



#CANCELED

VOL. 41 ISSUE 2



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Letter from the Editor

BY TAYLOR BEGLANE

You ever wonder what makes all this shit worth it? Maybe you have the worst situation going on at home, a low-paying job where all your coworkers are incompetent and none of your classes going the way you want. It's bleak no matter where you look, right?

I've been there — but what if I told you there was more to it?

Sometimes when all your anxieties are eating away at the fabric of your life, what you need is to create. To curate, to conspire with like-minded folks all working towards the same result.

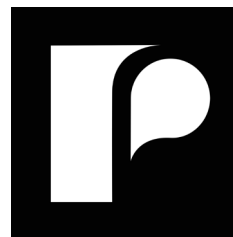
Expanding more elements into your world is like adding rooms to your house. Leave the awful decor, mold or knick knacks you can't bring yourself to get rid of and step out into a different, more stable space.

Realize that there is so much more to your life than the things that make it hard. These are cheap words from a woman you've probably never met, but trust me, I've been there. A few elements that make me up were pieced together from the aftermaths of some heavy stuff. That's when The Press came in. On a whim I popped into the office, figuring I'd forget to come to next week's meeting — but I didn't. I talked, made friends. I discovered what could make me irreplaceable to the magazine, skills only I could bring.

It's no true escape, but it's a breath of fresh air — and maybe it can give you the break and perspective you needed to go back in and deal with that mold, or throw away those things you don't need.

That's what this 'zine could be for you. It was for me. It doesn't matter where you're coming from.

Escape here, and create.

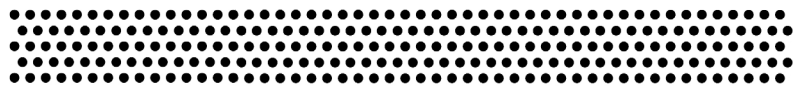


THE STONY BROOK PRESS FEBRUARY 2020

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50 Years 'Forever Wild': Looking Back on the Ashley Schiff Preserve

THE PRESERVE IN THE CENTER OF STONY BROOK'S WEST CAMPUS HAS BEEN A SANCTUARY FOR WILDLIFE AND A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PROFESSOR ASHLEY SCHIFF FOR 50 YEARS.



By Margaret Osborne,
Taylor Beglane and
Brienne Ledda



When Stony Brook University decided to bulldoze the tallest conifer tree on campus in the 1960s, political science professor Dr. Ashley Schiff chained himself to its trunk, according to campus lore.

His nephew remembers waking up to a phone call in the middle of the night at his home in Brooklyn. It was a plea from Schiff's wife to Ashley's twin brother, asking him to convince Ashley to unchain himself.

Though the tree is long gone and Schiff's widow does not remember the incident, it propelled Schiff into Stony Brook legend.

The 1960s was the era of the Vietnam War and flower power,

of civil rights protests and campus drug raids. But despite all the chaos, Ashley Schiff was known for always leaving his door open — and for his staunch environmentalism — at a swiftly expanding university vying to be the next Harvard.

When Schiff died suddenly at the age of 37 in 1969, the loss of a beloved professor, husband and father of three shocked the Stony Brook community. Students insisted on honoring him and, with the support of the university president, created the Ashley Schiff Preserve.

The 26-acre forest sits across from Roth Quad, along the outer edge of Circle Road. Professors teach along the trails, and students hike

Above:
A group of hikers led by botanist Sue Avery.

(Taylor Beglane/The Press)

through the woods. Naturalists have found endangered plant species sprinkled throughout, and geologists value its untouched terrain as a lingering testament to Long Island's glacial formation.

But 50 years after the land was set aside, the preserve still lacks legal protection. Though local environmentalists have fought for decades to make it a state park, their efforts have always fallen short.

Now, activists are once again pushing to make the park truly "forever wild." The Environment Committee submitted a resolution to the Faculty Senate on Monday, calling on the administration to implement and support permanent protection for the preserve. It

was passed unanimously and now hinges on approval from the university administration.

“We’re hoping some president will be bold enough to say, ‘I’m not going to build on it, and nor will anybody else,’” said Sharon Pochron, the president of the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Preserve, an organization formed after Schiff’s death to maintain the forest. The Friends encourage professors to use the preserve for their classes, celebrate major milestones and press the administration to approve protection more official than in name only.

Heavily emphasized in the resolution to protect the preserve is the site’s intrinsic historical value, especially as a testament to Schiff’s influence on the university in its early years.

Stony Brook University was less than 10 years old when Ashley Schiff joined its political science faculty in 1964.

Schiff was most known at Stony Brook for his tenure as the master, or faculty advisor, at Cardozo College, where he “provided the residents with a seemingly unending flow of celebrity guest

visitors, with a calendar of educational events unmatched by any of Stony Brook’s twenty other residential colleges,” according to an obituary published in *The Statesman*.

“He felt that it should be a place of stimulating ideas and intellectual fertility, rather than just entertainment,” Schiff-Shannon said — his obituary in *The Statesman* claims he once refused to bring a belly dancer to the college, as his students requested, because it was not an educational experience.

George Locker, a former student of Ashley Schiff’s and an original resident in Cardozo, said. “[Students] respected him because he believed in brutal honesty. He believed in facing a situation or an idea directly. And without compromise. That’s what set him apart.”

Schiff often butted heads with then-University President John Toll over the continued development of the campus, according to Schiff-Shannon.

“The campus was beautiful then — and the bulldozers were going around ripping it up,” Schiff-Shannon said. “He was very

emotional. This really bothered him.”

But even amidst the fervor of development, Schiff pushed to preserve natural spaces on campus. He took his students on “bramble rambles” in the woods during class, and his son, Philip Schiff, vividly remembers his father taking him to plant narcissus bulbs around Schiff’s office, and azaleas and crab apples near Roth Pond.

Schiff was “one of the most prominent voices” advocating to make the campus a little more natural, according to Michael Schrimpf, a former president of the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Preserve.

“That was very forward thinking,” Schrimpf added. “Nowadays, we pride ourselves on being a green campus. That wouldn’t have been possible without Ashley Schiff.”

His death was a blow to the fledgling campus. Schiff went to Mather Hospital with what seemed like a minor illness in late September, and was gone shortly after, on the morning of Oct. 1.

“We were a young campus. And most of the faculty was rather

Below:
A map of the trails in the preserve stands at the entrance.

(Taylor Beglane/The Press)





“Nowadays, we pride ourselves on being a green campus. That wouldn’t have been possible without Ashley Schiff.”

young,” Myers said. “Nobody had ever experienced anything like this. Most of us had never even had a death in our families.”

To console the grieving campus, the university offered to name a building after Schiff. Students rejected the idea.

“That was exactly what you shouldn’t do for a guy like Ashley Schiff, and so we came up with the idea of protecting a piece of the woods that was just south of Roth Quad,” Locker said. “We thought it was most in keeping with who he was.”

Toll signed off on the idea. The Friends of the Ashley Schiff

Preserve was formed soon after, to manage the area and educate the campus about its importance.

Part of why the preserve is so treasured is its ecological significance; it’s a snapshot of what North Shore forests may have looked like a hundred years ago. Oaks, maples and tulip poplar trees tower over an understory of cinnamon ferns, sweet-smelling cherry birches and an unusually large population of maple-leaf viburnum. Trees felled by storms or other natural causes become rife with fungi like chicken of the woods. Close to the soil grow clusters of trailing arbutus, or

Above:
The canopy
of the Ashley
Schiff
Preserve.

(Taylor
Beglane/The
Press)

mayflowers, and small spotted wintergreens, frosty white in the centers of their leaves.

The forest also houses the remnants of an historic treasure: the stumps of American chestnut trees — which were wiped out by an infectious fungus nearly a hundred years ago — sending up new sprouts that inevitably become infected and die down again. Researchers have been crossbreeding American chestnuts with blight-resistant Japanese chestnuts to try and bring the species back; two such hybrids are planted in the Ashley Schiff preserve.

The animals that call the preserve home include herds of white-tailed deer, foxes, opossums and raccoons; it’s also a known pit stop for migrating songbirds. Noisy bluejay pairs, often imitating the cries of their neighbor hawks, are major distributors of acorns. Red-tailed hawks patrol the skies, and a pair of Cooper’s hawks, small forest raptors, have nested in the preserve the past five summers to rear chicks.

The preserve’s irregular topography is also of interest to geologists; like most of the landscape of Long Island, the hills and ravines of the preserve were formed by a glacier.

“Near Tabler you can see it, but you have to have really good eyes. They smoothed it all out,” geology professor Gilbert Hanson said. “In the Ashley Schiff park preserve, you can actually see the features, the ridges and valleys.”

Hanson takes his students into the preserve to study its sediments, and has also overseen research on the American chestnut sprouts within. According to him, there are more than 100 sprinkled throughout the woods.

The preserve has been a hotbed of research and projects. In 2016, three engineering students



proposed a set of stone steps to combat erosion on a trailhead's steepening slope. Hogyem Evan Joo, an alumni representative and the web manager of the Friends' website and Facebook page, conducted a study before he graduated to test how many students knew about the preserve. Only about half of students polled had heard of the preserve, but more than 80% said they supported the protection and preservation of the forests.

David Taylor, the education chair of the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Preserve and an assistant professor of sustainability, takes his students into the preserve to help them connect with and reflect on nature.

He maintains that every major, from the arts to humanities to STEM, can find something in the preserve that will benefit them. "That little 26-acre-[forest] might be a place for us to restore something that also makes us healthy, both as students and faculty and all of us who work here."

The preserve is also something of a "gateway park" to more intense hiking, according to Pochron. She's known students from the city who discovered a love for the outdoors after walks through its trails.

But despite its many uses, the preserve still has no official protection. Its "forever wild" designation is in name only, and the

promises of presidents to leave the land alone would ring hollow if any of their successors reversed course.

The preserve, which was originally 28.2 acres, lost six percent of its land in 1998, according to The Statesman. Land was cleared to make way for Nassau and Suffolk Hall, and to widen Circle Road.

New York State Assemblyman Steven Englebright of Setauket has put bills forward to designate the preserve a state park, most recently in 2016, but each attempt was met with obstacles or resistance. The assemblyman said he needs the support of the university president for the bill to go through. But while each president has lent a willing ear, he said, none have been willing to "bind the hands" of future presidents and declare the 26

Above:
Chicken of the woods, a fungus, growing from the base of a tree.

(Taylor Beglane/The Press)

Below:
Spotted wintergreen, a native to the Ashley Schiff Preserve.

(Taylor Beglane/The Press)

acres permanently off-limits for development.

Englebright worries it might be only a matter of time before a president who values parking lots over parks comes along.

"Sometimes you get a person who really is not deserving of the kind of trust that goes along with being the steward of the entire campus," he said. "Rather than wait for that awful possibility, I'd like to see it designated in a permanent capacity that would make it virtually impossible for it to ever be disturbed or ruined."

The preserve turned 50 on Oct. 9. To celebrate, more than 60 people attended a ceremony at the Wang Center on Oct. 4. Suffolk County legislator Kara Hahn gave a speech, and the Town of Brookhaven also declared Oct. 4 to be Ashley Schiff Day.

At the celebration, Pochron pointed out that Schiff-Shannon sometimes says that though history is great, people rarely talk about what Schiff wanted to do.

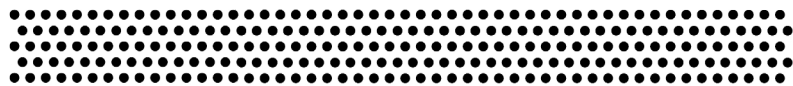
Before he died, Schiff was working on another book about controlled burning. And he was already in talks with administrators about setting aside a preserve on campus.

The idea of the Ashley Schiff Preserve had already been born — by none other than Ashley Schiff himself. ■



Displaced Revolutionaries: Hong Kong Students at Stony Brook

HONG KONG STUDENTS AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY WILL BE HEADING BACK HOME AFTER MONTHS OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS. WHAT AWAITS THEM?



By Caroline Klewinowski



Hong Kong has erupted with pro-democracy protests. The demonstrations began in June, when Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong, introduced a bill that would allow extradition to mainland China. After the British handover of Hong Kong in 1997, Beijing has slowly imposed new laws to unify the city — a unity promised to be fulfilled in 2047.

Mass demonstrations like the Umbrella Movement emerged as an effort to resist Beijing's authoritarian laws but didn't succeed in garnering universal suffrage. Hong Kongers and the rest of the world hoped that China would become a democratized state by 2047, but it has become clear that the Chinese government

perceives its authoritarian rule, communism and global market hegemony to be the perfect combination. The extradition bill got withdrawn only when protesters increasingly got violent week after week since the summer of 2019. Even afterward, students protested with resolve, having developed five demands that they want to be met before they end demonstrations.

With the fall semester ending at Stony Brook, students will be trickling back home to New York City, Virginia and Hong Kong. International students, like Queenie Wong, watch on social media and hear from friends and family in Hong Kong about the human rights quandaries back home. Having spent the past summer attending some

Above: The protesters have been known for instigation and violence — it has become the trademark of the demonstrations to get foreign and mainland-Chinese attention.

(Yoyo Chan/Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

of the marches, when Queenie came back to the United States, it became clear that Americans did not know what was going on there. An American political science major Queenie spoke to did not know about the protests. Another student who was an American-born Chinese vaguely knew about the democratic movement.

“People in Stony Brook — they are university students,” she said. “We are going out into society, people should know. I can't do much here. Sometimes I feel helpless, I can only watch from my laptop. I can't even go to the election.”

Queenie and her friends decided to embark on an information campaign at Stony Brook to help the movement garner American attention. Mia Wong, a sophomore

and Hong Kong native, took to airdropping political pictures to random people around campus at the library or in class. Queenie and her friend Steven Shum — who enlisted in what he characterized as “aggressive” protests in the summer — took to putting up posters in the library, SAC and commuter lounge explaining the situation in Hong Kong.

Only a day or two later, the posters were missing. The only people they suspect are mainland Chinese international students. Mainlanders and Hong Kongers on campus are generally friendly with one another, but there is tension. On WeChat — a Chinese social media platform and messaging app — one of Queenie’s friends from the mainland posted that Hong Kong protesters were “stupid.” Queenie knew not to bring up the demonstrations with them. They know about each other’s sentiments through social media, but direct conversation never happens.

“If you don’t find politics, politics will find you,” Queenie said, referring to all people — Americans, Hong Kongers, and Chinese mainlanders — who aren’t interested in politics.

Mia — who, like her peers, found politics when the protests started happening — expressed concern about going back home. “It’s like a warzone. The protesters don’t care about their future anymore.” Mia’s family lives next to some of the central protest areas and the demonstrations have invaded every aspect of their lives. Schools were closed as universities became battlegrounds. The MTR, the city train system in Hong Kong, altered schedules to prevent protesters from meeting at night. Mia’s mother complained that even the plants in their garden at home were affected by the tear gas.

The recent district election in Hong Kong saw the highest voter turnout in history, with unprecedented wins by pro-democracy legislators. But the



Above:
Hong Kong police officers in riot gear.

(Yoyo Chan/
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

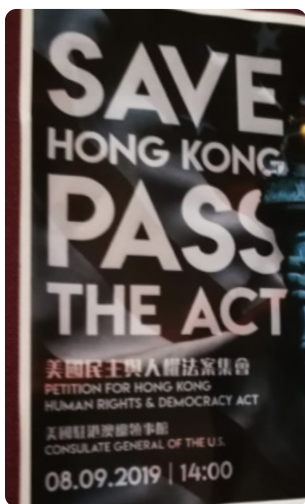
people’s grievances lie with the Legislative Council, not the smaller districts. The extradition bill may have been withdrawn but protesters and activists are still in the streets. Police are still attacking with tear gas and water cannons. On online forums, protesters still discuss what to do and plan boycotts of mainland businesses.

“The main issue has deviated from the bill to police brutality,” Mia explained. The extradition bill sparked weekly protests, but its withdrawal became only one of protesters’ five demands: withdrawal of riot characterization of the June 12 march, release of arrested protesters without charges, universal suffrage for elected officials and an independent investigation of the Hong Kong police.

Between water canons and tear gas, Hong Kong police have also used rubber bullets or “beanbag” rounds on protesters, causing injuries and even partially blinding one woman after

shooting her in one eye. Police in riot gear stormed Prince Edward Station on August 31 and used pepper spray and beat passengers indiscriminately — whether they were wearing the black uniforms of the democratic movement or the white of the pro-establishment. MTR, the train system and the police denied that people died in the attack, but rumors about the incident are widely spread and believed. Uncertainty and risk of disinformation surrounds the protesters at every side.

Accusations circulate about the police force in Hong Kong. Some speak Mandarin, as opposed to Hong Kong’s Cantonese, they use communist rhetoric and — according to Steven’s fellow demonstrator — when asked for their identification, they don’t have it or refuse to show it. The police force, as Steven put it, seems to be divided between imposter officers from mainland China and real local police. “The police are generally out of control and the government is not trying to control the situation.”



The death of Chow Tsk Lok, a protestor, who fell from a building next to protests, is considered the first in the current movement. Investigations by Time, The Seattle-Post Intelligencer, and CNN reported that tear gas was thrown into the building, but The New York Times reported that there was no police presence outside. A Hong Kong police report stated that any ricocheting objects from protests — rubber bullets or teargas — would not have caused the fall of Chow Tsk Lok.

Mia, Queenie and Steven all brought up the same case of police brutality: the body of a teenage girl that was found at sea. Competitive swimmer Chan Yin-Lam, 15, was found naked in the ocean in September. The Hong Kong police labeled the incident as unsuspecting and wouldn't lead an investigation. Protesters seem to go missing and are later found dead, fallen from buildings. A Hong Konger working in the UK consulate claims to have been detained by Chinese investigators. Protestors theorize that the police have been corrupted by their power and use of arms and want an investigation untainted by mainland politics.

Yoyo Chan, a sophomore student journalist at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, attended protests throughout the summer. She helped students escape the campus battles at Hong

Kong Polytechnic University and now covers the events for her university's publication. When asked about the mysterious deaths attributed to police outside of protests, she said: "To be honest, there isn't a lot of evidence. But the facts of the cases don't make sense." There is no blood surrounding bodies that fell from buildings. A competitive swimmer was found drowned.

As reported by the BBC, Simon Cheng, a United Kingdom consulate worker, claims to have been detained and tortured in mainland China to be interrogated about the UK's involvement or support of the democratic protests. He believes he was not the only Hong Konger in Chinese custody. In order to face less harsh treatment he was forced to confess that he solicited prostitution. In his own account online Cheng states, "The alternative was indefinite criminal detention, severe criminal charge and harsh treatment handled by secret police. I have no choice but to give a confession." Cheng was released and will be seeking asylum.

Videos of police brutality are spread from one Instagram story to another. Students rely on meme pages for the latest information about the protests, including videos of police abuse and theories about the string of apparent suicides. Traditionally trustworthy news

Above:
Posters
students put
up across the
Stony Brook
University
campus.

(Caroline
Klewinowski/
The Press)

outlets like the South China Morning Post were acquired in 2016 by Alibaba, a Chinese conglomerate, leaving readers skeptical of their coverage of Hong Kong events.

Before the district elections, Mia shook her head when asked how she imagined the protests would end. "I don't know." Since then, she said that things have died down but still persist. Protests still occur every weekend at shopping centers or the streets. "They won't stop unless they give the demands," Queenie stated about the protesters. All of the students The Press spoke to expressed similar thoughts.

Recently, the foreign experts aiding Independent Police Complaints Council quit the group's investigation of Hong Kong police brutality, stating that the council lacked the necessary powers to conduct a proper investigation the protesters wanted.

Steven laid out three possible scenarios for how the demonstrations could end: The democratic protesters have their demands met by the Legislative Council and Beijing; an intense crackdown on the protesters by the government; or an Orwellian conclusion in which the mainland government convinces the protesters that their demands are met, but truly democratic policies will never become enacted.

Stony Brook students will be heading back home for Christmas to rest until the next semester, but Hong Kong students go back to their city to protests, marches and rubber bullets, whether they like it or not. Queenie will be graduating this semester and will be staying in New York City for work, but Mia and Steven will be going back home to Hong Kong, participating in peaceful marches and demonstrations respectively. ■

The Complicated Legacy of Carmelo Anthony

A FUTURE HALL-OF-FAMER'S LAST CALL.



By Wilko Martínez-Cachero



Carmelo Anthony is back in the NBA for what could either be his basketball swan song or a prolonged, catastrophic end to a historic career.

Over a year after his last NBA game, Anthony signed with the Portland Trail Blazers on November 14 to theoretically bring some much-needed depth to a championship-caliber team riddled with injuries. The former Syracuse star last suited up on Nov. 8, 2018 with the Houston Rockets, missed all but one of his eleven field goals and was promptly ushered into irrelevance a week later.

A lot has changed since Anthony

last stepped on an NBA court, but surprisingly enough, the questions over his legacy have largely remained the same despite a year of inactivity.

There's no doubt Anthony is a future Hall-of-Famer. He is yet to win an NBA championship — and in all likelihood, he probably won't — but as a ten-time NBA All-Star, three-time Olympic gold medalist, NCAA champion and NBA scoring champion, Anthony has left an imprint on basketball that will remain far into his retirement.

The question that still stands is whether Anthony is capable of buying into something greater than himself. It is something that

Above:
Carmelo Anthony during his stint for the New York Knicks.

(Nathaniel S. Butler/Getty Images)

has plagued his entire NBA career since being drafted by the Denver Nuggets in 2003 with the third overall pick. Anthony lived up to the hype, turning one of the two worst teams in the league into a playoff team in his first season in Denver.

Anthony's star grew rapidly. For the better part of a decade, many considered him one of the top 10 players in the NBA, a status befitting of the individual statistics he was accumulating. Yet the Denver Nuggets did not improve at the same rate as Anthony.

They kept making the playoffs, but were eliminated in the first round for five consecutive years.

The 2008-2009 season served as a glimmer of hope, with Denver making the Western Conference Finals only to get eliminated by the Los Angeles Lakers, the eventual champions. The following season saw yet another first-round exit. Unhappy with his team's stagnation and sniffing out a chance to further boost his legacy, Anthony wanted out of Denver.

In February 2011, he got his wish when he was traded to the New York Knicks and returned to his hometown. Theoretically, this was the perfect opportunity for Anthony. He got to play in a big market while continuing to be the number-one option on a team with championship aspirations. But in practice, things turned out a lot different.

In his first season, the Knicks' championship hopes were dashed after Amar'e Stoudemire, supposedly the perfect complement to Anthony's game, went down with an injury. This would become a recurring theme

for Anthony and Stoudemire's partnership, which never quite took off. It didn't take long for Anthony to find himself embroiled in controversy. After all, it wouldn't be the New York Knicks without some drama.

Anthony supposedly advocated for head coach Mike D'Antoni's departure. He was also reportedly not the biggest fan of "Linsanity," a stretch of weeks in which Asian-American point guard Jeremy Lin, who wasn't even drafted into the league out of feeble basketball school Harvard, became the focal point of the Knicks.

In a 2012 ESPN story, a source close to the Knicks said this about Linsanity: "Carmelo's dream was to go to New York and be the man. That's why he fought to get out of Denver, and all of a sudden this little guy nobody's ever heard of is living his dream."

Over the next several years, Anthony continued to enjoy great individual success. In 2013, he led the NBA in scoring. However, it's also telling that the Knicks

only won one playoff series while Anthony was dressed in blue and orange. From the 2013-14 season onwards, the Knicks did not (and are yet to) make the playoffs.

Questions and concerns about Anthony were raised as playoff appearances faded into the distant past. Was this really a guy who could make other players better? Did he care about the team or just himself? Is his style of play even suited to the NBA anymore?

The answers to those three questions likely are not black and white.

To be fair, Anthony has never been known as a playmaker for others, especially when you consider that the top player in the 2003 NBA class was LeBron James, a preternatural facilitator. Yet, Anthony did sporadically showcase some passing acumen, which in turn makes people wonder whether the New York Knicks or Denver Nuggets ever put the right pieces around him.

Secondly, despite everything that has been said or reported about Anthony since the start of his NBA journey, he always seemed capable of putting aside his own ego for the United States' Olympic and international success. The lore of "Olympic Melo" surfaced in those stacked teams, with Anthony willing to ditch his regular basketball tendencies to get less touches on the ball and shoot more threes.

That leaks over into the matter of Anthony's style of play. For more than a decade, Anthony's bread and butter was receiving the ball in the post, jabstepping a few times and then taking a fairly difficult two-point jumper over his opponent. In layman's terms, this is something that slows down play a lot and is uncondusive to sharing the ball with the rest of the team.

For a long time, this style of play worked for Anthony. The NBA was slower-paced and suited to players who were able to make those types of difficult two-point baskets. However, towards the

Below:
Carmelo Anthony attacks the basket during his stint for the Oklahoma City Thunder.

(Rick Bowmer/
AP Photo)



The question that still stands is whether Anthony is capable of buying into something greater than himself.



middle of the 2010s, the league started trending towards a faster-paced, more analytical style of play which deemed those two-pointers inefficient and focused more on getting lay-ups and three-pointers — the two types of baskets that are best to score percentage-wise.

With that trend fully in vogue now, Anthony's long two-pointers are a relic of the past. Coaches, for the most part, no longer want their star player to run down a possession and take a tough shot. Anthony struggled to adapt to that in New York, but after he was traded to the Oklahoma City Thunder prior to the 2017-18 season, many hoped he would be able to play as "Olympic Melo" in the NBA.

Arguably, this was the case. It just didn't quite work out. In an Oklahoma City team with two younger, more dynamic stars in Russell Westbrook and Paul George, Anthony undoubtedly

played the unfamiliar role of third fiddle.

However, at the age of 33, his athleticism was no longer the same. He no longer had the same lift in his legs night in and night out for his jump shot to fall. Anthony was also a sieve on defense, so much so that a lot of Oklahoma City's better moments that season came with him on the bench.

One year after trading flashy New York for drab Oklahoma City, Anthony packed his bags again to join the Houston Rockets, a team widely considered to be in the race for that season's NBA championship. His stint in Houston only lasted 10 games after the Rockets got off to a 4-6 start.

Anthony's offensive numbers during that time declined relative to the rest of his career, but they weren't horrendous by any means. Mostly off the bench, he averaged 13.4 points per game in just under

Above: Carmelo Anthony's sole year with the Houston Rockets was massively disappointing.

(Space City Scoop)

30 minutes while shooting 32.8 percent from three — a little bit below league average, but still respectable enough.

But looking at the more advanced numbers, it's easy to tell why this marriage ended in disaster. The Houston Rockets gave up more points with Anthony on the floor than anyone else with legitimate playing time. Anthony was never a defensive stalwart, but his offensive output used to be so great that the positives outweighed the negatives. This was also not the case in Houston, as the Rockets' offensive firepower was extinguished in the minutes Anthony played.

A year removed from Anthony's stint in Houston, it is tough to believe that anything has changed. If anything, it's likely things may have gotten worse. Anthony has aged a year — a year with no real NBA action. We could be in for a surprise, though.

This is Anthony's opportunity to grab. The Portland Trail Blazers reportedly signed Anthony to a non-guaranteed contract with a Jan. 7, 2020 cut date. This means that he has not been signed to a full-time deal and that he will most likely get cut if he does not perform.

The good news is that, much like in Oklahoma City and Houston, Anthony's role should be fairly straightforward. Flanked by two younger, more dynamic stars (sound familiar?) in CJ McCollum and Damian Lillard who will command the opposition's attention, Anthony just has to make his threes and give some offensive impetus to a team sorely needing it.

If Anthony can do that, much like how Dwight Howard is resuscitating his career with the Los Angeles Lakers, it could be the end that many believe an iconic career deserves. ■

New York's Basketball Teams Switch Philosophies

CAN THE NETS AVOID THE SAME MISTAKES AS THE KNICKS?



By Daniel Marcillo



Despite the New York Knicks and Brooklyn Nets currently operating in two different directions, the Nets are operating much like the Knicks did during the beginning of the decade.

The Knicks' priority was to build through big-name free agents when the 2010s began — and that year's free agent class was regarded as one of the deepest of all time. Big names like Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh, Amar'e Stoudemire and Joe Johnson all featured, along with the crown jewel that was LeBron James.

For the Knicks, it was LeBron or bust. The franchise had a lot of money tied into low-tier players which put them over the amount they were allowed to spend, better

known as cap space. The Knicks cleared the cap space to afford him and potentially Wade, while the then-New Jersey Nets were looking to develop young players like Derrick Favors, Brook Lopez and Terrance Williams to partner with All-Star Deron Williams.

Unfortunately, the Knicks' wish to land LeBron never came true. They ended up signing Stoudemire to a five-year deal knowing the risk they were taking on a guy who had microfracture surgery on his knee early in his career.

Luckily, Stoudemire played like an MVP during his first season in New York. He averaged 25 points and eight rebounds, making his fifth straight All-Star team. Near the trade deadline, the Knicks made a blockbuster trade to acquire Carmelo Anthony from

Above: The Brooklyn Nets bolstered their team during the summer with Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving.

(Nathaniel S. Butler/NBAE)

the Denver Nuggets.

The trade was the big move the Knicks had been searching for since Patrick Ewing left. He was a four-time All-Star and averaged just under 25 points per game with the Nuggets. The Knicks felt Anthony was the superstar that could complete their goal of winning an NBA title.

The combo of Stoudemire's power in the paint, combined with Anthony's ability to score anywhere, seemed like a match made in heaven. The injury bug led to the duo's downfall, plaguing Stoudemire for the final four years of the contract and Anthony's inability to become a team-oriented player.

They were part of only one playoff series victory, and it came in the 2012-13 season where Stoudemire

only played 29 games and never started. The team belonged to Amar'e for half a season in 2010-11, but once Carmelo came to town, the reins were immediately handed over.

Due to their failures, both players were eventually pushed out via trade and it left the franchise in shambles. Stoudemire's injuries and Anthony's unwillingness to become a team player forced them to become useless to other teams in the league.

What does this mean for the Brooklyn Nets?

Their signings of Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving finally brought some excitement back to Nets basketball. Fans were still hungry from their first postseason appearance since 2014, and the signings of Durant and Irving showed the franchise was serious about contending after multiple years being one of the worst teams in the league due to disastrous asset management and overpaid contracts.

The Knicks are currently building through the draft, choosing to develop young stars like RJ Barrett or Mitchell Robinson, and avoiding free agents who may come with any baggage.

Look familiar?

This is not to say that Durant and Irving are going to sink the Brooklyn Nets but the franchise is taking a very big risk with both of these players. Both have had major injuries in their past. Irving has a knee that has given him issues on and off since 2015. Durant ruptured his Achilles in June while attempting to play already injured in the 2019 NBA finals.

Irving has also had some problems with teammates, highlighted during his time playing for the Boston Celtics. He says he is ready for the bright lights of New York City, but that is all talk until he shows he is able to handle the media after tough losses. With Durant likely out for the year, Irving has no choice but to continue to lead, albeit in a



better way than he did in Boston.

The Nets have four years invested in these guys, which means they both are going to be catered to along with extreme protection on their health. Due to Durant's injury, it only leaves three years for them to develop together while they are still in their primes.

The added issue, along with the most important variable in all of this, is that there is no guarantee Durant returns to be the same player he was. Achilles injuries can be fatal to careers and some players never recover. DeMarcus Cousins is just the latest member of the club who may never regain All-Star status.

The Knicks took a lot of flack for being unable to sign top-tier free agents and sticking with mid-to-low level signings, but they were actually the smart ones by avoiding the pitfall they always throw themselves into. Management would bring in the big-name players just to have them and see how they mesh well with the team.

The Knicks had red flags about offering too many years or too much money to the top-tier free

Above:
The New York Knicks have long been one of the worst teams in the NBA and are trying to improve by adding youth.

(Fernando Medina/NBAE)

agents. The current plan in place is to develop the multitude of young prospects they have and mix them with hardworking veterans, such as Marcus Morris and Taj Gibson to build the toughness needed to win a title.

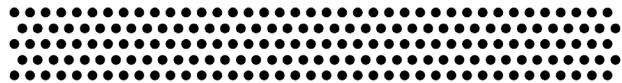
If there was one team's future to bet on for the next five years, my pick would be the Knicks. The Nets' current roster is not enough to even make it out of the East, regardless of Durant being healthy or not.

The Knicks are likely missing the playoffs again this season, but there is a real excitement around them. Many of the young players on the roster are loaded with potential and are going to get the chance to grow. R.J. Barrett, Dennis Smith Jr., Mitchell Robinson and Frank Ntilikina are just a few of the high-potential guys scattered all over the Knicks roster.

For once, the Knicks are rebuilding their entire roster the correct way, and fans not just in New York, but the entire country, should be excited for it. ■

Saving the Seas with Tidal Tees

ART AND THE OCEAN COME TOGETHER FOR A WORTHY CAUSE.



By Andrea Keckley



Sophomore marine vertebrate biology student Sydney Bell was recently recognized by the Long Island Business News' 30 Under 30 list. Bell created her nonprofit Tidal Tees Apparel, which sells sustainably made apparel, at only 18 years old, during her senior year of high school. I met with her to discuss her passion for conservation and how she achieved success at such a young age.

Can you tell me about Tidal Tee's Apparel in your own words?

When I originally started, the plan was to combine my love of ocean conservation and art. I've always loved art, I've taken art classes all throughout high school and I've wanted to be a marine biologist since elementary school. So it's kind of like blending my passions together.

My dad really helped me out

with starting the business. He's a businessman, so he helped me get my foot in the door. I started just selling to my friends, my family and my high school, and then eventually grew from there where now it's sold in Shop Red West, and I have 17 countries represented by my brand ambassadors worldwide.

The general gist of my company is that 100% of profits are donated to ocean conservation. I do all of these different designs by hand and I put them on different pieces of apparel. And then 100% of those profits go to a different nonprofit each month. I'll try and coordinate and pick an organization and then do a design that corresponds with that group. So right now, I'm working with a New York marine rescue center previously known as the Riverhead Foundation. I did a design for them, and 100% of the profits this month are going to them.

What made you want to start doing something like this at such

Above:
The Tidal Tees Apparel logo is featured here on one of the many products the organization sells at Shop Red West.

(Tidal Tees)

a young age?

I think I always really got involved in leadership roles. Even throughout school, I was student government president, class president and president of six other groups and school services. I always wanted to take action and do something that will benefit others.

Can you explain how you are able to produce your products in a completely sustainable way?

My products come from two different sources. I have limited-edition shirts that come from a company that makes the shirts from 100% recycled plastic water bottles, and they put that as a thread — they make it melted down, extrude it into a type of yarn and they weave that into recycled cotton. So that's how they make the shirts. The cotton is 100% scraps from other consumer goods. So that shirt is made completely from recycled materials.



My other shirts also come from a printer and dropshipper, and both of those companies print with 100% water-based inks. So that means that no chemical runoff goes into the ocean, or other waterways, and it's completely safe. And then the dropshipping company I go through also makes shirts in factories that use solar energy.

Throughout your journey, have there been any experiences along the way that really stuck out to you?

I think the biggest one was definitely getting my shirt sold here [on campus]. I always thought that was kind of far-fetched. When I came here, I thought, "That'd be so cool to have my shirts somewhere here," because I was getting a lot of support from different groups like the Faculty Student Association and School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences on campus, so I thought it'd be really cool to have them for sale here. And luckily, with the help of FSA and Shop Red West, that happened. I was also

able to sell them at different events on campus. I sold them at Homecoming Harvest, last year I was at Earthstock and I was also at Communiversity Day. I never expected it to happen, but it's been so great for the company.

How has being a woman in this field affected your experience?

I think it's really connected me with other women on campus, both within the marine sciences and marine vertebrate biology, because that's what my major aligns with. But I've also met so many people along the way. Angela Agnelo from FSA has been the one that has supported me the whole way, gotten me into Shop Red West, nominated me for the 30 Under 30 award with the Long Island Business News. And her staff, like Caitlin and Amanda, and everyone at the FSA has been so supportive.

I guess I've realized that most of the people helping me are women. And it's really nice to see that unity, especially on such a big campus.

So what's next for you?

Above: Tidal Tees Apparel's hammerhead shark collection features hats like these, as well as polos, hoodies and more.

(Tidal Tees)

Well, we're getting a new shipment of shirts coming in the Shop Red, in about a week. And then after that, we're going to start bringing new designs in that haven't previously been in the store before. So it's pretty exciting.

I'm going to start making bracelets for the company, made sustainably. It's going to be recycled wood, charms and then the cord on the bracelet is going to be recycled nylon.

People have been paying a lot of attention to climate change, sustainability and conservation. And there's a lot of fear. Many people are really worried about the future of the planet — they're kind of unsure and scared. So what gives you hope for the future of the planet and the future of conservation and sustainability at a time when people are so uncertain about what lies ahead for our planet?

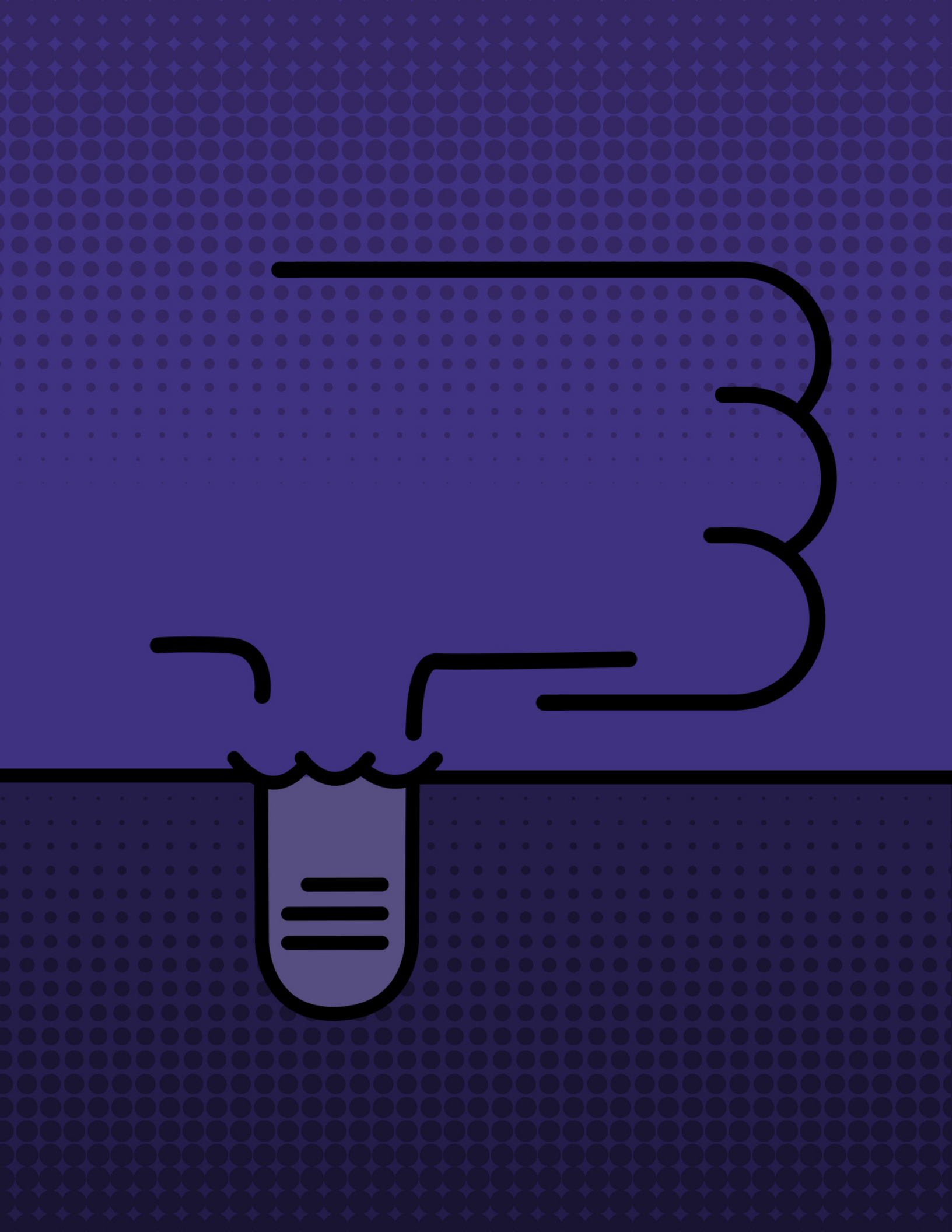
I think the media really shines a light on a lot of negative things happening, but there's so many little positives happening, even just in this school. And I think everyone just has to have the mentality that, even if we're not causing these problems, which it seems like we are, we should all be working to create a better planet anyway. We should be doing our best to make the world a better place.

What advice would you give people who want to achieve similar things to you, or to other young people who want to work for things like conservation efforts?

I would just say follow your passions and in that you will be led in the right direction.

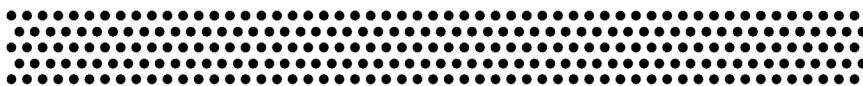
Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I have an eco blog on my website where I give tips, tricks and reviews on different eco-friendly products so the average consumer can get more educated about those issues and also find products to make their lifestyle more sustainable and eco-friendly.



Unfrozen 1920s Man Dies After 15 Minutes of Exposure to *Transformers: Age of Extinction*

TIME TRAVELER LESTER HOLTZMANN LOST HIS LIFE TO THE SCIENCE FICTION BLOCKBUSTER.



By Dudley Park

Lester Holtzmann, a man whose greatest accomplishment was accidentally falling into a lake in 1925 and freezing into an ice-pop only to be thawed out nearly a hundred years later, died on Friday in Staten Island, NY. He was 129.

The cause was a seizure after watching ten minutes of the popular 2014 film *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, his granddaughter, Emily, said.

Holtzmann spent 94 years under the lake behind his home, where he was presumed dead from drowning in the winter of 1925. He had worked many jobs before the incident, including positions as a top-hat salesman, a shoe-shiner and a neighborhood bootlegger who sold alcohol to minors.

His great-grandson Tyler Holtzmann was playing *Fornite* for Nintendo Switch and sipping on a Monster energy drink on his backyard porch one hot summer afternoon when he

noticed Holtzmann thrashing around in the lake, screaming, "By golly my good sir please save me from these devilish waters."

Afterwards, he was brought into the family home, where he was reintegrated into society. His granddaughter Emily, unemployed, threw weekly movie nights for Holtzmann to help him adjust to 21st century life.

The first movie shown to Holtzmann, *Casablanca*, captivated him. A week later, the family was in the middle of *Finding Nemo* when Holtzmann choked on a Nacho Cheese Dorito chip and had to be sent to the hospital.

"The flavor was too much for granddad to handle," said Emily Holtzmann.

But Holtzman found solace in the films. Unable to find a job with a useless 1920s education and a weird understanding about how race works, he spent most of the time watching movies.

His favorite film was *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*.

On the night of his death, Emily, her husband

Illustration by Josh Joseph

Jeff and their son Tyler had settled on *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, a popular 2014 Paramount Pictures production that was the highest-grossing film of 2014. Directed by Michael Bay, it starred Mark Wahlberg and an abundance of inappropriate Chinese product placements.

Within five minutes of the film, the elder Holtzmann had fallen unusually silent. During a scene where a car's tire punches a soldier in the face, he collapsed onto the floor. The family immediately called 911, but it was too late. Holtzmann was pronounced dead at the scene.

Paramount Pictures could not be reached for comment.

Lester Holtzmann is survived by his 12 children, his 18 grandchildren, and his two great-grandchildren.

"We could've studied him," said one local historian.

"I wonder why it was this movie that killed him. Was it the incoherent story? The clusterfuck of scrap metal and junk disguised as *Transformers*? The barely comprehensible, eye-straining special effects? Or the 165-minute runtime?"

"I guess we'll never know." ■

Professor who Clearly Has No Interest in Teaching “Still Kind of Upset” with Negative Class Evaluations

THE PROFESSOR CLAIMS HE HAS MORE PHDS THAN ALL THE REVIEWERS COMBINED.



By Justin Ligasan

Look, I'm really not that bad. I take very good care of my cat and don't steal cancer research money, so I think this notion of me 'not caring' about my class is a bit of a stretch."

The professor's words echoed throughout the sparsely populated Frey 100.

"So looking at the reviews here, I see some people complaining about the quiz dates being moved around and not being accurate on the syllabus. Moving forward, these will now be random 'vibe checks.' My daughter loves saying that. Or I think she does, haven't seen her since I lost custody," he said, citing a syllabus that hasn't been updated since he started teaching

the class in 2002. He went on to remind his students that if they had any complaints, they could go to his office hours.

One student attempted to do just that with no results. "Yeah, I tried to go to his office, but the syllabus says he can be reached 'at his corner of the Starbucks in the union.' What the fuck is the union?"

The professor in question has been bombarded with class evaluations accusing him of presenting PowerPoints that aren't his, leaving unprepared TAs to teach the class, making students wait outside of the classroom while he prints more exams during a test and putting on Crash Course videos for an entire hour and

Illustration by Josh Joseph

twenty-minute lecture. One unconfirmed rumor even claims the professor said class reviews were pointless because "it's not like you have another option for completing your major anyway."

The Press managed to catch one student as he left mid-lecture, and he divulged some of the abuse: "I mean, at first I was like okay, sure, maybe this is a good way to introduce a topic in simple terms that the professional who makes six figures will go into detail about. Then he let the next video autoplay and I knew this was only the eye of the shitstorm. He left his cursor in the middle of the screen the whole time too."

Despite repeated attempts to contact the department head about these transgressions, the only email students have managed to receive was an automated message saying: "We have investigated ourselves and found that the professor in question has tenure. The cost of automating this system is covered by your technology fee."

Another student who walked out of the lecture tried to clarify.

"So I keep getting the same message. I try going to the person in charge of my major. She says she can't do anything, maybe try the ombuds office. So I go there, some guy listens

to me bitch for twenty minutes, and he's real nice about it. Says he understands exactly why I'm upset and that this is unacceptable. Then he tells me he can't do anything, but he'll make sure to let the administration know to raise graduate fees, putting 'trickle-down pressure' on professors because less people will be able to afford the graduate classes — ”

At this point the student began to scan the room nervously, stopping when he saw Wolfie shaking his head in disapproval from the doorway of the first hall Frey bathroom.

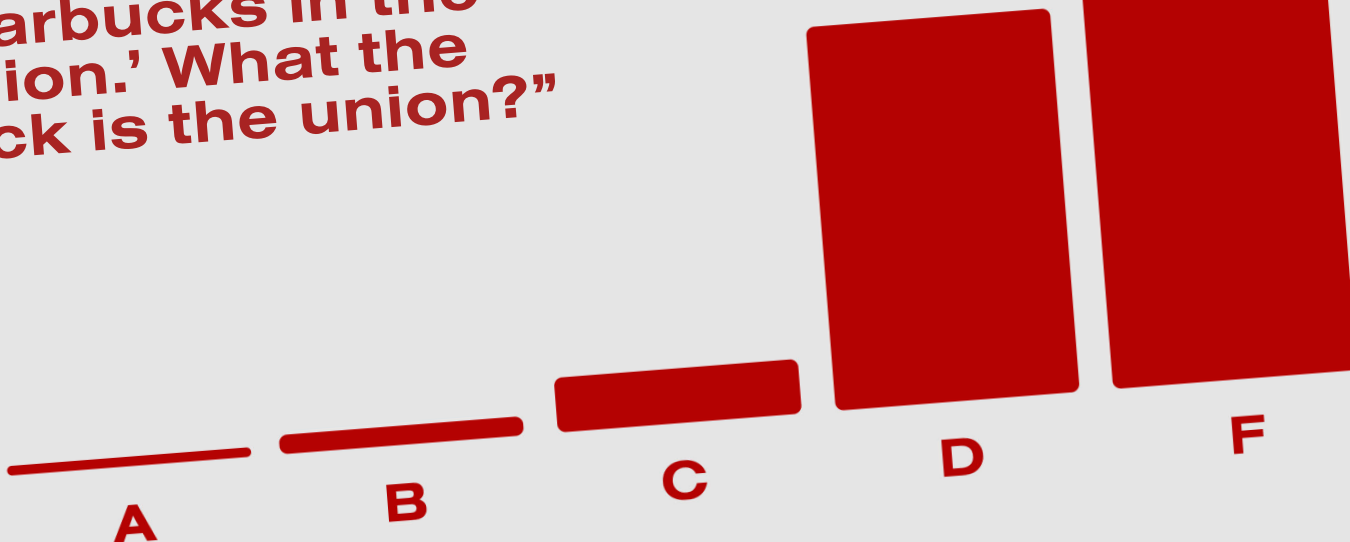
“N-No further comment.”

Back inside Frey 100, The Press managed to catch the last five minutes of the class.

“Now that we understand each other, let's all make my class

reviews a little more reflective of the truth — because if I see any student needs to get into my class to keep their TAP funding for the year, and you get screwed by a late enrollment, I certainly wouldn't vouch for someone who wouldn't do the same for me.” ■

“Yeah, I tried to go to his office, but the syllabus says he can be reached ‘at his corner of the Starbucks in the union.’ What the fuck is the union?”





The Apathy of Post-Internet Generations and

5 items

211K in folder



By Tuhin Chakrabarti

lable

Uaporwave.

An internet “microgenre,” ill-defined as lazy, unimportant, slowed-down elevator music, embodies the outlook of millennials, Generation Z and even some of the more disillusioned members of earlier postmodernity. The music itself is characterized by this aimless nostalgia, one that conflates the aesthetic themes of the mid ‘80s to late ‘90s. It uses corporate iconography, Greco-Roman architecture and Japanese text as imagery and melts together “loungy” genres such as smooth jazz, R&B and other choice elevator muzak (background music for businesses/public establishments) from the last two decades of the 20th century.

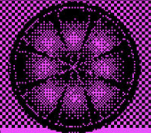
There are many notable artists within this internet genre, but Ramona Xavier, best known as “Macintosh Plus,” is the one credited with drawing widespread attention to a genre that originally started as a satirical offshoot of “chillwave.” Her magnum opus is *Floral Shoppe*, best known for the single titled “リサフランク420 / 現代のコンピュー.” The album is an archetype for the aesthetic and sonic appetites of the genre, providing the most confused sense of nostalgia with “garish Pepto Bismol-pink art with mint green Japanese type, a glossy cityscape, and a marble bust staring vacantly upward,” according to Pitchfork’s review. To them, “the music inside made less sense” than the wandering nostalgia of its cover. Ramona Xavier releases music under her primary Vektroid alias, as well as dsntn, Laserdisc Visions, New Dreams Ltd., Virtual Information Desk and PrismCorp Virtual Enterprises. All of these names are nods to office/corporate culture, the thing that vaporwave mocks the most.

The theme of nostalgia for a sanitized, psychologically constructed past that subsumes and omits components of the decades it reaches towards further solidifies this album as a “post-internet” piece. In the same Pitchfork review, the author discusses what “post-internet” music is — a collage derived from an infinite library of music provided by the internet. An entire generation of children grew up on file-sharing services subject to overwhelmingly diverse influences. Every genre, subgenre and microgenre is available for artists to pick at like a charcuterie board. But vaporwave is more than a symbol for genre and decade-bending. It’s a symbol of the disillusionment, even disgust that we now hold towards the internet’s supposed wonder, the illusion of American exceptionalism and the absurdity of consumer existence. There’s a quote from Miles Bowe, a contributor for Pitchfork that is especially poignant:

“Social media has distorted reality with global consequences, giants like Spotify threaten to reduce music to Muzak one mood-generated playlist at a time, tragedies are live-streamed, and we all get battered into numbness by a feed we can’t really turn off,” said Bowe, the author of the Pitchfork review for *Floral Shoppe*. Every generation has a period of disillusionment, when the great innovations of the world flip over, exposing their adverse underbellies. Every media revolution has its drawbacks.



Napster



LimeWire

Vaporwave 7 items 173K available

Vaporwave reflects a mind made lazy, apathetic and detached by the existential anxiety the internet breeds. Every song is awash, modulated to death and slowed down to half-speed, embodying the hypnagogic dream state. The genre actually emerged as a sardonic response to “chillwave,” a genre that served as one of the original millennial responses to global capitalism — shoulder-shrugging energy from 20-something-year-old artists staring down an economic and cultural conundrum.

Songs like “Deadbeat Summer” by Neon Indian are considered archetypes for chillwave. You can feel his apathy executed through a neo-disco, ‘80s new-wave, electro-pop palette.

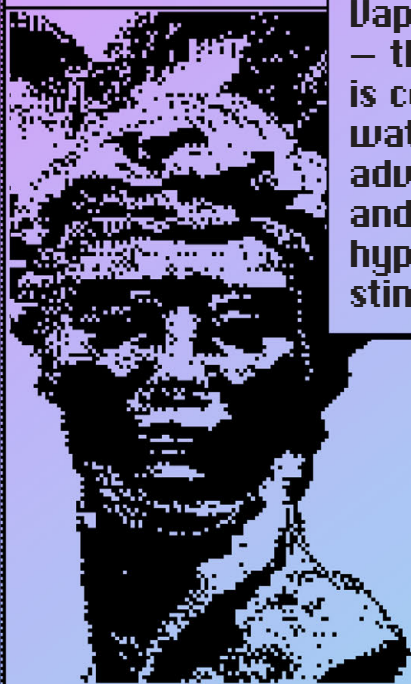
With vaporwave, it chooses different but in-the-same-realm sonic influences. But it does so carefully, using what is considered watered-down or commercialized genres of music, like smooth jazz. Staunch jazz purists used to condemn smooth jazz as “somewhat repetitive background music” that made too many “artistic sacrifices” after Kenny G popularized its sound around the mid ‘80s. It then took over the ‘90s, occupying public spaces like malls, hotels and bars. Smooth jazz was in every title sequence, every elevator and almost every commercial. It found itself closely associated with corporate branding and consumerism by turning into the kind of muzak designed for mindless activity. It already embodied the sense of detachedness from the world that gets fully flourished in vaporwave. “Smooth sounds for a rough world” was the tagline for a smooth jazz station called The Oasis, 107.5 FM. It was this music that gave corporate iconography life, and created this strange consumerist-centric ethos for the genre. Vaporwave focuses on this “mall music,” waters down the already watered-down, and distills four- to eight-bar samples from smooth jazz/elevator music, making it melt further into the background while simultaneously demanding your attention with intentional glitches placed within. It is a response to the overstimulation of advertising, of big bright neon-signs — a foreclosure of all the senses after being overwhelmed by hyper-capitalistic advertising. I think the description for the r/vaporwave subreddit speaks volumes when discussing this idea of the American mall, corporate aesthetics and “empty” background music:

“Global capitalism is nearly there. At the end of the world there will only be liquid advertisement and gaseous desire. Sublimated from our bodies, our untethered senses will endlessly ride escalators through pristine artificial environments, more and less than human, drugged-up and drugged down, catalysed, consuming and consumed by a relentlessly rich economy of sensory information, valued by the pixel.”

Vaporwave is a thesis — that consciousness is constantly being waterlogged by advertisement and muzak that hypnotizes instead of stimulates. These “artificial environments” are the malls, amusement parks, casinos and other manmade behemoths of pleasure that are unique to our young country. In response, it satirizes these spaces, creating a hyperreal dimension that is distinctly drugged up and hypnotized, emphasizing the real aridity of late-capitalistic pleasure centers that wear the veil of excitement and promise. Malls look great, and they overstimulate us with promise, but we are stuck in a loop of consumption and false fulfillment. Capitalism is ugly, and we know it to be. That’s why vaporwave is a synthesis of boredom, disillusionment and a “fuck-it” mentality. The shoulder-shrugging feeling of vaporwave is apparent — its response to capitalism is a hyperbole of the music that defines its consumerist peak in the mid ‘80s to late ‘90s. There’s a unique radicalism in holding a mirror up to what you despise, but a sense of laziness as well. There is nothing more defining for the post-internet generations than the idea of apathy versus activism.

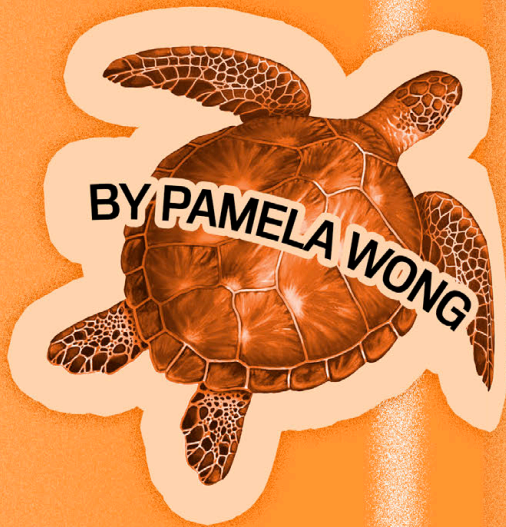
We are alienated, burdened and stupefied by the world of capitalism. Vaporwave perfectly embodies the feelings of a generation becoming aware of their deep desperation, and the bittersweet, drugged-out communion this engenders. ■

Block Quote



Vaporwave is a thesis — that consciousness is constantly being waterlogged by advertisement and muzak that hypnotizes instead of stimulates.

stop
making fun of
VSCO girls



You're seeing the same kind of girl on your Instagram newsfeed. They all have oversized scrunchies on their wrists and hold Hydro Flasks decorated with "Save the Turtles" stickers. Their choice of shoes ranges from Birkenstocks and Crocs to Vans and Nike Air Force 1s. Around their necks are puka shell necklaces. They wear shorts, oversized tops, tube tops and pack all of their necessities in Fjallraven Kanken backpacks slung over their shoulders. They swipe across their lips either a Carmex or Burt's Bees lip balm. They tell you to use reusable straws to help save the environment. Their shell necklaces remind you of the beach.

A new generation of girls have arrived; they call themselves "VSCO girls." VSCO is a camera-editing app with a sharing feature that doesn't have a liking or commenting system. This allows users to post whatever they want without the need for gratification like other social media apps. Although not all VSCO girls use the app, they are still stereotyped for their similar style.

These girls seem pretty harmless, right? They're just following trends they like and are becoming more sustainable; where's the harm in that?

With every new trend, there will be haters. People make fun of these girls on TikTok and YouTube, Urban Dictionary and Reddit. Is it for their conformity or for their love of the trend?

"5 minutes of annoying tik tok vsco girls | Tik Tok Memes" is a title on a YouTube compilation video. The girls seem to be "annoying" for comedic effect and they know it'll garner views. If anything they're acting this way to become more popular on TikTok.

On Reddit, a user made a thread titled, "The whole vsco girl/save turtles trend is stupid and annoying." The consensus in the thread is that these girls look and dress the same and are using a mobile app as their lifestyle.

The misogyny is real with the judgement of these girls. However that is not to say that girls don't make fun of VSCO girls as well. The girls

who make fun of the VSCO girl could actually pass as VSCO girls themselves, which makes it less misogynistic and more along the lines of self-deprecation.

Do these girls really want to be like every other girl because of the popularity aspect or do they just want to follow their own consumer desires?

“The pressure to be part of some group is strong for teenagers,” Dr. John Suler, psychology Ph.D. from Rider University, said. “Because the internet offers so many opportunities for joining so many different kinds of groups, a girl can find almost any group that fits who they are or who they want to be. Certain platforms may draw more people than other platforms simply because they are very popular, but even within those big platforms there are many different types of groups [a] person can choose from.”

Perhaps the people hating on these girls just hate what other people like. However, boys aren’t judged as harshly as girls are.

“One way some people try to define themselves is by being against a certain type of people,” Suler added. “It’s not a very good way to define one’s identity because it usually only reveals what that person is against rather than what they are for. Also, being against another group is often a projection of something one hates about oneself.”

Girls have always been labeled and sorted into cliques. There are your gamer girls who are ridiculed, and accused of liking games to attract men. Girls really don’t get a break at all. Why do they get the hate that they do? They’re only trying to play video games just as much as the next guy.

Then there are your egirls. A definition on Urban Dictionary describes the egirl as, “a species of emo... can be found wearing pink eyeshadow with a large wing, little hearts under the eyes and

a blushed nose. normally wearing some type of shirt from urban outfitters over a [long sleeve] striped shirt.” The most offensive thing was that the user called these girls “a species.” The rest of the description is just a trend that people follow. Certain makeup and fashion trends are always changing. Just look at the fashion over the years in decades. It’s jarring to see how much can change within 10 years. Time is just subjective and life goes on. What someone chooses to wear on their bodies and faces shouldn’t have to be ostracized.

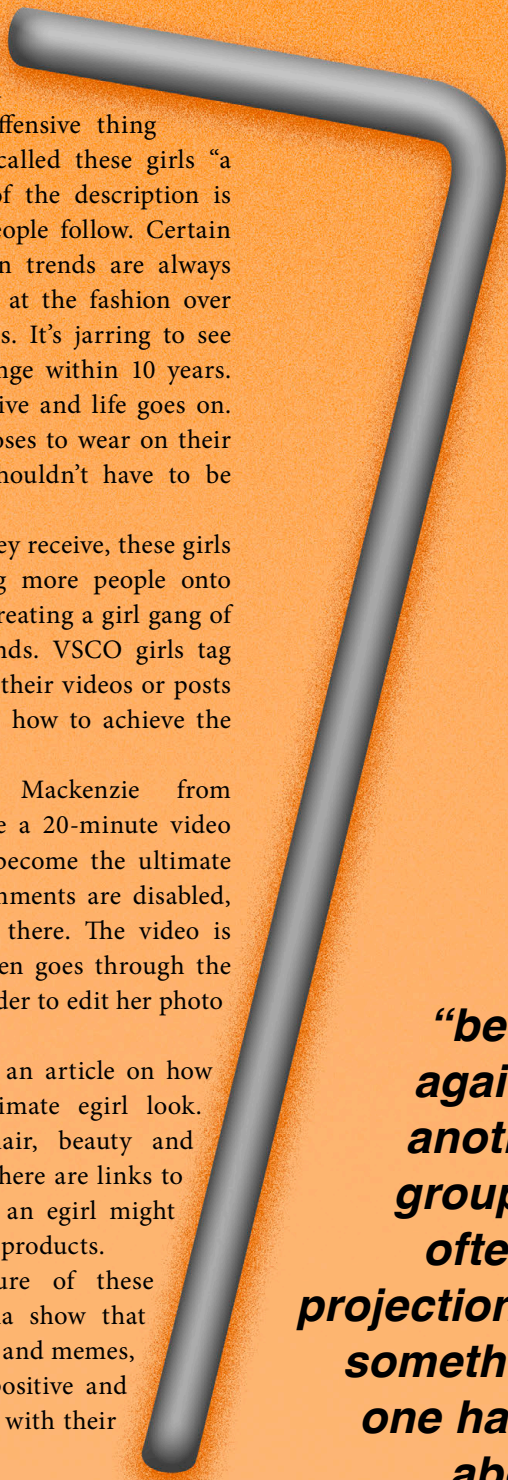
Despite the hate they receive, these girls are all for bringing more people onto the trends, almost creating a girl gang of their respective trends. VSCO girls tag “VSCO Girl” under their videos or posts to help show others how to achieve the look and lifestyle.

YouTuber Caiti Mackenzie from Kaiti’s Corner made a 20-minute video describing how to become the ultimate VSCO girl. The comments are disabled, but the message is there. The video is informative as it even goes through the steps she takes in order to edit her photo on the VSCO app.

Teen Vogue wrote an article on how to achieve the ultimate egirl look. It describes the hair, beauty and clothing in depth. There are links to some of the things an egirl might use in her arsenal of products.

The genuine nature of these girls and the media show that despite the mockery and memes, they want to stay positive and empower other girls with their aesthetic.

Girls already have a tough time, why not just let them have their Kanken bags and Crocs? ■



“being against another group is often a projection of something one hates about oneself.”

DRUGS
FOR
THE
TREATMENT
OF
MALARIA



On the rich,
campaign spending
and institutions

by Joe Amendola

If Michael Bloomberg's appeal — the appeal of his work, ideology or just the man himself — were to be harnessed and encapsulated in a physical form, it would look like a few stray office buildings in midtown Manhattan.

So naturally, he just filed to run for president in 2020.

Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman and former mayor of New York, is a cold and sterile figure. His tenure as mayor of New York was unimpressive at best and a brutal continuation of selective, racist martial-law and gentrification at worst. Bloomberg made his fortune selling market analytics and data to Wall Street firms in the 1980s. He was a luminary of an emerging financialized economic order that was beginning to pay less and less lip-service to concepts like "innovation" and the maximisation of an affluent society's productive capacities. Bloomberg's shrewdness came in his ability to sense that the point of Wall Street in an emerging age of shareholder primacy was to, in the words of economist J.W. Mason, "give capitalists their exit." Like a reverse ambulance chaser, Bloomberg quite literally monetized the rot.

One ideal that is often espoused by pundits, financial analysts and obnoxious suburban dads is that a president should run America "like a business." Thankfully, this (very dumb, unexamined and bad) idea is also starting to be widely mocked. Nevertheless, the concept has retained its allure among enough people to help, in part, to propel its first test subject to the White House. I guess you should decide for yourself how that's working out for all of us.

Of course, you need the right businessman to run the world's largest superpower, and that's where Bloomberg comes in. Bloomberg, unlike Trump, is an actual billionaire, and really knows what it takes, or something like that. This will be Bloomberg's campaign pitch, almost assuredly.

And outside of a few half-interested hedge-fund managers and upper-middle-class freaks who spend too much time refurbishing their LinkedIn profiles, no

one is going to vote for him.

Here's how it's going to go: Bloomberg will raise and spend a ridiculous amount of money — upwards of \$100 million, probably — and faceplant in the first few primaries, eventually causing him to drop out. That is, if pre-primary polls, which will have him lower than similarly sterile Pete Buttigeg, don't convince him to quit while he's only half-humiliated. It will all be for naught; vast sums of ill-gotten wealth will be, almost nihilistically, pissed away to the tangible gain of nobody. In the future, as in the past, there will be other candidates — both inside the world of government and out — who will do the exact same thing, with the exact same results. A constant, self-regenerating horror show continuing until the sun explodes.

Does this seem sane to you?

Of course, this piece isn't about Michael Bloomberg, really — he's never going to read this. The institutional mechanisms that secured his wealth will hold long enough. His great-great-grandchildren will be able to fund nonprofits supporting street art initiatives that boost property values in underprivileged neighborhoods whose vacant shopfronts they just bought half of. Or whatever lumpen heirs to great fortunes do with themselves. He's going to be fine, unfortunately.

Really, I am writing this to show how deeply, deeply absurd the system of elections and obscene wealth are in this country. That some half-committed business oligarch can decide, on a whim, to throw themselves into the most consequential election in the world does not signal stable or dignified institutions.

It is even less indicative of a sensical system to have widely-detested machine politicians do the same. That Jeb Bush or Beto O'Rourke can raise vast sums of cash from influence-peddling morons with extremely bad political instincts is probably more embarrassing.

I mean, fucking come on. Have you ever really sat and looked at reports that detail how much money is spent by the rich each election cycle on candidate promotion? It is almost unfathomable. What can this money possibly be doing more efficiently

than, say, increased social services or purchasing power among everyone else couldn't be? Are we really about to keep this current system going so Bloomberg can commission some marketing firm to put his ugly campaign logo everywhere? Are we really going to let our civic processes be hijacked so we can watch Ted Cruz, who looks like a melting wax figure, approximate human affability and speech in a promotional video with Ted Nugent? Do we really want to codify a system completely ambivalent to the interests of most people so monopolistic firms can fight against potential municipal taxes? Really?

Of course, this system is contingent on a panoply of bad judicial rulings and legislative choices — not bound by the foundations of the universe. So that's a silver lining. There are alternatives.

For example, there have long been calls to push for public funding of elections, including a few bills in Congress. Really, a more sober system of campaign funding would probably be one in which the federal government sets aside a specific "campaign finance budget" that is activated at a set date, dispersing equal funds out to any candidate who files the proper paperwork.

After all, that's equality of opportunity, right? Isn't that what everyone claims to be going for?

Such campaign finance reform, however, would run into problems in our virulently reactionary Supreme Court. The court decided in 2010's *Citizens United v. FEC* (codifying precedents they had set in 1976's *Buckley v. Valeo*) that money, especially campaign money, is a form of political speech, and restrictions on campaign spending are tantamount to censorship. Any such law seeking to overhaul our current system would thus have to confront the logic of this decision head

on.

Of course, the logic behind the decision, like most stemming from right wing "originalist" legal theory, is moronic. Money as such is obviously not equal to speech. A "free marketplace of ideas" is not aided by having no caps on spending, but rather distorted and tainted by unequal positions in disposable wealth; this has been shown time and time again in social sciences research, because, well, it's fucking obvious.

This seemingly obvious line of argument is of little use now that the precedent is set, unfortunately. Money is considered speech in courts of law, so now anyone seeking campaign finance reform would have to deal with the precedent on its own terms. That's the law — in all its majestic equality — for you.

Taking the "money is speech" assertion at face value to argue for campaign-spending reform isn't as hard as it seems, however;

the "money is speech" axiom leaves itself especially vulnerable to leftist critique by assuming an entire universe of vague egalitarian assumptions about the nature of economic and social power. Put shortly: Assuming "money is political speech" is in turn assuming that everyone has equal financial and social resources necessary to participate in such political speech in the first place. This assumption is wrong, obviously, and that's exactly the point: You cannot claim that political spending (which is grossly unequal across class and gender lines) is the same as speech (which everyone nominally has the ability to express) without putting the entire American system of property ownership and contract rights on trial as well.

This line of argument is strongly taken from the progressive "Legal Realist" tradition — which I have tried to make

In the future, as in the past, there will be other candidates — both inside the world of government and out — who will do the exact same thing, with the exact same results.



interesting to you, the reader, here — and has traditionally been a powerful analytical tool in debunking incoherent libertarian theories of liberty and its relation to the law.

Such Legal Realist justifications for campaign finance reform have a strong tradition. Twenty years before the Citizens United ruling, Duke law professor J.M. Balkin concluded a section of his paper “Some Realism about Formalism: Legal Realist Approaches to the First Amendment” by punctuating the arguments made above aptly:

“My conclusion, then, is that campaign finance reforms may be constitutional not because money is not speech, but because in a very important sense it is. The government is responsible for inequalities in access to the means of communication because it has created the system of property rights that makes such inequalities possible. Therefore, it is not only wrong but also incoherent for opponents of campaign finance reform to contend that the government should not regulate access to the political process. Government already regulates access to the political process - the first amendment simply demands that it do so fairly. At the very least the first amendment should not act as a barrier to attempts to ensure that the process works equitably.”

It is thus difficult, but not impossible to argue for some semblance of sanity among campaign spending to our backwards, reactionary institutions. Sound counterarguments can always be made, and harmful precedents always undone. The real task, then, is to force

the handpicked goons of capital who currently make up the Supreme Court to face their shitty arguments on its own terms.

It is still highly doubtful that the Gorsuchs and Kavanaughs of the court — who our constitution has ordained with the right of lifetime appointments, all but guaranteeing their power for a generation — will be convinced by a superior line of argument. Despite fawning odes to the un-taintibility of law you occasionally see, there really is no universal Right or Wrong way to determine law; subjectivity is inevitable, and biases cannot be avoided. The law, as Legal Realist forebear Karl Llewellyn believed, is “little more than putty in the hands of a judge who could shape the outcome of a case based on personal bias.” Such is life under our farcical liberal institutions.

Knowing how arbitrary judicial deliberation is makes it hard to not just scrap this entire analysis and call for something more radical, like court packing or even just getting rid of our current system all together, where one person simply wouldn't have the disposable wealth to throw away on a political donation or campaign. One of the challenges of writing institutional critique as someone whose beliefs are left-of-liberal is resisting the urge to destroy everything and start anew. This is certainly more desirable to me personally — I don't see much worth saving in a political-economic order like this one: a legal order that still parades the lie of equality before the law while propagating disparities in power

relations; an economic order that seeks to uphold the deservedness of mass wealth and privilege while ignoring the institutional mechanisms — like contract and property law — that make such gains available in the first place; a rhetorical culture that makes people believe that inequality is the default state of things, that there is no difference between wealth and virtue, between poverty and moral failings — that suffering is something you must accrue yourself out of through the market. What's the point of any incrementalist reform?

But, just as refurbishing the dining room on the Titanic is a recipe for failure, so is skimping on the lifeboat budget. Reforms — be they in campaign finance, labor law or mass incarceration — are necessary simply by the potentialities they can unleash in the imaginations of those who benefit.

Cynicism is understandable in a situation like ours, but fatalism is not. There is a stark difference between contingency and inevitability, any issue regarding the social and legal construction that is government certainly falls on the former.

At its best, a system of public-election financing — and the more sober ideological playing field it could create — could spur a long line of reforms that ignite people with a newfound sense of power and agency that the structures in which they live are not preordained, and wrestling them back from the wealthy is within their right.

At worst, it can make it harder for people like Michael Bloomberg to run for president. ■



TYLER, THE CREATOR BRINGS

TRICOR

TO MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

BY CAMERON ALBERT

T Tyler, the Creator's New York stop on his IGOR tour was a sold-out, must-see event for fans of the self-proclaimed "leader of the new school."

Tyler is no stranger to New York's famous venue; two shows at Madison Square Garden's Hulu Theater in support of his critically acclaimed Flower Boy pleased New Yorkers in February 2018. Now playing for the full 20,000 capacity arena, it's clear that Tyler has eclipsed his previous fame.

On a stage recreated from the music video for "EARFQUAKE," Tyler walked straight into the spotlight dressed in his blonde wig, red-and-white suit and a pair of glasses. While "IGOR'S THEME" played, Tyler remained standing still, rapping an unreleased verse and occasionally reciting adlibs. The stadium went black before the song's enticing beat returned and saw both the crowd and Tyler dance as if they were engulfed in flames.

"I want you guys to embrace your hard breathing, I want you to embrace your sweat, and I want y'all to fucking move," said Tyler prior to "I THINK." He certainly got his wish as the lines exiting Madison Square Garden were filled with sweaty, Golf-wearing teenagers.

The use of lighting during the instrumental between the bridge and the fourth verse on "NEW MAGIC WAND" created a nerve-wracking atmosphere that temporarily put the crowd in a

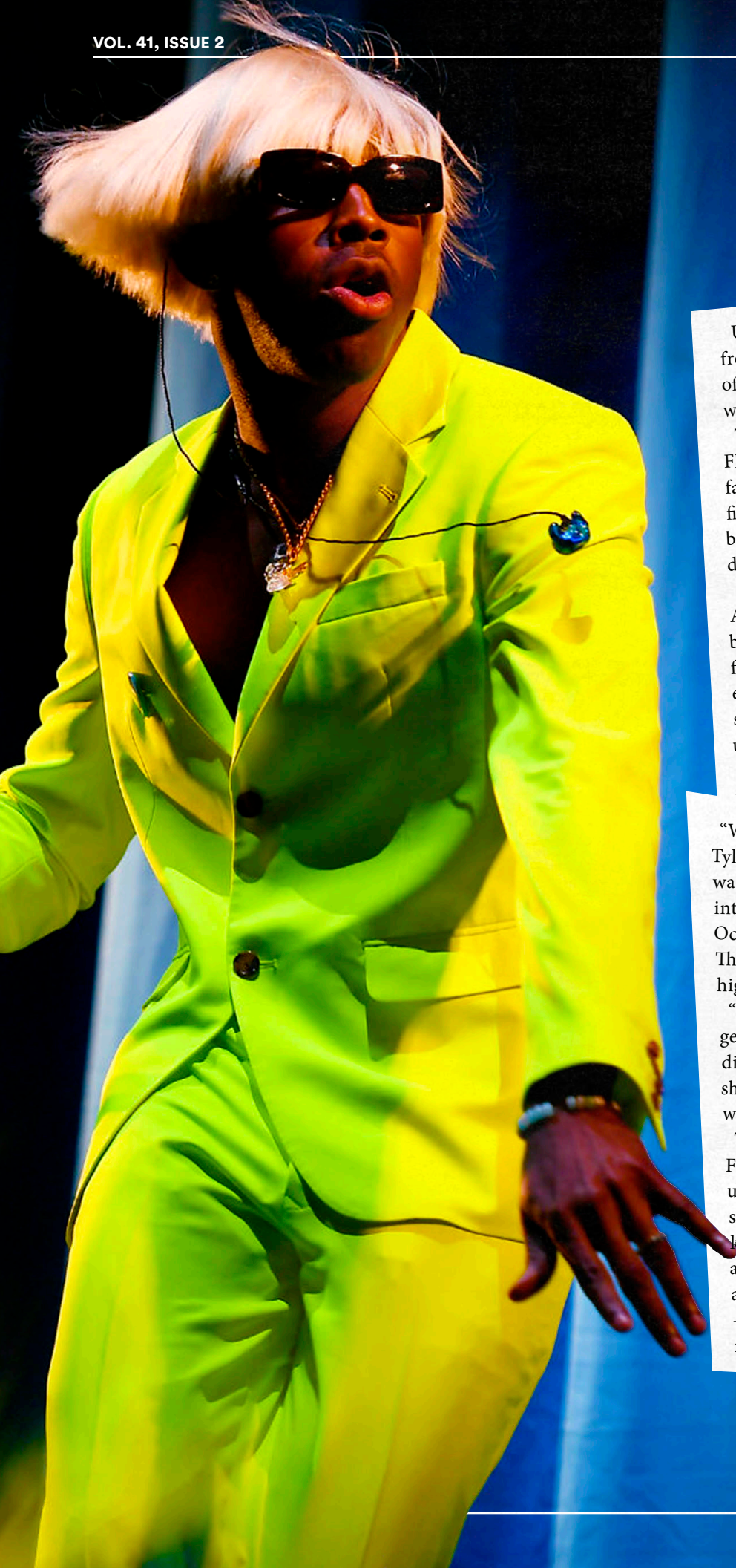
horror film. The suspense created was reminiscent of a character slowly opening their basement door in search of the terror that lies behind it. White lights flashed with the beat before everything went red for Tyler's menacing, yet pining, verse.

Six songs in, Tyler slowed things down when a piano made its way on the stage. Fans began singing as Tyler played the instrumental to "EARFQUAKE" prior to performing it in its entirety moments later.

Tyler gave the crowd a laugh after the track ended, scolding a pop star for passing on the song: "That's a good song, Justin Bieber's a little stupid bitch for not taking it." Bieber's decision turned out to be a great one for Tyler, as he then shared that he received a platinum plaque for the record before the show.

"I
WANT YOU
GUYS TO
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BREATHING,
I WANT YOU
TO EMBRACE
YOUR SWEAT,
AND I WANT
Y'ALL TO
FUCKING
MOVE."





Upon approval from fans, Tyler played songs from earlier in his discography. “IFHY,” “She” and of course “Yonkers” pleased longtime fans, who were in abundance that Thursday night.

The show reached its peak when it was time for Flower Boy cut “Who Dat Boy.” With his back facing the crowd, Tyler let the song’s instrumental fill Madison Square Garden with anticipation before the stage filled with flames and disordered dancing.

To the immediate delight of those in attendance, A\$AP Rocky graced the stage with both his babushka and his contributions to the song. Rocky’s first few lines were practically inaudible due to the eruption his arrival caused. Fans from the floor to section 400 were jumping up and down, causing an undeniable floor shake.

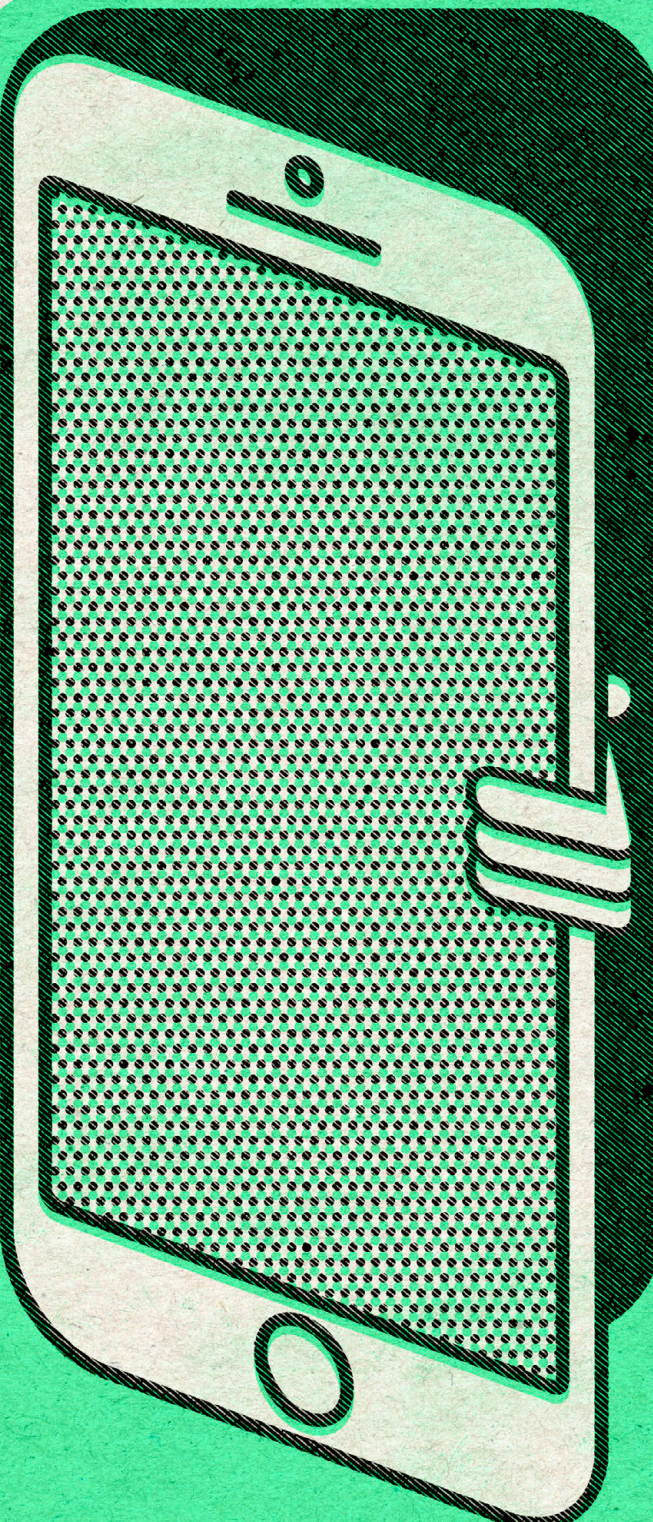
“GOLFWANG A\$AP n***a” were Rocky’s final words before leaving the stage.

“Who Dat Boy” was one of four songs played from Tyler’s Grammy-nominated album. “Boredom” was a much-needed calm follow-up. Fans turned into birds by Tyler’s request, repeating Frank Ocean’s “chirp chirp” line as he played conductor. The Kali Uchis-assisted “See You Again” was a highlight towards the show’s conclusion.

“WHAT’S GOOD” was the final time those in general admission could mosh, something they did since the beginning of Goldlink’s set at the show’s opening. IGOR’s most aggressive song was clearly a fan favorite.

The night concluded with “ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?” a cathartic experience that wrapped up a rollercoaster of a show. Performing the song on an elevated stage, Tyler dropped to his knees after the song’s screaming finish. Without any formal goodbye or conclusion, he left the audience at the same place IGOR found himself — having to accept, appreciate and eventually move on from what’s now in the past. ■

MEET GUILHERME RAMBO: THE MAN BEHIND APPLE'S LATEST LEAKS • BY JOSH JOSEPH



On Oct. 2, Brazilian software developer Guilherme Rambo found evidence of unannounced third-generation AirPods hidden within a new beta of iOS, Apple's mobile operating system. Digging through a newly released build of iOS 13.2, he discovered a low-resolution icon depicting the earbuds, and new options for noise cancelling. He immediately shared his findings on 9to5Mac, a well-known Apple blog. From there, they were republished across the internet at tech sites like The Verge and BGR, as well as at establishment outlets like the International Business Times, where writer Julio Chachila called him a "super sleuth," and Forbes, where tech reporter David Phelan hailed him as "a modern day Sherlock."

"It's funny," Rambo said in an Oct. 8 Skype interview from his home in Florianopolis, Brazil, his black hair deliberately swept forward atop his stubbled face. "Every website has a way to describe me. I have this collection of adjectives they've used for me."

The initial leak was confirmed weeks later, when Apple announced the AirPods Pro on Oct. 28. More than mere rumor, these images were substantiated by their source — Apple's own software — through Rambo's careful detective work.

At the heart of the tech news cycle, rumors and leaks about new devices snowball into stories. Rambo is frequently the source of these glimpses into the future. As a professional leaker, he digs through early beta versions of Apple's software, finding accidental hints of forthcoming iPhones, iPads and other hardware. Before the company dazzles with grand,

orchestrated unveilings, and before mainstream outlets like Bloomberg and The Wall Street Journal publish exhaustive rumor roundups, Rambo finds clues embedded in lines of code.

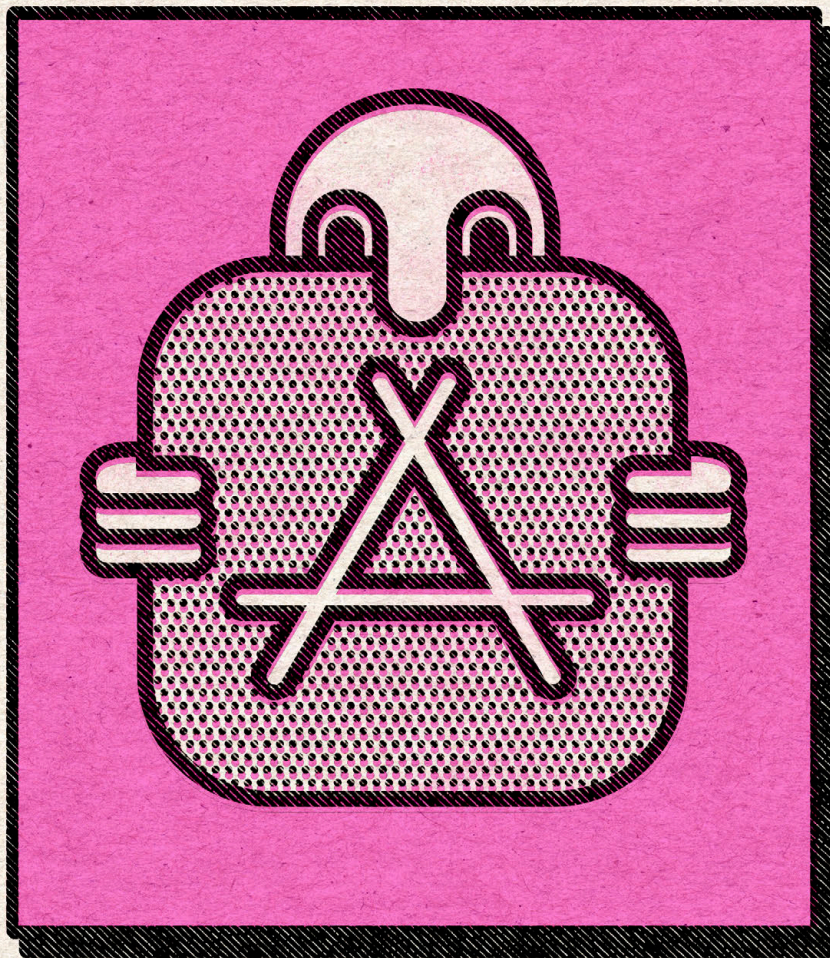
Growing up in southern Brazil, Rambo developed a passion for reverse engineering. “My dad used to work with electronics repairs, TVs and all sorts of home electronics,” he said. “So I grew up watching him disassemble stuff and seeing how it worked and what was broken and fixing it. I guess that kind of burned this interest about how things work in my mind.” When his family purchased a home computer, he began to study programming — a skill that would serve him well as a developer.

Today, Rambo spends his days working on a variety of software. He develops his own apps — AirBuddy, an AirPods utility for the Mac, and Chibi Studio, an art app for fans of anime. He also codes for Piexe Urbano, a Brazilian tech company working on an upcoming mobile payment system. Although these apps are his main source of income, the lure of finding and sharing the latest information keeps him on the hunt for leaks. “It’s like if you found a piece of gold through lots and lots of mining,” he said. “It feels really good.”

To find these elusive scraps of information, Rambo uses a proprietary process he developed. A system he designed monitors Apple’s servers for updates, and extracts all the data — images, audio files, code — buried in the latest version. “Then I compare it with the information I gathered from the previous build to see what changed,” he said. “Then I can do a deeper analysis of specific apps or subsystems. And it’s mainly a manual thing because I need to look at the changes and interpret them.”

In 2017, as rumors swirled about a potential iPhone redesign, Rambo

“IT’S LIKE IF YOU FOUND A PIECE OF GOLD THROUGH LOTS AND LOTS OF MINING,” HE SAID. “IT FEELS REALLY GOOD.”

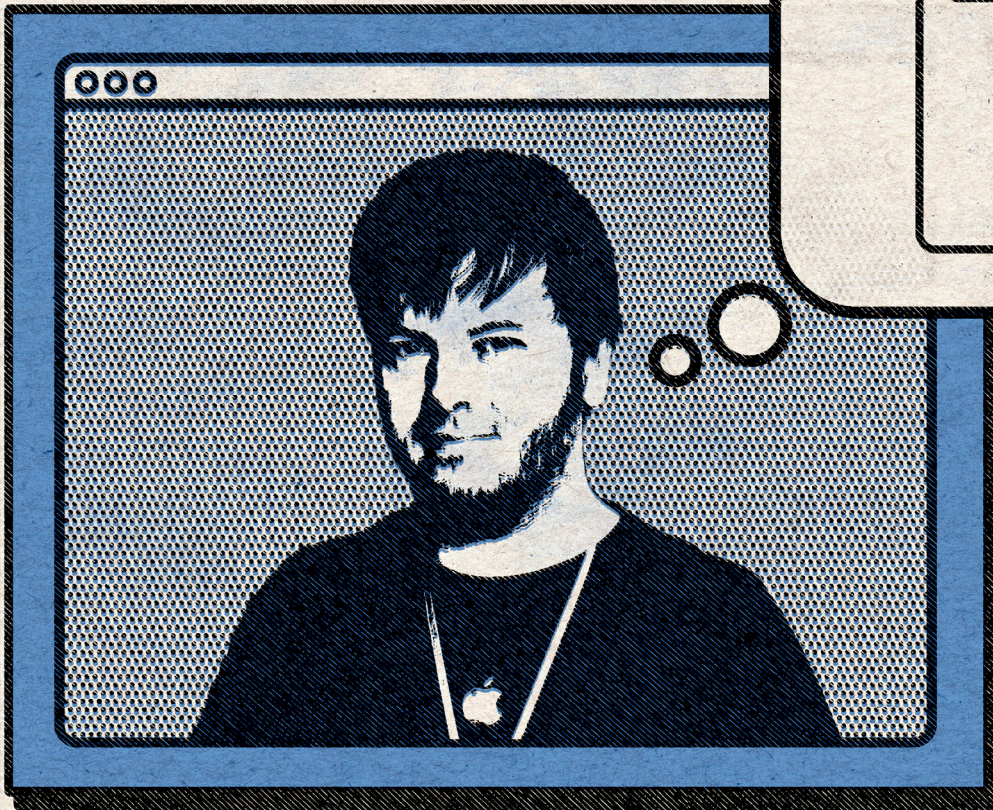


discovered a tiny icon that would make him famous in tech circles. Apple had just put out beta firmware for its upcoming HomePod smart speaker. Rambo and fellow developer Filipe Espósito quickly downloaded the firmware to further explore its contents. “At the time, I thought it would have nothing interesting beyond what had already been published... so I stopped looking for more info,” said Espósito. Rambo, however, kept looking and eventually found an outline of what would become the iPhone X’s distinctive camera notch, confirming a full year of design speculation. The leak, grounded in Apple’s own firmware, spread across social media and tech news sites.

“As for the snowball effect after that, it can probably only really happen with

the iPhone,” Ben Newcombe, a developer and friend of Rambo, said. “The glyph was probably perfect for spreading: It confirmed all the juiciest rumors and still left the finer details to the imagination.” While Newcombe and Rambo joked about the purported authenticity of rumors and conversed about his discoveries, they were also influencing the news cycle. Rambo’s name started appearing in ledes across tech outlets like Mashable and Gizmodo. Even The Guardian covered the story, citing Rambo and sharing the icon he had unearthed. “This screenshot of our text messages ended up on mainstream news sites,” Newcombe said. “Gui and I were just a pair of dorks who enjoyed the armchair spectating of it.”

Marcus Mendes, a tech podcaster and a



“EVEN MY PARENTS WERE LIKE, ‘OH, DID YOU SEE THAT APPLE HAS RELEASED AN IMAGE?’ IT WASN’T APPLE, IT WAS RAMBO, BUT MY PARENTS KNOW ABOUT IT NOW, YOU KNOW?”

close friend of Rambo, remembered the pride he felt when a fellow Brazilian made it into the news. “Especially for us here in Brazil, you know, it’s sort of like this soccer team,” he said. “He became the news, especially here, and not just what he had leaked, but the fact that he was from here.” And, Mendes said, the impact of the leak spread far beyond the tech world. “Even my parents were like, ‘Oh, did you see that Apple has released an image?’ It wasn’t Apple, it was Rambo, but my parents know about it now, you know?”

After the hype around Rambo’s iPhone X discovery settled, Seth Weintraub, owner of 9to5Mac, reached out to him with a job offer. “He seemed like a code whisperer,” Weintraub said. “He became a developer star on Twitter. I reached out to him there.” Now, Rambo gets paid by 9to5Mac to report on the information he uncovers.

In spite of his newfound star status, Mendes said Rambo maintains his humility and willingness to help others. “He has been... using this attention that he got from this (his leaks) for the good,” he said. On Twitter, small developers working on their first projects reach out to Rambo about their work. He often shares

their apps to his audience or helps them improve. “And he didn’t really have to do that, but he’s been consistently doing it,” Mendes said.

Rambo said he has never been officially contacted by Apple about his leaks, but the company has gotten smarter about protecting its data. After he found hidden press images of the iPhone XS and Apple Watch Series 4 on Apple’s website, its web developers began adding random characters to file names, preventing a similar leak from happening again.

His leaks do have a tangible negative impact on Apple. In 2017, when his famous iPhone X leak broke, Apple CEO Tim Cook blamed slowing iPhone sales on early speculation about the next model. “We’re seeing what we believe to be a pause in purchases on iPhone, which we believe are due to the earlier and much more frequent reports about future iPhones,” he said in a conference call with investors.

However, the excitement that builds from leaking can be positive. David Hyman is the former CEO of MOG, the company that eventually became Apple Music. Leaks are “a double-edged sword,” he said. Although they may stifle current sales,

the anticipation that leaks build may make up for it. “If someone is leaking on you, you’ve already made it,” he said. Allen St. John, a tech journalist at Consumer Reports, said leaks are an undisputed positive. “There’s pent-up demand for information about Apple products,” he said. “And honestly, it only benefits the company when consumers get a ‘sneak preview’ of the form or features of an upcoming phone or laptop.”

Rambo does not see his work as undermining the company. “I don’t think it steals their thunder,” he said. “I never have the story. I never have the why. Apple loves to sell you the why — why you’d want this product, why this product is good. They usually don’t sell you the what, like this has ‘x’ gigabytes of RAM... which is what most companies do. They sell you a story and they sell you an experience and I think that part is all theirs.” ■

ARE WE GIVING COMEDY TOO MUCH CREDIT?



By Louis
Marrone

Have you noticed something odd about Netflix's comedy specials? A lot of the trailers either promote them as "Jokes of Mass Destruction! #TriggerWarning Snowflake!" or "No Balls, No Patriarchy, No Problem: A Female Comic's Journey." Even the specials themselves have a certain duality to them. Picture this, if you will: On one side, you've got loud towering men with aggressive and energetic deliveries. A bombastic stock music track plays in the background as he struts across the stage "telling it how it is" while leaving no survivors; and on the other, you have short-haired women with thick frame glasses offering humorous jokes and stories, but oftentimes also giving what is more comparable to a TED talk, wherein they mostly tell you about their lives, their trauma and their truths. If you want a literal example of this, watch the trailer to Bill Burr's latest special Paper Tiger, which makes an effort to include a jump cut of Burr talking about ... what else? SAFE SPACES! HIPSTERS! MALE FEMINISTS! #METOO! Just as well, the trailer for Hannah Gadsby's special Nanette shows her standing firmly on stage, talking about her life and struggles as a LGBT woman living in the Western world, with the few jokes that are sprinkled about relating to the socio-political issues that apply to her situation.

Advertising is about generating attention and profit. By highlighting the most controversial parts of their specials, Netflix aims to not only generate controversy, but also court certain audiences. Their actual methods are rather simple. According to Business Insider, "to build its U.S. social team of about 15 people, Netflix hired TV and movie buffs who were passionate about sci-fi or comedy, two key target areas for Netflix." Netflix isn't just hiring any old PR agents. They've reached out to the people on the inside: the fans. These people are presumably very online, and know more than anyone about what

resonates with viewers, and what people will react to — both positively and negatively.

Netflix seems to be making the most of the current political moment. Their marketing and contextual molding of their specials reflects a recognition of the temperature in the room. It's all just another symptom of the culture wars, the ongoing battle between ideals and values, between older generations and younger generations, and so on. The cultural rift can even be noted in the striking difference in critic to audience reviews on sites such as Rotten Tomatoes, where Dave Chapelle's *Sticks & Stones* currently has an abysmal, "rotten" 35% critics score and a whopping 99% audience rating. Gadsby's *Nanette* is practically the inverse with a 100% critics score and a 22% audience score.

Lucky for Netflix, there certainly is not a shortage of things to market on. At least within the more underground, independent circuit of comedy there exists at least some division. In September, *Saturday Night Live* announced three new cast members. One of them was Shane Gillis, a comic from Pennsylvania who describes himself as "white trash." Following the announcement, journalists quickly surfaced multiple clips of Gillis on various podcasts repeatedly using the word "chi*k" and doing an exaggerated Chinese accent. This quickly resulted in his firing. Meanwhile, podcasts in the New York comedy circuit include Legion of Skanks, the self-identifying "most offensive podcast in the world" hosted by Luis J. Gomez, Dave Smith and "Big Jay" Oakerson, and *Cum Town*, a similar podcast hosted by Nick Mullen, Adam Friedland and Stavros Halkias. Their comedic stylings feature everything from ethnic accent impressions to jokes aimed at those with disabilities. That aside, the thing they both have in common is that they have garnered polarizing online followings for their irreverent, politically incorrect humor and equal opportunity offender attitudes. Both have faced criticism and pushback from a number of writers and commentators, such as

Sadie Doyle. Legion of Skanks has faced similar criticism, but despite it has continued to grow in popularity, even launching its own festival that, just this past year, welcomed disgraced comedian Louis C.K. to a standing ovation, with many fellow comics, including writer/comedian Kath Barbadoro, criticising it as not only tone-deaf, but also a workplace safety issue.

The question remains, though. How did things get to this point, and why? Are there any answers to be found?

In the aftermath of Trump's presidency, we have seen an uptick in commentary regarding the responsibility and role of comedy in society, as well as a larger number of controversies surrounding comedians. In August 2017 *The Establishment*, a blog focusing on feminism and social justice, published an essay titled "How 'South Park' Helped Empower The 'Alt-Right,'" which argued that the animated series in some way led to the creation of the far-right movement. In March of that same year, *The Atlantic* ran a cover-story on Alec Baldwin, with an accompanying caption that read "Can Satire Save The Republic?" Articles like these place figures such as Alec Baldwin and Samantha Bee on a pedestal, framing them as key figures in the #Resistance. The SNL-Shane Gillis situation has been propelled into a culturally relevant topic thanks to articles like *The Hollywood Reporter's* "Comedy's Civil War: How an 'SNL' Firing Exposed a Growing Rift in Stand-Up," to the point where even presidential candidate Andrew Yang took to twitter to give his two cents.

There are a couple of arguments used to justify this emphasized importance. One is simple: People should be careful about what they say, especially those with a larger platform. Raphael Bob-Waksberg is the creator of the Netflix animated series "Bojack Horseman." In an interview with *VICE*, Bob-Waksberg was asked about the value of political correctness and mindfulness in comedy. He responded:

"I think most people who argue for what you might call political correctness, are not actually arguing for censorship.

They're arguing for self-control and self-restraint. They're arguing for people to be conscious of the power they have, right? And I believe that I have a lot of power, as someone making popular entertainment. I do think we have to be careful about the art we put out. We want to make the argument that our art has power so we can't then also say that it has no effect over people, these people are adults who can make their own decisions. I think the art we make influences people, and I think with that power comes great

responsibility, to quote Spiderman."

This argument is not invalid, and actually makes a lot of sense. Everything is about time and place, and humor is no exception. "I don't necessarily think anything is off limits," Bob-Waksberg continues in the interview, "but you have to know who your audience is and know who you're talking to and what kind of jokes you're making."

Aside from that, like anything else, the First Amendment can be abused. Just because you can say something

does not mean you necessarily should. Sure, everything can be joked about, but should they be? Extending beyond humor, this can be seen as represented through platforms like 4chan and 8chan, where people are virtually unregulated and are given carte blanche to say whatever they want, no matter how inappropriate, offensive or even harmful what they say actually is.

One of the more tragic and radical examples of this would be Connor Betts, the 24-year-old white male who posted a racially charged manifesto on 8chan before murdering 10 people, including his sister, in the streets of Dayton, Ohio this past August. Tying this back to humor, Betts was the frontman for a band called Menstrual Munchies, a band that prided itself on "ironically" preaching violent, crude lyrics about raping and abusing women. "Whereas I saw it as a joke — like, 'Let's play this and we'll shock some people,' and then the people that we know laugh — he didn't see it as a joke," says Jesse Creekbaum, his friend and bandmate, in an interview with VICE. "He was like, 'Fuck, yeah. We're gonna do this.' It's like, Jesus Christ, how much of this was like real life for him?" This sort of dissociation with reality is sometimes referred to as irony poisoning. While other factors obviously played larger roles in Betts' actions — such as mental health and lax gun laws — the correlation is hard to ignore. We can sit back and just say that the things he posted were a joke, but when the relationship between art and violence becomes near-direct, then it is no longer just art or just a joke or just words. It becomes a weapon. This is also noticeable with the Proud Boys, a group started by libertarian commentator and VICE co-founder Gavin McInnes. After a supposed "joke" gone haywire, McInnes eventually made a call for violence against people on the left end of politics. The result was the group being placed on an FBI watchlist, and McInnes conveniently distancing himself from the movement all together.

The other argument is that there is a thin line between irony-bro edgelord



and genuine hater, and the line is so thin that audiences cannot tell the difference. Take, for example, Deadspin's feature on Barstool Sports' PFTCommenter. The piece accuses PFTCommenter, a character parodying a loud-mouthed, obnoxious, sexist and overzealous sports bro, of providing Barstool and its founder Dave Portnoy a shield from criticism that they unironically embody those very characteristics, claiming that:

"...The real value of PFT Commenter's shtick imitating a dog-whistling, sexist, message-board idiot is tricking people—or at least certain people, whose opinions matter very much—into thinking that Barstool Sports is not in fact dominated by racist, neanderthal bullies who harass women online, videotape each other in the shower, and call underage girls hot, repeatedly, but is in fact some high-concept gag. This isn't the thing itself, PFT Commenter's presence proclaims, in the face of a mountain of evidence that it is. But we're all in on the joke."

The problem with it is that it ignores one of the core elements of comedy, and speech in general: context. By this logic, irony does not exist, and everyone genuinely means everything they say. If someone tells their friend to "break a leg" before performing for an audience, then they genuinely want to see that person get their legs broken. When it comes to reading into jokes or satire or anything for that matter, the key elements to look at are intent plus context. What is the person trying to say? What are they intending? How is the execution? What is the outcome?

"Hate speech is whatever you want it to be. It has no specific definition," writes Lou Perez, the head writer and executive producer for the political satire/commentary website We The Internet TV, in an op-ed for Spiked magazine. "The term has become a catch-all for any speech that anyone hates, whether it's virulent white nationalism or reasoned social commentary defending civil liberties." And that's the reason why it's near impossible to eliminate "problematic" material from the culture

at large: What is hurtful to some may not be to others.

The risk of being offended is an unfortunate byproduct of the trials and errors of comedy, but so be it. To be harassed or threatened by someone is one thing, and as said before, if somebody is actively calling for violence then said person should be called out and dealt with, but to just be exposed to offensive jokes or unpopular opinions is fairly minor in comparison to actual violence or oppression. Nobody is forcing anyone to hear them. Nobody is required to listen to Shane Gillis or Cum Town, nor is anybody being physically attacked by their hosts and fanbase. People choose to listen to them. As with everything

When the relationship between art and violence becomes near-direct, then it is no longer just art or just a joke or just words.

else in life, consumption comes with consequences and should be done at one's own risk.

It is also worth analyzing the true influence of comedy and satire on its own. In March, 2018, a colleague of mine, Joe Amendola, wrote an essay titled "Is Trump Funny? On the Limits of Political Satire in a World Where Reality is a Horrifying Joke." The piece acts as a review of the Showtime animated series *Our Cartoon President*, a satire of Trump and the administration. Towards the middle of it, while discussing the impact of political satire, he writes "...did The Daily Show do anything? Did it stop the war in Iraq that it was so ardently against? Or slow down the rise of the

right-wing Tea Party political movement, something it skewered over and over again? As of today, America doesn't have any less of an outsized military presence around the world, and the Tea Party movement has had incredible electoral success and fundamentally changed politics."

"Jon Stewart on his own has done more for humanity than The Daily Show as a whole," tweets comedian Ian Fidance, referring to Stewart's efforts to get 9/11 first responders better health benefits. "Do what you can and make a difference on your own but tricking yourself into thinking 'comedy' cares or is important for social change is dumb [in my opinion]."

Taking this all into consideration, is it really worth being actively mad at podcasts? To do so feels at least somewhat comparable to getting mad at Slayer in the '80s or Marilyn Manson in the '90s. No, the material doesn't always land, and yes, arguably speaking, they can be offensive and punch too hard—but in the long run, it's all an act. It's the reason that articles like the aforementioned PFTCommenter take-down come off as out of touch and misguided. "There's no shadowy conspiracy to 'shield' anything," says Keith Markovich, Barstool Sports' editor-in-chief, in a tweet responding to the article. "Some things are just FUNNY. People LIKE laughing."

And that might be the best way to put it: Some things are just funny, and some people just want to laugh. There isn't always a critical lense to put over something, and there isn't always a think piece-styled reason for something being said. Sometimes people just enjoy something for enjoyment's sake. We often enjoy hearing outrageous, fucked-up humor. "We go to work, we go out in public, and we have to act proper and professional," says Matt Saincome, co-founder and president of the satire website *The Hard Times*, in an interview over the phone. "A lot of people sometimes turn to comedy and go to shows because they want to escape that and hear someone say things we can't."

On the flip side of all this, if you feel the need to spend time being mad at offensive material -- and some will because we're human and we naturally like to rant and rave about things, and certain things just hit a nerve for some -- then at the very least put that energy into people with actual, genuine political messages and larger audiences. Go after people like Steven Crowder, who sells shirts with the slogan "socialism is for fags" printed on them. Go off on Owen Benjamin, who regularly launches aggression-fueled rants against fellow comedians for criticising and disagreeing with him, and who consistently unironically uses slurs like the n-word and homophobic analogies ad nauseum to drive his points home. Criticize Gavin McInnes. People like this mean what they say, actually promote some sort of harassment and violence, and what they have to say is genuinely hateful and, frankly, sucks.

In a perfect world, people would worry about themselves. If they did not like something, they would simply not consume it, and the ones who do would just enjoy it and leave it at that. The ones who actively go out of their way to belittle people would be called out on it, and that would simply be the end of it. It's certainly how I try to go about life. But as a friend of mine once said, "ideal ain't real." That said, there is no real answer or resolution to this aspect of the culture wars. It is an ongoing dialogue that will ebb and flow as history moves forward. And that's fine, I guess. Everyone is going to have their own agendas. In that case, the better way to look at things, as I argued before, is to base them on time and place. Where is something being said and when? What is

IN THE LONG RUN, IT'S ALL AN ACT.



the larger outcome? In the meantime, as long as people keep debating, and as long as people keep playing into it, companies will continue to market it. Netflix refers to their comedy section as "Netflix is a Joke," but as far as overall business goes, it's anything but. They have put out over a hundred specials over the course

of two years, and many of them have either gone on to acclaim or sparked some degree of socio-political discourse. As long as they continue to churn out a consistent product, people will flock to it; and considering the way they sell it, people, whether they love or hate it, will watch. ■

GHOST ISLAND

BY JENNIFER CORR

By day, they are like most Long Island adults, tending to their jobs and families.

But by night, they're investigators — not of the living, but of the dead. To be a part of the Long Island Paranormal Investigators (LIPI), one must dedicate countless nights and hours determining whether or not a spot is haunted. On Thursday nights, they meet in the basement of a house in Selden, New York to discuss upcoming events and investigations, analyze gathered evidence, give out awards and occasionally enjoy a beer with a side of electronic voice phenomena (EVP). The founder and lead investigator, Michael Cardinuto, said he has been on over 550 investigations since he got into the business, when he founded the LIPI around 2003. The group formed after Cardinuto and some friends investigated an abandoned hospital. They later started investigating more Long Island urban legends that they read about on the internet. Their

first official investigation was Sweet Hollow Road in Huntington, which some believe to be haunted.

As the years passed, the group has acquired extensive knowledge, new team members and equipment.

"I know my shit," Cardinuto said. "I run this like a business. Hands down, I would definitely put this down in the top paranormal groups in the world."

And it is a business with many parts. Members are part of different departments, with duties that range from coordinating events to researching cryptozoology, the area of study that tries to prove the existence of folklore such as Bigfoot. All of the members, however, have the core responsibility of showing up. They must analyze all the audio, footage, pictures and other forms of evidence captured throughout investigations. Some investigations are even overnight or out of state and all investigations, private residences and areas throughout Long Island. Investigations, the business's main product, are free of charge.

Lead investigator Dimitrios Haritos has dedicated his basement

to LIPI's cause. The walls are lined with equipment, awards and racks full of files. Awards are given out to members each meeting, recognizing qualities such as leadership.

"As somebody who started on another team, I can say it's absolutely true [that LIPI is in the top paranormal groups in the world,]" Haritos, a 12-year LIPI member, said. "I know what other teams look like, I know what other teams operate like. You see each other once every three months, there's no in-depth training or anything like we do here, it's kinda like, 'Figure it out on your own,' which is like how most groups tend to run. This place is like college."

The training at LIPI is extensive, Cardinuto said, as paranormal investigating does present its dangers.

"Paranormal investigating can be a dangerous field to get into," Cardinuto said via email. "Many people may go out and investigate with good intentions but you never know what may possibly follow you home. The majority of the locations we investigate are



MEMBERS OF LONG ISLAND PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS GATHER AT THEIR WEEKLY MEETING TO DISCUSS PROTOCOL BEFORE GOING OUT ON AN ASSIGNMENT. (MEGAN VALLE/ THE PRESS)

considered to be safe but there are those few were [sp] you do open yourself up to something extremely negative. We also do many house investigations every year and you never know what you could be walking into. We have an extensive training program in our group teaching our investigators the dangers of coming in contact with a negative entity, elementals, Djinn (spirit beings) and even demons.”

Multiple forms of technology must be mastered, according to the group’s website. This includes a barometer, which is said to recognize the manifestation of a ghost or spirit when the pressure increases or decreases; a Cem IR Thermometer, which reads a surface’s temperature; and a DVR system, which can record multiple rooms throughout a location at once to check for any captured apparitions and cameras and recorders.

Any evidence captured on audio

is known as an electronic voice phenomena (EVP) and can have multiple categories ranging from Class A EVPs, which are loud, clear and high quality, to Class D EVPs, which are poor quality and questionable.

“Believe it or not, paranormal activity isn’t really a common thing, and it’s not what the movies and TV portray it out to be,” Cardinuto said. “When we go into a client’s house, we are able to debunk about 80% to 85% of the claims to be something that normally occurs. That does leave between 15% and 20% of the unknown. Once you deal with that unknown, there are a million questions people ask. That is what we are trying to do, is to help answer some of those questions people may have by using our investigation methods and getting to the bottom line of what is happening.”

During a meeting in May, the group analyzed some high-quality audio from an investigation in Rogers Mansion, a historic building

part of the Southampton History Museum. This investigation allowed the public to join in and learn about what LIPI does.

On one EVP, “Don’t, go, move away, what!” can be heard. The group listened over and over again, theorizing the possibility of it being multiple voices and nailing down exactly what could be heard. “It’s definitely ‘Move away,’” Cardinuto said. “I’ll fight you to the death.”

Haritos asked the group that caught it if they were with people when the audio was captured.

“The audio was at my feet,” investigator Michele Cassone said. “I wasn’t holding it or anything.”

“Everyone in the group was mad quiet except for one girl who was like, ‘I want a ghost to touch my butt,’ very loud, yes,” investigator in training and employee at the Southampton History Museum, Conner Flanagan added, as the group laughed. “And it was just me and Michele talking the whole

time.”

Cardinuto said the group makes it a point to differentiate captured human whispering and an EVP. “When going over our EVP analysis, many people ask us how can you tell it’s an EVP and not a person. When we are investigating, we train our investigators not to whisper, and if someone does whisper, we make it a note in the recorder. There are also many times that we investigate that there are multiple recorders recording at once. If one of the recorders pick up an EVP and the others do not, that gives the EVP more credibility, because if it was one of us talking, it would be on all of the recorders.”

The Stony Brook Press got to see LIPI in action in May when they were invited to join an investigation at Manorville Hills County Park. An animal researcher who has access to parks after hours contacted LIPI asking them to do an investigation of the park, saying that he felt uneasy at certain areas.

“He contacted us this year about Manorville Hills County Park,” Cardinuto said to the group prior to the investigation. “I drove past there at night — it’s pretty rough just being in the car, let alone getting out at night in the dark. I don’t know what to expect, I don’t know the history. Me and Dimitrios are taking a hit tonight.”

The hit was having to stay with the animal researcher while the other members of the group got to go anywhere and do anything they wanted. In exchange, Cardinuto and Haritos expect that the group will be their lookout on another Thursday.

The group laughed together. “That’s the deal for tonight,” Cardinuto said. “I don’t know how

**“I RUN THIS
LIKE A BUSINESS.
HANDS DOWN,
I WOULD
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DOWN IN THE
TOP PARANORMAL
GROUPS IN THE
WORLD.”**

long we will be; we will kind of play it by ear. Group leaders, make sure your walkie is working.”

After meeting the animal researcher at a Wendys after a Thursday meeting, the group traveled in a line of cars to the investigation site, parking on the side of a road absent of street lights. After getting out of their cars, they traveled single file into the woods, breaking up into smaller groups as they traveled deeper into the unknown. The Stony Brook Press stayed with Cardinuto, Haritos and the animal researcher. It was quiet, besides the sounds of frogs, crickets and footsteps.

Stopping on a bridge surrounded by a pond, Cardinuto and Haritos began taking photographs with a full-spectrum camera, which covers all spectrums of light that can’t be seen by the naked eye, a thermal imaging camera, which captures the temperature of different objects, and a regular digital camera.

Haritos said of the thermal imaging camera, “With this, they say that if a spirit is manifesting, it might be drawing in heat energy

to cause a cold spot, or it will be bundling up energy in a certain area to cause a hot spot. And hopefully, if there is a change, this camera will pick it up.”

However, Haritos said, one must be familiar with the area, because the hot and cold spots could be caused by numerous environmental factors such as the cool spring breeze that was present that night.

“When I go to these spots, I expect something,” the animal researcher said. “Every once in a while, I’ll see a light or hear a voice. I don’t care about that. This is different.”

He had an experience that drove him to contact LIPI during July 2018. While at the park after hours, he heard something move. At first he thought it was a male deer, but he began hearing heavy breathing.

“Went home and tried to match up the call, there’s nothing even close. I have animal guides, bird guides. I looked through all of those and nothing.”

“Maybe we should try to do an EVP session,” Haritos said, adding,

“What we’re going to ask [is] generic questions. If we had more history on the location I would gear more of my questions towards the history. But what we’re looking to do is, hopefully on my audio when I ask a question, an answer will come through and I’ll be able to hear it later when I play it back.”

When Haritos began the session, he started by saying, “Hi, how’s it going tonight? My name is Dimitrios. I don’t mean you any harm, I’m just looking to communicate with you tonight. Now that you know my name, tell me your name tonight.”

A moment of silent flares, besides the constant sounds of crickets and frogs, followed by an occasional breeze. Generally, he said, they wait about 30 seconds before asking another question, because a spirit would have to use a lot of energy to make itself heard on a voice recorder.

“Can you tell me what you see from where you’re standing?” Haritos asked. Thirty seconds pass.

“If you’re here with us tonight, can you give us a sign of your presence by making a loud noise or a bang, some type of sound that’s not one of these frogs.” Another thirty seconds pass by, as does a train in the distance.

“Do you know what year it is?” Thirty seconds.

“In my hand is a camera, it can take a picture of you. Can I take a picture of you if you stand right in front of it?” He took a photo with his thermal imaging camera.

He closed out the EVP session by thanking any surrounding spirits. He said that many groups often try to provoke the spirits by being

mean to them, but that LIPI does not believe in that technique.

“We had one of our investigators years ago asking provoking questions on a client’s house case we were at,” Haritos said during the investigation. “He started to feel stinging on his back and he lifted up the back of his shirt and there were scratch marks. So we told him to take a break and we sent him outside with another investigator. We told him to take a few minutes and he went outside, he got even more mad, he was like, ‘I wish you were here ‘cause I would mess you up,’



THE LIPI LOGO ON ONE MEMBER'S CAR.
(MEGAN VALLE/THE PRESS)

taking out all the curses involved. And then, within a few seconds, he started burning again, this time there were so many scratches on his back, it broke the skin. He was bleeding. It wasn't demonic. He just pissed off something he shouldn't have. A negative spirit could just be someone who was an asshole in life.”

When asked what people should know about paranormal investigations, Cardinuto said, “If you decide to investigate or go ‘ghost hunting,’ never go alone, and

have some way to protect yourself when you are on site. If you are passionate about it, I would say look for a reputable group out there that would take you under their wing or assist you in starting your own group. LIPI loves helping people who are really passionate about the field, get into the field.”

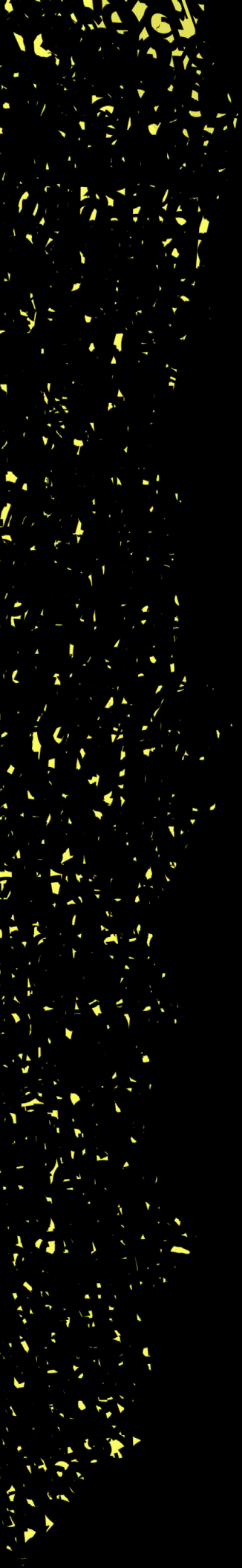
After some time, the group reunited to check out another part of the park, but was stopped by nature itself, as the woods were blocked off by overgrown vines. The animal researcher became interested in some frogs he heard, so LIPI turned back and ventured back to their cars.

“We checked out a couple of locations, new locations, so that you guys get to experience them for the first time, as we did,” Haritos said. “It seemed pretty quiet for the most part. We’re not going to know for sure until we go through our audio and video footage to see if we caught anything and also our photography.”

After analyzing the footage, audio and photographs, nothing was caught. However,

Cardinuto said they were going to go back to see if they can catch anything.

“As the Founder of LIPI I am extremely proud of what we accomplished since 2003 when we started. LIPI is a family and we are all passionate about the field. I love the fact that when we all go out and experience this unusual phenomena together, it makes it worth everything you give up for that experience.” ■



The English alphabet comprises exactly 26 letters and the language itself is made up of 171, 476 words. There are estimated to be at least 97 million songs. Despite such a large variety of factors, there are bound to be thematic parallels throughout all of these works because they are composed by humans who all experience the phenomenon that is the human condition: whether they tackle love or heartbreak; victory or failure; joy or sadness; black or white.

With such a wide variety of factors and wealth of experiences that would inform one's songwriting, rap music seems to have painted itself into a corner by merely skimming off the top of the vast English language. The same metaphors, similes and wordplay that were once novel and creative are now as easy on the ears as bottom-shelf plastic-bottle vodka is on the throat. I'm a huge rap fan and an avid listener, but I can't help but cringe when I hear certain played-out bars delivered as if they never existed. They might be catchy, convenient and very accessible to the average listener, but it gets old quickly. Some of our faves are guilty of these lyrical offenses but have other bodies of work to counterbalance them. Some bars are just so bad they render themselves irredeemable.

These are the low-hanging fruit of the rap world, inspired by XXL Mag's C. Vernon Coleman II and his article "11 Hip-Hop Cliches That Need To Die."



Ballin' Like

UGLY GOD

Hip-hop and basketball go together like R&B and sex appeal. However, there have been so many tired references to Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Scottie Pippen and other basketball players that it's become a failsafe option. Rappers use these when speaking of their success with money, women and lifestyles. Similar to this is the "shooting like" trope sometimes used to brag about their marksmanship.

Guilty parties:

"Water," Ugly God

"Bitch I'm balling like Mike (Swish)"

"Self-Made," Bryson Tiller

"I've been balling like I'm Curry, need a jersey for myself"

"Froze," Meek Mill

"Twenty twelve I was balling like Tom Brady..."

Rappers LOVE to brag about their sexual prowess and how wet they can make women. Personally, I prefer how sex is spoken about in R&B because it's usually less explicit and much more nuanced than the aggressive and hypermasculine manner used in rap. Also, there have to be things besides the ocean, jet-skis, jacuzzis, lakes and puddles that can serve as similes or metaphors for a woman's sexual arousal.

Guilty parties:

"Sacrifices," Drake

"I'm talking wet like it's runnin' (sink)
I'm talking wet like Katrina (New Orleans)"

"Stoner," Young Thug

"Your bitch is my dinner she wet like a fish"

"Sauce It Up," Lil Uzi Vert

"Woo, yeah I said that you wet like Squirtle"



Wet Like

YOUNG THUG



Beat It Up (Or Any Ike and Tina Turner Reference)

THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.

We live in a world where it is socially permissible for rappers to refer to having sex with a woman as “beating it up” and then paralleling that with an actual case of domestic violence. “Beat it up” may be sexual innuendo, but it is still very aggressive. This line will never fail to elicit a cringe and make my stomach churn a bit no matter who it’s from. Not only is it insensitive to Tina Turner — who was abused and has had to hear these lyrics for decades now — it perpetuates rape culture and misogyny in a culture that already suffers from tone-deafness on these issues. Rappers have to do better. It’s overdue.

Guilty parties:

“Drunk in Love,” Beyonce ft. Jay Z
“I’m Ike Turner, turn up, baby no I don’t play”

“Got That Work,” Fabolous
“She call me Ike Turner because I beat her in the car”

“Bussin Remix,” Trouble
“Beat a bitch and call me Ike Turner”

“Just Playing (Dreams),” The Notorious B.I.G.

“Smack Tina Turner give her flashbacks of Ike”

Lil’ Wayne birthed a monster with his 2008 breakout single smash “Lollipop.” The song soared to the top of the Billboard Hot 100 and went platinum five times. He wasn’t the first to do it, though. 50 Cent used the same metaphor in his 2005 Grammy-nominated song “Candy Shop.” With the popularity of these songs came an obvious, childish and overall cringy simile and rap trope. I hope they get to the center of this one so it can finally be thrown out.

Guilty parties:

“YuNg BrAtZ,” XXXTENTACION
“Lick my dick like Lil Wayne lollipop, huh!”

“Lolly,” Maejor
“She love my lollipop”

“Freaky Gurl (Wanna Minaj?),” Nicki Minaj
“Might lick you like a lollipop once you taste my honey bun”



Lollipop

XXXTENTACION



FLY LIKE

6IX9INE

In African-American vernacular, and general slang terms, “to get fly” means to look good, be dressed in your best attire and exude confidence. This term was popularized in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s and has since been used by basically every single rapper that has graced a mic or put a pen to paper. The term loses a bit of its charm when rappers use it in lazy and predictable ways to form lackluster lyrics.

Guilty parties:

“TATI,” 6ix9ine

“Bitches suck my dick, ‘cause I’m fly like Alladin”

“Love No Thotties,” Chief Keef

“I make bitches fly like Peter Pan do”

“Peek a Boo,” Lil Yachty

“Ooh, young nigga fly like a pigeon”

“Comfortable,” K CAMP

“Me and you together superfly like propellers”

The lead singer of Nirvana, pop culture icon and member of the infamous 27 Club has been the topic of many think pieces, as well as a style figure for decades. His life came to a tragic end on April 5, 1994 when he committed suicide in his Seattle home. He was nationally mourned and is fondly remembered by his fans the world over. He also has been the inspiration for some of the most insensitive and jaw-dropping lyrics. They speak for themselves.

Guilty parties:

“Addiction,” Ryan Leslie

“I hop out the suicides lookin’ so Kobain”

“Dust Eaters,” Shotty Horroh

“They probably think I’m gonna Kurt Cobain and blow my brains out”

“Put Ya in Da Game,” Fat Joe

“Suicide doors, I’m so Kobain”

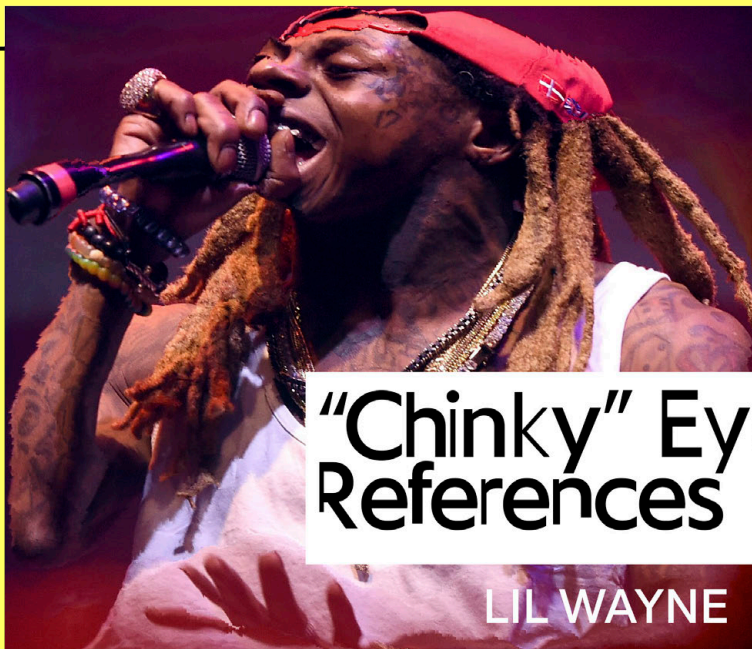
“To The Top,” Ja Rule

“My life is Kobain, meaning I O.D”



Kurt Cobain References

SHOTTY HORROH



"Chinky" Eye References

LIL WAYNE

Not only is this antiquated and racist, but it's also distasteful and played out. The reference is made to show how high a person is in the most offensive way possible. The ugly, racial history of the word makes this go-to metaphor even worse.

Guilty parties:

"Vegas," Bad Meets Evil

"Weed got her so chinky-eyed"

"Holidae In," Chingy

"My eyes chinky, I'm with Chingy, at the Holiday Inn"

"Thinking Bout You," Lil Wayne

"Wayne Chong, chinky eyes like I'm from Vietnam"

"Pressed," Tyga

"Yeah, I'm too high, chinky eyed"

Wesley Snipes is an American actor who starred in films like *Blade*, *New Jack City*, *White Men Can't Jump* and *The Expendables 3*. In 2008, he was sentenced to up to three years in prison on tax evasion charges. His case serves as a cautionary tale for rappers and entertainers to pay their dues to Uncle Sam. His name is also convenient for gun and shooting references.

Guilty parties:

"Wesley's Theory," Kendrick Lamar

"I'll Wesley Snipe your ass before thirty-five"

"Still Got That Rock," Lil Wayne

"And my homie, he a sniper, we call him Wesley Snipes"

"Overtime," Big Sean

"Shit taxing, the same thing that got Wesley Snipes"

"Cut Throat," Kodak Black

"Boy it's on sight, Sniper Gang call me Wesley Snipes"



Wesley Snipes References

KODAK BLACK

These are the references that make my ears bleed, or don't impress me anymore, due to their frequency and commodification. I'm not saying rappers should stop using them, but they should tap into different combinations of the 171,476 words available at their disposal. Rap and hip-hop are synonymous with innovation and have moved with the times in terms of content, but the lyricism can be a bit predictable and archaic. Being a global force and culture shaper, hip-hop would do well to move on from some of these tropes. ■

Stray Th

on
LCD Soundsystem,
Creativity

by Joe Amendola

Thoughts

Memory
and How We Survive

I was in middle school the first time I heard LCD Soundsystem. They were on the Step Brothers soundtrack, and “North American Scum” blared during the opening credits in the iconic scene where Will Ferrel’s and John C. Reilly’s characters meet. I was drawn to the synths and cheeky lyrics of James Murphy pretty much immediately.

I’m very bad at describing how music sounds.

I became fairly competent at left-handed guitar at one point; besides that, I really don’t know shit about chord progression or “sonic arrangements” or whatever other term you see on Pitchfork when they review Riff Raff or whatever. I can really only describe how the sounds make me feel, or what they make me infer about the intent of a piece of music. I think that’s fine, that’s mostly how we relate to art in the first place; I’ve never watched a Paul Thomas Anderson movie and thought “the aspect ratio and tracking shots are what’s making me emotional right now” — although those things obviously enrich the film in totality. I’m not dismissing those more technical aspects.

I suppose, though, that what grabbed me about LCD Soundsystem’s instrumentation was its ability to convey mood and memory in the form of dance-punk. I’ve always been fascinated with this particular creative power music has; it’s why I love Debussy and John Coltrane and people like that.

LCD Soundsystem makes sentimental and pithy dance music. It’s really quite incredible. A song like “Us v Them” alludes to the monotony of everyday life while making you sway back and forth when listening; they take trebles, synths, fast-paced bass lines and all the other auditory cues that make us Feel Good and supplement them with wry lyrics about the lingering discontent everyone feels from time to time. It’s how you feel when you’re drunk with friends, having an objectively great time, but still feel the need to keep your latent emptiness close by you.

It is pretty rare that I find myself genuinely blown away by music; I can really only think of a handful of times this has happened in my life — “Late” by Kanye West, “Band On The Run,” “Inner City Blues” and “Fireworks” by Animal Collective, to name a few. I have obviously been deeply moved or impressed often. However, those feelings of stimulation, the acute feeling of astonishment, those goosebumps where it feels as if someone just reached a new rung of emotional expression and creative enrichment, they occur far less often. I’ve learned to cherish those infrequent moments. Memory is becoming a harder and harder thing to retain, understand or even make in the first place. The beauty of inelastic pieces of art is

It’s how you feel when you’re drunk with friends, having an objectively great time, but still feel the need to keep your latent emptiness close by you.

their ability to break this trend. Everything else seems to keep moving; things really do happen so much. Internet time has shattered our ability to process what happened yesterday, let alone five years ago. They say life is short, but it’s really quite long — just long in a way that makes you constantly feel like you’re running out of time (to do what, I’m not too sure).

But singular pieces of music are not subject to this sort of frightening transience. A studio or live recording of a song only happens once; it’ll never sound or be played the exact same way again, like fingerprints or stripes on a tiger. It is in this fortunate staticness that music is imbued with its power to stay with you, in more or less unchanged form, forever, following you but staying the same nonetheless.

Music is, of course, intensely tied to memory. It’s what makes some songs joyful, painful or sentimental to listen to. It’s facts like these that make me think of music as more of a tool and less a monument made purely for aesthetic appraisal. A song has more in common with a hammer than an exhibit at the Louvre.

It's a way of accessing relief or memories (no pun intended) using an unchanging, singular apparatus.

Some of the most powerful tools we have are the ones that give us relief, memory or just time to be okay with being in our own heads for once. Ironically, one of the things most intensely tied to memory for me was cigarettes when I used to smoke (I liked Camel Blues). I say "ironically" because, quite obviously, cigarettes kill you and Aren't Good. But in those moments in between overnight shifts and classes, I formed sentimental attachments to what I was thinking, feeling and who I was at the time. I remember the weather, what I was wearing and, most importantly, what I was seeking relief from at that very moment very deeply. I would retreat into a cavern of the self; I would start over nine times a day. I think music shares a similar quality. The power of memory or relief inheres in all the little tools that help us live on the day to day; it's how we survive.

Of course, this attribute of music may be cheapened with the rise of streaming services, which vomit out the entirety of musical history by way of algorithms and quasi-monopolistic business practices. Maybe there's some truth to this. Maybe music is less a hammer than an antibiotic that's starting to lose its potency against the resistant germs known as content and capital.

It's precisely for this reason that I value this quality even more. I'm not going to let any record shop closing or Silicon Valley freak with a god complex take that away from me.

I was blown away the first time I heard "Someone Great" by LCD Soundsystem. The song is a futuristic-sounding (see, I really don't know what the fuck I'm talking about. "Futuristic-sounding?" What? Bro shut up) tribute to lead singer James Murphy's therapist, who had passed away sometime before the recording. There's something hilariously New York about the concept of "Someone Great" — a scatterbrained creative writing a farewell letter to his austere and wise shrink seems like the exact kind of hipster trope Murphy would make fun of in a song like "Losing My Edge." A sizable portion of Murphy's songwriting is sarcastic; you can almost picture him rolling his eyes after every line. Anyone who pens lyrics like:

I hear that you and your band have sold your guitars and bought turntables.
I hear that you and your band have sold your turntables and bought guitars.
I hear everybody that you know is more relevant than everybody I know

obviously has no problem poking fun at some of the more obnoxious aspects of being an accredited Cool

Person. But in "Someone Great," Murphy is being completely sincere, and that's what makes the song so powerful.

This is what I mean when I talk about "mood." "Someone Great" starts out with brooding synths and a fiercely catchy keyboard line — it sounds like the beginning of a trance song you'd hear in a sketchy warehouse rave where everyone is on ketamine and looks both 19 and 33 at the same time. But what follows, as mentioned above, is this:

I wish that we could talk about it
But there, that's the problem
With someone new I couldn't start it
Too late, for beginnings
The little things that made me nervous
Are gone, in a moment
I miss the way we used to argue
Locked, in your basement
I wake up and the phone is ringing
Surprised, as it's early
And that should be the perfect warning
That something's a problem
To tell the truth I saw it coming
The way you were breathing
But nothing can prepare you for it
The voice on the other end
The worst is all the lovely weather
I'm stunned, it's not raining
The coffee isn't even bitter
Because, what's the difference?
There's all the work that needs to be done
It's late, for revision
There's all the time and all the planning
And songs, to be finished

The first time I heard these lyrics in context with the fun sounds that came before it, I was stunned. Murphy took a danceable electronic piece and turned it into a beautiful ballad about grief. This, once again, is a power music has — it plays with your expectations and flips them upside-down within a six-minute self-contained recording.

A big theme of Murphy's songwriting is nostalgia — that is, memory. Murphy seems preoccupied with pondering the question, "Is Nostalgia even worth cherishing in the first place?" In some songs he says no, but in other songs, most notably "All My Friends," he's saying yes. Murphy's stream-of-consciousness, conversational style allows you to witness a person arguing back and forth with himself throughout four albums. "Someone Great" is a vessel where we can view Murphy eulogizing a man he may have worked out these exact dueling sentiments with at one point in

In reality, we ourselves don't experience life in these sorts of broad, sweeping strokes — we live life on the day to day.

time.

There's been no shortage of writing on LCD Soundsystem — they were one of the most critically acclaimed acts of the 2000s and their much-publicized retirement and subsequent revival sparked a predictable amount of criticism and takes. And that's fine, because I'm not really interested in that at the moment.

What I'm interested in, as I suppose I've explained above, are the dynamic ways creative sensibilities can manifest themselves. It's long been a thing I'm obsessed with; any insight I can glean from a brilliant musician, director, writer or early 20th-century academic is something I value above almost anything else. Understanding LCD Soundsystem and how James Murphy thinks and expresses himself helps me understand how I think and express myself better as well. Being blown away by a work of art reminds me of our capabilities as people, how we can thrive, how we can better understand each other. As long as we can commit it to memory.

I went through a very irritating and demoralizing bout of writer's block recently. For reasons I won't explain (but that aren't too serious) I've been struggling with motivation as well.

It's funny how things work: Creative energy and mental fortitude almost have to be harnessed and

encapsulated like a swarm of bees, or else it's gone, and you don't know where it went or when it'll come back (which is why I'm up at 3 a.m. writing this). I think most people struggle with these things, and it's important to remember that. We judge others based on a vague set of indicators about what we've been told they are: the Wikipedia-like rundown of their characteristics and life circumstances. But there's a fundamental inconsistency in this sort of thinking. In reality, we ourselves don't experience life in these sorts of broad, sweeping strokes — we live life on the day to day. People aren't their benchmarks; they're the culmination of an unimaginable mass of minute-to-minute feelings and decisions that are almost always influenced by the circumstances they find themselves in. We know this to be true of ourselves, so we should recognize this in others as well. I had an epiphany recently, that self-hatred/criticism might just be outer-judgement of others turned inward, and that the less we do of either, the better off we'll be (of course, you don't have to give everyone the benefit of empathy, especially if you likely can't count on them to do the same. You shouldn't refrain from hating Jeff Bezos because he's going through a divorce, or a killer cop because they were "scared" or whatever. I still think Silicon Valley CEOs are drunk with power; I still think there's something deeply wrong with you if you work in finance or Big Law. I'm still going to talk shit. Sorry).

I didn't learn any of this from therapy; I learned it, in part, through trying to understand others' creativity and ways of expressing themselves. I save some money that way.

I cured my writer's block by, get this, changing the fucking font on my document, from Times New Roman to Merriweather. There was something funny and humbling about this, one of those occasional reminders that your brain really is just a web of nerves that is susceptible to the most banal of linguistic and visual tricks. It reminded me not to take things so seriously. It also helped me understand myself better. ■

As the impact of the 2008 recession dwindles into America's amnesiac consciousness, the nation's economy has seen the rise of another subtle but looming economic catastrophe. Student loan debt, already at a record high of \$671 billion in 2008, rose to \$1.52 trillion last year according to the Federal Reserve — a figure higher than the current standing \$1.3 trillion GDP of Spain. This exorbitant deficit is the unintended consequence of a long-winded historical effort to increase the accessibility of higher education to the general public, though to limited avail. As the price of higher education continues to grow and universities across the nation adjust their tuitions to maintain inflationary standards, the most vulnerable Americans, grappling with high economic stratification and stagnant wages, are crippled by this trillion-dollar industry of compounding interest and extravagant

payment obligations. This system fails the very demographic it initially aspired to assist, and has morphed into a form of predatory lending that keeps marginalized communities stranded in debt obligations and trapped in their economic strata.

The process of federal loan distribution for the financing of higher education emerged in 1958 with the National Defense Education Act, which allowed students to borrow up to \$5,000 from their universities to afford their education. This method was further developed in 1965 with

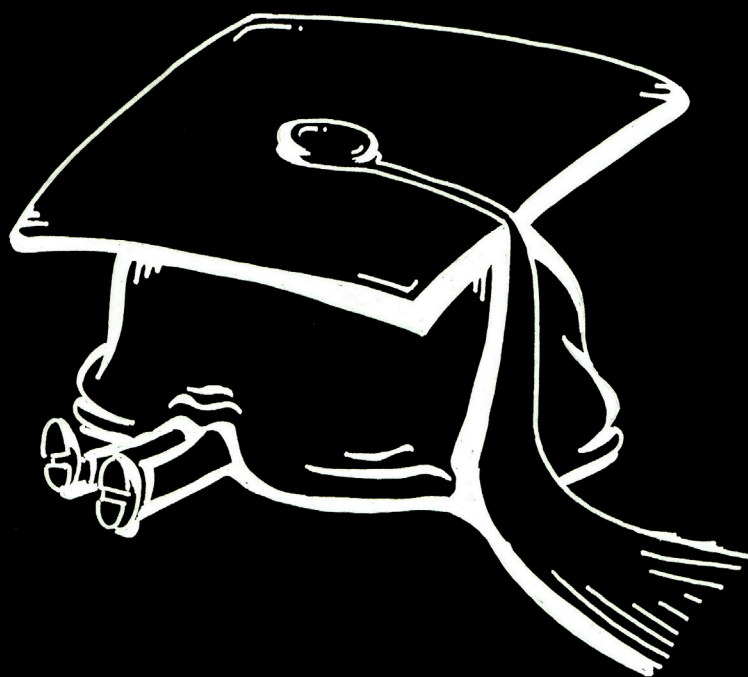
the passage of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Higher Education Act (HEA), which authorized an increase to the federal funding of universities, created more scholarships and provided low-interest student loans to those seeking advanced degrees without the financial means to do so. These loan-based schemes now encompass a wider variety of federally funded loans, including both independent and cosigned loans,

Illustrations by Josh Joseph

Student loans did not emerge for nefarious reasons. They were amended to be a weapon against economic shortcomings, aspiring to assist the poor and the middle class in accessing university education to guide their social mobility. Once people went through the system, it was assumed they would be able to pay off the debt with relative ease due to the return on their investment in

higher education. This assumption, however, is complicated by the reality that from a very early age, an individual's socioeconomic standing determines their financial means to invest in the things that will build their social capital — which is necessary to gain admission to and succeed in American universities. It is further undermined by the racial and economic disadvantages that inhibit many from successfully completing their schooling. Instead of universities being the equalizer of the American Dream, the children of wealthy individuals disproportionately enjoy various

THE DICTATORSHIP OF DEBT



BY JENI DHODARY

to assist a student's cost of college attendance. The demand for higher education in attracting job prospects and the surging cost of tuition deemed federal loans incomplete in its influence; thus, in 1972, they were supplemented by the creation of Sallie Mae, a secondary market for student loans distributed by various private lenders. The student loan crisis encompasses a hybrid of both publicly and privately withdrawn loans, all of which accrue interest at individually established rates.

comparative advantages contributing to their success, ranging from their access to better school districts, tutors and extravagant extracurricular activities, to a lack of financial obligations. These inequalities are exacerbated through the process of an inequitable education, that bars many from even entering college.

Among the students that do complete higher education, only 30% leave the system debt-free — this means 7 out of 10 students graduate from university with a substantial amount of student debt averaging \$37,172. The annual cost of college attendance, ranging from \$10,230 in public universities

to \$48,510 in private in 2019, is even more staggering when observed along trends in wages. It was comprehensively observed by Drew Desilver, a senior writer at the Pew Research Center, that “usual weekly wages have risen 3% (in real terms) among workers in the lowest tenth of the earnings distribution and 4.3% among the lowest quarter [since 2000]. But among people in the top tenth of the distribution, real wages have risen a cumulative 15.7%, to \$2,112 a week – nearly five times the usual weekly earnings of the bottom tenth (\$426).” As the majority of wage growth significantly benefits the highest percentile of the income bracket, wealth inequality is on a sharp rise, disfavoring low-income individuals with loans to service — many of whom have accumulated the highest number of student loans due to financial necessity.

The high cost of college also means dropouts will yield significant economic losses. In instances of dropouts, students become overwhelmed with debt while simultaneously facing the cost of reduced social capital due to wasted time. This questionable rate of return is existent for many successful graduates as well. The rising threat of underemployment looms in the career prospects of every individual, who, fresh out of university, will be willing to take on even low-paying jobs to avoid unemployment. According to the Federal Reserve’s Labor Market for Recent College Graduates report, 43.7% of recent graduates between the ages of 22 and 27 “are underemployed, which means they’re working in jobs that don’t require their degrees” and “34.4% of all college graduates are underemployed.” This percentage translates to \$462.3 billion in student loans taken out by students whose costly education had virtually zero impact in their employment outcomes. This has been a trend since the Great Recession. Political economist Gary Lapon stresses how “companies across the United States have been able to take advantage of the excess talent in the labor market and push overall wages down, while boosting the experience required for these roles.” What this means is that the value of a college degree is both increasing and being diluted; it has become a qualifying factor



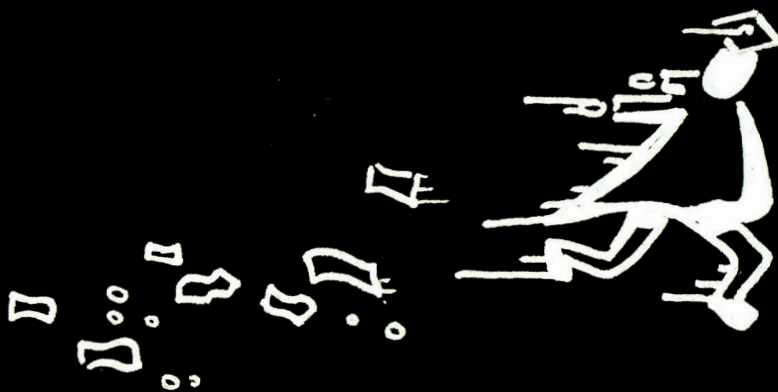
in the job recruitment process regardless of whether or not the acquired education contributes to the skill sets required for that job in the first place.

It is evident that the transition into a loan-based model of investment in human capital has transferred the burden of social investment from the government to individuals themselves. This neoliberal schema, premised under the notion that welfare initiatives result in inefficient outcomes, boasts accountability and the power of market-generated solutions. However, when this method is supplemented by a reduction in the federal spending of higher education, there is a disregard for both the predatory influence a student debt crisis has on the economy, and the more functional models of socially funded

universities in nations more highly ranked in terms of upward mobility than the United States, such as Norway. Despite these critiques of inefficiency and debates surrounding the morality of welfare subsidies, it is possible to undergo an institutional shift to a publicly financed universal education scheme without it straying from the framework of a capitalistic model. This model solely requires governmental reprioritization. It is not that the United States government cannot afford a program this large in scale — it has simply never considered it in its budget considerations, establishing a loan-based precedent that is exacerbating today’s student debt crisis.

First and foremost, in order to maximize higher education participation

IF THE REST OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD CAN DO IT, SO CAN WE.



for low-income individuals, it is critical to improve the standard of education in the years leading to university. This ought to be done through a more equitable consistency in student investment across the nation's schools, increased integration, greater opportunities for vocational training and reforms in other sectors that influence a child's ability to attend school. There should therefore be an exerted attempt to equalize the playing field through increased financial intervention in these especially impoverished districts.

For individuals who complete primary, secondary and tertiary education but do not go on to pursue a university education, vocational education and apprenticeships must remain a potential avenue for social mobility.

The emphasis on formal schooling has so significantly devalued the power of vocational education that it is essentially void today in sectors contributing to noticeable mobility. A striking example is in the field of law with the case of President Abraham Lincoln, who became a professional lawyer without the experience of a formal education and solely through apprenticeships. Today, only a select number of states allow apprentices to become barred attorneys without a law school accreditation. Students are instead expected to pursue an advanced law degree after their undergraduate degree, which averages in cost \$43,020 per year. Greg Fernstein of the Brookings Institute emphasizes this very reality in other industries as well, for "college associations have fought to

maintain full-time academic degrees as the first step toward aspirational careers — whether in law, medicine or other professional occupations — for over a century, successfully relegating apprenticeships to less prestigious careers." If social mobility is the goal, the possibilities of vocational training must once again be expanded to meet the potential of every worker.

Furthermore, there must be an initiative to make public colleges free. In the same way that we invest in our military to develop weapons of mass destruction to keep us safe, we must see it in our priorities to build our citizens' human capital through a formal investment in higher education. The notion of governmental funding is not as radical as it may appear. Gary Lapon stresses that "to make public higher education free for all in 2009-10 — covering all tuition, fees, room and board for undergraduates at all public two- and four-year colleges — would have cost \$127 billion." Calculating this \$127 billion into the total expenditures for the 2010 fiscal year would come out to only 3.6% of the total expenditure for the fiscal year, granting free education to all within the public university system without considerable impact. This number is old, but it is still feasible. According to the Department of Education, the funding of public education would have required \$79 billion in 2018, a number consistent with that in 2010 — although this would not consider room and board.

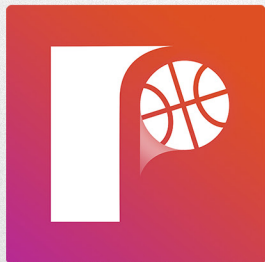
So we need to get our priorities straight. The idea of education as a social investment has never been significant in America's neoliberal culture and this ideological gap has always been the biggest hindrance to change. But funding free universal education is compatible with a variety of capitalism that prioritizes the social welfare of its students, and treats their education as a social investment. This approach would significantly reduce the weight of the student loan crisis by eliminating one of its main sources and encourage more students to go on to higher education, without needing to consider the burden of student loan debt. If the rest of the developed world can do it, so can we. ■

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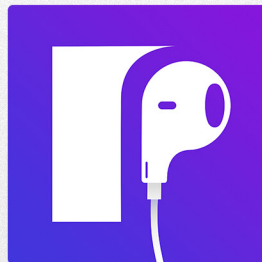
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