

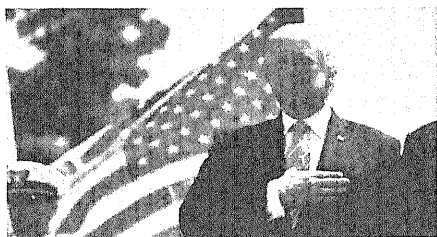
THE BANNER

The Official Newspaper of the College of Staten Island

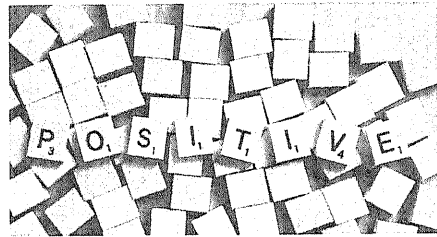
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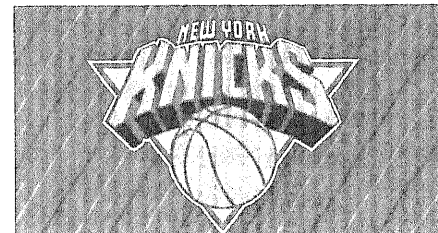
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The True Story of Emily Beidel:

A Young Woman Boldly Coming Out

BY: JULIANNA ROMANO

Emily Beidel was born into a very strict Christian family.

Her father led the family as a pastor of the Christian Missionary Alliance Denomination. For the most part, Emily and her family are protestants.

Having a father as a pastor who always preached about faith, there were many restraints to remain a good, Protestant family.

Beidel happens to be a huge Harry Potter fan, but in the past, she and her three siblings were forbidden to watch the magical wizarding world due to its take on of witchcraft.

Being clever, she told her father that Harry Potter is simply an allegory of God and that it was tastefully appropriate to enjoy.

As she grew older, she noticed differences about herself growing stronger too. She wanted to tell her parents, but the family's Protestant faith kept her in the dark.

"I was closeted for a very long time," Beidel said, "I already got

rid of my overtly homophobic friends."

Beidel eventually felt more secure about her identity and mustered up some confidence to reveal her secret to her parents. They both refused to accept her, and came up with many ways to "straighten" their daughter out.

Her parents sent her to the



photo credit: Juliana Romano

Timothy Christian School, believing that this would solve everything. Her parents would make sure that her hair was perfect and her nails were always painted to look straight for school.

She recalled one day in school, where she and her peers were required to attend a seminar.

She then told of the message from the headmaster.

"Queers are the evils of the world. If you are a queer, you must keep it as a hush-hush scenario."

Knowing her true identity, Beidel walked out of the seminar, only to be confronted by the school's staff and her parents. She was immediately kicked out of the school, and was promptly homeschooled.

Beidel spent many days and nights alone in her own thoughts. Luckily her older sister Julianne, now 26, supported her for who she was no matter the circumstance.

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CSI Cafeteria Wants to Hear From YOU!

Dining Services Makes an Effort to Respond to Feedback
BY: LUCIA ROSSI

What is that delicious smell coming from the kitchen? That is the inviting and exciting stench of change.

CSI Student Affairs and Auxiliary Services has decided it is time to listen and address concerns of students in regards to the quality, pricing, and variety of foods available in our cafeteria.

It is their hope to create a more meaningful dialogue with the stu.
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New Semester, Same Old Questions
- How Am I Going to Afford My Degree?

Ensuring Aid for Looming College Expenses

BY: JAYME FARBOWITZ
A new semester starts, but many of the same questions about how to afford a college degree remain.

For too many students, college is still far from free. Between rising tuition and fees, mounting textbook prices, rent, food, trans-
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International Student Talks CUNY Explorers and Academic Support

How Jobs at CSI Can Make a Difference

BY: LUCIA ROSSI

Being emotionally invested in your college and/or occupation is something special that may be lacking among many students at the College of Staten Island.

For Nicole Agu, however, a 20 year-old international student from Nigeria, school involvement has become a major part of her life and career.

She is currently a sophomore studying accounting and international business, with a minor in management, and works three positions on campus.

She is also Vice President of

the International Business Society club, and a member of the Emerging Leaders Program and International Student club at CSI.

Agu is a math and accounting tutor, a college assistant for the Office of Academic Support, and a tour guide for the CUNY Explorers program.

"As a college assistant, I serve as a front desk personnel; greeting students and staff and determining their needs," she said. "I provide other basic clerical support such as making phone calls, filing papers, sorting mail, and

helping students make tutoring appointments during the remedial program."

As a math tutor, Agu provides one-on-one tutoring sessions for students to help them understand homework and to assist in preparing for exams.

CUNY Explorers is a program created by the Mayor's College Access for All Initiative and is a particularly fulfilling job because it works to inspire young children into going to college.

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Paid Tuition in Place for Hard-Working CSI Students

NYP-IRG Introduces the Excelsior Scholarship

BY: VICTORIA IFATUSIN
A new scholarship has been presented to the College of Staten Island and the majority of CUNY schools.

The Excelsior Scholarship was implemented by New York State government officials, and NYP-IRG began doing its research by asking students what they needed while they were in school, in the Spring of 2017.

Founded in 1973 by college students, the New York Public Interest Research Group, also

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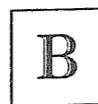
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BANNER POLITICS

President Trump's First State of the Union Address

What is in Store for the Future of America?

BY: STEVEN MORRIS

President Trump, in his first State of the Union address as the President of the United States, declared in his speech "The state of our Union is strong because our people are strong."

His address to the nation was a speech that was intended to encourage unity in an ever-divided country.

"Over the last year, the world has seen what we always knew: that no people on Earth are so fearless, or daring, or determined as Americans. If there is a mountain, we climb it. If there is a frontier, we cross it. If there is a challenge, we tame it. If there is an opportunity, we seize it," said President Trump, after calling for unity among Americans.

The address was a different kind of speech than what the American people are accustomed to. The President's speeches are often unscripted and filled with divisive language.

However, this speech was scripted, in an effort to make the President look more like a politician and an elder statesman.

The message in his address to the nation was to bring the country into "a new chapter of American greatness."

Light on details, President Trump in his speech also shared his vision of the future and propositions for the United

States.

On infrastructure, President Trump called on Congress "to produce a bill that generates at least \$1.5 trillion for the new infrastructure investment we need."

On immigration, President Trump offered "four pillars."

The first pillar of President Trump's bipartisan immigration reform plan is

The second pillar, according to President Trump, is a "full secure of the border."

The third pillar would be to end the diversity visa lottery program, created as part of the Immigration Act of 1990 and began in 1995.

This program makes 50,000 visas available to immigrants from countries

President Trump also called on Congress to "fully fund" the military, rebuild the nuclear arsenal, and a commitment "to fighting the drug epidemic and helping get treatment for those in need."

As expected, democrats had numerous issues with the President's address.

Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III gave the official Democratic response to the State of the Union Address.

In this speech, Kennedy stated that "The state of our union is hopeful, resilient, (and) enduring," and that "Bullies may land a punch. They might leave a mark. But they have never, not once, in the history of our United States, managed to match the strength and spirit of a people united in defense of their future."

Also, in his speech, he spoke to "Dreamers" and promised those who were watching that "You are a part of our story. We will fight for you. We will not walk away."

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who ran against Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Democratic primary, had his own State of the Union response.

In it, Senator Sanders heavily criticized Trump, noting the differences between then presidential hopeful Trump versus President Trump, and highlighting "Trump's broken promises."



photo credit: latimes.com

to "offer a path to citizenship for 1.8 million illegal immigrants who were brought here by their parents at a young age... those who meet education and work requirements, and show good moral character, will be able to become full citizens."

with low rates of immigrants, in an effort to diversify immigrant population.

The fourth and final pillar to this plan is to put an end to "chain migration," a process in which immigrants are able to petition Immigration Service to bring over their relatives.

Donald Trump: Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

The President Gets Down To Business

BY: JOSIAH AKHTAB

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was recently passed by the Senate, 51-49, after first being passed in the House, 227-205.

On December 2, President Trump gave praise to Republican lawmakers on Twitter, as Trump exclaimed, "Biggest Tax Bill and Tax Cuts in history just passed in the Senate. Now these great Republicans will be going for final passage. Thank you to House and Senate for your hard work and commitment!"

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act marked the first significant legislative victory since the Republicans took control of the Executive branch in 2017, after taking control of the legislative branch back in 2014. The high speed process and determination to overcome and disregard objections accentuates the pressure they have faced in getting the act approved.

The Republicans pitched the bill in favor of the middle class, stating the "overhaul" intended to cut taxes for about 70% of middle class families.

It in turn, rather, would raise them for millions of other families, as the Senate plans to phase out tax breaks for state and local income as well as individuals by 2025.

New York Senator and Minority leader, Chuck Schumer, stated the Republican approach was "a process and a product no one can be proud of and ev-

eryone should be ashamed of."

Senator Schumer also went on to say that the changes that were made "under the cover of darkness" would "stuff even more money into the pockets of the wealthy and the biggest corporations while raising taxes on millions in the middle class."

Democrats, along with Senator Schumer, opposed the bill, saying it was in favor of the wealthy and not the middle class. However, the bill's approval was made possible by the Republican idea that \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts would sort things out, producing enough economic growth and additional revenue to cancel out costs to the Treasury.

The New York Times reported this belief to be contradicted by several stud-

ies, including one from the economic scorekeeper, in which Republicans regarded as "overly pessimistic."

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, according to Congress, serves to "amend the Internal Revenue Code to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and deductions for individuals and businesses."

The act, for individuals, serves as follows: to replace the seven tax brackets with four brackets of 12, 25, 35, and 39.6%, increase standard deductions, repeal deductions for personal exemptions, establish a 25% tax maximum on business income for individuals, increase child tax credit, and establish a new family tax credit.

It also serves to repeal limitations

on certain itemized deductions, repeal deduction for state and local income or sales tax not paid or made in business, and repeal deductions for medical expenses.

It will also consolidate and repeal several education related deductions and credits amongst other things.

From a business perspective, the bill serves to reduce corporate tax rate from 35 to 20%, allow increased price raising of certain properties, and limit deductibility of net interest expenses to 30% of business's adjusted taxable income.

Businesses also benefit from the elimination of the exclusion for interest on private activity bonds.

The bill also modifies or repeals energy-related deductions and credits, modifies taxation on foreign income and imposes excise tax on certain payments from domestic to foreign related corporations.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was signed by President Trump on December 22nd, with most of the bill, especially the new tax brackets, going into effect on January 1st, 2018.



MORE jobs | FAIRER taxes | BIGGER paychecks

"The True Story of Emily Beidel"
Continued from Front Page

Her parents were still not pleased with their daughter's revelation, and sent Beidel to the Ywam Zion camp in New Zealand.

Ywam Zion is a program run by Christian enthusiasts to turn young people into good Christians. Beidel recalls many peculiar experiences during her trip to New Zealand for forced self-discovery.

She distinctly remembers young girls screams all day and night.

She spoke of a little boy who was always sick from the pressures of the camp, a child who, all of a sudden, became paralyzed, and three little girls that always sat in a circle, laughing devilishly.

Beidel's most prominent memory of the camp was of a young man who was homophobic and transphobic, who became outcasted, yet refused to read anything but the bible.

The kicker of the story was that this young gentleman was doing too many drugs and while impaired, wanted to convert to Christianity.



photo credit: Juliana Romano

Growing very weary of the camp, Beidel snuck out and hitchhiked to her cousin's house in New Zealand.

She then stayed with her cousin for the remainder of the trip and never looked back.

Now that Beidel is back home, she is still proud of who she is, and hopes that one day her parents will see that she is very happy with herself.

"If a young person was scared and asked about coming out, I would ask them to please make sure they are safe first and foremost. Mostly, I would tell them that they are beautiful, whole and deserving of love."

"International Student Talks"
Continued from Front Page

"I give a college tour to 7th grade students, and emphasize on the benefits and resources they can obtain from college," Agu said.

"I also collaborate



photo credit: Nicole Agu

with other tour guides to create fun games and college topics that would help the students enjoy the tour and look forward to college."

With this position, Agu seeks to encourage young students to be persistent in their goals through middle school, onto high school and eventually through college.

"I find it interesting to tell the students what to expect in college, so they will be ready," she said.

"I hope to help students understand that college is becoming affordable through scholarships and financial

"New Semester, Same Old Questions"
Continued from Front Page

-sit, and even child care expenses, CSI students deserve a break!

Flat state funding has left the burden of paying for our expanding CUNY and SUNY institutions increasingly on the backs of students and their families. Tuition has gone up over 35% in just 7 years at New York's public universities.

The state has two tuition aid programs which are designed to provide free tuition to low and middle income students. Even so, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Governor's new Excelsior Scholarship continue to box out too many students in need.

Flat state funding has also meant that campuses cannot invest in more classes or student resources. Insufficient course offerings and support services like advisement means that graduating on time is far from the norm.

Once more, this year's budget proposal includes millions



photo credit: CSI Nypirg

of dollars in cuts to Educational Opportunity Programs, ASAP, SEEK, College Discovery and campus child care centers. These are time-tested, successful services that support New York's most financially vulnerable students through to graduation.

They deserve more funding - not less.

In short, our state representatives are responsible for ensuring all New Yorkers have access to a degree, because higher education is a right. When students organize together, sending a message that students deserve more from their government, real change happens.

Team up with NYPIRG and hundreds of students across the state for Higher Education Action Day on February 28 in Albany, NY to share your story and fight for an accessible, affordable higher education. A cost free, debt free, public higher education is in New York's future!

Join us in the fight to get there. Stop by the NYPIRG office in 1C-218 to learn more!

aid. I also want to communicate to them the necessity of a college education to build a better life."

The program's main message to young students is that anyone can go to college, despite financial status or origin, and they should start thinking now about what they would like to do in the future and how they would like to get there.

This is important because middle schoolers don't know much about the reality of what college is actually like besides partying and massive student loans.

"Students are encour-

aged to start their college plans by saving for tuition, studying harder and becoming more responsible," Agu said.

She believes it is imperative that students are aware of all the choices they have.

"I applied for this job because I like to work with children, and I saw it as an opportunity to share my college experiences with them so they could be motivated and learn from it," Agu said.

"I have worked as a tour guide for a year, and I believe I am constantly making a difference in the lives of the students."

"CSI Cafeteria Wants to Hear From YOU!"

Continued from Front Page

-dent body in order to improve the campus community and enhance our dining experience.

According to the Director of Auxiliary Services, Mary-Jeanne Hennessy, this is important because, "All revenues generated in Auxiliary Dining, Bookstore and Parking Services, are returned back in support of the College in the form of student scholarships, support of activities, commencement, snow removal and facilities maintenance."

Students, clubs, organizations and faculty are therefore providing support for the college by buying from our cafeteria.

With a steady and reliable flow of revenue, the cafeteria could address their own concerns such as, "an infrastructure in much need of repairs, rising minimum wage costs, difficulty in keeping

prices competitive with some of the external vendors due to labor and food costs."

"A Dining Services Survey will be distributed this term, where feedback will be solicited. Student and campus feedback will contribute to the future strategic direction of Dining Services at CSI, including menu options, facility design and potential new vendor partnerships," said Hennessy.

However, according to Hennessy, the interest in feedback doesn't stop with the survey.

"A follow up to the survey will include the opportunity for students and staff alike to provide constructive feedback on service, menus, prices, and opportunity for fresh ideas," she said.

Dining and Auxiliary services would also like to create better communication through

speaking with CSI's student government more regularly to discuss issues they might not be aware of. This way, they could also provide their information about upcoming events, projects, and potential partnerships more clearly and directly.

Students will also be happy to know that the main dining facility in the Campus Center will finally be accepting credit cards this spring.

Furthermore, Hennessy disclosed that, "A new vending machine has been installed in Building 3A, with plans for 2 additional to be installed in the new 2M location."

Auxiliary Services has also been working towards having a better social media presence through Twitter and Instagram.

"[This] will allow quick and easy access to announcements, specials or new menu items,"

said Hennessy.

Auxiliary and Dining services have many goals that reflect the concerns of its patrons.

Hennessy named a few such as, "provide additional food options that respond to the requests and needs of a growing and diverse population," "renovation of the space, both back end and front, to accommodate the volume and needs of the growing student population," and "have the ability to provide nutritional information with ease, displayed on electronic menu boards or potentially a smartphone application."

In order to provide a more affordable and delicious dining experience at the college, they need to hear from its customers. So, if you have any helpful suggestions or even complaints about the food or services, don't be afraid to make them known.

"Paid Tuition in Place"

Continued from Front Page

known as NYPIRG, is known as a "statewide, nonpartisan, non-profit organization" that has the main objective of engaging peers of all walks of life in civic society.

Of course, many students have experienced difficulties funding the costs of their education, from tuition and textbooks, to related costs like food and healthcare, according to the Excelsior scholarship testimony.

Thus, NYPIRG provided to solution for such students by presenting the new scholarship.

In a brief interview with Emily Skydel, the Higher Education Coordinator for NYPIRG, provided more information about this new "free money."

Q: What is the Excelsior Scholarship?

A: Excelsior is a scholarship program that would be available to students who, one, enroll in at least twelve credits per semester, but earn at least thirty credits each academic year; two, remain on track for on-time graduation; three, agree to live and work in the New York State upon graduation for a certain period of time; and four, sign a contract with Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to have his/her scholarship converted to a loan if the student fails to fulfill this requirement. Tuition rates for Excelsior recipients would be frozen at the 2016-17 academic year levels until the 2021-22 academic year

and every four years thereafter, in which the tuition rate would be reset to equal the rate charged for the upcoming year.

Q: How do students of CSI benefit from this scholarship?

A: The program provides free tuition to students attending SUNY and CUNY two-year and four-year programs. When fully implemented, students with a family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) equal to or less than \$125,000 would benefit from this program.

Q: What are the qualifications for the scholarship?

A: Eligibility will be phased in from up to \$100,000 in 2017-18 academic year, \$110,000 in 2018-19 academic year, and \$125,000 in 2019-2020 academic year and thereafter. But, the scholarship does not cover everyone and is designed to minimize costs for the state. The plan only applies to families whose income is less than \$125,000. And not everyone making less than \$125,000 a year would qualify. The Governor's plan is a "last dollar" program, meaning it will only apply once all other forms of government aid have been applied. New York's financial aid programs already offer tuition coverage for the poorest public college students. The program has credit and performance limitations as well; if a student doesn't obtain 30 credits in one year, for example, they lose the scholarship and would likely be forced to take out a loan to pay

for the credits they did receive.

Q: Is this scholarship available to transfer, out of state, international or graduate students?

A: The program is not available to international, graduate or out of state students. Transfer students are covered as long as they are in state.

Q: Will the scholarship have an effect on the Financial Aid package?

A: A student has to first fill out FAFSA and then whatever remaining tuition balance, if there is any, would be covered by the Excelsior Scholarship, if the students meets the qualifying criteria.

Q: For this academic year, is there a deadline?

A: The time to qualify in the Fall is June 7th to July 21st.

As mentioned in the Testimony, "A recipient of an Excelsior Scholarship may receive up to \$5,500."

In order for the amount to be determined for a CUNY student, the resident tuition - which is currently up to \$6,330 - "will be reduced by the amount of certain other student financial aid awards which an applicant has or will receive for the academic year, including a NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award and/or federal Pell grant," according to the Testimony.

Thus, the scholarship will fund the remaining amount of the tuition up to \$5,500. "Tuition

credit will cover any remaining tuition expenses not covered by the Excelsior Scholarship," according to the testimony.

Along with the research that was discovered by NYPIRG, "a third of CUNY students reported not being able to register for a course they needed for their major. Of those students, half couldn't register because there were not enough seats available."

Due to the inability to apply for the classes intended for their major, waiting to pick a major may delay the process of accumulating 30 credits for the academic year, causing rejection of funds for a student who applies for or obtains the scholarship.

NYPIRG thus testifies, "To ensure that students are able to hold onto their scholarships, more funding must go toward expanded course availability."

Following the inability to apply for classes, "textbooks, transit, food, and housing costs are barriers toward achieving a college degree," stated NYPIRG.

According to the Testimony, "an analysis by Politico found that 10,362 CUNY... received the scholarship. That comes out to less than 1% of the student population." This brought up the need for the scholarship to be "enhanced to offer more aid to needy students."

The organization then mentioned that it "urges the Governor and the Legislature to agree to extend the Excelsior Scholarship to undocumented students."

LIFESTYLES

The Three Keys to Positivity Important Lessons for Your Emotional Well-Being

BY: BRIELLE SPARACINO

It's incredibly easy to let every negative emotion you feel get the best of you; that's why most of us do it. Science has always told us it takes more muscles to frown than to smile, but it rarely seems that way when we're going through something difficult to deal with.

No matter the situation, all we usually want to do is wallow about it for long periods of time, but that is an unhealthy practice that can lead to bigger, self-inflicted issues.

The good thing is that there are better ways to cope with the tidal wave of emotions that come with the backlash of incomprehensible problems.

One of the most important lessons you need to know in order to keep your mental and emotional health in check is to acknowledge that it's okay to let yourself feel what you're feeling.

Many people in this world think that by repressing your emotions after something devastating or traumatizing happens, you've coped with the issue at hand, but that isn't true.

The truth of the matter is, it's the most unhealthy thing you can do for your well-being.

If you're feeling hurt, upset or frustrated, remind yourself that these are natural reactions to what you've experienced; you're not immediately going to feel okay. If you need to grieve, whether it be the loss of a friendship, a relationship or the passing of someone close to you, then allow yourself to do

that.

It's better to work through those emotions than to force yourself to feel indifferent in that moment, because if another problem triggers those same emotions later on and you've never dealt with them, chances are it's not going to be pretty for anyone.



Another important lesson is to accept the situation for what it is. Of course you're feeling a certain way, but while you want to allow yourself to work through what you're feeling, you can't change what's already happened either.

You've got to remind yourself that

what's done is done, and that choosing the high road will feel better in the long run.

This lesson also ties into the subject of revenge. If someone has wronged you in any way, getting revenge seems like the only logical answer.

Unfortunately, by getting revenge,

The best revenge is to make yourself a better person, and treat everything you endure as a learning experience.

The last major key to positivity is forgiveness.

Whether it's forgiving yourself or the other person or people, the simple act itself allows you to get the weight of the situation off of your shoulders.

Many of us hold grudges, and when we do this, we're choosing to hold on to our anger, our hurt and our frustration.

Forgiveness might be the last thing on your mind, but you'll definitely feel better if you choose to do it. However, forgiving doesn't mean you have to forget what's happened.

You can still hold someone accountable for their actions while accepting the fact that you can't change what they've done.

Forgiveness is about your growth and your maturity. It's about finally letting yourself feel at peace.

The keys to positivity aren't able to be achieved overnight; there are so many individuals in this world who hold onto their anger out of spite or out of fear that if they let go of that grudge, they'll stop feeling emotions they've grown so used to feeling.

Even if it takes some people longer than others to achieve a healthy emotional state, simply knowing the keys of positivity are a step in the right direction.

you're only receiving instant gratification and it will prolong your internal healing process because you're prolonging the hurt you're feeling.

It's hard to not take advantage of an opportunity to get back at someone, but you have to let yourself believe that what goes around, comes around.

LIFESTYLES

Snapchat Users are Furious!

App's Newest Update Has Consumers Threatening to Delete

BY: JESSICA SCARIMBOLO

One of the biggest social media platforms has recently undergone a makeover, and consumers are not thrilled with the outcome.

Snapchat's drastic redesign was announced in November, but did not make its way to users until February, leaving people furious and in desperation to reverse their update.

Snapchat launched in 2011, evolving with numerous updates throughout the years. The idea for this app began by a couple of students in a classroom in Stanford University.

Only a year later, Snapchat hit 10 million active users, proving what a success it would grow into in the years to come. By May 2015, the app reached 100 million daily users with 400 million snaps being sent back and forth daily.

Five months later, 400 million daily snaps became four billion videos being viewed daily.

Because of the app's growing success, the updates are crucial to consumers. In July 2014, Snapchat launched geofilters, a feature for photos that displayed the name of your location in various, pretty fonts.

In January 2015, a new update launched a discover page, allowing consumers to stay up-to-date on the latest political, sports and celebrity news all in one place.

Later that year, Snapchat launched perhaps its most exciting update yet.

In September 2015, Lenses was launched, putting filters on people's faces, making for some funny or fabulous selfies.

By December 2015, it was stated that 36% of Americans between the ages of 18-29 had a Snapchat account, making this social media platform the fastest growing for millennials, according to statistics from the Huffington Post.

AJC reported on the changes that came along with the app's new update that has irked users enough to threaten to delete the app from their phones.

Previously, Snapchat stories were ordered chronologically, showing the most recent story at the top of the list, however, the new update organizes stories based on which friends you interact with the most.

Another major change brought on from this update is the way the home page is now organized. Previ-

ously, Snapchat conversations and your friend's stories were on separate pages but not anymore.

With the update, snap stories, private conversations and group chats are all on one page, making users feel the app is much less efficient and even stating that they are having trouble locating the snap stories.

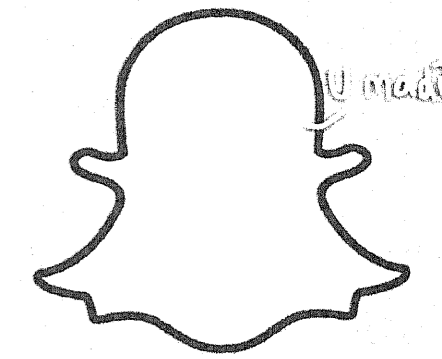
People have taken to twitter to express their anger regarding the new update including Kylie Jenner.

She tweeted: "Mm just saw the new Snapchat...I don't know how i feel about it! What do guys think?" Fortunately, Kylie is not the only one who is feeling uncomfortable about the update.

Another Twitter user said, "who was in charge at Snapchat headquarters for this new design? Who's responsible? I just wanna talk.....," while another tweets said, "I'm not intelligent enough to operate this stupid Snapchat update. I've been defeated."

While many have taken to Twitter and the other social media platforms, users have been affected severely enough to create a petition to persuade Snapchat to revert the app back to its original layout.

Nic Rumsey started a petition on



Change.org, asking for 500,000 signatures to have the Snapchat update removed.

With the number of signatures increasing by the second, Rumsey's petition already has over 445,000 signatures.

Though Snapchat users are incredibly upset by this new change, developers have not issued any statements recently regarding the update.

The change is still relatively new, one can only hope the company is working on some sort of response to the overwhelming negative feedback they have received thus far.

Turn Your Dreams Into Reality With Vision Boards

An Inspirational DIY That Manifests Your Goals

BY: VERONICA PISTEK

There is an unexplainable magic to visualizing your goals at the start of every new beginning in your life.

Whether you break down your goals into action steps, plan a long-term future for yourself, or take it day by day and hope that your dreams become a reality, following your joy and taking creative action is the most exciting thing that you can do.

Vision boards, also known as dream boards, are a simple and enjoyable device you can personalize to enable visualization and inspiration.

By creating a tangible source for your passion-bursting ideas, you will begin to follow down the path you yearn to pave.

By symbolizing your specific goals



and aspirations with physical images, your emotional drive will be strengthened. So, get buckle up, and get ready to stimulate the energy that exists deep within you to make your dreams happen.

To create a vision board, you must first set your intentions.

It can be a combination of multiple lifetime goals, a yearly set of endeavors, a set of health-centered goals, a mixture of images that spell out your future for relationships, careers, home-living, and even a visual of your spiritual desires.

Once you establish your purpose, you can begin the creative and entertaining production.

Find pictures that represent the possessions, spirit, experiences, and feelings you aim to energize in your life. You can search the Internet, cut out magazine images, or take your own photographs—just remember that you should use only images that truly speak to you.

It is also important to add in a few motivational words or mantras that affirm your capabilities.

There's nothing wrong with having a physical goal of owning a Ferrari and a mansion in California, but adding words that describe the ultimate goal for feelings such as happiness, health, and strength will instill your emotional motivation and keep you grounded.

Now that you are focused on a theme of goals and have collected a

bunch of symbols to inspire you, it's time to make a board that suits your personal aesthetic.

For example, some might prefer a simple whiteboard to start filling with their dreams, while others might put their ideas together on an easily changeable corkboard, or even in a frame to serve as a permanent reminder.

If you're having trouble with transferring your ideas into a tangible result, scrolling through Pinterest or Instagram is never a bad idea. You can even watch YouTube tutorials of how to make your motivation turn into a post-worthy creation.

Your vision board should reflect only you. Disregard any goals that your friends might have or that your family members might want you to embark upon.

Creating a vision board is a personal process that takes internal stimulation and aspirations that you are seriously hoping to achieve.

To experience the benefits of your newly made board in the most fulfilling manner, place your vision board in a spot that you will see every day.

Places such as above your bed, on your door, or near a mirror are helpful to set up each morning with bursting motivation and energy to succeed.

Spending each morning or each night visualizing is powerful and essential to internalizing and eventually externalizing your goals.

Believing that you have the ability to actually work toward something that one might only dream of is key to following the path of commitment and manifestation.

As time goes on, and you may have fulfilled some of your goals, reflect upon your board and keep it as a time capsule.

Keeping records of your personal journey is proven to be beneficial, and will provide you with constant present energy to never stop moving forward.

Remember, we all start off small and timid. As time allows us to grow, we build roots that are strong enough to endure a mighty force.

Just as a mighty oak tree starts off as an acorn, the same potential for evolution and beauty lives in you.

By visualizing what you'd like to create within your life, you will start to only spend time on what is actually important. What you focus on focuses on you.

Specifically, straying away from little anxieties and reinforcing your mind with self-expressed affirmations will enable you to believe how much you already are the you that you desire to be.

If you are a dreamer that is striving to create a future that seems unattainable, a vision board will help you remove yourself from the realm of your dreams and into the reality of an achiever.

A Trip to Florence, Italy- Courtesy of CSI

Center for Global Engagement Offers Trip of a Lifetime

BY: DOMINICK WOJTAS

The College of Staten Island offers wonderful opportunities year round, waiting to be taken advantage of.

Unfortunately not all of them reach the attention, or even field of view, of the students on campus. Luckily, walking into the right building (IP) at the right time, helped me net a spectacular trip- all the way to Italy.

At CSI, the Center for Global Engagement organizes the colleges study abroad efforts. There are a handful of options to choose from in terms of location, and the offered classes tend to pair well with the environment, helping you immerse into the surrounding culture.

Programs are offered semester round including the summer and winter; one of which is, the Arts and Sciences program at the Lorenzo de Medici Institute in Florence, Italy.

Arguably the most convenient thing about living in Florence is transportation. The primary mode is located right below your hips, and the secondary modes may either be dangerous to your well being or just plain expensive. Let me explain.

The sites are all condensed into a small area that constitutes the original old city.

Anywhere that you will need or want to go is within a 20 minute walking distance. But if you'd like to switch it up, other popular transportation options include riding a bike or taking a taxi.

The notion of "sidewalks" cease to exist in Florence, and individuals are sprawled across the streets at any given hour. This makes biking quite stressful as you need to skillfully swerve in-between pedestrians, not to mention the unforgiving

cobblestone roads that will have you icing your rump at the end of the day.

Taking a taxi is expensive due to the layout of the city. The streets are so narrow that most are one way, leaving the driver with no choice but to pick a route that would seem supremely inefficient by American standards.

Fortunately, there is a way to propel yourself without the need for these inventions; and ironically, you can easily walk between prominent locations defined by



the very men who were arguably the forefathers of these inventions!

The Uffizi Gallery includes pieces from the individual who had coined the term "Renaissance Man", the father of invention himself, Leonardo da Vinci. He happened to be a Florentine himself.

Another prominent fifteenth century Florentine, most commonly known by his first name, Michelangelo, has his works on display in both the Uffizi Gallery and the Academia.

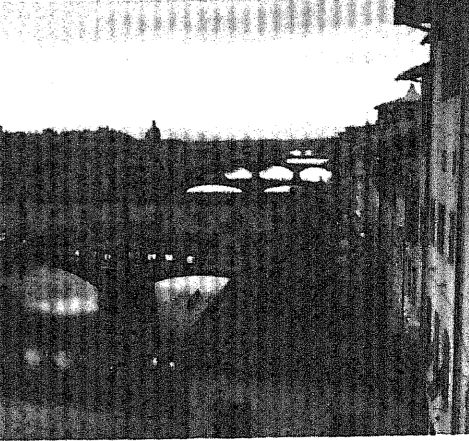
The reigning theme in these artists'

works is Christianity, and it is easy to understand this link by simply being present in the environment they came up in.

Italy, being the epicenter of Roman-Catholicism, naturally has cathedrals littered throughout the country.

The most notable one in Florence is referred to as the Duomo, and if Florence was a living organism, this cathedral would certainly be its magnificent heart due to its central location and hypnotic allure.

Just a walk down the street from the



Duomo, past the Uffizi Gallery, you will encounter the Arno, a river with a landmark, picturesque bridge built across it named the Ponte Vecchio.

Once you cross the river, the Piazza de Michelangelo is a short hike uphill and is defined by a sweeping vista of the entire city. This view has a dynamic essence, altered by the time of day, making it worth the hike during both day and night.

Right after you soak in the entirety of Florence, it is recommended to try some of the first-class cuisine spread throughout

the city.

There are various restaurants in Florence and although it is possible to find more international cuisine, authentic Italian and American are the most common options.

There are three P's that one should certainly indulge on whilst in this city: pizza, panini, and pasta.

After you chow down on one of these P's, it is highly recommended to top it off with a toothsome gelato at one of the many gelaterias throughout Florence. The night is filled with finely dressed individuals graciously promenading through the well lit streets.

On your nightly stroll, it is not uncommon to find the youth on line waiting to be permitted entry to one Florence's bars/nightclubs.

Many of these establishments are tailored for study abroad students coming from the states - so much so, that a bar featured a ceiling lined in T-shirts from various U.S. universities.

These establishments provide social benefits to students as you are grouped in a room with individuals in the same boat as you. Reflection on life back home in the states and the many quirks of Italian society are great topics for conversation.

One may talk about their longing for home, yet feel a sense of buyers remorse after catching glimpse of the final destination on their plane ticket.

Within Florence's maze-like alleys there is something for everyone.

The doors are open as long as you get the hours right.

With your senses in-check, the city openly welcomes you to consume, speculate, learn, and get lost in its ambiance.

BANNER ARTS

Pop Goes Hip Hop? A Fresh Take on Boy Bands

Brockhampton Goes on a "Love Your Parents" Tour

BY: DOMINICK WOJTAS

Founded by a young creative from Texas that goes by the name of Kevin Abstract in 2015, Brockhampton is changing the dynamic of what most millennials dub as an American boy band.

The crew consists of 14 young men, in their early 20's, and it is finding its form as a creative agency with its members ranging from rappers to art directors.

They have grown exponentially since their humble beginnings over the web; currently having over a million monthly listeners on Spotify, and sold out shows in the U.S.

This creative powerhouse, dubbed "the internet's first boy band" was conceived while Kevin Abstract was in high school.

He met four of the future band members while the rest were spawned from a post reading, "Anybody want to make

a band?", on a Kanye West fan forum back in 2011.

The name "Brockhampton" is directly taken out of the street that Abstract grew up on.

The entire crew moved out and bought a house in North Hollywood, where their debut mixtape, "All American Trash" was formulated and then released, preceded by "Saturation I", "Saturation II", and "Saturation III"; three full feature albums all dropped within the course of 2017.

With that type of output, it is no surprise that they refer to their home as, "The Factory".

And what is it that makes Brockhampton so eccentrically tasteful? Perhaps it's the fact that their music is so genre weaving, including elements of down to earth, sometimes crude hip-hop, and sappy R&B, all the while maintaining a vivacious, adolescent

feel.

Although not so evident, one may even notice a "One Direction gone rogue" type of vibe in both their work and performances.

This connection is not without merit as they are extremely insistent on having the title of "boy band" and have even released merchandise with the quote "Best boy band since One Direction" plastered on it.

The importance of being known as a boy band is significant for the members, and for a few reasons.

They seek to redefine the term, the style and dynamic of their shows, and the genre merging music culture of today.

Instead of a group of polished performers who don't play "real" instruments and are more known for their matching outfits and choreography, the archetype for boy bands in the past,

Brockhampton has set out to incorporate some of these classic elements, such as the matching outfits, while altering others, such as the level of refinement, and genre staidness.

In a sense they're altering the pop music genre all-together.

"I don't look like Justin Timberlake, and I don't look like Harry Styles," said one of the group's members, rapper, Ameer Vann.

"But I would love to be them. We do the numbers you know what I mean? We sell out shows. We make pop music. What is pop music right now? It's hip-hop."

Despite this creative powerhouse's exponential rise to fame, their future is still young based on the notion of their past ambition defined by three successful full length albums released last year.

With that amount of work being put in, it is hard to believe that the clans flame will weaken just yet. And when they are not working on their next album, the clan is touring North America, for their "Love Your Parents" tour, set to end on the March 7.

The show will take you on an emotional rollercoaster, erupting feelings of both "blow the roof off" type of wildness and sticky-sweet, relatable melancholia.

Brockhampton's music would surely evoke emotion in even the most apathetic individual.



photo credit: miaminewtimes.com

BANNER ARTS

Green Day Releases New Album

Band Bashes Trump Again in New Song

BY: ANTHONY RUSSO

Pop punk/punk rock band Green Day has released a new album called "Greatest Hits: God's Favorite Band", first made available on November 17.

Green Day's most popular albums, "American Idiot" (2004) and "Dookie" (1994) dominated the tracklist, as those albums consisted for nine of their 22 songs released. The album included 22 songs, a collection of their most popular songs, along with one new song and studio recorded duet with Miranda Lambert.

Controversial songs that missed out on Green Day's Greatest Hits album were "East Jesus Nowhere" ("21st Century Breakdown", 2009), "Let Yourself Go" ("Uno", 2012), "Warning" ("Warning", 2000) and "Jesus of Suburbia" ("American Idiot", 2004).

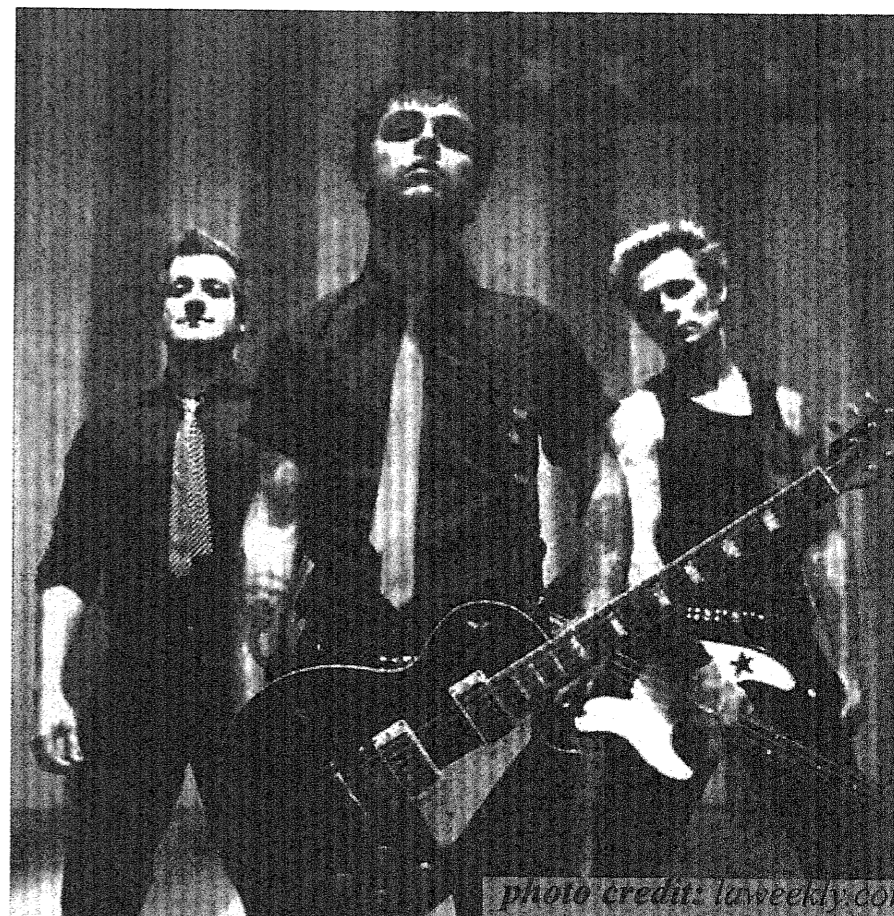
The duet, which featured "Ordinary World" from Green Day's most recent album "Revolution Radio", is a revised song with some lyrics from Lambert. Originally "Ordinary World" was recorded as a solo song by Green Day's lead singer, Billie Joe Armstrong along with his acoustic guitar play.

"Ordinary World" was the final song on the track of "Revolution Radio" and was formed into a movie, Armstrong as the protagonist.

Green Day's Greatest

Hits album released a new song called "Back in the USA" that declared the band's displeasure toward President Donald Trump.

This wasn't the first time that Green Day publicly spoke out against President Trump. At the 2016 American Music Awards, just weeks after President Trump's election victory, Green Day performed "Bang Bang"



which was one of their singles from "Revolution Radio".

During the songs guitar solo Armstrong shouted to the top of his lungs 6 times "No Trump, no KKK, no Fascist USA!"

About a year later, Green Day released "Back in the USA," a song that bashes President Trump and mocks the political world in the United States. "Back in the USA" is designed

by Green Day to mock President Trump's manipulation tactics used on Americans.

Green Day also released a music video that depicts fake patriotism from certain people in the United States. Included in the music video is drummer Tre Cool and bass guitar player Mike Dirnt. Prominently represented in the music video are the black sunglasses

which symbolizes "reality."

When the sunglasses aren't worn in the video, the band can't see the truth, and instead see things such as "Presidential Address Tomorrow" on the cover of a newspaper. When either Cool, Dirnt or Armstrong puts on the sunglasses in the video, "Presidential Address Tomorrow" becomes "President to Lie to Nation Tonight."

Green Day hasn't started shooting the movie just yet, but HBO has given them their approval.

Green Day's "Greatest Hits: God's Favorite Band" is available to be downloaded and listened to on Spotify and available on iTunes for \$12.99.

"American Idiot", the album that revived Green Day that's shaped them to what they are today, started their punk rock revolution towards political issues in the United States.

Though the album is considered a punk rock opera that tells the story of three Suburbia kids, Green Day attacked President George Bush's administration at the time. Green Day's attacks included issues pertaining alienation, speaking out against the government and revolting.

These issues in "American Idiot" are particularly prominent in songs like "Holiday", "Letterbomb", and the title track, "American Idiot".

Green Day hasn't released any news pertaining to a new album included with all news songs, but Armstrong told NME, "it's all systems go" on adapting their "American Idiot" album into a movie.

Green Day hasn't started shooting the movie just yet, but HBO has given them their approval.

Green Day's "Greatest Hits: God's Favorite Band" is available to be downloaded and listened to on Spotify and available on iTunes for \$12.99.

BANNER OPINIONS

Commentary: Why the Super Bowl is Overhyped- Yet Viewership Still Rises

America Attracted to the Big Game Like Never Before

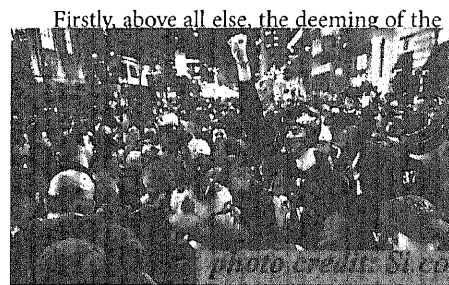
BY: Eric Ransom

The first week of February brings that time of the year when Americans obsess themselves with an overrated, made-up holiday.

Yes, Groundhog Day.

Actually, it's not Groundhog Day, but by now, the groundhogs don't even take into account global warming, so what's the point?

This event is, of course, the Super Bowl. It's that special American pastime, which today has become the holiday of eating the worst food imaginable and watching Tom Brady play for another title at a party with people who either love football or could care less.



Firstly, above all else, the deeming of the Super Bowl as a "holiday" is pretty ridiculous- it's just a game.

Through many decades, the final football game of the season has turned into parties that worship eating snacks, watching underwhelming halftime shows, and making the NFL and its partners a ton of money.

Nothing says "Super Bowl Sunday" like stuffing faces and TV sets everywhere with the worst junk food, and it is made acceptable because "it's a special occasion."

The special Super Bowl ads every year tend to gravitate towards selling junk foods and sodas like Doritos, Coke, M&M's and various beers- all the good stuff.

The ad revenue generated with Super Bowl ads is outrageous. According to statistics posted in an article by AdNews, companies spent upwards of about five million dollars just to get 30 seconds of advertising in 2016 alone.

This is hidden by the fact that all of the commercials are supposed to be humorous and funny.

Is it not too much to ask for companies to write quality commercials like they do for the Super Bowl year round? Why must the Super Bowl be the only encouragement?

The advertising for and during the game has done so well, that they have convinced the public to actually look forward to watching commercials. That's no easy feat.

Secondly, of course, there's the Patriots. At this point, Tom Brady and Bill Belichick have made it incredibly easy to care less. Between the constant winning at the behest of the league, the New England Patriots make football boring.

Every year, no matter how old Tom Brady gets, another trip to the championship is always on his radar. If not for Nick Foles and

the Philadelphia Eagles defeating the Pats this Super Bowl, Brady would have won his sixth title in eight tries.

The NFL has Eli Manning and the Giants to thank for Brady's first two defeats, otherwise football would be virtually unwatchable. As long as the Patriots team has a healthy Brady, it is almost a certainty how the Super Bowl will end up at the end of each season.

Brady is the greatest quarterback of all-time, this is a given, but the unpredictability of the Super Bowl matchups each year has vanished, eliminating any chance of variety in the game (at least in the AFC.)

For many, though, watching football is a passion, and whether or not a football lover's team is vying for football immortality in the Super Bowl or not, the big game caps off another season of watching the sport they love.

Let's also not take away from the Eagles, who finally won their first Super Bowl since its inception in 1967, ending many years of heartache by putting a stop to the spoiled Patriots.

Generations pass down their love for a particular team, through the good and the downright awful, and somehow remain loyal to their team and the sport, which is something that should be respected.

Most importantly, die-hard fans of down-trodden teams who rarely play in the big game and are finally given the chance to win a Super Bowl should be able to cherish every moment, especially if victorious.

Despite these types of fans, over 100 million people will tune in to the game, many



who don't even watch football. It's gotten to the point where watching the Super Bowl is a forced endeavor.

It has become a bastion for attention, all for a few hours of competition and a cute, free performance in the middle of it- two for the price of one. If there's anything Americans love, its deals and free stuff.

The obsession with the Super Bowl should serve as a way of self-identifying an ever-expanding stereotype with this country. We are now the land of encouraging its citizens to be capitalist consumers who will cheer and absorb anything on their 50-inch LED flat screen televisions (which they probably bought on sale just for the Super Bowl).

It is the icing on the cake of abundant American consumerism. Its advertising strategies are luring its viewers, and straying us from caring about the more important issues, like when those damn groundhogs will finally accept climate change. It's science!

Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, and the Future

Bonds and Clemens Must Remain Out of Cooperstown

BY: ERIC RANSOM

Baseball has enshrined a vast number of terrific athletes and worthy heroes that kids can look up to.

Players like Ted Williams, Jackie Robinson, and Cal Ripken Jr. all were huge figures who represented the game with class.

That being said, this is simply not the case with Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens.

To elect either of these men into the Baseball Hall of Fame, a magnificent dedication to the model players and citizens who upheld the sanctity of baseball, would be a slap in the face to those pure players, as well as their fans.

It would represent that steroid users can get away with cheating, and be glorified for their accolades, rather than be appropriately shunned.

Hall of Famer, Joe Morgan, is absolutely correct in his letter, urging voters to be anti-Bonds and Clemens.

Unfortunately, there is a groundswell among the writers who vote for the Hall of Fame to vote-in Bonds and Clemens, and in the future, more cheaters to come.

On last year's ballot, Clemens received 54.1% of votes, and Bonds, 53.8%, inching ever so closely to the 75% of votes needed. These two are on the cusp of forever being enshrined as Hall of Famers.

A Hall of Fame filled with steroid users will corrupt future generations of baseball fans by openly glorifying its cheaters and ignoring the disgraceful acts they put forth on the league.

For example, a kid ten years from now, curious about baseball, will look up the Hall of Fame to see who the best to ever play were. In their research, he or she stumbles upon Bonds and Clemens, and their plaques, jerseys, and stats will lay next to their names just like every other player in the Hall.

Granted, no Hall of Fame in any sport has a spotless track record of electing the perfect athletes every time, but not to the magnitude of Bonds' stranglehold on the game when taking steroids.

Take the fact that Bonds has hit 762 career home-runs (a record), and won seven Most Valuable Players awards (a record), including four in a row from 2001-2004.

In those seasons, Bonds was 36-40 years old. Most players consider or choose to retire around that age, yet in miraculous fashion, wins four consecutive MVP's. This is a baseball record only he has accomplished.

Clemens is no different. He won seven Cy Young awards, the award for best pitcher in his

league, with his last coming in 2004 at age 42.

No pitcher has ever won a Cy Young award at 42 years old, and no player has ever won an MVP at 40 years old like Bonds. Clearly, steroids and performance-enhancing drugs improved their play, gaining an edge over other players of whom stayed clean, and were rudely slighted.

If Bonds and Clemens were to get into the Hall of Fame, the domino effect begins - once one cheater is in, all of them will be.

The shockwave sent throughout baseball in electing these cheaters would forever change the landscape with voting-in each year's batch of players, where even steroids wouldn't be enough to disqualify them.

Soon, the entire steroid era of the 1990's and



2000's will all be one happy family, honored with plaques and attention in the same room with dignified ballplayers like Ripken Jr. and Robinson.

It must be noted that the Baseball Hall of Fame is not perfect, nor will it get any better.

The time has arrived where the majority of the players from the Steroid Era are now eligible to be elected, and it's almost inevitable a large amount will get in.

Some steroid users may already be in the Hall of Fame, and the baseball world may not even know, therefore not being fair to Bonds and Clemens. If cheaters are already in, Bonds and Clemens are sure to be next, being the best players from the tainted era.

The writers who vote are in tough positions. With this, a new era of voting should ensue where the character of the player may count just as much as the statistics, if not more so.

If these voters truly love the game, they must take into consideration that the credentials of the clean candidates with decent statistics, and their willingness to reject PEDs and steroids, is qualification enough over those who cheated and purposefully inflated their numbers like the airheads they are.

SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS

Jamaica Serves Sex on the Beach...in the Nude

Solo Adventure Turns Cold in the Tropics

BY: SAMUEL STEPNEY

Almost exactly a year ago, my best friend hit me up. She was about to finish grad school and wanted to celebrate.

This woman has been my best friend since the 7th grade, so I tell her, "Pick a place and we out".

When she eventually decided on Jamaica, I quickly bought my plane tickets.

As we get closer and closer to the Memorial Day weekend, one by one her friends begin to drop out, until it was just Rizz (my bestie), her mom, and I. Which was cool until she missed her flight, and just like that, my bestie's vacay was turned into a solo trip.

Determined to have a good time, and attempting to follow my vacation motto "I am responsible for how much fun I have", I created a list of all the events and well-known restaurants in Negril.

During this time period, I was between girlfriends, so I was looking for a little extra something to get into. I happened to come across an event called "Mochafest" at a resort called "Hedonism II".

At around 8pm, I went to the front desk and asked Paulette for a taxi. When I told her where I was going, she shot me some well-deserved side eye and said, "Enjoy your night".

As my taxi pulled up to the resort entrance and began to drive up the long winding road leading to the lobby, I began to understand how massive the space was.

I walked confidently through large glass

doors, and inside this Caribbean Caesar's palace, my eyes met with a billboard-sized painting of Mona Lisa with her titty out.

It was \$120 for an evening pass, which was justified in my mind since it included unlimited food and drinks.

Over the next few hours, I got to bond with a fivesome and many others at the dining room. I also went to a Beanie Man concert where I almost got stabbed, but that's another story.

On our way back to the resort, on the bus, I realized that my near death experience had made me very hungry.

When we arrived at the resort, I walked straight toward the late night food area only to be confronted with a line about 50 deep; so, I angrily got in queue.

About 10 minutes later, one of the women that got on the bus after me walked past with a plate of food. I called her over and asked if there was another location for food, to which she laughed in response and said, "Yeah! But, you have to go to the nude side."

Up until this point, I had assumed that the nude side of the resort was a sectioned off beach or pool area for the old nudists, not a whole separate side of the resort. After a three-minute walk, I found my way to the entrance of the nude side.

There was a very large sign nailed to massive palm tree that made the repercussions of photography and video recording very clear.

After turning off my phone to avoid any

kind of misunderstanding, I made my way through the clearing of palm trees and tropical plants, where I then became a pilgrim in the nudist land.

Slightly embarrassed, I put my head down and walked straight to the food line that I saw in the distance.

After waiting on the line for a couple minutes, a woman walked up to me and stepped right in front of my face with a smile.

She was about 5'4 slim, thick and chocolate, which was my preference. She looked me right in my eyes and said, "you know where you are right?" and I responded, "Are you going to yell at me?"

She smiled menacingly and said, "Only if you want me to". After I finished laughing, she looked at me completely straight faced and said, "I'm waiting".

So, I began to strip. As each layer came off, she gently folded and laid them on the back of a chair nearby.

I honestly wasn't sure if I was being bullied or seduced but I felt compelled to do anything that this woman told me to do.

Enough time now passed so that the nude bodies were becoming more normal to me, and the thought of looking at all the titties became less intrusive.

We sat by the pool and talked about everything that had happened over the course of the night.

Then one of the women that I had met earlier walked over to me and said, "I'm about to go back to my room, you're wel-

come to join me if you want".

Holding back my drunken excitement, I answered, "I'll keep you company". So, I left my clothes and followed her down the road.

As we both walked back to her room completely naked, there was no confusion as to what was about to happen and my heart was pounding.

When she opened the door to her room. Her roommate woke up, said hello and had a brief conversation with her as she laid down on the bed.

I stood awkwardly by the T.V. until she called me over to the bed.

She went down on me as I inched my hand slowly between her thighs as her friend watched and played with herself. Some time had passed and she asked me if I had a condom.

I looked at her straight faced and said, "where was I gonna put it?" she shrugged and said, "I don't have one"; I looked at her roommate hopefully, but she gave the same response.

As I was standing there with my friend waving in her face at full mast, she plainly said, "Well, I guess I'm going to bed. Hopefully, I'll see you tomorrow." and proceeded to pull the blankets over herself.

As I made my way back to where my clothes were, I decided that I was not going to come back tomorrow.

I ended the night with one last drink and called a taxi to take me back to my hotel room.

Find Your Identity Again Even in Love

Losing Yourself in a Relationship and How to Fix it

BY: JESSICA SCARIMBOLO

Entering a new relationship can change your life in many ways, and the majority of those changes tend to be positive.

However, it is important not to lose yourself in a relationship while with another person.

It is essential to remember the person you were before being with a significant other, before they change your personality.

Similarly, you should make time for yourself the way you would for another friend or family member. You deserve care, too.

Elizabeth Stone, from Thought Catalog, is a relationship coach and person who "lost" herself in a previous relationship. She created a list to help save others from going through this, in an effort that her experiences can better educate others that are in her situation.

First, when being with another person, you should never lose sight of your personal goals.

If you planned to start a business and hope to be a millionaire one day, do not let your significant others' dreams take that away from you. While you are connected, you are also separate people.

In response to that, it may seem like all the goals you felt were once achievable are now

just out of reach. You may begin to wonder how you could have ever thought you were capable of achieving them in the first place.

If you feel like things you once thought of as goals are now far-fetched dreams, that is a red flag.

Another important thing to look for when fearing getting lost in your relationship is the trap of always making sure everyone else is okay before you.

This is related to what was previously mentioned about making time for yourself the way you would for others. It is okay to be selfish sometimes, though the word has a negative connotation.

Suzannah Weiss, from Bustle, confessed that all of her previous relationships became obsessions, inevitably resulting in her losing herself in her relationships.

She admitted to noticing herself doing things like changing her interests to match her partners, and passing up opportunities for them.

However, Weiss discusses ways to change this issue that may seem permanent.

While Weiss gives advice on how to change each individual aspect, overall, she recommends remembering what makes you an individual person.

She recommends even writing

a list of things that are important to you, and how those differ from what is important to your partner.

After doing this, you may even want to do something that you enjoy that your partner wouldn't.

Remembering that you can still be happy and in love while being different people is key; the person you're with chose you as the individual that you are, and should respect that.

Consider having a pamper day to take care of yourself, including getting your nails done, make a cup of coffee, put on a face mask and read a great book.

It is also important to know that if you notice this happening, it does not mean that the relationship has become detrimental and needs to end- it simply means some aspects need to be re-evaluated.

It doesn't mean your partner is a bad person, either, or that you are insecure- this is all too common! It is avoidable and can be fixed after it is present in a relationship.

All in all, make sure you do not lose yourself just because you found someone else.

Bilingual Brain Power and Benefits

The Macro and Micro Effects of Speaking Another Language

BY: VERONICA PISTEK

Any time is the best time to learn another language.

Being bilingual has recently been shown to be incredibly beneficial, and learning more than one language can open the door for a stronger brain, great career opportunities, social and cultural diversification, and an overall healthier lifestyle.

It is discussed widely throughout the psychological world that a bilingual brain works differently from a monolingual brain. Such research has yielded that bilingualism helps to keep us mentally fit.

For instance, you might spend an entire Sunday watching Netflix and not be active. Then, on Monday, take a trip to the gym, learn at school, and conquer assignments. Your brain is just like a muscle —the more it exercises, the stronger it becomes.

Flipping language on and off like a switch in the brain works out the core control system, directing attention to processes such as planning, problem solving, and mentally intense tasks.

Believe it or not, learning a second language from youth prepares the mind for the multitasking that comes with adulthood.

Even better, bilingualism enhances focus, improves listening skills, and overall increases cognitive and emotional distance which enables you to make more rational decisions.

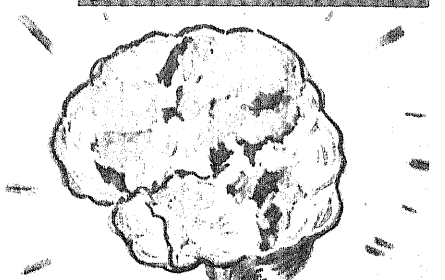
Knowing a second language enhances important qualities that provide more value to employers. Many careers in today's world search for employees that embody diversity.

Being bilingual creates that edge when applying to jobs such as journalism, education, international services, the military, and even healthcare careers.

If you are a "paper chaser", it has been noted that jobs with pay differentials based on bilingualism can pay up to 5-20% more per-hour.

If you strive for that extra money, then learning that language can benefit your financial gain

photo credit: uulbww.com



greatly over the course of your career.

Speaking a second language paves the road for interaction with more diverse people and cultures. This aspect can lead to more opportunities to make friends, open your mind to cultures, and explore different types of art, hobbies, and locations.

Ever dream of eating the best cuisine in Paris and living life like the locals? If you have the chance to travel to Paris and happen to know French, you will recognize how much easier and memorable your experience will become. You can navigate the streets easier, engage in conversations, and indulge in the culture without any limitations.

Even if travelling is not your forte, becoming bilingual will expand your mind and open up new perspectives.

Research has shown that speaking another language can actually help you focus on seeing the world differently.

Many bilingual folk report that they feel like a different person when speaking another language.

Speaking a different tongue brings out various characteristics within a person, and leads to a new perception of the world through a different lens.

The benefits of being bilingual can also be sustainable for a lifetime.

The cognitive flexibility combined with enhanced adaptation skills can help delay dementia in older adults. Also, bilingualism is said to make Alzheimer's symptoms appear much later on in one suffering from the disease.

Symptoms such as memory loss, difficulty of focus, and increased confusion are all aspects of the mental deterioration that comes with having Alzheimer's.

If bilingualism really can delay these symptoms by much as five years, then one should truly consider making bilingualism a universal phenomenon.

Not only does bilingualism benefit an individual, it can impact an entire community. By exposing a child to a new culture and language, they will be more likely to destroy any ideas of discrimination.

By removing the international language barrier, the children who come from English-speaking homes can lend their language to those who live in Spanish-speaking homes, and vice versa. This could foster a better understanding of other cultures.

Though the Critical Age Hypothesis of Language Acquisition states that it is easier to develop a new language during the prime of our youth, it is never too late to fulfill your goals.

The sooner you begin to learn and the more frequently you practice, the greater the benefits of knowing another language will be.

SPORTS

Knicks Season Falls Completely Apart

Injuries, Poor Play Ruin Promising Start

BY: ERIC RANSOM

More of the same old ways haunt the New York Knicks yet again this season.

With an enthusiastic beginning to the season, the Knicks looked poised to abandon the Carmelo Anthony era and start anew.

The incredible start for Kristaps Porzingis, as well as additions like Enes Kanter and Tim Hardaway Jr. jolted the team to a brief high point in both energy and productivity not achieved in years.

Much like last year, though, the season has come crashing down to a halt, with key injuries and poor execution to blame.

Just to add salt to the Knicks wound, first time All-Star Kristaps Porzingis tore the ACL muscle in his left knee in a February 6 game against the Milwaukee Bucks, putting a cap on an aggravating year so far.

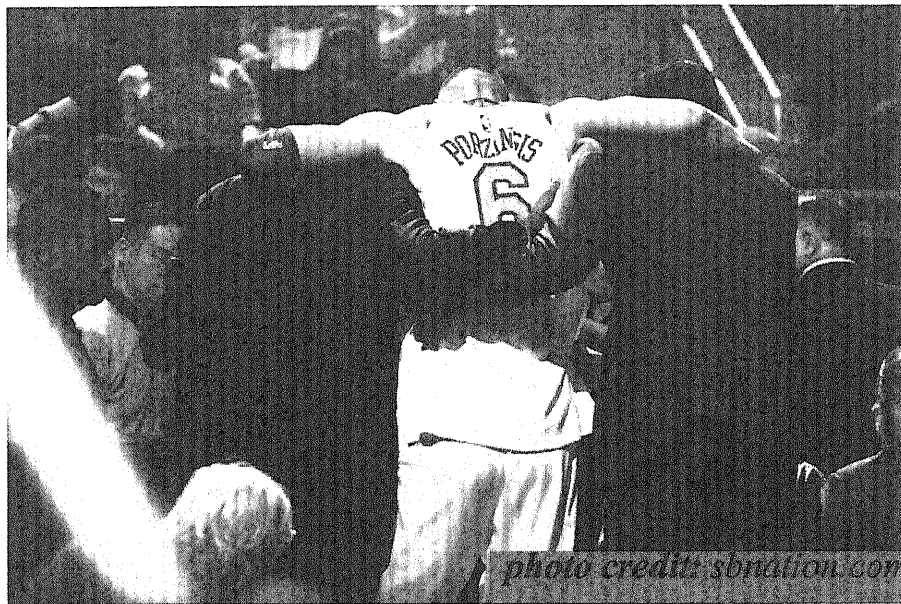
An injury such as this can take up to 12 months to recover from, the last thing the Knicks could have wanted during this rebuild period.

Porzingis was having a career year before the injury, being among the tops in the NBA in blocks-per-game and putting up career high offensive numbers while being selected to his first All-Star game.

Unfortunately, Porzingis will miss the festivities, just two weeks before the start of the All-Star break.

The Knicks as a team showed sparks of something special in the first twenty games of the season, but it was not meant to be.

Through 56 games, both the 2016 and 2017 team have identical records of 23-33.



A combination of lackluster defense, blowing 20+ point leads, and not securing victories while ahead in the fourth quarter all contributed to a lost season for the Knicks, now relegated to counting the days until the offseason begins.

Willy Hernangomez, an underused center, was pushed down the depth chart

and nearly forgotten about all season. This was enough for him to request a trade, eventually being dealt on the Charlotte Hornets.

The trade deadline also had the Knicks acquire French point guard Emmanuel Mudiay from the Denver Nug-

getters in a three team deal.

gets in a three team deal. Knicks forward Doug McDermott was sent from the Knicks to the Dallas Mavericks, as well as point guard Devin Harris from Dallas to Denver to complete the deal.

Despite the negativity permeating from the Knicks, a few bright spots shined through the darkness this year, especially in that of forward Michael Beasley.

The former second overall pick in the 2011 NBA Draft has provided a fantastic offensive spark off the bench for the Knicks, predominantly playing during Porzingis's absences this year.

As of February 10, Beasley has averaged an impressive 12.6 PPG playing in just 19.8 MPG, as well as shooting a staggering 51% from the field.

Beasley's playing time will surely increase with Porzingis now shelved for the rest of this season, and most probably a portion of next season as well.

Other players like Enes Kanter, Kyle O'Quinn and Courtney Lee have all had solid seasons, though their time in New York may be limited. Kanter, though, hopes this does not come to fruition for him.

"This is where I want to be, this is where I want to retire," said Kanter, still enthusiastic about his team despite the adversity.

Courtney Lee set the record for most consecutive free throws made with 46, beating out former record holder Chris Duhon and his 44 straight makes back in 2008.

For now, the Knicks will look to the future not just in acquiring new players, but for a positive rehab and anticipated return of Porzingis sometime in 2019.

Giancarlo Stanton Traded to Yankees, Shohei Ohtani Chooses Angels

NL MVP Moves to Bronx, "Japanese Babe Ruth" Picks Los Angeles

BY: ERIC RANSOM

Christmas presents have arrived early for Yankees and Angels fans.

In the biggest move of the baseball offseason, the New York Yankees have acquired National League Most Valuable Player Giancarlo Stanton in a deal with the Miami Marlins.

Coming off a career year, the outfielder will now play in Yankee pinstripes alongside American League Rookie of the Year and near-twin, Aaron Judge.

In 2014, Stanton signed the richest contract in U.S. sports, inking a 13-year, 325 million-dollar extension to his existing contract with the Marlins.

Due to the Miami's poor play the last few years, and new management buying the team, the Marlins set out to free themselves of the massive contract, aiming to trade their superstar at some point this offseason.

Stanton also had discretion to veto a trade due to the no-trade clause in his contract. After declining a trade to both the Cardinals and Giants, the Yankees quickly jumped at the opportunity once Stanton listed the Yankees as a desired destination.

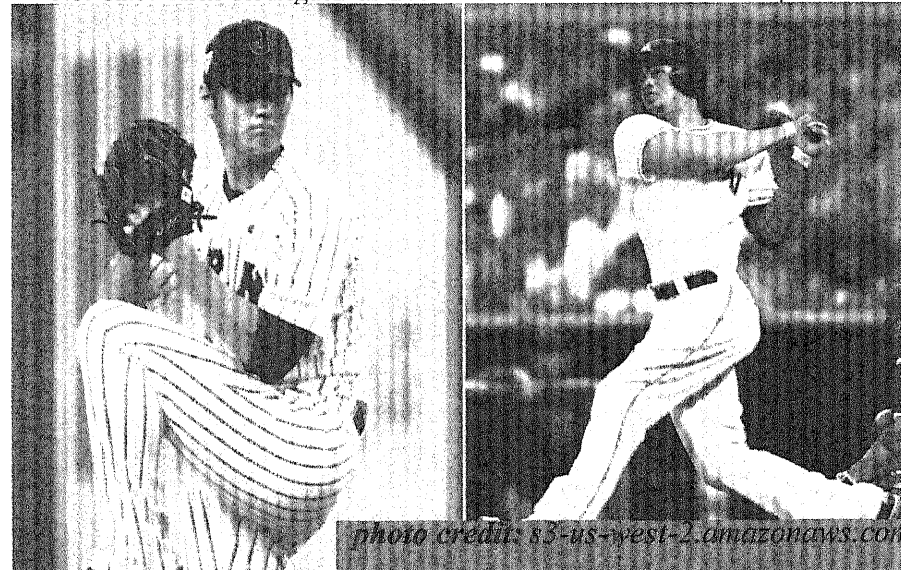
The Yankees agreed to pay 265 million of the 295 million-dollars left on his contract, as well as trade INF Starlin Castro and two prospects to complete the trade.

One of the new owners of the Marlins is Yankees legend Derek Jeter, who

was instrumental in the completing the sale.

Stanton, 28, is coming off a career year with the Marlins, leading Major League Baseball last year with 59 homeruns and 132 RBI, earning him his first MVP award.

Not since Alex Rodriguez in 2004



has a MVP been traded the following year- a player also acquired by the Yankees.

With Aaron Judge's rookie record of 52 homeruns, and catcher Gary Sanchez's 33 homers, a Yankee's lineup with Stanton could become the most dominant trio of hitters in baseball.

Now that both Stanton and Judge

are paired up, fans are deeming them the new "Murderer's Row", which featured Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris in 1961. The potential of this new duo may further add to the nickname that is the "Bronx Bombers".

Not even 24 hours before the trade, baseball received its next superstar in an

import from Japan.

fielder, netting him his nickname. His coveted ability to both pitch and hit at an elite level drew massive interest by all 30 MLB teams, especially for his age, being only 23.

After carefully hearing pitches from all interested teams, it was up to Ohtani to sign wherever he wanted, eventually choosing the Angels.

Ohtani will join the best player in baseball, Mike Trout, and an Angels team that missed the playoffs last year but will now look to build off of the groundbreaking acquisition.

One of the biggest questions will be how the Angels handle his dual-threat capabilities, whether or not he will focus on only pitching, or attempting to accomplish both pitching and hitting.

His decision to leave Japan at his age was a surprise, as staying in Japan for three more years would have enabled him to earn much more money from MLB clubs under an agreement with the NPB.

Instead, Ohtani chose to join the MLB this year after getting permission to be posted, putting aside a potential bigger payday in the future to showcase his abilities right away.

The American League has certainly been gifted with two new dynamic superstar players in Stanton and Ohtani, and who knows, the two could possibly battle for an AL MVP one day.