



BIO DEPT INVITES SPEAKER TIED TO JEFFREY EPSTEIN

QC Biology Dept Colloquium

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Outrage stirs amongst the QC community over Robert Trivers' connection to Jeffrey Epstein

Photo by 123rf.com

QC LIBRARY HOSTS BLM PANELS

The COVID-19 Project QUEENS MEMORY

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT & ANTI-RACISM IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

LIVE
TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 22
4PM EST

Series Part 1: How Can We Do Better?
Creating a More Just & Inclusive Future

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Queens Memory project hosts series of panels about diversity at QC

CAREER CENTER GOES VIRTUAL

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The Knight News sits down with Director Zavi Gunn to talk transition to virtual life.

LIVE ACTION MULAN DEBUTS

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Disney's Mulan revived on Disney+ streaming service

OP-ED: Is a CUNY tuition hike amidst the pandemic really necessary?

Veronica Kordmany
Executive Editor

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic's initial onset, finances are the biggest burden on everyone's shoulders. In such turbulent times, one would think that City Universities of New York (CUNY) would be sympathetic to those who are especially struggling to make ends meet while attending school, either part-time or full-time. However, according to recent research, the truth of the matter is that CUNY was actually incentivized to increase tuition during these hard times.

As of October 2020, my tuition bill, as a full-time student at Queens College (QC), is \$3,809.85; last semester, that number was much lower, coming in at about \$3,600. When I first saw the number, my immediate reaction was to laugh at the absurdity--surely I wasn't being charged an extra \$200 when we're not even allowed to utilize the school's facilities?

Current Professional Staff Congress and former English professor Barbara Bowen, who taught at both QC and The CUNY Graduate Center, spoke about the impact that this tuition hike has on the CUNY demographic: "An additional tuition increase will threaten access to a college education and undermine CUNY's mission to provide opportunity for the low-income and working class students of New York City." Bowen (elected president in 2000) shared in a press release published by PSC that this is one of many tuition hikes approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees that "... amounts to a tax in disguise, a tax that disproportionately hurts the poor, people of color, and first-generation students."

The Board met on July 21st, 2020 to approve a resolution that would increase tuition by \$150 per semester for all community and senior colleges.

Bowen says this latest addition is on top of the \$300 annual tuition hike, which would unfold over a five-year span.

The CUNY community was outraged upon hearing about the tuition increases, some even going so far as to instigate legal action. Three CUNY Lehman College students filed a lawsuit against CUNY, which subsequently led New York Supreme Court Judge, Eileen Rakowerto, to sign an order. This order would have prevented the \$300 tuition increase from passing on the grounds that "state law requires the entire CUNY Board of Trustees to vote on any tuition increase," as the press release explains. In response to the court hearing, the Board of Trustees commenced once again on August 3rd, and voted in favor of the tuition hike. Protestors were kicked out after 15 minutes.

One can argue that there are a multitude of private and public programs that offer scholarships, grants, and/or loans, but those are often contingent upon certain eligibility requirements, such as meeting a certain income minimum/maximum, being a part of a certain demographic, or delaying tuition payment to a later date with the threat of interest awaiting students' mere months after they graduate. After looking into these policies, I became more anxious at the thought of having to stretch out my limited finances for longer than a semester.

I definitely speak for many when I insist that tuition should be free for American undergraduates, as it is in other countries.

The fate of CUNY tuition now rests in the administration's hands. I can only hope that the administrators will unanimously see the new reality for what it is, and if they do not reverse the decisions enacted, hopefully they will at least propose some alternatives for paying the adjusted tuition prices.

A message from the Editor in Chief:

Dear Readers,

October's finally here, just a few more months until the conclusion of the fall semester. Like many Americans, I was deeply saddened by the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg fought tirelessly for women's rights, gender equality and on behalf of the LGBT community. Justice Ginsburg showed the American public that it is possible to be friends with someone who does not agree with you, as her friendship with the late Justice Antonin Scalia was proof. As the second woman to serve on the bench, Ginsburg set the bar high, looming as a powerful figure to ensure that the court defined liberty for the American public in the fairest of ways.

Ginsburg opened many doors for women across America, to get closer to breaking the glass ceiling. However, Justice Ginsburg did not open all these doors for women, just so we can allow the leadership in America to slam them shut. Please, do your civic duty as Americans and vote for leaders who can work to repair the nation.

On an unrelated note, please join me in welcoming Johnny Sullivan to the editing staff. Johnny is a junior theater major, who's been actively involved with The Knight News this year. He's been an enthusiastic face at the paper, and has thoroughly demonstrated his willingness to serve. His competency in writing journalism articles also makes him qualified for this new role. If you sign up for an article for our coming issue, there's a likelihood of working with Johnny as he begins his new role as editor!

Sincerely,
Sidd Malviya
Editor in Chief, The Knight News
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Biologist with ties to Epstein invited to guest lecture at QC Bio dept

Siddharth Malviya
Editor In Chief

Outrage spread throughout the biology community at Queens College (QC) as people had come to learn that Robert Trivers was set to be a guest lecture at the weekly colloquium. For those who don't know, Trivers is an evolutionary biologist with ties to Jeffrey Epstein, an American financier, and convicted sex offender, in addition to human trafficking.

Trivers was invited by David Lahti, professor, and evolutionary biologist at Queens College. Trivers' talk was centered around the evolutionary logic of honor killings & other atrocities including powerful psychopaths. Trivers' ties to Epstein are financial, as according to a report from Reuters, "Trivers was a friend of the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, and received \$40,000 from him to pursue research on knee symmetry and sprinting ability. Commenting on the accusation that Epstein had sexual relations with underage women, Trivers said: "By the time they're 14 or 15, they're like grown women were 60 years ago, so I don't see these acts as so heinous"

For those who don't know, honor killing, which is Trivers' focus, is defined as the killing of a relative (typically female relatives), belonging to a certain culture,

who has brought dishonor to the family. Trivers' lectures are centered around the benefit of inbreeding (i.e incest), as it makes it less likely for individuals to be killed. Trivers has proclaimed this in regards to middle eastern ethnic groups, which involve fathers imposing arranged marriages on their daughters. In the scenarios that Trivers describes, fathers are imposing arranged marriages between his daughter and a related cousin. Essentially, Trivers' lectures are centered around archaic stereotypes of middle eastern cultures that are not as prevalent in our modern society (or world).

The talk left many offended, notably Daniel Weinstein, dean for Math and Natural Sciences, and Kaitlin Kosinski, a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York (CUNY), Queens College.

Kosinski put out a message to the biology community expressing her outrage. "I find it particularly hard to stomach that he would be invited given his association with Jeffrey Epstein and his statements regarding that case given to Reuters asserting that 14 and 15-year-old girls are the same as adult women, and therefore Jeffrey Epstein's crimes were "not so heinous"." Kosinski also expressed her feelings about Lahti's choice of guest and criticized the lack of research done before

inviting Trivers to speak. "I will be perfectly frank that I am very uncomfortable with David Lahti's judgment and others in this matter with his selection to host this speaker. It took me about an hour of googling to discover these links after reading the title of the talk. No one decided to look up the research for this talk title? I cannot imagine the reasoning behind inviting him to speak. There was no possible way this talk was going to play out well."

Lahti defended his choice of guest prior to Kosinski's message to the biology community. Lahti explained that invited speakers are not part of the QC community, and are therefore not held accountable for failing to share the values QC holds.

Kosinski commented to The Knight News about Lahti's belief that there's no accountability. "We have a responsibility as scientists and as teachers to not expose students to racist pseudoscience-- we would not entertain vaccine conspiracy theorists at colloquium either. The standards we have for our community should extend to all those we invite into our community, without question. I believe that our department and the undergraduate students would be best served by speakers who are working on current projects with the highest scientific value."

Daniel Weinstein, dean for Math

and Natural Sciences responded to Lahti in a later message to the biology community. "While we of course welcome the free exchange of ideas, I would assume that we are unlikely ever to host another seminar quite like this one -- a talk which I found to be not only stunningly offensive but also almost entirely devoid of scientific content," said Weinstein.

Weinstein spoke to The Knight News in regards to preventative measures being taken to repeat the instance of inviting such a controversial guest. "I have since asked Dr. Nathalia Holtzman, chair of the Biology Department, to propose additional mechanisms, consistent with our commitment to academic freedom, rights, and responsibilities, for review of upcoming departmental seminars and seminar speakers."

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Elizabeth Hendrey, shared Weinstein's concerns for preventing a repeat of the situation at hand. "I join Dean Weinstein and the Biology Department in their desire to support academic freedom and the free expression of views, including those that may be considered controversial; however, we want to clearly state that we do not tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia, or bigotry in any form."



SECOND GENERAL MEETING

Monday October 19
During free hour



Zoom Meeting ID: 492 129 4792

A conversation with Queens College Provost Diversity fellows Weeks & Genao

Siddharth Malviya
Editor in Chief

The Knight News recently sat down with Professors Edisa Weeks and Soribel Genao, the newly selected Provost Diversity Fellows at Queens College (QC). Genao is an associate professor of Educational Leadership in the Department of Educational and Community Programs and Weeks is an associate professor of Dance in the Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance. These two professors, who are women of color, were chosen for the one-year Provost Diversity Fellowship due to their contributions to combating social justice issues.

The fellowship serves as an opportunity to allow faculty to better serve the Queens College community by taking on specific projects. Each year, the Provost selects two tenured faculty members looking to engage in academic leadership are selected for this one-year fellowship. This year's fellowship theme is centered around diversity, in light of the ongoing social justice movements across the nation such as the Black Lives Matter Movement. Professors Weeks and Genao gave their take on their journeys as women of color and of how QC can better itself, terms of diversity, and what work remains to be done to make QC a more inclusive, safer campus.

As a fellow, Weeks is tasked with looking at the QC institution as a whole, to

look at how she can generate more equity, both in terms of students accepting diversity on campus and the resources provided to them. Simultaneously, she caters catering to faculty on campus by creating a community and safe space for Black and Latinx faculty. "You say we're in the most diverse county in the entire country, so how can faculty staff and administration represent that diversity?", said Weeks.

Genao followed up by readily addressing the need for diversity in the faculty, something that matters to many of the staff members, especially those of whom are people of color. "When

crucial," said Genao. Professor Genao then went on to explain her project for the readers. "Primarily, [my research is about] the decolonizing of curriculum and pedagogy on campus". Genao hopes to re-evaluate the method and practice of teaching to be inclusive of students of all backgrounds and cultures.

She then went into how her research revealed why Black & LatinX students are hesitant coming to QC: From what she's studied, QC isn't viewed as a welcoming environment for people of color, especially in cases where a non person of color would teach a course that students



Photo: QC Twitter



Photo caption: Edisa Weeks (left) and Soribel Genao (right)

we are not being represented as faculty to students, [we]lose [our]own inspiration as representation matters, and it's

are interested in, ora curriculum that isn't culturally diverse, she recalls as a former student and current in higher education.

"When students don't envision themselves in what we are teaching them, then we are doing a disservice," said Genao.

Genao and Weeks feel pride in working with the Black Latinx faculty staff association (BLFSA), an organization which creates a welcoming and safe space for Black and Latinx faculty on campus. Genao notes that she was active in leading the charge of demanding change from the QC administration in regards to creating a more diverse and inclusive environment for faculty (and students).

While looking ahead to the future, Professor Weeks hopes that students and faculty will feel supported by the efforts of Professor Genao and herself, and that they are able to succeed in their time here.

Genao explained the reality of being one of the few black women at Queens College, at least in her department, is anything but unified. "There are 3 women of color in my department (Black & LatinX) and we look nothing alike.... our research agendas, our approach to education... yet we're always mistaken." She then provided an anecdote of a microaggression she faced in the workplace on the basis of her sex: "At a faculty meeting, my name tag was on backwards ... and because of my stature and because I am a woman of color, I automatically had to be taking minutes for the meeting."

Weeks added that she makes no apologies for being a black woman of color, adding "it's a source of power for me... and I can focus on the microaggressions but [doing so]wears me down." Weeks remarked, "look at a system and find where the weaknesses are, and you'll find opportunity".

How can we do better? Creating a more just and inclusive future

Nika Nuñez
Writer

The Queens Memory project team recently launched a three-part panel series titled, "How Can We Do Better? Creating a More Just and Inclusive Future." This series was meant to give the Queens College (QC) community a virtual platform to meaningfully discuss and raise awareness about issues regarding race, identity, civic participation, and student leadership which hopes to instill positive social reform. The panel was part of a national dialogue that was prompted by the death of George Floyd, a black man who was victim of police brutality and passed away earlier this year in May.

With a recent surge in racial animosity across our nation, protests against the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmuad Arburey in the hands of police, and rallies against systemic racism in police practices lead several prominent QC community staff, scholars, and professionals to come together for an in-depth discussion about race in

higher education in the United States. The series kicked off on September 22nd, with QC President Frank Wu serving as a moderator for a discussion about the Black Lives Matter Movement and Anti-Racism Public Higher Education.

Some of the topics discussed were the role of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests amidst the global pandemic. Enoch Jermott introduced the prominent role of social media in sharing #BlackLivesMatter worldwide. Jermott is a junior transfer student at QC and a documentary producer. Social media sites have amplified the BLM movement and bolstered tremendous activism amongst users. As a result, the social justice movement that was often overlooked in times past is now being "shoved down people's throats at work" according to Jermott.

William Sales, former director of the SEEK program at QC, offered his historical perspective about protests in the 1960s and 1970s. He explains that "the scale, distribution, composition of these protests is radically different" now than ever before. Prior to the acquisition of

mass media and technological resources, only a few hundred people rallied in cities. Now, over a thousand people of different races, gender, ethnicities and backgrounds are sharing the same goal: equality and racial justice. It's no longer just an issue amongst the Black community, but a worldwide concern. The priority of all supporters and BLM leaders is for current and future generations to make this movement permanent.

To better understand and thus learn about the shift in racial protests in history, Sales defined systemic racism as "socially constructed lies that affirm biological differences place white people as superior to African American people from the Southern US region". Differences between Anglo and African American customs were used as a pretext for white supremacists to treat people of color poorly. Racism within the American capitalist system enabled the exploitation of black people. Policies, practices and procedures, such as Jim Crow laws have disproportionately prejudiced black communities. To combat such disparaging acts, Soribel

Genao, QC Provost Diversity Fellow and professor in Education suggests that people in office and local community officials serve as outreach individuals to unify communities, ultimately empowering African Americans and their allies.

Genao then went into how the educational curriculum is not culturally inclusive. Genao argued that curriculums should be "decolonized", explaining that courses such as East Asian Studies, Latinx Studies, and Africana Studies should count towards general education requirements instead of being specialized concentrations. In other words, more professors of color should be teaching physics, natural sciences, mathematics, history, etc.

Overall, the panel stressed the importance of strength in numbers. Allyson Regis, a counselor at the SEEK program for Queens College, candidly spoke about her experience with allyship. She maintains that although allied non-colored persons have good intentions, their support is often misconstrued. To combat such loss, Regis suggests that people should remain open minded and actively listening to Black stories and experiences. She wants others to "amplify her voice rather than stifle it." Together, as a community, we can combat systemic racism and strive for equity and equality for all communities.

The Queens College Biology MA Program: How to Get in

Siddharth Malviya & Veronica Kordmany
Editor in Chief/ Executive Editor

Amid the pandemic, the future of graduate studies is blurry for most undergraduate students. The abrupt shift from in-person learning to online education has caused many to consider pausing their education as long as schools are strictly virtual. Professors are sympathetic to this fact, but are still trying to ignite a spark of light in this dark time. Recently, The Knight News sat down with John Dennehy, Deputy Executive Officer for PhD program admissions at QC, and asked him about the state of Queens College biology admissions, and how it will function for the time being.

To get into the QC biology graduate program, the prerequisites are as follows: a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0, two letters of recommendation, and a 500-word personal statement essay. Applicants are also not required to take the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). On their transcripts, applicants are encouraged to have at least 20 credits in upper-level biology, along with coursework in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and statistics. But as Dr. Dennehy explains, the admissions committee looks past the numbers: “Our approach is definitely more holistic. We aren’t simply looking at numbers. We pay special attention to what the candidate writes and what is written about them (personal statement and letters of recommendation). We also look at the level of preparation and their academic trajectory. Does the candidate show a linear academic progression or are they unfocused and aimless?”

But as any STEM major will tell you, a key component of a graduate application is research. After all, if someone pursues a PhD, they need to be committed to dedicating their life to seeking out answers. Dennehy emphasized how the overall application should be centralized around research. “The personal statement for graduate studies is not the same as the personal statement for undergraduate studies. We [admissions officers] are not interested in how your [insert family member here] illness/death inspired you to study biology. We look for evidence that the applicant is intellectually and mentally prepared for graduate school,” said Dennehy. He further explained that one’s activities during undergraduate years should be related to research. “How can you commit to a five-year endeavor without having any experience in what the day-to-day lifestyle of working in a lab or in the field is like?”

Dennehy also noted that the emphasis on research does not end in the application. It should carry into the in-

terview, where questions are centered around research experience and reasons for seeking a PhD. They intentionally look for “applicants that have a clear plan and can discuss their science background and science knowledge in a concise, coherent manner.” Additionally, as in any interview, getting a sense of the applicant’s personality is an important goal. “A candidate can look great on paper, but this can change dramatically in the interview,” Dennehy pointed out.

However, in light of the pandemic, many applicants are left wondering whether their chances of getting into graduate school have been significantly impacted. CUNY has been hurt by budget cuts, which have created fears about class reduction and a lack of resources. When asked how the budget cuts have impacted Dennehy’s job as an admissions officer, he explained that his workload has increased significantly. Elaborating, he explained that gradual budget cuts over the years have taken their toll on his day-to-day workload. “My administrative workload has exponentially increased over the past ten years. It is not especially cost-effective to pay someone a faculty member’s salary to perform work that could be accomplished by a part-timer with no specialized training.” Students around Queens College have also taken notice of faculty members being overwhelmed with administrative tasks, something Dennehy readily acknowledges. “Because of budget cuts, faculty members are routinely spending time on such tasks instead of focusing on teaching and research.”

It’s always recommended that applicants looking to learn about various programs contact the university’s admissions department for advising. Admissions officers like Dennehy have helpful insights that can better prepare students for the stressful endeavor of graduate school applications.

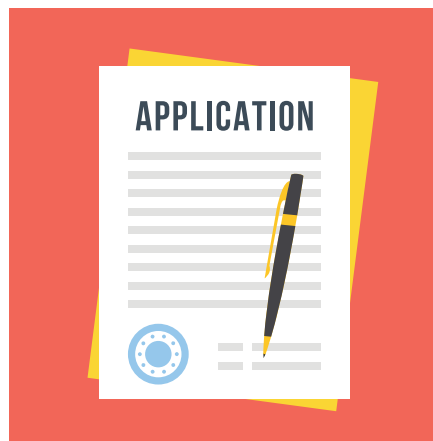


Photo: 123rf.com

The new Career Center for all your virtual needs

Arwa Ali
Editor/Reporter

The inability to communicate in person has impacted every single aspect of our community’s virtual college experience. That is why every QC department has made its own concerted efforts to provide students with the necessary support they need to easily acclimate to an online environment, and the Center for Career Engagement and Internship is no exception. The Career Center has made it its goal over the past several months to be a vital resource for our community amidst the uncertainty of a global pandemic.

The Knight News spoke to two Career Center staff members, Director Zavi Gunn and Alumni and Employer Engagement Specialist David Engel, about how their department has adjusted, what new opportunities they have to offer, and why their services are more valuable now than ever before.

Upon the transition to online learning this past spring, the Career Center was quick to strategize how to best approach providing virtual assistance. They did this by curating a survey in March that addressed the needs of the student body. The survey, which received 101 responses, showcased that students prefer to maintain communication via email as opposed to social media, are mainly available for guidance on Mondays and Thursdays between 12-2 PM, and are in dire need of finding internships and full-time work. The survey worked as a useful jumping-off point to ensure the Career Center ran their operation as efficiently as possible.

Gunn is proud of how fast her team adapted to the unnerving circumstance. “We were all resilient and quick to pivot, which made our team stronger. Our mission statement is ‘educate, engage, and empower students and alumni for career opportunities within a transforming local and global workforce,’ and that’s what we have been doing. Being a career educator you have to be compassionate, patient, empathetic, and creative. You have to think outside the box in how you solve issues.”

Engel is especially enthused about the various initiatives that his team managed to implement even while the world went virtual. The most prominent being the QC mentorship program, which he spearheaded. “We built a community of alumni, faculty, staff, and employer partners to

be able to mentor students and give them insight into the world of work. It has been a great collaboration with Alumni Affairs and Institutional Advancement.” Engel believes that bridging that connection has been fruitful because of how important it is to leverage alumni during a time where they can relate to the student’s struggles and provide much needed advice.

Engel is also passionate about the success of the Hire QC newsletter, which includes both career and health/wellness related resources. The weekly schoolwide email is simply a condensed version of the expansive opportunities available on the official Hire QC website.

Hire QC is an online career management platform where students can apply for jobs/internships and sign up for events. Once logged in, you can upload an updated resume and provide any necessary profile information so that the right employers can find you. Gunn was happy to report that there has been a 17% increase in internship offerings through Hire QC during the pandemic.

Another thing Gunn is proud of is the Career Center’s commitment to providing stipends for students completing unpaid internships. Over the spring, she helped roll out the Dr. Felix Matos Rodriguez Stipend, which was generously funded by the QC Foundation. “Being able to give students \$2400 for doing 150 hrs of internship work was phenomenal.” Winning students were able to apply for the stipend toward a summer or fall internship, which Gunn assisted in ensuring they all secure.

Both Gunn and Engel are pleasantly surprised by how well their department was able to meet the needs of students, and are able to continue doing so amidst the current crisis. From holding virtual workshops and career fairs to providing individual guidance at any hour, they have witnessed higher levels of student engagement than ever before. They also recognize that students are desperate for support and direction from professionals that care about their success, something that the Career Center never fails to supply.

If you would like to schedule an appointment with a career advisor, you can do so via the QC Navigate app or www.navigate.qc.cuny.edu. Also follow the Career Center on all social media platforms to stay up to date on upcoming events.



CUNY
GRADUATION
RATES

Photo: beyondpositive.org

Getting “Locked out” of Graduation

Serene Klapper
Editor/ Reporter

Many students enrolled in the City University of New York (CUNY) have had the relatable experience of seeing the dreaded blue square next to a course title on CUNYFirst, the student class portal, just minutes before their registration slot, indicating that a class that they wished to sign up for has already been filled. As a result, registration dates and class capacity are easily two of the most stressful factors in ensuring a fulfilling semester to follow and in some cases, a timely graduation.

For the past 30 years, CUNY has reported below-average four-year graduation rates. According to College Factual, only 56.1% of the Class of 2011's freshmen in CUNY Queens College (QC) had finished their degree by 2017. Other CUNY colleges have reported similar numbers: Medgar Evers being the lowest with only 39% of students graduating within six years.

These low graduation rates have long been attributed to factors beyond the University's control, such as that 27% of CUNY students are over the age of 25, and as a result, more likely to be working full-time or struggling to secure childcare in order to attend classes. These theories have led to the creation of programs such as “QC in 4”, a program specific to QC which serves to encourage students to sign up for 15 credits each semester to ensure they graduate in four years' time. A variety of factors such as small class sizes, strict prerequisite policies, and limited access to advisors are often credited as most responsible for hindering CUNY students in their studies and delayed graduation dates.

However, an audit released on September 1st has revealed that efforts such as these may be futile, as CUNY students simply do not always have access to the resources necessary to graduate in the expected four years. The audit, released by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, covered three years of CUNY academics and was conducted in order “to determine whether the City University of New York (CUNY) is effectively matching course offerings to student demand.”

A series of surveys conducted revealed that many students had been barred from necessary classes. One particular 2018

survey, known as the CUNY Student Experience Survey, reported that 35% of the students surveyed claimed to have been unable to register for one or more of their courses, thereby possibly contributing to the delay in their graduation. Unfortunately this issue remains prevalent among CUNY students in 2020, especially those pursuing common majors such as psychology, biology and computer science.

“When registration for this past spring opened, the only class I needed to take for my major was Advanced Experimental Psych” said an anonymous senior psychology major at QC. “It was a 20 or 25 person class and even though I had regular senior registration, I got locked out. If I had been able to take it I could have easily finished last semester, but now I'm graduating after this semester [Fall 2020] instead of last spring.”

A delayed graduation can amount to added financial expenses for students, many of whom are at a financially-sensitive point in their lives, or just beginning to support themselves. Many only qualify for eight semesters of financial aid, and most scholarship programs don't cover more than four years of tuition, so students relying on such can find themselves in unanticipated debt. The constant unreliability of securing a place in necessary courses is daunting as graduation timing can not only be a source of financial strain, but also directly impact post-graduation plans.

“Registration is stressful,” commented Morielle Tolchin, a Brooklyn College senior psychology major. “You don't know which class you're going to get or get locked out of or how it's going to impact the next year of your life. I'm nearing the end of my college career and I really need to get into the right classes in order to graduate in the spring so that I can enroll in a graduate program next fall.”

Since the audit concluded that CUNY is not, in fact, meeting its students' academic needs, it is anticipated that there will be an effort to add much needed class sections in crowded majors. Already some classes have become more lenient with regard to overtallying, but CUNY students have yet to see if more course seats will become available despite persistent underfunding and COVID-19 budget cuts.

How will New York City's budget cuts affect CUNY and our community?

Jayla Cordero
Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic that has taken over our nation has caused a decline in our economy by disrupting the city's businesses, and more importantly, our schools and public services. For months, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and state budget officials have warned that New York and local governments would have to make extreme cuts to essential services including law enforcement, fire departments, and schools due to lack of additional federal stimulus money. Within these cuts, primary education is the most recent victim of the cutbacks, causing local school districts to announce possible layoffs and moving to more remote learning in order to save money. The City University of New York schools were among the first of the university institutions within New York State to experience budget cuts, those of which equated to about \$270 million in late June. CUNY officials blame the Professional Staff Congress, the labor union who represents 30,000 CUNY faculty and staff, for the laying off of nearly 3,000 adjuncts who were not asked to return for fall semester simply because the union would not extend the deadline for returning teachers on limited-term contracts. The implications of the budget cuts in New York hit CUNY schools when Brooklyn College's administrators requested that departments cancel over 25% of fall courses, and when the two-year academic CUNY program that aids students in receiving special support to help them transition into the workforce or a 4-year college, ASAP, had to cut its funds.

These budget cuts have affected the jobs of important service workers such as EMTs, as New York City has been left with no choice but to lay off 400 emergency medical workers. According to Business Insider's article by Bill Bostock, “Bill Neidhardt, a City Hall spokesperson, told NBC News that the city ‘does not want these layoffs to happen, but this is the hole we are in without a stimulus or borrowing authority. Our EMTs and firefighters save lives every day and we are working with their unions to find personnel savings to avoid layoffs, but unfortunately all agencies will face layoffs,’ the spokesperson said. ‘Without a stimulus or borrowing authority, EMTs and firefighters will have to find personnel savings.’”

New York received \$5.1 billion from the federal government to cover COVID related costs and has already spent \$2.2 billion so far, but the state's budget plan estimates that the remaining aid will be spent by the end of the year. According to Times Union's article by Amanda Fries, she states “De Rugy and New York University Economics Professor Nicholas Economides say rather than doling out more federal aid to state and local governments, leaders should identify where expenses can be reduced, and productivity increased with fewer employees.” Economides gave their input on Cuomo's calls for federal aid by stating, “It seems to me like the governor has put all his hope on the federal money, and getting money from the federal government, and that's extremely dangerous. It's possible to do technological changes that allow you to do things more efficiently, and that seriously needs to be taken into consideration.”



Photo: Spyarm/iStock

NYC, we will bounce back

Raveena Nabi
Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic has unquestionably taken a toll on both the general morale and financial standings of cities across the United States. The vibrant and crowded New York City was hit particularly hard, suffering over 250 thousand cases of the virus and over 23 thousand unfortunate COVID-19 related deaths. As a result of pandemic guidelines, many of the attractions of New York City were forced to shut down, leading to a great deal of financial loss for both the city and its inhabitants.

As early into the pandemic as March 12, live performances across NYC were canceled due to the risk of spreading coronavirus. The financial repercussions of the decision to shut down these popular venues were immediately and widely felt. This affected not only the affluent investors and theater owners, but everyone involved in the business, including actors, musicians, stage crew and maintenance employees. The restaurant industry also took a significant hit, with empty tables cluttering popular eateries where it had once been near-impossible to reserve a seat.

“There’s no reason to do business in New York,” Michael Weinstein, owner of Ark Restaurants as well as the famous Bryant Grill & Cafe told *The New York Times*. “I can do the same volume in Florida in the same square feet as I would have in New York, with my expenses being much less.”

Brick and mortar retail stores have also encountered major financial loss as many of them rely on New York City foot traffic to stay in business. As a result of the pandemic, most were forced to rely on money made from online sales while still paying rent and taxes for large retail spaces. Although many stores have managed to stay in business, a number of major stores such as Neiman Marcus, J.Crew and J.C. Penney were forced to declare bankruptcy.

The financial and public health challenges that New York City is currently facing have led many to believe that the city will never bounce back. Some who have reached this conclusion have simply left

NYC, seeing no financial or social benefit in continuing to live in a closed city. Developing business owners have shifted their interests elsewhere, no longer viewing the city as a lucrative location to live or to conduct business. Due to high taxes, expenses have always been high for NYC residents and are correspondingly so for businesses. In light of the financial devastation of COVID-19, NYC and the state of New York may be forced to charge even higher taxes in order to recuperate their losses. This is anticipated to place more financial stress on residents of NYC and as a result there have been reports of large numbers of wealthy citizens moving out of the city in a “panic leave.” Many have decided that they will not return.

Despite these many challenges, a great deal of loyal New Yorkers still believe that over time the city will manage to bounce back. Already there is hope as small-scale indoor dining has recently returned, and the MTA has begun once again to collect fare. In addition, despite many businesses closing their doors for good, there are a great deal that are determined to persevere and resolve their losses as the economy gradually repairs itself.

“Real, live, inspiring human energy exists when we coagulate together in crazy places like New York City. Feeling sorry for yourself because you can’t go to the theater for a while is not the essential element of character that made New York the brilliant diamond of activity it will one day be again,” comedian Jerry Seinfeld wrote for *The New York Times* on Aug. 24.

“... And it [NYC] will sure as hell be back. Because of all the real, tough New Yorkers who, unlike you, loved it and understood it, stayed and rebuilt it.”

Perhaps New York City will never be quite the same but it seems many are not striving for the normal of the past. Reopening the city brings with it a new hope: one of a restored and perhaps increased vibrancy, diversity, and sense of unity for having endured so much. Although the struggles New Yorkers have faced over the course of the pandemic should not be taken lightly, NYC has remained a hub of knowledge, ideas and business through difficult times, and those who stay will ensure to keep it alive.

Remembering the “Notorious R.B.G.”, a tribute to justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Nadia Rampersaud
Writer

“People ask me, what do you have in common with the Notorious B.I.G. (a well known rapper), and I say to them, we were both born and bred in Brooklyn, New York.” Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away on Sep. 18, 2020. Ginsburg died at her home in Washington D.C. as a result of complications of metastatic pancreatic cancer.

She was nicknamed the Notorious R.B.G. by a second year law student at New York University (NYU). As Ginsburg explained in a 2017 NBC interview, “This young woman was, to put it mildly, disappointed by the Supreme Court’s decision in the Shelby County case — the decision that held a key part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 no longer constitutional.” Thus, the “Notorious R.B.G.” was born, a positive Tumblr blog to celebrate Justice Ginsburg’s dedication to the law. With her recent passing, it’s important to reflect on Ginsburg’s life and impact on our country.

Born in the spring of 1933 to a working-class family in Flatbush, Brooklyn, Ginsburg grew up watching her mother, Celia Amster Bader, provide for the family as a garment factory worker in order to send her brother (Ginsburg’s uncle) to college. This instilled within Ginsburg a great appreciation for education as she excelled in high school and went on to graduate top of her class at Cornell University in 1954. Unfortunately, her mother was diagnosed with cancer during Ginsburg’s teen years and did not live to see her child’s high school graduation, but her teachings live on through Ginsburg’s legacy.

Ginsburg overcame many barriers imposed by sex discrimination in the 1950s as 1 of 8 females in a male-dominated class of 500 Harvard Law students. When she attended in 1956, it had only been six years since Harvard Law began admitting women students. Even the dean chastised Ginsburg and her seven female classmates for “taking a man’s spot.” Nevertheless, through the misogynistic comments, gender-based discrimination and crude remarks, Ginsburg prevailed. She became the first ever female member of the *Harvard Law Review*, an esteemed, student-run journal of legal scholarship. Her personal struggles admirably never hindered Ginsburg’s ability to excel in her roles as a student, a mother or a wife, especially when her husband Martin Ginsburg was diagnosed with testicular cancer during her first year of law school.

Despite her prodigious academic achievements, Ginsburg continued to face great discrimination while attempting to enter the workforce as a female lawyer. She remarked at one point that if she and Justice Sandra Day O’Connor had not faced any sex discrimination, they both would’ve been partners at a law firm.

She took a job as a professor at Columbia and became the first female at the school to receive tenure. During the 1970s Ginsburg built upon her status as a feminist icon “as the director of the Women’s Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), for which she argued six landmark cases on gender equality before the U.S. Supreme Court.” Ginsburg was hellbent on dedicating herself and her career to “the equality of all people and the ability to be free.”

R.B.G. became the nation’s second woman to be appointed as Supreme Court Justice, serving from 1993 until her recent passing, where she earned the nickname “The Great Dissenter” for her “fiery, impassioned” dissents against her fellow judges’ regressive decisions. Ginsburg recognized the need to move this country and its belief systems forward as she spent her time as Justice making choices and fighting for laws that would warrant equality for those in the LGBTQ+ community, undocumented people, disabled people and, of course, women in the workplace. Ruth Bader Ginsburg made her mark on this nation’s history by returning power back to the people. The little girl from Brooklyn who built her life upon the significance of one’s independence has provided just that for so many.

Ginsburg taught us that it’s possible to be close friends with those who have completely different opinions than oneself. She demonstrated this through her great friendship with the late Justice Antonin Scalia, who passed away five years ago. Scalia’s interpretation of the Constitution and American law was far different than Ginsburg’s, and when asked about how he could be close friends with someone so radically different in thinking than his own, Scalia replied, “I attack ideas, not people... and if you cannot disagree with your colleagues on the law as a lawyer, you ought to get another day job.” Ginsburg often noted that the bipartisan spirit in America has been absent since her confirmation to the high court in 1993. Scalia and Ginsburg’s friendship is a reminder that there is hope that America will heal from the ongoing crises our nation is facing.



Photo: commons.wikimedia.org

From left to right, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, Sonia Sotomayor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elena Kagan

Trump and Biden clash in a free for all at first presidential debate



Photo: ABC News

Siddharth Malviya
Editor In Chief

It was only a few months ago when vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris proclaimed at a Democratic Party presidential primary debate that “America doesn’t need to see a food fight; they want to know how we’re going to put food on the table.” Her wishes didn’t come to fruition at the first 2020 presidential debate, which took place on September 29th.

Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden and Republican nominee President Donald J. Trump took

to the stage for the opening presidential debate ahead of November’s elections. The debate was moderated by Chris Wallace, American journalist and anchor of the Fox News program Fox News Sunday.

One thing remained consistent throughout the debate: each candidate repeatedly attacked the other. Trump’s attacks centered around the notion that the Democratic Party is far too radical to keep America sustained. Biden’s attacks centered around claims that Trump’s supposed ineptitude as president has led to a high COVID-19 death

toll and severe racial injustices against Black and indigenous people of color.

The debate started off by addressing the hot topic on everyone’s mind: the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the vacant seat she left behind in the Supreme Court. Trump asserted that he’s well within his rights as empowered by the United States Constitution to appoint a nominee, pending Senate consent. Biden responded by insisting that the victor of the presidential election should have the privilege to appoint a new justice. He further explained that the American people ought to have some say in the process, and that translates to electing senators who’ll confirm the appointment made by the next duly-elected president.

The debate was civil for the Supreme Court nominee segment. However, that quickly changed as the topic transitioned over to healthcare. This portion wasn’t exactly coherent, as neither candidate adequately addressed the issue at hand and Wallace failed to control the debate. Trump attacked the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as ObamaCare, while Biden overemphasized the importance of voting.

However, the lack of productivity in the healthcare segment paled in com-

parison to the discussion on race. Biden opened by saying that the egregious Charlottesville protests, specifically the white nationalists taking to the streets and inciting violence, prompted him to run for president. He insinuated that “equity, equality and the Constitution” would be key in tackling the main components of systemic racial issues in our country. Trump responded by bragging about being able to “take back” cities that allegedly were overrun with violent protests (Seattle and Minneapolis, for instance, according to Trump), all the while citing the need for law and order.

Trump’s recent COVID-19 diagnosis prompted concerns about his being able to participate in the next debate, scheduled for October 15th. The Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) put out a statement indicating that a virtual debate would not occur. “On October 8, CPD announced that for the health and safety of all involved, the second presidential debate, scheduled for October 15 in Miami, would be conducted virtually. Subsequently, the campaigns of the two candidates who qualified for participation in the debate made a series of statements concerning their respective positions regarding their willingness to participate in a virtual debate on October 15, and each now has announced alternate plans for that date. It is now apparent there will be no debate on October 15, and the CPD will turn its attention to preparations for the final presidential debate scheduled for October 22.”

Harris and Pence go head to head in latest vice presidential debate

Siddharth Malviya & Veronica Kordmany
Editor In Chief / Executive Editor

Kamala Harris, senator and Democratic nominee for vice president, took on the Republican nominee, Vice President Mike Pence, live on the debate stage on October 7th, 2020.

With viewers feeling uneasy about the upcoming election in the aftermath of the presidential debate, it’s safe to say that the vice presidential debate was certainly cordial. The topics included the Supreme Court vacancy left behind by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s passing, the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, racial injustice, and President Trump’s tax controversy.

Harris opened by condemning Trump’s administration for their failure to handle the coronavirus pandemic, in light of the 200,000+ death toll. “They’ve [the American people] had to sacrifice far too much because of the incompetence of this administration,” said Harris, explaining that the Trump administration’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to many Americans suffering financially and emotionally. Pence responded later, while discussing the coro-

navirus vaccine: “The fact that you continue to undermine public confidence in a vaccine, if a vaccine emerges during the Trump administration, I think is unconscionable.” Pence made a bold statement shortly thereafter: “Senator, I just ask you, stop playing politics with people’s lives.”

On the topic of trade, Harris criticized the political tension between the United States and China, adding that “America lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs” as a result of a “so-called trade war with China.” Harris called out the president for not supporting frontline workers enough by minimizing the seriousness of the coronavirus, as he’s done by discouraging people from wearing masks.

In addition, on the subject of the coronavirus, the plexiglass dividing the VP candidates were a startling reminder of how much American life has changed. CNN noted how, in every shot of Harris and Pence, the barriers were undeniably noticeable. Gone unnoticed by Pence, however, was the fly that sat on his head for a small portion of the debate and quickly went viral on social media.

Kamala Harris later went on to slam Pence and Trump on the Supreme Court



Photo: BBC News

vacancy. The focal point of the Supreme Court vacancy issue is the decision of whom will be appointed to the vacant seat. Pence asked what the Biden administration would do, in terms of adding seats, if Judge Amy Coney Barrett is confirmed to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s chair. All Harris responded with was that the Senate should not proceed with Judge Barrett’s confirmation: “Joe and I are very clear: The American people are

voting right now and it should be their decision about who will serve on the court.”

But at the conclusion of the vice presidential debate, political commentators stated that the debate did little to sway American voters. If anything, it provided original content for some quality memes, mostly about the fly that attached itself to Pence’s hair and quotes from Harris such as “Mr. Vice President, I am speaking.”

The disturbing truths of competitive cheerleading

Chloe Sweeney
Editor/ Reporter

Netflix “Cheer” star Jerry Harris was arrested on Sept. 17, 2020, on charges of child pornography and sex solicitation from minors.

The internet became obsessed with the world of competitive cheerleading this past January as a result of Netflix’s docu series titled “Cheer.” “Cheer” follows a charismatic, spunky team of cheerleaders from small town Corsicana, Texas, as they pave their way to the national cheer championship. Throughout the show, viewers came to know and love several members of the team, with perhaps the most memorable being Jerry Harris. Jerry, 21, was not only an incredibly driven athlete, but also the ultimate hype man for his teammates and the biggest softie. It’s for these reasons that Harris’s arrest on such heinous charges came as an immense shock to “Cheer” fans.

The accusations against Harris came from 14-year-old twin brothers, Charlie and Sam (Their last names were withheld due to their minor status). Charlie

alleged that when he was just 13, he received a follow request from Harris, then 19, on Instagram. This was the beginning of their communication, one where Harris frequently asked for nude or sexually suggestive photos from Charlie, some requests of which Charlie obliged, believing Jerry would be upset with him when he refused. Charlie stated that he explicitly told Harris his age. The two cheerleaders would often see each other at competitions, and Charlie shared that there was even an incident in February 2019 where Harris cornered him in a bathroom and failingly pleaded for sex.

When Charlie’s mother, Kristen, became aware of Charlie’s relationship with Harris, her initial decision was to simply cut Charlie off from Jerry and not go to the police. Months later, Kristen changed her mind when she discovered that both her sons had been sexually assaulted by one of their coaches. At that moment, Kristen realized that this situation was bigger than just Harris. She reported the “Cheer” star to the US All Star Federation (USASF), the largest organizer of youth cheerleading and dance. After the first reporting had no

effect, she reported Harris again, had a phone call with USASF’s VP, and finally wrote the VP an email. Still, she got nowhere. It wasn’t until the boys’ story was released into the media that Harris was finally suspended from All Star activities.

Not long before this, USA TODAY had coincidentally begun an investigation into competitive cheer’s apparent leniency towards protecting their cheerleaders. The news outlet found that close to 180 people within the cheer community had previously been charged with sexual misconduct towards minors, but USASF had done nothing about it. Even more horrific, 74 of those 180 people are registered sex offenders. USASF claims to make the safety of their cheerleaders a priority, but the vice president even admitted to Kristen during their phone call that, in regards to USASF’s sexual prevention policy that had been implemented across all their gyms, she’s “certain that people don’t do it.”

The US All Star Federation leaves its individual gym owners in charge of who is allowed to be around their cheerleaders. Sometimes, however, the gym owner is the one to be concerned about. One ex-

ample can be found at a USASF gym in Ohio, owned by Mishelle Robinson. Robinson, 44, was convicted of sexual battery of a high-schooler in 2006 and was listed on Ohio’s sex offender registry until this past March. Mishelle is upfront about her past with every member of her gym, and she believes there’s nothing wrong with her operating a gym, as she has never offended. It’s unclear if, and how long, the USASF has known about this. A coach in Texas, Kale Dunlap, did not own a gym but was hired into one despite previous sexual assault charges. Even after being indicted, the USASF did not ban him, and he continued to frequent their gyms until he was sentenced to prison months later.

The USASF’s lack of attentiveness to the individuals owning and coaching within their gyms is deeply concerning. With hundreds of offenders’ names being identified and more survivors coming forward with their stories, awareness of this deep-rooted issue within the cheering world is starting to gain traction. In regards to USASF gyms’ attempts at bettering their programs, a woman in the cheer community commented, “... it’s not always for the safety of the athletes. It’s more of just how they can win.”

As of Sept. 21, Jerry Harris remains in custody, and the FBI is asking any more victims of his to come forward.

Controversy surrounds the release of *Cuties* in the United States

Ralph Matamoros & Samantha Galvez-Montiel
Writer / Editor/ Reporter

Despite a great deal of controversy surrounding its release, the film “Cuties” was made available to viewers in the U.S. in early September. Regardless of the negative reputation that has developed around the film and its director, Maïmouna Doucouré, “Cuties” tells the unique coming of age tale about Amy, an 11 year old girl struggling to define what growing up and womanhood mean to her.

When Amy learns that her father is marrying another woman and bringing her to live with the rest of the family in France, she begins to deliberately reject her family’s values and seek guidance elsewhere. Around the same time, Amy befriends a group of girls known as the Cuties. Amy initially meets the girls while grocery shopping, where she sees them playing tag in the aisles of the store. As she watches them running seemingly carefree around the shop, Amy starts to get the idea that joining these girls would grant her freedom from the family val-

ues she has come to resent. However, although the Cuties seem to provide a source of liberation, in reality they are just another group that seeks to control Amy and her developing set of morals.

A main theme of the film surrounds Amy’s search to define womanhood, a concept prioritized both in her family’s values and those of the Cuties. The steps toward becoming a woman at home are dramatically different from those required to be a woman in the Cutie’s world and Amy is forced to try to reconcile the two contradicting influences throughout the film. As a result of this confusion and a lack of information from home, Amy and the other Cuties begin to conflate womanhood with what they find online: sexualized dancing and similar behaviors. The director of the film continuously addresses the issue that children are sent mixed messages about who they should be as they grow up, and does not shy away from having Amy and the other girls partake in provocative behaviors in order to convey her powerful message.

Much of the debate regarding the film was sparked by the initial poster Netflix used to advertise, with some Netflix users

accusing the corporation of oversexualizing the young actors in the film and in extreme cases, normalizing pedophilia.

“Responding to the controversy regarding Maïmouna Doucouré’s *Mignonnes/Cuties* is challenging, because while the film itself deserves attention, given its insightful take on race, immigration, and adolescent female sexuality, the backlash had absolutely nothing to do with the film at all,” said Professor Amy Herzog of Media Studies at Queens College.

“Netflix did a great disservice to Doucouré with a promotion campaign that undermined her entire project, taking the most sensationalized imagery of young girls dancing out of context.”

Although the film does take a stance against sexualizing children, there are several scenes throughout the film that can certainly make the viewer uncomfortable. The scene showing the Cuties dancing in their competition has been particularly criticized for sexualizing the young actors, resulting in many people threatening to cancel their Netflix subscriptions.

“There is a long history of European films in general and French cinema in particular prompting a backlash and

ensorship efforts in the U.S.” said Professor Benjamin Strassfeld of QC Media Studies who has also been following the controversy surrounding the movie.

“Cuties is only the latest, but the fact is that when films move across national and linguistic borders, things get lost in translation, with, in this case, American audiences frequently failing to understand the nuances of foreign-made films like *Cuties*.”

The film certainly has been sparking a reaction in the United States. Republican Senator Ted Cruz of Texas called for the Department of Justice to open an investigation into whether Netflix broke federal laws against child pornography, and on September 23rd a grand jury in Tyler County, Texas indicted Netflix on charges of “promoting lewdness.” However it is contemplated that despite the controversial nature of the film, much of the backlash the movie has received is due to how it was advertised, as well as a disregard for the fact that it’s a foreign film with very different taste than American culture, rather than the actual content.

How social justice protests have found their way into sports

Holden Velasco
Writer

2020 has been a turbulent year. Though comparatively small in relevance compared to other fields such as the health care system, sports took a huge hit throughout this hell-stricken year. From the passing of the National Football League's all-time winningest coach Don Shula, the tragic death of National Basketball Association legend Kobe Bryant, and the complete stoppage of all professional leagues, sports have seen some unfortunate events unfold during the past ten months. However, the sports world is not an isolated land mass far off in the distance, but rather, a very large oak tree implanted on the paradise of an island we call home. The roots of pop culture and politics are intertwined with sports, and this has never been more apparent. On Aug. 23, Jacob Blake, a Black man, was shot seven times in the back by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This inundated national outrage, as the country was already over the boiling point after the death of another Black man, George Floyd, who's name is now linked with fighting the system to create equality. The athletes had had enough.

On Aug. 26, the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks were slated to face the Orlando Magic in Game 5 of their first round playoff series. However, it was nearing

tip-off, and the Magic were on the court by themselves as the Bucks did not appear from the locker room. It was announced the Bucks would not play the game in protest of the Blake shooting. Speculation started to grow that the Bucks would have to forfeit a game. In a true move of unity, the Magic denied the forfeit. Bucks Senior Vice President Alex Lasry tweeted, "Some things are bigger than basketball. The stand taken today by the players and organization shows that we're fed up. Enough is enough."

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association announced all games for the day were postponed. In a meeting that took place later the same night among the players and coaches within the NBA's COVID-induced bubble to finish out the season, a vote was taken as to whether or not to cancel the season. Only teams, the Los Angeles Lakers and LA Clippers, voted to do so. That movement was unsuccessful, but strikes started to seep to other leagues soon after.

Major League Soccer players staged walkouts that ended up cancelling five of six games that were supposed to be played. The Women's National Basketball Association postponed all games that day, and the games on the 27th would follow. On the 26th, a game between the Milwaukee Brewers and Cincinnati Reds of Major League Baseball was postponed as well. The two other games



Photo: John Minchillo / AP

The Day the Sports World Went Loudly Silent

scheduled for that day (Seattle Mariners vs. San Diego Padres, Los Angeles Dodgers vs. San Francisco Giants) were also postponed. The next day, all seven MLB games were postponed, with the New York Mets placing a "Black Lives Matter" shirt on home plate at Citi Field.

In a somewhat surprising move, the National Hockey League postponed games on the 27th and 28th that were a part of the Stanley Cup playoffs. The NHL has typically steered away from social issues, and it is rare to see a NHL player kneel during the national anthem, which made this move all the more loud.

Outside the athletes and organizations, there was a lot of disagreement on the boycotts. Some believed it to be

a beautiful social movement that should be held in the highest regard. Others believed it was a shameful move that should be frowned upon. Once again, the term "shut up and dribble" was being thrown around social media to deteriorate the boycotts and players' personal beliefs. However, they're humans first before players. They have the right to be upset, just as you and I do; the only difference is they have a larger platform to project their grievances. They're not entertainment slaves. Jump forward to today, where you can see the "Black Lives Matter" slogan to some capacity across every sport, where the National Football League has "It Takes All of Us" and "End Racism" behind every end-zone, and where conversations are being had, conversations that will drive change, change to bring about unity and equality.

New Playstation and Xbox Consoles to be Released in November

Ralph Matamoros
Writer

With the holiday season approaching and the need for people to stay home due to the coronavirus, excitement has generated from the upcoming release of the new Playstation and Xbox consoles, with preorders for the consoles selling out within minutes.

The PS5 and the PS5 Digital Edition are set to be released on Nov. 12, with the two models costing \$499.99 and \$399.99 respectively. According to Sony, the two models are "identical" with the only difference being that the PS5 has a disk drive, and the PS5 Digital Edition does not.

Both models are backwards compatible, meaning that you can play PS4 games on the PS5. However, the PS5 Digital Edition is only backwards compatible with digital downloads of PS4 titles, whereas the PS5 can play PS4 disks, as well as upgrade PS4 disks to digital PS5 games. For people looking to upgrade from a PS4 to a PS5, the stan-

dard PS5 is the better model in terms of being able to play old PS4 disks and having the ability to watch Blu-rays and DVDs via the disk drive — which might be appealing if you are buying the PS5 as a family console. If you don't own any PS4 disks, the PS5 Digital Edition might be the better choice because it has the same capabilities as the regular PS5 but at a lower price: at the expense of losing the disk drive.

Similar to the PS5, two different Xbox models are hitting shelves on Nov. 10. The Xbox Series S will only cost \$299. However, the more powerful system of the two is The Xbox Series X, costing \$499. There are clear differences between the two models, the most obvious being the color: the Xbox Series X is black while the Xbox Series S is white.

Looking towards gaming as a form of entertainment and socialization during this time, many people are wondering which console out of the four is the better buy. The Xbox Series S is noticeably smaller than the Xbox Series

X and even the PS5. Similarly to the PS5 Digital Edition, the Xbox Series X does not have a disk drive, meaning that you'll have to buy games digitally.

However, just like the PS5, the Xbox Series X and the Xbox Series S are backwards compatible. According to Microsoft, both new Xbox models are compatible with Xbox One, Xbox 360, and Original Xbox games, which gives you thousands of games available to be played on either new model. This means Xbox Series X is the better system compared to the PS5 if you want to play a wider range of games, as the PS5 is only backwards compatible with PS4 games.

Unique to Xbox, the Xbox Series X and Xbox Series S are compatible with the Xbox Adaptive Controller, a controller that can be customized with other switches, buttons and joysticks for gamers with limited mobility. There is no official controller like this for the PS5.

The two systems are similar. Designed to immerse players in their games, the PS5 and the Xbox support ray tracing, which is an algorithm used to "trace the path that a beam of light would take in the physical world" an article from WIRED reported. Ray

tracing allows light in video games to behave like light in the real world, meaning that games can have more realistic shadows and reflections, which enhances visuals and the overall gaming experience.

The upgraded processors in the new consoles push performance capabilities, with the target for both Xbox and PS5 being set at 120 frames per second. With the power of high frame rates and ray tracing, games not only look great but they also run smoothly. The only differences between the two consoles is that the Xbox Series X has a slightly stronger processor and has 1TB of internal storage which is much more compared to the PS5's 825 GB (Eurogamer).

With similar capabilities and pricing, the only argument for buying a specific console is if you're looking to play PS5 or Xbox exclusive titles, like "Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales" or "Halo Infinite". If you're looking to pick up a new console at launch, it is recommended that you sign up for email notifications when pre-orders are available at stores like Best Buy or GameStop.

Gene Therapy: New tools in our treatment arsenal



Gloria Stoyanova
Columnist

Perhaps some of the most important contributions to science is the ability to manipulate DNA. A notable discovery is humulin, the genetically modified insulin. By reducing the cost and increasing the safety, the treatment improved the quality of life for millions of patients. Since humulin's approval in 1978, hundreds of gene therapy treatments have been approved. Scientists can insert a normal gene to compensate for the defective one an individual was born with.

Over the past few decades, all the developments in gene therapy are countered by religious, ethical, and socioeconomic concerns over its misuse. The most prominent argument against gene therapy is whether we should edit the genes to treat disease. It is often regarded as unnatural and dangerous because we cannot foresee the effects down the line. The idea of picking and choosing your genes leads to comparisons between gene therapy and eugenics. It is import-

ant to note that the eugenics movement sought to increase desirable qualities of select races, whereas gene therapy seeks to improve the quality of life for patients.

Current drugs for a lot of diseases merely treat, rather than targeting the source of the illness. The vast majority of diseases have a genetic component. This makes it so critical to continue developing new therapies. People value their health and if gene therapy can improve the lives people would have had, then it's worth it. There are therapies for hemophilia, sickle cell anemia, and certain kinds of cancer. If gene therapy is regarded as a form of enhancement, then consider all the other things people do to change themselves: plastic surgery, cosmetic improvements, diet and exercise. Scientists in the United Kingdom have been working to treat mitochondrial diseases by creating three parent embryos. This is a type of in-vitro fertilization that takes a healthy mitochondria from a third parent. Because the mitochondria, usually inherited only from the mother, has its own DNA, it can be said that the child has three parents.

With gene therapies, we are changing

the course of evolution. Treating diseases at the level of DNA once seemed like science fiction. With all of the recent advancements in science, it is possible to turn it into a reality. Despite the ethical concerns, the number of treatments approved by the FDA show that they have potential to improve people's lives.

The treatment is only as accessible as it is affordable. Novartis Pharmaceuticals' new therapy Zolgensma made headlines for its hefty \$2.1 million price tag. It is meant to treat spinal muscular atrophy; a muscular degenerative disorder where the patients only live a few years. Not all insurance companies cover Zolgensma, leaving families wondering how to acquire this life saving treatment. This is the most expensive therapy out there, but highlights how cost can leave families scrambling to provide relief for their children. The cost of all gene therapy medications should be made affordable so medication can do its job of improving quality of life. There is the fear that only the wealthy will have access to gene therapies.

Photo: thalassaemia.org

Live action remake of *Mulan*: How does it compare to the original?

Ashley Gines
Writer

The live-action Disney film *Mulan*, originally supposed to be released April 2020, was instead pushed back to stream on Disney Plus beginning this past September due to the pandemic. The film was mainly just a rumor for many years before it was set for production with a lot of the original material from the film taken out. Director Niki Caro commented, “I mean, back to the realism question – we don’t tend to break into song when we go to war. Not that I’m saying anything against the animation. The songs are brilliant, and if I could squeeze them in there, I would have. But we do honor the music from the animation in a very significant way.”

The film received a lot of criticism due to the director’s choices because I, like many fans, enjoyed *Mulan* because of the music and mythical creatures. This

led to the movie already having a division amongst its fans between those who wanted to see this new revamped version and those who believed that some things should just remain the same. I was somewhere in the middle when watching the film. The original movie was very much a staple in my childhood, that of which made me feel powerful and strong as a young girl growing up. I was weary to see a version of such a classic without “I’ll Make a Man Out of You” to make me feel the adrenaline of *Mulan* training for war, or even the comedic essence of Mushu and Cricket. However I was able to pull myself together during the film and came to the conclusion that I didn’t need music to feel *Mulan*’s emotions during that sequence. The action in the film is the highlight despite most of it occurring during the film’s climax.

Despite the lack of music, I still en-

joyed the film, and I especially appreciated the addition of *Mulan*’s sister. It was interesting to see her as an older sister in this film as opposed to being an only child in the original film. It added more depth to the level of responsibility she must have felt within her family, especially when her father was called to war. That brings me to the concept that stood out the most during this remake of *Mulan*: honor. It’s likely the most used word throughout the film and captures the emphasis of that ideal within the traditional Chinese culture. Honor determined your family’s worth and status within society, and bringing honor to her family was the one thing that drove *Mulan* throughout the whole film. It is a very selfless and powerful motivation that drives the character throughout the film and makes her easy to root for.

After watching the film, my immediate instinct was to look at reviews online and

see how well it rated. However, instead of seeing news about the quality of the film, the main topic was the lead actress Liu Yifei and the trend #BoycottMulan. Days after the film’s release, *The Guardian* reported that Liu Yifei had shown support in previous years for the Hong Kong police’s mistreatment and harm towards many of their citizens. This upset me, seeing that this was overshadowing whatever success the film could have had. It is upsetting when people show so much anger towards others’ opinions and beliefs. I in no way agree with Liu Yifei, but at the same time the idea that we must scrutinize a statement from a year ago to harm the success of countless others who worked on the film is unfair. I do believe that if people were to look past that, they would see the film for what it is worth and not who it stars.

Music review: Bob Dylan’s *Rough and Rowdy Ways*

Johnny Sullivan
Writer

One of the many things that define Bob Dylan is the frequency of which his public persona changes. At various times, he has assumed the roles of philosophizing folk hero, bluesy beat poet and sentimental country crooner. On “*Rough and Rowdy Ways*,” Dylan’s latest album that was released this past June, he has quite comfortably settled into one of his most compelling niches to date: the wizened old man, giving valuable advice on life to all who are willing to hear. Dylan avoids such clumsy attempts at ‘relatable modern music,’ which have plagued recent music-producing efforts made by contemporaries like *The Rolling Stones*. I was pleasantly surprised by the depth and ambience found within the album and would recommend that fans, not just of Bob Dylan but also of music that strays off the beaten path, give it a try.

To be precise, this album demands monastic patience from its listeners. Its shortest track, Disc One’s “*Black Rider*,” clocks in at a substantial 4:13, while the album’s closer, “*Murder Most Foul*,” is a 17-minute marathon, the longest song in Dylan’s entire catalogue. Still, those who are persistent enough to listen cover to cover will be lavishly rewarded. What this album lacks in energy and catchy hooks it more than makes up for with thought-provoking, surreal imagery.

Dylan has done a good job of writ-

ing songs that work in the context of the album as well as on their own. “*My Own Version of You*,” in which he masquerades as Dr. Frankenstein, is a welcome reminder that Dylan has not, with age, lost the sense of humor that gave songs like “*Motorpsycho Nightmare*” and “*Leopard-Skin Pill-box Hat*” their inimitable charm. In addition, the aforementioned “*Black Rider*” showcases refreshingly uncommon chord changes that represent a stark departure from the blues progressions with which Dylan entered the musical pantheon in the mid-’60s. This latter category of Dylan’s songs also finds itself well represented with the raucous “*Goodbye Jimmy Reed*,” featuring a cameo appearance by Dylan’s fabled harmonica playing. As nostalgic as this song is, it feels out of place among the deliberate, steady music throughout the album, especially right before the arresting “*Mother of Muses*”.

The album ends with its obvious crown jewel, the sprawling “*Murder Most Foul*”. Across 17 minutes, Dylan recounts the killing of former president John F. Kennedy (the titular murder) and addresses all of the soul searching that America, as a nation, has done in its wake. Where “*I Contain Multitudes*” was largely introspective, “*Murder Most Foul*” turns an eye to shared experiences, specifically the ability of music to effect collective emotional and spiritual healing. The song ends with a long list of songs and musicians comprising the American

tradition of popular music, advising the listener to “play” each one. With its final line, “Play ‘*Murder Most Foul*,’” it’s as though the song, having just concluded, commends itself to that same tradition as a gift to the public and the world.

The brilliance of the song is twofold. Firstly, there are the lyrics, intelligent and meaningful yet organized with attention to repetition and rhyme at levels only Bob Dylan could reach. Secondly, and more distinctly, there is the song’s tempo. The instruments, including the hypnotic strings and soaring piano, don’t keep time (not for most of the song, anyway). Instead, they play according to the tempo Dylan sets with his vocals. When he reaches a new line, the instruments follow suit. Dylan’s the one telling the story here, and the story (and the song with it) progresses at his leisure. This device is executed to captivating effect. I feel as though I’m sitting at a

crackling campfire with Bob Dylan, with him regaling me with tales of America as it was, as it is and as it figures to be.

If you go into “*Rough and Rowdy Ways*” expecting the youthful fire of an album like 1965’s “*Bringing It All Back Home*,” you will be disappointed. Bob Dylan is almost 80 now, and whatever righteous indignation he had then is absent from his current music. In its place, though, he’s gained something arguably more valuable: experience and all the wisdom it confers. With wisdom, Bob Dylan has put together a new album that is my pleasure to review and highly recommend.

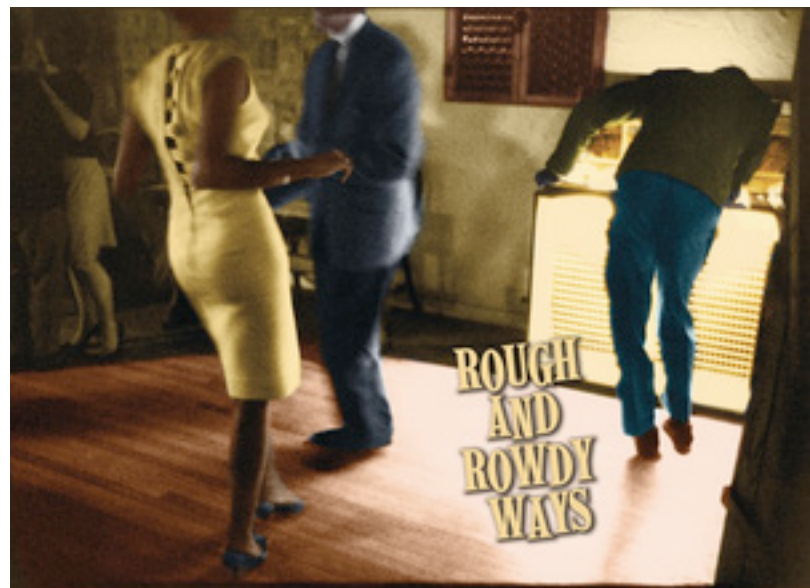


Photo: Sony Music