



# CUNY STUDENTS FIGHT BACK IN 2020 ELECTIONS



Photo by 123rf.com

### SA EVENT SPARKS BACKLASH

#### What Matters w/Tamika Mallory

A Discussion on Social Injustice  
Hosted by Student Association  
Wednesday,  
10/14 at 6:15pm live on [YouTube](#)

"Tamika Mallory offers bold, inspiring ideas and strategies for creating social and political change, while rallying audiences to fight for human rights, civil rights, and equal rights for all."



Tamika Mallory

SEARCH QUEENS COLLEGE STUDENT LIFE ON [YouTube](#)

**SEE PAGE 5**

QC Student Association Instigates Outrage in Jewish Student Community

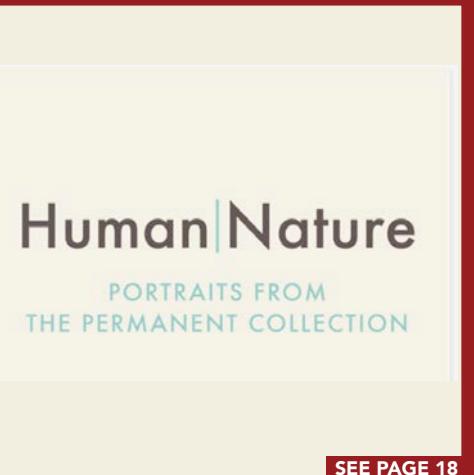
### TKN EVENT RECAP



**SEE PAGE 4**

TKN hosted Vogue's Beauty Editor, Celia Ellenberg and QC Alum Amir Khafagy

### QC VIRTUAL ART EXHIBIT



**SEE PAGE 18**

QC Godwin-Ternbach Museum hosts first art exhibit since COVID-19 pandemic

# CUNY faculty union proposes strike

WHEREAS, more faculty and staff have died during the COVID-19 pandemic at CUNY than at any other university in the country, and New York City's tens of thousands of COVID-19 deaths have disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx communities, including the families of CUNY students and workers; and

WHEREAS, CUNY's executive leaders celebrate the university as one of the most diverse in the country, with 70% of its student body made up of students of color, yet fail to implement an agenda that advances racial justice; and

WHEREAS systemic racism and persistent bullying have for many years created unsafe and unhealthy working conditions for thousands of PSC members, and members impacted by these conditions have been pressing for them to be urgently addressed in bargaining; and

WHEREAS, CUNY has failed to dedicate adequate infrastructure and financial resources to hire, promote, and retain Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty and staff, or to take any serious steps to combat systemic racism and bullying; and

WHEREAS, librarians, College Laboratory Technicians, Higher Education Officers, and other staff have been called on and continue to face pressure to return to workplaces that put them and their households at risk of serious illness or death; and

WHEREAS, CUNY's administration cut thousands of adjunct and staff positions over the summer, leaving many workers without income or health insurance in the middle of a pandemic; and

WHEREAS budget cuts, layoffs, hiring freezes, and larger class sizes have drastically increased workloads for those still employed at CUNY, resulting in real pay cuts and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions; and

WHEREAS, these cuts and increased class sizes have negatively impacted CUNY students, who are unable to access needed course options or to get the personalized support they need from overworked staff and faculty to succeed on their path to a degree, even as they struggle with online learning and face growing food and housing insecurity and mental health challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS budget cuts have threatened those facilities and programs that most support CUNY's diversity, including ethnic and gender studies programs and opportunity programs like SEEK; and

WHEREAS, even as the CUNY administration implements massive cuts and continues to threaten students with increased fees and tuition in the name of austerity, it is holding millions of dollars in unspent federal CARES Act money, has increased executive administrative spending, and has failed to demand that the state and city invest in CUNY by increasing taxes on the wealthy and redirecting funds spent on policing and

prisons; and

WHEREAS in August 2020, the PSC published ten demands to save lives, save jobs, and save CUNY, and warned that if CUNY management did not meet those demands by August 26, the union would consider all options including "further legal and legislative action, votes of noconfidence, and preparation for a strike"; and

WHEREAS CUNY management has not met these demands and instead is threatening further budget cuts for spring 2021 that will negatively impact CUNY workers and students through a continuation and deepening of layoffs, non-reappointments, and possible retrenchment of faculty and staff, along with hiring freezes, shortened job contract terms, loss of health insurance, and increased workloads and class sizes; therefore be it

RESOLVED that we, the members of the PSC Delegate Assembly, direct the PSC Executive Council to allocate all necessary union resources and funding to immediately launch a campaign to prepare the membership for a possible strike, including creating an alternative dues collection system and a robust militancy fund, supporting the activation of strike readiness committees on every campus, increasing organizing capacity and directing PSC organizing staff to help mobilize and support rank-and-file members to take militant job actions, and holding a strike authorization vote of the full membership; and

RESOLVED that this campaign and militancy preparation, including strike readiness committees, must prioritize the active inclusion of rank-and-file PSC members from all job titles, recognizing that respect for true diversity across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, disability, nationality, job title, experience, and other factors strengthens our collective analysis and capacity to fight for our demands and to build the solidarity within and beyond our membership, including with students and the broader NYC community, that is crucial for a successful strike; and

RESOLVED that strike demands should incorporate the union's ten demands to save lives, save jobs, and save CUNY, as well as concrete measures to combat systemic racism and bullying in CUNY workplaces, with all demands to be developed in consultation with directly impacted union members who have already been working collectively on these issues; and

RESOLVED that the PSC launch a public-facing campaign that makes clear that our members are preparing to strike because we reject the current and future erosion of wages, working conditions, jobs, healthcare, course options, and student services at CUNY, as well as continued administrative inaction against systemic racism and bullying, and urges the public to support us in advancing an agenda of racial and social justice and defending the CUNY mission of educating the whole people of New York.

## A message from the Editor in Chief:

Dear Readers,

I'm going to spare you another welcoming message that reminds you the pandemic is still ongoing, and just hope that for the students reading this, midterms went well.

I'd like to extend a thank-you to the staff and writers for this issue. As always, the consistency in our work has been key to keeping The Knight News going through these tumultuous times.

I'd like to make one note about the article regarding CUNY students impacting the 2020 election cycle; it was truly wonderful to hear from the three student organizers I spoke to about their activism. It reminded me that there is still hope for our society, and I hope that message comes across as you read the article.

Thank you again to all the people who worked to help this issue come together. Anyone interested in being a part of the team should email [info@theknightnews.com](mailto:info@theknightnews.com).

Sincerely,

Sidd Malviya

Editor in Chief, The Knight News

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Queens College Student Union LL35

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# How CUNY students impacted the 2020 election cycle

Siddharth Malviya  
Editor In Chief

The civic engagement this election cycle was unlike any other. With the City University of New York's (CUNY) student body being some of the most vulnerable people to the consequences of public policy, it's no surprise that student advocates took to organizing this year.

The Knight News spoke to Navjot Pal Kaur, a CUNY Baruch College graduate in political science who was extremely active this election cycle. Kaur is described as an "organizer by trade" by Smitha Varghese, former legislative director of the University Student Senate. Kaur talked about the various ways she went out to encourage people to vote, from calling citizens in her local district to directly knocking on doors while campaigning on behalf of Bernie Sanders's presidential bid. She also started a blog called "Kaur Republic." As she puts it, "A lot of our politics aren't being represented the way they should be. ... A lot of gatekeepers in our community continue to sell out to the highest bidder. That blog serves as a push back against the establishment forces and serves as a vehicle for young Sikh individuals."

She reflected on Hillary Clinton's race in 2016, and her loss of the popular vote in Michigan by 10,000 votes. Kaur views the situation as 10,000 people deciding it wasn't worth going to polling sites to cast their ballot. When Kaur went out organizing this year, she said, "I really emphasize the fact that people have their own political power... [and that] accountability doesn't just stop at the ballot box, it continues into the legislative session."

Kaur's message is one that resonates strongly with Yisroel Goldberg, a sophomore political science major at Queens



Photo: Yisroel Goldberg

College. Goldberg recently campaigned for president-elect Joe Biden in Florida, a "swing" state (one that isn't definitively associated with one political party). When asked why he would campaign during these tumultuous times, Goldberg cited the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right rally, where far-right supporters harmed civilians protesting the rally. Biden noted that President Donald Trump's response to the incident ("There were very fine people on both sides") prompted him to run.

"Biden stood against anti-Semitism [and white supremacy]," Goldberg said, explaining that this strongly resonated with him and eventually led him to campaign for Biden as a field organizer in the Orlando region.

Goldberg reflected on CUNY's impact on his motivation to get involved. "Because of how diverse CUNY is, it definitely opened me up. Coming from a monorothodox Jewish community... and being in a more diverse school... seeing the fear and what another 4 years would've meant to my peers, it was incumbent upon me to take a stand and do as much as I possibly could."

Whereas Goldberg and Kaur were able to be actively involved, the reality for many CUNY students has dramatically shifted. Senior political science major and student activist Enrique Peña spent his time helping out behind the scenes, using his bilingual skills in Spanish and English to translate the messages of various candidates, notably assemblywom-

an Catalina Cruz, to help convey their messages to the Latino community. Peña explained that during the pandemic, his circumstances drastically changed, as was the case with the majority of CUNY students. Peña, who's now working full-time while attending Queens College as a full-time student, lamented the pandemic's restraint on his ability to campaign to a larger extent. Nonetheless, he hopes that his contributions were worthwhile and that they helped those looking to understand the candidates' values.

Goldberg shared his hope for what civilians, particularly the younger generation, take away from this election. "I hope that, because of the success of this election, young people can now understand that on a local or national level you can

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# An insider's look into the world of beauty editing with Vogue's Celia Ellenberg

**Akampreet Kaur**  
Writer

The Knight News kicked off its highly anticipated virtual speaker series with esteemed guest Celia Ellenberg, beauty director of Vogue. On Wednesday, October 21st, Ellenberg appeared on zoom with a warm smile and was more than willing to share her vast knowledge and experience of being in the beauty industry for 15+ years.

Ellenberg grew up in Philadelphia and went to Washington University in Saint Louis for her Bachelor's degree and later went to Oxford University to study literature. As a 22-year-old straight out of college, Ellenberg recalls be-

ing the oldest intern when she started work in NYC. Although being an intern wasn't financially fruitful, she did three part-time jobs in order to appease her addiction to journalism, which she considers being completely worth it. "It is a balancing act to be an entry-level intern and being in New York," she says.

One of her first jobs consisted of managing Style.com, the first-ever fashion website people could visit to see runway shows.

In 2008, without any budget, she helped design and build its online home that displayed its beauty vertical. She also worked as a freelancer for some time as she navigated working in different spaces of the beauty world to find where she could best lend her skills. In order to not feel burned out, she highly advises writers

to step out of projects in order to offer the best work possible. Everything she learned from those early experiences prepared her for what would be an opportunity of a lifetime: working for Vogue.

In 2015, Ellenberg was officially hired as Vogue's new beauty director. As a director, Ellenberg's authenticity is what sets her apart. "It's [working for Vogue] a part of my life but not my entire life" she explains. In fact, most of her friend circle is not part of the beauty industry, which she finds refreshing. She recognizes the importance of having diverse people with unique outlooks around her because it forces her to be more aware of issues outside of her own realm of knowledge. "I get the ability to be inside and outside the beauty world," she says.

Ellenberg believes that this allows her to think outside the box and introduce exciting socio-cultural topics to Vogue.

When asked about brainstorming ideas for Vogue, she states that it is a delicate balance of spotlighting artists from social media that can connect to new readers, yet also writing stories that engage with the older audience. "I get the ability to be inside and outside the beauty world." She desires to bring more perspectives and offer a cultural aspect. Her main goal as a writer has been to focus on exploring socio-cultural output which she states have paved her success. She hopes to shine a light on the beauty world and offer credit for the perspectives she uses to show the view of the world, inside and outside of beauty.

Ellenberg's success is a testament to what dedication and drive can accomplish. She's an inspiration to all young female writers that no matter how strong a glass ceiling may be, it can in fact be shattered.

## Finding your voice amidst the noise: QC alum Amir Khafagy offers young writers insight into navigating the world of journalism

**Arwa Ali**  
Editor/ Reporter

For a long time, Amir Khafagy was told that his dream of being a journalist-much like being a filmmaker- was unattainable. From gatekeeping in big newsrooms to the financial unpredictability of freelancing, the odds were stacked against him in every which way. And yet, he made it his mission to chase his deep-rooted passion for storytelling and breakthrough every pre-existing barrier in journalism. On Wednesday, November 11th, Khafagy virtually met with several Knight News staff writers to share his inspiring path to journalism and discuss the unique perspective that has set him apart when reporting on local and national hot button topics.

As a kid, Khafagy always knew he wanted to tell stories regardless of how they manifested. Although making movies was his first passion, it was quite an expensive hobby, which is why writing felt like the most natural second option. It allowed him to be creative with limited

resources. Of course, he didn't realize it was a viable career choice until college, the place where he also discovered what his niche would be. Whilst obtaining a bachelor's degree in Urban Studies and a master's degree in Urban Affairs from QC, Khafagy realized that he had a knack for writing about urban development. It was then that he had the brilliant idea of transforming his term papers into reporting style articles and submitting them to various local publications like City Limits. The success he garnered as a student journalist gave him the confidence to eventually pursue it as a full-time job post-grad.

It's no surprise that Khafagy was able to find his voice through the lens of diverse urban issues. Growing up in Jackson Heights, Queens to a multicultural Muslim working-class family, he always understood the complexity in trying to navigating those identities within a metropolitan area. In explaining his relationship to the urban experience, he claims: "I live, breathe and think cities. I know the streets. I know what makes it tick. I could spend hours observing the urban environment and how it shapes

people's thoughts and perspectives. That's something I was always drawn to."

Along with being from a diverse background, Khafagy's activist past has also played a major role in informing the sociopolitical issues he chooses to cover. In fact, as a college student, Khafagy was thoroughly involved in movements like Students United for a Free CUNY and People Power, both of which fought for a more equitable academic environment. From writing about tuition and immigration to public housing and labor laws, Khafagy's ten-year-long work in community and labor organizing has given him a level of insight that has only further authenticated his present-day reporting.

When discussing his experience as a freelancer and how it differs from being part of a singular news outlet, Khafagy maintains that he enjoys the freedom and flexibility of being his own boss. On the flip side, he acknowledges that there is a level of instability and lack of legal protection that comes with the job. "Freelancers are a reserve pool of labor and so there is no incentive to make them a full-time journalist," says

Khafagy. "I'm a journalist in exile. I'd rather be in a newsroom, but newsrooms by and large are closing shop. There are more journalists per capita in New York City than there are newsrooms."

The glass ceiling that exists in Khafagy's chosen field is not going to stop him from continuing to push the envelope for issues he believes deserve attention. He encourages all prospective writers to embody that same sense of drive and not be disheartened by invisible roadblocks. "If you really have a vision of why you want to be a journalist, what your interests are, and what kind of beat you want to focus on, you will be successful. Especially people of color from working-class backgrounds, it's really important for us to get into journalism so we can really change where the stories are going and center people who look and talk like us."

If you would like to learn more about Amir Khafagy and support his work, check out his website: <https://www.amirkhafagyjournalism.com/>.

# Queens College Student Association instigates outrage in Jewish student community

Veronica Kordmany  
Executive Editor

On October 14, 2020, a dramatic uproar rose from the QC Jewish community when students learned that social activist and notorious anti-Semite, Tamika Mallory, was a guest speaker at an event held by the Queens College Student Association (SA). The Knight News conducted a thorough investigation on the allegations at hand and spoke to local leaders in the QC Jewish community for their take on the matter.

According to the Washington Post, Mallory was asked to resign from the 2019 Women's March over allegations of antisemitism, yet it is public speculation that her term had already expired prior to the request that she step down. Mallory's controversy dates back to her involvement with the nation-wide Women's March. She and three of her co-organizers, Linda Sarsour and Bob Bland, were eventually fired from the Woman's March over allegations of anti-Semitism. In 2018, Mallory angered and shocked the Jewish community for her public allegiance with and praise for the notorious Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. According to National Public Radio (NPR), Farrakhan has a long history of anti-Semitism, and has made comments ranging from denouncing the legitimacy of Judaism (calling it an 'elaborate lie' and a 'theological error') to conspiracy theories for many of the world's problems.

Junior Jewish Studies major and undergraduate student senator Alexander Kestenbaum took to the student senate floor on November 5, 2020, to confront SA leadership over the situation and address Mallory's alleged antisemitic past, after his initial comments were deleted during the livestream. When called upon by the Chair Pro Tempore of the student senate, Kestenbaum began his account of that night and the many emotions felt by the rest of the Jewish student community. His testimony, which can be found publicly available on the QC Student Senate resources page, centered around the lack of communication between SA and their constituents that led to this event occurring. His intent, as he said in the recording, was to receive an apology from the Student Association about their negligence and to start a collaboration between the SA and the Jewish organizations on campus. Hopefully speaking, this partnership and progressive dialogue would prevent this problem from occurring again.

SA President and junior sociology major Zaire Couloute responded to Kestenbaum, citing that while she condemns antisemitism, there is a larger dialogue to be had. Couloute argued that

Mallory is not anti-Semitic, explaining that Mallory's words were taken out of context. Dwayne D. Jones, Director for Student Development and Leadership at Queens College, defended the event hosting Mallory and his censorship of Kestenbaum, noting that, "I blocked your [Kestenbaum's] comments because the conversation we were having at that time was about Black Lives Matter, it wasn't a conversation about antisemitism," further adding, "we [Student Life] can have a conversation [and event] about antisemitism [at another time]."

Couloute, concurring with Jones, explained that they had met with Chabad and Hillel, two of the main Jewish groups on campus, to address their concerns. Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer of Chabad confirmed that whereas the Student Association's leadership did not reach out as of yet, Vice President of Student Affairs Adam Rockman and Assistant Vice President Jennifer Jarvis did. Kestenbaum pleaded for more transparency between the SA and the Senate going forward, in order to prevent a recurrence of this situation. After the debate shifted back and forth multiple times, both parties ended the Zoom call with no substantial agreement reached and much left to discuss.

Couloute responded to the situation days later via a public statement on Instagram. A brief excerpt from the statement says, "We at the Student Association strongly denounce Racism, Sexism, and Anti-Semitism, and will work to have more intersectional programming to highlight the struggles shared by our various marginalized groups [...] as a student body, we never want any students to feel left out and silenced." The full statement is available on The Knight News website, as well as on the SA social media platforms.

This elongated, heated exchange goes to show how fragile race relations are in modern-day America, as the shackles of centuries-worth of racism and religious persecution slowly come off. While neither side has made any official statements as of now, the general consensus is that there will be some type of dialogue between groups sometime in the foreseeable future. Queens College has always been a place of comfort and inclusivity for all people, and hopefully events like this will serve as learning experiences for the future.

Please visit [www.theknightnews.com](http://www.theknightnews.com) for more information and to see the QC administration's and the SA's respective responses.

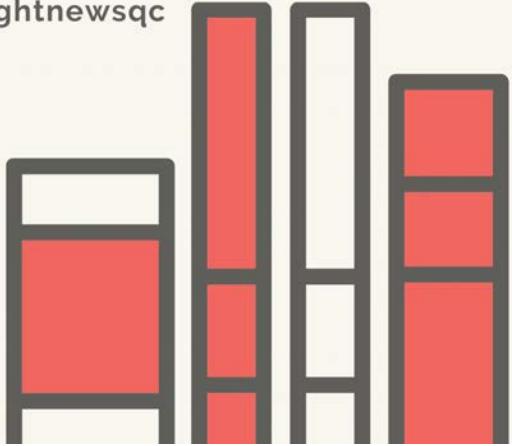


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# QC's psychology department seeks to adjust major requirements

Johnny Sullivan  
Editor/ Reporter

A newly uncovered curriculum proposal revealed that the psychology department has been considering dramatically changing its major requirements. According to an anonymous source at the Academic Senate, the proposal would adjust the performance requirements in several Gateway courses necessary to the completion of the major. Specifically, the minutes show a wording change in the description of the major, in which the "C" grade requirement is stricken and replaced with a "B-". In addition, the requirement is narrowed from all courses taken for the major to core courses. Finally, the department's proposal raised the minimum GPA required to remain a psychology major from 2.00 to 2.50.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee requires that all proposals be submitted with justifications for the changes. The justification submitted by the psychology department addresses "disturbing trends" they have observed among students in the major. The Psychology professors wish to promote "excellence in the program" and in concluding their proposal, state that, "we believe that these standards are necessary to ensure students achieve mastery and prepare them for their future endeavors beyond their graduation."

Robin Tassler, psychology major of the class of 2022, expressed her support for the proposal, acknowledging that its intentions were in the right place: "For those

students who plan on entering into the field of psychology, a policy with a passing grade of a C for foundational courses is doing them a disservice. In order to advance in the major, it makes more sense to have a passing grade that indicates at least somewhat mastery of the material."

Jeff Beeler, chair of the psychology department, shed some light on the fate of the proposal. Speaking through email, Beeler reiterated that "the motivation is to ensure that students do well in this series of courses that build upon each other successively." He revealed that the Offices of the Dean and the Provost had raised concerns regarding how many students would be affected and how [they] would address and help students affected by such a change; the figure cited by Beeler was "5% of our students". For this reason, the proposal would be shelved until the feedback from the aforementioned offices could be reviewed and the proposal subsequently reevaluated. He reaffirmed that the ultimate goal of the department and its proposal is "to facilitate better student outcomes."

Concluding his email, Beeler extended the following invitation to students in the psychology department: "As the new chair of the department, my goal is to facilitate more communication between students and us. This remains a goal, but has been severely hindered by COVID. If students have questions or concerns, they should feel free to reach out to the department at qc\_psychology@qc.cuny.edu."



Photo: 123rf.com

# How are college presidents handling COVID-19?

Daniel Lubofsky  
Managing Editor

When pressed about the potential pressure to begin filtering students back onto campus after several months away, Queens College President Frank H. Wu was blunt in his answer: "Please don't come to campus."

This straightforward response may lack the sense of hope one might expect from an administration member, despite its roots in science over preference. The same applies to all of President Wu's decisions since the pandemic forced students of QC into online schooling last March. Only a specific handful of science and art classes have continued in person, with wellness check protocols put in place to ensure maximum safety.

Regardless of how much students or even President Wu, himself, may want to get back to campus, he acknowledges the importance of listening to experts. "People can have any opinion they want" Wu maintains, "But there are also facts, and those facts are that this is a disease, right? It spreads. [...] We will follow the science and what is safe."

Not all colleges and universities have prioritized safety when planning for the fall semester. Between April and July, the American Council of Education surveyed roughly 300 college presidents and asked them, among other things, what their most pressing concern was for the upcoming fall semester. Safety protocols related to COVID tied for sixth place, with only 29 percent of the vote. Other concerns included the mental health of students and faculty (No. 1 and 3 respectively) as well as spring enrollment numbers (No. 4) and fundraising (tied for No. 6).

President Barbara Jean Morris of the State University of New York at Oneonta resigned from her position in October after the school reported over 700 COVID cases since opening on Aug. 17. While

other SUNY schools enforced testing before the semester, Oneonta chose not to test or quarantine students upon their arrival and instead sought to enact preventative measures only once the rise in cases had rendered such steps too late.

"I believe President Morris should have handled COVID much better," Oneonta student Eryn Kenney told CNN, "Most SUNY schools required testing before the semester started. My sister goes to SUNY Plattsburgh, and testing was required."

University presidents did not expect they would have to become health experts overnight. That is why the current most successful school administrations are those whose actions confess the gap in their knowledge to better inform difficult and inevitable decisions.

In speaking with President Wu, the word "team" was used often. Our Zoom conversation included several members of the team he has proudly relied on, including chief of staff Meghan Moore-Wilke and Vice President of Student Affairs Jennifer Jarvis. Moore-Wilke tends to students' unique at-home needs and Jarvis helps coordinate many of QC's in-person classes.

"One of the things that you learn as a leader is it is important to say 'I don't know the answer to that question,' President Wu said, "Part of what I had to learn over time is how to delegate and to be an effective leader means getting out of the way of real experts."

"This is a moment, if you ask me, for empathy. The great leaders of nations where they have contained the COVID rate... they have leaders there who have been honest, who have been candid. If I'm gonna make it through, if my family's gonna make it through, or your family is gonna make it through, or my neighbors and co-workers, they have to understand I am going to be lookin out for them."



Photo: ClubRunner.com

# Majors that are producing the smallest number of graduates and why

Nika Nuñez  
Writer

As an undergrad, you will inevitably hear some STEM majors drone on about how difficult their major is. So, it begs the question, what makes their major so hard? And what is STEM?

STEM majors encompass science, technology, and mathematics. More specifically, this umbrella term is inclusive of natural (biology, chemistry, physics), behavioral (neuroscience, psychology), and computer and information sciences. Some of the crucial benefits of majoring in chemistry or physics include training in critical thinking, learning, and analysis. There are a variety of possibilities for students with STEM degrees.

Here at Queens College, The Knight News caught up with Dr. Cherrice Evans, an associate professor of chemistry, to enlighten readers about the myths, truths, and applications of STEM majors, most notably chemistry.

While these majors attract many undergrads every year, many students fail out of the major and do not graduate with a Bachelor's of Science degree. Evans explained that it starts with the foundation STEM majors build in high school. During those 4 years in high school, teachers will make courses far too

easy, as they'll provide worksheets with fill-in-the-blanks and other methods that cause the student to develop weak study methods. Evans also commented that the pace of the semester can be rough for students fresh out of high school. As she explains it, "Because a semester tends to be 12-14 weeks long, STEM courses cover 1 chapter per week under the preconceived notion that students will be diligent- writing notes, reading/annotating chapters, creating study guides and asking questions." Being over-coddled in high school inevitably leads to failing out in college.

According to Evans, another issue that arises is that the majority of students have not taken advanced placement courses, so the rigor of course material becomes overwhelming. Students tend to struggle with these subjects due to a lack of understanding of the material being covered and poor time management skills.

Student involvement in STEM outside of class is also very prevalent. The QC Future Healers of America Club's president and senior neuroscience major David Musheyev spoke with The Knight News. Musheyev spoke highly of the opportunities and advantages the club has to offer for its students. He explained that networking and making connections can increase your odds of graduating. The Future Healers organization offers information sessions from



Photo: 123rf.com

various graduate schools (e.g. med, vet., etc.). Musheyev notes that these information sessions and meeting directly with admissions officers can help students gauge what they need to do to succeed.

Clearly, there's a lot of factors that go into succeeding in STEM. One factor that seemingly goes unnoticed is the culture between the students in STEM. As an observer from the outside, it almost seems like there's this hyper-competitiveness for STEM majors to get a career before 25. Students tend to rush through semesters, taking 5 or more class-

es at a time, all in an effort to complete things quickly, regardless of what grade they get, so long as they pass. This newly defined standard is one that probably contributes to STEM majors failing out.

Although STEM careers may sound daunting, the right amount of support, dedication, and application will ensure success. Whether you are a freshman at QC or a senior deciding upon a graduate program, there are communities and groups here to offer a helping hand as mentors and friends.

## The Library is now open to reservations for the fall semester!

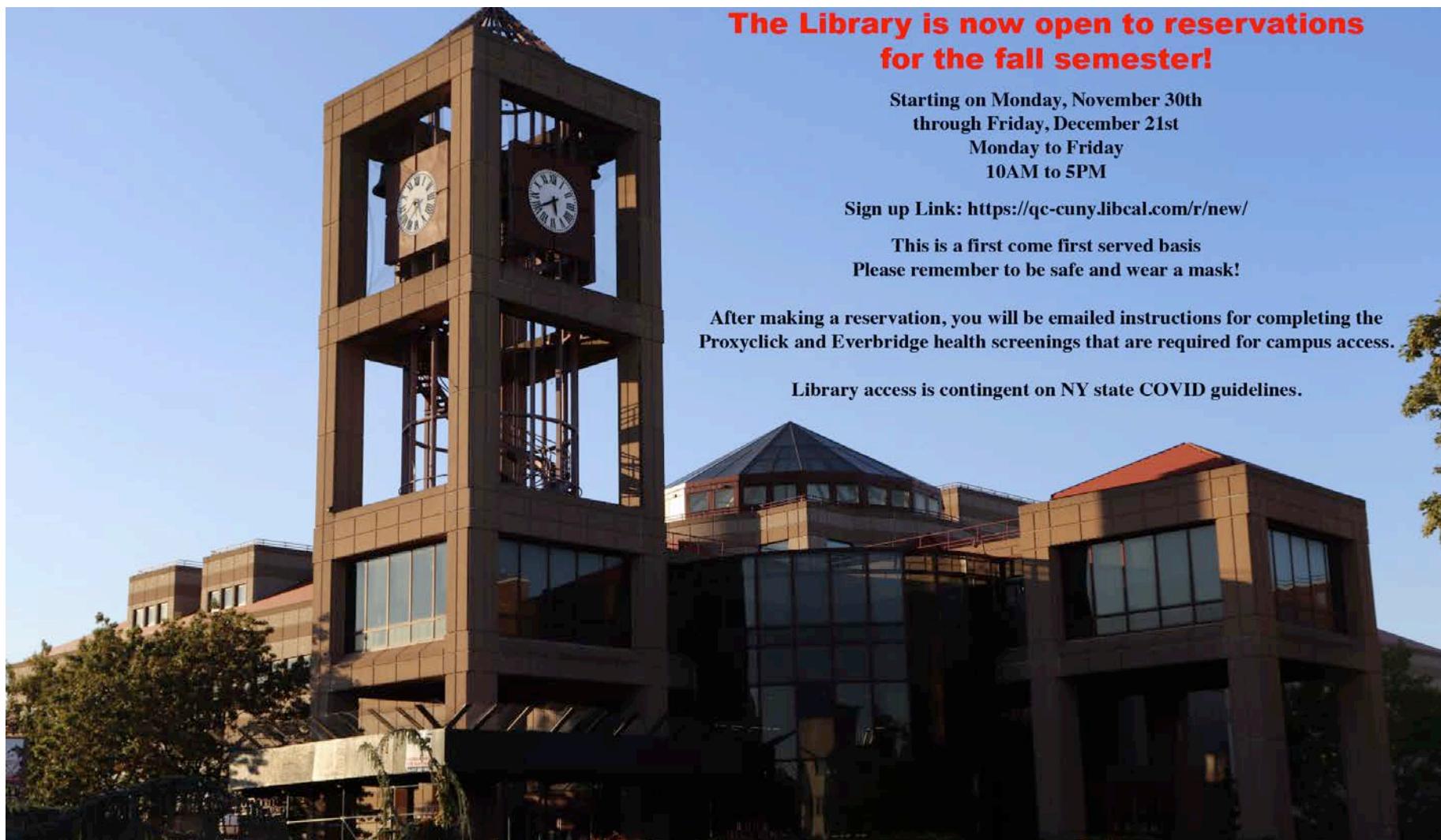
Starting on Monday, November 30th  
through Friday, December 21st  
Monday to Friday  
10AM to 5PM

Sign up Link: <https://qc-cuny.libcal.com/r/new/>

This is a first come first served basis  
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# CUNY Dean resigns “my resignation was a profound act of self-preservation”

**Samantha Galvez-Montiel**  
Editor/ Reporter

The dean of City College’s architecture school, Lesley Lokko, has resigned as dean after less than a year for “crippling workload” and racism, the New York Post reported.

Lokko resigned as dean of the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture at City College after being appointed in June 2019. She explained to the Architectural Record, “My decision to leave Spitzer after less than a year is fairly straightforward: I was not able to build enough support to be able to deliver on either my promise of change or my vision of it.”

The Architectural Record reported that Lokko saw a lack of respect and empathy for Black people. “No job is worth one’s life and at times I genuinely feared for my own,” Lokko said. “Race is never far from the surface of any situation in the U.S. Having come directly from South Africa, I was not prepared for the way it manifests in the U.S. and quite simply, I lacked the tools to both process and deflect it.”

“The lack of respect and empathy for Black people, especially Black women, caught me off guard, although it is by no means unique to Spitzer. I suppose I would say in the end that my resignation was a profound act of

self-preservation,” Lokko explained.

Our very own Norka Blackman-Richards is the director of SEEK, a program to help African American, Latino, working-class and immigrant students by supporting them in college studies, has told The Knight News that she’s sat with Black women in the following weeks of Lokko’s resignation. “The general consensus, sadly, was how well we could relate to the reason behind her stance,” Blackman said. “The commonality of finding ourselves at the crossroads of wondering if our professional gains were worth the sacrifice. That we all had considered leaving our jobs to preserve our ‘selves’ at some point.”

Blackman made it clear that as a Black woman, she can relate to how Lokko may get tired of an environment that makes it harder to do a job they love. “In fact, it is not unusual for Black women to be working in and or leading areas that are perpetually underfunded, and understaffed. We also deal with the routine professional micro-aggressions of having our contributions overlooked or diminished.”

However, this wasn’t the first time race has become an issue among the administration at the school. Back in June 2018, Michele Baptiste, the college’s diversity dean who is black, said she became the third administrator to be fired by Vincent Boudreau, the school’s pres-



Photo: The Guardian

ident, in recent months. One of those let go was black and the other Hispanic.

“We would have been thrilled had she been able to see these changes through to their completion, but have accepted her resignation with deep regret,” Boudreau said in a statement.

Our educators of color must not go unnoticed and underappreciated, we can’t let another Lesley Lokko have to choose between respect and pursuing a career.

“We work within systems that do not know how to support loyalty,” Blackman said. “Systems that are created to compensate people (many times under-compensate women of color) for hours of work, but will consistently overlook brilliance.”

“A system that is still performative in its address of inequity. A system that is sadly still steeped in supremacy ideals in a climate that is steadily demanding that these be overturned.”

## Mental health matters: What CUNY is doing to support its students:

**Nika Nuñez**  
Writer

As the COVID-19 global pandemic persists, CUNY students and other students nationwide continue to grapple with prevailing uncertainty, fear, anxiety and depression. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention defines mental health as our emotional, social and psychological well-being. Mental health has experienced a sharp overall decline as a result of the widespread effects of coronavirus. For students, as they continue to attend classes physically or via online platforms, the pandemic continues to affect mental health.

The City University of New York is a network of vast and expansive urban public universities; according to the CUNY website, the university system ac-

counts for the largest such network in the country. CUNY serves 500,000 diverse students across New York City. In the 2020 spring semester, CUNY conducted a student survey asking students about their thoughts on COVID-19. The survey showed that 40 percent of students reported feeling nervous, anxious or on edge for more than half of the days in the two weeks prior to the survey. At least one-third of the students who responded said that for more than half of the days during the same period they felt uninterested and unenthusiastic when performing tasks or activities they once enjoyed. They also reported feeling down, depressed, helpless or were unable to stop worrying. The figure increased from 25 percent of students reporting stress, anxiety and lack of interest in activities in 2018, an alarming 8 percent overall uptick.

CUNY’s decision and announcement to expand mental health services for students comes alongside an upsurge in COVID-19 cases. The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or the CARES Act, provided CUNY with \$250 million in aid to be used for a variety of purposes including economic support for students, reinvigoration of online infrastructure and professional training. Only \$5 million is reserved for the improvement of mental health services across CUNY campuses inclusive of community colleges. With these funds, the provision of virtual counseling sessions will increase and the training and certification of mental health specialists and counselors will be carried out.

Although the global pandemic has both encouraged the modification of mental health services and expanded

the modes of access to them, the growth of these services will positively impact students beyond the global health crisis. The investment in more technology will allow specialists and professionals alike to hold teletherapy sessions as counseling services acclimate to the rapidly advancing technological age. Per the Gotham Gazette, virtual and digital training will be implemented CUNY-wide.

If students are feeling down, due to the pandemic or otherwise, there are many resources available in times of crisis. You or someone you know can reach out to a local campus counseling center; alternatively, or in addition to accessing campus resources, you can call NYC Well, a free mental health service hotline that connects people to crisis experts. The number to call is 1-888-692-9355 (NYC-WELL). You can also text WELL to 65173.

# Defeating the odds: CUNY grad turned powerlifter paves the way for aspiring paraplegic athletes

Arwa Ali  
Editor/ Reporter

If someone told Garrison Redd in 2006 that he would one day be an athlete training to participate in the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games, he may not have believed them. After being shot by a bullet on the right side of his chest during his senior year of high school, Redd had no choice but to give up his dream of dominating a college football field. And yet even paraplegia couldn't take away Redd's natural athleticism and drive for success.

Because of the number of boundaries

that exist for individuals with physical disabilities, Redd's once-intense passion for sports disappeared after becoming paralyzed from the waist down. It wasn't until years later that he conjured up the strength to attempt various wheelchair-friendly sports. Out of everything he tried, powerlifting ultimately called his name.

Redd began seriously competing in para powerlifting after meeting John Gaglione, head trainer for the Team USA Paralympic powerlifting sector. They met at Gaglione's gym in Farmingdale, Long Island, where Gaglione trains athletes in both perfor-

mance and strength. It was then that Gaglione agreed to work with Redd and prepare him to compete professionally.

Mary C. Hodge, a U.S. para powerlifting coach and powerlifting faculty member at Logan University, believes Redd's hard work will pay off eventually. According to CUNY Athletics, Hodge reported that she feels strongly about his ability to be a contender for the Paralympic powerlifting team in Paris 2024. "In the last few years, I have seen him grow tremendously athletically, and I think he has great ability as a competitor," says Hodge.

When he isn't benching 290-pound weights, Redd remains a vocal advocate for the disabled community at large through TEDx talks and various initiatives. In 2017, he founded a nonprofit called The Garrison Redd Project, which collaborates with companies to provide the resources they need to host inclusive events that individuals with disabilities wouldn't otherwise be able to participate in.

As if his accomplishments weren't impressive enough, Redd manages to do it all while being a student. He is currently looking into pursuing one of CUNY's Masters of Public Administration programs and took courses at Medgar Evers College over the summer in preparation. Prior to that, he earned an associate degree from Kingsborough Community College and a bachelor's degree in business from York College in 2012.

Redd's love for CUNY extends be-

yond academics, from being a prominent member of the CUNY Athletic Conference (CUNYAC) to constantly engaging in CUNY's Americans with Disabilities (ADA) celebrations.

On the 30th anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez showcased his admiration for Redd's relentless drive. "Garrison is emblematic of the kind of talent and determination that fuels the success of our students, alumni, faculty, and staff with disabilities. As we cheer Garrison's unrelenting pursuit of his Paralympic dreams, we also applaud the very idea of a dream," said Rodríguez.

Redd is grateful for his parents, who have supported him unconditionally throughout his journey as a powerlifter. According to CUNY Athletics, "Redd says his parents reminded him about how much he could do. 'They refused to let me sit around and feel sorry for myself,' he said." It's Redd's determination to continue overcoming countless hurdles and making both his family and the CUNY community gleam with pride.

Today, Redd and Gaglione are both in the process of raising money to financially relieve Redd of traveling costs for competitions, as well as a new training bench that is more suitable for his body's unique needs.



Photo: <http://curemedical.com/>

## NYU medical residents receive no hazard pay during pandemic

Kayleigh Kearnan  
Writer

Medical residency is the final stretch of the higher education marathon required to become a practicing physician in the United States. Even in the best of times, residency is notorious for its grueling hours, low wages, and a culture that discourages trainees from demanding better conditions. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the already arduous position became all the more dangerous and distressing.

The New Yorker tells the story of Nicholus Warstadt, an NYU Langone Health Hospital resident who was "redirected from a pediatrics emergency room to a COVID-19 respiratory unit." Warstadt was one of the hundreds of NYU residents that signed onto a petition requesting increased life insurance, dis-

ability insurance, hazard pay, a guarantee that the program standing of the residents' will not be affected by COVID-19 related absences, and coverage for the testing and treatment of COVID-19.

The situation soured quickly when the hospital administration caught wind of the petition. The administrators, some of whom take home millions of dollars in compensation annually, denied the residents' requests for hazard pay as well as enhanced insurance benefits, citing the "increasing financial uncertainties for all of our institutions". There is no doubt that financial strain was felt throughout the entire U.S. medical system as profitable elective procedures were cancelled due to the pandemic, however both Mount Sinai hospital system and New York-Presbyterian were able to offer some form of hazard pay (though Mount Sinai suddenly rescinded the benefits a month after they kicked in).

In addition to the denial, the administration accidentally forwarded an email chain to residents where they had discussed the request for hazard pay. According to The New Yorker, one of the medical chairs at the hospital written that "Now is the time to accept the hazards of caring for the sick . . . rather than focusing on making a few extra dollars," and "I am not indifferent to your anxieties but personally feel demanding hazard pay is not becoming of a compassionate and caring physician." Another email from a director sought the names of residents under his charge that signed onto the petition, which some residents felt was threatening.

Residents, some anonymous, shared their feelings about the accidentally forwarded emails on social media and with different news outlets. Some residents felt gaslit by the emails and upset that their integrity and compassion were being called into question for

simply asking for compensation commensurate with the increased workload and risk (to both themselves and their families) associated with the pandemic.

A few days after the ordeal, NYU Langone Health Hospital announced their plans to retroactively instate a resident pay raise that was scheduled for July 1st to April 1st and to raise funds philanthropically to help offset the financial burden some residents were experiencing, particularly those with partners who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic. In addition, according to The New Yorker, NYU Langone Health Hospital "eventually agreed to double its life-insurance coverage for non-unionized residents and fellows". Though it is not the hazard pay they asked for, some residents were too emotionally exhausted by the pandemic workload and the petition exchange to push the issue further for the time being.

# Purdue Pharma paying the hefty price for their hand in the opioid crisis

Victoria Young  
Editor/ Reporter

Since the late 1990s, opioid pain relievers have been prescribed at increasing rates due to pharmaceutical companies reassuring doctors that patients would not be subjected to addiction following use of such. However in 2017 alone, nearly 47,000 Americans died due to opioid overdose, while an additional 1.5 million suffered from opioid related substance abuse. Purdue Pharma, one of the leading private pharmaceutical companies, is currently facing three federal charges for the part that it has played in the national opioid crisis.

The company, which is a leading provider of opioid painkillers, has pleaded guilty to all three charges and will be paying more than 8 billion dollars in fines as part of a settlement. The charges include that of conspiracy to defraud the United States and violation of federal anti-kickback laws. Of the 8 billion dollar penalty, 3.5 billion will be paid as a fine, 2 billion will be forfeited in past profits, and 2.8 billion will be paid in civil liability. Steve Miller, Purdue's chairman as of July 2018, has spoken for the company, stat-

ing that "Purdue deeply regrets and accepts responsibility for the misconduct detailed by the Department of Justice."

Since the company does not possess the necessary funds due to past legal discrepancies, Purdue Pharma has no choice but to close and surrender its assets completely. This means that the company owners, the Sackler family, will lose control of their business, which according to the Justice Department, will begin to function strictly in the interests of the public. This new and improved institution will work on producing life saving drugs to be used in the event of an overdose as well as treatment medications.

The Justice Department has reached an additional settlement with the Sackler family resulting in 225 million dollars in personal fines. Clearly fearful of their fate, members of the family have withdrawn over 10 billion dollars from the Purdue Pharma company which they have since placed into family trusts. This is not the first time the family has been accused of pushing their products via illegal means. Back in 2019, the company was forced to file for bankruptcy following a charge due to violation of anti-kickback laws. However, on this oc-



Photo: Maria Fabrizio for Kaiser Health News

casation the family may not be able to get away with simply paying a hefty price. They are also at risk of having federal criminal charges filed against them.

New York Attorney General Letitia James wrote that she does not agree with the deal that was made by the Department of Justice because it fails to "account for the hundreds of thousands of deaths or millions of addictions caused by Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family." Following the announcement of the settlement, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey took to Twitter to state that the "DOJ failed". "Justice in this case requires exposing the truth and holding the perpetrators accountable, not rushing a settlement to beat an election," she tweeted. "I am not done with Purdue and the Sacklers,

and I will never sell out the families who have been calling for justice for so long".

This settlement is the outcome of years of investigation into the over-prescription of opioids. Purdue Pharma and companies with similar motives have single handedly instigated an alarming increase in opioid related drug addictions and overdoses. Since Purdue has decided to plead guilty, they will likely end up admitting to having made payments to healthcare providers, companies and doctors to increase the prescribing of their drugs. The Sackler family has stated that amidst these lawsuits they have reached the agreement to "facilitate a global resolution that directs substantial funding to communities in need, rather than to years of legal proceedings."

## The road to recovery: How NYC restaurants are facing the Covid-19 crisis

Nika Nuñez  
Writer

The remnants of the global pandemic have severely affected the restaurant industry in New York City, leading to a new protective measure that allows restaurants to gradually recuperate by adding a surcharge after an unprecedented statewide shutdown of non-essential businesses.

The New York State Restaurant Association's (NYSRA) reports revealed that as of April 16, 527,000 restaurant industry workers were dismissed without pay and furloughed as a result of Covid-19. With almost a million workers out of jobs, restaurant sales plummeted dramatically.

According to CNN Travel, a surcharge has been on the table since April 2018. The frontrunner of the 2018 surcharge initiative in New York City was Republican Councilman Joseph Borelli, who sug-

gested a 5% surcharge for restaurants. As many as 200 restaurant owners sent Mayor Bill DeBlasio an open letter asking permission to enable an optional surcharge that was pre-existing outside of New York City. Ultimately, the bill was not approved because there were no extraneous circumstances like a pandemic at the time.

Covid-19 reintroduced the proposal and gained overwhelming support across New York City's council. Once again, Councilman Joseph Borelli became the bill's main sponsor. The key purpose of the newly named "COVID-19 Recovery Charge," is to prevent restaurants from increasing food prices. Most notably, the surcharge is not in lieu of tips and/or gratuity. This surcharge can also be used to purchase essential safety items such as outdoor seating equipment, cleaning agents, temperature scanners, and hand sanitizer.

The New York City Council offi-

cially implemented the non-mandatory surcharge, which enables restaurants to add up to 10% to all customers' bills, on October 17, 2020. According to an article by NY Eater, restaurants must explicitly print or indicate the surcharge percentage on their menu. If the restaurant is non-compliant with the aforementioned rules, the establishment will be subjected to fines up to \$350.

SUNY student Nicole Guzman is the daughter of small business owners in Queens, NY that were severely affected by the Coronavirus shutdown. Her parents own a bakery that, prior to the pandemic, operated twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. However, according to Guzman, everything changed in March:

"The bakery has been closed for approximately four months and throughout that time, the government did not aid small businesses, so we had no choice

but to get a third-party loan which was charged with interest. This would soon be another debt we'd have to worry about. Once the business opened after summertime, we received notice that many of our product suppliers passed away from covid-19, so it was very difficult to find other suppliers in such a short amount of time because the bakery had to be open in order to pay back the loan on time. On top of trying so hard to pay bills for utilities, rent, etc, people did not eat out frequently, so the number of sales decreased to more than 25% than usual."

When asked about whether or not they would implement the surcharge, Guzman revealed that her parents would take it into consideration.

# Biden wins 2020 race for U.S. presidency, what's next?

**Samantha Galvez-Montiel**  
Editor/ Reporter

After much anticipation for the 2020 Presidential Election, the President-elect is officially Joe Biden and his Vice-President elect Kamala Harris.

Shortly after the results were called on Nov. 7, New Yorkers took to the streets to celebrate along with the majority of the rest of the country. However, the question still remains: what happens now?

President Donald Trump refuses to

give Biden's team access to transition offices and resources guaranteed under law. The White House is preparing a budget for next year as if President Trump will be there to present it.

"First, Americans should be proud of this election. We demonstrated that 160 million people can cast ballots under very difficult circumstances," said Queens College (QC) Associate Professor of Political Science Kenna Lipsitz. "Moreover, all of these ballots were counted in a very reasonable amount

"They need to unify an extremely divided nation, handle a pandemic, address racial injustice, address immigration reform, address healthcare, make climate change a priority, and much more."

In a recent roundtable meeting the QC political science department held via Zoom on Nov. 9, experts discussed what the future might look like in America. They touched on the transfer from the Trump presidency to the upcoming Biden presidency starting with the media. "In this instance, they're doing what I've been longing to see which is turn the cameras away from him," said Joe Rollins of the political science department.

Rollins pointed out that we should be able to know what the new president is planning and "open up the New York Times, Washington Post and look at the television not to see 'Trump did this, Trump did that' but what the Biden team is doing, what they are planning to do and what they are attempting to do."

Biden and Harris have a lot to undergo this coming year. "After Trump and the era of Trumpism, it's gonna be interesting to see how and if Biden and Harris are able to put the pieces of this nation back together," Echeverry stated. "Both of them also have not-so-pleasant pasts where they have made important decisions that hurt marginalized communities. But they can take this opportunity to show us how they can do better."

As Lipsitz explained, Biden needs to turn the Senate towards the Democratic party. "He will have the most latitude in the area of foreign policy where he will focus on rebuilding our relationships with democracies around the world by focus-

ing on issues that threaten us all, such as climate change and the pandemic."

On Biden's campaign website, he has all his plans in squares for everyone to read. Biden and Harris' plan to beat COVID-19 is to rebuild tracing protocols in order to double the number of drive-through testing sites and in order to establish a U.S. Public Health Jobs Corps as a way to mobilize at least 100,000 Americans across the country. With support from trusted local organizations in communities most at-risk, the goal is to perform culturally competent approaches to contact-tracing while protecting these at-risk populations.

He will ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone through the Defense Production Act that will ramp up the supply of PPE. That is the first step to get through this pandemic as a nation.

Biden also has plans to expand the Child Tax Credit to help families through this crisis as well as help keep families together at our border. Biden intends to improve screening procedures at the ports of entry with the cooperation of Canada and Mexico.

"I hope he will be better at bringing the country together," Lipsitz said. Biden and Harris have many great plans, but we cannot ignore when something is not right. The people of this nation can't turn a blind eye on a presidency that was pushed so hard to come. If we the people do, we will be repeating 2020.

"We desperately need him to be [better]. Unfortunately, with half the country living in the alternative reality created by President Trump and the media outlets that cater to him, that is unlikely."



Photo: Financial Times

accept the results, initiating numerous lawsuits to find incriminating evidence of voter fraud anywhere in the country. The New York Times reported that the president's Attorney General William P. Barr has also authorized investigations into supposed voter fraud. The general services administrator has refused to

of time given all of the accommodations states had to make for COVID."

With that said, Americans now have to look forward to what the future will look like in terms of coronavirus, climate change, the economic struggles of the lower class, among many other issues.

Alba Echeverry, an alumni of the QC political science department, chimed in,

## Voting rights groups expose California DMV for voter suppression

**Jayla Cordero**  
Writer

A lawsuit was filed on May 9, 2017 by numerous voting rights groups against the California's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) by the League of Women Voters of California (LWV), Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Institute (ACCE), California Common Cause (CCC) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). The lawsuit targeted the DMV's failure to provide federally mandated voter registration opportunities to millions of California voters. The California DMV has been unlawfully requiring millions of Californians, who renew by mail every year, to complete a separate voter registration, causing people to bend over backwards to become a voter. Due to the low voter turnout last election, voting activist groups wanted to ensure every Californian got the chance to vote and have their voices be heard in this year's election.

The lawsuit sought to force the California DMV to obey the National Voter

Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993. NVRA was enacted to increase the number of overall voters by making it easier for people to register to vote and by mandating the incorporation of voter registration into DMV forms. Thus, citizens can register to vote or be able to update their voter registration when they apply for or renew a driver's license, a state identification card or when they submit a change of address.

The plaintiffs first notified the DMV of demonstrating extensive violations of the NVRA in February 2015. In January 2016, in order to avoid a lawsuit, the California DMV integrated voter registration into its in-person and online transactions. They also stopped requiring people to fill out a separate card.

However, the DMV refused to incorporate voter registration into its mail-renewal process. According to the President of LWV, Helen Hutchison, "It is simply unacceptable for the DMV to deny seamless voter registration to millions of Californians who renew their licenses by

mail," she stated, adding, "While we appreciate the work the DMV did to create an integrated voter registration process for people who go to their offices or renew their licenses and IDs online, others should be given the same opportunity."

Senior Vice President of the NCLR, Delia de la Vara, showed concerns about the impact this issue would have on Latino voters in California. "There are still more than 5.5 million eligible but unregistered California voters, and Latinos are disproportionately represented in that group," she said. "That's why NCLR is committed to seeing [the] DMV do everything required by law to ensure these antiquated barriers to registration are eliminated." Their work is particularly important since Latinos are a young population, and a large portion will be the first in their families to vote.

Michael A. Krasner, Associate Professor of Political Science and Internship Director at Queens College gave his opinion on how these voting restrictions can heavily impact certain communities.

He stated, "This is position diametrically opposed to my own, which is that the real problem in our politics is that many Republican dominated state legislatures and administrators have undertaken to limit voting by poor people, minorities and young people". Krasner continued by quoting the speaker of the New Hampshire state assembly, citing, "They vote wrong.' From my point of view this lawsuit seems to be one more action taken with that purpose."

Senior Counsel Stuart Naifeh at Demos, a liberal think tank based in the United States, also commented on the issue, stating, "The freedom to vote is the most critical component of our nation's democracy and difficulty registering is one of the greatest barriers to exercising that freedom. The DMV's failure to comply with Motor Voter has deprived millions of eligible California residents of one of the most accessible and popular ways of registering to vote. It's time for the DMV's foot-dragging to end."

# Amy Coney Barrett confirmed as 115th Supreme Court justice

Avi Koeing  
Writer

Over the past several months, the people of this country have been riveted by both the presidential election and the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court in the wake of the death of liberal icon Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The nomination process was unusual in this case due to the determination of Senate Republicans to confirm a new justice before the election, contradicting the position they set in early 2016 following the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. Back then, the Senate, and notably Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), refused to hold a hearing for President Obama's nominee for the court, Merrick Garland, citing the election that coming Fall. As can be expected in such a charged context with controversial precedent, America was fiercely divided over the issue of this year's nomination. According to a Gallup poll on the topic, 51 percent of people surveyed supported Barrett's nomination, whereas 46 percent objected. This divide was also reflected in the confirmation voting

for Justice Barrett. Barrett's became the first entirely partisan confirmation of a Supreme Court Judge since Edwin Stanton, who was also confirmed by a purely Republican vote, 151 years ago in 1869.

Nonetheless, a vote is a vote, and Justice Barrett is now on the bench. This raises the question on everyone's mind: How is she going to vote? Justice Barrett had only a couple of years of experience as a judge on the Federal Court of Appeals, so Americans don't have a clear picture of what her voting inclinations are. What we do know, however, is that she clerked for the aforementioned Justice Antonin Scalia, who was a firm practitioner of the judicial theory known as originalism, a theory that Justice Barrett is on record saying that she follows.

Originalism is based on the notion that in making rulings a court must interpret the constitution as it would've been understood during the time of the Founding Fathers. This is in contrast to living constitutionalism, a theory Justice Ginsburg (Barrett's predecessor) strongly affirmed, which posits that the meaning of the Constitution changes and evolves



over time. Originalism by contrast leads opinions toward a more conservative judicial outlook, which is why Justice Barrett is viewed as conservative. However, what Barrett's particular application of originalism will be is still unclear.

The Knight News spoke to professor Carl Bonomo, professor of political science at Queens College, for an expert's view on Barrett and originalism. According to Bonomo, "Her [purported view on the law] will not be as closely aligned as people might think with the [pure] originalist take on things, but I certainly think it won't be far from Scalia's. At least, not as far as people would like it to be." This uncertainty as to what Justice Barrett's particular brand of originalism is gets compounded by the fact that Justices influence

each other's views on the court, leading professor Bonomo to speculate that Amy Coney Barrett will "stay in her [ideological] lane, but that lane will get wider."

So where's the court going to go as a whole with the addition of Justice Barrett to its ranks? Again, it's hard to say. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., will continue to be a conservative court but perhaps not the extreme precedent-shattering machine many liberals fear, or some conservatives wish it to be. The evolution of the Supreme Court takes time and we probably won't be able to discern how it has changed based on Barrett's nomination until several years down the road. Until then, the American public will just have to wait and see.

## Pope Francis goes against "traditional church teachings" and supports same-sex couples

Victoria Young  
Editor/ Reporter

"Francesco", a documentary film focusing on the life and teachings of the current leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis, debuted on Oct. 21, 2020. The film, directed by Israeli-American film producer, Evgeny Afineevsky, allows the followers of the church and all those interested to gain insight to the progressiveness of Pope Francis' views on same-sex marriage. Pope Francis is considered to be one of the most inclusive and accepting leaders that the Roman Catholic church has ever seen. Though the opinions of his LGBTQ followers and their allies have been nothing but positive, Pope Francis has received quite a bit of backlash from the conservative members within the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic institution as well as representatives all over the world.

Since 2010, Pope Francis has advocated for the legal protection and equality of health benefits for same-sex couples. It is his belief that gay people are also God's children and should be treated as such in the eyes of religion as well as the law. In the film "Francesco", he stated in an interview that a civil union law must be created in order for same-sex couples to be "legally covered." Many followers are supportive of his progressive beliefs and inclusive words. These supporters have discussed how they feel it's about time for the church to catch up with society and the way the world has grown over the years. Those who oppose Pope Francis' comments and viewpoints have not hidden their discontent, however. Supporting this criticism is Reverend Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who commented that "Given the influence of that church worldwide... [same-sex

marriages] will weaken Christian witness to marriage and sexuality and gender according to God's will and God's word."

More conservative critics of Pope Francis have stated they feel the perspective the Pope shared in the film interview was a direct attack on "traditional church teachings" and they are in complete disagreement with the words and actions of the Pope. Bishop Thomas Thobin, who belongs to one of the more conservative wings of the Church in Rhode Island, has stated that he feels that the Pope's statement "clearly contradicts what has been the longstanding teaching of the church about same-sex unions."

When Francis was the cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires in 2010, he outwardly supported the "civil union" between gay couples. Although the Church does not explicitly teach homosexuality as a sin, it does elude to the idea that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered";

homosexual orientation is thereby disordered by proxy. Pope Francis believes that gay couples deserve the right to be "part of the family." In the documentary "Francesco" he stated that "[The LGBTQ people are] children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable because of it."

Though the Pope has voiced his personal opinion and feelings towards same-sex unions and the gay community, the Church doctrine has yet to be changed and most likely will not be for an insurmountable period of time. The Church doctrine states that "the principles of respect and non-discrimination cannot be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual unions." Regardless of this, there is a feeling of relief and acceptance that has washed over the gay community as they've gained perhaps the most important ally: Pope Francis.



## Utopia Parkway, QC's literary journal preserves voices

**Ralph Matamoros**  
Writer

As students stay home during an online semester, literary journal Utopia Parkway hopes to keep students connected through creative writing.

Utopia Parkway is another publication at Queens College, but what makes the club unique is that it specializes in publishing the creative writing, art, and photography of students on campus. "I think the journal creates an artistic space for other writers, artists, photographers. It allows us to recognize each other and come together as a community," says Rebecca Ramdhan, an editor of the publication. "I've always liked finding and befriending fellow writers, and since art is overall rather personal and sincere- I feel like I get a glimpse into their perspective of the world."

"I guess it's in that personal way

that the journal feels like a different form of connection compared to other clubs," she added. The journal has moved entirely online this semester, compared to the print journals offered at the end of each academic year. "We would collect submissions from fall and spring and publish it all the end of the school year," Ramdhan noted about the club's usual method of publication.

Despite the journal's movement to be solely online, Ramdhan is hopeful that the club can use digital media to the journal's advantage. "I feel like we can accept a lot of different types of submissions now that we don't have to worry about formatting things into a publishable book!"

Back in April, the publication released an issue that included a Soundcloud for poets and authors to read their work aloud. "We can also accept longer pieces and a lot more art or photography without worrying about color print-

ing," Ramdhan said. "It just feels like we have a more open space for people to express themselves through our journal."

As a club dedicated to showcasing students' work, there are no limits to what a student can submit. All genres of creative writing, including poetry, short stories, creative nonfiction, and more are accepted for publication online. Similarly, art and photography are also accepted. While there are specific guidelines on Utopia Parkway's website, there has been discussion within the club about loosening guidelines now that there are no physical limitations to what the journal can publish.

Part of what makes Utopia Parkway special is connecting writers and artists together, and the club plans to continue this virtually this year. Editors meet over Zoom each Wednesday, looking over submissions and brainstorming different ways to connect students. "As for

connecting the writers and other QC students- social media will play a big part, but I'm hoping that we can also interact over online workshop events if we can manage them," said Ramdhan. She also described plans of an open mic night, an event where QC students could share poetry and other creative works over Zoom. Ramdhan hopes that hosting an open mic night could foster a sense of community among Queens College's creatives, as well as hosting workshop events to help new writers feel confident in submitting to the journal.

Utopia Parkway is currently accepting submissions on a rolling basis. Ramdhan encourages all students to submit pieces, saying "We thrive on self-expression and we're always here to help. We look forward to whatever it is that you want to contribute!"

### OP-ED

## Self Care and Collective Care

**Sharon Jackson**  
Research Assistant & Intern @CERRU

Deep in thought in his prison cell, political theorist Antonio Gramsci fought to ignore the waves of nausea and pain washing over him. Bent low over a notebook, he began to pen out the two ways the state controls its people: the first through brute force, the second through a situation in which the people internalize certain ideas – and then willingly control themselves.

This second method, a kind of divide-and-conquer strategy, causes us to fight amongst ourselves, or more specifically, within ourselves. Our attention is turned inwards, not for self-reflection, but for self-battle. Here in the United States, we blame ourselves when we need a GoFundMe for insulin, beat ourselves down for making only min-

imum wage, curse ourselves out for not yet having a house to our name.

The QC Center for Ethnic, Racial, & Religious Understanding (CERRU) is known for teaching methods to mitigate conflict between people: "Listen to understand, not to respond;" "Speak for yourself;" and "Understand impact versus intent." All along, CERRU has also been training people to mediate the conflict within – the conflict that comes from internalizing the ideas of rugged individualism, of ingesting the shame of being unable to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. This internal conflict has us at war with ourselves, and there is no more important time to end this conflict than now.

When the pandemic ensued and quarantine began, there was plenty of time and yet no time to engage in self-blame. There was plenty of time and

yet no time to dwell on the lack of food in the refrigerator and cabinets. However, for CERRU members the time was now to come together to find out what students needed most by starting a mutual aid group. Students fill out a survey describing the things they need, and members of the mutual aid group work to connect them to resources such as food, grant money and housing opportunities. (If you are in need of any assistance, please fill out the survey here.)

As they say, "You can't pour from an empty cup." To do the work in order to collectively help people, those of us at CERRU make sure we are grounded and ready to listen and address the needs of others. With this in mind, CERRU recently began to hold monthly virtual yoga sessions, led by program director Valerie Hannibal. (For the next yoga

session, please follow us on instagram @cERRUqc.) Practicing yoga or finding the time to be creative, take walks, listen to music or do something other than checking off boxes on our to-do lists, gives us the recharge we need to look outward once again. We look inward not to berate ourselves, but to heal ourselves.

Rugged individualism does not own the determination and can-do spirit that people often associate with it. If you come away from CERRU and the mutual aid group with anything, let it be the realization that empathy for others can be a powerful driver of action. There is a saying that "heaven helps those who help themselves." But it is also true that heaven helps those who help each other. (For more information or to get involved, please contact Aysa Gray at agray@cERRU.org.)



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# The Los Angeles Lakers win most significant NBA Championship in recent memory

**Holden Velasco**  
Writer

On Oct. 11, the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Miami Heat in Game 6 of the 2020 National Basketball Association Finals; a feat that seemed impossible in March. When the world was put on hold due to COVID-19, NBA fanatics wondered what would happen to their beloved sport. After a positive COVID test from Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert, the NBA indefinitely postponed the rest of the season on Mar. 11. Many worried that the 2019-20 season would have to be nulled and erased in history as if it never happened. But then, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver announced the NBA would go into a bubble in order to try and prohibit the virus from entering the closely-huddled players, coaches, and other league staff starting July 7. 170 games and zero positive COVID-19 tests later, against all odds, the NBA was able to crown a champion.

The question then is: why does this championship matter? What makes it so

special? Well, for one, it came at a time when the world needed sports the most. Sports have been an outlet for countless individuals to come to as a relief for pain in their personal lives. Sports act as an icebreaker to an otherwise unbreakable social barrier between those who would usually be strangers. Sports serve as a bridge that connects us with others, creating bonds that would otherwise not exist. During quarantine, people began to lose that human-to-human connection we all desire in some form or another. Something as simple as watching ten grown men throw a leather ball into a metal ring can bring together people like nothing else.

Not only was this championship victory vastly important to the fans, but it was also important to the players and members of the Lakers organization that actually won it. On Jan. 26th of this year, NBA legend and Lakers icon Kobe Bryant was among the nine people tragically killed in a helicopter accident. Throughout the Lakers' bubble run, everyone in Los Angeles wanted to win the championship for Kobe. After every timeout, Lakers head

coach Frank Vogel would break down the huddle not by chanting the usuals such as "defense" or "team" — not this year. Instead, the arena echoed, "Mamba on 3!... 1,2,3! MAMBA," as an ode to Bryant's iconic "Black Mamba" nickname. When the job was finally finished, Lakers star forward Anthony Davis was seen crying by himself on the bench, in complete awe of what just happened. "All we wanted was to do it for him (Kobe)," a visibly shaken Davis said after the series-clinching victory. "I know he's looking down on us, proud of us... He was a big brother to all of us. We did this for him."

LeBron James certainly played his heart out in memory of Kobe as well. Following the victory, he posted a black and white picture of himself on Instagram with Kobe's No. 24 jersey resting on his lap, the black snakeskin designed by Bryant himself before his passing and worn several times throughout LA's title run. The caption read "Hope I made you proud my brother! Love and miss you Champ!" This championship not only means a lot emotionally to LeB-

ron, but it certainly boosts his legacy. His disappointing 3-6 Finals record is now boosted to 4-6. After winning his fourth Finals MVP, he becomes only the second to accomplish such a feat, while being the first to win the award on three separate teams. This certainly helps his case as the greatest player to ever pick up a basketball. In addition, this is the franchise's 17th NBA title, tying them for the most all-time with their longtime east coast rival Boston Celtics.

The 2019-20 NBA Championship will be remembered as one of the wackiest in the league's history. However, it should be remembered as one of the most important. It gave fans a chance to heal a wound, even if it was for a brief moment. Legacies were made. Lives were changed. But perhaps above all, the Lakers honored the legacy of the player who helped set the bar for greatness which took a long time for them to reach.

# After a 32-year wait, the Los Angeles Dodgers once again reign supreme

**Johnny Sullivan**  
Editor/ Reporter

The dust has settled on Major League Baseball in 2020 in what was its most chaotic season since the labor strikes of 1994. After all was said and done, the Los Angeles Dodgers, one of baseball's most storied franchises, captured their first World Series since 1988 in a thrilling contest against the upstart Tampa Bay Rays.

The victory, assuredly, was more cathartic for no one than it was for Clayton Kershaw, the Dodgers' ace pitcher. An otherwise top-10 pitcher all-time, Kershaw had been saddled with a (partially deserved) reputation of playoff underperformance. Kershaw and his Dodgers had, over the past decade, entered the post-season with championship aspirations, only to fall short time and time again in increasingly heartbreaking fashion.

The Dodgers had previously lost back-to-back World Series in 2017 and 2018. After last year's stunning loss to the

eventual champion Washington Nationals, many fans questioned whether the Dodgers had it in them to win it all. It was why, despite the Dodgers again finishing the regular season with the league's best record at 43-17 in the abridged 60-game season, their fans couldn't help but hold their breaths and wait for the other shoe to drop. This year, though, there would be no disappointment, even after a heart-breaking Game 4 loss in which ninth-inning blunders by center fielder Chris Taylor and catcher Will Smith turned a game-tying hit by Tampa's Brett Phillips into an 8-7 walk-off victory for the Rays.

The difference this year was in increased contributions on the part of Los Angeles' young talent. In particular, superstar and former Most Valuable Player (MVP) Mookie Betts, acquired in the offseason in a highly publicized off-season trade with the Boston Red Sox, tipped the scales in Los Angeles' favor. He made his presence felt both in the regular season, in which he hit for a .292 batting average with 16 home runs in

only 55 games. He stole four bases in the World Series and slugged two home runs while making some incredible momentum-shifting plays with his glove.

Corey Seager, too, was a force to be reckoned with in 2020, becoming just the eighth player ever to win MVP awards for both the League Championship Series and World Series in the same season. Both awards were well-earned; the Dodgers' shortstop hit five home runs in a dramatic 3-1 National League Championship Series comeback against the Atlanta Braves before registering a scorching .400 batting average in six games against the Rays in the World Series.

Of course, the happy ending for the Dodgers was sullied in part by third baseman Justin Turner. Turner was pulled in the eighth inning of the clinching Game 6 after a delayed COVID-19 test came back positive. Once the final out was obtained, Turner drew heavy criticism for returning to the field to celebrate among teammates, first with a mask before eventually removing it.

Though the Rays lost the World Series, their season defied every expectation. Despite being riddled with injuries, they stole the American League (AL) East Division championship out of the clutches of the heavily favored New York Yankees, a team they defeated in the divisional round in five games. They then went on to eliminate the reigning AL champion Houston Astros before finally falling to the Dodgers, but they made significant history in their run to the pennant. Rookie Randy Arozarena broke the single-postseason home run record with 10. His stellar play made the Rays' Cinderella run that much more enjoyable.

With the 2020 season now at a close, baseball's 30 teams can now exhale and begin to gameplan for the season to come. The Dodgers, for as hard as they worked, can, for the time being, rest comfortably on their hard-earned laurels as the champions of Major League Baseball.

# NFL sees dangerous rise of COVID-19 cases that question their protocols

Holden Velasco  
Writer

The National Football League is starting to see a rise in the amount of COVID-19 cases league-wide. As of Nov. 6, half of the league's 32 teams are dealing with at least one case of COVID-19. That means at least 16 teams have either had a player contract the virus or had to shut down their facility due to a COVID-19 scare. It has become abundantly clear that the safety protocols and punishments for not following them are not working.

The NFL and National Football League Players Association agreed to have Polymerase chain reaction testing, a form of rapid testing, to all players scheduled to play that day. However, they don't get results until Monday or Tuesday. This leads to COVID-positive athletes playing in games and possibly unknowingly spreading the virus. If a player is placed on the special COVID-19 reserve list on Monday or Tuesday, they could potentially still play on Sunday if they record five straight days of negative tests. In addition, masks are required for all team and league personnel, as well as the players, while they are traveling to and from

games. They are also required inside all team facilities while not practicing. During the actual games, all coaches and other personnel on the sideline are required to wear masks. The league "strongly recommends" the same for players, but no league-wide mandate has been issued.

These protocols have not prevented the spread. The exact number of how many players and league personnel that have tested positive is unknown, but the estimation is around 160 players have been placed on the COVID-19 reserve list with 99 league personnel testing positive in the month of October.

In a memo to all NFL franchises, the league has tried to deal with the issue of post game interactions such as congratulations, hugging, jersey swapping, and other traditional occurrences. The memo reads, "However, if clubs permit such interactions, all players and club staff must wear masks or double-layered gaiters during any such encounter — to mitigate risk of transmission." Nobody really listened to this memo after every game of the Week 9 schedule. We have yet to see the test results from these teams, so no solid number can be provided

about the consequences of such actions.

The league is doing its best to dish out fines to set an example for the rest of its members. On Nov. 5, the Las Vegas Raiders were fined \$500,000, they were stripped of a sixth-round pick, and head coach Jon Gruden was fined \$150,000 because of repeated violations of the league's protocols. Last month, Gruden was fined \$100,000 and the Raiders were fined \$250,000 because, once again, Gruden had not worn his face covering properly on the sideline during a game. Individual players on the Raiders were fined after they attended a charity event in a crowded indoor venue without wearing masks. The Tennessee Titans were fined \$350,000 for holding secret practices while the league-mandated they stopped practicing after an outbreak of two dozen cases.

There's also a problem with the league's consistency. On Oct. 22, a Raiders player tested positive for COVID-19. Because of this, the NFL swapped Vegas's 8:20 (Eastern Standard Time) game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers with the Seattle Seahawks versus Arizona Cardinals matchup slated for a 4:05 start.

However, after the Baltimore Ravens announced cornerback Iman Marshall tested positive on Nov. 12, the NFL decided to go ahead with the Ravens versus New England Patriots matchup. Yet, that game will still be played on Sunday night. This sends an unclear message, and the fact that there's even a whiff of the NFL caring more about money than their players' well-being is disappointing.

The question then really is how sustainable is this back-and-forth situation the NFL has going on? Just like the rest of the country, the NFL is beginning to see a rise of COVID-19 cases and should become increasingly worried not only about the status of the season but also the general health of their players and personnel. Their situation drastically differs from the National Basketball Association's handling of the pandemic, as the NBA entered a strict bubble and saw zero positive tests en route to completing their season. While the functionality of a bubble in a 32-team league with at least 53 players on the roster is questionable, discussions should be had as what they're doing now obviously isn't working to the benefit of their members' health.

## Why are sports seeing a historic dip in ratings and viewership?

Holden Velasco  
Writer

As is the case with all broadcasted content, ratings are extremely important for the survival of sports. They can tell a story about the viewers' and society's perception of any given sport. This year, however, viewership for such prominent sports leagues as the NBA, NHL and NFL has come under fire for numbers that strikingly differ from previous years.

First off, do ratings even matter? In general? Yes. To sports? Not so much. At least compared to a reality show, they don't. However, ratings do affect how much money is spent on the sport in advertisements, network choice, and media coverage. They can affect the industry but not to the point of catastrophe. Unless, of course, the drop in viewership is so significant that it truly does affect their viability. That would be end-of-the-world stuff in certain cases because we all know how much some people love their sports.

So what were the numbers amid these most unusual circumstances? How bad was the damage? According to Sports Media Watch, Game 1 of the NBA Finals this year saw a 45% ratings drop from 2019. The Stanley Cup Final fell 61%. Tennis's U.S. Open Finals were down 56%. The Kentucky Derby (43%), MLB (40%) and college football (30%) saw notable decreases as well. The NFL had a much smaller dip of only 13% through Week 5 of their season. The only leagues that saw a positive change? The PGA Tour had a 17% increase while viewership for the WNBA Finals were up 15%.

The big lingering mystery is why these popular sports have seen significant decreases in viewership. Truthfully, it's quite simple. You just have to look at past trends and present situations. According to Kevin Draper of the New York Times, total viewership across all television was down 9% in September 2020 compared to the same month the prior year. When people turn on their TVs, it has been to get updates on the COVID-19 pan-

demic or hear more about the presidential election. This brings us to the social justice movement. According to a poll from The Athletic's Kavitha Davidson, 32% of people answered that the social justice movement in sports would make them less likely to tune in, contrasted by the 21% that said it would make them more likely. Marist's Center for Sports Communication conducted a poll finding that 70% of registered Republicans said they are less likely to watch sports if they were to get involved with politics. The same poll found that 28% of the viewers for NBA games on ESPN and ABC were Democrats and 11% were Republicans before the NBA restart. After the restart, with the NBA focusing heavily on the Black Lives Matter movement, the share of viewers who were Democrats increased to 30%, while those who were Republicans dropped only to 10%.

There is also an issue of overscheduling because of the unusual circumstances the pandemic brought to sports. The NBA and NHL normally have late

spring to themselves. MLB owns the summer. The NFL and college football dominate fall. However, these leagues are overlapping because of the pandemic. Fans simply can't get to them all.

"You have an oversupply of premium events," says Mike Mulvihill, head of strategy and analytics at Fox Sports. "It's causing the total pool (of consumption) to not be affected that much. But on a sport-by-sport basis, everyone suffers."

It's also important to note the continuous growth of illegal streaming methods as a way to circumvent channel prices.

Fewer people are watching television in 2020. When they do, it's usually to watch updates on the COVID-19 situation or one of the most prominent elections in United States history. The former has caused an unusual situation for sports, causing an overlap in scheduling that has never happened before. Time will tell if these are the true factors impacting the situation or if there is a greater issue affecting these leagues.

# Dr. Cherice Evans, a new light to the Honors in Math and Natural Sciences program at QC

Sidd Malviya  
Editor-in-Chief

The Knight News interviewed Dr. Cherice Evans, associate professor of Chemistry at Queens College (QC), who has recently taken on as the new director of the Honors in Math and Natural Sciences (HMNS) program at QC.

HMNS is a program oriented towards students majoring in the division of mathematics and natural sciences, specifically for majors focused on doing research while at QC. The program was formerly led by Wilma Saffran, a former associate professor in the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at QC, who has since retired.

Evans feels a special bond with the program's purpose, as well as the many students who are accepted into the program. She recalled her childhood, growing up in Louisiana, where she always had the mindset of asking why certain things happened. Her grandfather, a petroleum engineer, taught Evans plenty of math, but explained that getting a job in the field would be increasingly difficult.

She then went on to the University of Louisiana at Monroe, with an intent to study pharmacy. Little did she know, that wasn't going to be the route she'd take.

While taking general chemistry, a preliminary requirement for pre-phar-

macy students, her professor saw her affinity for the subject and insisted she major in Chemistry. After careful consideration, Evans decided to weigh her options out. While speaking to the campus' pre-pharmacy advisor, Evans said that double majoring in chemistry and pharmacy wasn't an option for her due to policies set forth by the university.

After looking into what it takes to be a chemist in the professional world, she decided to major in it. A decision that, on her part, would lead her to where she is today.

Research for Evans began soon thereafter, working with a newly hired physical chemist on campus, who doubled as a professor. "My mentor put me on a research project almost instantly. That's how I ended up finishing quickly getting a master's quickly and getting a PhD quickly."

Fast forward to her time at Queens College, which started in 2003, she recalls the challenges she faced as a new research mentor and as a professor. Evans was incredibly nervous at first, on both fronts. On the research side, she remembered having inherited completely outdated equipment. Luckily, Evans didn't let that slow her down and instead, used her resourcefulness to utilize the two modern pieces of equipment, while centering most of her experiments around those devices.

As for her early days as a professor,

she expressed appreciation for her senior mentors in her department letting her know how to fine tune her exams. Evans notes that "the normal rule of thumb for a freshman chemistry exam is, if I'm designing an exam for two hours, it should take me 30 minutes."

Evans, now as the new director for the HMNS program, moved on to reflect on her predecessor's legacy. "She kept it running and active... and I want to build on that... as it was strongly rooted in the biology and psychology disciplines," said Evans.

Her plans for the HMNS program include creating a system for the students to easily find research mentors that are best compatible with their interests and skills, and getting more computational math mentors engaged with the program. She also has set forth plans to revamp the introductory seminars for the program. In her proposal, the seminars will teach students the fundamentals of what skills you need in the lab, researching scientific literature, keeping a documented record of data, and other skills necessary for competency in the lab.

Evans also plans to create a program with a student governance component. She plans to utilize the senior students in the program to aid her in an advisory capacity of how the program should

operate to best serve the community.

As the interview neared its end, Evans reflected on her time as a scientist, noting that the best feeling of being a research mentor is "watching my students finally understand what they're doing."

Photo: QC HMNS



## SCIENCE

# The lasting impact of the pandemic on research

Gloria Stoyanova  
Columnist

Everyone's world has been turned upside down since the start of the pandemic, with seemingly no end in sight. As a senior applying to graduate school, I find myself balancing applications, coursework and research. However, when the pandemic hit, my peers and I were concerned about how we would be able to conduct experiments with everything that was going on.

Working in the lab has always been a respite from the hectic pace of being an undergraduate student. Around the world, our lives have been upended with the hopes of mitigating the spread of the coronavirus. Research labs are no exception to these closures. All research in New York City was abruptly halted in March under the stay-at-home order. Now that some researchers are allowed back onto campus, research has slowly made its way back into our lives.

I'm currently studying viruses under Dr. Zahra Zakeri, professor in biology at Queens College (QC). I've always had an affinity for biology re-

search, but even more so now that the field I'm in (virology) has become increasingly valued during the pandemic.

When the lockdown first started, back in March, my mentor and my lab members and I were greatly concerned on how we would carry out our work.

In the early stages of the pandemic, while protocols were being developed and strengthened by the CDC (alongside CUNY and QC), I had to maintain the lab when COVID was at its worst in NY. I was frightened but felt comfort knowing the risk was minimized since only essential personnel were allowed on campus.

The restrictions vary from institution to institution, but face coverings are required while on campus. To gain access to the QC campus, you first must fill out questionnaires regarding your health, regardless of the duration of stay on campus.

I'm fortunate in that I do not have trouble getting onto campus. The Zakeri research lab is spacious and is only home to two students. I will say that it does get easier for undergraduates to gain access to research labs when they have a C-14, a chemical safety certifi-

cate issued by the Fire Department.

However, not all students who did research prior to the pandemic are able to afford taking the risks that I am. For now, many of my fellow undergrads involved in research at QC are working on literature reviews as the school tries to keep in-person activities to a minimum. This will limit the options students have as they search for possible major and career paths. Whereas writing a review is a great way to start thinking about research and seeing if it something you could pursue down the line, it doesn't replace the benefits of working in the lab amongst your colleagues.

To get a better sense of how other student-scientists are doing, I spoke to QC Alum Nanami Kubota about the challenges she faces while doing lab rotations. Kubota is currently a first year PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, studying a range of viruses from bacteriophages to HIV.

Kubota is in the process of lab rotations, typical for a first year PhD student until they identify the lab they would like to work in for the remainder

of their graduate school years. She recalled her first rotation being in a spacious lab where appointments to access the facilities were not required. Things changed however in her second lab rotation, where appointments limited her ability to do research and prevented her from being in the lab most of the day.

PhD students rely on being able to access the lab at all times for dissertation research (i.e a final thesis required to graduate). The restrictions, although necessary, could severely hinder productivity for Kubota's colleagues, especially for Ph.D. candidates nearing the end of their degree.

Another drawback to this is not being able to get a feel for your PhD mentor or the lab environment, both extremely important factors when deciding where to spend your PhD. These are some of the unspoken challenges in returning to the lab. We are used to collaborating with others in research. There is a feeling of isolation lingering in the halls, waiting for students to return.

Hopefully, with the benefit of modern technology and research, this dark chapter of COVID-19 will soon come to an end.

# First ever virtual event at the QC Godwin-Ternbach Museum

Serene Klapper  
Editor/ Reporter

Because of eight months of mostly-online courses, a number of Queens College campus facilities have been struggling to fulfill their intended roles because there is only a small fraction of students that can utilize them. Among these facilities is the Godwin-Ternbach Museum on campus, a place where the continuation of online studies has prompted the center's first-ever virtual exhibit, which opened on the museum's website on September 29th.

The exhibit, titled "Human Nature," includes a carefully-ordered progression of portraits in a fashion remarkably similar to that of an in-person gallery. The display opens with a cluster of pieces under the title "Realism," which prefaces the rest of the show by introducing the art of portraiture in its purest observational form. The pieces in this section span a great deal of years and media, providing a basis for some of the more unconventional portraits to follow.

In the sections titled "The Timeless Gaze" and "The Male Gaze," observational paintings and sculptures are displayed to further portray the desire of the artist to understand humanity. The former incorporates terra cotta sculptures dating back to at least the fifth century B.C., while the latter includes

more recent works detailing the muses of various artists. Despite the vast difference between the dates of creation of the pieces, the longing to understand the subject is evident in each, a feeling that the exhibition describes as "an impossible yearning" which prompts the artist to mimic the human form.

In the more contemporary section, "Pop Art," the viewer observes the active role of portraiture in defining rather than simply observing. The work in this section includes pieces by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, as well as a haunting two-panel painting by Roger Shimomura, which is titled "Yellow Rat Bastard (How to Tell the Difference Between Chinese and Japanese)." Each panel bursts with a number of crowded faces, marking a transition of the portrait artist's role from observer to that of defender and definer of cultures. Similar strategies are implemented in a number of later sections. Pieces from "Satire and Caricature" and "The Honorific Portrait" show how portrait artists have the ability to take on a politically and socially relevant role in either criticizing, mocking, or exalting their subject. Meanwhile, work from "Describing the Spirit" and "The Human Condition" follow by displaying how an artist may manipulate the subjects of their work to appeal to

worshippers or to instill feelings of outrage and injustice.

In "Illustrating the Dream," the subjects of the portraits float between reality and possibility, providing the most integral turning point from the observational start of the exhibition to some of the more abstract pieces at the end. Particularly in the heavy-handed reproduction of Georges Rouault's "Tête de Pierrot (Head of a Clown)," the viewer observes the departure from the traditional portrayal of the human into the realm of vague possibility that can be seen in some of the exhibit's later pieces. This transition especially enables the viewer to embrace the pieces in the final section, "Self Portraits and Alter Egos," which includes work that spans from the highly realistic "William Hogarth Painting the Comic Muse" to the somewhat frightening and distorted etching by the artist Paul Klee, titled "The Comedian." This group of pieces draws the subject of the portrait inward for the purpose of self-definition. A number of the other pieces in the self-portrait section also refer directly to art as something very clearly tied to the maker's identity. A sample of this is the gracefully sketched etching



Photo: <http://gtmuseum.org/>

by Picasso titled "Peintre Travaillant (Painter Working)." In this piece, the painter and his companion are drawn in a bare and complete state of focus on the painter's work, a portrayal which depicts the very definition of the artist's being.

In light of current circumstances preventing many from viewing art in a traditional museum setting, this exhibition provided those interested with the opportunity to observe and contemplate an artistic portrayal of the human condition throughout a vast timespan and within various media. The topic holds both current relevance and inspiration for the viewer as they undertake the virtual trek from realism toward unearthing the self through the gradual observation of the human condition.

## Disney takes accountability for its racist films

Jayla Cordero  
Writer

Disney is well known for their classic animated films such as "Peter Pan" (1953) and "Dumbo" (1941), but on Disney's streaming service, Disney+, they are receiving backlash for some of its scenes that consist of racist and insensitive content.

Instead of removing the harmful scenes from its movies, Disney says that it's using the new content advisories to start a conversation about harmful stereotypes and wants to improve representation in its content moving forward. As a result, Disney has added a 12-second disclaimer before viewers start the film, warning them about scenes that may contain outdated cultural depictions. The 12-second disclaimer, which cannot be skipped, tells viewers that "This program includes negative deceptions and/or mistreatment of people or cultures. These stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful

impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together. Disney is committed to creating stories with inspirational and aspirational themes that reflect the rich diversity of the human experience around the globe."

Disney has identified six movies that are available on their streaming service that present the warning such as "The Aristocats" (1970), "Peter Pan" (1953), "The Jungle Book," (1967) "Lady and the Tramp," (1955), and "Dumbo," (1941.) The warning also directs viewers to a website called "Stories Matter", that explains why those particular movies will present the new warning by pinpointing the racist caricatures and stereotypes present in some of the films' scenes. For example, referencing a scene from the 1953 animated movie "Peter Pan," Disney's website states, "The film portrays Native people in a stereotypical manner that reflects neither the diversity of Native peoples nor their authentic cultural traditions."

"It shows them speaking in an unintelligible language and repeatedly refers to them as 'redskins,' an offensive term.

Peter and the Lost Boys engage in dancing, wearing headdresses and other exaggerated tropes, a form of mockery and appropriation of Native peoples' culture and imagery," the site continues. In another example found in "The Aristocats", there is a cat with slanted eyes and buck teeth, portraying a "racist caricature of East Asian peoples with exaggerated stereotypical traits," the website says. The cat's song about egg foo young and fortune cookies — Westernized foods — "mock the Chinese language and culture," it says. Also, Disney points to a scene from "Dumbo," where it contains a group of crows that "pay homage to racist minstrel shows," the site says. The leader of the group of birds is named Jim Crow, a reference to the laws that enforced racial segregation in the United States. The website explains that they "also want to acknowledge that some communities have been erased or forgotten altogether," and are "committed to giving a voice to their stories as well." With Disney finally admitting to their faults that have harmed many communi-

ties throughout the years and attempting to educate viewers on why certain scenes were insensitive through their website, some may think that their efforts are better late than never, but is it enough?

Noah Tsika, an Associates Professor at Queens College whose work explores the politics of representation in both commercial and noncommercial media, emphasizing race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nationality, gave his opinion on the matter and stated "I think that it's important to keep in mind that Disney's disclaimers represent more than just the company's attempts to atone for past sins. They also suggest an effort to use Disney's current racial consciousness to distract from the company's monopoly power and longstanding resistance to unionization. Disney wants, of course, to seem 'woke,' but we have to ask what such 'wokeness' is concealing or enabling. One need only look to the recent production of *Mulan*, which, despite Disney's attempts to appear progressive, was a public relations disaster."

# “The Witches” film review: A remake of the 1990 classic, how does it compare?

Ralph Matamoros  
Writer

On October 22, “The Witches” made its debut on HBO Max. Adapted from the famous Roald Dahl book, “The Witches” follows an orphaned boy who moves into his grandmother’s house, only to discover that witches exist. While there is already a classic 1990 adaptation of the movie that exists, the 2020 version is an enjoyable movie with its own strengths.

The 2020 adaptation of “The Witches” has spectacular makeup and costuming. The witches were ominous even in disguise, which made them feel more menacing compared to the 1990 adaptation. The witches prey on children, and the makeup for the witches reflects this. The witches have scars on their cheeks from unhinging their jaws, their hands have two fingers and their thumbs have velociraptor like claws. Anne Hathaway plays the Grand High Witch, and her character has a single talon on each foot, while the other witches have none. I like that the makeup team depicted the witches as convincing predators, which juxtaposed the costuming department’s choice to place them in elaborate dresses and wigs.

The attention to detail in Hathaway’s costumes is quite possibly one of the best aspects of the movie. In the scene where her character reveals that she’s a witch, she is wearing a velvet dress with

a white trim that changes into a snake that wraps around her. This is complemented by the character’s forked tongue and sharp teeth, which adds to her menace. She also stays in room number “666”, which makes a reference to Hell and the Devil, adding to her fear factor.

The makeup and costuming add a layer of storytelling to the film, alluding to socioeconomic class struggles. While the witches are in elaborate attire, the protagonist wears blue jeans and worn-out shoes. Even his grandmother, who dresses in frilly hats and gloves, wears dresses that look ill-fitting on her. When the boy’s grandmother makes the decision to leave their town to escape the witches, she claims that witches “only prey on the poor, the overlooked, the kids they think nobody’s gonna make a fuss about if they go missing”, revealing a deeper message to the classic story. It’s not just children who are in danger, but the most vulnerable ones. On top of that, setting the film in 1967 Alabama helps portray the witches as elitist predators.

Although the visual effects in the 2020 adaptation are great, the practical effects from the 1990 adaptation still hold up today. In both versions, the main character is turned into a mouse by the Grand High Witch, but the 2020 version uses a CGI mouse, while the 1990 version used a puppet mouse. Using CGI makes sense for the film because the mouse needs to

move and emote, but it looks obvious that the mouse isn’t real. This is especially noticeable with the protagonist’s pet mouse, Daisy. In scenes where the boy is still human, he’s interacting with a real mouse, but later in the film, that mouse is replaced by a CGI one in his shirt pocket. Using CGI is appealing because it has improved drastically over the years, but it’s still valuable to film certain elements practically, which is what the 1990 version does with

1990 film opted for a physical character.

Similarly, it looked like CGI was also used to depict the hotel lobby. When the witches march into the lobby, it doesn’t feel like the characters are in a real physical space, which can be off-putting.

Ultimately, both adaptations of “The Witches” are enjoyable films, but they excel in different ways. The 2020 adaptation is theatrical and uses makeup and costumes as a tool to create a subliminal story. Meanwhile, the

Photo: IMDB



its mouse. Puppets are used for the main character after he is turned into a mouse, and while it’s still clear that the filmmaker is using a fake mouse, it feels more real compared to the CGI mouse because the

1990 adaptation uses practical effects to make its story feel believable. You can watch the most recent one on HBO Max and the 1990 version is on Netflix.

## Dickinson’s complex & witty characters mirror the pressures of being a Gen Z

Akampreet Kaur  
Writer

Slammed tables, secret love affairs, lucid realities, 21st-century slang: “Dickinson” offers all of these thrills and more. Complex and witty but filled with wild dreams, the show’s actors do not fail to deliver performances that are raw and relatable. Emily Dickinson, portrayed by Hailee Steinfeld, is a character that demonstrates the complexity of being a female. The fictional version of the real-life poet is an extravagant mixture of the past and present, coloring Emily’s life with the struggles of a contemporary Gen Zer.

The Emily of the show is a teenager who has emerged into young adulthood. Emily is portrayed as a modern Gen Z teen trapped inside of an old-fashioned society. She wants to be seen as special despite these circumstances and is shown fighting against the disparate treatment she receives

in comparison to her brother, Austin.

Emily is a genius writer who hides in her bedroom writing poetry. This is based on biographical details of the real Emily Dickinson, who had written nearly 1,800 poems that were found in her bedroom after her death in 1886. Inside a beautiful house hid an intellectual woman with what The Guardian refers to as “A bomb in her bosom.” Dickinson’s inner life was hidden from the world because of her father and a generally misogynistic society. Emily the TV character, no doubt, has a privileged life, yet her dreams of becoming a writer still seem nearly impossible as they run up against these barriers. When her father has had enough of her rebellious nature, he orders her to read his self-written handbill, “On the Proper Place of Women.” I rolled my eyes at the irony of a man giving a published piece of his to his daughter to stop her from publishing her poetry. “What was he so scared of?” I kept asking the question,

fully aware of the answer. Women have limitations due to social constructs. As a Gen Zer, I was filled with emotion and cheered for Emily throughout the show as she spoke up against gender constraints.

Emily tends to please and keep the family together. She grapples with the notion that her place is inside the kitchen. At one point, Emily even goes into the kitchen to learn to cook in order to impress a man. Emily is not afraid to be seen as a hopeless romantic as her poems explore the idea of losing a lover. The complexity of her love breaks glass ceilings and channels a rebellious Gen Zer in a modern coming-of-age story.

Emily is shown as a social yet independent individual; she enjoys her own company but is also a bold and fierce woman who will speak her mind. Parts of the show’s story line are fictional, such as when Emily tries opioids at a house party she throws. The scene is a far cry from what Emily Dickinson would have been

doing in the 1840s. This extreme change makes the story line relatable, which allows the viewer to empathize with Emily.

Emily’s poetry lets the viewer go inside her mind and navigate her intense emotions about life and death. Emily has lucid dreams about meeting Death, played by Wiz Khalifa. Her relationship with Death ends as Death tells her, “You thought this was a love story between us. Some kind of romance. But it’s not. I don’t love you. You’re not special.” The romance, as tragic as it is, captures the viewer.

Emily exhibits teen angst and the desire to be heard. Through the portrayal of her flaws and mistakes, she becomes more than just a fictional character. An angry Emily ends Season 1 by telling her father, “I am a poet.” Dickinson is a teen romance that is silly and witty, yet it has a serious message about the struggles of being a teen who is full of dreams and aspirations which society constantly tries to oppress.