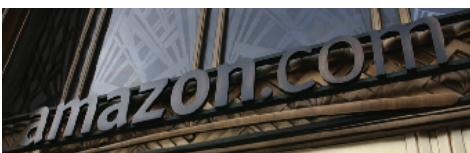


President Cruz Starts Campus Renovation



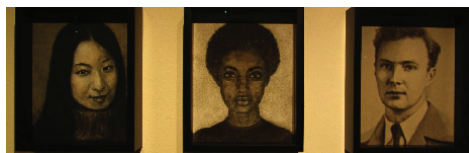
Artist's rendering of the proposed construction of new Nursing Building. [Page 3]



NEWS

Bronx Residents Disagree
on Amazon HQ Bid

[Page 4]



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Dark and Stormy Night' Puts a Gothic
Twist on Contemporary Art

[Page 6]



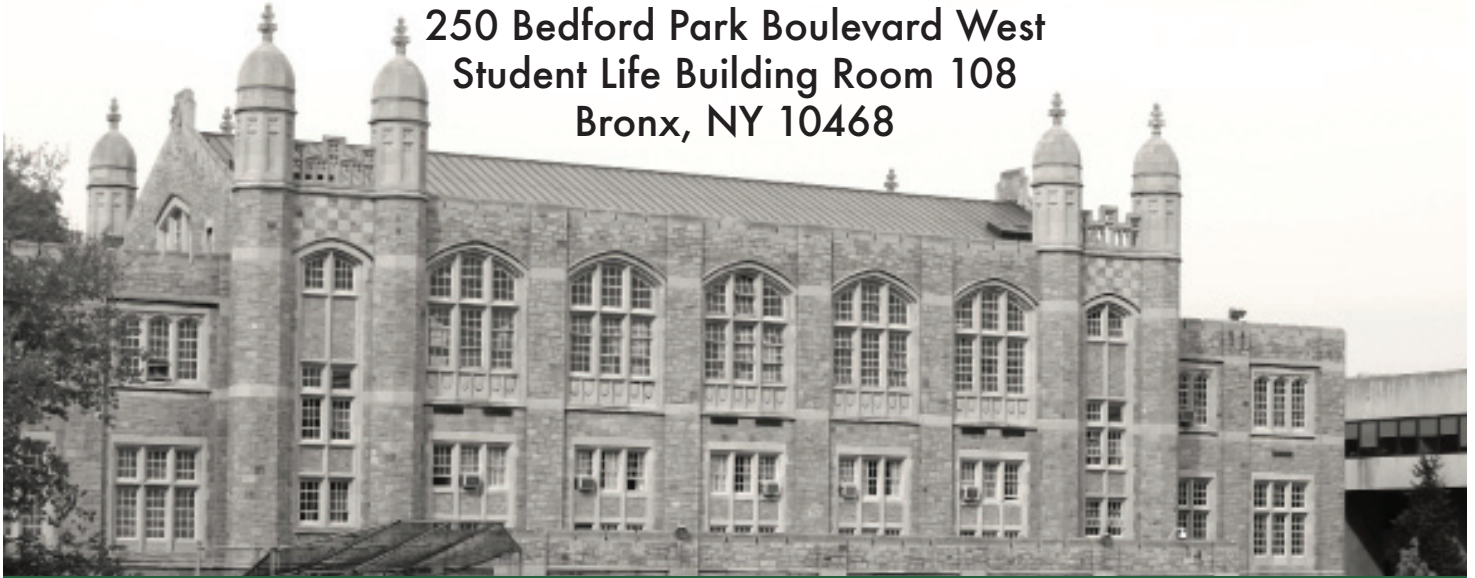
LIFESTYLE

Lehman Students Challenge Colorism
in the Entertainment Industry

[Page 10]

the meridian

250 Bedford Park Boulevard West
Student Life Building Room 108
Bronx, NY 10468



BUILD YOUR PORTFOLIO WITH US

Be part of our team of reporters, writers, photographers, videographers, and artists. Send your sample writing, photography, and/or art to our email, or come find us in our office at the Student Life Building Room 108

the staff

EILEEN SEPULVEDA

EDITOR IN CHIEF

LEONEL HENRIQUEZ

MANAGING EDITOR

ANGEL MINDANAO

OFFICE MANAGER

ZOE FANZO

PRINT PRODUCER/WEB DESIGNER

ELISSA FANZO

COPY EDITOR

JENNIFER MACKENZIE

FACULTY ADVISOR

THOMAS BEHNKE

NEWS EDITOR

JUAN VASQUEZ

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

LEAH LICEAGA

LIFESTYLE EDITOR

**WRITERS: THOMAS BEHNKE, DEIRDRE FANZO, ZOE FANZO,
DEIRRA FRANCIS, SHAIANN FRAZIER, LEONEL HENRIQUEZ,
JOREL LONESOME, ZAYNA PALMER, JUAN VASQUEZ**

Questions? Comments? Write us at lehmanmeridian@gmail.com
Check out our website: lehmanmeridian.squarespace.com

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Meridian reserves the right to edit articles and letters as the editor(s) see fit. The views expressed in editorials are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Meridian staff. Ads published both in print and online do not reflect the views or opinions of the Meridian staff. The message or product being sold in the ad may not be in accordance with our staff's personal beliefs. The Meridian articles, in whole or in part, may only be reprinted with permission from the editor(s) of The Meridian. All letters, opinions and articles sent to us must have the name, phone number, and email address of the author for verification. Letters without the author's name(s) will be ignored. Upon request, authors' names may be withheld from publication.

President Cruz Starts Campus Renovation

By Leonel Henriquez

When Lehman President José Luis Cruz cut the ribbon at the Lehman Performing Arts Center renovation last week, it marked the start of a host of capital improvements slated for 2018. Next year will see the campus bookstore moved to the old gym building to make way for a new 50,000 square foot building to house the nursing program. A 350-bed residence hall/dorm and phase II of the Science Hall will further change the campus skyline, at an estimated cost of \$ 282.8 million dollars.

Cruz laid out these plans to students at a lunch with the student government association (SGA) and the general student body in the Student Life Building on Oct. 25. At this event, the president also noted that Gillet Hall auditorium and the Lovinger Theatre would be renovated, with the latter to have its seats re-upholstered



President José Luis Cruz speaks with students during lunch. Photo by Leonel Henriquez.

and reconfigured to provide greater wheelchair access.

Senior, biology major, and SGA member Kimberly Pereyra was excited about the announcement, telling the Meridian, “I think it’s really great that they will fixing some of the auditoriums that are run down like the one in Gillet.”

Chris Higgins, technical director for Lehman Stages, is impressed with

Cruz’ efforts so far. “I think it’s great that the new president has been able to raise so much money in such a short time that he’s been on the job,” he said. But Higgins added that rather than prioritizing new construction, “I would really prefer to see more money going into repairs and renovation, particularly here in the theatre building, where there are so many leaky pipes in the basement.”

New Yorkers Re-elect Mayor, Reject Constitutional Convention

By Thomas Behnke

“I knew de Blasio was going to win, but I think the convention vote was a missed opportunity. Lehman freshman Jasmin Delgado said when asked about the recent mayoral election results. The vote on the Constitutional Convention, known as Proposition 1 on the ballot, asked New Yorkers if they wanted the opportunity to amend New York’s

constitution. While Delgado saw it as “a chance to change things” and voted for it, her mother voted against.

“My mom thinks that any changes politicians would make would be better for them and worse for us,” Delgado said. “We went to vote together, [and] we fought up until we entered the

school.” Delgado laughed. “We are a very political family.”

Most New Yorkers voted with Delgado’s mother on the constitutional convention. The proposal, which appears on the ballot every 20 years, was rejected by a margin of 86 percent to 16 percent, according to



New Yorkers voted to reject a proposal for a constitutional convention. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.

the New York Times. The last time New Yorkers voted for a constitutional convention was in 1938. According to nyconstitution.org, delegates debated issues such as social security, expanding the rapid transit system, and education. The next time a convention proposal will be on the ballot is 2037.

A yes vote would have resulted in a convention in which delegates could voice concerns and propose changes to the state constitution. Any changes coming out of the convention would then need to be voted on by the public before being implemented. Nysaysyes.org, a website advocating a convention,

listed important issues that might be addressed, such as election reform, the environment, and court and criminal justice reform.

Delgado saw it as a way to protect something closer to home--her own education. "You see the signs that Trump's education secretary doesn't like public schools," she said. "A convention could have helped our focus on free public education even stronger." Critics of the proposition point to the special interests, and the money they would pour into lobbying the delegates for changes. "My father is in the ironworker's union. They

were against it, because they're scared the bosses could weaken the unions. I guess it is complicated, but we can't change if we don't try something. The system is broken."

However, the substantial showing for de Blasio, who was re-elected by nearly 40 points, shows that some New Yorkers still have faith in his abilities--or else less in all the other candidates. Many Lehman students affirmed this preference to the Meridian. "I like de Blasio," Hector Mucheca, a sophomore, said. "He has his own mind, I think. He doesn't get pushed around, and we need that with the way things are in the rest of the country."

Bronx Residents Disagree on Amazon HQ Bid

By Zoe Fanzo

"An Amazon headquarters in the Bronx will drive out native Bronxites," Bronx resident and Hunter College freshman Andrew Shkreli told the Meridian. Shkreli opposes the call from Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and several other elected officials for Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to select the

Bronx as the location of the company's next headquarters.

In an open letter published on Oct. 15, officials advocating for a Bronx headquarters boasted of the borough's central location, noting, "We are six miles from LaGuardia Airport, [and]

20 minutes from Kennedy Airport... The Bronx is the only borough attached to the mainland United States, and we offer easy connections to Westchester, Connecticut and New Jersey by car. In addition, we are in the midst of constructing a new Metro North commuter rail spur in the East



An entrance at Amazon's 185-acre Seattle headquarters. Photo courtesy of Flickr.

Bronx.” The letter also documents the borough’s recent economic growth, citing \$3.27 billion in total development in 2016. Diaz asserts that since 2009, unemployment in the Bronx has been reduced by more than half, making it a prime location for corporate investment.

Some Bronxites, though, dread the consequences of corporate influence, and fear that Diaz is accelerating gentrification in their communities. “I think the main issue is that Diaz cares more about people coming into the Bronx and improving the Bronx’s image rather than those who already reside here,” Shkreli said. “There is a blatant attempt to facilitate gentrification because the main people who will benefit from this are college-educated professionals, which the majority of the Bronx is not. Consequently, Diaz isn’t looking out for the Bronx now, as it is, he is looking out for what it could be. An Amazon headquarters in the Bronx will drive out native Bronxites.”

However, Diaz’ plea has some Bronxites celebrating urban renewal and economic stimulation. “I think it would be a cool idea. It would bring more jobs to the Bronx, and also more

publicity to the borough,” said Lehman sophomore Ngozi Fisher.

Bronx resident Mary F. Smith, 63, who grew up during the era of burning buildings and urban decay, praised the potential headquarters. “I looked into it, and I found that at Amazon, even the entry-level jobs pay \$12 an hour, which is more than the minimum wage. You can work your way up, and we don’t have those kinds of jobs here; they’re full-time and they’re benefit jobs. I do think the Bronx economy is transforming, there are more and more positive things happening. If you look back at pictures of the Bronx in the 70s, it’s like war-torn Europe,” said Smith.

While Bronxites are divided about the placement of the headquarters, plans for its location remain undetermined.

“If you look back at pictures of the Bronx in the 70s, it’s like war-torn Europe.”

- Bronx resident Mary F. Smith

Some New Yorkers believe that, regardless of economic consequence, the city is not equipped for an Amazon headquarters. Veronica Vanterpool, board member of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, rejected the plea to make New York the home of the next headquarters in her recent Daily News opinion piece, “Mayor, get behind progressive congestion pricing,” citing Amazon’s preference for “proximity to major highways and arterial roads,” and “access to mass transits.” The city, according to Vanterpool, “has traffic-choked streets and an imploding transit network--both of which will remain that way until we make a long-overdue fix.”

“It will definitely inject a lot of growth into the Bronx, but it will also bring a lot of traffic,” agreed Lehman graduate student Jeldin Colberg.

Ultimately, as many cities attempt to make a case for Amazon’s next headquarters, it remains unclear as to whether or not the Bronx will be chosen by the corporate giant, or if the borough is even in the right condition for such development. Regardless of the outcome, Ruben Diaz Jr. insists, “Amazon belongs in New York.”

‘Dark and Stormy Night’ Puts a Gothic Twist on Contemporary Art

By Deirdre Fanzo



From left to right, the portraits “Yoko Sato, 1968-1999;” “Tasia Brown 1982-2012;” and “James Otis Purdy, 1914-2009” by Heide Hatry. Photo by Deirdre Fanzo.

“Gothic sensibility sends shivers down the spine,” reads the text at the entrance to the latest exhibit at Lehman’s art gallery. “It is the essence of foreboding, never going out of style, just as it unveils the eternal moments of human dread.” The exhibit, “Dark and Stormy Night, Gothic Influence in Contemporary Art,” opened on Oct. 28 and features 34 artists who skillfully manage to capture the Gothic essence in contemporary works of art.

The show foregrounds several prominent Gothic themes. The idea of a dark and stormy night is well represented in four photographs from a series entitled “I’m Made of Rain” by Isabelle Menin. These photos present an eerie, almost surreal, Gothic atmosphere. So do statues and paintings of tall, ornate, angular towers and cathedrals found throughout the exhibit, along with depictions of women shrouded in mystery.

Among these conventional Gothic themes are a few surprising works of art. A series of portraits in black and white by Heide Hatry entitled “Yoko Sato, 1968-1999,” “Tasia Brown 1982-2012,” and “James Otis Purdy, 1914-2009” appears, on the surface, to be nothing more than a few paintings of smiling people. Another painting featured in the gallery, “Poe Crossing the Concourse,” by Daniel Hauben, portrays an urban cityscape in bright and beautiful colors. Both of these installations require a careful eye to find the Gothic within them. According to the label beside the portraits, the materials used to create them were the human ashes of the very people being depicted. The urban cityscape reveals a scene outside Poe Park in the Bronx, and in the corner of the painting, a rendering of Edgar Allan Poe himself can be seen crossing the street. The pieces are incredibly macabre and suggest the notion of life--or perhaps still-life--after death.

The only installation that truly feels out of place is a three-dimensional tower installed as the centerpiece in one section of the gallery. It is pink and frilly, and while it could be interpreted as a Gothic commentary on the notion of contemporary femininity, this reading is difficult to determine and is one I am not entirely confident about.

Overall, the most interesting thing about “Dark and Stormy Night” is the presence of many different interpretations of what contemporary Gothic looks like. Several pieces depict Gothic themes in highly contemporary mediums, like digital photography, while others show contemporary scenes with the addition of Gothic elements. This exhibit is stunning, absorbing, and in some instances, morbid. I would highly recommend viewing ‘Dark and Stormy Night’ before it closes on Feb. 10, 2018.

On Their Comeback Album, The Cool Kids Live up to Their Name

By Jorel Lonesome



Sir Michael Rocks performing at Southbound Festival in 2011. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

When Antoine “Sir Michael Rocks” Reed and Evan “Chuck English” Ingersol announced their duo was splitting up shortly after releasing their hit album “When Fish Ride Bicycles” in July 2011, it seemed as though we might never hear from them again.

But, The Cool Kids are back with their new sophomore album, “Special Edition Grand Master Deluxe.” Released in September 2017, the 16-track LP features artists such as Jeremih, Syd, Smoke DZA as well as collaborations with artists such as Drake, Maroon 5, Lil Wayne and Travis Barker. The album does a great job at sounding both modern and nostalgic. It’s like a classic Cool Kids album but with noticeable artistic progression. In rap music today, it’s increasingly difficult to make an album that sticks for an extended period of time, but The Cool

Kids serve their purpose once again.

Many of the tracks were produced entirely by Sir Michael Rocks and Chuck English, with a plethora of drums, samples, disco tunes, synth, strings, horns, guitars, bass, and more synthetic sounds such as “Westside Connections,” “Get Out the Bowl,” “Checkout,” “Gr8Full,” “Jean Jacket,” and “Too Smooth.”

The first track, “The Moonlanding,” comes in hot with a gust of intensity. This really sets the stage for the production style of the album—energetic beats, futuristic synths, and layered horns. The track features actor/comedian Hannibal Buress, as he begins with a Black Sabbath tribute. “The Moonlanding” shifts into a banger that includes a dynamic horn sample applied by Sir Michael Rocks’ slick fashion talk in the hook that is produced by tag team partner Chuck

English. Their lyrics relinquish their most savvy wordplay and also reference “The Purple Tape” and Pokémon.

Arguably one of the coolest tracks is “20/20 Vision,” which features great beat characteristics for Chuck’s production. According to Urban Dictionary “20/20” means “Completely seeing the truth of a situation.” Therefore, we may suggest that the theme of the track is about how The Cool Kids are also The Real Kids. When we delve into tracks such as “TV Dinner,” to name a few, it’s as if your head is inside a hornet’s nest, but with a rhythmic sound of a robotic alarm that blends perfectly with the dominant pounding of drums beating in an even pattern to entice you to bop your head.

“Break Your Legs,” features drummer Travis Barker from blink-182. The song is edgy compared to their smoother sounds. You can definitely compare it to N.E.R.D.’s 2001 smash hit “Lap Dance,” which sets this particular track apart from the others.

“On the Set,” produced by Chuck English perfectly shows the dark and 90s atmosphere beat that both Boldy James (Detroit native and Mass Appeal signee) and Smoke DZA (Harlem underground representative) are known for. English’s distinctive use of vocals and instruments is inventively cognizant. The base is layered on top of the smooth sounding vocals that follow and will make you feel as cool. They create unforgettable funky bass lines and 808 hits that fall in the line of new- and old-school Hip Hop.

Overall, with its creative production, this album lives up to the anticipatory hype of the duo’s cult fans, and will be regarded as a good reference point for future experimental MCs.

Return of ‘Stranger Things’ Lives Up to the Hype

By Zoe Fanzo



Logo of the Netflix series “Stranger Things.” Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

Last summer’s finale of the hit Netflix show “Stranger Things” left audiences with many unanswered questions. Where did Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) and the Demogorgon go after their final confrontation? What happened to Will Byers (Noah Schnapp) after his return from the Upside Down? Would the simple town of Hawkins ever be the same?

In the sequel, “Stranger Things 2,” released in its entirety on Oct. 27, these questions are answered, but greater conflicts arise. A new supernatural villain, the Mind Flayer, is introduced, and his presence tortures Will. The portal to the Upside Down, opened by Eleven in the first season, has grown immeasurably. Eleven must struggle to come to terms with the implications of her upbringing and decide how she wants to use her abilities.

Ultimately, the return of “Stranger Things” satisfied fans who yearned for more of its captivating science fiction, synthesized soundtrack, and homage to

1980s genre films. After its first season premiered in the summer of 2016, the show quickly developed a cult following. Creators Matt and Ross Duffer, known as the Duffer Brothers, drew inspiration from Steven Spielberg, Stephen King, and 1980s pop culture; their first season premiered to critical acclaim.

In the behind-the-scenes special, “Beyond Stranger Things,” the Duffer Brothers describe the challenge of continuing the story. “It was kind of freaky figuring out, how do we make this story continue on in a way that it doesn’t feel forced? And we want to make sure that it can sustain at least a few more years,” said Ross. Matt echoed this adding, “In season one, you have the dramatic tension of Will being gone which ties it all together, so we lost that, but at the same time we had all these characters that we actually knew a lot better now.”

The strength of this season ultimately lies in the character growth, particularly Eleven’s coming-of-age story in standout

episode “Chapter Seven: The Lost Sister.” The season allows for further character development and exploration, and skillfully groups characters into unlikely pairings. The emotional climax of the season finally arrives with the long-awaited reunion of Eleven and Mike Wheeler (Finn Wolfhard).

New characters also join the award-winning cast, including Billy Hargrove (Dacre Montgomery), a sociopathic human antagonist, and Bob Newby (Sean Astin), a love interest for Joyce Byers (Winona Ryder). New addition Max Mayfield (Sadie Sink), also known as Madmax, introduces conflict when she beats Dustin’s high-score on an arcade game. Tensions deepen when Max finds her way into a love triangle between friends Dustin (Gaten Matarazzo) and Lucas (Caleb McLaughlin).

Though the Duffer Brothers plan to end the show after four or five seasons, fans can rest easy knowing that this trek into the Upside Down was not the last.

Lehman Students Are Spellbound by Magic: The Gathering

By Juan Vasquez



A game of Magic: The Gathering. Photo by Juan Vasquez

"I didn't know what Magic was, I only ever heard about it in passing," said Kat Anne Fornier, a novice player and Lehman student. "Then one day I watched a chaos match, which was really confusing and I wasn't feeling it." Though she felt intimidated at first, after other players guided her, she said, "it was actually really fun...I don't even remember if I won or lost but by the

end of it I wanted to enter the Magic community and have my own deck."

Created in 1994 by Richard Garfield, Ph.D., Magic: The Gathering is a pastime that has drawn many Lehman students into a world of dueling wizards attempting to do each other in. The rules are simple--reduce your opponent's life total from 20 to 0.

Players use 60-card decks filled with monsters, spells, and lands that aid the player and hinder their opponent. While there are more ways to win--reducing an opponent's deck to zero cards, using cards that create certain win conditions when activated, etc.--this is the most common win condition.

Players find the game helps them get away from the rigors of college life and regain a sense of calm. Fornier notes that playing is "extremely stress reducing...a lot of laughter comes out of the games, and...all the laughter means dopamine, which is kinda like a runner's high without the exercise."

Many players credit the Magic: The Gathering community as being a safe and supportive community. Andrew Negrón, an avid Magic player and Lehman student says, "I enjoy the community...how players help each other get better by assisting new players with getting cards and learning new skills, which makes the game even more enjoyable." Negrón adds "It is very fun so I believe it's a very relaxing game that helps you make new friends and strengthen bonds with current friends that also play."

Yet to most Magic players, the real enjoyment is going to victory with a deck that they put hours of research, development, and construction into. Frederick Kemeh, a Lehman Student and longtime Magic player, said, "It's always rewarding, making a successful deck and winning with said deck, but it takes time of planning and preparation. That, however, is fun for its own right."

Lehman Students Challenge Colorism in the Entertainment Industry

By Deirra Francis



Rutina Wesley speaking at the 2012 San Diego Comic-Con International. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Colorism limits opportunities for women of color in film and TV, and Lehman students won't stand for it. "Roles for younger women of lighter skin tone typecast [them] as this sex symbol," Lehman student, filmmaker and actress Valerie Baptist told the Meridian, while darker-skinned women, are "strategically" sidelined as "the handy-dandy sidekick, a darker-toned woman dumbed down in her beauty by the makeup artist in order not to outshine."

Dr. Mark Christian, chair of Africana studies and cultural theorist, agreed. "There is a double standard within the entertainment industry. Black men are sex symbols while black women of darker skin tone aren't." On the other hand, he added, "Black women of lighter skin tone are portrayed as the top of the pyramid hierarchy of the group--high-class, sexy and smart."

In the face of this discrimination, Lehman students who aspire to make

their careers in the entertainment industry feel frustrated. Denied the opportunity to show their talent on the basis of their skin color, many now aspire to change these double standards.

Christian noted that colorism is nothing new. "The prejudices people have attached to skin tones stem from the deep-rooted racism in our history. On top of the after-effects of slavery, we have been bombarded with images on television and film of this stereotype."

These racist portrayals date back to the beginning of mass advertising--and they haven't changed much. In the 1920s, an ad for the N.K. Fairbank Company featured a white child asking a black child, "why doesn't your mamma wash you with Fairy soap?" Almost a hundred years later, a Dove ad released Oct. 9, 2017 showed a black woman removing her brown shirt to reveal a white woman underneath in a lighter shirt. Likewise, SheaMoisture commercials supposedly celebrate diversity but manage to exclude representation of a big part of their darker-skinned base clientele who have "kinky" hair texture, featuring mainly women with straight or fine hair.

Christian pointed out that within the entertainment industry, this discrimination has privileged women who look "ethnically ambiguous--people with an off-white skin tone who appear to be of mixed race. The more we tune into our favorite shows and movies," he said, "the more variety of black women we see. However, the ugly face of colorism continues to resurface."

This shows up in the way that many productions cast ethnically ambiguous women in the role of black women, perpetuating a stereotype. Notoriously, in 2012, Zoe Saldana was casted as Nina Simone in the movie "Nina." A prosthetic nose and dark makeup were applied to Saldana, but the Latina actress still failed to resemble the appearance of the legend. This distortion shows how black women are excluded even from playing themselves.

In mid-July, the star of the hit TV show "Everybody Hates Chris," Iman Hakim, tweeted "so I'm not even being considered to audition for a role because I am 'too dark.'"

This chronic discrimination has drawn

widespread demands for a change from viewers and actors alike. Many Lehman students told the Meridian they see a shift in social values taking place. "I definitely think people are talking about it more," said Lehman alumna Nadia Floyd '17. "I do think progress is being made, not only in the entertainment industry. On television we're seeing the emergence of dark-skinned black girls. This discourse is occurring in classrooms even more, not only amongst black students but Latino (non-gender specific) students have spoken up about it as well." Floyd,

"The only way to represent people of color is to have more directors of color."

- Octavia Maybakk, Lehman sociology major

who wrote her English honors thesis on colorism and patriarchy, said, "It's refreshing to see this! We still have a way to go, of course, but yeah, there has been a growing cultural awareness towards colorism."

A Lehman panel on "Colorism in

Africa and the African Diaspora" that took place on Nov. 9 in the Lovinger Theatre inspired many in the audience to demand change.

Lehman student Erachie Brown pointed out that access to social media can also help anti-racist messages reach millions of people, so the tools now exist to debunk the negative connotations assigned to darker-skinned African-American women. "The knowledge we've gained in production helps us to create our own platform of film and series that we are interested in watching," Brown explained. "Our position is to cast the Taraji P. Hensons, Tiffany Haddishes, Nicole Beharies, and Rutina Wesley's of the world."

Other Lehman students noted that some directors are already making waves in the entertainment industry with their positive representations of black women, citing Ava Duvernay, Shonda Rhimes, and Issa Raye as examples. Duvernay is the first Black woman both to win the Best Director Prize at the 2012 Sundance for her featured film "Middle of Nowhere" and to be nominated for an Academy Award for the documentary "13th." She was also nominated for the Golden Globe Award for best Director for the movie "Selma" in 2014. Rhimes is best known as the creator, head writer, executive producer for shows like "Grey's Anatomy," "Private Practice," "Scandal," and "How to Get Away with Murder." Raye follows in their footsteps as a director, writer, and actress creating the webseries "Awkward Black Girl" which later turned into the hit HBO show "Insecure."

Octavia Maybakk, an African sociology student at Lehman said change is needed and a new generation of directors is key. "The only way to represent people of color is to have more directors of color," she said.

Lehman Students Hack Their Way Toward Success

By Zayna Palmer

“We want to hire CUNY grads and undergrads to become full-time interns or employees in the near future,” said BuzzFeed Tech Recruiter Nicolette Nelson, 29. BuzzFeed is just one of the prospective employers that came to Lehman’s fourth annual Hackathon on the lookout for diverse interns among future CUNY grads. Nelson explained that BuzzFeed, which participated in the Hackathon as both mentor and judge, has a mission to offer opportunities to more diverse people and get more women working in top management positions. The goal for this Hackathon, she added, is “to find out what students need from employers and what employers need from students. We’re here to find out how the market is changing for students of diversity.”

The Lehman Hackathon, which was held November 10-11, exists to foster just such opportunities. “We understand that the proximity between job locations and where students live can be quite difficult, so we implement these events for local students to attend and network with sponsors and mentor that can hire students for jobs and internships,” said Rosemarie Encarnacion, a Lehman junior. She is also a help desk analyst and Civic Technology Fellow at Lehman. The National Society of Black Engineers primary mission, she added, is to “make sure that every student in the community

has the opportunity to exercise their skills with teammates so they could fully integrate themselves into building product software, hardware, and mobile programs.”

The Hackathon helps disadvantaged students as well as those with disabilities to find the right path towards their careers by providing them with professional advice, assistance and employment opportunities in the tech industry. The event, co-sponsored by the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) is open to CUNY and SUNY students. Its focus is to highlight, support and encourage talent from all backgrounds and to help strengthen the community. Encarnacion states that it also aims to “Bring students to an environment where they connect with the sponsors, teams and fellow students with similar and/or different skills to build projects using hardware. The Hackathon is for Blacks and Hispanics, but anyone who is a student or graduate from CUNY schools is invited.”

Rafael Gonzalez, 21, a Lehman mathematics Professor and a participant in this year’s Hackathon, said his mission is to “train and expose students to the industry of computer science and engineering for minority groups for many of our Lehman graduates.” He believes that

through it, every student can get the opportunity to be mentored and to network in the industry as well as get internships and full-time jobs in fields they enjoy. Rafael wants every student to have fun and test their skills because the Hackathon is also very competitive. “It is a great way to ask questions and find out what jobs you are looking for” he said. This year, NSBE and SHPE were able to increase diversity to bring in more sponsors for the Hackathon.

Rodney Perez, a full-time technology analyst for JPMorgan Chase, “The challenge is about bringing students in, [to] increase the capabilities and capacity to invent new ideas for the company.” Perez added that the company, which participated in the Hackathon, believes in giving back to the community.

Students agreed that the Hackathon is a good opportunity to network and get projects completed, along with having a team to provide mutual growth, learn technical skills, and build community between employers and students. Daniel Encarnacion a Lehman sophomore studying computer science and Hackathon treasurer said that it is a great chance “to have everyone demo their projects to sponsors that could offer employment in the tech industry and promote a program that speaks on diversity and reach out to those who are disadvantaged.”



Lehman students attend annual Hackathon event. Photos courtesy of Miguel Rodriguez.

Shanel Spence, 22, a senior and biology major, also actively avoids men on the street. “One thing that I do for sure is that I cross the street when I see a group of guys or I walk in the opposite direction.”

Leticia Hernandez, 24, a junior and recreational major also took a similar stance. “Usually I start walking faster just so they don’t get close to me,” she said. “Or sometimes I give them a look to back away.”

Women are not the only victims of harassment, a 2012 study released by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that the percentage of males who experienced sexual harassment

had increased from 16.1 percent to 17.8 percent. Although the findings could not conclude why the number of reports had increased in men, a possible contributing factor was that more men began to come forward and speak out. Numerous studies have shown that men don’t report incidents of sexual harassment due to shame and embarrassment.

Gregory Reyes, 18, a Lehman student who works at the front desk in the APEX said, “When a guy gets catcalled people just look at him like it’s a joke and it’s not as derogatory as when it happens to a woman.”

Lian Kizner, 19, a junior, dance

and sociology major agreed. “I have experienced it and it’s really annoying,” she said. “Guys don’t have the authority to make a girl feel [bad] like that when they’re just walking down the street trying to get home.”

Michael Buckley, associate professor of the philosophy department at Lehman, advocated for more training for all Lehman students. “I am glad to know that Lehman requires some of its students to take workshops or online courses [about sexual harassment],” he said, “but I think the policy should be extended to every student and given several times throughout their time at Lehman like it is for faculty and staff.”

Having Her Cake and Eating It Too: A Black Entrepreneur’s Path to Success

By Zayna Palmer



Luquana McGriff. Photo courtesy of A Cake Baked in Brooklyn.

“My grandma used to always bake, she would make cakes and create different kinds of designs. I thought this was fabulous and it inspired me to bake as well,” recalls 35-year-old Luquana McGriff, now CEO of her own company, A Cake Baked in Brooklyn. Inspired by her grandmother, McGriff founded the business in Jan. 2016, in Brooklyn, where she was born and raised.

It is a now a well-known boutique- and dessert-catering company that creates the most original and delicious desserts for any event. McGriff, who has no formal culinary training, has been baking since she was a child and likewise taught herself new techniques that would help to make her company successful. She says, “I always wanted to be an entrepreneur and I had the drive for it. I didn’t know what business I wanted to start at first, but I knew I wanted to work for myself and become

a CEO for my own company.” With a B.A. in social work, McGriff has a passion to help others, to work with people and satisfy their needs.

She was encouraged to start her business through the positive feedback from her family. “I love baking and I began to make cupcakes for family events,” she explains. “My family said that I could turn my baking into a business. I started to go to business classes and tried to learn what will be the next step of selling my products.”

Now amazed to have her own store, McGriff knew that one day this would happen. “I always wanted to be successful,” she says. McGriff used many strategies to build her brand, from hiring help to seeking a competitive position. “In my store, red velvet is a top seller and I didn’t know what would go best with red velvet. I tried to find my niche in this competitive market.

I found out more about my products through my customers. I promoted my business on social media and on my website. I received a ton of feedback from my clients and customers.” She is still branding herself and working to gain many more customers.

Her mission is to make original desserts, “something that you can’t get anywhere else,” and she adds items and flavors into her baking that she hopes would make her customers happy, declaring, “You are your biggest critic. I always strive to have the best products and make people happy when they taste my desserts. I knew in order to do better, I have to be better. I refine my craft and find different things to do that would make my business grow.”

“You have to want it more than anything else. When you get knocked down, you have to get back up.”

- Luquana McGriff, CEO of A Cake Baked in Brooklyn

Her advice to other budding entrepreneurs is to actively seek knowledge. “Research what business that you want to get into and find a mentor or volunteer in that field. Get someone to teach you the way before you spend money on something that you don’t want to do. Go after your dreams and your passions and everything will fall into place,” she says. For her the top three skills needed to be a successful entrepreneur are the drive to work hard, a clear goal, and doing something new every day. “You have to want it more than anything else. When you get knocked down, you have to get back up. Have the passion to never give up and no one will have your vision, only you will.”

LOOKING FOR A CAREER?

CONSIDER JOURNALISM



The **CUNY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM** offers scholarships for selected graduates of any CUNY undergraduate program.

Want to give us a look? Juniors & seniors can attend free workshops at our Times Square campus, Jan. 4-26. Learn skills ranging from audio and video to photo, virtual reality, travel & food writing and much more.

For more information:

🏠 www.journalism.cuny.edu

✉️ admissions@journalism.cuny.edu

☎️ (646)758-7700