At the Queens College faculty town hall, which was held on July 8th at 6:00 PM, President Frank H. Wu alleged that the ELI was on a "hiatus" which was in conflict with the fact that the faculty were told they were out of a job. This lack of clarity has been simultaneously confusing and hopeful for well-wishers of the ELI.

President Frank H. Wu was unavailable for comment.

## QC President Frank H. Wu addresses campus via Zoom "town hall" meetings

Siddharth Malviya  
Editor in Chief

Amidst the ongoing budget cuts, the adjunct layoffs and the uncertainty of whether or not the Queens College campus will be reopened, President Frank H. Wu held a series of town halls to address the concerns of the QC community.

Wu was appointed by CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez this past Spring to serve as Queens College President following a national search after Chancellor Matos left the position vacant.

Wu took to Zoom, a video conferencing platform, to interact with students, faculty and other members of the QC community. Town halls were held from July 6 to July 8, each day dedicated to a different audience, including students, faculty and others.

The town halls kicked off with President Wu interacting with the students. It should be noted that less than 1% of the student population was in attendance. Out of 75 RSVPs, approximately 25 students were in attendance for the town hall. Nonetheless, President Wu explained his

priorities for Queens. "Addressing the pandemic thoughtfully, ensuring we [Queens College] advocate in light of recent budget consequences, and ensuring that I [Frank Wu] get to know the community."

Whereas the town hall held for students was a small gathering, approximately 40-plus faculty were in attendance the following evening to meet with President Wu. Alongside him was Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Elizabeth Hendrey and the rest of the Queens College administration.

The faculty town hall placed major emphasis on the "budget consequences" that President Wu mentioned while discussing his priorities at QC. One of the major budget consequences was the recent closing of the English Language Institute, an academic program for learning English as a second language. Faculty within the department were told that they were soon to be out of a job, yet Wu claimed publicly during the town hall that "The English Language Institute is on a hiatus."

This remark caused major confusion amongst the several faculty members from the English Language Institute who were

present on the call. Ann Larios, former English Second Language Instructor, published a statement in the Zoom call: "The English Language Institute (ELI) classes were geared towards academic success and success in chosen careers. The immigration policies of the past few years were instrumental in [the] downturn of students. The ELI classes were completely different from library classes. They were essential for the success of the diverse student body."

Larios then directed a question to President Wu via the Zoom chat, "If it [ELI] is on hiatus, who will work to bring it back?" Similarly, Monica Courtney, a faculty member from the English Language Institute, voiced her confusion about the President's remark claiming that the ELI was on hiatus. "Our dedicated ELI students were told quite abruptly that the program at QC was closing - as were the faculty. This is the first mention of the program being 'on a hiatus.' How will you involve the experienced ELI faculty in the process of redesigning the ELI?"

Sadly, both Larios & Courtney's questions went unanswered, as President Wu, alongside Provost Hendrey,

acted in unison to dodge these concerns.

Apart from the concerns about the English Language Institute, there was significant unrest regarding the lack of action from Queens College regarding the budget cuts. David Gerwin, Professor for Secondary Education and Chair of the QC Chapter, PSC-CUNY, was not afraid to call out Wu publicly. "President Wu, will you speak out publicly, or only behind the scenes?" asked Gerwin via the chat function in the Zoom call.

Gerwin spoke to The Knight News, expressing his concerns that Queens College is acting similarly to private institutions. He explained that summer sessions have a much wider range of course offerings compared to the coming Fall semester. As a result, students who need to graduate or take the necessary courses for their major/minor are forced to pay the excessive amount of fees and tuition for summer sessions. Gerwin says that this marginalizes the students who cannot afford the summer session, forcing them to be subjected to taking a minimal amount of courses in the fall or waiting around for the desired course for another semester.

Though these series of meetings were termed "town halls," it should be noted that no faculty spoke up, as President Wu retained control of the conversation for the entire meeting. Rather than terming the meetings as town halls, a more appropriate label for the meetings would have been "live announcements from the QC administration."

# A victory for U.S. international students

Nika Nuñez  
Staff Writer

Earlier this month, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Trump administration announced that degree-seeking international students must attend in-person classes in the fall or they may face deportation from the U.S. In these unprecedented times of uncertainty, many colleges and universities have resorted to online classes for the fall semester, leaving many students in limbo. However, recent developments indicate a reversal in this policy.

To recap the situation, on Monday, July 7, 2020, the Trump administration declared a policy barring international students with certain visas from receiving classes in a completely online format while residing in the U.S. As a result, these students would have to enroll in an in person course or face immigration consequences.

Receiving online instruction is the only choice for some students, given the

uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many elite and local colleges closed their doors as a precaution to keep students and staff safe. ICE's decision caused a major upheaval in colleges across the nation that vowed to provide support to its students. This policy proved to be detrimental, for it would compromise countless students' educations, and their respective institutions would face astronomical financial losses. The New York Times reported that many elite colleges such as Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology were the first of many schools that declared a complete online class format in the fall, as well as the first to file a series of lawsuits to block the policy.

As of Tuesday, July 14, one week after the announcement of this policy, the Trump administration rescinded its decision to penalize international student visa holders that will receive online instruction in the fall. This decision, for many, is a victory. For some, however, it should not have been

contested with at all. Nevertheless, this decision brings tranquility to the students and their families who experienced jeopardy.

A large contribution that led to this decision is the surprising lawsuit that Harvard University filed, in conjunction with MIT, against both ICE and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Both The Harvard Crimson and MIT News, the schools' respective student newspapers, reported that the school had filed formal charges. "The motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to halt the immediate enforcement of the new rules will be argued at 3 p.m. on Tuesday in front of Federal Judge Allison D. Burroughs", The Harvard Crimson reads. Swiftly, other American colleges and universities joined the pair in solidarity with the mission statement, that all students are welcome on American campuses, regardless of where they come from.

Queens College's President Frank Wu announced in an email on Tuesday, July

14, to the school's students, faculty, and staff that the school would become part of a collaborative effort to prosecute the federal government for its extreme measures. This occurrence comes shortly after the Trump administration halted its policy on international students.

Juwanie Piquant, the University Student Senate's (USS) Vice Chair of Legislative Affairs, shared a comment regarding support to CUNY Students. Piquant assured us that the USS, the governance system for all CUNY students, will "continue to communicate important information to our student body ensuring that everyone stays informed. We will also provide information for students interested in advocacy." She also concurred that while the president's decision to rescind was appropriate, his policies should not have been instilled in the first place.

## QC's reopening committee sets its sights on fall semester

Johnny Sullivan  
Staff Writer

Following New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's mid-semester decision to indefinitely discontinue in-person CUNY and SUNY school classes, many questions have been raised regarding how—if at all—schools ought to go about reopening in the Fall. To address these questions, Queens College organized and convened a planning committee consisting of faculty members considered especially well-equipped to chart the course of the school in the coming months.

The Queens College Ad Hoc Working Group on Reopening, as it is called, was formed with the purpose of "planning for reopening physical use of campus space for academic instruction and other in-person activities with an emphasis on the Fall 2020 semester," according to its website. The committee's variety ensures that the needs of Queens' similarly-varied student body are all taken into account. It represents a wide array of disciplines; among its members are Daniel Weinstein, Interim Dean of Queens College's School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and Megan Healey, Chair of the Department of Drama, Theatre, and Dance. Also involved is student Zaire Couloute, who as President of the Student Association, serves as the committee's sole student representative.

As the committee deliberates, it keeps students informed via email. The first of these emails, sent on June 19, announced the formation of the committee and allowed for the future addition of "smaller working groups with additional college administrators, faculty, and staff...as needed to focus on a specific issue." Since then, two



Photo: John Sullivan

"Progress Reports" have been sent out. The first, sent on June 26, reiterated that the Queens College campus will remain closed for the summer (except for research labs); the second, sent on July 9, detailed additions to the committee's personnel, and made the unfortunate announcement that the college's long-running Summer Camp had been cancelled. This latter report also mentioned that in response to the abrupt manner in which the spring semester moved online, a contingency plan is now in place, providing for a more orderly course of action should Queens College open its doors in the Fall and then decide to reclose.

Even with the diligence with which the committee works toward its stated goals, many students have still expressed reservations regarding the status of the Fall semester and whether reopening would be prudent. Ezra Hermann, a rising Junior and Psychology major, said that "the health and safety of students and teachers is of utmost importance," adding that "many students would have to take public transportation, which is not necessarily safe right now." The point about public transportation was echoed by Joshua Sacker, a Senior and Environmental Science major, who felt that he would not return to potential in-person classes next semester because

"my commute to Queens College involves a train and a bus and I don't feel public transportation is safe to use so often yet."

However the Ad Hoc Working Group on Reopening decides on conducting the next semester, it must consider that personal safety is the primary concern of many of the students it is tasked with serving. This and other issues will inform the moves of the committee as it navigates an uncertain future.

# QC alum Khaleel Anderson makes history in the NYC district assembly

Raveena Nabi  
Staff Writer

In this day and age, it can be easy for Americans to not to have faith in politics. After all, the last 4 years have only divided America further. However, given 2020 is an election year, many are rushing to the polls to elect candidates in an effort to bridge the divide and heal America before it is too late. A local case of this can be seen in New York City's District 31, specifically its recent elections for district assemblyman.

Khaleel Anderson, a Queens College alum with a BA/MA in Urban Studies, has become the youngest candidate in 20 years to be elected to the NYC District Assembly serving District 31. Anderson has always been active in his community, as his most recent service includes serving as a community board member and activist in his native home of Far Rockaway. This begs the question, what was the driving force behind Anderson's path to victory?

Anderson was inspired to go into public

service/activism at very young age, both of his parents were deeply involved in community activism. Anderson also attributes his willingness to serve to the belief that young people deserve a seat at the table.

It's worth mentioning that Anderson was also a founder of the Rockaway Youth Task Force which consists of young people engaging in community activism as well as encouraging other young people to do the same.

His core platform consists of criminal justice, housing resources and youth programs. Anderson feels that working on these issues will ultimately improve the wellbeing of the community overall.

Anderson also expressed his concerns about the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). He mentions that the first solution to improving the MTA is establishing a fair pay rate, wherein riders will pay the same exact fair regardless of which service they use (bus, train, etc.).

In addition to transportation and criminal justice, Anderson emphasized that

healthcare is another issue that has been plaguing the state, city, and District 31. He mentioned a bill, "The NYS Health Act", which he hopes the New York State Senate will pass. The benefits of the clinics across the city, especially District 31, will have greater access to city/state funding which will help them to create programs to ensure that undocumented and uninsured individuals are able to have access to basic level healthcare including primary care doctor.

When asked about his take on the current economic affairs of his district, Anderson expressed that small businesses are essential to providing people with much needed jobs that will increase the overall employment rate within District 31 and the rest of the city. Like many, Anderson firmly believes that small businesses are the economic engine of the city and its neighborhoods.

Anderson contends that the first step to stimulating the economy in his district is to provide lower-cost loans which make it easier for individuals within the community to open their own businesses. As

a result, higher numbers of high-school students and college students will be able to be hired and for business owners to offer good salaries. When employed, these students will be able to support their families and gain job experience which will be very useful for future careers.

Lastly, Anderson made note to mention his stance on education. District 31, along with the rest of the city, is currently dealing with high dropout rates in its high schools, coupled with underfunded/overcrowded schools. Anderson says that the first solution is to make academia relevant to all forms of employment including employment in the trade sector. One way to do this is that all schools (especially high schools) give students the option to take classes in a trade/skill such as woodworking, I.T., and other skills that can be applied to different careers within skilled trades such as construction, industrial, and others. Anderson explains that this will allow for students who do not have the means to enter higher education, can then enter the job market to develop themselves.

One can hope that with progressive candidates such as Khaleel Anderson, that enough change may be generated to make for a better society.

# Daniel Weinstein appointed as new Dean of math and natural sciences

Daniel Lubofsky  
Managing Editor/Reporter

Dr. Daniel Weinstein never expected to be the dean of the Math and Natural Sciences department at Queens College after holding the chair of QC's biology department for several years. But, when the department was in search of a dean, after the original selection was forced to drop out due to personal issues, Dr. Weinstein found himself stepping in days before the start of the Fall 2019 semester at the provost's request.

When it came time to select a permanent dean, Dr. Weinstein was among a group of potential candidates in a search that began last December. His time as the interim aided his candidacy when the

search for the official dean began once again. After his tenure officially began on July 1, the delight of his coworkers spoke volumes to the approval Dr. Weinstein had throughout the department.

"I was very pleased to hear he was appointed as Acting Dean last year and now, I am also quite pleased he will be the next Dean of Math and Natural Sciences," wrote Professor Jeffrey Bird, the Chair of the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, via email. "He is an accomplished scientist, teacher, and knows QC and CUNY very well."

"He is absolutely the best possible candidate for the position," wrote Professor Esther Muehlbauer of the Biology department, also via email. "(He

has already had a successful semester as Interim Dean - and did beautifully!"

A dean has a baseline list of responsibilities, from approving faculty hires to the improvement of the overall curriculum, but checking those goals off of his list has become a bit more difficult in the current climate. "I've spent a lot of time trying to get our researchers back on campus and back into their labs," Dr. Weinstein said over the phone. "If you're an English professor, there's no need for you to do your thinking [while physically being] on campus. But for so-called bench scientists or field workers, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, all of these fields they need to get back in."

Nevertheless, Dr. Weinstein's long-term pursuits remain in the same line of sight, even as a global pandemic throws his daily operations out of order. He wants to offer as much of what he calls "real research experience" to as many undergrads as possible. That is, a more authentic lab experience to better the progress of those pursuing a scientific career.

Nothing about the current state of the world, not to mention CUNY's continuous budget issues, makes for an ideal entry point into any job, much less one with as much potential impact as a dean. Dr. Weinstein, however, has grown accustomed to unusual beginnings, effectively tackling them with a level of respect and understanding among those he works with and for in CUNY.

"His own communications keep faculty in the loop with Division updates," wrote Professor Muehlbauer. "He is a good interpreter of information - and when there are changes or unknowns that are causing concern (as with the start of the Pandemic in Spring semester) - his communications provide straightforward information together with his own intelligent insights."

"To be effective in leading change, leaders must use good data and engage in critical dialogue," said Daniel Yakubov, a Senior Biology and Biology Anthropology major who had Dr. Weinstein as a research advisor for three years. "I have no doubts that he will go above and beyond to care for students and faculty of those within the Division of Math and the Natural Sciences. Dr. Weinstein is, without any reservation, the man for the job."

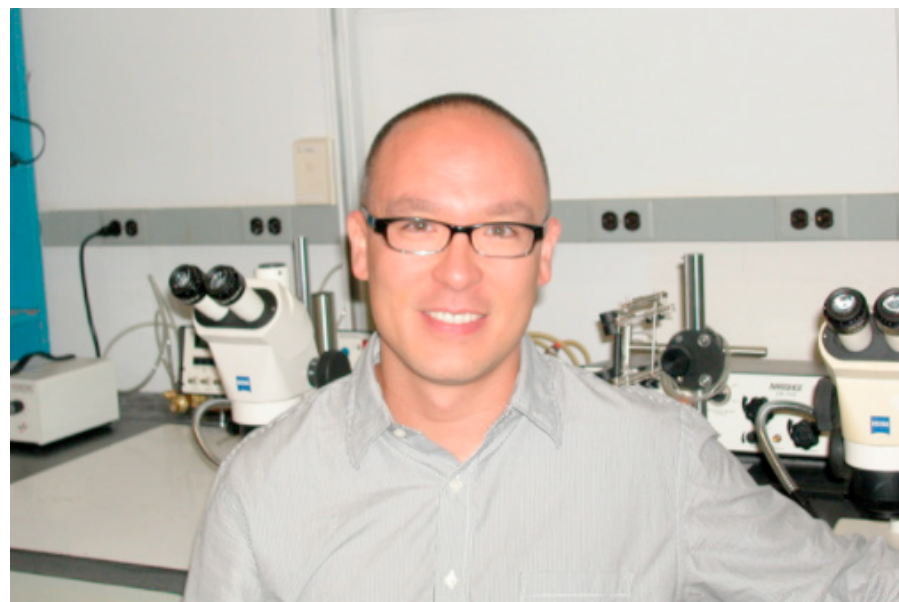


Photo: Queens College  
Pictured is Dr. Weinstein in a QC lab

# Deputy chief librarian Simone Yearwood shares her inspiring tale

Siddharth Malviya  
Editor in Chief

While most Queens College students see the Benjamin Rosenthal Library on campus as a hub for studying, it's actually a community and place of work for Professor Simone L. Yearwood, Queens College's Deputy Chief Librarian. Yearwood recently took the time to sit down with The Knight News to talk in depth about her life journey. From her recent re-election as Chair of the Academic Senate, to her strong efforts to integrate the library with the student body, to teaching courses for the Graduate School of Library Sciences, Yearwood does it all.

Yearwood was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and was the first in her family to graduate high school. She was raised in a household where her mother made many sacrifices to ensure her kids were comfortable and well. "I tend to realize that as I got older, that my mom worked two jobs while we were on welfare to make sure we got what we needed," said Yearwood, adding, "Growing up as a little black girl from Brooklyn, we were on welfare, relied on food stamps, and lived in the projects, but I never knew that was a blight (i.e. a disadvantage)."

She recalls her aunt saying at one point when she was young, "you know you...you're gonna be somebody." At the time, Yearwood had no idea what that brief sentiment meant. She was a young African American girl in a neighborhood with a population of socioeconomically low citizens. It was only until years later she recognized that it meant she was on a path to success, which Yearwood notes was uncommon for her situation.

Yearwood began working with Queens College Rosenthal library in 1997 as support staff. A year later, she took advantage of the CUNY tuition waiver and enrolled in QC's ACE program, which is intended for adults over the age of 25 looking to obtain a collegiate education. At the time she was enrolled, Yearwood was balancing being a wife and a mother of two young children. Looking back on her undergraduate days, Yearwood notes, "I was that student who was prepared. I did my readings, my assignments were on time and I was engaged in the instruction."

She also went on to discuss how pursuing an education while having a family was her choice. "I chose to take classes, to pursue a degree, with a family. My oldest son was 12 [years old], so my youngest son had to be about 7 [years old]...and I knew that they were my first and primary responsibility." Yearwood explained that her cumulative experience of being a mother and a student allowed her to improve her time management and organizational skills.



Photo: Simone L. Yearwood

She pursued two masters degrees throughout the early 2000s in Library Sciences and Urban Affairs. When asked why Library Sciences, Yearwood replied, "My very first job was in 1979, at the Brooklyn Public Library. I worked in the summers... and now all these years later, to come back, having ended up being a librarian is cool for me." She explained her favorite part of the job, which is research services. "I really enjoy it, sitting down with a student and helping them find their way through a research article."

As for the current day, apart from her Library duties, Yearwood is actively involved in the Queens College community. She was recently re-elected to be the Chair of the QC Academic Senate, following her initial election in 2019. Yearwood is the first person of color (POC) to have held the role since the Senate's founding nearly 50 years ago. When asked to comment on the matter, she said, "Whereas Queens College should congratulate itself on the diversity of the student body, it needs to take a look at the [lack of] diversity in the faculty body, and figure out what it could

do to address it."

Yearwood went on to explain how, in her profession as a librarian, it's largely dominated by white women. She recalled a student from one of her courses who addressed the lack of diversity in library sciences. "I had a student say to me, this past Spring that in the Graduate School of Library Sciences at QC, I was her first African American instructor." Adding, "at the end of the semester, she sent me a message that she was glad she got the opportunity to take a class with me because it gave her hope and that she wished the program had more diversity in it."

On the note of diversity, Yearwood's message is, "If you really want to make a difference when it comes to diversity, you need to listen to what I have to say when I tell you what I'm experiencing. Listen to hear, not to respond." She elaborated further, explaining that typically when people listen to others, they're already formulating a response in their mind, and in that process they're neglecting the entirety of what the other person is trying to say.

She then addressed the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement. Yearwood stated,

"I am the mother of black men. My fear is if my children will come home safely," adding that "these concerns are not the same as my white colleagues and peers. Their sons are not going to be stopped because they're deemed out of place. My son is and has been. Let's not try to compare apples to oranges."

As the interview neared its end, Yearwood's message to the readers is, "You only have one opportunity to live this life you've been given. You really need to think about it, live your best life and make no apologies, and it's never too late to learn."

*The Knight News thanks Professor Simone L. Yearwood for allowing our staff the opportunity to interview her.*

# Trans health care protections under attack by Trump Administration

Chloe Sweeney  
Editor/ Reporter

On June 12th, 2020, the Trump administration issued an executive decision to reverse Obama-era transgender protections in the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also commonly known as “Obamacare”, was enacted in March of 2010 under President Barack Obama’s administration. It is a comprehensive health care reform law, meaning it encompasses a vast array of services necessary to maintain both physical and mental health. The main goal of the ACA was to provide these various health services to millions of uninsured U.S. citizens under affordable health insurance. It did so with a set of regulations, which included expanding Medicaid eligibility and ensuring that insurance companies would not be able to deny someone coverage due to a pre-existing condition.

The act has a multitude of sections within it, one being Section 1557, which is the Health Care Rights Law. This law strictly prohibits discrimination in health care on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability. In 2016, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) clarified by saying that Section 1557 included anti-transgender discrimination, thereby making it clear that the trans community was protected within this section.

Fast forward to present day, the HHS under President Trump’s administration

has decided to revoke their previous clarification and now say that transgender people are no longer included within Section 1557. The new regulation will interpret sex determination, “according to the plain meaning of the word ‘sex’ as male or female and as determined by biology.” However, this does not mean discrimination against the trans community in health care is now legal. Transgender people can still file lawsuits against anti-trans discrimination, but the HHS and federal government will not be investigating complaints.

If there were no discrepancies, the HSS’s ACA revision would be finalized in the federal register 60 days after it was announced. However, the 60 days can also be put on hold if the rule is challenged in court via a lawsuit, through which the judge deems it necessary to pause the countdown. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), along with a multitude of LGBTQ+ nonprofits, stated it will be filing a lawsuit to have the revision ultimately revoked. This lack of support could potentially keep the policy from going into effect for years.

Moreover, the recent ruling of the Supreme Court in *Bostock vs. Clayton County* directly undermined the HSS’s revision, as this court case ruled in favor of trans protections in the workplace. This will no doubt cause problems for the HSS. Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch of the Supreme Court stated, “It is impossible to discriminate against a person for being homosexual or transgender without discriminating



Photo: American Civil Liberties Union

against that individual based on sex.”

It comes as no surprise that members of the LGBTQ+ community feel hurt, offended, and alienated due to this decision of the Trump administration. To fully understand how this new policy has impacted this community, the following are quotes from members of Queens College’s Gender Love and Sexuality Association (GLASA).

Akashdeep Singh, Vice President of GLASA at Queens College (Gender Love and Sexuality Alliance), said, “Personally, all I can simply say is that for a while, it’s felt like the walls around me have slowly began tumbling down. I remember waking up and seeing ACA trending on Twitter. I called my friends just to rant about how President Trump has chosen to prioritize finances over human rights. The Trump administration has definitely dragged us many steps back.”

Mariam Aslam, President of GLASA agreed with Singh, adding, “As president of GLASA, it is astonishing to see how basic human rights are denied just because people want to express who they are. I myself have been homeless and have been on my own journey, as I know how it feels to not have medical insurance or no coverage. It’s awful having our mental health or physical being treated as if it were a luxury. Especially for expenses such as top surgery, bottom surgery or any other medical expenses to make people feel their identity in some way is already rejected by the medical industry. It is hard seeing how much as a society we have digressed, but I hope as the future progresses, so do the rights of those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and other minorities.”

## J.K. Rowling’s transphobic tweets and Trump’s transphobia

Samantha Galvez-Montiel  
Staff Writer

The author of the famous Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling, has been labeled “transphobic,” “cruel,” and a “bigot” after tweeting in support of her friend, Maya Forstater. Forstater lost her job as a tax expert at the Center for Global development after suggesting that transgender people cannot change the biological sex they were born with. Maya Forstater is a researcher who claimed online that there are only two biological sexes. As a result, she was fired by the U.K. think tank for questioning the government’s plans to allow people to self-identify as another gender.

The tweet said: “People who menstruate. I’m sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?”

This particular tweet appeared to be in response to a line that described the “menstrual health and hygiene needs of girls, women, and all people who menstruate.”

Francis Cruz, Senior Media Stud-

ies major, commented, “she seems like a very ignorant individual who cannot grasp real struggle, which is ironic because she was homeless for quite a while before she hit it big.”

The actors of the Harry Potter franchise have spoken out against her opinion. Daniel Radcliffe tweeted in response that, “Transgender women are women.” Radcliffe wrote in a blog post for the Trevor Project, an LGBTQ youth suicide prevention group, that “Any statement to the contrary erases the identity and dignity of transgender people and goes against all advice given by professional health care associations who have far more expertise on this subject matter than either Jo or I.”

He noted that a Trevor Project survey found that 78% of transgender and non-binary youth reported being the subject of discrimination because of their gender identity. “It’s clear that we need to do more to support transgender and non-binary people, not invalidate their identities and not cause further harm,” he said.

Mr. Radcliffe also had a message for fans

disappointed by the author’s comments: “To all the people who now feel that their experience of the books has been tarnished or diminished, I am deeply sorry for the pain these comments have caused you. I really hope that you don’t entirely lose what was valuable in these stories to you.”

“J.K. Rowling’s platform is built on top of readers who lost themselves in a fictional world of magic. Unfortunately -- though she can claim to know and love trans people -- her tweet shows an inability to understand the world we live in. Trans people -- more than ever -- are struggling to be understood in society. The tweet was undoubtedly insensitive to trans people,” said Senior English major, Jarrett Newman.

This wasn’t the first time the author has said something controversial. In December of last year, she tweeted, “Dress however you please. Call yourself whatever you like. Sleep with any consenting adult who’ll have you. Live your best life in peace and security. But force women out of their jobs for stating that sex is real?” Rowling’s tweet included hashtags such as

#IStandWithMaya and #ThisIsNotaDrill.

“She just comes off as ignorant and dumb. It’s also willful ignorance as she has been educated on transgenderism for years. As this is not the first time she’s caught flack for saying stuff like this. After years she still doesn’t understand the difference between sex and gender, having being corrected by actual physicians. She defines women by their ability to menstruate, which as we know, isn’t the case,” said Elijah Diaz, an alum of QC.

One can safely say that it is ignorance such as this that causes so many people to feel comfortable with their transphobic opinions. According to the Human Rights Campaign, Meri Mack is the 18th transgender or gender-non-conforming person to be slain in the U.S. in 2020. Mack was found shot to death in the parking lot of an apartment building around 6:15 A.M. July 2 in Dallas, TX.

Additionally, the Trump-Pence Administration finalized the rule on section 1557 of the ACA that rolled back critical protections for LGBTQ people, according to the Human Rights Campaign. It is safe to say that if you have a platform, it should be used to spread awareness and to educate people on their transphobia. J.K. Rowling has received backlash for her transphobia so instead of spreading

# Our country's long history of voter suppression plagues the 2020 primaries

Arwa Ali  
Editor/ Reporter

Voter suppression is a phenomenon that should seem incomprehensible in the proud, democratic United States of America, but is something that still occurs during each and every election cycle. It has yet again become a topic of conversation due to the 2020 primaries, an event that was not exempt from its fair share of voter suppression.

Voter suppression is the insidious effort taken to make the voting process more difficult for disenfranchised groups of people. The intention behind voter deterrence is grounded in the attempt to control the political outcomes of an election. Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 aimed to outlaw the overtly racist tactics used to shut out voters during the Jim Crow era, there are still many covert ways in which it is practiced today. Some of the most prominent ways include voter ID laws, voter registration requirements, voter purges, felon disadvantages and gerrymandering.

As of this year, thirty-six states require identification at polls, and seven of those states only accept a government-issued photo ID. This has prevented voting from many low-income

citizens who cannot afford to attain an ID, as well as disabled citizens who cannot travel for one to be made. In regard to registration, many states, including New York, have a cut off time prior to the election. This is an outdated restriction that was implemented when registration was done via mail and needed ample time to be delivered. It deprived around 90,000 New Yorkers of voting in the 2016 Presidential election. Voter purges are another form of suppression, where eligible voters are removed from voter rolls. Oftentimes this process will use inaccurate data to deny people the right to vote without fair notice that they have been purged from the system. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, over 16 million eligible voters were wrongfully removed from voter rolls between 2014 to 2016. The third way in which voter suppression manifests is through felons being barred from voting. Given that Black people living in the United States are disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system, they are also the most negatively impacted by these voting restrictions. Iowa notably has the most stringent voting restrictions for felons, along with the highest Black incarceration rate in the nation. A fourth way in which marginalized

people are strategically singled out is through gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is when states redraw district lines every ten years based on the census data of residents. This is used as a tool to manipulate district boundaries toward favorable constituents, and assure future election victories.

On top of these established methods of voter suppression, states still manage to find creative ways to make voting strenuous, and this was evident over the past few months during the 2020 primaries. In April, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., Republican legislators blocked a plea to extend the absentee ballot. According to *The Nation*, a voter named Jennifer Taff was infuriated that she requested an absentee ballot three weeks in advance but never got a response. Also, very few polling stations were operating, which prevented high-risk individuals without reliable healthcare from going out to vote. A similar situation happened in Georgia and Kentucky during their respective election days. In Louisville's Jefferson County, an area where around half of Kentucky's Black population lives, only one polling station was available. In Georgia, claims of absentee ballots never being delivered, long lines, broken machines and polling locations not opening during designated times caused a massive up-

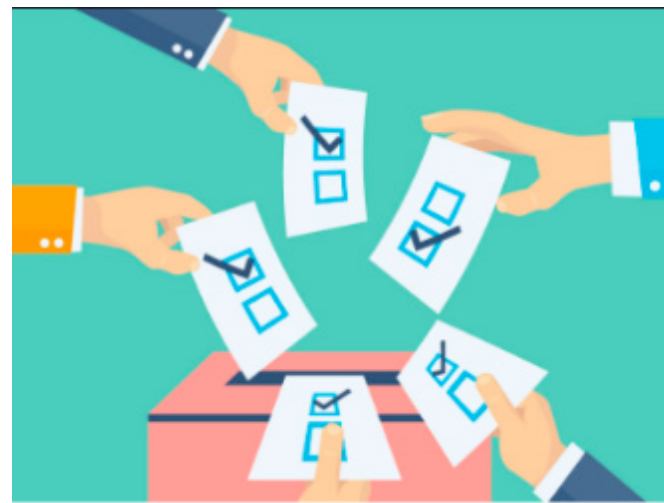


Photo: Minute School

roar. In response to the outrage, Georgia State Secretary Brad Raffensperger blamed local officials, but former Representative Stacey Abrams claimed that “it is not sufficient to say that the county you live in determines the quality of your democracy. That’s why we have the secretary of the entire state—not just the counties that do it right, not just the counties that have the resources, not just the counties that he likes.”

Given what occurred during the primaries, who knows what November will hold? Will there be more push-back, or will the suppression intensify? Things become more complicated when the stakes are so high. Regardless of what happens, it’s important to note that voter suppression won’t just disappear unless concerted efforts are made to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would alleviate the voting process and hold perpetrators of suppression accountable. The bill has been passed by the House but has yet to be passed by the Senate.

## Philadelphia Eagles player DeSean Jackson faces backlash over anti-semitic instagram post

Veronica Kordmany  
Executive Editor

The Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver DeSean Jackson, 33, caused an uproar when he ‘mistakenly’ posted an anti-Semitic quotation to his Instagram Story, which he believed to have been the words of Adolf Hitler. Although Jackson took down the photo shortly after fans began calling him out, the aftermath of his actions is still affecting the Jewish community today.

Jackson had posted a photo of a racist and anti-Semitic quotation attributed to Adolf Hitler, which was highlighted on the page of a book. The quotation supposedly came from Hitler, claiming that he would cause World War III after his death. Hitler is known as the orchestrator of World War II, also commonly referred to as ‘the Holocaust’, where over six million Jewish people were extinguished at the hands of the Nazi Party (Hitler’s army of German soldiers).

Eventually, it was discovered that the

quote was falsely attributed to Hitler. The Philadelphia Eagles were quick to condemn the star’s shameful post, calling the incident “offensive, harmful, and absolutely appalling”, according to *The New York Times*.

On numerous occasions, Jackson took to social media to voice his apologies, none of which were considered genuine nor acceptable. Initially, he labeled his actions as ‘a mistake’, explaining, that he “really didn’t realize what this passage was saying” and that “we should be together fighting anti-Semitism and racism”. Another evening, he apologized on his Twitter platform, writing that his intention was only “to uplift, unite and encourage our culture” but, instead, had “unintentionally hurt the Jewish community”. The Jewish community has yet to accept his apology.

Former Eagles president Joe Banner responded to the situation, saying “If a white player said anything about African American’s as outrageous as what DeSean Jackson said about Jews tonight there would at

least be a serious conversation about cutting him and a need for a team meeting to discuss”. The Philadelphia Eagles made a collective statement regarding Jackson’s posts saying, “We reiterated to DeSean the importance of not only apologizing but also using his platform to take action to promote unity, equality, and respect”. According to ESPN, New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman, who is Jewish, invited DeSean to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “I have seen DeSean play in his career, make outstanding football plays, we’ve communicated over social media,” he stated in an Instagram video. “I’ve got nothing but respect for his game. I know he said some ugly things, but I do see an opportunity to have a conversation”.

A Holocaust survivor named Edward Mosberg, 94, reached out to the Eagles wide receiver, inviting Jackson to visit Auschwitz with him, in a formal invitation that has gone viral on the Internet. “I would like

to invite you to join me at the sites of these German Nazi death camps, to understand what evil truly is, and why sharing quotes of the man behind this evil, is so offensive to us all,” one paragraph reads. It is unknown what Jackson’s response to the invitation is.

DeSean has announced that he would work to educate himself and “work with local and national organizations to be more informed and make a difference” in the harmed community. Many are still dubious about his truthfulness given his past support for Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, and an infamous anti-Semite. In 2018, Farrakhan posted a video to Facebook, in which he compared the Jewish people to termites. It was shortly taken down for violating hate speech policies.

So far, the National Football League (NFL) and the Philadelphia Eagles team have yet to determine what the appropriate disciplinary action is. They are currently evaluating the circumstances, but no formal action has been taken as of mid-July.



# Meet Mira Rosenblatt: A holocaust survivor's story

Veronica Kordmany  
Executive Editor

Meet Mira Rosenblatt. She is a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother; she is a New Yorker, and a Polish native. She is also a Jewish Holocaust survivor.

Mira Rosenblatt's childhood was like any other Jewish child. She was raised by a Polish mother and father with three brothers and two sisters. She was taught how to help her parents work in a store, how to speak Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew, and German, and that being Jewish was not a lifestyle, but a birthright.

Between 1940 to 1942, Mira, along with her parents and siblings Vida Malka, Estushsa and Natan, lived in the Sosnowiec ghetto, where Mira was forced to work in a factory ironing uniforms every day from 6 am until 6 pm to receive bread-ration cards to sustain her family. On August 12, 1942, she was deported to the Stadium ghetto, this time in Germany. It was there where Mira was separated from her family and never saw them again. She was deported to Gruenberg, Germany, which was part of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp.

Mira, along with over one thousand Jewish women, were forced to work in the concentration camp's textile factory: the factory had different divisions. Mira was in charge of making uniforms for soldiers, using materials shipped to the factory from Auschwitz, another concentration camp based in Poland.

After three years of working in the factory, Mira was ordered to join the infamous Death March in 1945. "On the 25th, I came back from work [in the morning]," Mira said, "and all of a sudden the soldiers told me, 'No, you are going, you have to get dressed, you are going to the Death March'... [we] got dressed, and we started to walk." The Death March was a punishment in which the Nazi Party forced millions of

Jewish prisoners to walk hundreds of miles in below-zero temperatures through Germany, resulting in many freezing to death or dying of hunger and/or exhaustion.

"All of a sudden, I think so [that] the General needed to use the bathroom, so we stopped. I picked myself up, and I went to the forest, making up that I had to use the bathroom" she said. But when everyone started walking, Mira and another girl were left behind. "I was left over there, with another girl. They got up, [the general] came back, [everyone] got up, and they left and I was over there, in the forest, eating the snakes and the dirt." When it dawned on Mira that she had successfully escaped, she started to look around for somewhere to go. But as she didn't see anyone or any place to go, she became lost. "Finally, I was in the forest all night, with another girl, and finally, I saw a chimney," she recalled. With her excuse in mind, she knocked on the door. When the woman answered her door, she saw a young girl on her doorstep, claiming that she lost her parents and if she could stay with her.

By that time, Mira was living under the pseudonym 'Irina' to conceal her Jewish ancestry, and spoke Polish very well. Over the next two months, the pair grew closer, and the woman eventually confessed that she wanted Mira to stay with her, unaware of who Mira really was. As hard as it was, Mira admitted that she had 'lost' her papers, and left the comfort and luxury the woman had blessed her with.

Shortly after she left, Mira found work at a Polish bread bakery, where she was hired under the assumption that no one knew she was Jewish. There, she wrote a letter to the super of her old apartment building: "If anybody is alive," she wrote, "you have to come get me." Her future husband, Henry, found her letter shortly after. During the war, Henry had



Photo: Belinda Rosenblatt

been in Auschwitz and then the Death March, until he was freed in April 1945. It wasn't until someone recognized Mira's handwriting that the pair reunited.

Mira Rosenblatt's grandparents died before the War in 1934 and 1935. In 1939, her two brothers, Herschel and Manek, fled to Russia and eventually Uzbekistan, where they remained for the duration of the war. Mira's sister, Vida Malka, stayed with Estushsa and Natan until she was

deported to a work camp, most likely in Neusalz, Poland, in 1943, according to Belinda. It is believed that she died on the Death March. The only family that Mira reconnected with after the War were her two brothers, Herschel and Manek.

## OP-ED

## OP-ED: Positive social outcomes of COVID-19

Siddharth Malviya  
Editor in Chief

COVID-19. Just reading the phrase might cause you to sigh, roll your eyes and long for the days when we freely roamed the world. The pandemic has resulted in a significant decline in mental health, due to the state-enforced quarantine and fear of becoming ill.

The Knight News sat down with Dr. Barbara Moore, a psychologist at the Queens College Counseling Center, for her take on the emotional state of the average person. Moore explained that the prominent emotions amongst individuals during the pandemic are sadness and hopelessness coupled with anxiety about the future. Additionally, she emphasized the dangers of social isolation, noting that, "Some countries like Britain consider lone-

liness a high risk factor for suicide and has instituted programs to help its citizens."

In spite of all the negative factors, Moore discussed some of the positive social outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Many of the students I spoke to did really well in their courses... perhaps this was partially due to being home and not having other distractions, and having more time to do their schoolwork." Moore also added, "Some students I spoke to have a lot of contact with their friends. They've had some fun activities like movie nights and deep conversations about what they were all going through. Some students formed their own support groups with people in their own classes."

A recent study conducted by Kaia Health, a German based digital therapeutics company, seconds the notion that there are positive social outcomes to COVID-19. The

study was conducted as a survey throughout several countries. The participants were classified into two groups: one with low anxiety and social isolation, and another with high anxiety and high social isolation.

The study claims that nearly 50% of people with high anxiety and social isolation reported an improved relationship with family and friends. At first glance, this may seem like a positive statistic. Moore was quick to point out that, "Despite the fact that subjects with high isolation and high social isolation reported improved relationships, this negatively correlated with their mental well being, as reported by the study."

Junior Psychology major, Cayla Kempf, did not note a decline in her mental well being, but agreed with the study that the relationship between her family and friends improved. Kempf also mentioned that she's recently taken the time to sharp-

en her cooking skills. Senior biochemistry major, Jacky Fan, agreed with Kempf, but also noted that during this pandemic, people have become increasingly distant.

It's not shocking, though, that in this era of social media usage, people are isolating themselves. "It's important not to read too many Twitter feeds. I think that using social media, reading every article that you possibly can can decrease your sense of control and make you feel much more helpless," said Moore.

Towards the end of the interview, Moore emphasized that, "As people's anxiety about going outside diminishes, any kind of volunteer work is best to help alleviate those feelings."

# Kanye West enters, exits, and re-enters race for POTUS

Siddharth Malviya  
Editor in Chief

When Kanye West jokingly announced at the 2016 MTV Video Music Awards that he planned on entering the presidential race for 2020, nobody saw any validity to those claims. After all, he has no experience in politics, has undergone several public scandals and is associated with the Kardashian clan, otherwise known as the reality TV divas.

Shockingly enough, West took to Twitter on July 4th to announce his candidacy for President of the United States. “We must now realize the promise of America by trusting God, unifying our vision, and building our future. I am running for president of the United States! #2020VISION”, said West via social media platform Twitter. It came as a shock to the entire nation, many immediately assumed the announcement was a preconceived plan, in an effort to get Trump elected.

To provide more context, West is a well-known acquaintance of President Donald Trump. He has publicly expressed his support for Trump, donned the blood red “Make America Great Again” hat, and has visited the White House to demonstrate his allegiance to him.

Given West’s relationship with President Trump, it’s not at all a misguided notion to believe that West announced his run for the sole purpose of taking votes away from Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate. After all, West is revered for his music from the early 2000s, hence indicating a possibility of young voters showcasing their commitment to him. However, this theory was quickly debunked after West denounced President Trump and quickly withdrew his support for the man who was formerly his favorite politician.

In the midst of the uproar over West’s announcement, Tesla CEO Elon Musk publicly offered his support to



Photo: gurugamer.com

## Drawing of Kanye West in the Oval Office

West’s run for President. Musk replied to West’s initial announcement on Twitter stating, “You have my full support!”.

Though West seems to have the public in a frenzy, there may not be much hope for his campaign. West has markedly missed the filing deadline to appear on the ballot as an independent in six states, specifically New York, Texas, North Carolina, Maine, New Mexico, and Indiana.

Yet, West was adamant about proving the public wrong about his odds, despite missing some deadlines. West’s campaign filed a “Statement of Organization” on July 15 with the Federal Election Commission, which establishes his campaign team as the primary organization leading his campaign. On Thursday, July 16, he

filed a “Statement of Candidacy,” which can only be done in the event a prerequisite of raising more than \$5,000 is met.

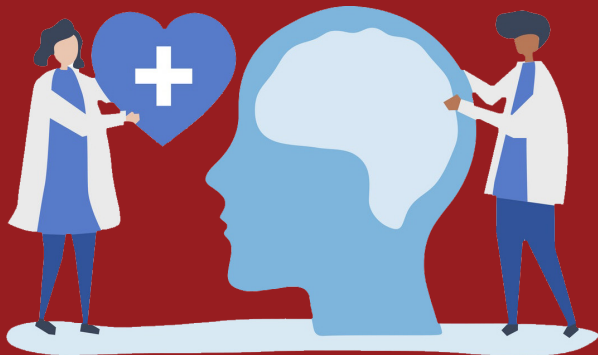
West’s run seemingly came to a swift end on July 14th when Steve Kramer, a member of West’s campaign team confirmed to New York Magazine’s *Intelligencer* that West was out of the race. Yet confusingly enough, West is still scheduled to hold a campaign event for Sunday, July 19th in South Carolina. Many are struck by West’s inconsistency and haphazard decisions.

Nevertheless, with Mr. West out of the race, there is an intense emphasis on voting for Biden amongst liberals. Trump’s controversial, and at some points, tyrannical, policies have created a culture of animosity and polarization. Marginalized communities such as immigrants & people of color have experienced the brunt of Trump’s reign.

With attempts to remove DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and international students, many citizens in the U.S are seeking a beacon of hope in 2020.

Senior Political Science major, Enrique Peña commented on the bigger picture of this whole ordeal. “There’s an uncertainty about where we’ll be in a year from now. This pandemic was just a disgraceful wake-up call for us, to understand that our current system isn’t working. We need Medicare for all, more than ever. We need to protect the environment because even more people will die if we don’t fight climate change. We need to protect our most vulnerable. And all of that is on the ballot this November. So we need to vote.”

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# Film Review: Palm Springs HULU movie

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The Knight News, July 22, 2020

theknightnews.com



Veronica Kordmany  
Executive Editor

Hulu's latest original film, *Palm Springs*, has been a blockbuster hit since its release in July 2020. Starring SNL and Brooklyn 99 actor Andy Samberg and *How I Met Your Mother* alum Cristin Milioti, the rom-com takes place on the morning of a wedding day. Again, and again, and again.

The film taps into *Black Mirror*'s area of expertise, a show well known for its eerie dystopian depiction of mankind, as it follows its two protagonists through the same day on a continuous loop.

Nyles (played by Samberg) has been stuck reliving the day of Tala (Camila Mendes) and Abe's (played by Tyler Hoechlin) wedding day since stepping foot into an infamous cave. Sarah (played by Milioti), sister of the bride, meets Nyles and rescues him from Roy (J.K. Simmons), another man caught in the time loop.

As he lays on the ground, fatally struck

by an arrow, Sarah is sucked into the time loop as well. In the aftermath, Sarah and Nyles reluctantly join forces as she takes on the seemingly-meaningless task of getting them out of their predicament.

Throughout the rest of the film, the pair navigates life in a whole new way, complete with love, redemption, and of course, comedy. The symbolism of the wedding day – the day that is repeated – is something worth noting as the viewer watches the film. It signifies all the components of marriage – trust, loyalty, and above all else, true love.

Tala and Abe, the wedding couple, are merely background actors in the true love story, which is that of Sarah and Nyles. As the pair grow closer, the hilarity of their relationship is unfolded best at the wedding reception, particularly as they interrupt multiple speeches to establish their own narrative.

According to *The New York Post*, the film holds the title of biggest sale

in Sundance Film Festival history, with Hulu and indie film distributor Neon acquiring it for \$17.5 million – “It’s easy to see why Hulu and Neon dropped all that cash on it. It’s the stuff of streams.”

Critics have raved about the phenomenal dynamic between Samberg and Milioti – *New York Times* film critic A.O. Scott writes, “Andy Samberg and Cristin Milioti star in a fresh and funny comedy that might remind you of something you saw before.”

Not all critics were thrilled by the film's content, though. Being an R-rated film, *Palm Springs* features language and attitudes toward death, violence, sex and other subjects deemed problematic by some reviewers.

Plugged In film critic Emily Clark writes, “I don’t think this is the kind of movie most folks are going to want to loop through repeatedly.”

Both reviews drew comparisons between this movie and *Groundhog Day*, the Bill Murray-led 1993 film with

a similar premise of a repeating day.

*Palm Springs* is essentially the same kind of comedy as that film – similar themes and story beats run through the plot, but they’re delivered with an updated, more current presentation.

All in all, this is a film that I wouldn’t watch in the middle of the night, when I’m bored of reruns on Showtime. This is the kind of film I would watch with friends, family, or even by myself.

Despite its R-rating, *Palm Springs* is a rom-com that needs to be watched on movie nights, for the anticipation that viewers get as the opening credits roll can only be paralleled to rising to the precipice of a roller coaster, right before the dramatic plunge.

All in all, I strongly recommend that anyone in need of a good laugh watch this film – it’s definitely worth it.



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