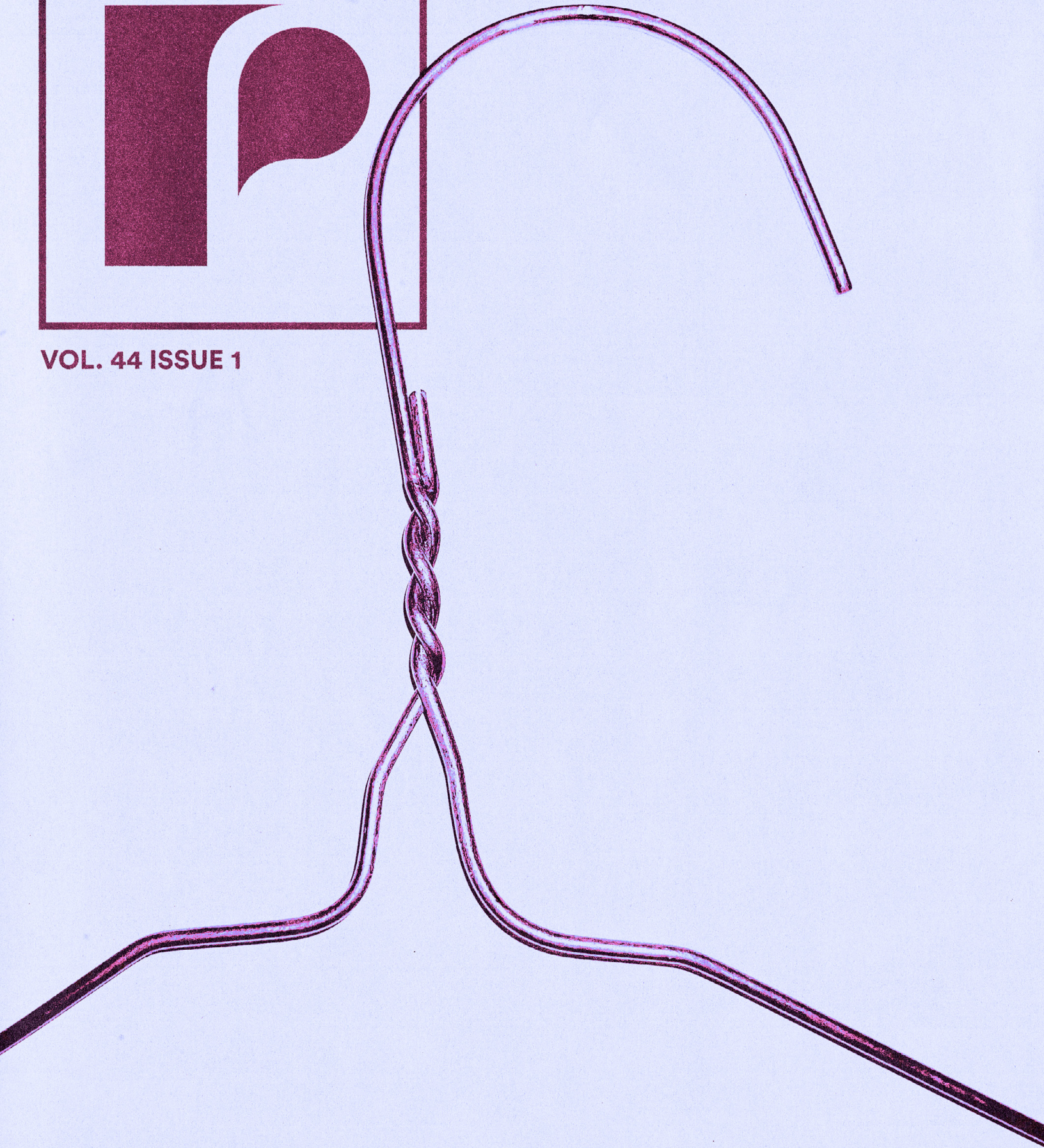


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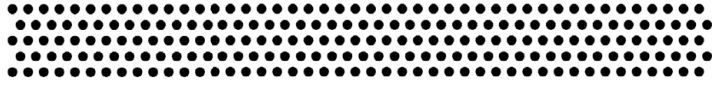
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# Letter from the Editor



By Keating Zelenke

**W**hen I joined The Press in the fall of 2020, I distinctly remember thinking to myself that I would never pursue an editorial position. Like many people at the height of the pandemic, I could hardly be counted on to take care of myself, much less other people's work — the Cs I earned in Intro to Mass Communications and Foreign Policy testify to that fact. But when the former exec, Deanna Albohn, encouraged me to run for graphics editor, I reluctantly did it. And every semester after that, I kept on running for positions and I kept on getting them.

There's a lot of things to love about The Press. For one, walking into our office is like walking into a dumpster diver's garage museum — spray-painted shoes hanging from the ceiling, laces tucked in between the ceiling tiles; Post-it notes on the walls declaring things like "BIG MEATY CLAWS" with absolutely no context; a red plastic spoon hooked to a Command Strip by an old shoe lace; a sandwich shop sign that no current student can explain the origin of. Every person who walks in here leaves something behind, as evidenced by the names of long-graduated members carved into the table at the center of it all.

So I walked in here two Octobers ago and I never left. Yeah, the artifacts that decorate our office brought me in, but something else made me stay. Like most people, I've spent the last 21 years of my life running away from responsibilities and obligations, and when I first walked into SAC 307K, I couldn't imagine what would possess me to voluntarily take those things on.

This is what I think it really is — through working at The Press, I discovered meaningful work. Not the work that will (hopefully) deliver my degree to me in May, and not the work that keeps the tiny roof over my head in Port Jeff Station. How do I put it? It's not something cheesy, like the work that "gets me out of bed" every morning. Admittedly, I've spent a number of days dreading coming into the very office I sit in now, dreading looking at that stupid Mona Lisa portrait on the wall, her small, obnoxious smile taunting me, telling me that I have no ideas, that I should never have run to be exec, that I'm not cut out for this. I think about how the person who spray-painted over her face with devil horns was right — *what a bitch!*

Really, the magazine has been like a thunderstorm for me. It's shaken the ground I stand on. But every once in a while, a bolt of lightning straight from God comes down and I swear I can feel those bright-white branches shock me straight through every vein and capillary in my body.

It's electrifying.



## THE STONY BROOK PRESS

SEPTEMBER 2022

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Scan with Spotify to hear what we've been listening to lately:





# HOW SUNY'S NEW CHOSEN NAME AND PRONOUN POLICY WILL AFFECT QUEER COLLEGE STUDENTS

By Rafael Cruvinel and Jane Montalto

**N**ew York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on June 8 that all 64 SUNY campuses will enact a chosen name and pronoun policy in order to respect and reflect the identities of transgender, gender nonconforming and nonbinary students.

The policy allows a student's chosen name and pronouns to appear on college diplomas, campus portals, class rosters and student email addresses. Moreover, it gives students the option to select "X," rather than "M" or "F," when providing their gender to their college.

The law mandates that the gender identity policy must be implemented by the end of 2022 and the chosen

name policy by the start of the fall 2023 semester.

As per Stony Brook University's Office of the Registrar, the university has had its own chosen name policy since fall 2020. However, the governor's policy is more comprehensive because it includes a gender nonconforming option and ties all SUNY campuses around a single notion of inclusivity, rather than leaving each campus with its own policy based on its own terms.

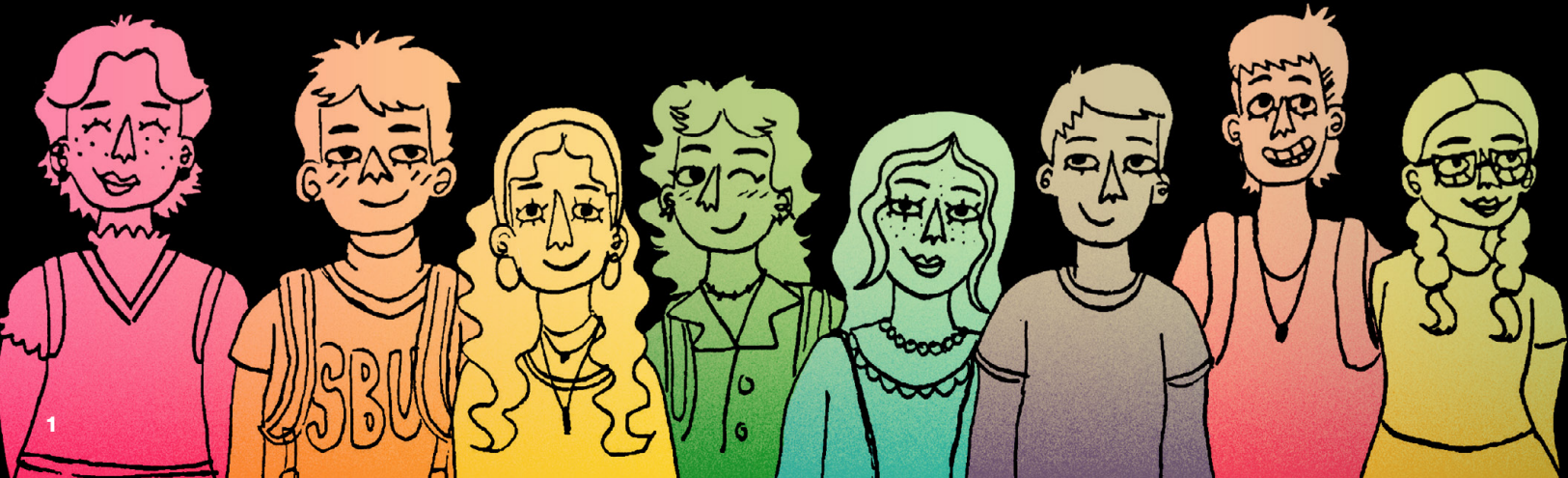
According to a press release from Gov. Hochul's office, these measures represent a step forward in SUNY's mission to "create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for students within the LGBTQIA+ community."

Sam McGee, a 25-year-old nonbinary alum of Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), used college as a place to explore their freedom and become more confident in their identity.

"I know for me personally, I was out as bi and kind of questioning if I was gay in high school, and then when I went to Suffolk, that was when I was like, 'Alright, I'm just gonna go for it and tell everybody,'" McGee said. "Nobody you know from the past is going to be there, so it gives you this safe space."

Additionally, McGee stressed how valuable it is for schools to support students in these situations.

"To know that your school is also backing you — having a safe space and





the ability to totally customize your new life — I think that is going to be a really good thing for a lot of people,” they said.

Although SCCC already had a chosen name policy prior to the governor’s measure, it did not cover issues related to pronouns and gender.

“School is a setting for people to learn, grow and discover themselves,” said Maria Demauro, the community mobilization coordinator at PFY, an LGBT advocacy group on Long Island. “Everyone deserves to feel safe and supported at school, and this new policy is a great start.”

Demauro is a licensed master social worker who provides counseling and gender-affirming care services for trans and nonbinary people. She also oversees TransAction, a support space aimed at creating inclusivity for trans and nonbinary people ages 15 to 30.

“A chosen name is more than just a nickname or a preference,” Demauro said. “A chosen name is, quite literally, your name by choice. When you respect someone’s chosen name, you are respecting them as a human being. You are respecting them as an autonomous person who is the expert of their own experience.”

Demauro also emphasized the importance of acceptance as a way to com-

bat mental health issues.

“Research consistently shows that when a trans or nonbinary person is in a space where their name and pronouns are being respected, their mental health drastically improves and their suicidality decreases,” she said. “In this way, using someone’s chosen name is suicide prevention.”

One of the studies she referred to is the 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, which shows that rates of attempting suicide among young queer people are significantly lower in accepting and inclusive communities compared to those that are more hostile.

“It can be really scary for LGBTQ+ students to feel safe or accepted in their environment, especially when they are just starting to be their true self,” said Liv Haring, a transfeminine, nonbinary and genderfluid Stony Brook graduate.

Haring said that she began her transition when she was a senior in college, so she had to come out to professors and friends who had met her before she was her true self.

“Everyone was very respectful and accepting to me as a trans student,” she said.

Unfortunately, this isn’t everyone’s reality, especially in a time when queer-

ness is being contested on a legal basis.

“The current anti-LGBT laws being passed in conservative states are honestly terrifying and disastrous,” Haring said. “If I were to lose access to my hormones, for example, I would be devastated beyond words, probably to the point of becoming suicidal.”

Interim SUNY Chancellor Deborah Stanley spoke on this matter when addressing the new policy.

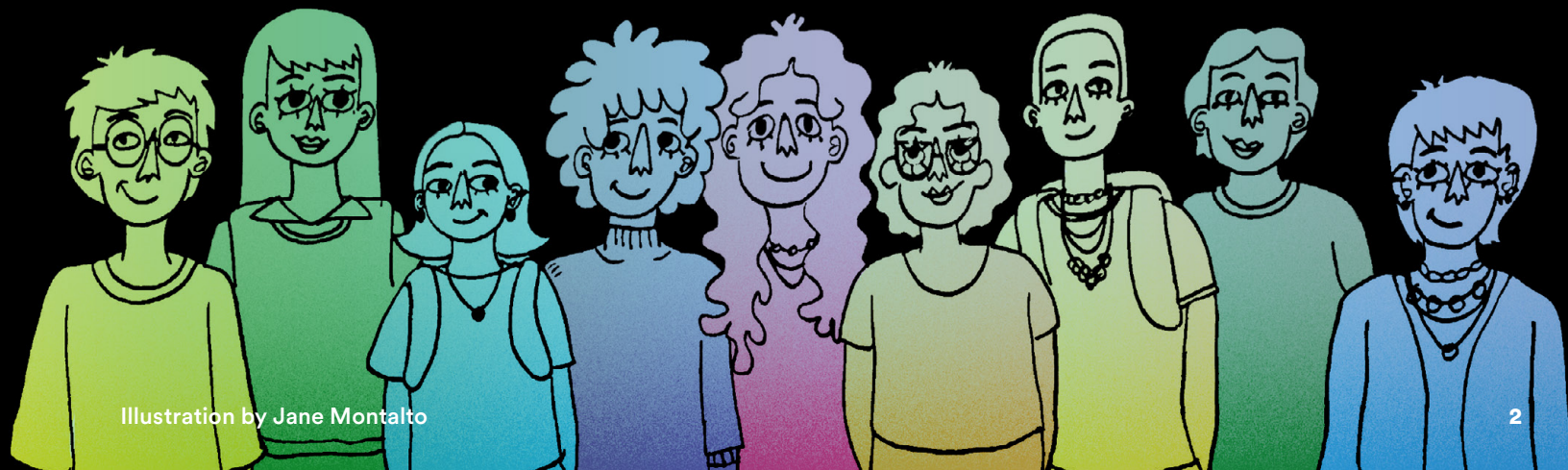
“To those students and families who are seeing an unprecedented effort to roll back LGBTQIA+ rights and opportunities in other states, we want you to know that New York State and SUNY’s 64 colleges and universities intend only to move forward,” Stanley said.

Although the implementation of the policy makes SUNY campuses a more comfortable space, there are still public institutions where this isn’t the case.

McGee, for example, won’t see these differences in their daily life since they are pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Brooklyn College, which is a part of the CUNY system and has a less stringent preferred name policy. However, they remain hopeful for the future.

“I’m crossing my fingers that maybe it will jumpstart and kind of become the norm for everywhere,” they said. ■

“EVERYONE DESERVES  
TO FEEL SAFE AND SUPPORTED  
AT SCHOOL.”









... which stages and not simply when the mother

The District Court, contrary to what the majority has said, ... The District Court, contrary to what the majority has said, ... The District Court, contrary to what the majority has said, ...

... one or more of which may not be, or the special facts present in actual case or controversy. pp. 127-128.

... what ... remains ... in ... post-Roe ...

... America ...

... the abortion decision and its effect on ... to the medical judgment of the physician ...

... the first Amendment, the State, in promoting its interest in the health of the mother, may, if it chooses, regulate the abortion procedure in ways that are reasonably related to maternal health. pp. 163, 164.

(c) For the stage subsequent to viability the State, in protecting its interest in the potentiality of human life, may, if it chooses, regulate, and even prohibit, abortion except where necessary in appropriate medical judgment, for the preservation of the life or health of the mother. pp. 163-164; 164-165.

(d) The State may define the term "physician" to mean only a person currently licensed by the State and may prohibit the performance of an abortion unless it is performed by a physician who is not a "physician" so defined. p. 165.

... it is unnecessary to decide the inductive rule ...

BY KEATING ZELLENKE & CARMELA CASSARA



On Friday, June 24, the U.S. Supreme Court ended constitutional protections for abortion that had been in place nearly 50 years in a decision by its conservative majority to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The announcement triggered near-immediate strict abortion bans in 12 states and potentially more, pending the results of state legal battles.

This win for Republican politicians comes just one day after another shocking win for conservatives — and on a grim anniversary. Exactly a month before the decision, 21 people — 19 of them children — were murdered in a mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas. On June 23, the same politicians that celebrated *Roe*'s reversal as a “pro-life” victory also celebrated the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn a long-standing New York law that limited the concealed carry of guns in public spaces. Being pro-gun and pro-life is an oxymoron, and represents the hypocrisy of those who celebrated in the wake of these decisions.

That last week in June demonstrated the dire state of our American democracy, as the public opinions on both of these issues were betrayed in favor of the opinion of the conservative Supreme Court majority, which includes five justices who were appointed to lifelong terms by presidents who were not elected by the people.

In his concurring opinion, conservative Justice Clarence Thomas stated that other landmark cases that involve personal privacy — *Griswold*, *Lawrence* and



2022 - Carmela Cassara

*Obergefell* — should also be reconsidered in the highest court. This means that the right to contraception, the right to same-sex marriage and the right to same-sex relationships are all next on the chopping block. So long as the Supreme Court remains locked in a conservative majority, there’s no reason to assume that what happened to the right to choose will not also happen to these other fundamental human rights.

Two hours after the news broke, President Biden stood in the Cross Hall of the White House addressing the nation. In what sounded more like a campaign speech than the words of a sitting president, he urged Americans upset with the decision to go out and vote.

“This fall, *Roe* is on the ballot,” he said. “I will do all in my power to protect a woman’s right in states where they will face the consequences of today’s decision.”

Millions of people now thrust into a post-*Roe* America must grapple with what their vote could mean in the fall, and what it has meant up until this point. Nine unelected justices that exercise their will over 328 million people. One elected president who apparently can do nothing to defend his voters’ human rights. If voting is a viable solution for the Democratic public majority, how is it that a Democratic president and a Democratic-controlled Congress are constantly losing battles for their constituents’ long-established rights?

The Supreme Court justified their decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (along with *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, another landmark case on abortion) by stating that “the right to abortion is not deeply rooted in the Nation’s history and tradition.” Similar to their decision the day before on New York’s gun law, the conservative justices of the Court relied on the state of the country as it was in 1788, when the Constitution of the United States was ratified, to determine how it should be ruled today, well over 200 years later. Referring specifically to *Roe*, health care was so severely limited in the nation’s early years that women weren’t allowed to ride trains because it



1980 - Keystone Features









2022 - Carmela Cassara



1986 - Ann E. Zelle

**This is what the Supreme Court means  
when they talk about the "history and tradition" of the United States —**

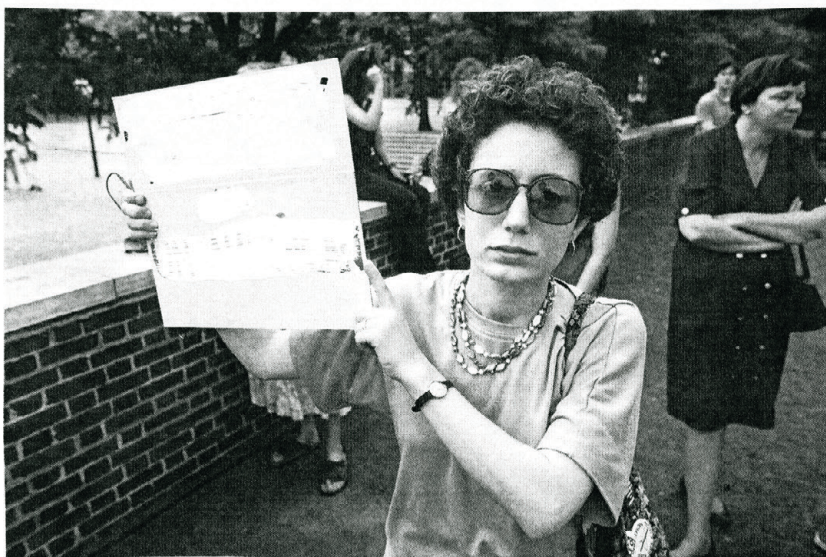
**control over those who are not cis men,  
who are not wealthy**

**exercising  
those**

**and those who are not white.**



2022 - Carmela Cassara



1992 - Leif Skoogfors



was believed that their uteruses would fly out of their bodies from the sheer speed of 50 miles per hour.

These arguments about “the Nation’s history and tradition” have allowed a deeply out-of-touch conservative Court majority to enshrine legal precedents based on religion and personal choices rather than the rights of the people. In their statement, they somehow go on to compare *Roe v. Wade* to the historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which served as the legal basis for segregation until the mid-1950s.



2022 - Carmela Cassara

Lawmakers in conservative states have been lying in wait for the final announcement of the decision to overturn *Roe* for weeks. As early as September of last year, states like Texas began enacting strict anti-abortion laws in anticipation of a ruling in their favor. In early May, the news site Politico leaked a draft opinion of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling that would overturn *Roe* and *Casey*, prompting even more legislators across dozens of states to begin drafting their own laws to go into effect the moment the decision would be announced. One of these drafts from Louisiana Republicans in the state’s House of Representatives classifies abortion as homicide from “the moment of fertilization,” potentially criminalizing the use of emergency contraceptives. Though this draft has not yet been added into the Louisiana trigger laws that went into effect as soon as *Roe* was overturned, efforts to ratify it remain ongoing among politicians in the state. Even without this provision, the Louisiana trigger laws are brutally restrictive, with no exceptions for victims of rape or incest.

Efforts to restrict the right to emergency contraceptives and birth control prove that this decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* — and the potential fight to overturn *Griswold* and other rulings that Justice Thomas alluded to in his concurring opinion — is nothing more than a way of controlling people’s bodies, and especially those of underprivileged groups.

Cristal Norton, president of the campus Planned Parenthood Generation Action chapter at Stony Brook University, said that people of color, people of low eco-

nomics status and victims of sexual assault would suffer disproportionately.

“Rich people will always get the health care they need. People who can get pregnant and who encounter issues will be forced to carry the child to term,” she said. “POC and people with low incomes already struggle with access to abortions, and this will just make it harder. Black people with uteruses will be at a greater risk of dying or [having] complications during or after birth — they have the highest maternal mortality rates.”

This is what the Supreme Court means when they talk about the “history and tradition” of the United States — exercising control over those who are not cis men, those who are not wealthy and those who are not white. By stripping away options for family planning, rich white elites are able to ensure that those who are poor and struggling in America today remain that way, hopelessly caught in a relentless cycle of poverty. The potential axe on additional rights, like the right to same-sex marriage and relationships and the right to access birth control, will further hurt those who are already oppressed in this country.

For many, it feels as though the cracks in American democracy have widened to caverns over the past decade. There is no longer a bridge between the two sides that alienate our politics; instead, one side consistently pushes to come out on top at the expense of those who oppose them. We have witnessed time and again how our democracy has failed us, and it will continue to do so as the consequences of overturning this precedent ramp up and threaten other human rights.

With that in mind, is there any winning in this painstaking debate on abortion?

As the Supreme Court begins to look more and more like a broken institution, both politicians and average Americans are wondering where we go from here. Since Justice Amy Coney Barrett’s confirmation in 2020, Democrats have discussed packing the court by adding more justices to offset the current conservative bias. However, once Democrats are out of power and Republicans control Congress again, they could just as easily pack the court to their liking. This process has the potential to completely delegitimize the judicial branch, ruled by whichever party is in charge of Congress.

A potentially less volatile alternative to packing the court would be establishing term limits for Supreme Court justices, so a political majority won’t impact legal precedents for decades on end. While not delegitimizing the Court like packing might, constant turnover for justices could prove just as helpless to shifting political parties in Congress. However, it could still be a more democratic solution to what currently feels like a very undemocratic Court.

But both of these corrective measures still require legislative support, which neither of them have. Thus, the question remains whether or not voting among regular American citizens has the power that Democrats like President Biden think it does. If the Court does not become more accessible to the people after this year’s elections, then voting may prove futile. After over two centuries of stagnation, it already might have. ■



# STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS LACK VITAL ACCESS TO PERIOD PRODUCTS

BY SOPHIE BECKMAN AND MELANIE FORMOSA





**S**tony Brook University's Undergraduate Student Government (USG) recently launched a pilot program to provide free menstrual hygiene products to students on campus, called the Menstrual Hygiene Program (MHP). While the name may suggest a solution to the lack of access to products on campus, it is not enough.

This program consists of only two product dispensers across the entire campus — which has a student population of over 25,000 — and both product dispensers are located in a single location: the Student Activities Center (SAC).

This initiative took two years to be approved, and it is funded solely by the Student Activity Fee, which is already split between all clubs and activities on campus. This sparse funding is one explanation as to why the dispensers are located in so few bathrooms.

Stony Brook students are never expected to pay for their own personal toilet paper in residence halls or class buildings. As menstruation is another basic human function, there should be no cost for period products either. This disparity affects students' physical, mental and emotional health, and puts a financial strain on students.

Acknowledging the issues around menstruation starts with fighting the mindset that period products are luxury items that should be dealt with personally. Normalizing discussions about menstruation can create a shift in this archaic perception. Companies like Aunt Flow, which has partnered with Stony Brook for the new MHP, are working to start the conversation and advocate for free period products.

"Policy change comes with cultural change," said Anusha Singh, a community and impact specialist with Aunt Flow. The lack of availability of products is not purely because of a lack of funding.

"There is always a budget for toilet paper," Singh said. "Even if the student population were to triple in size, schools would never require students to purchase their own toilet paper. Because of the stigma around menstruation, and the fact that non-menstruators are usually the majority in administration, period products are not seen as a priority."

Lack of access to products is a widespread and per-

vasive issue among students. According to a 2021 study by Thinx, students often struggle to afford period products and rarely find free products in school bathrooms. Students at Stony Brook are no different.

Multiple students on campus haven't seen that there are now free products in the SAC bathrooms. Madison Ford, a junior at Stony Brook, was surprised to hear that products are located there now.

"The other day my friend got to class and realized she forgot tampons. She had to walk 15 minutes back to her dorm to get them," Ford said.

This scenario is not rare, and students often miss valuable education because they don't have access to period products. This impact on attendance and performance can be seen across school campuses. According to the Thinx study, "65% [of students] do not want to be at school when they have their periods. 38% often or sometimes cannot do their best school work due to lack of access to period products."

"We don't get a choice when we have our period or if we have one at all," Ford said. "It's unfair to have to pay to begin with."

Even students who have seen this initiative in practice want greater availability of products on campus.

"I don't always have products on me," Erin McCartney, a junior, said. "That could happen anywhere, and then you'd have to walk to find something."

Prior to this pilot program, very few locations on campus offered free period products. Students in need of these products were limited to baskets in the lobby of the Campus Recreation Center, outside the Center for Prevention and Outreach offices and inside the LGBTQ+ Center.

Lamisa Musarat is the associate treasurer of the Undergraduate Student Government. She helped to initiate the new Menstrual Hygiene Program on campus and surveyed the student population.

"People feel uncomfortable getting products in public locations," Musarat said. "These resources, like in the Rec, were rarely used by students."

A goal for this program is to provide dispensers directly inside bathrooms in other high-traffic areas including the Melville Library, the Student Union and eventually in residence halls, Musarat said.

**"WE DON'T GET A CHOICE  
WHEN WE HAVE OUR PERIOD  
OR IF WE HAVE ONE AT ALL."**



Other schools have proven that with enough advocacy, these programs can be implemented campuswide. The University of Michigan has over 2,000 restrooms stocked with free menstrual products following requests from students to make the products available. After California's Menstrual Equity for All Act passed in 2021, universities across California are now advised to stock at least 50% of their bathrooms with free products. UCLA supplies all campus restrooms with menstrual care products.

During the launch event for the Menstrual Hygiene Program, Musarat shared student feedback about the affordability of products.

"Menstrual hygiene products should not be priced the way they are in the marketplace on campus," one student surveyed said. "That is unethical for a product that is necessary for half the population."

At a market on campus, one box of ten tampons costs \$8.63. According to calculations done by The Huffington Post, those who use tampons go through about 20 per menstrual cycle. Cycles vary and could require more or less, but in general, this means that at Stony Brook University, it costs students about \$17 a month and over \$200 a year to sustain a basic biological function.

"Don't make students put in money for a basic human necessity," another student who provided feedback on the new pilot program said. "This is long overdue."

When students are forced to pay upwards of \$200 per year on products, they are more likely to resort to reusing products or finding alternatives. Rachel McFarland, treasurer of Stony Brook's Planned Parenthood Generation Action (PPGA) chapter, spoke at the MHP launch event about this issue.

"Lack of access has been linked to using substitute products like toilet paper, socks or two pairs of pants, and stretching product usage," she said.

Extending the life of period products may result in risks for vulvar irritation, vaginal discomfort and fatal toxic shock syndrome. According to research by Huma Farid at Harvard Medical School, 64% of people who menstruate in the United States reported having difficulty affording menstrual products at some point, and 21% reported they were unable to afford menstrual products every month. Food stamps and subsidies under the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program do not cover the cost of menstrual products.

In addition to their financial strain, menstrual products strain the environment. The typical disposable pad takes roughly 500 to 800 years to decompose, and is used by 89% of people who menstruate. A person who menstruates will use between 5,000 and 15,000 pads and tampons and 400 pounds of menstrual hygiene product packaging in their lifetime. Disposable menstrual products contribute to the over 250 million tons of trash that Americans generate each year. The \$2-billion-per-year menstrual hygiene industry commercializes the natural menstrual process and appeals to environmentally conscious consumers with buzzwords like "compostable" or "biodegradable," but often these products still contain plastic for waterproofing.

Stony Brook's partnership with Aunt Flow offers a slightly more environmentally conscious option, producing approximately 25% less waste than leading brands due to being made with 100% organic cotton. Despite this, the location of these products is restricted to only two dispensers in the SAC, so any positive environmental impact is minimal when the rest of campus continues to use traditional disposable products.

APRIL - JUNE

Menstrual Hygiene Program

# MHIP

A USG PILOT PROGRAM PROVIDING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS TO ANY STUDENT!

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Stony Brook University **USG**



# AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY, IT COSTS STUDENTS ABOUT \$17 A MONTH AND OVER \$200 A YEAR TO SUSTAIN A BASIC BIOLOGICAL FUNCTION.

Stony Brook students are working hard to advocate for accessible products on campus. Clubs like End the Stigma SBU, PPGA and the LGBTQ Alliance are leading the charge in spreading awareness about issues surrounding periods. A main issue that these clubs focus on is period poverty, or a lack of access to menstrual products, for college students and for people around the world.

A major contributor to period poverty is the “luxury tax” collected on menstrual products in at least 30 states in the U.S. The menstrual product tax exacerbates period poverty because it acts as a barrier to the estimated 16.9 million menstruating individuals across the country living in poverty.

Statewide policies have been put in place for no-cost menstrual products in public bathrooms. In 2018, former Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed a bill that requires public schools in New York to have freely available menstrual products for grades 6 through 12. But for public universities and colleges in New York, the requirements remain unclear.

New York Assembly member Linda Rosenthal has introduced a new, more inclusive version of this law called the Total Access to Menstrual Products (TAMP) Act. The proposed law would require tampons and sanitary napkins to be available in all public restrooms across the state, including at universities. It is currently active in the assembly committee and has to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to Gov. Hochul.

The main barrier to implementation of these policies stems from the fact that menstruation is seen as taboo, and those in charge are unlikely to prioritize providing free products if they aren’t aware that barriers to access exist. With more awareness and advocacy, period poverty could inch its way to the forefront of policymakers’ agendas.

Students on campus are continuing to push the importance of this issue. The lack of access to free period products at Stony Brook is a source of unnecessary financial stress and a barrier to learning in a university that prides itself on providing, in its own words, an “accessible world-class education.” ■





ALDO FALLAI

BRONX

POST

WITH PHOTOS & WORDS BY  
DAN MONTALTO &  
CARMELA CASSARA







# ON APRIL 21

hundreds of Stony Brook students buzzed with excitement while they waited on an extensive line that poured out of the Island Federal Arena. Step by infinite step, they inched closer to the door, where the event that many had been waiting for was already beginning.

Perhaps one of Stony Brook's most highly anticipated events of the spring semester, Brookfest finally made its return. Rapper Young M.A and R&B artist Capella Grey performed to a sold-out crowd before headliner Gunna took the stage for the first Brookfest in two years.

The line for the concert started hours early, with a sizable crowd backed up to East Side Dining anxiously waiting for the show. Upon entry into the arena, they were greeted with the music of DJ Potential, a popular student DJ on campus.

Due to fire regulations, only about a third of the arena's floor was filled, leaving plenty of room for those with floor tickets to dance around. As the doors opened at 6:30 p.m., some audience members wandered in and found their seats, patiently waiting for the opening acts. It was obvious that the stands, like the floor directly in front of the stage, were not entirely filled, as there were many students still outside, waiting to be let in. Despite this, Capella Grey opened his set, facing a largely empty stadium. He only played two songs before heading offstage. The crowd was confused, but ultimately distracted — they were ready for the bigger artists.

Due to Capella Grey's premature departure, there was a lot of time before the next act. During the lull, more people from the outside trickled in, and music continued to play courtesy of DJ Potential, who stood behind a booth at the front of the stadium. Before Young M.A came on-stage, members of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) threw rolled-up Brookfest T-shirts into the crowd, boosting morale and anticipation. Students danced to DJ Potential's set as the bass was bumping throughout the venue. It was clear that many students were ecstatic to be there. For many, it was their first Brookfest — and for some, it was their last.







Brooklyn-born rapper Young M.A tore up the stage when she finally entered. To amp up the crowd for her set, she encouraged everyone in the audience to turn on their phone flashlights and sway them in the air, illuminating the entire arena. There was a large group on stage with her — her entourage. They all danced as Young M.A performed her first songs. A few minutes in, she began to call for volunteers to come on stage to dance. There was clear hesitation from security, but she insisted on bringing a group of girls on stage.

Amanda Davidman, a senior health science major, was among the group that was brought up.

“I had to be lifted up over the barricade in front of everyone, and I’m really tall, so I was scared, but it worked out,” Davidman said.

The spotlights of the stage illuminated Davidman and the other girls. After much encouragement from Young M.A, they engaged in a twerk-off. The audience erupted in support for the volunteers.

“Being up there was so surreal at first,” Davidman said. “I was somewhat shy, but all the girls were hyping each other up, so then I felt better.”

With the crowd successfully amped, their anticipation peaked as they waited for Gunna. When he finally made his appearance on stage, fans howled as his first song rang out. Gunna frequently engaged with the audience,

“IT WAS SO MUCH FUN  
BEING ON THE  
FLOOR

BUT IT WAS ALSO  
SCARY  
AT SOME POINTS.”

exciting many of the students on the floor. During one of his songs, he leapt right onto the barricade in front of the crowd and reached his hand out as hysterical fans jostled and tried to grab him. When Gunna performed his viral hit “pushin P,” the crowd chanted along and bounced to the music.

To some, the crowd on the floor seemed to get a little too rambunctious. Taylor Matthews, a rising sophomore marine vertebrate biology major, was in the crowd of dancing students. “It was so much fun being on the floor in all the mosh pits that opened up, but it was also scary at some points,” he said.

“Two people had to get pulled off of the floor by security. ... It looked like they passed out because of how many people were pushing,” Matthews said. “Sometimes [it was] scary, but overall [it] was an amazing time!”

At the end of the show, Stony Brook students flowed out of the arena into the dark night. People laughed and sang as they returned home after the energetic performances.

Davidman looks back on Brookfest fondly. “It was definitely a great experience — one of my favorite memories of senior year.”

After a two-year hiatus and a number of setbacks, Brookfest has finally reinstated itself as an important part of the spring semester at Stony Brook. ■





















TYLER, THE CREATOR BRINGS

# CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST

TO MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

BY BEN ZIMMER





# SEEING YOUR FAVORITE ARTIST LIVE

WILL ALWAYS BE AN  
UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE —

especially when your love for their music spans more than a decade. I remember listening to Tyler, the Creator in the backseats of the basketball bus with my buddies in middle school. This March, I rekindled the spirit of those moments. My girlfriend and I went with one of those buddies from middle school, along with his girlfriend, to Tyler's show at Madison Square Garden.

Tyler, the Creator's release pattern — an album every two years since I was 11 — has always provided his art with the space to step in at crucial points in my life. *CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST* was the album playing in the midst of the summer that made it clear I was dating my future wife. When I lost a friend of mine, *IGOR* was the album that blew out the speakers every night I'd close the gym I was working at. At the time, those nights alone with *IGOR* were the best chance at solace my hands could reach following his death. When I started getting into music again during my senior year of high school — before I ever picked up my phone to write anything down — *Flower Boy* was the trap door. A door that dropped me into a world I'd forgotten since middle school: Bumping Earl Sweatshirt, Mac Miller, Chief Keef and Tyler after class and after basketball games.

I had cast those middle school days aside when high school rolled around, but I don't hesitate to cherish those memories now. Those days still felt very alive that Sunday evening at Madison Square Garden. Everything from his beginnings — *Goblin* and *Wolf* — to *CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST* had a moment in the sun that night. Every iteration of being a Tyler, the Creator fan was on full display.

Seeing him live for the first time felt like a culmination of many things: the love I share with my girlfriend, the love I have for the friends I made in middle school and the love I've had for Tyler's music since I was a kid.

The cold Manhattan air the four of us inhaled was soon erased by the hustle and bustle of Madison Square Garden: warm, loud and full of life. Voices from people of all shapes and sizes trying to find the right shirt or hoodie from the merchandise kiosks, security guards directing everyone to where they needed to go based on their tickets and of course Tyler's music playing from speakers everywhere.

By the time my girlfriend and I got to our seats, which were to the right of the stage on the second floor, we were itching to start cheering. And once the concert itself did begin, it seemed like we never stopped. I never stopped yelling into her ear that I loved her over the loud music. I never stopped holding her, and we never seemed to stop singing lyrics to each other that only could've been shared before while driving together in the car. Neither of us cared how long we were standing, or how much our feet hurt — once the music started, only our love and Tyler's presence were alive.

I'm only 21 — in the grand scheme of things, I have so many more memories to make. But the number of snap-





# EVERY ITERATION OF BEING A TYLER, THE CREATOR FAN

WAS ON FULL DISPLAY.

shots in my life that belong to Tyler's music is immeasurable. When he played "SMUCKERS" in particular, all the mornings I drove to school during my senior year of high school with the song on full blast came flooding back.

*I clearly don't give a fuck, so you could run that shit back  
And fuck your loud pack, and fuck your Snapchat*

Screaming all the lyrics at 7 in the morning — not a single drop of coffee, just pure adrenaline. His music has always had a quality that yanks you right back to when each song meant the most to you. That's why the balance in his setlist was perfect.

He began the show with the first four tracks from *CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST*, rising from the floor of Madison Square Garden in a coral 1939 Rolls Royce Wraith. From my vantage point, Tyler wasn't much bigger than a blip, but his confidence on stage reached every corner of the Garden for more than 90 minutes. Upon the conclusion of the first leg of the show, Tyler boarded a boat, a mahogany and cream vessel shining under the Garden's spotlights, and sailed from the main stage to a smaller grassy stage across the arena. There, he tapped into his roots, playing songs in reverse chronological order from *IGOR*, *Flower Boy*, *Cherry Bomb*, *Wolf* and even *Goblin*. "Boredom" and "911" became "Bimmer," "IFHY" and the aforementioned "SMUCKERS."

Tyler even played "Yonkers," a song he notoriously despises because of how much personal and artistic growth he's undergone since its release and subsequent notoriety. Yet on stage, Tyler seemed to unabashedly accept all versions of who he's been after more than a decade in the public eye. Not to mention his frequent monologues in between songs, and poking fun at people in the crowd; a guy in an all-gray sweatsuit received a "shake that ass" chant courtesy of Tyler because he wasn't dancing enough as the setlist progressed.

Everything he's done following *Flower Boy* was paired with what preceded it in a way that felt incredibly right. As a person who's loved this dude for a minute — not only for his art but also his personal growth — I felt incredibly proud of T that night. It was a sold-out show, and his energy miraculously matched that of all 20,000 people who came to see him.

One day, I'm gonna thank him for all of this dumb shit in person. For now, this will have to suffice. ■



# STONY BROOK'S GRADUATE WORKERS CALL FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS



BY RAFAEL  
CRUVINEL

Members of Stony Brook's GSEU at their May Day protest in the Administration building on May 2. Photo by Rafael Cruvinel.





Protestors watch as GSEU Chief Steward Doğa Öner enters the University Senate meeting on Zoom on May 2. Photo by Rafael Cruvinel.



Graduate workers vocalized their financial struggles on Monday, May 2 at the May Day Open-Mic Action protest organized by Stony Brook University's Graduate Student Employee Union (GSEU) in West Campus' Administration building. Wearing GSEU T-shirts, graduate students carried a blue and red flag from the Communication Workers of America and posters with messages like "no more starvation wages" and "SBU counts on contingents. Can contingents count on SBU?"

While police officers and administration workers watched the protest from the second floor, protestors congregated around the spiral staircase and the dinosaur skeleton that decorates the lobby. The main lobby was illuminated by the sunlight that penetrated through the glass ceiling. As the group shared their stories, they drew solidarity from their collective struggle.

When Doğa Öner, the chief steward of the GSEU and a Ph.D. student in the philosophy department, asked who wanted to be next to speak, Gregory Lella raised one of his hands while he held CWA's flag with the other. Lella, a Ph.D. candidate in history, said that his department is having trouble recruiting new students because they are receiving better offers from public universities outside New York State.

"You are losing that talent," Lella said, looking at the administration workers who were watching the speech.

He pays in-state tuition, has no student debt and has sizable savings. Despite all of this, he can't afford on-campus housing.

"I came here with every privilege you could imagine and I'm having difficulty," he said. "Now imagine international

students. Now imagine the students who came here with college debts."

A research assistant who asked to remain anonymous for protection gave a testimony in which he revealed he has considered dropping out and leaving all of his research behind for lack of a better option. Even after working extra hours, he was forced to take out loans to pay his rent, putting him thousands of dollars in debt.

"Thousands of dollars that the university will not pay, will not reimburse me back and that they do not care about," he said.

He emphasized that he found himself in this situation even before the pandemic started and inflation began to rise. Now, in the middle of an economic crisis, his future remains uncertain.

"I do not know how I'll be able to afford the rest of my [stay] in Stony Brook," he said.

Following the open-mic session, the group gathered behind a chair where Öner sat while he prepared to speak with President Maurie McClinnis during the University Senate meeting — which was being held on Zoom. When GSEU had their chance to speak, University Senate President Richard Larson informed them that McClinnis had to leave because the meeting ran late and she had another call. Ironic laughter echoed in the main plaza as the group argued that the meeting was supposed to run until 5 p.m. and it was not 5 yet.

On April 21, GSEU delivered a letter with their requests to the President's office and read a statement to those present. On that day, Öner said that any prospective Stony Brook student should be attentive to the financial issues that SBU graduate workers struggle with.



“Unless this changes, this is most likely something you are going to face too,” he said.

Öner explained that their request is simple: a living wage. The Economic Policy Institute Family Calculator determines this value to be a yearly \$52,901 salary for an adult with no children living in Suffolk County. The extreme poverty level for Suffolk County is \$27,300 per year, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Stony Brook University’s base stipend is \$22,500 per year.

“We want to be treated like people who deserve to be able to live with dignity, be able to focus on our research — which is why we come to this university — and the simplest thing that the university can do to ensure that is to give us a living wage,” he said.

Öner added that the unsustainable conditions students face can be harmful from an educational perspective as well. He said that for the highest quality of education to be ensured, graduate workers need better living conditions.

“It’s not beneficial for anyone that this situation continues because we know that this affects everyone’s research and ability to teach,” he said.

This is not the first wave of protests from graduate stu-

dent workers — in November 2021, the GSEU held a rally outside the Administration building. On a sunny fall day, the students gathered around the fountain where they read testimonies from different workers through a speaker.

One of these was from an anonymous student in the Department of Computer Science, who wrote that they struggled to find an apartment that fit their necessities with their low stipend. Because of their financial situation, they lived with a verbally abusive roommate.

“I have become afraid of him to the point that I avoid being in the same room as him,” they wrote.

Also at the November protest, Andrew Dobbyn, the GSEU’s New York State president, said that 60% of instructional employees on campus are graduate students, but they represent only 9% of all the wages that Stony Brook pays every year.

“It’s not a budget issue,” Dobbyn said. “It’s a question of priority.”

Additionally, he said that there is a disproportionate discrepancy between TAs’ and RAs’ salaries and those of educators in higher positions like vice presidents and provosts. For example, while some graduate workers live below the extreme poverty level, Rick Gatteau — vice

## “IT’S NOT A BUDGET ISSUE. IT’S A QUESTION OF PRIORITY.”

The GSEU gave out free pizza in the Administration building’s lobby during their April 21 Teach-In. Photo by Rafael Cruvinel.







Protestors wait in the hallway at the GSEU's Teach-In on April 21. Photo by Rafael Cruvinel.

president of Student Affairs — earns roughly \$321,379 a year.

Beyond the letter given to McInnis, the statement read and the testimonies shared, the GSEU wrote a “Living Wage Campaign” petition to demand higher stipends from the university.

According to the petition, many of these workers are forced to live in “unsafe or abusive homes,” make choices between basic necessities like maintaining a car or buying groceries and commit to extra jobs. They say such conditions lead to mental health problems that become an obstacle to student success, going against the university’s mission statement of providing high-quality education and research.

“Anxious, hungry, worried and financially struggling graduate workers do not make good researchers or educators,” the union wrote.

Moreover, the petition reinforced what the anonymous research assistant said about how undignified living conditions might lead students to rethink their future. The petition explained that students dealing with hunger, anxiety and financial problems cannot perform to the best of their ability, forcing them to seek other paths for their lives.

“Our financial struggles turn the disciplines that we love into an exploitative reality, a source of so much financial misery and unhappiness that some of us consider leaving.”

So far, the petition has been endorsed by 13 local organizations, including the Graduate Student Organization’s senate and executive council, and has nearly 1,000 signatures from students, graduate workers, faculty and staff members.

Recently, the GSEU also launched their own publication, *The Stony Brook Worker*, which explains a little bit of the history of the Living Wage Campaign and updates its status. The campaign started one year ago and, by the end of fall 2021, was able to raise the base stipend of \$20,000 per year by 10%. However, with U.S. inflation rates at over 8%, this increase didn’t do much.

When asked for a comment regarding the GSEU’s requests, a spokesperson for the university said that they are aware of the discrepancy between high living cost and low stipends for graduate student employees and that this has been a “longstanding issue.” The spokesperson said that the university supports wage increases, but ongoing negotiations between the GSEU and the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations are holding them back from acting at this time.

“We will continue to work to strengthen graduate education and support for our graduate student employees who are key partners in our quest for academic and research excellence,” they said.

Although the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations is the division of the university responsible to do this strengthening work, the GSEU’s petition calls on President McInnis personally to solve this problem.

“You have professional, moral and personal responsibilities to ensure a living wage for graduate workers,” the union wrote.

President McInnis has stated multiple times that she cares about graduate students’ financial issues. The petition demands the president fulfill a moral obligation to address this problem as the leader of the university, a point that Öner agreed with.

“She has the power to give thousands of people a dignified life, which should be what the administration is doing,” he said.

On May 2, GSEU members left the Administration building without hearing a response from McInnis. However, their protests have been constant since the Living Wage Campaign started, demonstrating that they will not give up on their cause until they are satisfied with their living conditions. ■

*Melanie Formosa contributed reporting.*





Is the subway

SAFE?





By Matt Hono





This past April, a gunman released smoke canisters in a subway car at the 36th Street station in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and fired on passengers with a semi-automatic handgun.

A scene akin to a battle zone erupted within the car — 33 bullets were fired and 10 riders were shot.

Police recovered a bag at the scene that contained fireworks, a hatchet, a bottle of gasoline and a fuse. They had reason to believe that the attack was premeditated. The gunman injured 10 people, but miraculously none were killed.

“I don’t know if I’ll ever feel safe on the train again,” a 15-year-old high school student who witnessed the attack told The New York Times.

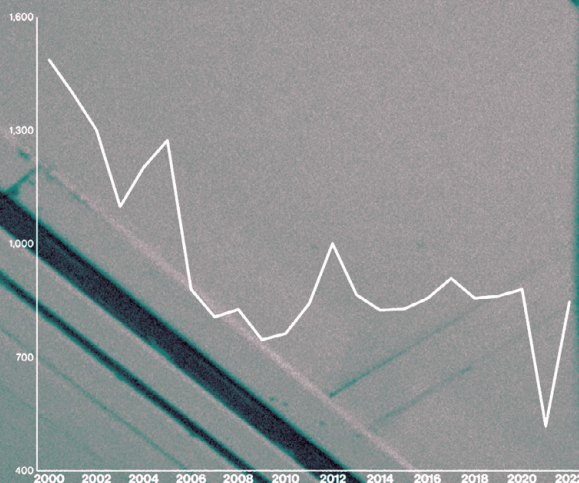
Subway crime reports have dominated headlines for the past two years, sparking tensions throughout the city. In January 2022, a man pushed Michelle Go, an Asian American woman, to her death in front of an oncoming train at the Times Square subway station. A spike in Asian American hate crimes has led to significant safety concerns for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community both inside and outside the transit system. News outlets have also reported on other transit crimes, from four youths stealing train keys from a conductor to the unprovoked assault of an elderly man. Many New Yorkers feel a palpable anxiety surrounding subway trips, and after the subway shooting in Sunset Park, there has only been further uneasiness. A 2022 Quinnipiac poll showed that 43% of responding New York City voters feel unsafe riding the subway during the day. During the evening, 61% reported feeling unsafe.

These stories have not only impacted perceptions of those who live in New York City, but also those who live in neighboring areas, such as Westchester and Long Island. Recently, I overheard a Suffolk County barber talking with his customer about how the lawlessness, widespread drug deals and riots have made trips to the city unbearable for him and his family. The emergence of the transit crime crisis has been emphasized by mainstream Republican politicians. During a televised debate, New York Republican gubernatorial candidate Rob Astorino asserted that subway riders on a “good day” may be “hit over the head with a bag of poop,” and on a bad day may “get hit with a hammer or shoved onto the train tracks.”

The perceived threat of subway crime has been a main talking point for many New York Republicans, who often use it as an excuse to advocate for unsuccessful and discriminatory policing strategies. Examples include “broken windows theory” — which has been disproven by researchers at Northeastern University — and the unconstitutional, biased and ineffective practice of “stop, question and frisk,” as advocated by former gubernatorial candidate Andrew Giuliani.

Growing up 40 minutes outside the city, I have al-

## NYC Transit Crime Incidents



Source: NYPD

ways been familiar with warnings from my parents to be cautious of my surroundings on the subway. These warnings were repeated routinely by other family and friends, but they often confused me. My experiences on the subway were always relatively comfortable and seemed disconnected from their perceptions. Besides the stress of missing a stop and navigating rush hour, I never experienced the terror and crime that the news around me amplified. I often hypothesized that this subway skepticism was a byproduct of living in a fearful, post-9/11 world, but in the aftermath of recent attacks, I’ve started to wonder if the warnings are valid. Am I just lucky? Should I be worried? Is subway crime truly rising?

On the surface, it appears that it is. Recent news headlines warn that transit crime is up 68%. However, the public must consider an important caveat to this data: while it *is* up around 68%, this figure is compared to last year, when COVID-19 suppressed public transit ridership. The NYPD reported 2,499 subway felonies in 2019 and only 1,778 in 2021 — a historically low number. Now, in 2022, the number of felony complaints has returned to pre-pandemic levels. According to MTA data, from January to May 2022, there were 966 felonies reported. During the same period in 2019, there were 940. When compared to 2019, crime is really only up about 3%.

However, crime per capita might be a better metric to examine. Ridership on the subway is currently about 50% to 60% of what it was pre-pandemic, with about 3 million people riding each day. Logically, crime should be below what it was in 2019 due to this decreased ridership. Looking at crime rates, you can see that in 2021, there were 2.32 felonies per million rides, while in 2019 there were 1.45 felonies per million rides. In May 2022, the MTA reported 1.84 felonies per million rides. While the raw number of felonies is around where

Photos by Matt Hono



Transit crime

is still

overwhelmingly

RARE

it was pre-pandemic, felonies per capita is on the rise compared to 2019, a trend likely due to the tendency for crowds to discourage criminal acts. Many experts, such as Nicole Gelinias from the Manhattan Institute, believe that once ridership reaches the “safety in numbers” tipping point, felonies per capita will fall.

While the individual risk of a subway rider experiencing crime has risen, transit crime is still overwhelmingly rare. In a system that runs 24/7 and services millions of people per day, the vast majority of people will safely get to their destination. The increase in felonies per million riders from 2019 to 2021 was a decimal per million. This data means that for about every million people who ride the subway, less than three people experience a felony. Many city officials emphasize that the subway is safe. In 2021, the NYPD transit bureau chief said that “it’s a disservice to New Yorkers to advance a narrative that crime is soaring in the subways when it’s simply not the case.”

It is also important to note that subway crime is at exceptionally low rates compared to previous decades. In the 1990s, the number of major yearly felonies in the subway was over 15,000. In 2018, the number was under 3,000.

The New York City subway also appears to be doing better than most comparable transit systems. In 2019, there were 4,714 transit crime complaints in New York, compared to the 20,631 crimes reported in the London Underground. The size of the two systems is similar in terms of number of passengers and length, making such a difference striking.

In 2014, the polling firm YouGov asked women from 16 major cities, including New York, Moscow, Paris and Delhi, how safe they felt using public transportation. New York women reported feeling the safest and experiencing the fewest negative interactions, including groping and verbal harassment.

Despite false perceptions of rampant subway crime, Mayor Eric Adams pledged that he will pur-

sue a “return to normalcy.” To relieve safety concerns, he aims to double the number of police officers in the system. Will this measure make those who distrust the police feel any safer though?

In 2021, a Gallup poll found that national confidence in the police was around 51%. Regardless of the debate on police ethics, the lack of confidence in police demonstrates a serious problem that undermines their legitimacy.

There is also no guarantee that more police will reduce crime. Studies have shown mixed results for the increase in police budgets, and Daniel Schwarz of the NYCLU instead insists that “real public safety” is created when the government begins “investing in our communities.” Long-term solutions that focus on the root of the problem, such as increased spending on drug treatment programs, mental health services, affordable housing and youth employment, have shown clear positive results. A 2022 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that cutting welfare income to disabled low income adults increased the likelihood of incarceration by 60%. An NYU study found that for every new nonprofit focused on crime prevention in cities of 100,000 people, the murder rate decreased by 1.2%. The positive impact of community solutions on crime is clear.

The NYPD is already a force rivaling the size of the entire United States Coast Guard, with a budget of \$5.44 billion for the 2022 fiscal year. Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg famously bragged in 2011 that he had his “own army in the NYPD, which is the seventh-largest army in the world.”

The strategy of increasing police numbers also does not consider the increased risk of negative interactions between citizens and police. With more police, arrests for petty crimes increase, a trend that disproportionately harms Black people. It is probable that the main effects of increased police presence will be a crackdown on subway fare evasion, arrests for the ambiguous disorderly conduct violation, penalization of public sleeping and more random bag searches. Will increasing an already



The citizens of

New York City

RIBLY

on the subway,

B

D



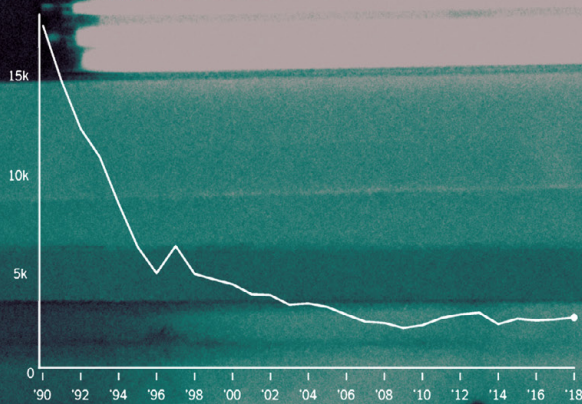
and even in dark times,

it's one of their only options

for reliable transportation.



## Major Felonies on the NYC Subway



Source: NYPD

bloated police budget at the expense of social programs really help address crime long term?

Mayor Adams' "Subway Safety Plan" focuses mostly on removing individuals experiencing homelessness from the system, reflecting a stigma that largely equates homelessness with crime. Homeless individuals need housing and should not have to resort to sleeping on trains, but framing efforts to remove these people from subways as "safety" measures is misleading. Homelessness studies have shown that individuals experiencing homelessness are less likely to commit a violent crime and are more often victims of violent crimes than housed individuals.

There are also short-term alternatives to increase subway safety without laying the responsibility solely on the police. In February, the MTA announced that they were experimenting with platform edge doors in three stations. These barriers help prevent potentially deadly falls onto the tracks and have become common at transit stations in Asia and Europe.

The subway system also suffers from a lack of reliable video surveillance in all of its stations. When reviewing camera footage from the Sunset Park shooting, investigators found that one of the cameras at the station malfunctioned and did not record any footage. Expanding surveillance security systems and ensuring that the cameras already installed are functioning is an effective way to help catch criminals and deter crime. One study of the Stockholm subway system found that security cameras reduced crime rates by 25%.

Working to help rather than penalize is also important. Public transportation research group TransitCenter recommends hiring more outreach workers instead of police officers. These outreach workers help connect individuals struggling with mental illness and homelessness to resources. Administrators also must not overlook the benefits of increasing ridership. As discussed earlier, a crowd-

ed subway station may be uncomfortable, but experts have stressed that it deters criminality. The myth that armed police officers can solve all issues must be rejected.

Policymakers should also examine efforts to reduce crime. In 2014, the New York Daily News analyzed crime data and reported on the most dangerous stations in the city. They found that the Broad Channel station had the highest crime rate at 27.38 crimes per 100,000 trips. This rate is much higher than the city's average and is a clear outlier. Broadway Junction had the second highest crime rate at 5.76 crimes per 100,000 trips. They also found that the highest raw number of crimes occurred in the Times Square/Port Authority station, a particularly busy station often mobbed with tourists and New Yorkers alike. More recent data shows that in 2021, the transit districts 2, 4, 20 and 1 had the highest number of crime complaints. Safety measures should be concentrated in these stations and districts. Blanket goals of adding more police and removing all homeless individuals do not reflect the reality that a large amount of crime is focused in just a few areas.

Though rare, it is still critical to emphasize that transit crimes are tragic occurrences and even a single life lost is too many. It is a miracle that no one was killed in the Sunset Park shooting. Measures to decrease crime in an essential transit system like the New York City subway are important and will help the city as it continues to recover from COVID-19. The city is still trying to get businesses and employees who left during the pandemic to return, and headlines about rising crime in the underground will only hinder this goal. However, the focus should be on detailed examination of data and the range of solutions available. The reflexive urge to hire more police officers often does not guarantee crime reduction and reinforces the overly punitive orientation of the national criminal justice system.

Demonizing the subway for those who rely on it does not improve the situation. The citizens of New York City rely on the subway, and even in dark times, it's one of their only options for reliable transportation.

Blowing crime rates out of proportion may even exacerbate the problem by undermining efforts to increase ridership. It is time to leave fear-mongering aside. Public administrators must recognize fears but focus on a range of solutions — community investments, subway barriers, surveillance cameras, outreach professionals and ridership promotion campaigns — that will bring confidence back to the city's public transportation system. ■



FKA TWIGS FINDS HERSELF ON |



ANTONIO MOCHMANN



## “JUST TOGETHERNESS,” FKA TWIGS DECLARED

in an Instagram post as she characterized her highly anticipated quarantine mixtape in early January 2022. Following the release of lead single “tears in the club” featuring The Weeknd in mid-December 2021, FKA twigs — known to many simply as Twigs — delivered another expectation-topping and sonically riveting album titled *CAPRISONGS*, with songs featuring the likes of Jorja Smith, Daniel Caesar, Shygirl and many more acclaimed artists.

Twigs is usually known for her emotionally heavy, melancholic projects like the critically acclaimed heartbreak anthem “cellophane” from her 2019 album *MAGDALENE*. With *CAPRISONGS*, however, she expresses herself in new ways — through afrobeat, U.K. drill and Jamaican dancehall songs like “jealousy,” “darjeeling” and “papi bones.” She also stays true to her melancholic roots in experimental, electronic tracks like “meta angel” and “thank you song.” *CAPRISONGS* is a beautiful blend of emotion that showcases the long-awaited solace in Twigs’ heart-wrenching journey from abuse and heartbreak to self-realization and recovery.

The album begins with dance track “ride the dragon” and an opening monologue:

*hey, I made you a mixtape  
because when I feel you,  
I feel me  
and when I feel me,  
it feels good*



*CAPRISONGS* is dedicated to Twigs' friends, her listeners and most importantly, herself. This opening song sets the tone for the rest of the mixtape: a self-celebrating exaltation in the face of painful life lessons.

The listener is guided by Twigs' poetic wisdom, both through the lyrics and through recordings of conversations with friends. In the third track, "meta angel," Twigs plays one of these recordings:

*The universe, like, the universe is so powerful  
You're gonna be more free, and you're gonna love more  
And you're gonna have more fun | Do you think so?  
And I'm telli — No, I don't think so, I know so |*

Invited into her world, the listener comfortably takes this advice in while angelic vocals play in the background. The unique production of "meta angel," consisting of an ethereal backing track, harsh percussion, trap beats and electronic, autotuned climaxes, makes it a standout track on the album, widening the listener's palate to the many facets of Twigs' production.

Twigs is known for her ability to challenge convention and create indescribable genre blends in her music. "Pamplemousse" exemplifies this. The playful cut revitalizes confidence, making the listener feel like the sexiest chick on the block, capturing everyone's attention as they strut with their girls. It's a fast-paced dance track, blending bubbly elements of pop and rapid drumming and opening a new gateway to experience confidence.



## A SELF-CELEBRATING EXALTATION IN THE FACE OF PAINFUL LIFE LESSONS

Similarly, in the Jamaican dancehall track “papi bones,” Twigs creates an insurmountable urge for the listener to dance and revel in their own beauty. Featuring Shygirl’s juicy lyricism, the song will have the listener winding and grinding with their “spicy hot body” on the dancefloor — even when there isn’t one.

The album continues on a slower and more heartfelt note as it reaches its 12th track, “careless,” featuring R&B singer Daniel Caesar. Twigs’ soothing, delicate voice and Caesar’s rich vocals complement each other divinely here. The ballad showcases the fragility one bears in a mutually infatuated relationship, teaching the listener that while vulnerability may invite heartbreak, it can also be a beautiful experience with potential for the heart to blossom.

*CAPRISONGS* ends on a touching note with “thank you song.” Twigs opens the song with a painful confessional:

*I wanted to die  
I’m just being honest*

The listener is struck by the depth of her pain as she takes them along a journey from blunted piano chords to a brightly harmonized chorus. The album ends with expressions of deep gratitude to “love set in motion” by all those who have supported Twigs in her journey back to herself.

*CAPRISONGS* is a wondrous experience that is difficult to capture in words, sparking newfound feelings with every listen. It’s an album that fits any mood and will have Twigs’ fans dancing and celebrating, blinded by the tears in their eyes at her next concert. It’s a vital remedy for heartbreak, a loyal companion and a tear-jerking liberator that everyone should be listening to this year. ■

and these are your golden years,  
so have fun.



INTRODUCING THE

# BASH

By LAUREN CANAVAN







**PHOTOS BY LAUREN CANAVAN, RAFAEL CRUVINEL, MATT HONO,  
JOSH JOSEPH, ANTONIO MOCHMANN AND KEATING ZELLENKE**

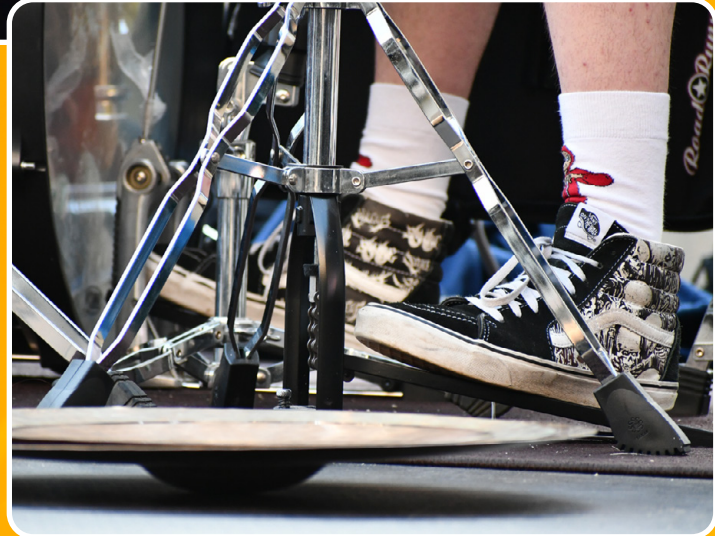


## TUCKED AWAY ON THE TOP FLOOR

of Stony Brook University's West Side Dining is WUSB — the largest commercial-free, free-form radio station on Long Island. A plethora of CDs and records line the walls, some of which have been with the station since it was first built in the 1970s. DJs of all ages push music through the airwaves 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

At Stony Brook, a school that focuses mainly on the sciences and engineering, the importance of live performance often takes a back seat. Although Stony Brook hosts mainstream artists at Brookfest, they can only represent one genre at the annual concert. Additionally, the Staller Center and the Stony Brook Music Department host shows throughout the year, though student attendance at these events is usually limited.

For years, WUSB has provided a platform for new, up-and-coming artists by playing their music on air or promoting their releases on social media. In a brainstorming session last spring, WUSB's student executive board proposed taking this a step further by inviting artists to perform on campus. Soon the idea developed into a plan to put on a free, one-day festival hosting a bill of young musicians spanning multiple genres. The club voted on the festival's decisive title, "The Bash," hoping that the name would stick.





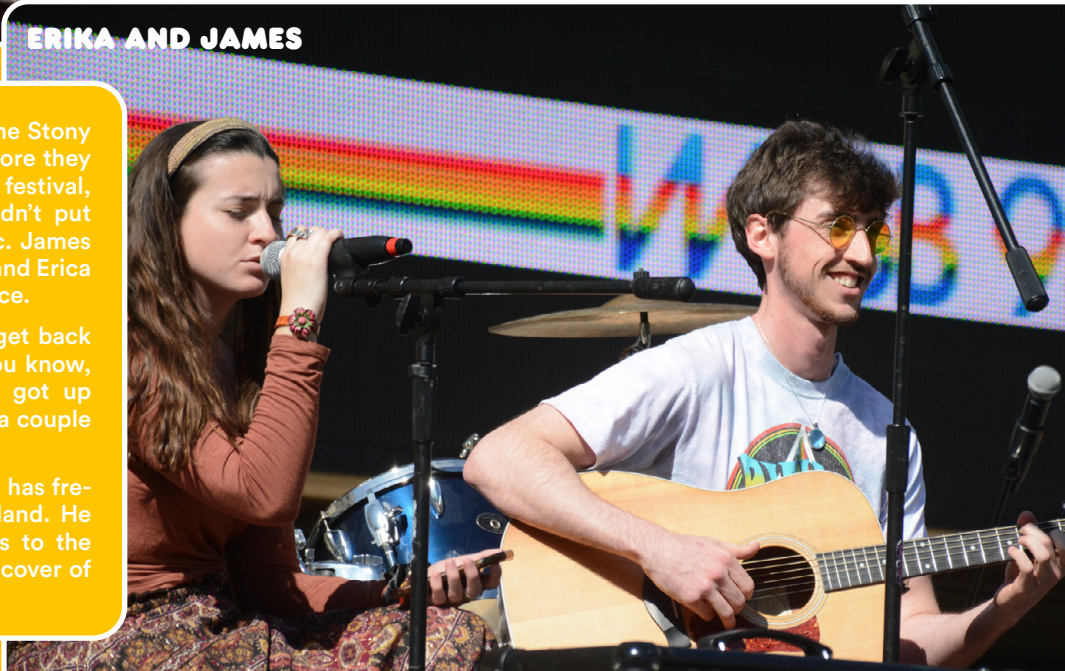


**ERIKA AND JAMES**

Acts on the bill hailed from both the Stony Brook and New York City areas. Before they were approached to perform at the festival, folk-rock duo Erica and James hadn't put much thought into playing in public. James hadn't performed publicly in years, and Erica had never sung in front of an audience.

"It was a little nerve-racking to get back up here again," James said. "But you know, it really goes to her because she got up there and sang — all I did was play a couple strings."

Solo artist James Puccio, however, has frequented many bars across Long Island. He brought some of his favorite songs to the Staller Steps, including an acoustic cover of "Sunday Morning" by Maroon 5.



**JAMES PUCCIO**







**BRIGHT MONDAY**



Indie-rock group Bright Monday performed a set featuring singers Sophia Nicastro and Maria Zozulya. Dressed in a starry blouse, a complementing green vest and beaded belt, Zozulya surprised her friends, who were kept in the dark about her performance. A classical vocalist for years, she hadn't yet had the chance to explore other genres.

"Originally, we just got together for fun because we all enjoyed making music, but when an opportunity came up to actually perform, we thought it'd just be a lot of fun to do, and The Bash really gave us a goal to work towards," she said.

## FACES BEAMED AS BODIES SWIRLED AROUND.



**GASLITE**

You wouldn't know that The Bash served as rock band Gaslite's first gig. Arriving complete with merchandise and what appeared to be their own personal fan club, the five-piece group from Long Island were naturals on stage. The band's elaborate wardrobe further proved that they meant business — guitarist Liam McClean donned a fluffy bunny hat with flopping ears while singer Nick Panzarino sported a bright blue cowboy hat as he danced across the stage. They played a varied set, intertwining cover songs with originals, including "Percocet Allergy Medicine." The crowd rose to their feet early in the set, erupting in dance that lasted until their final note fizzled out. Faces beamed as bodies swirled around, allowing students to release their stresses with finals season on the horizon.







**ARAHMUS BROWN**



The festival also allowed for some local veterans to break into the college scene. Arahmus Brown has made a name for himself performing at clubs around Long Island. Brown and his band members met at Five Towns College in Dix Hills when they signed up for a music competition. Since then, they have continued producing electric performances, fusing genres like rap, rock and R&B. At The Bash, the band's cover of "Rock with You" by Michael Jackson garnered a huge applause.



**PLASTIC BABY JESUS**

Plastic Baby Jesus — yes, you read that right — came all the way from the city to deliver a raging set. Heavily influenced by Nirvana, the animated three-person punk-rock group shredded as the sun's rays glistened off their guitars. If it weren't for a random encounter at Tompkins Square Park in the East Village, Plastic Baby Jesus would never have graced the stage on the Staller Steps.

"We were busking in Tompkins Square Park, just trying to get our name out," said TJ, the band's drummer. "Nadia [Kuban] saw us, and I guess the beginnings of The Bash were boiling in her head. She reached out to us and asked us to play and we said, 'Fuck yeah, that's awesome!'"







Kuban — who serves as the secretary and event coordinator at WUSB — was overwhelmed by the success of the event. “It was so amazing to see things come full circle,” she said. “We worked really hard to put on a seamless event, and I think it really gave PBJ and all of the other bands awesome opportunities to widen their fan bases and make connections.”

For four straight hours, guitar riffs and cymbal crashes ricocheted off of Staller and the surrounding buildings, attracting students from all over campus.

“Sometimes it feels like events at Stony Brook are forced, but this did not feel that way at all,” rising senior Clare Dana said. “The Bash felt like the most student-led event I’ve been to; it felt like the people who put it together really cared about it and I think that’s what made it so successful.”





**“IT FELT LIKE  
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As the sun began to set, Brooklyn-based rock band Chronic Delta closed the lineup, gaining animated approval from the crowd when they ripped into “All the Small Things” by Blink-182. The band’s lead singer, Nick Paiva-Santos, also encouraged the crowd to sing along to some of the band’s original music, including their unreleased punky single “High School Sucks.” Arahmus Brown and James Puccio jumped on stage, joining the band to freestyle as the last notes reverberated into the dusk.

Due to the overwhelming response from those who attended, The Bash will be making a return to Staller this year, with an all-new lineup of artists in both the fall and spring semesters. ■

*Jayden Feisthamel contributed reporting.*





# ELDEN RING

## AND THE STATE OF OPEN WORLD GAMING

BY TAJ WHITE

**I** have been playing FromSoftware's *Elden Ring* for the past few weeks — frankly, I am more focused on which new Glintstone spells to get and which new Ash of War I should add than on my exams. I love everything in this game — from the open world to the lore — and it is quickly rising to the top of the list of my favorite games of all time, sitting with the likes of *Mass Effect 2*, *Persona 5* and *Uncharted 4*. I love *Elden Ring* and I believe it to be a genuine masterpiece.

It is so good, in fact, that it has subsequently ruined my taste for open world games. Prior to *Elden Ring*'s release, I began to grow tired of this type of game. *Death Stranding* was the last one I played and adored. Rather than taking a break, I doubled down and bought *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *Horizon Forbidden West* and *Dying Light 2*, believing that if I played a game that I loved, it would reignite my love for the genre. I finished *Dying Light 2* first and thought it was a mediocre game with some very high points. I have very little to say about it other than the parkour is stellar and someone on the development team loves bearded men — because that is about half of the character designs.

Then, I began to play *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the*

*Wild*, which is an immaculate game. Though not without its faults, *Breath of the Wild* strips the fat off of the open world game template and allows the fun to come from players wanting to explore. The game does not care how you play it, just that you are having fun doing it.

*Elden Ring* came out shortly after I finished these games, and it's a triumph. Even as someone who's not the biggest fan of FromSoftware's *Souls* series, I believe every other game should follow *Elden Ring* in terms of open world design. Playing *Elden Ring* and *Breath of the Wild* is like eating lobster at a candlelit dinner with your significant other on a honeymoon: it's euphoric in a way that I struggle to put into words.

Following those two, I began to play *Horizon Forbidden West* and felt something was off. The game looks, plays and sounds outstanding. Unfortunately, I have yet to finish it and have no desire to. This is primarily due to its tired "checklist" design. If you've played any open world game in the past decade, then you know what I'm referring to: taking out the enemy base, going to the tower to unlock more parts of the map, grabbing meaningless collectibles on the way and filling out your skill tree. To its credit, *Horizon Forbidden West* has refined this game design template to such a degree that it feels fresh and



wholly unique, unlike games with similar design styles. Some add-ons, like the explorer mode option, help differentiate it. Explorer mode is really the best way to play the game; it shows that the developers at Guerrilla Games intend for the player to be completely immersed in the world around them — but then I look at the map and it hits me. This feels more like a job than a video game.

Some might see this map and be giddy with joy, excited about all the different things they can do and how much content there is to offer. I see a series of checkboxes that need to be completed like paperwork. This design philosophy has been peppered throughout every open world game within the last 10 years, and it is an extremely dated and boring way to show off an open world.

There have only been four amazing open world games in the last decade — *Grand Theft Auto 5*, *Elden Ring*, *Death Stranding* and *Breath of the Wild*. All these games have one thing in common and it is this philosophy: an open world game should feel like a toy box. Go wherever you want, do whatever you want and make sure you have fun while doing it. *Horizon Forbidden West* and games that follow the checklist template are extremely lacking when it comes to the freedom of the player.

Whenever I see a new open world game, I get this wave of excitement because everything is new to me — the

possibilities seem endless and I can't wait to explore everything. Unfortunately, this feeling usually dissipates the longer I continue to play. I still believe that *Horizon Forbidden West* is a good game that most people will love, but after playing *Elden Ring* and *Breath of the Wild*, I cannot bring myself to put the disc back in. *Horizon Forbidden West* is basically a nine out of ten in every aspect of game design, but it severely fails at engaging players like these other games have.

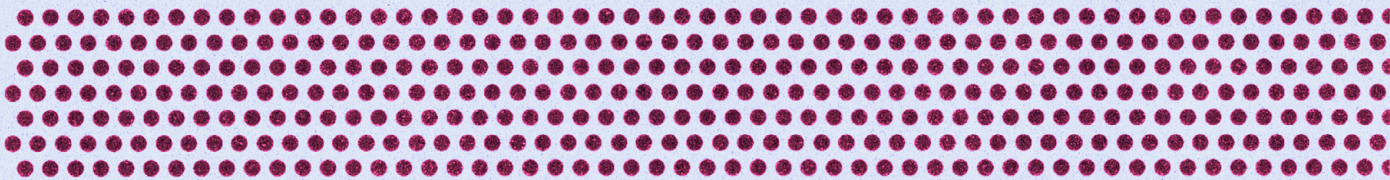
I posted a poll on Stony Brook's subreddit to gauge opinions on the main three open world games that have come out in the last couple months, and most people agreed with me on the current state of the genre. The lowest rated game out of the three options given was *Horizon* with only six votes, closely followed by *Dying Light 2* with nine votes. *Elden Ring* accumulated a whopping 69 votes, making it the highest rated game of the three. *Elden Ring* takes the game design of *Breath of the Wild* and combines it with the progression and combat of prior FromSoftware titles like *Dark Souls*, making for a superior experience. Open world games shouldn't feel like busy work, but rather a gateway for immersive gameplay and more open-ended game design. Going back to *Horizon* after experiencing *Elden Ring* is rough. It's like eating microwavable fish sticks; it's not the worst thing ever, but I have already tasted lobster. ■

**AN OPEN  
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SHOULD FEEL  
LIKE A TOY  
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