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# WHEN LIFE HITS YOU RIGHT IN THE FEELS

Stony Brook has a reputation as being one of the top SUNY schools and one of the top research institutions in the country. But according to a recent survey from the Princeton Review, Stony Brook University also has a reputation for general unhappiness. That unhappiness has taken a fatal toll on at least three students in the past two years with the most recent death happening less than a week into this spring semester.

Mental health is not the easiest thing to care for, especially when a young person finds themselves thrown into a fast-paced, competitive environment with tight schedules and ever-impending deadlines.

In a round table discussion with members of the student media, university President Samuel L. Stanley Jr. discussed the services available to students on campus for dealing with issues of mental distress.

"There really are a number of pathways where people can get help on the campus," said Stanley. When the university's response to a suicide on campus is an email and then a stretch of silence, it raises the question of whether or not the administration is trained to deal with taboo topics of depression, anxiety and with death.

The trials and tribulations of our lives can be overwhelming. When things in our lives go wrong, we may react negatively. We establish a vicious cycle of emotional pain that sends us into a downward plummet. Like a snake biting its own tail, we become hurt, then hurt ourselves more by identifying with the pain. Bad things become perceived as a bad us.

As a student of a University that is regarded with some academic prestige, this sort of reaction is regular. Life finds a way of being bad no matter the circumstance. Us humans are ridiculous and like to find ways to best make ourselves miserable. Don't do that.

The Stony Brook Press took these thoughts into consideration and decided to make our issue dedicated to students on campus who are feeling down. We wrote from personal experiences to show our colleagues that they are not alone. We are publishing different angles on the topic of emotional trouble which will hopefully bring everyone some good vibes.

While we are not psychiatrists, we are still students. Members of The Press have gone through our own share of problems. While we can't treat emotional problems, we can offer consolation.

As an organization, the Stony Brook Press wishes to offer the campus community a sense of solidarity against the mental troubles we may mutually face. Suffering of the mind is a relatively regular thing in the human experience. As such, our Feels Issue is intended to offer some perspective of our own experiences in the voids of sadness, the oblivion of self doubt, loathing of personal image, dread of anxiety. We hope to provide ideas to help you be better for yourself as well.

What we wish for you all, readers, is the best. Keep on keepin' on, Stony Brook. You got dis.

## The Saddest Day at Stony Brook? All of them.

*Michelle Karim*

It has been five years since we were listed among the unhappiest. Stony Brook University earned a spot in the top 20 schools with the least happy students in a survey conducted by the Princeton Review. All of this was based on the question: "Are you happy here?"

Stony Brook University's current position is 11, but back in 2010 we were awarded with the number one spot. So the question is, what are we doing wrong?

"Weekends on campus are depressing and that's why I go home," said Masukkuzzaman Alvi, a senior psychology major. According to Alvi, who makes use of the Counseling and Psychological Services on campus, sometimes it takes about a week for the counselors to get back to the students.

"By the end of the week, we might lose any motivation of going and some people don't even want to admit that they have a problem later on." However, Alvi added that he was patient throughout the process, and in the end it all worked out for the better when he was assigned a counselor. "It really helped me deal with my problems."

Despite their personal problems, a vast number of student issues have academic roots. Julian Pessier, Interim Associate Dean and Director for CAPS, said that the situation is a complex one. "I cannot stress how much the student's opinions matter at the administration meetings and how best to solve them."

According to Pessier, around 1,700 students seek the counseling services at CAPS every year. "Most of the time, students come with problems relating to meeting academic requirements, adjusting to college and maintaining relationships." Expanding on the topic of how the students meet their specific needs, Pessier said, "We help students organize a plan and try to understand what fits best for them." At CAPS, Pessier says, the first meeting is devoted to understanding the student's needs and then the following week is assigned to finding him or her the perfect counselor.

In a recent student conference, Stony Brook University President

Samuel L. Stanley Jr., said that he is "always a little skeptical" about ratings like these. "In case of unhappy students, this is where the students' feedback matters." "Stony Brook is a very demanding school academically, sometimes more than other places," Stanley explained. "That's why the college system is there-to build more cohorts; so we are working really hard on these things." Stanley also added that any suggestions for improvement is welcome from the student community.

Assistant Professor in the School of Medicine Dr. David T. Hsu, Ph. D, studies social acceptance in groups. His recent findings shed light on how differently people react to rejection when they are depressed versus when they're relatively happy. In this study, the subjects were exposed to a mock dating site and were asked to vote for people they like most while their brains were being scanned in a positron emission tomography (PET) scan. Dr. Hsu then compared the scans of depressed people who were rejected by the profiles they liked most and the happy subjects who got rejected by the profiles they liked most. The brain's pain-response mechanism, called the opioid system, was observed and it was found that depressed people release less opioids in regions where mood, motivation and stress are regulated.

"Of course everyone responds differently to their social environment," Hsu said. "To understand who is most affected by social stressors, it is important to investigate the influence of genes, personality and the environment's ability to release opioids during rejection and acceptance."

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the problem is, but this research could be a stepping stone to observing how often students on campus feel rejected, and then build a solution from there. "The ultimate question is- what is the cause and effect?," said Hsu.

When asked about what she thought about the school's ranking, senior Pharmacology major, Wai Ng, said that she wasn't too surprised about the outcome. "Most people

just go home on weekends. I usually work on campus but if I can, I go off campus." According to Ng, science classes tend to be more competitive, the lectures are large and it's hard to get in touch with the professors who teach them, most of the time. "So many students are packed into one lecture hall."

The Princeton Review also revealed Stony Brook University is ranked fifth in professors giving low marks and 12th in least accessible professors.

Another aspect of this murky situation is the fact that a lot of students turn to anonymous outlets like Yik Yak or the Stony Brook Secrets Facebook page to vent their frustrations and even go so far as to discuss extreme options.

"We do have a group therapy program where about ten to twelve students meet with a counselor on a regular basis and talk their problems through," Julian Pessier explained, when asked about how students discuss their issues in a comfortable setting. For serious cases, the school has an emergency hotline that leads to the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program, at the University Hospital. "We try to work with the students as best as possible with all the resources we have," Pessier added, saying that the CPEP is contacted only in case of dire emergencies for evaluating severe medical conditions.

"This is a highly unusual situation. The suburb is not as integrated with the University compared to other state universities, said Pessier. This perhaps sets another dimension to the situation—the location of our school.

However, President Stanley insists that the administration and the student government are working very hard trying to create a happy environment on campus. "Students have access to clubs, groups and events on campus, all of which can bring cohesion and a sense of identity and help in navigating college."

The entire situation about depression and how to battle it is a looming foreground that beckons our attention. As Mr. Pessier puts it, "Stony Brook is many things at once," and it remains to be seen what we as a community can do about it.





# PTSD AMONG EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

*Joseph Ryder*

Within a matter of minutes after American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower on Sept. 11, 2001, emergency crews were on the scene. Hundreds of FDNY firefighters, EMTs, NYPD and PAPD police officers were streaming towards the World Trade Center, evacuating people as they poured out of the towers.

As civilians ran down the staircases, firefighters made their way up the stairs with nearly one hundred pounds of gear, tools and hoses to try to combat flames that were engulfing the upper floors.

102 minutes after being struck by flight 11, and 29 minutes after the South Tower collapsed, the North Tower fell. By noon a total of 2,977 people had been killed in New York City, Washington, DC and outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania in the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history.

Years later, after the physical injuries healed, survivors faced symptoms of a new, more terrifying condition. The loss of so many friends and the continuous trauma that was 9/11 left many survivors with injuries that went deeper than skin and bone.

Dr. Benjamin Luft, a founding physician of the Long Island World Trade Center Health Program, has been treating responders of the 9/11 attacks since the weeks following the attacks.

"A group of us went down to Ground Zero and saw the massive response, but it also became apparent to us that there was a huge amount of toxins and that there was a lot of traumatization to those responding, by means of both physical and mental trauma," Lust said.

After returning to Long Island,

Lust and others created a free clinic to treat responders of the attacks. "We would see them regardless of their ability to pay. This was our way of responding to the attacks," Lust remarked.

Of the 8,000 responders that the Health Program tracks, Lust estimates that about 20% suffer from "significant psychological issues as a result of 9/11."

Numerous forms of psychological issues have been diagnosed, including: depression, severe anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is characterized by trouble sleeping, difficulty controlling anger, losing interest in activities, flashbacks, emotional numbness and/or other symptoms. If not treated, it can be debilitating.

According to a 2010 report from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, PTSD "is the most common WTC-related health effect among exposed adults."

Traumatic stress among first responders is not isolated to 9/11. According to the Trauma Center at the Justice Resource Institute: "first responders are routinely exposed to traumatic events in the course of their duties. As such, they are at increased risk for long-term problems from traumatic stress."

In emergency services, especially the fire and emergency medical service(EMS), not only do responders have to deal with the same issues as society in general, but also the fact that they are exposed to events that involve trauma, death and loss on a regular basis throughout their career. These incidents can compound over time and can take a mental toll on a responder leading to what's called

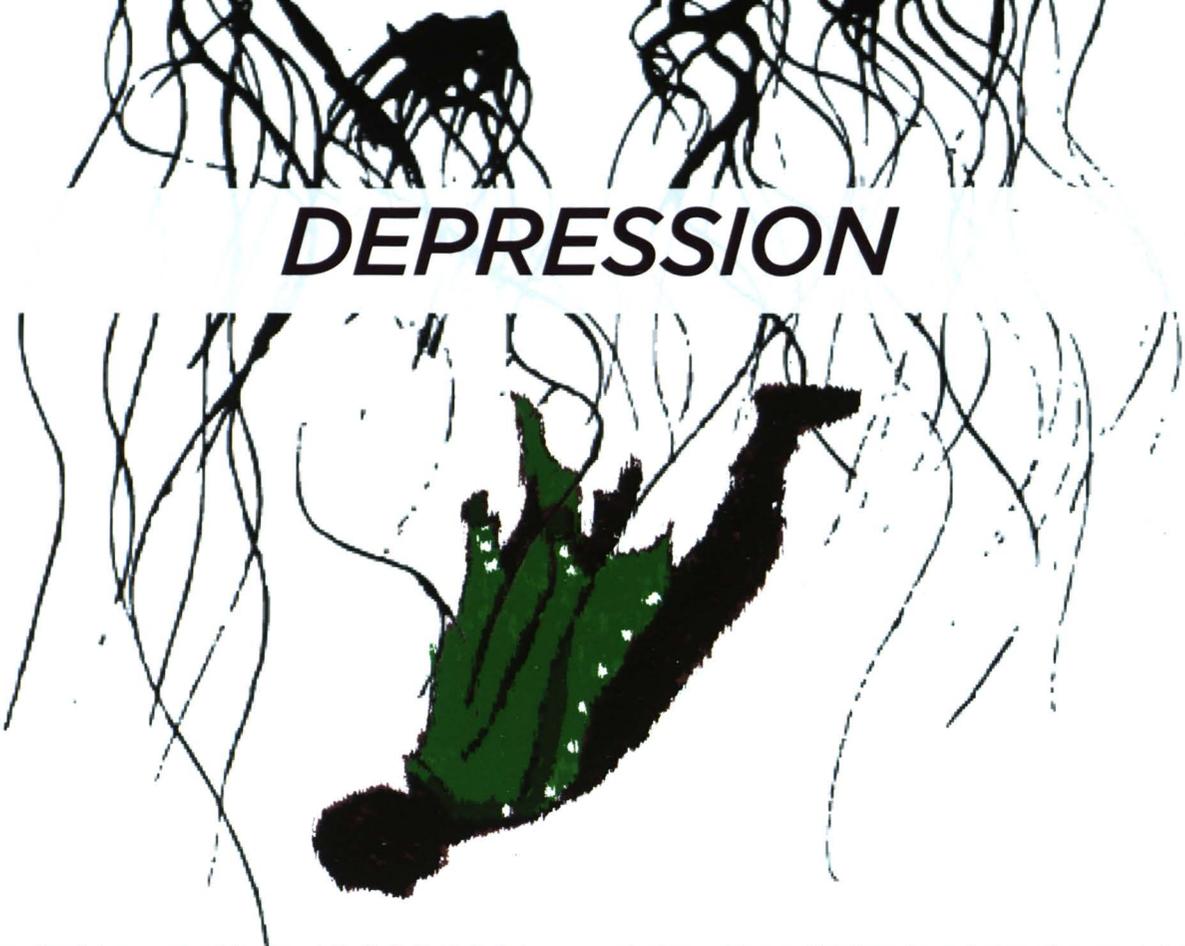
burnout.

Burnout can present symptoms similar to those of clinical depression and stem from chronic occupational stress and work overload. Especially in EMS, EMTs are constantly forced into stressful situations on a moment's notice, often entering a person's life at their lowest and most stressful moments. Being exposed to repeated stress such as this can lead to burnout if not managed properly.

Psychological illness such as PTSD can go undiagnosed in professional responders. "In some ways the effects of traumatic stress can help a professional responder or soldier. While on the job, effects like hypervigilance can be a good thing," Dr. Lust tells us. "Many times it isn't until after a responder or soldier retires that that the symptoms become more pronounced. Hypervigilance is one thing on an emergency scene or battlefield but is something else at a backyard barbecue for instance. These people don't go to the doctor for their insomnia or anger, they'll attribute it to something benign, and it won't be until they go to see a doctor and explain their symptoms that many will even realize they have PTSD."

One of the biggest successes that has stemmed from the Long Island World Trade Center Health Program is a mind/body program where those suffering from PTSD can learn to control their memories.

"The responder's memories don't go away. 9/11 doesn't go away," Lust finished, "All we can do is help the responders and teach them to take charge of their memories, and by doing that, help them to heal."



# DEPRESSION

Depression. Spell it out, read it aloud. D-E-P-R-E-S-S-I-O-N. It's an ugly word, isn't it?

I thought I had reached my end. I thought that I was just on my way out. I was convinced that I was wasting my time. Why do anything, really? Why not take the dive? I wouldn't have to worry about a future I wasn't exactly sure about if I did that, wouldn't have to worry about bettering myself or putting in work towards something productive. It was a sure fact that I'd never accomplish any dream I could remember having; there was no energy left in any of my muscles to put towards bettering myself or anything else-- really, I'd have been avoiding a mess of trouble if I would have done it. Thinking about it was like fanning myself, a relief and a reminder that a powerful and delicate solution like that was right there, up a few steps and then down a few more.

And how it easy it seemed! How obtainable! What a solution! The universal and ultimate solution! I'd never have to worry about anything again. Sorry, miss. You can send my skeleton to class, but I don't think that he'll learn much.

For folks with depression, death ends up looking a little different than how many seem to perceive it. It's a concept to most: something that can and will come one day, to think about in passing or occasionally recognize as a far-off and untouchable fact of life. They can look at it and think about it from behind a solid fence and dream about the life they'll live before then.

Death isn't the goal of a depressed person, but it is a

solution with a solid, firm foundation that can't fall out from beneath you. It's convenient, it seems simple and easy, like something you'd go and pick up at the grocery store, and the most important factor is the certainty; big, dark nothing has got to be better than living miserably. The body gets fed up, the mind gets fed up; sadness mixes with frustration and one thing leads to another-- that's a good way of putting it. It's like a big, black ball that keeps on growing inside your skull. That ball will keep expanding and growing denser and denser and, well, what are you supposed to do about it? It's all in your head. You can't just take it out and give it a wash, or say a few nice words to it to appease its growth and get it to back off. There's a lot of pressure that comes with that sort of growth, pushing down on all of the wrong spots that shouldn't be messed with.

That kind of pressure can lead you to something drastic, and there's only so much a person can possibly take before they give out. It takes a lot, a warrior strength, to balance all that extra weight to carry.

That kind of weight can lead you to the cliffs. A trip to smell the foam, hear the waves and try to be calm. An excuse to stand as close to the edge as you can. You could fall, sure. But y'know, why not fall? Why do anything, really?

I never made it around to dying (obviously), but hearing about the folks who did always puts me in a strange way. I feel like comparing how close I came to what put them over, what finally got them to their decision. Makes me think: it's scary. It's scary just how easy it really is.

# ANOREXIA

I was diagnosed with acute anorexia in high school.

I weighed around 70 pounds in middle school. Throughout most of high school, I was proud of being under 100 pounds. I've had this problem for years and even though I'm at a healthier place now, it's still a pretty big problem for me to maintain a 'normal' weight.

Most people who are diagnosed with anorexia limit how much they eat to maintain what they think is a perfect weight.

It's not the same as bulimia, which is characterized by binge eating and throwing up, but its more along the line

of just not eating

for days on end to feel better about yourself.

That's what I've had to deal with for the past seven years.

I never really thought about my weight before middle school. It used to just be an afterthought. I'm a skinny kid and some kids aren't. But when I got into middle school and started seeing people get bullied for being overweight, I felt that the only way to not be a victim was just to stay skinny. It started off pretty innocent, I would skip breakfast and lunch. My parents weren't around for those meals so I didn't really feel any pressure to eat.

Dinner was a different story. It was pretty easy at first but as it got worse I'd have to force myself to eat a few bites and lie to my parents, "I had a big meal at lunch, sorry mom." I'd feel lightheaded during gym and recess but it was worth it because I wasn't getting picked on. The fat kids were. It wasn't until late into high-school that I started seeing how stupid I've been.

There wasn't a giant life changing moment that made me decide to start eating regularly again. I just went to a high school that was a lot more accepting of all kinds of people and I just didn't feel pressured to maintain a low weight so over time I just started to not care as much. I realized how much of an ass I'd been by judging

overweight people and that I wasn't better than them just because I weighed less. Around 11th grade, I began forcing myself to eat, I thought brute force would be enough to make my body change. It worked, slowly, but in retrospect I probably should've seen a shrink.

That's another thing I've always worried about. Having this be a public thing. I probably should've mentioned this earlier, but I'm a guy. Anorexia holds a specific stigma for men who harder to be open about it because it's considered a girly thing to be worried about weight. That's why I've never really talked to a shrink. Even when I got diagnosed, me and my parents were happier just to ignore it for as long as we could. We still don't talk much about it.

That's sort of one of the reasons I wrote this article. Anorexia is an issue that affects a lot of people, but it mostly affects women. There isn't that much coverage for the small number of guys who have to deal with anorexia. It took me a long time to be okay with some of my friends knowing, and even now, most of my friends don't know I had to and still have to deal with anorexia. Reading about how other guys got over it really helped me start feeling better about myself.

There is no doubt that I still have issues with this, I'm still proud of being slightly below the average weight. I'm still proud of my weight in middle and high school, as if its something that makes me a better person. I can acknowledge it was a terribly unhealthy thing to do but I can't get rid of that happy feeling I get when I think about seeing a double digit weight when I step onto a scale.

It's a lot easier for me to eat now and I'm maintaining a borderline average weight but I still get the feeling that I'm not good enough when I look in a mirror. There's always that niggling thought saying things like "Is that a double chin?" and "You probably shouldn't eat dinner tonight." But it's become something I can ignore now, or at



# ANXIETY

*Julianne Mosher*

"I'm going to die in a car," I would always think to myself after the crash. I saw it whenever I closed my eyes. It was a never-ending nightmare that was always on my mind. The crushed metal, the glass on the black pavement and the look on my mother's face when she pulled her silver SUV onto the scene.

"You're lucky you didn't die," the Suffolk County cop said to me as I was pulled out of my black GMC Jimmy. The pickup truck across from me was flipped over. I was crying. I was 17 and had just gotten my license a few months before. There was a red bow on my rear view mirror, a symbolic gesture from my Italian mother to keep the devil and bad spirits away as I drove. The car accident wasn't even my fault - I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

For years, I suffered from anxiety whenever I got into the driver's seat of a car. Living on an island made up of highways and parkways, it was a terrible situation knowing that when I climbed into any car I was going to shake uncontrollably. My hands would get sweaty, my heart would beat as if I was on speed and I would hyperventilate. Thinking about driving would make me physically sick. I never really knew what anxiety actually was, let alone actually have it. It changed my life.

Anxiety is not only a psychological condition but it has a physical component. When someone has an anxious feeling, they often experience tension in heightened form. They panic.

"Anxiety refers to heightened muscle tension, difficulties in breathing, increased heart rate, headaches, stomachaches, racing thoughts or even blurred vision or lightheadedness and sweating," Dr. William Futersak PH.D, a clinical psychologist at LI Anxiety Care located in South Steauket, said.

The Stony Brook graduate also noted the different psychological signs one may experience when suffering from the disorder.

"Psychological signs have more to do with the need to

escape a situation," he said. "Most of the time we escape by avoidance. We avoid situations that we usually go into but pull away from."

That being said, a student could suffer from anxiety when they start classes but begin to not go because they become anxious. They avoid going because they could be fearful of speaking in class, talking to a professor or peers or even asking questions aloud. "We have a feeling of discomfort physically and emotionally, anxiety makes us what to avoid the situation," he said.

However, just because someone is feeling anxious doesn't necessarily mean they have the disorder that affects more than 40 million Americans. "It's normal to feel a certain amount of anxiety in a challenging situation like a test or a date," Dr. Futersak said. "Anxiety becomes a disorder when it interferes with someone's ability to cope or participate in activities or situations that are necessary as the person grows as a human being."

Dr. Futersak said that there are several different things that people can do that can help alleviate the mental, physical and emotional strains that anxiety can cause. To calm the physical symptoms like tension, difficulty breathing and uncomfortable state of anxiety, a person may deal with it by learning how to calm their central nervous system. By learning practices like yoga, relaxation exercises and meditation, people can learn to control their bodies and relieve stress with deep breathing.

Another way to cope with anxiety, Dr. Futersak said, is to practice cognitive coping strategies, changing the way we think about situations we don't want to think about. When people begin to narrate their thoughts in a negative way, they begin to exaggerate the stakes of a given situation. By practicing what Dr. Futersak calls "positive self talk," people can start to focus more on what they can do in a situation rather than the negative what-ifs. "It's important to remind yourself not how bad the situation



could be but if it goes badly what you can do to fix it," he said.

I talked to him on the phone and told him about my personal experiences with anxiety. He gave one more practice, a behavioral one, which helps others who are suffering. Exposure Response Prevention (ERP) is a concept that allows the participant to gradually increase anxiety-provoking situations in order to slowly start to cope with whatever the anxiety begins to derive from.

He said that with driving anxiety, someone like me should use that practice to slowly become comfortable again with being in a car after a traumatic experience.

"Think of anxiety as the body's or mind's survival mechanism gone haywire," Dr. Futtersak said. "Anxiety tries to protect us from what the mind thinks is threatening." "If you understand what it is, then you realize it's a fixable, treatable condition," he added. "It starts with understanding what's happening to you and learning to cope so you can bring down those symptoms."

Dr. Futtersak believes that with a little positivity and with the help of the coping skills, people suffering from anxiety can live happier lives. "As you gain confidence," he began, "the symptoms will fade."

# IN BRIEF, MEDITATION: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

**Taylor Knoedl**

Meditation as a vague concept, to me, is an effective waste of time. You sit upright with an empty head and think nothing. This practice is far too contrary to my New York lifestyle to be anything viable for practical living. But when you hustle your life so hard that you don't feel anything at all, you realize how useless you actually are without meditation.

In this article, I present my humble and unprofessional testimonial experience with meditation and how it works for me. Maybe it can work for you too.

At times in your natural life, you experience moments of serious *feels*. These *feels* can be defined as vividness in your human experience at a given time. The things you do and the way you feel are all in relation to each other and, when their combination is right, refers to something I refer to as being in your *right mind*. Scientists call it being mentally stimulated.

These feels which occur are spontaneous—they're fleeting. Maybe you had sex, or took heroin, or beat a lot of people at *Smash Bros* and are thus in a killer mood; until you're not. To get back the feels, some may find it necessary to re-up on this stimulation junk in order to re-elevate to a proper mood.

Behaving in such a way puts you at the mercy of your earthly desires. This can be difficult situation to handle, as earthly desires are a limited resource. At some point you will either run dry yourself or run dry your fellow human-kin. Either way, you're not being fully self-reliant. Mindfulness, achieved through proper meditation, is a means of controlling this fluid state of comfortable thoughts.

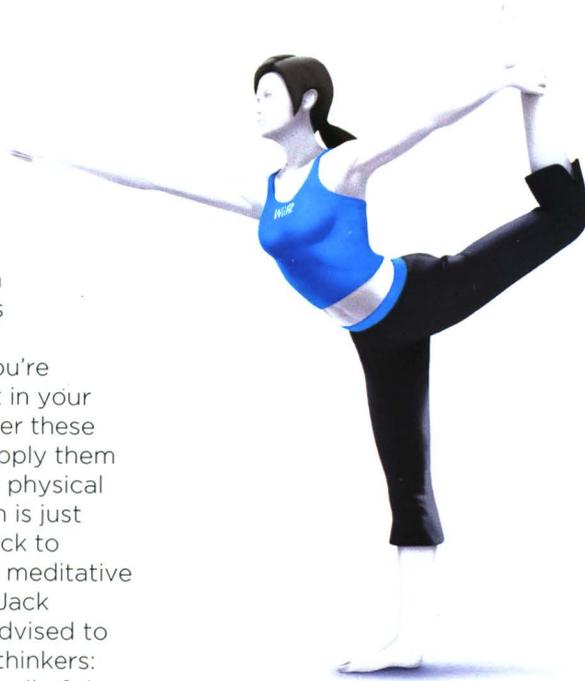
This is the point where I suggest you sit upright and begin to think comfortable thoughts to blow through your skull like a cavern with no people in it, not even yourself. It's not as easy as that, of course, as meditation is a deliberate action which brings you into a state of spontaneity. It's a natural tendency to encounter, whilst you sit in your effort to reach a meditative state, the ridiculous noise which attempts to quantify your life and keep you from silence. Dealing with this is something of a paradox; whereas you wish the nonsense of your troubles would stay quiet, it can be counterproductive to deliberate silence for the sake of itself.

A basic Buddhist idea dating back to 150 A.D. states "Form is no different from emptiness, Emptiness no different from form." Meditation in its proper definition can happen once you allow yourself to find vividness in your surroundings. Do this without forcing the process. When a wind of ideas blows through your quiet, cavernous skull, don't shoo them away to opt for silence. But at the same time, don't seek achievement with your meditative state and the thoughts it may bring.

A central point to meditation is the idea of a center in itself. Focus on your breath, you will often be told. This is true, but focus is a difficult word to comprehend in this regard. What I've experienced is pulling yourself from your troubles and ideas and plans and all temporal things which make up your objective-based life. Focus on this process of pulling away from the noise. You have to try very hard for a brief moment to not be influenced by the things in your life.

After this, cease the deliberate action and just perceive: ideas will float through your mind— do not disdain them, but do not betroth them either. Let them go, as new ones will come.

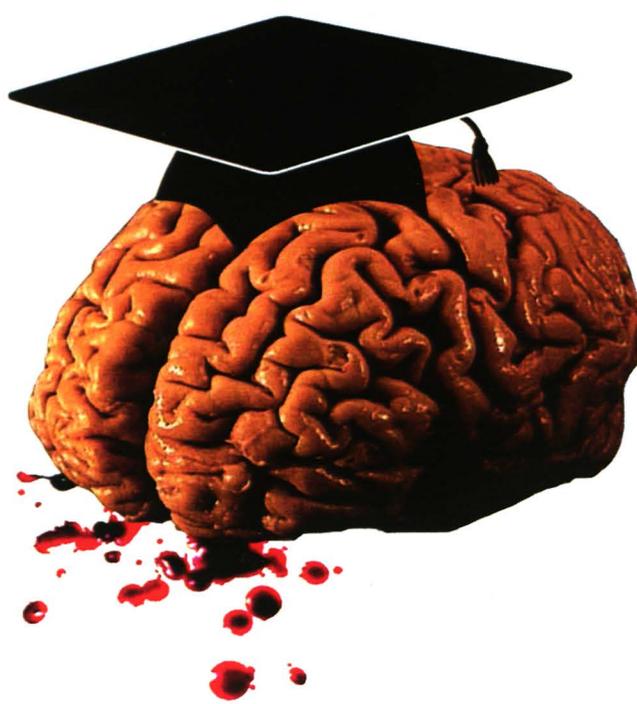
Then when you're not sitting quiet in your comfort, consider these concepts and apply them just as well. The physical act of mediation is just bringing you back to mindfulness. Be meditative all the time. As Jack Kerouac once advised to capable young thinkers: "you're a Genius all of the time." It's just a matter of realizing this self-evident truth within yourself.





# The Community College Conundrum

Kyle



Out of all the comments made during President Obama's 2015 State of the Union address to a room full of clapping democrats and sneering Republicans, none were as polarizing as his announcement advocating for free community college.

According to the U.S Census Bureau, the Stony Brook student community has more college experience than the average university, with 66.7 percent of the 5,345 residents of Stony Brook under the age of 24 having an associates degree or some college experience, while the greater New York region is at 45.9 percent and the U.S as a whole is at 45.5 percent in the same category. Those with experience in community college have had differing experiences relating to the variety of community colleges seeded among the different parts of New York.

"I just assumed community college was a fast way to get my degree and go on to a four-year university," said Stony Brook transfer student Laura Acosta. "I still feel the same way. It was kind of like being in high school again."

Acosta attended Queensborough Community College in Queens, getting the most of her tuition covered with financial aid. She likes the idea of free community college because of obvious financial reasons, also making reference to her sister that went straight to a four year university and is still paying off her debt three years later.

Acosta saw it as more of a transitional period: "I felt more independent, only because I was not in high school anymore. I had to be responsible for myself."

In 2012, according to Dr. Braden Hosch, the assistant vice president of the department of institutional research and development, 50 percent of transfer students came from Suffolk County Community College, Nassau County Community College and SUNY Farmingdale.

Community colleges are notorious for having low graduation rates. For example Suffolk County Community College has a 34 percent graduation rate, while Nassau Community College is at 39 percent according to CollegeMeasures. Enrollment in two-year public college has gone down by about two percent according to the American Association of Community Colleges.

Stony Brook transfer student Konrad Sieradzki graduated from Rockland Community College and went to Stony Brook as his first choice for college, citing it as much more of a research university compared to his other

choices.

"It was just kind of watered down," Sieradzki said of Rockland. "It was simpler, especially with the expectations that teachers had."

Sieradzki said that students could benefit from free community college, but there are several downsides. One he cited was one of his own problems trying, and usually failing, to transfer credits and classes, which forced him to retake classes he took in Rockland.

Several states, like Tennessee and Oregon, have shown support for the plan by announcing their own free two-year college plans. In comparison, the states' plans are only available to people right out of high school and require full time participation, while the president's plan will include nontraditional students such as adults and veterans trying to get back into school and will allow those enrolled part time students to get free tuition.

Suffolk County Community College student and Student Government Senator Steven Curcio went into college with "solid C- grades" and came out near the end at a 3.9 GPA. With his tuition covered by Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), his main cost was sunk into textbooks at about \$600 to \$1000 per semester.

"The experience was well worth the cost of the textbooks," Curcio said. "It was one that I believe should be available to all who seek it."

The argument takes an interesting turn when taking in the real depth of the proposed intent. During President Obama's State of the Union address he mentioned several key facts, such as two-thirds of job openings requiring some degree of higher education by 2020 and that those with degrees earn more money on average than those who don't. The actual intent of the bill is to use community college as a springboard towards four-year college or a job, with the bill incentivizing occupational training classes. According to the White House Blog, the intent for the bill is to allow more opportunities for more people to attend community college, but also to give them work experience while they are there.

"I was lucky to not have to pay tuition while at Suffolk County Community College. I would love for others to have the same opportunity that I did, the opportunity for a second chance," Curcio said. "However, I fear that the experience won't be the same for others if and when this takes hold, as the personal classroom experience will be



# WHEN WEATHER BITES, SBU WEATHER FIGHTS

Kyle



For the first few weeks of the Spring '15 semester, Stony Brook University was subjected to a blitzkrieg of bad weather. The week before school was supposed to start, the media was advertising Winter Storm Juno as the "storm of the century" with up to 30 inches of snow accumulation and winds over 40 miles per hour. Reporters were out in the field before the first flakes hit the ground and were commenting even while most statistics said New York would not be hit as hard as New England.

SBU Weather, a social media suite of forecasts hosted by the Stony Brook Meteorology Club, posted a much more subdued version of the storm over Facebook, with constant and clear updates of how the storm would affect Stony Brook campus. They even posted that when the first two days of classes were cancelled, the Union erupted in a cheer.

"It was certainly not the storm of the century, a lot of meteorologists took the worst case scenario, and I'm not sure why. We knew it would just be a narrow band," said President of the Meteorology Club and leader on the SBU Weather project Michael Colbert. When asked if he thought the news sites knew it would not be as bad as predicted, Colbert laughed. "Well I hope they knew," he said.

Colbert strolls around in a sweatshirt and sweatpants, a change from the slick black suit he wore for a few on the forecasts for the SB Newsbreak. The only reminder of that same man were his glasses and his amiable face.

"I'm pretty much addicted to weather," he said. "When theres a lot of homework to get done and theres a storm coming, the storm is my priority. Even during class when i see a heavy storm coming, I just walk outside, you know, pretend I'm going to the bathroom."

When Colbert first came to Stony Brook, the idea for personalized weather reports were already in his head, having posted weather reports on his own facebook page for over 7 years. "I started it my freshman year, and one of my first goals was 'wouldn't it be cool if nobody was ever surprised by the weather again?' Even with a rain shower we could put on an alert 30 minutes before it happened and say 'bring out the umbrellas if you're headed to class.'"

Starting with only a few members of the meteorology club, the first attempt at this idea was renovating the old and outdated website. But even then the word did not seem to get out, so now all focus has been put on social media.

"Social media has only been growing," said professor and faculty advisor to the Meteorology Club Dr. Brian Colle. The primarily student driven project, he says, is a means of having a voice for students before, during and after bad weather occurs.

"Social media is a real nice way of getting the word out," Colle said.

The Meteorology club uses a multitude of data to come to their conclusions. Computer models are developed by grad students

using the two weathers stations at Stony Brook, one on top of the Three Village Soccer Club building next to South P, and another on top of the Health Sciences building, one of the highest points in the surrounding area. They aggregate data from the National Center for Environmental Prediction in Maryland as well as the european model for tracking storms. The Meteorology club also has enough base knowledge of how weather usually interacts with Stony Brook and uses all the previous information to create one simple forecast.

"Our primary goal is to make accurate forecasts," Colbert said.

In October of last year, the Meteorology club partnered with SB News to create a new forecasting section to the SB Newsbreak broadcast. The main driver behind the collaboration was Vice President of the Meteorology club, Charlie Argento.

"It was my dream to do it before I even came here," Argento said. Working with Journalism professor Jonathan Sanders, both Argento and Colbert have appeared on the broadcast. The number of club members have grown from 4 or 5 to 25 over the past few years.

Colbert honestly believes that his forecasts are some of the most accurate. "It sounds kind of arrogant, but we know what time the majority of people are waking up, we know when the majority of people are heading out to class, we know when the majority of people are on Nicolls road, so we put our forecast out for those periods when people most need them."

Putting the magnifying glass to Stony Brook and the surrounding area while focusing on students and faculty allows SBU Weather to tailor its information to those select groups of people, while avoiding having to make large scale predictions without having all the data first.

"Were not obligated to put out a 5 day forecast, so if we're uncertain about something, we don't even mention it until we get a better idea. The majority of us aren't deciding if we have to have 50 sanitation trucks with salt, we don't have to prepare so far in advance. For the most part we just need to know about the next few hours and tomorrow."

SBU Weather has over 900 likes on facebook and 165 followers over Twitter, and they have seen significant growth in early 2015. Enough Monday's have seen foul weather for SBU Weather to coin the term "Messy Mondays." These mondays saw growth spikes in the number of likes and followers these pages gained. Winter Storm Juno saw the largest growth for SBU Weather at that point, gaining over 100 likes in one day.

January and February 2015 have seen a host of cold, biting wind, snow and freezing rain. The layers of snow grew until you could almost trace the dates of foul weather in the side of the snow like rings in a tree trunk. At the time of writing this article, it is cold outside, and SBU Weather warns it will get colder. There is the expectation for more snow.

At this point, it's unlikely anything will be called the "storm of

# NOSTALGIA GOGGLES PRESENTS: BIONICLE

KEVIN URGILES



I don't really like Toys R Us. Its linoleum floors are covered with mysterious brown streaks. The air is a suffocating mixture of cashier sweat and children's tears. Every store is pretty underwhelming, even the one in Times Square with the awkward Ferris wheel, but there is one section that stands out. The Lego section.

As a kid you could always find me rummaging through the Lego section looking for one thing - Bionicles. Bionicles entered my life some time in 2001. My love for them began with a gift from my mom after doing well in school and eventually blossomed into a zero income profession that consumed all of my time, making it hard to focus on the rules of first-grade mathematics. I was always that kid that did not take care of his toys. I left them around the living room, inside the bathroom, hell, sometimes even the fridge.

Bionicles changed that. I learned that Bionicles and the little pieces that make them up, required a certain amount of care and respect. If I opened the capsule-like packaging too carelessly I risked losing a microscopic piece that held an arm together, or worse yet, the head.

The best part about building a Bionicle figure was not just the end product, but the actual process. I laid out every piece like a doctor getting ready to go into a 15-hour medical procedure. I studied the manual carefully and took it one step at a time. It taught me to be patient, work quickly and procrastinate completing my homework.

The first biomechanical hero I ever built was Kopaka, Toa of Ice. His ability to control ice amused me, but I was not satisfied with having just one Bionicle figure on my tabletop. I wanted to collect every Toa, control every element, and rule my imaginary living room world.

By the time I finished building every

Bionicle figure I could get my hands on, Bionicle: The Game had come out for the Nintendo GameCube.

This game gave every Toa a completely new life.

As I became immersed in the story of Mata Nui I could no longer see Kopaka as just a Lego figure that used his Ice Shield to ride around the snowy mountain ranges he called home. He had a personality to him. He was anti-social, brave and analytical. I was given a unique glimpse of the Bionicle Universe through his cyborg-like Toa Mask.

I never beat the game. I never got to personally defeat Makuta and see how the Toa of Light looked like on my mom's 20 inch Sony television. IGN gave the game a 3.8 out of 10 so I probably didn't miss anything important, and whatever I did miss was more than likely covered in the Bionicle movie that I watched every time I had a friend over. I was mad popular.

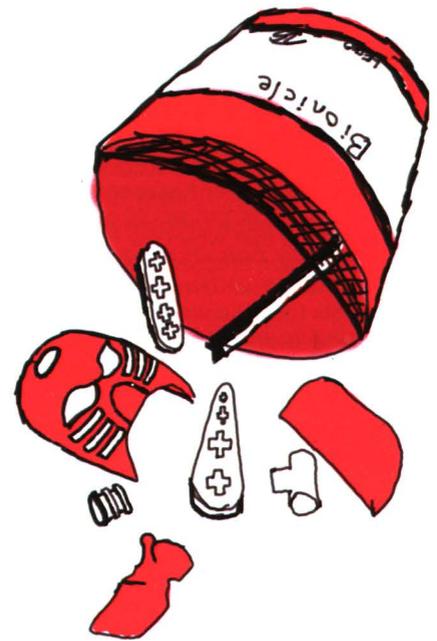
I eventually grew up. I played video games more often and soon I began finding pieces of Bionicle figures scattered around my house. One here, one there, some lost for good. I knew I would regret my apathy one day, but didn't feel bad about it until the day I found out that Bionicles were being discontinued.

The last time Bionicles had any relevance in my life was when I went to Ecuador this winter. I don't know why I was reminded about my Toa collection while in the mountains of Cuenca, but I do remember feeling confused about where life was headed.

I have always been a person who wants to be many things at once. An artist, a scientist, a philosopher. Now that I am reflecting on Bionicles, and how different each one of the Toa were I realize that the reason Bionicles appealed so much to me as a kid was because I could be so many things at

once. I could be the anti-social Kopaka, the wise Onua, the hot-headed Tahu, the virtuous Gali, the funny Lewa or the friendly Pohatu.

I was free in my imagination, and having that freedom as a child shaped me into who I am today.



Bionicles were re-booted January of this year. That same month I went to Lego World with a friend who could not understand why I spent so much time contemplating whether or not to buy Kopaka. I knew that he would be a unique decoration on my college desk but I didn't want him to be just that - a decoration. As I placed Kopaka back on the shelf I came to the conclusion that it didn't matter whether or not I had any of the figures on my desk anymore. They had already done their job.





## Starbucks' Secret Menu Julianne Mosher

There's a secret underground map found online. Within its pages are lists upon lists of different and sweet concoctions made up of sugars, creams, liquid sweeteners and artificial flavorings.

The secret is found inside the local Starbucks. Legend has it that years ago, Starbucks employees came together at their own individual shops and created their own drinks using the ingredients available to them behind the counter. With the power of the Internet, employees all over the world have begun to post their creations to the web.

"I know that the secret menu was created by other Starbucks baristas with way too much time on their hands," Nicky Ramdeholl, a former barista said. "The most bizarre I've heard of is the Raspberry Cheesecake Latte... Just Google it and you'll understand."

Although this idea of specially made shakes may seem amazing for sweet tooth lovers out there, employees of the coffee chain disagree that this "secret menu" is a good thing.

"It's annoying when people would ask for the secret menu items especially if we were not taught how to make them," Jess Mai, a former Roth Starbucks employee said. "It also usually takes more time to make them because more often than not they would be Frappuccino's or complex drinks."

Ramdeholl worked at the Roth Quad Starbucks for a year and said that when students confronted her with a weird request, she would get frustrated.

"It was pretty annoying when someone would order something off the secret menu because Starbucks employees are not trained to make those drinks," she said. "Therefore, it becomes a grueling and tedious process. We have to wait for the customer to Google the recipe, then we squint at the ingredients while running from the drink bar to the cash register and try to make it," she added.

With names like "The Super Cream Frappuccino," "Thin Mint Frapp," "Teddy Grahams Frappuccino," "The Bomb!" "Chocolate Caramel Pretzel Frapp," "Snickerdoodle" and "Samoa Girl Scout Cookie Frappuccino," customers are often intrigued. However, these delicious ideas are not, nor will they ever be, part of the official Starbucks menu next to the Double Chocolate Chip, Mocha and Vanilla Bean Frapps.

And even though employees of the chain may find the procedure of creating a custom drink tedious, Starbucks disagrees.

"While we don't offer an official 'secret menu,' we do offer a wide variety of beverages that customers can personalize," a Starbucks representative said in an email. "From time to time, we regularly recommend customizations we think our customers may enjoy."

"In addition to the beverage options included on our menu boards, there are more than 170,000 ways baristas can customize beverages at Starbucks, selecting from a variety of fresh dairy selections, combination of syrups, coffee/espresso options and toppings."

The Starbucks representative added that the personalization that baristas are capable of when it comes to creating that special drink can give customers a "unique Starbucks experience and tailor their drink to match their own personal taste preferences."

Some of these secret items have become so popular that select stores use the ingredients to their advantage. Amanda Mueller, a shift supervisor at Starbucks in Setauket said that her particular store made one secret menu item a real menu item because of its frequent desire.

"The Cotton Candy Frapp' is a vanilla bean with raspberry. We actually train new partners about what it is so that they know because it's ordered so frequently," she said. "But it's funny because people who have been with the company for years refuse to call it a cotton candy frapp... they will literally be like, 'No we don't have a cotton candy frapp. There is no cotton candy in that drink.'"

It's unclear as to whether or not the "Willy Wonka" or "Butterbeer Frappuccino" will ever become a real thing but until then one barista requests that if a customer does feel the need to create their own beverage, they do it in a respectful and fluid way.

"Knowing how to order your Starbucks drink properly makes you a better human," Andrea Charidemou said

In order to be that better human, she listed the way one should order it:

"Size - hot or iced - (if extra espresso shot say here) - drink type (ex: latte / caramel latte) - with (all extra things) you want go here - so like, extra caramel / whip cream...)"



# Majora's Mask: My Funny Deku Scrub

By Taylor Knoedl

**I**t was Valentine's day and my father was going to see *Fifty Shades of Gray* with his 23-year-old girlfriend. I had to be out of the house for the night. Fortunately on this same day I bought *Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* for 3DS so I took my handheld and sorrowfully wandered the Lost Woods.

*Majora's Mask* is the third (fourth if you want to count *A Link Between Worlds*) HD remake from the *Legend of Zelda* series, preceded by *Ocarina of Time 3D* and *Windwaker HD*.

The loose sequel to *Ocarina* had gained a cult following due to its dismal storyline and rich world-building. It has seen much anticipation for some sort of remake pretty much since Nintendo revived *Super Mario 64* with *Super Mario 64 DS*.

All was going well for me at

first; I was the boy heartthrob and hero of time, Young Link. Getting women would be a piece of cake. I was riding out of Hyrule on my beloved steed Epona—all of us in HD, nothing could junk up my day.

And of course, this game is fifteen years old so I should know that there he-be, that little brat Skull Kid wearing Majora's mask with his personality disorder and two fairies who have no idea what they're getting themselves into, just kind of jump me and steal my horse. It's some bullshit. I still don't have that horse back.



So at this point I'm still young Link and have to jump across some strategically laid out stumps. I do a few of those famous cool-flips (which set *Majora's Mask* as a real cultural back-flip forward from *Ocarina of Time*) and land into Termina. And then I'm an ugly little Deku Scrub because Skull Kid turned me into one. Fuck that guy.

This is *Majora's Mask* 3DS remake. Instead of being in the conflict-endured land of Hyrule where all the women fawn over the all-charming Ocarina rockstar, wielder of the Master Sword and high-fantasy James Bond—I'm in Termina as a hideous little Deku Scrub with a fairy who doesn't even want to be my friend and not one beautiful woman is in sight to teach me songs to remember them by (o' where art thou Saria! Grow old with me!).

To anyone unfamiliar with the story, this sketchy-ass Happy Mask Salesman needs Majora's Mask back but he needs it in three days

(fifty-four minutes in real-time) because after then he's outtie. Also note that the world will be destroyed by a resting pissed face moon in this amount of time as well. The two are unrelated as far as confirmed statements go. The Happy Mask Salesman refused to comment.

I walk out into the beautifully designed Clock Town where any vacationer would love to spend more than three days in. It looks as if Hyrule turned into Portland with massive art installations all up on the walls, concert promos, street performers and a major tourist economy.

Of course, Dawn of the First Day: 72 Hours Remain—I've got no time to be waddling about a city which pretty much denies service everywhere for shitty little Deku scrubs. Even the yorlike in South Clock Town attacks me for being ugly.

Eventually you do get past the whole ugly Deku phase and become the boy-heartthrob Young Link and people suddenly want to talk to you. When this happens I suggest exploring the colorful personalities of Clock Town. There be mad sidequests.

One new friend I find is the famous green-jumpsuit clad Tingle who was probably the chief reason Majora's Mask was ever so popular. He sells maps for a living. I suspect this man-fairy to not be a certified cartographer but 5 rupees for a map is a solid deal.

Compared to the original 2000 release, the gameplay hasn't changed much. Though there are some rad new features including: a Sheika Stone tunnel which leads to clues, these funny cow bobble heads (which bobble very dynamically whenever the moon impends its doom), a timeline which replaces the old obtrusive semi-circle clock (it counts hours and minutes. Minutes!) and a greatly improved Bomber's Notebook.

Actually let's take a minute on the Bomber Gang and their notebook. After joining this club of young boys (albeit some unprogressive bullshit discrimination I face as a shitty little Deku Scrub), they give me this quest log which categorizes all my objectives and another page with individual schedules of each NPC with accompanying pictures. It's a little carry on Facebook that these innovative youths will share with their grandchildren one day

All was going well for me at first; I was the boy heartthrob and hero of time, Young Link. Getting women would be a piece of cake. I was riding out of Hyrule on my beloved steed Epona—all of us in HD, nothing could junk up my day.

(given I beat this game and save this dumb world which doesn't even love me).

These kids are pretty clutch despite their slight racism. They act as this Sherlock Holmes network of vagrants who hook you up with sidequest ideas.

Since I first played *Majora's Mask* back in year 2000, I've learned how to manage stress. Three days translated into fifty-four minutes isn't so bad and a moon crashing upon the world is manageable. I have also gotten cold. But you know, when the call of duty demands you to be a hideous

Deku Scrub you don't give much back.

But right away I'm prepared with the time-slowing inverted song of time—the Starbucks secret menu of ocarina songs. With time slowed from the beginning (as opposed to learning from friends telling me, the invention of Google, or waiting until *Majora 3DS* is released 15 years later...), I was able to sort of kick back and enjoy my time in Termina. I also prolonged my suffering when considering my poor, sad Deku form.

At some point in all this I realize Clock Town (despite how hip it is) isn't the place for a social innovator/ex-hero of time (am I still, though?) like me. I go to the Southern Swamp where ugly things reside, seeking solidarity. I feel completely not at home as the potion hags deny me service and even the Deku

aristocracy doesn't want me in their court. No one wants me.

I walk away from my 3DS for two hours and forty-two minutes and let the moon crash into Clock Town.

**Still though, five stars.**



# Broke Kid Fashion

## Fresh Without the Debt

Jasmine Wibisono  
& Jordan Bowman

*Spring is here. It's time to pack away that 50-pound The North Face parka, those Timberlands boots and prepare for bright, sunny days and the abusive New York City heat. As you transition from Winter to Spring, you have to change the wardrobe up a bit. I realize that most college students are broke after taking out financially crippling loans, but that doesn't mean you can't attempt to look a little more presentable. No more oversized cargo shorts and tank tops that have ironic marijuana jokes. Everything in life is expensive, especially clothes, so we curated a list of items for broke college kids like you.*

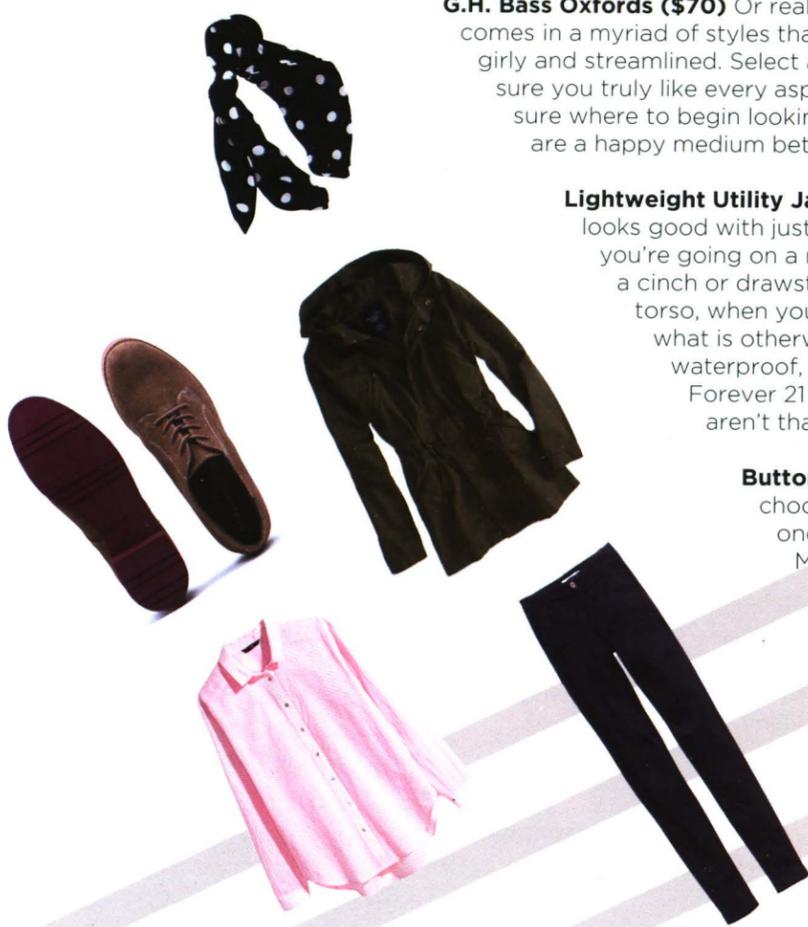
## For the ladies:

**G.H. Bass Oxfords (\$70)** Or really any close-toed shoes that are not sneakers. Oxfords comes in a myriad of styles that range from boot-like and menswear-inspired to more girly and streamlined. Select a pair that reflects your own personal style and make sure you truly like every aspect of the shoe before you invest in it. If you're not sure where to begin looking, G.H. Bass & Company offer a pair of Oxfords that are a happy medium between feminine and masculine.

**Lightweight Utility Jacket-- (Forever 21, \$35)** A piece of outerwear that looks good with just about anything and is super functional whether you're going on a road trip or just going to class. Look for one that has a cinch or drawstring that hits your waist, the smallest part of your torso, when you wear it. This key detail will help maintain structure in what is otherwise a casual jacket. You could also invest in one that's waterproof, unless you prefer wearing a bright yellow raincoat. Forever 21 has options that come in good neutral colors, but aren't that shade of army green that was everywhere in 2014.

**Button Down Collared Shirt -- (H&M, \$25)** Even if you choose to forgo everything else suggested, this is the one thing every girl, and really everyone, should have. Make sure you invest in one that is 100% cotton or linen, materials lightweight enough to keep you from overheating. Pair this with jean shorts, cuff up the sleeves and leave the first two buttons undone for a casual look, or opt for a dressier look by buttoning all the way up and adding a statement necklace and dark jeans.

**Trousers (H&M, \$30)** Yes trousers, or pants that aren't made of thin cotton, nylon, or denim. It sounds sort of dated but a good pair of trousers that fit you well will look exponentially, substantially, like, galaxies better than a pair of too-tight or worn out skinny jeans. Search for ones which have back pockets that lay right on the center



of your butt. It's not a good look to have pockets that look like they're trying to climb up your ass. Look out for a slight taper towards the ankle. I suggest opting for dark navy blue or black if you're new to the trouser game. Let your leggings rest this spring.

**An interesting headband (\$5-\$20)** Not everyone has their ears pierced; bracelets can be annoying in class; sometimes you don't have time to struggle with a necklace clasp. Accessorizing in general is such a personal touch so go with a headband that suits you but don't settle for plain ones that have no appeal other than keeping hair out of your face. ASOS offers a student discount and has pages of options that range from simple bows to studded statement pieces.

## For the dudes:

### Clarks Desert Boots (\$90)

If you want to stand out in a crowd full of "bros," you have to step your footwear game up. These are basically the cheaters guides to being fresh. Everybody loves desert boots; they're relatively cheap, they look good on everyone, and your lady friends are going to compliment you for not dressing like a Hollister reject. Desert boots look good in basically any color, but I would recommend the Beeswax Leather or Sand Suede color options.

### Uniqlo Linen Shirts (\$35)

The temperature tends to shift dramatically as the seasons transition from Winter to Spring, so that means layers. Layering is actually pretty simple, but it's just hard to do if you are picking random items from your closet. It's important to realize that you have to try and balance different fabrics. Linen is perfect because its thin and breathable, which means you can wear it during the day and then throw on a sweater or a jacket for some late-night debauchery.

### Levi's Denim Jacket (\$60)

The denim jacket is a kind of all-purpose menswear basic because it works year round for layering and they tend to fit really well. Just as a rule of thumb, try not to match your denim jacket with your jeans. The only person allowed to wear a Canadian tuxedo is Drake. I would recommend picking up the slim fit option in Stone Wash. The lighter color makes it look more casual and rugged.

### Chinos (\$30-50)

Almost every clothing store has a selection of chinos to choose from, but your best bet would probably be from Club Monaco or Uniqlo. Club Monaco has three fitted options. The Kennedy is a looser fit that some guys may feel more comfortable in. The Connor is available if you prefer a skinny tapered look. If you fall somewhere right in the middle of those two options, try the Davis pants for a slim alternative. Club Monaco may not work under some student's budgets, so try Uniqlo if you want a variety of colors and maybe save some extra dollars.

### Timex Weekender Watch (\$30)

A lot of people don't see the need for a watch, and it's understandable with your phone attached to you body like an extra appendage. Why waste time strapping ancient technology to you wrists? But Timex has a cheap option for the broke students out there that actually still care about the time. You can get the "Weekender," which comes with a basic colored NATO strap. I would recommend the navy blue or olive green color.



# ASK A SEMI-PROFESSIONAL PERVERT: SEXY STRESS RELIEF

DAKOTA JOR-

People ask me a LOT of questions about sex and related topics. A huge amount of those questions are prefaced with something about how nervous or anxious the person is to even be asking the question. Anxiety and stress are both huge problems when it comes to sex. It keeps people from communicating with their partners, finding partners and sometimes can prevent them from having sex with existing partners. People with anxiety disorders often take medicine that can cause erectile dysfunction or a lowered libido, which can sometimes be a source of more stress. However, orgasms, whether from sex or masturbation, can actually help to alleviate stress. Here are some ideas for sexy stress relief, alone or with a partner:

- **Pour some hot water over your head**, or sit in it. A bath or shower, alone or with a friend, is a great way to relieve stress and also an awesome place to masturbate. People who tend to get a lot of UTIs should stick with showers. A good sexy addition is yummy smelling soap. Lather yourself or a partner and enjoy that slippery-skin feeling.

- **Massages are awesome.** Get some lotion or body oil and rub yourself down. Or rub down a friend. Or cover a group of consenting adults in super slick goodness and just roll around naked. This will leave you with smooth skin and

- **Consume something tasty.** Post-Valentine's Day, chocolate is cheap. Eat some of that. Or some fruit. Or fruit dipped in chocolate. Maybe eat it off your partner. Snacks are fun and fun is good. And snacks during sex just means more energy for sex. Bored of the whole "fruit and chocolate" thing? Try Nutella, or honey, or frosting. Really, you could lick Sriracha off a person as long as everyone involved knows it's going to burn like shit. Just keep all the treats out of the vagina/urethra/eyes/nose because really, food doesn't belong there. You want ants? That's how you get ants.

- **Watch a sexy film.** Not 50 Shades. Maybe Secretary? Maybe some "Awesome Crashpad" series porn? Maybe some old episodes of "Whisker Wars" (I have my own ideas about what's sexy). The point is, watch something sexy. Watch it alone in bed with your sex toy of choice. Watch it with a partner in a slightly bigger bed. Watch it with a group of close friends and analyze the artistic merits of the piece.

- **Work it out.** Yeah yeah, exercise is good for stress we all know that, but you know what else can be good? Being too tired and sore to even think about anything, and that doesn't have to come from a gym. Instead of watching a movie about BDSM, maybe try some out yourself. Spanking is fun and doesn't require any fancy toys. Aim for the fleshy parts of the butt and thighs and make sure to use a safe word.

Got more questions or comments?  
Email me @ [\*\*semiproper@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:semiproper@gmail.com)

# FUN WITH BOOZE

## YOUR GUIDE TO DRINKING

Greetings fellow drug enthusiasts. While you might have been hoping for a topic this month that was unfamiliar, or at least peaked your curiosity, in light of recent events throughout our campus, it's a good time to discuss our need for booze.

Alcohol has always been, and as far as i can tell will always be, the choice drug for the majority of students. Some use it to unwind after a long week of grueling work, surrounded in an otherwise immobile room of frat brothers and random strangers, while others choose to enjoy a simpler night with a handle, a few friends and Cards Against Humanity.

Being heavily consumed, however, alcohol has the opportunity to cause trouble, moreso than other drugs, whether that means a night of regrets, or in most cases, your head stuck in a semi-clean stall for an hour or two. At it's worst, alcohol can lead to sexual assault, violence, criminal conduct and a trip to the emergency room. So how can these be avoided without giving up our beloved drink of choice?

With Stony Brook stirring controversy recently with the claims that a woman's sexual assault was mishandled by the university, the issue of sexual assault and alcohol should be addressed. According to a recent article by the New York Post, the victim had attended an on-campus party where she had her mixed drink switched to straight liquor so that the alleged attacker could assault her. As a male student myself, I am unaware of how frequently this occurs but I believe that there are strategies to avoid the situation this victim was subjected to.

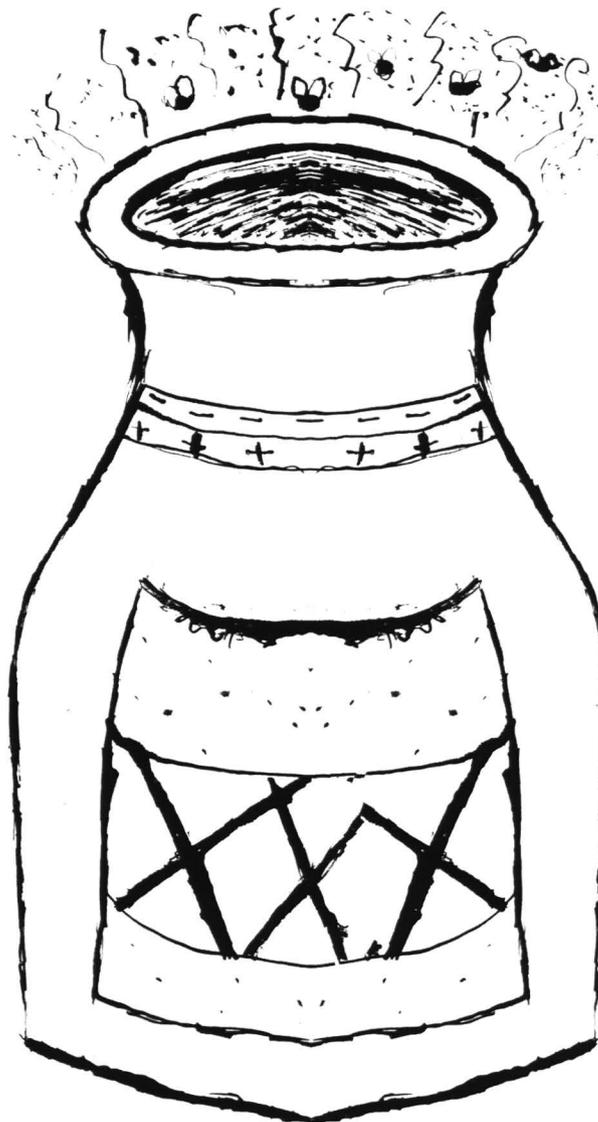
As a caveat, let me declare this explicitly: it is always the attacker's fault when one becomes the survivor of assault. Under no circumstances should the survivor have had to do something, not have said something, or not have been where they were to not become sexually assaulted. With this in mind, here are some ideas to stay proactive in keeping yourself safe with alcohol.

The first point should be nearly fundamental to people concerned about this, and that is to keep an eye on your drink,

especially around people you may not trust. Beyond this, having a friend or two accompany you to make sure that you get home safe and make sound decisions is always a great idea. If you decide to bring friends along with you, it might be a good idea to communicate your intentions for the night before anyone begins drinking, as this sets an easy to follow guideline for the night out.

Beyond sexual assault, dependence on alcohol is an issue that is rarely addressed in college but is more of a "hush-hush" activity for individuals. Alcohol, being easily accessible to most of the student body, is too often the drug of choice for attempting to forget your problems, cope with circumstances or make decisions that you would not normally make. Unfortunately, there isn't much sound advice to give if you are somebody or know somebody in this position.

Of the few options on campus, the Counseling and Psychological Services, otherwise known as CAPS, is a highly recommended service to anyone struggling with dependency issues. CAPS has trained counselors and even specific support groups for people who are already abusing or even simply using more than they desire and offers the services for free in complete anonymity. Outside of this, being supportive of someone who is dependent or coping with alcohol may also be useful in that it may encourage them to seek help. Being there for them can even be the perspective they need to reevaluate their drinking habits. So to put it swiftly, just because alcohol leads to these problems doesn't mean we have to abandon it. We simply have to use it in a responsible manner to ensure it doesn't interfere with our lives. So raise your glass to a great semester and hopefully I'll see some of you stumbling over near the Union soon, ordering your three burritos at one in the morning.



**Cheers!**

**Love,  
Lippman  
& Miss Token**

# MAJOR INFLUENCERS IN MENSWEAR

Jordan Bowman

Despite men's previous serf-level importance in the Fashion Kingdom, menswear is on a huge upswing now. In the last few years, the menswear community has become a much more lucrative business. A large majority of guys are finally becoming interested in clothing, just check one of your friends' Instagram pictures and you will probably see #GQ somewhere while they flex in their poorly fitted blazer.

It is common knowledge that men play a much smaller role in fashion. Over a month ago, the Council of Fashion Designers of America, or CFDA, announced that menswear is getting its own dedicated Fashion Week from July 13th to the 16th. There have already been similar men's fashion events held in Italy and London but being America, we're always a step behind when it comes to anything cool. The New York Times is even launching a Monthly Men's Style Section beginning in spring, according to Capital New York.

## Public School:

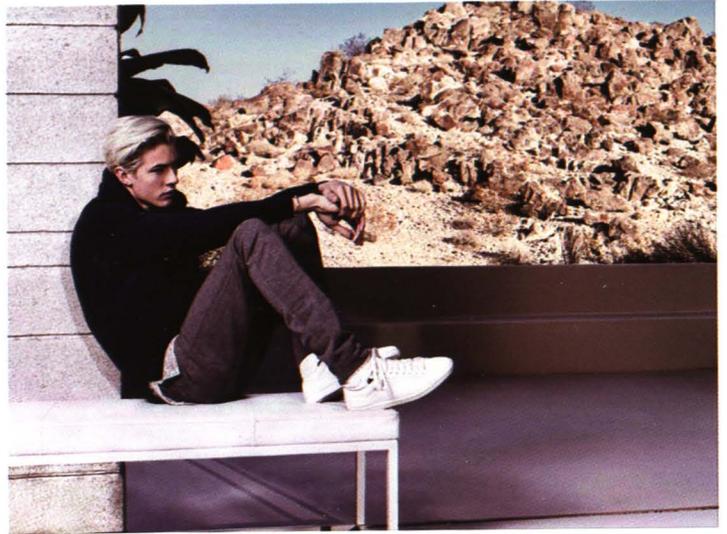
In 2014, Public School designers Dao-Yi Chow and Maxwell Osborne received the CFDA award for Menswear, which certified them as rock stars in the fashion world. The designers managed to blend high fashion and the rugged details of blacked-out, tailored sportswear. Public School is flawlessly creating MA-1 Bombers and slim fitting leather jackets. They are catalysts in menswear, so you better believe that Zara and H&M are going to be making some knock-off versions real soon.



## John Elliot + Co:

Did you notice that sometime last year, men started wearing more sweatpants? I'm not talking about the grease stained, stretched out pair that your high school gym teacher used to wear. I'm talking about the slimmed-down, streamlined version, a trend that was kick-started by John Elliot's brand. Elliot's ascension to the menswear throne happened quickly and his influence didn't go unnoticed. In 2013, GQ profiled John Elliot + Co featuring the brand's head

designer and highlighted his obsession with making the best menswear essentials. Elliot created a line of clothes that took basics to another level with their best selling side zip "Villain" hoodie and fitted denim giving the whole menswear community a reason to want to try a more laid back style. In 2014, GQ announced John Elliot + Co as one of the winners in its annual Best New Menswear Designers in America contest.



## Kanye West:

Mr. West is a brand that influences everything from Hip-Hop to menswear. In a now-famous interview with Zane Lowe from BBC radio, Kanye described himself as Wreck-It-Ralph. It is a somewhat bizarre metaphor but you have to admit Kanye West has the power to influence millions of people and no one is more polarizing musically or in fashion. When the "Stronger" video premiered and Kanye wore those white shutter shades, no one knew why the hell they were wearing useless sunglasses, you just did it because Kanye taps into culture. His original sneaker collaboration with Nike, the Air Yeezy's sold out almost immediately. The second time around, the Air Yeezy II's gave Nike an even more astonishing turnaround in profits. However Kanye and Nike's lucrative creative partnership was soon disbanded after Nike and Kanye had a falling out over creative reasons. After Nike, Kanye had a connection with the French fashion company A.P.C. His first and second collaborative collection with the brand sold out again as expected. Kanye recently revealed his new Adidas collaboration, which is currently one of the most talked about events in menswear. The point is that Kanye shits diamonds and pisses gold when it comes to fashion collaborations and he moves products off the shelf.





# The Right to Engage with Minimum Wage

Kyle Barr

Working at or close to minimum wage simply makes you feel small.

Minimum wage is the lowest rung of the ladder and it does not reach very high. You can get bumped up to minor manager positions, but it's years before those opportunities come. You end up doing the same work as before, only more of it.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) latest report shows that unemployment is down to 5.7 percent, and most sectors show increase in employment and the average number of hours people are working is up.

Then why, after all this, does the close to minimum wage job feel so small?

The political debate on raising minimum wage progressively to \$10.10 an hour in 2014 has raged all the way to the beginning of 2015. There are multiple studies, and their data seems to contradict each other, where they either suggest that raising the minimum wage will slow job growth, or that it will raise people out of poverty.

Minimum wage has always had to rise due to inflation. Where it stands now is much below that old standard. Many pundits have stated that when they were young, they made due with \$3 an hour and were glad for the job opportunity. They forget to mention that when adjusted for inflation, three dollars in 1979 becomes close to ten dollars, according to the Bureau of

Labor Statistics (BLS).

That debate has become another playground of partisanship. Many conservative thinkers argue that raising the minimum wage hurts the economy by decreasing demand for jobs and forcing jobs to limit hours for their employees, and that minimum wage hurts small businesses by making them pay more for the same amount of work. Some argue that the very idea and policy of minimum wage hurts those at lower income by limiting job opportunities for low paying, starting jobs.

It makes sense, especially on paper. The market economy has always worked on a system of supply and demand. When you increase the price, you lower the demand.

Of course, then you are treating such people as a commodity, as if they are supposed to be used. That utilitarian belief reminds me more of the beliefs present at the start of the industrial revolution than anything else. And of course, it would be assuming that many workplaces do not involve hard work, and are not already abusing their workforce.

Wage abuse became a hot button issue in 2014, especially concerning fast food workers. Cases of unpaid overtime, wage theft, off the clock working and even the abuse of child labor laws coalesce to the effect of the abuse of the minimum wage worker. These circumstances do not occur at the level of a small business, but at

the scale of large chain restaurants and fast food places, where according to the BLS the majority of minimum wage workers are found. The larger companies can claim they have no hand in it, but managers are incentivized to maximize work hours for a limited number of employees, making sure that no overtime is paid.

Wage abuse is consistently tied to minimum wage. Many of the largest service industry jobs can pay their employees \$10.10 an hour, but have argued against it using the same arguments used by conservative pundits. The argument that such jobs are only supposed to be a starting job is false, the median age of frontline fast food workers is 29, according to the BLS.

It's a cycle. The people who have minimum wage jobs move from one to the other, gaining little transferable work experience to a higher income job. Not all minimum wage workers are non-adults, and it becomes rather insulting to tell people to simply work harder, only to have jobs stop you from working overtime, or not even pay for it.

The number of part time workers is dropping, the economy is improving. It's time to help the people stuck in the same situation they found themselves in 2009.

# What's in a Picture?

Dovid Marsky

Several years ago, my wife Laura and her mother Joan, went on a trip to Italy with my parents. I unfortunately could not travel due to a heavy workload. After a long flight from NYC to Milan, they all arrived at their hotel, travel-weary. Due to Murphy's Law, they had to wait longer than expected for their rooms. My father, an avid photographer, decided he would take some pictures of Joan and Laura sitting on a bright red couch in the lobby. This made them both uneasy, as they were tired from traveling and not feeling the whole "photo shoot" opportunity. They were both doing their best to overcome their vanity and smile for the shot. My father took the picture because he wanted to get the whole mother/daughter traveling photo—just doing his thing.

A year zipped by and my father told Laura that he had "a gift she would love"—When Laura received the gift and saw the picture, her expression was priceless. She didn't like how she looked in the shot and was currently fighting with her mother. What kind of gift was this? She took the picture and promptly put it in the trunk of her car. This was where it would sit for three years freezing, thawing, wrinkling and just being ignored.

One summer day, I decided to clean out the guest room and that led to me reorganizing things, making random trips from one room to another ensuring each object found its proper place. At one point, my reorganization efforts led me to the trunk of my wife's car—that's when the picture grabbed my eye, I decided to bring it inside and place it on the dresser. I actually liked this picture. Laura came home and looked at me with expressions of disdain, naturally I cooked dinner that night. She couldn't believe that the picture had actually made it into the house and told me neither she nor her mom cared for it. I told her I liked it and that it was a gift. I couldn't throw it out.

A few days ago, when I was coming

out of a lecture, I saw many text messages on my phone. The one that stood out was from my brother Michael, "David, call Laura, she's ok, Joan..." I knew what that meant; she was an ill woman who had a heart transplant done on September 11th 2001, and due to medical malpractice—she had passed in the early morning hours.

That night, WWW I was consoling my wife. The picture in question on the kitchen table—placed in a careful manner with a candle next to it. It was the only picture that we had in physical form with both Joan and Laura in it, as strange as that may seem. Laura told me how much she now loved the picture and wished she had more pictures of her and her mom, no matter the appearance. I called up my buddy Matthew, a professional photographer, and had him scan and crop the image so that it looked like a portrait of Joan. We used that for the funeral service and reveled in how good she looked there—her health had deteriorated sharply in her final days. Now, Laura has declared the original as her favorite picture.

I find it interesting how, over time your perception of an object or circumstance can change—sometimes drastically. We've all experienced a parallax. It's when you walk past a building and slowly see the background—or not. From one angle you may see a forest behind the building, but from another angle just a tree. I wonder, how many of us have cemented themselves to their beliefs and miss out on the forest behind the building—not because they don't want to see, but because their perspective never offered them the opportunity or capacity to change their view.

At any given moment circumstances change. Was the energy we used to hold the position pointless? Of course not. I'm not implying that we shouldn't take or explore a given position, but rather be flexible in understanding that things change and, when they do, we might need to change our conceptions. Sometimes the change is sudden and all is made clear quickly. Other times its slow, too slow for us to even recognize what's happening—we've made up our minds some time ago and might perceive the world as it once was.

After writing this article the story about "the dress" broke across the Internet, and I felt that it exposed how drastic our perceptions can be from one another because of something like capacity or "vantage point." Is the dress blue or white and gold? It turns out that, when background context changes, so might people's ability to determine what's in front of them—even if it's something as elementary as color.



# MetroCard 1993-2020

Kevin Urgiles



**M**etroCards, the little yellow wobbly rectangles that allow people to get around on the subway and break into their rooms if they forgot their keys, are at the heart of what being a New Yorker is all about.

They are the reason why people growing up in the city don't drive until they are 22.

Unfortunately, the MTA weighed the pros and cons of the MetroCard and has decided that the best course of action for the future of New York City's subway system is to permanently relieve our wallet companion from its sworn duty by the year 2020.

I regretted losing all of those MetroCards over the years, not knowing that one day they would be nothing more than some pieces of plastic with magnetic strips that future generations will go see at the New York Transit Museum in Brooklyn.

The worst part is that the MTA is not even replacing the MetroCard with something cool, like the 3D-printed "Sesame Rings" that an MIT graduate helped create to substitute for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's transit card. Instead they are implementing another card system that uses radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology.

This technology has improved significantly since researchers began dabbling with its potential in the 1970s. What was once a large chip used to track cows (and marketed products soon after) has now become small and economical enough to incorporate into everyday systems, like the subway.

The RFID technology will be placed inside cards as tags that can constantly change and update data. Such technology makes it easy to deduct money from an electronic data bank where a certain amount of money may be placed. Instead of having to swipe the MetroCard's magnetic strip you will just have to tap it against a surface with near field communication technology that can access the data in the card.

So far so good, right? Well, while it's true that magnetic strips can be infiltrated easily by someone familiar with skinning data, the truth is that MetroCards don't have that much important information on them. Besides the ten-digit serial number with your amount of money, MetroCard information significantly lacks the amount of information a hacker can get from you when compared to a credit or debit card that is being used constantly. In my eyes, the MetroCard was

a safe way of keeping 30 bucks in one card without having to worry that someone could steal more from you.

Honestly, I would laugh if someone tried to hack my MetroCard with \$5.55 on it. If they went through all that trouble just to get a ride to work and back then they probably need it more than I do.

The MTA has defended their decision to replace the MetroCard with several reasons, but the one that stands out the most is their claim that it will help busses run faster. At first having people tap their credit cards to pay for busses instead of waiting a whole two seconds after dipping their MetroCard seemed logical to me, but then I thought about it some more.

I am not sure how often Thomas R. Prendergast, CEO and Chairman of the MTA, rides the bus to get around New York, but from personal experience of being crushed inside a packed Q47 bus for four years I can safely say that the reason busses take so damn long to get going is because of the people who pay with coins.

If everyone just used a MetroCard instead of counting how many nickels they have while getting on the bus then we might see a real improvement.

Well, now all we can do is wait. Wait for MetroCards to become irrelevant by 2020, and then completely disappear from the average New Yorker's wallet by 2022.

I am not upset that technology is doing its job by making our lives easier. But I am upset that one day I will reminisce to younglings about how I used to hoard MetroCards in my FOSSIL wallet for no reason besides the fact that it made it look like I had cash in there, and they will have no clue about what I am talking about. No clue about how many memories were stored in that card along with my \$5.55.

-Insert this way / This side facing you



# FRESH OFF THE BOAT LIKE ME

Shan Lin

ABC's new sitcom *Fresh Off the Boat* turned out to be a hit on the Tuesday comedy battlefield. It shows the laughter and the tears of a Taiwanese family that moves to the lily-white suburbs of Orlando in the early 90s and, in my opinion, the story is all about a single question: when you're different, should you fit in? It is not about being Asian American and it is not about culture shock, it is about everyday life. Being an international student and a *FOB* type of girl in American society, I have to say that, even though I am not an Asian American, I can still relate to this show. It may not be as universally funny as *Friends* or *South Park*, and its characters may still be based in some of the same stereotypes as all other Asian Americans portrayed in the media, but it is still so unique and groundbreaking. In fact, it is the first series centered on an Asian American family airing on network television since Margret Cho's *All American Girls* back in 1995.

The mother character of this family, Jessica Huang, is a typical strict and harsh mom who only pays close attention to her sons' academic results. When the school principle was alarming parents with a drug issue around school, Jessica's only care is centered around her elder son Eddie's report card. If Eddie doesn't get an A, she'll be mad; if Eddie gets straight A's, she'll be even more mad. She considers the school curriculum too easy and starts tutoring her sons at home! For Jessica, it is not important

if she could fit in or not; all she worries about is her family. She tried to join a group comprised of some American neighbors, but it just doesn't go well. When people make fun of her, she continues to be herself and doesn't feel ashamed. She is probably the toughest character on the show.

When Eddie brings a noodle lunchbox that Jessica made for him to school, he is obviously mocked and humiliated by his American friends. A rebellious teenager who is desperate to be a "real man like Shaq," Eddie got so ashamed that he dumped all the noodles. It kind of broke my heart even though the pilot was so funny. Eddie is a teenager who would die for a little recognition from his American peers. He hates that he is a different color, has different food and different everything from other kids! But on the other hand, he is a caring and loving big brother in the family, who often feels proud of his parents for being good people. Even though he's only 15, he feels like a complete character.

While having imperfections, *Fresh Off the Boat* is doing a good job encouraging the American audience to understand their Asian friends and neighbors. Moreover, it came with questions for us to think. I can see myself clearly in the characters. How about you?



# Angry Sports Fans Argue about Hockey

Michael DeSantis



There are several reasons why the Islanders are the better team than the Rangers when it comes to hockey in New York, both currently and historically. While the teams are neck and neck in the standings right now, it's not farfetched to think the Islanders will win the division when the season is said and done and do some

damage in the playoffs.

To start, the Islanders have one of the best players in the NHL on their team, John Tavares, who is better than any player the Rangers have on offense, despite Rick Nash being near the top of the league on goals. The Isles captain has a very good chance of winning the Hart Trophy for the NHL's MVP, and the Art Ross for leading the league in points. The team is continuing to win without their second best forward, Kyle Okposo, who had surgery on his detached retina, who might be coming back soon. Once he comes back, the team will definitely be in business. This season has seen the Islanders play their best regular season hockey in over 20 years.

The Isles also have the better young core than the Blueshirts. I'd like to think most fans around the league would take forwards Tavares, Ryan Strome, Anders Lee, Brock Nelson, and defenseman Nick Leddy and Travis Hamonic over Derek Stepan, Chris Kreider, J.T. Miller and Ryan McDonagh.

The Islanders and Rangers have each won four Stanley Cups. The difference is that the Rangers have been around almost 50 more years than the Isles. The Rangers also won three of their championships when there were less than ten teams in the league. If the Islanders had those luxuries, they'd almost certainly have more than four Stanley Cups. The Rangers championship team in 1994 basically consisted of the core from the Edmonton Oilers roster that won five Stanley Cups just a few years prior. Mark Messier, Craig MacTavish and Glenn Anderson were all on the Oilers championship rosters.

All that said, it should be an exciting finish to the rest of the regular season and an even more exciting postseason. Let's go Islanders!

As a Ranger's fan I'd mention the fact that Glen Sather has a habit of tossing talent (Gaborik, Del Zotto, Dubinsky, Bickel) That and Tortorella were the biggest downfall. Capuano's very hands-off approach has allowed the team to grow outside of the restraints that Torts had on

Jessica Opatich

The Rangers went from "Tex's Rangers" to "The Classiest Team In Hockey," and now, they're riding atop a four-game win streak and holding the top spot in the Metropolitan Division of the Eastern Conference. New York Rangers Hockey is an incomparable combination of legendary talent, charisma, and bad-assery. Then, there is the team that will forever remain in the shadow of their Big Apple rivals, The New York Islanders.

In 1926 the National Hockey League took over the defunct World Hockey League and two years later the New York Rangers were hoisting the Stanley Cup trophy. Two years later. The league was born and then, just two years later, greatness was established. This is 44 years before the Isles were even founded and more than half a century before they hoisted that same trophy.

It started with moonshine, really. A lot of moonshine. William "Big Bill" Dwyer amassed a fortune peddling moonshine. Big Bill jumped at the chance to own a professional hockey team in New York City. So, he purchased the Hamilton Tigers, moved them from Canada to the newly built Madison Square Garden and renamed them the New York Americans

George Lewis "Tex" Rickard, a prominent boxing promoter, was running the Garden at the time and decided to get in on the professional hockey scene and purchased an expansion team, "Tex's Rangers." The New York Rangers are a team built on the money of gangsters, cowboys, and boxers. It's not just a New York story, it's an American story.

Islanders fans will no doubt mention the string of championships in the early 1980s. It's admittedly impressive, but their greatness was fleeting. It came in quickly and unexpectedly and left in the same fashion. I see it on the tattered, fading jackets of Long Island fathers and grandfathers who've been unable to buy a new championship jacket for the past 32 years.

But if you want the cold hard facts —here they are. The Rangers are the most resilient team in the league. We lost our Hall of Fame goalie and guess what, we replaced him with the best backup goalie in the league. Cam Talbot is 13-3-3 since February 4. We lost Stralman, Pouliot, Richards, and one of my former favorites, Brian Boyle. These were all key players. But, we added Yandle and Sheppard and resigned fan favorite, Mats Zuccarello. Vigneault has made some major adjustments following former coach, John Tortorella. He's worked with young players like J.T. Miller and Kevin Hayes and veterans like Rick Nash, who is currently second for most goals in the league.

The Rangers are one of three teams with 95 points. The only team with more points right now is Anaheim, and they've played three more games. We meet them Sunday at the Garden. That's the matchup I'm waiting to see. The Islanders aren't even on my radar.



# New York, New York

## Baseball Predictions

Randall Waszynski

Michael DeSantis

One topic looms around the 2015 season for the New York Yankees and fans: Alex Rodriguez. Should he be on the team? Has he been punished adequately?

Rodriguez, 39, sat out all of last season and the later half of 2013 with a suspension because it was revealed that he was using performance-enhancing drugs after news broke about the Biogenesis scandal. Fourteen major league players faced suspensions, but other suspensions paled in comparison to Rodriguez's 162 benched games.

But these are the wrong questions. A-Rod will be in the line-up this season regardless of the crowd's adaptation. So what's more important: itching to see him strike out every time at the plate or watching the Yankees win baseball games?

Home-field advantage is all about the crowd's support. And stripping a potential key offensive asset of that additional, much appreciated encouragement isn't going to help the Bronx reach the top of the division.

I grew up watching Rodriguez and Derek Jeter lead the Yankees, and it was difficult to see the whole scandal unfold. I

am not, by any means, a fan of Alex Rodriguez anymore after his countless lies and multiple infractions with MLB policies regarding PEDs, but he has a spot in the New York Yankees' line-up this season. If he can help the team get a 28th World Series victory, then that's great.

A better question is: What will we expect in terms of baseball from Rodriguez? In a league based solely on production, Alex Rodriguez will have to overcome his checkered past and play at a consistent level if he wants to retain his title as an offensive threat in the big leagues.

New York will face a difficult challenge and a painstaking risk by penciling Rodriguez into the line-up. But he still needs to be paid \$61 million by the organization. In the eyes of the New York Yankees, they will attempt to squeeze every penny's worth out of the clubhouse polarizer.

Alex Rodriguez may have no positive impact on the team's record, but his contribution is toward the team—not the A-Rod legacy, which is deep in the landfill alongside the likes of Mark McGwire and Barry Bonds. His name may not have value in the record books, but his value toward the New York Yankees in the upcoming season rests on his ability to swing the bat.

This A-Rod stuff is in the past for the New York Yankees this season, whose priority is to win games. And if the post-steroid-era A-Rod can make an impact, that is the push this offensively challenged Yankees team desires.



Spring training is underway, which means regular season baseball is right around the corner. The Mets will be looking to have a better campaign than the Yankees and they have a very good shot to do so.

The Mets not only have a better starting pitching staff than the Yankees; they have one of the best in the league. The Mets' ace, Matt Harvey will be coming back from Tommy John surgery to reunite with other young studs like Zack Wheeler and Jon Niese, as well as Bartolo Colon and last season's Rookie of the Year Jacob deGrom. That doesn't even include Dillon Gee, as well as prospects Noah Syndergaard and Steven Matz. I'll take that pitching corps any day over the aging CC Sabathia, injury prone Michael Pineda, the underachieving Ivan Nova, Nathan Eovaldi and journeyman Chris Capuano. They do have a gem in Masahiro Tanaka though to anchor their rotation, but he can only pitch every five games or so.

The Mets' lineup will consist of a blend of veterans and young up-and-comers. David Wright, Daniel Murphy, Curtis Granderson and Michael Cuddyer provide some veteran leadership; while youngsters Travis d'Arnaud, Lucas Duda, Wilmer Flores and defensive standout Juan Lagares (who won a Gold Glove award last season) look to build upon last year's success. The tools are there for a solid offense, while also being a defensively sound lineup.

The Yankees will be playing their first season without longtime captain Derek Jeter, whose leadership will likely be sorely missed in the locker-room. Alex Rodriguez will be back for the Yankees this season, or as he's better known, A-Roid. He'll return after serving a suspension for the 2014 season for using illegal steroids from the now-closed Biogenesis anti-aging clinic in Florida, and trying to hamper the MLB's investigation into the allegations against him. The 39-year-old rejoins the Yankee core in hopes he can provide a spark without the use of performance enhancing drugs.

The Mets are finally poised for their first winning season since 2008 and first playoff berth since 2006. The fans are ready and the club has the players to do it.

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