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Students Mourn, Remember 50 Dead At Vigil for New Zealand Mosque Shooting

By Quiara Vasquez
Editor-in-Chief

“Say it loud, say it clear - Muslim lives matter here!”

So said the fifty students gathered in front of the library on Tuesday, Mar. 19. To participate a vigil for the 50 people killed at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday, Mar. 15. The vigil was hosted by the Brooklyn College Socialists, who read out the names of the dead, invited students to speak their minds, and tried to connect the event to wider world events. Yasmine Kamel of BC Socialists and student Maira Tahir began the event by reading the names of 25 confirmed victims in the shooting. The crowd echoed the names, in remembrance of the lost.

“We just read the names of 25 human beings,” Kamel told the crowd. She was the first to address the crowd after that somber moment.

“The most difficult thing is that this horrific, senseless crime does not surprise me in the least,” she said. Kamel lives in Bay Ridge, where she says that Muslim women are frequently subjected to harassment and assault. But she also connected the tragedy in Christchurch the rise in Islamophobia across the world, such as the “explicitly racist ban” on immigration from several majority-Muslim countries signed into law by the Trump administration and supported by the Supreme Court verdict last year.

Kamel told the crowd that rather than viewing the shooter as a “lone wolf,” or viewing the shooting as an “aberration,” they should call the event what it is: “an act of political terrorism, motivated by white supremacy.”

“This campus knows very well what Islamophobia is,” Kamel added - referring to an incident on campus in 2015 where the NYPD infiltrated several on-campus Muslim groups. Speakers at the event pointed to two campus security officers standing about twenty feet away from the vigil, as an example of the sort of surveillance Muslim students face.

“Why are you here?” one student cried at the two officers. They did not respond.

Maira Tahir spoke after Kamel, talking about her experience as a Muslim woman who wears the hijab in public.

“They call me Osama’s cousin,” Tahir said. “Osama [bin Laden] isn’t even from Pakistan!”

According to Tahir, many people have false ideas about what Islam is, which leads them to make hateful assumptions, and in extreme cases, commit Islamophobic violence.

“Islam is a religion of peace like any other,” she said. “I wouldn’t call [the Christchurch shootings] “Christian” terrorism, because I know what Christianity is.”

Several representatives from Muslim clubs on campus spoke as well. A representative from the Islamic Society said that many men and women in his club were afraid to wear hijabs in public or attend Friday prayers. Like many people at the event, he explicitly called out white supremacy.

“You don’t have to be white to be a white supremacist,” he said, referencing a recent incident where African-American comedian Jess Hilarious had four Sikh men kicked off a flight. (Sikhs are not Muslim, but Sikh men are often misidentified as Muslim because they wear turbans.)

He concluded by referencing a verse from the Quran (5:32): "whoever kills a soul [...] it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely."

A representative from Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) brought up, of course, Palestine, mentioning that Palestinians were killed in the Christchurch shooting. While the event was not explicitly about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she decried “Zionist rhetoric” as one of many "small ways" in which Islamophobia and white supremacy are spread. She told audience members to "call out these small ways when you see it in front of you."

Several people from the crowd came up to speak their minds briefly, some more on-message than others: a Polish-American student encouraged white ethnic students to examine their own histories with discrimination, while another student called out NYPD activity on campus and beyond as "state-sanctioned violence."

Perhaps the most moving statement was from one student who was struck by the reading of names earlier in the day, saying that everyone in the American Muslim community knew someone with the same name as one or more of the victims.

“Everyone knows a Hamza,” she said. “Everyone knows a Zeeshan […] We all know someone with the same names.”

Finally, Tahir and Kamel led the crowd in a handful of chants. They started off with a cry of “Say it loud, say it clear, Muslim lives matter here,” but the chant went through many permutations, speaking to the dignity of other targeted groups - "black lives," "refugee lives," and "immigrant lives" all got a literal shout-out from an enthusiastic crowd.

Several ISO members then started a pair of far more contentious chants: “Long live Palestine!” and “Long live the intifada!” The crowd was less comfortable with these cries. One student turned and asked, “what is an intifada?”

Still, while some students in attendance may have objected to the strident pro-Palestinian views shared at the event, the fifty people in attendance all stood in solidarity against Islamophobia in the wake of tragedy.

A second vigil, co-hosted by the Young Progressives of America (YPA) and the BC Islamic Society, will be held in the Student Center this upcoming Thursday, Mar. 21 at 12:30 p.m.
Brooklyn College Opens Campus Track to Community

By Cheyann Harris
Staff Writer
Reporting Assistance from Quiara Vasquez

Brooklyn College is opening its track to the public, as part of a wider push to help students remain physically active.

Starting Monday, Mar. 18, the track behind the West Quad building will be open to students and faculty from 11 to 3 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and from noon to 3 p.m. on Sundays.

Senior VP for Finance and Administration Alan Gilbert pushed to open up the track to the BC community as part of his “Health and Wellness Initiative.” It’s only been a year since Gilbert took the Senior VP post at Brooklyn College, but he says he has a list of plans to help Brooklyn College students feel more secure on campus. He started from inside of the school, trying to fix problems in the bathrooms by administering the “90-day challenge” in spring 2018, where he challenged himself and his office to see how many issues they could fix in 90 days.

While Gilbert and his team are focused on fixing the interior of the campus, they are also working to increase student activity on campus, both physical and communal. After the Athletics Department began reporting to his offices in late fall, he says his first thought was to give open track access to all students and faculty.

“One of the things I thought we should be doing is opening up our track. I thought it would be important to see if we could open it up as part of our new wellness program,” Gilbert told The Kingsman. “If students have time between classes, they can walk it.”

The use of the track has not always been free of charge. Undergrads already pay for the track’s upkeep as part of their student activity fees. Faculty and staff were paying for access to the track, and graduate students were paying $18 to access it. But as of March 18, the track will be open at no cost for daily use. “In theory, people could walk around the quad,” Gilbert said. “But we already have a track there, and it’s not like it’s costing any more.”

“It’s land,” he added. “It’s not like it’s equipment that could be broken.”

As with all student services on campus, some students were not aware we even had a track. Gilbert wants to make sure those students are informed. “We’re going to keep on advertising,” he said. “We will be doing some sort of opening event with the president and myself in April and we’ll officially welcome everybody.”

The students in the know have been looking forward to the opening. With the track opening so close to the springtime, they have strong hopes that people will actually use it. “I would use the track because it’s more convenient for me and I think it will help many students start focusing on their health,” said a business major who asked to stay anonymous.

Some members of the BC cross country team were confused by the announcement. “Occasionally when we were training someone would just come in and run,” said Joshua Casiano, captain of the men’s cross country team. “But I’m surprised to see it open for the public. How’s that gonna work when track people have practice, or the soccer kids in the fall?”

According to Alan Gilbert, the track will be closed during track meets and soccer games. That’s good, says Casiano, who’s been at many track meets where a soccer ball rolled onto the track at high speed. But otherwise, he’s satisfied with the quality of the track itself. “If it’s a regular sunny day it’s pretty dope,” Casiano said. “There’s the occasional bird s–, but whatever. Can’t control that.”

Slang Slung at Trap Spelling Bee

By Natalina Zieman
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, March 13 in the Club Room of the Student Center, the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. hosted a lit spelling bee for slang words. The girls of the sorority did a quick and involved discussion about what we describe slang as, and the stereotypes behind the word.

One student explained that spoke up and said “Slang is normally associated with urban communities and cities”, when asked what we think slang is. The argument between if it is a language or dialect was brought up, and the same student continued, “Slang is always flux, that’s why right now it is still a big debate as to whether or not slang is a specific language, because language has its own set of rules.”

Slang is always changing.”

The discussion carried into talk about code-switching, which means “the process of shifting from one linguistic code to another, which include accents, language, dialects and tones of voice,” an explanation from a video about code switching.

The sorority girls continued to educate the crowd about slang and how often it is misused and misunderstood. They talked about how we use slang to fit in or seem cool, even if we are not completely sure what it means.

Much of the discussion about code-switching pertain to the middle-working class in different settings. The movie “Sorry to Bother You” was used as an example of code switching.

After the discussion, the yellow and blue sweater-wearing girls set up the Trap Spelling Bee, choosing eight contestants to participate. The words and reactions of the people who participated kept the crowd drawn-in with laughter. Words such as thot, thotiana, yerr, lit and skrrt were thrown out there for the participants to struggle to spell. Although this was a silly and fun event towards the end, much was learned about slang’s history and background. “I did not know the exact meaning of slang or code switching before this event,” mentioned Frances Sanzone, a marketing major here at BC. “My favorite part of the event is when they tried to spell the words. I definitely would not have been able to spell them all!”

She exclaimed. The spelling bee had eight contestants and three rounds, each round getting harder. The words that were chosen for the event were obtained from different states. Some were from New York, Georgia, California and D.C. It was a blast watching the contestants struggle with the words, and their reactions to their definitions and sentences. One contestant was disqualified for not saying the word before spelling it. What was learned from this event is that slang is different everywhere. One lady spoke up and said “Other than making it a racial issue, how about your socioeconomic status? Because if I’m a black girl that grew up in the middle of Long Island, my slang is very different than my black counterpart that grew up in the middle of Brooklyn.” Slang is referred to any spoken word that does not pertain to traditional English.

The event was entertaining yet educating, because slang is usually misinterpreted as “gangster” or “uneducated”, when in reality it is something everyone picks up from friends and/or family members. It is the way we talk and express ourselves in the realm of our environment. Slang is ever-growing, with words being added to modern dictionaries and our daily vocabulary, it is impossible to stay formal. In the wise words of slang: stay lit, fam!
Women of Color Club Holds Conference

By Jonathan Alleyne
Contributing Editor

March is Women’s History Month and the Women of Color Club at Brooklyn College made history in an already historic month, hosting their first ever Women Of Color Political Conference. Coincidentally both Women’s History Month and the WOC Political Conference started as a school event celebrating solidarity, achievement, and history of, by and for women. The former went on to become a national holiday celebrated every March since 1987 and a symbol for all women everywhere; I believe that latter has proven its worth and deserves to be a mainstay at BC.

The conference began in the Gold Room the 6th Floor of the Student Center at 10 o’clock on a great Friday morning. Opening remarks were done by Rebeca Lafond a senior majoring in sociology and President of Women of Color, Chair of Outreach with CLAS Student Government and a University Student Senate Delegate and Dr. Zinga Fraser, Director of the Shirley Chisholm Project. Lafond was met with roaring applause when she introduced herself and her executive positions. She discussed her initial introduction and continuing interest in politics, the purpose of the Women of Color Club at Brooklyn College as well as the purpose of the conference as a whole. Dr. Fraser showed a short video about the most important woman to Dr. Fraser, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn and the nation as whole, Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm. Chisholm’s boldness authenticity and focus on the community set the tone for the rest of the conference.

Next came the event’s Keynote Speaker from the 9th Congressional District, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke. Congresswoman Clarke discussed her upbringing and how her mother, former Councilwoman, Una Clarke used to take her to every community and political meetings because of the lack of daycares at that time. She also described the barrier most if not all women panelists have faced, the concept of lowered expectations where people tend to underestimate the knowledge and ability of obviously qualified and intelligent women of color. Clarke cites her determination to make her parents proud as a prominent fixture in her motivation as well the importance of creating a diverse support system of women of color with an emphasis on common cause service. “Young women [of color] bring added value, diversity and inclusion to the table; their perspectives are informed by their existence,” stated Congresswoman Clarke shortly after her keynote address, “if you’re going to exist in society, you’re going to want to avert as many intended and unintended consequences of policy that are being proposed that impact our communities and our lives.”

The first two panels were about “Women of Color in Politics,” one panel was held in the Gold Room and the other, in the Penthouse. The panel in the Gold Room consisted of political figures like Una Clarke, former Councilwoman and current CUNY Board of Trustee member, Maritza Davila, New York State Assemblywoman and District Leader for the 53rd Assembly District, Alicka Ampry-Samuel, New York City Councilwoman for the 41st Council District, and Sharon Lee, Deputy Borough President as well as International Affairs expert and US Army veteran, Asha Castelberry. Sharon Davis, Vice President of both Women of Color and the Brooklyn College NAACP Chapter moderated the panel. The panel in the Penthouse boasted former political candidates, a political hopeful and Vice President of the Brooklyn Young Democrats, Christina Das. The panelists were: Genesis Aquino, who ran for District Leader of the 51st Assembly District in 2018, Jasi Robinson, who ran for New York State Senator in the 23rd Senate District in 2018, Ifeoma Ike, who ran for Public Advocate this year but was unable to get on the ballot due to a clerical error with her election lawyer, Amanda Septino, who ran for New State Assembly in the 88th Assembly, and Farah Louis, who is currently running for City Councilwoman in the 45th Council District.

The panelists faced. Asha Castelberry began the conversation by highlighting her career and its challenges, being an expert in international affairs but still being judged as mediocre by contemporaries. “There’s no way you know what you’re talking,” was an underlying statement to describe the low expectation of women of color face even in a field they are an expert in. Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel’s response was more internal; she describe her battle with low confidence and high self doubt when in meetings with supposed ‘experts.’

Photo Credit: Samuel Honore

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Women of Color Club Holds Conference

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She soon realized that she knew more than the experts and used that knowledge as a main factor in her confidence which propelled her to a seat at City Hall, “[Women of color] are strong and have a powerful voice just inherently, it is critical for us to be in these discussions so that we can empower each other so we are comfortable and confident in what we’re saying because society would have us believe that we are less than. This is a time for us to build together, organize and mobilize and take back what’s removed from us.”

The final question pertained to advice for women of color wanting to participate in politics. This question was answered by Assemblywoman Maritza Davila, she emphasized that politics starts from the ground up and the importance of joining your local community board. She also stressed identifying a need in your community and using that need to drive your passion. When asked about who was her woman role model, she cited Shirley Chisholm as her top contender, “she was one of the first women activists [from New York] of color to come up and voice the issues of the communities during the 60s and she was a tough lady who opened the door for everyone of color.”

The last two panels consisted of “Women of Color in Activism,” the two panels were held in the same two rooms.

The panel in the Penthouse comprised of activists, advocates and CUNY heavyweights like Melissa Denizard, youth activist and documentarian, Jaslin Kaur, policy and advocacy organizer at Know Your IX, Mercy Baez, domestic violence advocate, Grenshawna Clement, Vice Chair for International Student Affairs of the University Student Senate, Na’ilah Amaru, advocacy and policy strategist and Monica Silbri, founder of CUNY Dreamers and National Program Coordinator for IGNITE National.

Once again, I stayed in the Gold Room with Ms. Davis as moderator and once again I was impressed by the question and answers alike. The first question was in regards to ways women of color can advocate for change. Opening the discussion was Zakiyyah Ali, who articulated that women of color “don’t have to be a specific brand of activist” and the essentiality of using your own expertise and platform to create change. When asked about what were the benefits of educating young women of color she said, “The benefits of educating young black woman is that you always have young girls that look to you and push you to be your better self because you know that you are a reflection of them and they are a reflection of you. So every time when I walk into a classroom and see young girls, I think about my younger self and what I would’ve said to my younger self so that I could make some changes in my life and do things even grander. One thing I tell the young girls that I teach is ‘don’t live in fear because fear is what holds you back.’” Adding to the discussion was Malinda Rascoe, who describe her life story as being homeless and still receiving her master’s degree summatng that “the best advocates have lived experience.”

The final event of the conference were three breakout workshops held by three different organizations. IGNITE hosted an organizing workshop in the Jefferson Room presented by Jessica Rosario, WEBelieve held a leadership development workshop in the Gold Room presented by Chelsea Miller and Dare to Run introduced a running for office workshop presented by Rachelle Sussia.

I attended the Gold Room’s (again) workshop presented by Chelsea Miller. Miller introduced the workshop by posing the question of what does it take to be a leader. To Miller, a leader is someone who is able to listen to others, and able to organize and lead a group. She also went on to articulate that leaders are able to listen, organize and lead. She pointed at being an inspiration and being an authentic entity as being incredible factors in the ability to tap into leadership potential. To achieve this, Miller cited 3 major characteristics; being unapologetic, being uncertain and being unafraid.

“This political conference was about encouraging and empowering women of color to be organizers, to be politically active and to be leaders,” said Rebeca Lafond. The conference convened elected officials, activists and cultural influencers from all backgrounds into several panels of discussion and seemingly had an impact on its attendees.

“As a woman of color I am so glad that I have had the opportunity to come to the conference because there is a disparity within [the] women of color [community] in all aspects of life,” says Mame-Yaa Boateng, a sophomore at Brooklyn College studying psychology. “Whether it’s in politics or medicine and these [women] showed me that we can do it, like woman of color can branch out and do great things and be leaders in the communities no matter what we do. I got useful tips about how to help build myself and my brand.”

This conference is a watershed moment and is a glimpse into a future where women of color take control of their destiny and push the conversation and the nation forward.
Student Filmmaker Calls For Brooklyn College to Cut Ties With Corrupt Residence Hall

By Noah Daly
Business Manager

The Brooklyn College Residence Hall at 1 Kenilworth Place has been a glaring omission in the school’s efforts to take care of their students.

Last week, film student and documentarian Chris Omar launched a petition demanding that BC separate itself from the residence hall in the wake of numerous cases of sexual harassment by staff, as well as deplorable living conditions.

When Chris Omar first came to BC as a freshman in 2016, he moved into the dorms at the residence hall just a few blocks from campus.

“As soon as we walk into the rooms I could clearly see mold in the vents, in the shower, and pubic hairs in the wardrobes,” Omar recalled. “The hot plate they provided was badly rusted, and we were given a broken chair.

A few weeks into my stay I got food poisoning when I realized the refrigerator wasn’t working. I called the front desk dozens of times, and spoke directly with the staff, but they kept claiming I had to just wait for [the fridge] to reset. After weeks they finally showed up to inspect it and I was berated for ‘wasting their time’.

The thermometer read 56 degrees, and it still took them weeks to replace it.”

Now a junior, Omar recalled the tough decision of actually having to commute home to his parents’ house in Monroe-Woodbury, a nearly two-hour drive.

“I was taking public transit to commute to school. It took me between two and a half to three hours in either direction, so I was spending five or six hours everyday commuting, just so I didn’t have to stay in that room.”

After the reality of life in the residence hall set in, Chris Omar was forced to take action. He began by creating a YouTube video documenting his findings and encouraging anyone to move in. The video is a twenty-minute review with interviews of residents and several pictures of prevalent black mold in the many fixtures of the residence hall.

Some of the interviewees elected to have their faces blurred and voices changed in fear of reprisal for speaking out. “People deserved to know that they were not going to get what was advertised,” Omar told The Kingsman. “This is not a home.”

When he tried to report his findings to the authorities, he discovered the college was woefully incapable of helping him. “I spoke with Andy Auguste, who used to be in charge of student life on campus, and he confessed that his office was unable to intervene.”

Chris’s dilemma spurs from the fact the the residence hall is not in fact owned by Brooklyn College. New Brooklyn Development LLC, owned by Yosef “Sefi” Zvieli, has total control of operations and maintenance within the dorms.

“I spoke with Andy Auguste, who used to be in charge of student life on campus, and he confessed that his office was unable to intervene. I called 311 again and again, and even when the Department of Health actually came to the premises, they were denied a key card.”

Zvieli, a known entity in housing and residential development in Brooklyn, has not made himself available for public inquiry, and has excluded any linkage between New Brooklyn Developments off of the 1 Kenilworth page.

The reaction to Omar’s video was overwhelmingly positive.

“I received tons of e-mails thanking me for exposing the way things were,” Omar said. One e-mail in particular, from a student named Christine DeLisser, stood out. Lisser claimed she was sexually harassed on four different occasions in the Residence Hall.

When Omar went to the #MeToo speakout event on campus last semester with DeLisser, he saw that President Michelle Anderson didn’t say a word. When he brought his own complaints to the office of the Provost, he was promised that they would get back to DeLisser within ten days, and then didn’t do anything. But DeLisser and Omar’s efforts didn’t go unnoticed among students at the Residence Hall.

“We then got three other reports of sexual harassment in the facility,” said Chris Omar. “It’s clear that this is not a serious issue for President Anderson, but we are the ones living with it.”

At the prompting of a powerful public official, Omar made a petition on change.org calling for President Anderson to cut all ties with the Residence Hall. As of press time it has over 200 signatures.

Omar’s also still using his camera to tell the stories of students in RHBC. His documentary “You Found A Home”, will be played at the Brooklyn College Film Festival on May 28, 2019.

It’s obvious that the quality of life at 1 Kenilworth Place falls abysmally short of what is necessary to provide for any student. Whether the mantle of responsibility falls to the developer or the Office of Student Affairs is no longer the question. Instead, reform and extreme ownership of these deplorable conditions must be at the core of any bipartisan solution.

Talk to us!

Are you a CUNY student or faculty member with something to say? The Kingsman’s Opinions section is accepting submissions. Send your op-ed to kingsmanbc@gmail.com before 11:59 PM Saturday.

(The Kingsman only publishes articles written by Brooklyn College students and faculty, related to goings-on at Brooklyn College or CUNY. We reserve the right to reject submissions which are off-topic, obscene, or excessively wordy.)
Student Voices:
Tales from Residence Hall @ Brooklyn College

By Allison Rapp
Managing Digital Editor

“I actually have had a decent experience living here. This is why I never spoke out against RHBC. I was in student gov last year and definitely could have done something to speak out against the res hall but felt bad doing so. However, this semester when I was struggling with a payment, I came home to a notice on my desk ordering me to move out within 10 days unless I gave them a post-dated check. I ended up just doing it for the sake of not having to deal with eviction proceedings. I work in the state government and work with eviction cases but apparently the residence hall isn't even a legitimate lease, it's a licensing agreement, which means they can circumvent the NYC and NYS tenant landlord laws.”

--a current tenant at RHBC, from upstate NY

“My experience living there was horrible. I paid double of what I pay for today, and I had to share a room with someone. When we moved in it was horrible and I waited about three hours to get some of my keys. Some keys I never got. When I went into my room it was disgusting and I found pubes in my drawers. The sink in my bathroom was clogged with hairs that I had to remove myself. I would change everything about that experience because that was horrible to live through during my first time in college, New York and living by myself. Everything can improve: prices, cleanliness, communication, and their honesty. I left because I found cheaper options. Also, I felt extremely unsafe living there. The security guards never felt useful and some made people uncomfortable.

The only solution I can see for this is to have the residence hall closed as soon as possible. The college should find a space where dorms can be established for students that both come from out of the state or are international.”

--a former tenant at RHBC, from out of the area

“My experience overall has been fine, I have an awesome roommate, which in my opinion has a huge influence on someone's experience. I would definitely change the cost if I could, as many people I'm sure would. I think for my first year it was a good transition from living at home to living in Brooklyn. In my opinion, it is a little different than a typical college dorm atmosphere, which has its positives and negatives. I would love to live somewhere else -- next year im moving into an apartment with my roommate. With an apartment, we can get a lot more space for less money and for a longer period of time.”

--a current tenant at RHBC, from out of the area

“I'm an international student so I literally based myself in the advertisement done by the school. It seemed like a good place to start and I had seen in movies that Americans dorm while in college so I thought everyone did it too. I had generally bad experiences with the building and staff itself, but I did kind of appreciate it for what it was. I met some really good friends while living there, it felt like a big slumy party. My room was super filthy when I moved in and the maintenance guys were very creepy, one asked me out and I was like no I have a boyfriend and he says that they all say that -- it was super uncomfortable. I reported him but nothing happened. I think I wouldn't use the residence hall at all. I think its a private corporation with private interests so obviously it's looking out for itself I think it's just so poorly handled and it's really a building full of kids, so it's dangerous to advertise it as a Brooklyn College thing when it really isn't. It's a nice place to meet people and it is convenient to be close to school but it is not worth it. It's pricey, poorly handled, small, not very well maintained and just in general, like if you have the option, just rent an apartment with some friends, because you have a lot more freedom.”

--a former tenant and international student

[Editor's note: for obvious reasons, all students profiled spoke on condition of anonymity.]
Editorial: The Garden State Might Get Greener

By Noah Daly
Business Manager

On Monday, Mar. 25, the state of New Jersey will vote on whether or not marijuana will be completely legalized for residents.

The state senate and assembly both have voting dates set for the 25th, but it is still unclear whether the senate can gain the remaining ‘yes’ votes to legalize. This past Monday, Mar. 18, the state assembly and senate both passed a version of a bill that must now go before New Jersey’s outspoken pro-legalization governor, Phil D. Murphy. In a statement made on NPR, Governor Murphy reminded listeners that individuals purchasing marijuana in New Jersey will need to be “at least 21 years of age, no question,” adding “it is still unclear what kind of a danger marijuana could present to developing minds.”

Still, it is a time of great anticipation for a state that has consistently been ranked amongst the highest in the nation pertaining to marijuana-related arrests (more than 400 per 100,000 people in 2016). Should the bill pass, it will be a clear sign for New York state to take similar steps.

Joining Gov. Murphy in the push for legalization are New Jersey Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) and State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-Middlesex). The three reached an agreement earlier this month to once again bring the issue before the state legislature. In spite of recent rumors among state officials that Murphy would let the voting push ‘drown’ it, this week his commitment stuck as this referendum, Murphy told press that he would “let the legislature decide” during a conference in February.

Since a complete bill has not been made public, the coming days will be Murphy’s opportunity to whip up votes and iron out the language of the bill. Issues as broad as individual clinics acquiring commercial licenses, the potential use of courier services, and procedures for out-of-state residents being able to make purchases, are all unsettled.

The Grass Tax

Still, some features of previous proposals will be appearing on the 25th: As part of the deal struck between the Governor’s office and legislative officials, the state would institute a $42/ per ounce flat tax rate. That tax would remain the same no matter the price of cannabis, meaning that when prices fall, the tax rate would effectively grow larger. On a $300 ounce of marijuana, it’s essentially a 14 percent tax rate. If cannabis prices drop to $200 an ounce, the tax will represent a 21 percent levy.

Another key component will be the individual tax on goods sold in the state. Townships with dispensaries would be able to claim up to 3% on all items sold, while growing communities would face a 2% tax, and wholesalers in the now booming big-cannabis industry would face 1% on all transactions in the state. Those municipalities that do not support or allow pot in their communities would not receive any tax revenue from the marijuana in the state.

If legalized marijuana comes to New Jersey, it will quickly bring changes to economic development, interstate commerce, and law enforcement practices in a state notorious for its history enforcing arrest and ticketing quotas.

“I was fined more than $700 on two separate occasions for having tiny amounts of pot,” says Robbie Crosian, a Paramus resident. “I work hard, I pay my taxes, and if I want to enjoy a smoke in the park, that should be my right.” During his administration, former Governor Chris Christie cracked down hard on any would-be marijuana users. His final term saw more than 40,000 arrests for possession, with a staggering majority of those arrested being non-white.

“Legalizing adult-use marijuana is a monumental step to reducing disparities in our criminal justice system,” Murphy said in a statement. “I believe that this legislation will establish an industry that brings fairness and economic opportunity to all of our communities, while promoting public safety by ensuring a safe product and allowing law enforcement to focus their resources on serious crimes.”

Echoing the governor’s concerns, New Jersey residents and advocacy groups are excited to see the state seeking policing reforms. In an interview with Kingsman, an anonymous Cherry Hill resident we’ll call Carla described her experience as a “private smoker.” “I enjoy marijuana because it helps me stay focused on my work. I don’t have time to be a stoner,” she continued. “Having [marijuana] be more readily available would be great for New Jersey, but I know a lot of people who’ve been working privately in the industry, so I’m concerned for their livelihoods. I’ve watched friends get slammed with huge fines and even embarrassing court appearances. If our government wants to really represent the people [of New Jersey] this cannot continue.”

Carla is a specialized biologist working with major government organizations and in many ways represents the modern marijuana modern smoker: productive, progressive, and uninterested in the perpetuation of anti-marijuana hysteria left over from the past century.

And Another Thing...

On Feb 28th, officers from New York and New Jersey made the second largest bust in U.S. history when they found 3,200 pounds of cocaine with a street value of around $77 million in a shipping container. The opioid epidemic in the United States has reached a fever pitch, costing the United States over $78 billion, including the costs of health care, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement. 1 in 5 Americans receive long-term opioid prescriptions for non-cancer related ailments, and more than 40% of all overdoses come from prescription abuse.

It’s high time New Jersey begin to address the real calamitous substances that are harming communities, and begin to build upon an industry that has already brought so much into the lives of its residents.
The pressure is on for the recently reclaimed Democratic House to hold Trump accountable for any actions worth removal from office - but is the risk of an attempted impeachment worth the political backlash if they fail?

Speaker of the House and Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi recently drew ire from many liberal circles after she cemented her position on the topic of impeaching President Donald Trump in a recent interview with The Washington Post. Angered debate filled the media after she was quoted as saying, “He’s just not worth it.” Disappointment by many left-leaning pundits was only exacerbated after the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Congressman Adam Schiff, shared a similar sentiment, saying to CNN that, “In the absence of very graphic evidence, it would be difficult to get the support in the Senate needed to make an impeachment successful.”

With a multiplicity of investigations, both criminal and civil, looming over the President, many left-leaning voters are rightfully frustrated to hear such a passive tone come from Democratic leadership. But upon further inspection, cautionary statements around the tricky subject of impeachment are not without warrant from the Congressional leadership.

Removing a President is a fickle game, and more importantly, a 2-step motion. The House of Representatives holds a Democratic majority, and while the first step of impeachment is a purely Congressional affair, the vote to remove a sitting president lies solely in the hands of the Senate. Getting the Senate to vote in favor of removing Trump is an extremely unlikely thing, as the legislative body is currently comprised of a large majority of Republicans, none who seem too willing or interested to put their careers on the line to remove Trump. As Schiff said, in the absence of clear evidence of criminal wrongdoing (or, as the standards of impeachment are typically referred to, “high crimes and misdemeanors”), it’s going to be incredibly difficult to convince any Trump-loyalist Senators to actually vote to remove Trump from office, thus making a full impeachment procedure a very difficult thing to successfully pull off.

This puts Democrats in a bit of a pickle. If they commence impeachment proceedings and fail to fully follow through with it, the damage to their chances of reclaiming the Presidency in 2020 could be irreparable. Trump has already spoken out against vocal figures itching to remove him from office. It doesn’t take much cognitive exercise to understand that a failed impeachment attempt against Trump could give him more than enough of the ammo he needs to galvanize and fire up his already strident voter base. After 3 years of Trump walking back many of the policies Democrats had worked to enact under the Obama administration, and an uncertain future in the 2020 election, it’s hardly a surprise that leading Democrats are nervous about any potential mishaps that might negatively affect their attempt to regain the presidency.

While the idea of impeachment holds a lot of uncertainty, that certainly isn’t the only side of the debate. A growing number of liberal voices have proposed strongly differing views from Pelosi’s. To many, impeachment is not a question of merely whether it can happen, but rather whether it must happen. If the President has committed crimes and conduct that are worthy of removal and prosecution, then it is the obligation of the Congress to hold him accountable for such.

There’s an ideological, future-weary aspect to this school of thought supporting the initiation of impeachment proceedings. If Congress refuses to impeach a President in the face of high crimes and misdemeanors solely because he or she has the favor of the Senate, then we might as well go ahead and cement the idea that the President is firmly above the law. If evidence is found of impeachable offenses, and the Democrats refuse to take action out of political fear, it sets a frightening precedent for how a future (or present) President chooses to act when they are aware they hold a significant political advantage.

Not everyone in the Democratic House share Pelosi’s tepid feelings on impeachment. Incoming members of Congress like Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib have expressed varying levels of support for impeachment efforts, from spoken approval to Tlaib’s infamous rallying cry of “impeach the motherf-ker.” Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Jerrold Nadler has been cautious with his wording around the efforts of impeachment, but his aggressive effort to seek documents from Trump associates and organizations speaks for itself.

Of course, this debate is to an extent hypothetical, as the world awaits the long anticipated report from Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s office to be released in coming weeks, as well as conclusion of the ongoing investigations by multiple different House committees. Ultimately, they may find that the President hasn’t committed crimes egregious enough to warrant an impeachment attempt - although many would argue that he has obstructed justice in public view.

Whether the Democrats move to impeach or not, the question of “how close to above the law can the Executive branch get” has already been raised, and the conversation around it is unlikely to die down anytime soon. Lawmakers and future administrations may have to begin entertaining the notion that we need to re-assess the range of powers given to the Executive branch in order to preserve a truly equal system of government.

“Did the President refuse to take action out of political fear, it sets a frightening precedent for how a future (or present) President chooses to act when they are aware they hold a significant political advantage.”
Last Tuesday, students crowded the new lecture hall on the first floor of Ingersoll Extension to premier the fourth season of the TV/Radio Department’s web series “Unproductive.”

The show was created by TV/R Radio professors Brian Dunphy and Stuart McClelland. Seasons one through three each told different stories about three different sets of TV/Radio students, like an anthology series. For the first time, season four picks up where season three left off, continuing the story of newly minted radio jockey Emily Reinhardt and her friends and radio partners Kelly and Valerie.

Although this will not be a review of the season, I do have to say it is arguably the strongest yet. With improved writing, performances of the main cast, and production value taking a solid step up, it was definitely an enjoyable watch. (Okay, maybe this was a little bit of a review.)

The premiere event, which followed a party in the SUBO Penthouse, was hosted by Dunphy, who got the night going by saying “Come on, I have kids to take care of!”

After showing the first few episodes of the new season, he brought on a panel of three of the season writers: head writer Andrea Katz and writers Medina Skoro and Matthew Dalto.

“I’m not sorry,” said a unapologetic Professor Dunphy.

They detailed a time when Dunphy and Katz discusses a writing note on the phone while Dunphy was shopping for homes with his wife.

“This was an idea that we had turned into something bigger. We became a family,” said Medina Skoro, who will be inheriting the role of head writer season five.

After a few more episodes they brought up some of the players during the production and post-production stages: director and faculty Sally Lomidze, post-production supervisor and faculty Michael Zhonga; Andrea Katz again, who also worked as script supervisor and editor, Amanda Acevedo; who worked as a camera operator; sound mixer and boom Daniel Mines, and The Kingsman's own editor-in-chief Quiara Vasquez, who worked as a set designer but also was involved with writing and editing for the season.

Production is by far the most complex part of the process. For season four, three entire sets had to be built - a new challenge for the Unproductive crew - and production had to be built around that. Director Sally Lomidze worked to refresh the shooting style for the series, incorporating aspects of both single-cam and multicam cinematography, as well as increased lighting detail.

After a life-affirming season finale, Dunphy brought up the entire cast of the season to talk about their experience working on the show, and for many of the leads, returning for a second season. Rae Mizrachi returned as the show's lead character Emily, who made a large jump from the bashful Christian girl we met at the beginning of season three to a woman dealing with her new role as a commanding radio host.

“To have two other woman in a room and not talk about men or cleaning [...] to pass the Bechdel test [...] it was a really lovely process,” Mizrachi said. Also returning to the main cast are Emily’s friends, radio coworkers, and now roommates Kelly and Valerie, played by Rachel Fink and Sarah Beitch, respectively.

It was nice to see all the people who put their own touches onto the project, that was in production for two years, all in one place talking about the experience dealing with the long arduous task of building a series from a blank sheet of paper with “FADE IN” at the top to a final edited cut, especially considering that cut was a good one.

Dunphy also announced that episodes of “Unproductive” may be aired on the Pacific Coast TV network sometime in April. The forty or so students and faculty involved with the production will have their work air on an actual television station in California.

“I’m really proud of everybody,” he said.
THEATER REVIEW: “Porch Play”

By Quiara Vasquez
Editor-in-Chief

In my time as a theatergoer at Brooklyn College, no two words have ever been cause for alarm in the same way “World Premiere” has. Sure, some of the debuts at the college have been good - really good, in fact. During the 2015-2016 season, “Radium Now” and “When We Wake Up Dead” were both fantastic. Last year’s “world premieres” were, respectively, the middling “Must Wash Hands” and the almost-great “La Folie” - a mixed bag befitting the scrambled scavenger hunt that was the 2017-2018 theater season. And in spring of 2017, I had the distinct displeasure of attending the opening night of “Royal Jelly,” an absurdist comedy with zero comedic content, not to mention, simulated animal sex that made the Discovery Channel look dangerously close to “Royal Jelly.”

Kate Kremer’s “Porch Play” is tame. “Porch Play” shows signs of brilliance - a work of art for what it is. “Porch Play” is jarringly out-of-touch during the lighter-hearted early acts and frustratingly on-the-nose when the play takes a hard turn into darkness towards the end. And frankly, from my vantage point, the lighting set-up was more migraine-inducing than anything. This is very distracting, and I wish that everyone involved in that department had a little more faith in the script.

I also found the ending melodramatic, and this time I am using the word pejoratively. “Porch Play” ends in an unforgettable brutal fashion - but I left the theater feeling a little sick, because that brutality was not earned at all.

If I had to describe “Porch Play” in a word, it’d be “extra.” Kremer clearly is a gifted playwright, and the cast’s talent is similarly obvious. I understand that this is a nominal farce, and that in many ways farce is just real life “with the volume turned up,” so to speak. But sometimes when the color is too bright, or the music blasting too loud, the end result dulls rather than numbs your senses and makes it hard to appreciate a work of art for what it is. “Porch Play” shows signs of brilliance - but I think that brilliance would be better appreciated if the lights were just a little dimmer.

SPEAK UP!

BC STUDENT TOWN HALL
SUBO, 4th FLOOR
Jefferson Lounge
Wednesday, March 27
6 P.M.

By Quiara Vasquez
Editor-in-Chief

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By Hernan Pacas
Staff Writer

On Saturday, the Brooklyn College Men’s Volleyball team headed to Immaculata, Pennsylvania, where they split a tri-match against Elizabethtown and Immaculata University. The Bulldogs would lose the first match against Elizabethtown College, where they also failed to win a single set and lost the match 3-0. However, the Bulldogs would fight back and respond with a win against the host and wins Immaculata University. They would win all three sets in that match and, having secured a win, bolster their record to 7-10.

In the first match against Elizabethtown College, they would play three fairly competitive sets but still lose all three by a score difference of 6 or less. They would lose the first set 25-19, the second 25-20 and finally the third 25-19. Gabriel Pjatak and Omar Rezika, a junior and freshman respectively, would come together to score a total of 23 points in the first match. Pjatak would record nine kills and five blocks while Rezika had another great game and contributed with seven kills, two blocks, and two service aces. Senior setter, Sayuj Zachariah, would also finish the game with team high in assists and digs. He would record 19 assists and 17 digs. The Bulldogs were however outscored by Elizabethtown, who would go on to also hold the edge in kills, aces, blocks, assists, and digs for the game, securing them their win.

For the second game, against Immaculata University, the Bulldogs would dominate all three sets and were led to victory by middle blocker, Gabriel Pjatak, and middle hitter, Omar Rezika. Pjatak would finish the match with a match high 18 points comprised of 14 kills while hitting .524, three solo blocks, and a service ace. Rezika would add eight points across five kills, a pair of service aces, and a solo block. In the first set, the Bulldogs would cruise to victory as they dominated Immaculata and won the set 25-13. The second set wound up being more competitive and a little closer, but once again the Bulldogs would win this set 25-18. The third set would again be won by the Bulldogs, this time leading by 25-15. For the match, the Bulldogs greatly outscored Immaculata in points, scoring 49 points for the entirety of the match compared to the 23 points Immaculata managed to put up. The Bulldogs would also have the statistical advantage in kills, aces, assists, and digs.

The Bulldogs were able to respond perfectly, having played a great all-around game against Immaculata, giving them a much-deserved win after losing the first match of the evening to Elizabethtown University. The Bulldogs now head on to host their final regular season match on Thursday against City College. The game will be at the West Quad and prior to the match, senior day activities will take place. In addition, it will be Homecoming night, where the first 125 fans will receive a free BC athletics t-shirt! Homecoming night, where the first 125 fans will receive a free BC athletics t-shirt!

By Maruful Hossain
Sports Editor

The Brooklyn College Men’s Volleyball team broke a three-game skid and dominated against Lehman College, 3-0 (25-17, 25-16, 25-17) at the West Quad Center on Tuesday, March 12. This game was considered a non-conference game, despite the fact that both teams are in the CUNYAC conference. Nonetheless, after this game, the Brooklyn College Bulldogs improved to 6-9, while the Lehman College Lightning’s dropped to 3-11.

The first match set the tone for Brooklyn College. The Bulldogs found ways to make digs and blocks and the Lightning just couldn’t respond. Our team seemed to know what they were doing and when their team played with cohesion, they made proper plays. The set ended with a bad serve on the LightningLehman College’s end, summing up the first set for Lehman, 25-17.

The second set started off with the LightningsLehman College at an advantage, leading 3-7. However, the Bulldogs would look to clawed back and tie the game, 10-10. It would then become a back-and-forth game until the Bulldogs took a 15-14 lead, slowly gaining making their momentum. Senior setter Sayuj Zachariah helped the Bulldogs stave off a loss with saves, dig and assistance from middle hitter Omar Rezika. Middle blocker Gabriel Pjatak also helped the Bulldogs rally with kills. The Bulldogs did not look back as they took the set, 25-16.

The third set also found the Bulldogs trailing 7-2. However, the Bulldogs rallied back with a three point rally, including back-to-back kills by Gabriel Pjatak. After trailing again 14-12, the Bulldogs secured the game by finishing off with a 7-0 run, ending the set with a 25-17 lead. The Bulldogs had 39 kills as opposed to the LightningsLehman College’s 20 kills. The Bulldogs hit .316 while the LightningsLehman College hit .041. The Bulldogs also had 38 assists while Lehman only had 18 assists.

Leading the Bulldogs was middle hitter Gabriel Pjatak as he had 14 kills. Freshman Omar Rezika followed up with 9 kills while junior setter Michael Valentin had 7 kills.