

KKK Attempts to Recruit Lehman Students



Anti-KKK Graffiti. Photo courtesy of Flickr. [Page 3]



NEWS

Hurricanes Hit US as White House
Keeps Pushing Climate Change Denial

[Page 5]



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The New 'IT' Will Give You
Goosebumps

[Page 8]



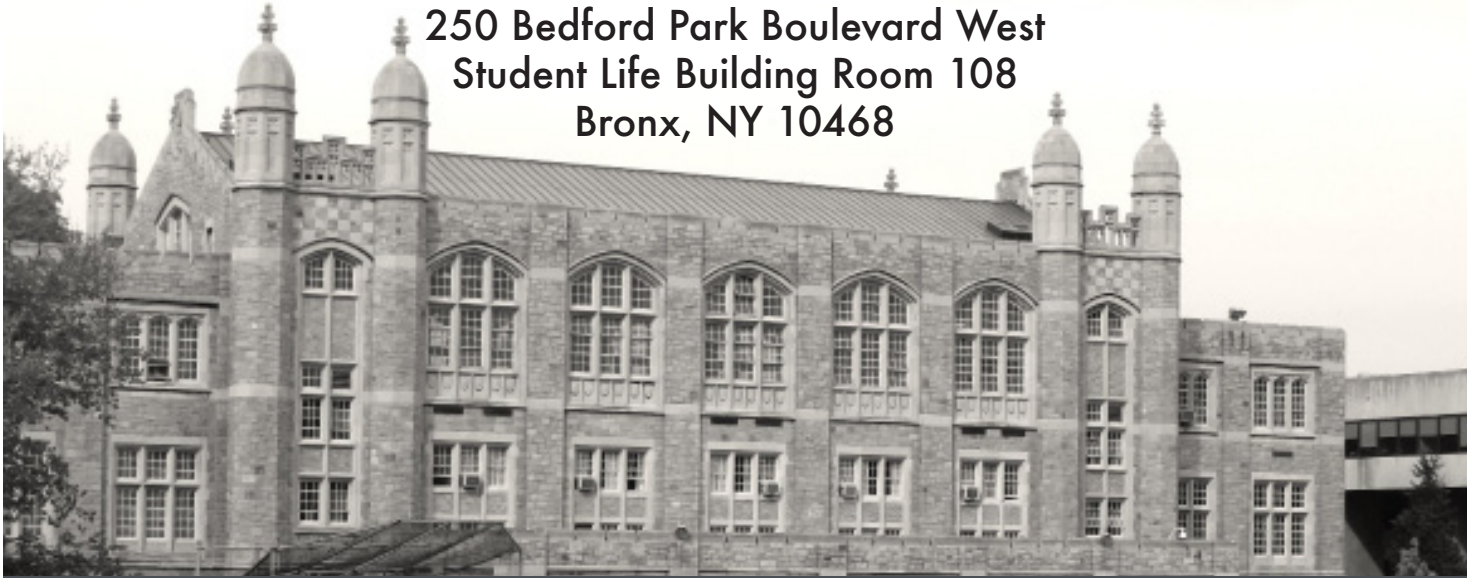
LIFESTYLE

Most Lehman Students Back
#TakeaKnee, but Some Call Disrespect

[Page 18]

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KKK Attempts to Recruit Lehman Students

By Eileen Sepulveda

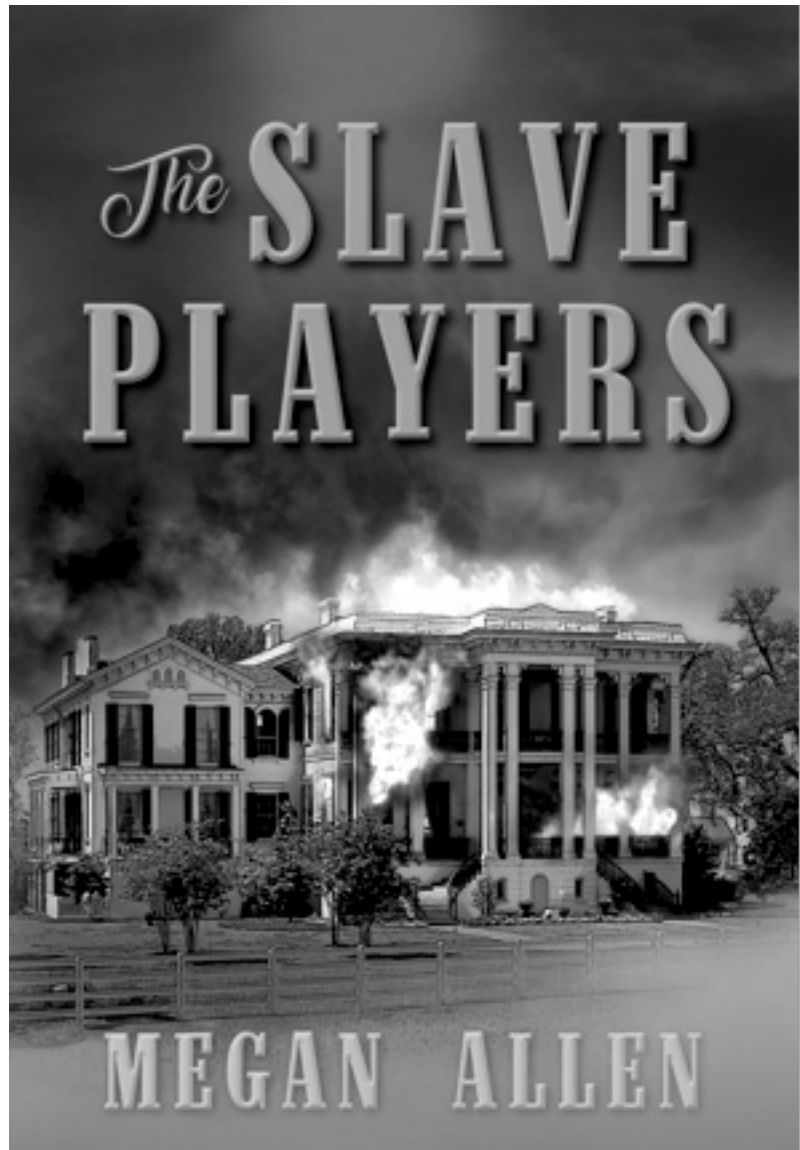
On Sept. 29, the Meridian received a letter from the Loyal White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Addressed to the editor, the letter stated that the KKK was under “extreme fire for being a hate group.” This characterization, it said, was untrue, adding “we only wish to keep the white race pure as God intended.” The letter went on to ask students to join in protesting a new novel, “The Slave Players,” by Megan Allen, which it described as “loud-mouth literature” written “just to agitate the college educated who always think they have a better answer.”

According to Wilhelmina Mount, a representative of Allen’s publisher, Burning House Publishing, “The novel is a highly controversial one which slaps pretty hard at southern white supremacists. And they [the KKK] are also targeting others as well.” Mount told the Meridian, “Other media sources have also received the letter---but mostly in the South---and we have been receiving hate emails for several months now [from] about a hundred KKK fans who periodically send us lovely emails telling us that we are the haters, and not them.” Mount said, “They have labeled [Allen] as a traitor against ‘her own kind,’ and us as a publisher beyond redemption.”

Other CUNY colleges also received letters. Anthony Medina, editor-in-chief of York College’s student newspaper, Pandora Box, informed The Meridian that York College was also targeted.

A mass email sent to all York students from Russell Platzek, Executive Director of Legal Services and Labor Relations at York College, stated that “multiple offices at York College, as well as other CUNY campuses, received a letter from

a national hate group, advocating for the separation of the races.” It added that the letter “appears to have been carried out in a mass mailing format, not specific to York College in any way.” Platzek did not respond to the Meridian’s requests for further comment.



Novel under attack by the KKK. Photo courtesy of Burning House Publishing.

Other college newspapers around the country were also targeted. C.S. Hagen reported in North Dakota's High Plains Reader on Oct. 11 that two college newspapers---Valley City State University's Viking News and North Dakota State University's the Spectrum---had received an identical letter from the KKK "asking for help." Valley City State University's Viking News, and North Dakota State University's the Spectrum were the newspapers targeted. Jack Hastings, editor-in-chief of the Spectrum, told NPR, "First off, the presence of a group such as the KKK surprised me, but now they're targeting college campuses. Seeing this delivered to our office is upsetting to me."

The letter was postmarked Florida, the state ranked by the Southern Poverty Law Center (partnered with Propublica) as having the second largest number of hate groups in the U.S. While Florida has 63 out of a total of 917 hate groups operating in the U.S., New York has an estimated 47, putting it at No. 4. According to Propublica, "Groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center and the New York City Police Department report a recent uptick in bias incidents and hate crimes. But with thousands of police departments failing to report alleged or even confirmed hate crimes to the FBI, we lack foundational information about many such crimes occur in any given year, where they might occur the most and least, who the targets of such crimes tend to be, and how this has changed over time."

In New York, other hate campaigns have recently been carried out by mail. According to an Oct. 4 article in the New York Daily News "Anonymous hate mail filled with slurs and emblazoned with a swastika was mailed to nine city businesses...in Brooklyn and Manhattan, including three law firms, an international financial firm, a jewelry store, a Starbucks, a kosher meat market, and a bakery." The article added that

"It is an affront to the values of our diverse campus and for what the city of New York stands for."

– **Xiomara Vazquez, Lehman freshman**

these attacks are under investigation by Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez's office, and that they are aware of "this and similar letters that have been sent."

One reason the KKK might have chosen to recruit via letters, Mount pointed out, is "The KKK national member site, together with Stormfront, their national media site, have both been crashed, leaving them without a channel of communication, so extremists have taken to the mails."

Professor Brian Levin, Director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, told the Meridian "The Loyal White Knights (LWK) has been active for years in pamphleting to get publicity, and is one of the largest Klan groups in the nation...Among the LWK's 'positions' is [sic] stopping immigration, Sharia law, and 'white cultural genocide'." He added, "Still, the Klan network overall of which LWK is a subset has only several thousand members."

Lehman English professor Crystal Curry told the Meridian she believes that Donald Trump "laid the groundwork through his rhetoric for these kinds of much more perverse things to like spill out into the mainstream...and so a lot of this recruitment started during his campaign." Curry, who researches alt-right narratives, also emphasized the ideological connection between their racism and misogyny. A white female

novelist like Allen, she said, "would be the perfect person" for the KKK to target because they also blame women for ending the era they idealize when white men "ruled the household." In their ideology, she said, "it's basically women's fault you can't 'genocide' people [of color]...These are the kinds of narratives you find in people who are nostalgic for the Third Reich."

Michael Sullivan, Director of Campus Life, reported that the case of the letter sent to the Meridian was being handled by Public Safety. Deputy Director of Public Safety Gregory Nigri told the Meridian that, "the KKK letter was shared with the Chief of CUNY Public Safety, William Barry, who reached out to the university community to inquire whether any other campuses received similar letters." Two other CUNY campuses, he said, received similar letters, and Public Safety believes that the letter is "benign."

Medina observed, "I think it's ultimately disturbing that this group of people believe they have any right to express their discriminatory methods through any means."

Xiomara Vazquez, a Lehman freshman who moved to New York from Puerto Rico three years ago said she felt disturbed by the KKK's self-promotion. "Their existence is just proof that there is much to work to be done in this country. With a president who condones this behavior, we have seen that they have been feeling more 'free' to come out in to the open. I feel it is an affront to the values of our diverse campus and for what the city of New York stands for."

A copy of the letter sent to the Meridian was not available for publication due to the ongoing investigation by CUNY Public Safety, but an identical letter to the one received can be viewed on <http://hprl.com/index.php/feature/news/college-newspapers-targeted-by-kkk/>.

Hurricanes Hit US as White House Keeps Pushing Climate Change Denial

By Deirdre Fanzo



From left to right, Hurricanes Katia, Irma, and Jose. Photo courtesy of CHIPS Magazine.

On Oct. 23, Nicaragua announced it would join the Paris Agreement, a global pact to combat climate change, leaving the U.S. and Syria as the lone holdouts from the accord. The statement came five weeks after the Trump administration reaffirmed it would withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord, a decision first announced in June. Over this five-week period, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean islands and much of the mainland U.S. were struck by a series of record-breaking storms. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and

Maria have caused billions of dollars in damage, and wreaked havoc on the lives of residents in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and many nations in Central America. Despite this devastation, the Trump administration continues to vehemently deny the existence of climate change, further isolating the U.S. from global efforts to address it.

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris climate accord

“Brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so.” This collaboration amongst countries was designed to lessen greenhouse gas emissions and seek clean power sources to prevent global temperatures from increasing to dangerous levels. In April 2016, then-president Barack Obama signed this accord. However, in June 2017, Trump declared his intention to

rescind this decision on the grounds that it “disadvantages the United States.” However, many analysts argue that one underlying reason for his move was his administration’s very public climate change denial, and the political leverage this affords it with certain constituents.

Rabab AlAjmi, an environmental science and political science double major at Lehman, emphasized the political and economic factors behind Trump’s decision. “Countries run by capitalism... have pretty much swept [climate change] under the rug,” she said. This is precisely what Trump’s administration is doing.

It is in the administration’s best interest to deny climate change, as they have a history of mutual gain with corporate energy giants. Indeed, prior to assuming his current role, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was the CEO of ExxonMobil, one of the largest multinational oil and gas corporations in the world. ExxonMobil, under Tillerson, “gave \$1.8 million this election cycle.” Trump himself owned stocks in the Dakota Access Pipeline, and

“We need to take responsibility [for the planet] and think beyond our pocketbooks and our net worth.”

— Stefan Becker, Vice Provost for Academic Programs

though he sold them after his election, the investment reflects his values. According to the Washington Post, “three politicians Trump has appointed to relevant Cabinet positions have taken in large campaign contributions from the energy sector.” Policies supported by the climate agreement, as well as confirming the existence of climate change, would almost certainly limit industry profits---the capital gains of the current administration.

The administration’s denial of climate change, however, flies in the face of scientific consensus. “Man-made climate change is a concept that is accepted by

97 percent of scientists today,” AlAjmi said.

Indeed, the recent tight cluster of deadly hurricanes---Harvey, a Category 4 storm when it hit Texas on Aug. 25, and Irma, between Category 3 and Category 4 when it wreaked havoc in the Virgin Islands and Florida---is a “textbook case for what you would expect under climate change scenarios,” Stefan Becker, vice provost for academic programs at Lehman, told the Meridian. Harvey was considered the strongest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Hurricane Wilma in 2005. Irma usurped this title soon afterward, followed by Hurricane Maria, which caused great devastation in Puerto Rico and is regarded as the strongest hurricane of 2017 thus far.

In light of the evidence, Becker called Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris accord “unbelievable” and “reckless.” He added, “We need to take responsibility [for the planet] and think beyond our pocketbooks and our net worth.”

Christopher Columbus Inspires Parades, Protests, and Vandalism

By Thomas Behnke

Contemporary protests of Columbus Day decry how Christopher Columbus oppressed the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as did the wave of Europeans that followed in his wake. Following the recent demands for the removal of statues of Confederate generals from public areas, many Americans, Bronxites included, say that Columbus should be counted among the symbols of hate and oppression.

“It’s a farce,” Bernadette Santiago, a junior at Lehman said. “We are

celebrating someone who is evil.” When asked about the holiday’s connection to Italian heritage she said, “shouldn’t it be a Spanish holiday, since he was commissioned by Spain?”

Ironically, the holiday, which began in 1869 in San Francisco and became a federal holiday in 1937, was initially seen as a way for oppressed and marginalized Catholics---especially Italians---to gain mainstream acceptance. Manhattan and the Bronx both hold annual Columbus Day parades. This year, CBS New York

reported 35,000 people marched in the Manhattan parade while the Bronx Times stated that nearly 100 groups participated in the Bronx Parade.

During the Manhattan parade, a small group of protesters gathered in Columbus Circle to voice their objections to the celebration. The Bronx Columbus Day Parade was sparsely attended, perhaps due in part to sporadic bouts of rain. The Meridian attended it, and was offered the opportunity to sign a petition to keep the Columbus statues in the city,

in response to Mayor Bill de Blasio's call for a review of symbols of hate in New York. Bronx parade coordinator, Tony Signorile, as reported in the Bronx Times, stated that due to the controversy surrounding the review, the mayor would not be invited to this year's parade. There was also a noticeable increase in police activity compared to past parades. Police dogs, numerous patrolmen and helicopters were a constant presence.

In addition to these protests, several acts of vandalism involving statues of Columbus have recently occurred. In Baltimore on Aug. 21, a statue believed to be the first in America erected in honor of Columbus was vandalized. No arrests were made. A YouTube video shows the statue being struck with a sledgehammer and protestors holding signs reading "racism," "tear it down," and "the future is racial equality."

Statues were defaced in three separate incidents in the New York City area. On Aug. 29, at Columbus Park in Yonkers, a bust was thrown to the ground and destroyed. No arrests have been made. On Sept. 12, a statue of Columbus in Central Park had its hands painted red, and its base was spray painted with the words "hate will not be tolerated." The perpetrator is still at large. On Sept. 25, a homeless man was caught painting the hand of the Columbus iron portrait in Columbus Circle, with pink nail polish. Daniel Kimery, 38, was arrested at the scene. He allegedly told police the nail polish represented "the blood on the Italian explorer's hands."

When it comes to the past, however, much misinformation about Columbus discovering America is still taught in elementary schools. Children learn "in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," and about the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria. In truth, though he made four voyages to the Americas, Columbus never actually landed on the mainland. Throughout most of these voyages, he

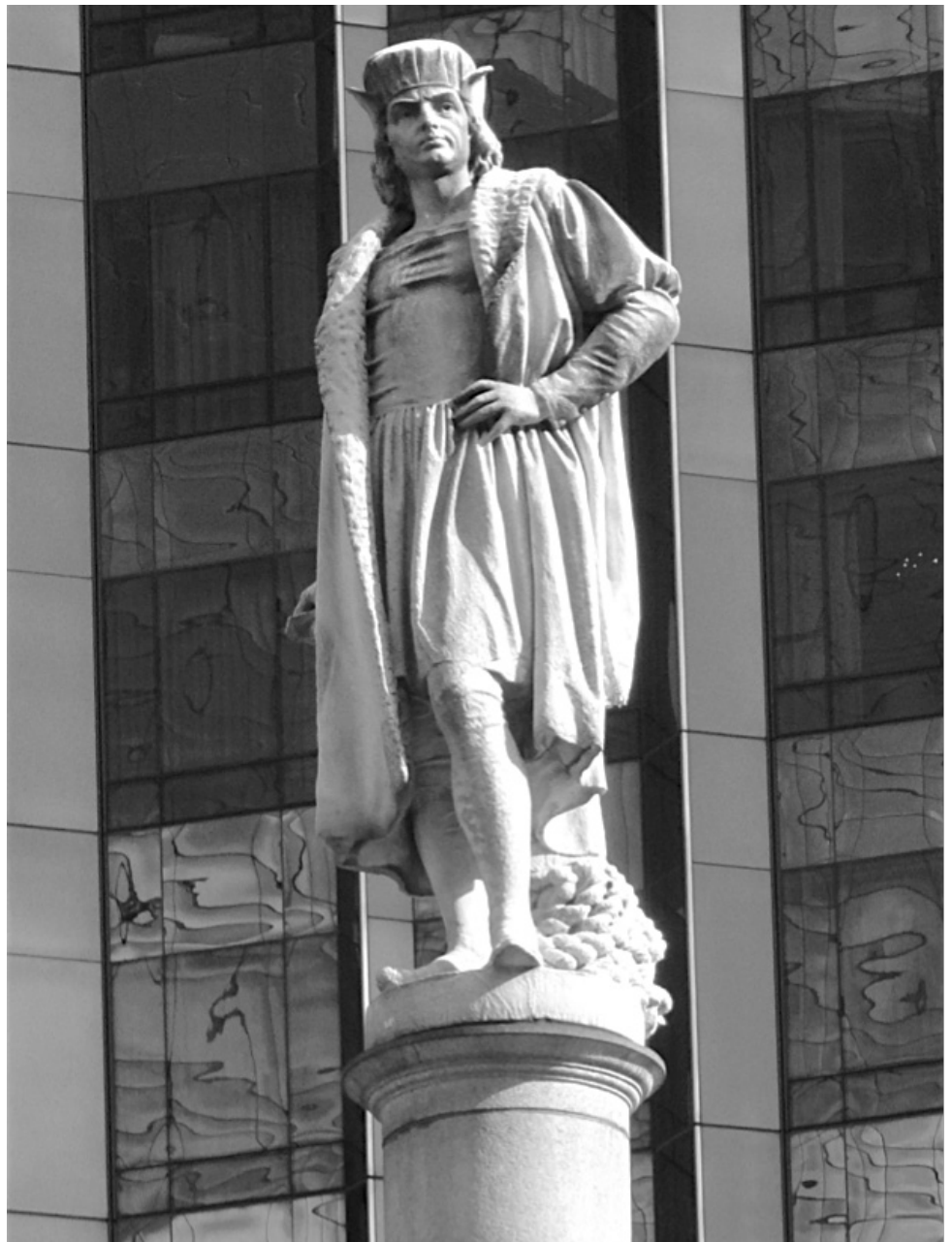
"The good and the bad of history, both should be studied and explored, but Columbus should stay in classrooms, not in monuments."

**- English literature major
Duane Edmonds**

was convinced he was on the continent of Asia and had discovered a new route for the spice trade. After his first voyage

he was appointed viceroy and governor of the Indies due to his belief that he had landed in India.

While most Lehman students who the Meridian spoke with do not view Columbus as a hero, neither did they support the vandalism. English literature major Duane Edmonds said, "We should have a civil debate, peaceful; I don't agree with the defacings. The good and the bad of history, both should be studied and explored, but Columbus should stay in classrooms, not in monuments."



The Columbus Monument in Columbus Circle, New York. Photo courtesy of Daderot.

The New 'IT' Will Give You Goosebumps

By Shaiann Frazier

If you want to be scared and laugh at the same time, the latest adaptation of Stephen King's 1986 bestselling novel, "IT" is the movie for you. Director Andres Muschietti does an excellent job of exposing the individuality of each character in depth, while adding an element of comedy which was missing in the 1990 version, a two-part TV miniseries directed by Tommy Lee Wallace.

Muschietti updates and internalizes King's story of several Maine teenagers who unite against two attacks---relentless bullying and terrorism from an ancient shapeshifting creature which they call IT. IT mainly manifests as Pennywise the Dancing Clown (Bill Skarsgård), and preys on and murders children using supernatural powers that feed off the fears of its victims. What makes the creature so terrifying is that it can only be seen by children and goes undetected by adults. IT also appears every 27 years, otherwise hiding in the local sewer system of fictional Derry, Maine.

With a \$35 million budget, almost triple that of the miniseries, Muschietti's version focuses less on brute horror and more on the individuality and struggles of each character. The use of drama balances out the brutality of the movie, which helps the audience empathize with each character. Take Beverly Marsh (Sophia Lillis), for example, who struggles with an abusive father and school rumors about her. Her friend Eddie Kaspbrak (Jack Dylan Grazer), another victim of IT's attacks, suffers from mysophobia and an overbearing mother. Even though the movie is set



Bill Skarsgård as Pennywise in Andres Muschietti's "IT." Photo courtesy of Vimeo.

up to scare the audience, each character affected by IT has to endure their own struggles in their personal life while attempting to not become another victim of the terrifying clown.

Muschietti also focuses heavily on the bond that brothers, Billy (Jaeden Lieberher) and Georgie Denbrough (Jackson Robert Scott), share. From the opening scene, it is evident how much Georgie means to Billy, especially when Billy creates a boat for Georgie to sail in the pouring rain, and calls it "SS Georgie." The moment after they hug before Georgie goes out to play will have your heart pounding.

But in terms of pure terror, Wallace's film does a better job with the awful Pennywise, who appears within the first ten minutes, by intensifying each scene where IT appears. For those who have seen the first adaptation, it is safe to say that the more Pennywise appears, the more scared the audience becomes,

and the more difficult it becomes to gauge Pennywise's next move, especially in the sewer scene when IT appears to all seven teenagers at the same time. Likewise, rather than emphasizing the relationship between brothers, Billy and Georgie, Wallace focuses heavily on how Pennywise affects Billy's mental state along with the other characters. This build-up of anticipation makes Pennywise appear more unpredictable compared to the 2017 adaptation where one can expect the appearance of IT, although Pennywise doesn't show up until 30 minutes into the film. For fans of the original, just having to wait for the awful Pennywise can be a deal-breaker.

However, if you can overlook some minor plot changes and Pennywise jumping out at you from the screen, the latest, "IT" will have you laughing while gripping your seat tightly in anticipation. For that darker and more subtle suspense, this film is worth every minute.

New 'American Horror Story' Season Spins 2016 Elections as the Real Horror Show

By Eileen Sepulveda

Although its sixth season turned out to be a major flop, the seventh season of "American Horror Story," entitled "Cult," has so far proven to be one of the best seasons ever. Created and produced by Ryan Murphy and writer Brad Falchuk, the psychological, gory dramatic thriller, which premiered Sept. 5, revolves around the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. The show stands out for tackling issues that are detrimental to many U.S. citizens, such as discrimination against Mexican immigrants and the LGBT community, and the resurgence of white nationalism.

"AHS" fans will appreciate the writer's careful approach. John Landgraf, the chief executive of FX told John Koblin of the New York Times via phone interview, "It's a horror piece, so it's a genre piece, but it's trying somehow to locate and diagnose the essential craziness of the times in which we live."

Chaotic and terrifying, the first episode, "Election Night," draws the viewer right in. It opens with the exhilarated soon to be cult leader, Kai Anderson played by Evan Peters---an "AHS" fan favorite who is also known for his role as

X-Men's Quicksilver---humping his TV screen and whispering, "The revolution has begun." Along with his sister Winter (Billie Lourd) and their brother Dr. Rudy Vincent Anderson (Cheyenne Jackson), the three begin recruiting several members of the community into their strange and dangerous cult. By the end of episode 1, Kai's evil cult has formed.

Masked as hideous clowns, the cult begins to terrorize the town, going on violent killing sprees. Allyson Mayfair Richards (Sarah Paulson) is also tormented by the cult. Triggered by Trump's victory, Allyson and her family deal with her many phobias, including coulrophobia. Her wife Ivy (Alison Pill) goes on her own psychological rollercoaster. It takes a toll on the couple's relationship and inflicts traumatic stresses on their son, 10-year-old Oz---short for Ozymandias (Cooper Dodson), who we learn secretly loves to read "Twisty: The Clown Chronicles." As some viewers might know, Twisty the Clown (John Carroll Lynch) also makes his appearance on "AHS Season 4: Freak Show."

As the plot unfolds many of the characters' identities are revealed and the truths uncovered through many twists and turns will leave viewers dumbfounded right up till the season finale, "Great Again," scheduled to air on Nov. 14. Beside the constant neck slicing and clown faces, the show brings to life the nightmare that's become a reality in the U.S.



Promotional image for "Cult," the latest installment of FX's anthology, "American Horror Story."
Photo courtesy of Wikicommons.

'Twin Peaks:' Still a Damn Fine Cup of Joe---and Hot

By Deirdre Fanzo

"I'll see you again in 25 years," said Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) to Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) in a bizarre dream shared between the two characters. The ominous phrase kept fans of "Twin Peaks," David Lynch and Mark Frost's cult television series, hoping she was right.

Now Palmer's words have proven true. The show returned in May of 2017, airing Sunday nights on Showtime at 9 p.m. Directed in its entirety by David Lynch, "The Return" has a far darker vibe than the original run.

As computer science major Carlos Perez put it, "it's a completely different show with a completely different tone."

When "Twin Peaks" originally ran on ABC on Thursday nights in 1990-91, it was a quirky combination of paranormal detective mystery and soap opera. The plot followed Special Agent Dale Cooper on his investigation into the murder of local sweetheart Laura Palmer. There were funny scenes, touching moments, bizarre happenings, and an abundance of donuts, black coffee, and cherry pie. But as Agent Cooper uncovered Palmer's dark secrets, the darker side of the town was revealed as well.

With the inclusion of alternate dimensions, malevolent spirits, and doppelgangers, the show presented to its audience something entirely new that paved the way for future programs like "The X-Files," "Fringe," and "Stranger Things." But in 1991, network producers ordered Lynch and Frost to do what they had never intended---to reveal Palmer's



Title card from "Twin Peaks: The Return." Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

killer. Ratings plummeted after the big reveal and the show was cancelled, leaving angry viewers with a cliffhanger that seemed as though it would never be resolved.

Then, in 2014, Lynch and Frost were picked up by Showtime and given a platform to bring back their cult sensation in the form of "Twin Peaks: The Return." Running "The Return" on Showtime allowed Lynch and Frost to bring in darker and scarier elements this time around. MacLachlan returns to the series as the show's forerunner, this time taking on two different roles---the separate sides of Cooper. The show follows both Cooper's horrifying and evil doppelganger, known as Mr. C, and the good, but infantile, Dougie Jones, who, unbeknownst to him, is actually the benevolent Dale Cooper.

There are moments where the show meanders. While Jones is funny, there

are moments where his presence is excruciating. Cooper was the heart of "Twin Peaks" when it originally ran, and in "The Return," the audience sits through roughly 15 hours of the clueless Jones before the true Cooper returns. When he does return, though, it is incredibly satisfying. This plot evolution makes it clear that the title "The Return" has two meanings---the return of the show itself and the return of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

True to the style of David Lynch, more questions are asked before the season comes to a close. "Part 17" can be considered the true ending of the season, while "Part 18" feels more like an epilogue, which ends on another confounding cliffhanger. Since a fourth season has not yet been confirmed, audiences can only hope that the show doesn't end for good on yet another suspenseful shocker.

‘When January Feels Like Summer’ Debuts at Lehman

By Leonel Henriquez

From Oct. 18-21, Lehman’s Studio Theatre showcased “When January Feels Like Summer” by award winning playwright Cori Thomas from Marymount Manhattan college. The play follows five characters as they evolve from the redundancy of their lives in Harlem, New York. The warm, funky January weather is a precursor to the changing elements of the characters as they externalize their turmoil and desires. Susan Watson-Turner brilliantly directed and masterfully staged the production.

The moment the lights go up the witty rapid-fire banter between two fast food workers is as electric as the third rail. The two Burger King employees, Devaun (Mark Robinson) and Jeron (Jahdiel Rodriguez), seek a greater purpose to their fast food lives. They set out on a crusade to rid the neighborhood of a sexual predator and prevent him from “homosexing” little kids.

Joe (Eloy Rosario) is an awkward, reserved, and sincere sanitation worker who finds value in what others consider garbage. Joe has a crush on Nirmala, the sister of Ishan/Indira and the wife of an abusive bodega owner. Sara Rosado gives a phenomenal performance as Nirmala, who deals with a comatose husband. The somber hospital scenes are gut-wrenching as she addresses the monosyllabic response of a life support machine. At one point it feels like the audience wants to pull the plug to free her from her marital prison. Finally, Joe and Nirmala come together as



Devaun (Mark Robinson) and Indira (Erica Peña) discuss dating. Photo by Leonel Henriquez.

“People can only truly find themselves when they are themselves.”

— playwright Cori Thomas

they realize their mutual yearning for companionship.

Meanwhile center stage, shrouded in darkness, Ishan (Erica Peña) transforms to Indira. Peña’s performance is dynamic in the dual role. “I just want to look on the outside how I feel on the inside,” says Ishan of his desire to transition to a woman. Rounding out the cast, theatre

major and senior Shawn Lackerson plays the newscaster.

Playwright Cori Thomas wrote the play in 2007 after overhearing a conversation between two young men on the train. The language of the characters, how they speak and represent themselves, is at the heart of the play, she said. “People can only truly find themselves when they are themselves,” she told the Lehman audience.

“I thought it was great. I loved it,” said senior and environmental science major Jeffrey Townsend. This play is a must-see that will both have the audience laughing and have them leave wanting just a little more of this fantastic production.

Faith Directs Her Way onto Lehman Stage

By Leonel Henriquez

Macaulay Honors College junior, Faith D'Erasmus, is wasting no time growing into her craft, and pushing its boundaries while she's at it. The 20-year-old theatre major made her directorial debut July 21-23 at Lehman's Studio Theatre with a production of the musical "Spring Awakening" by Steven Sater, and said the opportunity came in the nick of time.

"My friends and I really wanted to perform our favorite show, 'Spring Awakening,' which is quite risqué," she explained. So, D'Erasmus was thrilled at the opportunity to direct a show at Lehman. "Since last year I began searching for a new venue to perform our summer show. We had been performing at a Catholic grammar school for years and the choice and content of our shows was very much hindered by the kids, priests, and other community members attending. We really wanted to perform more intense theatre. Last summer, we did not find a venue and had to do a different show."

The search for a new venue brought her to Henry Ovalles, assistant director of Lehman Stages. "She told me she wanted to move on to a bigger location with the freedom of content, one of the things we want to do at Lehman Stages is foster creativity and new work, as long as there is no nudity." Ovalles also said he was very impressed by how organized D'Erasmus and her staff were. "Usually people her age are still finding their way. I find her very mature...she and her staff had their stuff together, they had experience."

D'Erasmus's passion for theatre began in 2013, with her first performance, in an ensemble of "Legally Blonde," when she was just 15. "Right after I did my first

show, I knew that theatre was what I wanted to do," she said. "I actually gave up sports because theatre caused me to lose interest in those other things."

Though D'Erasmus has performed in eight shows, six of which she directed herself, she does not consider herself a natural performer. "I would love to [be a performer] but I know I'm not cut out for it. I typically struggle with anxiety," she said. She prefers the comfort zone of the organized chaos backstage, and the director's chair. "I'm usually busy running around trying to make sure things are in place and everyone is doing

what they're supposed to," she said with a grin.

While she has her heart set on directing, D'Erasmus has also had success as a playwright. This past winter her play "Across the Yard" was directed by Stephanie Stowe at Lehman's Studio Theatre for the Student's Playwright Festival. Recently, she finished co-authoring her first musical with her boyfriend. D'Erasmus said she is very happy with her recent achievements. "I got a wonderful opportunity of putting on our dream at Lehman," she said.



Faith D'Erasmus, currently directing her 16th show. Photo courtesy of Faith D'Erasmus.

Day and Night Runner: Lehman Alum Hustles for Acting Career

By Jean Carlos Soto

Lehman alumnus Angel Dilemuth '06 may not share the fate of the many gun-toting "thug" characters he plays, but the Bronx native has pursued acting with the spirit of a hustler.

"It really is a grind," he says, sporting a black graphic T-shirt that reads "Night Runners" above an image of a claw. He has a tattoo on his right forearm---the comedy and tragedy masks, a known theater symbol he got during his MFA at the Actor's Studio Drama school. Apparently, a gang in upstate Connecticut has also adopted the symbol.

The working actor sacrifices financial stability to attend auditions and meet with a trusted acting coach throughout his busy week. Instead of full or part-time work, he juggles a number of per diem jobs---he works at a catering company, a hospitality company, as a substitute teacher, and puts up Christmas decorations throughout the city. He even serves as a senior house manager for Lehman's Lovinger Theatre. Although challenging, he refers to it as "playing Tetris."

"A lot of people think this is an overnight success kind of thing," he says, "and it's not. Even for the people who end up doing really well, there's a lot of work you put into it. A lot of time."

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) lists 22 films and television series featuring Dilemuth since 2007, including NBC's "The Blacklist," and the independent film "Dope Fiend." In the spring of 2017, he completed his latest project, "Night Runners," a sort horror film recently shown at the Nightmares Film Festival on Oct. 22 and nominated for best short thriller.

Dilemuth grew up in the Soundview section of the Bronx during the crack

epidemic of the 1980s, where he could walk from his Rosedale Avenue residence and find a nearby park strewn with crack vials and smokers. At home, he and his five siblings were raised by his aunt and uncle in lieu of his absent parents, who were addicts at the time. To avoid this harsh reality, he acted in the religious- and Disney-themed productions of the C.A.C. Christian Theatrical Program at the Blessed Sacrament Church. One of his earliest roles was as a dog in "The Little Mermaid."

The "misguided clown," as he says, was always getting into trouble until his senior year at Cardinal Spellman High School. While auditioning for the school's production of the musical "Grease," he realized that acting was what he had to do; he resolved to pull himself together and work harder.

"He was the most serious of the serious."

- Dante Albertie, director of Lehman Stages

After graduating, he threw himself into auditioning, with no training, no guidance, and no luck.

"I think just being from the Bronx for me has just taught me a lot about survival and perseverance," he says.

In the fall of 2002, he enrolled at Lehman as a theatre major and found a small crew as devoted as he was, including the current assistant director of Lehman Stages, Henry Ovalles '06.

"The four big productions that the theatre program would put on every year were not enough for us," Ovalles says. "So, we created a student repertory company,

started doing shows in the summer, then later started doing shows in between the four shows." They outdid their predecessors by doing "seven or eight shows" on a yearly basis and would take turns acting and directing one another.

"We were strong," Dilemuth says. He began doing one-act shows and one-act competitions, primarily using the Manhattan Repertory Theatre, a "great space for beginning playwrights and people that just want to put up their work."

Even though his focus now is on film and television, he finds theater training more beneficial to an actor than film training. "With theater training," he says, "you're training your whole body. With film training, you're just learning to play angles, but you're still not learning how to be yourself, how to react, how to listen appropriately, how to break down a scene. Because you can do a horrible job or you can do a brilliant job and the editing can make you look great or it can make you look horrible, [and] sometimes it's not completely in your hands."

"As far as the craft of it," says Ovalles, who agrees, "I think any actor will tell you that it's easier to make the transition from theater actor to film and screen actor, as opposed to the other way around."

Early on, Dilemuth stood out to the director of Lehman Stages, Dante Albertie, who had taught and directed the actor at Lehman for years. "He was the most serious of the serious," Albertie says. Dilemuth, Albertie added, is "a raw nerve, and his journey is to get through life not feeling everything."

"He's an intense person," Ovalles says. "We would be doing shows and if there was stuff going on in his personal life,

he wouldn't let it affect his performance. He was always gonna show up on time and bring his A-game, but he would be backstage punching walls in the hallway or by the bathrooms and the dressing rooms, and then he would come out to rehearsal with, you know, his knuckles all beat up." As a senior house manager, the actor can also be hard on his ushers, "but if you know how to do your job, then he starts to respect you," says Aleigi Dume, an office manager for Lehman Stages who has worked as an usher with Dilemuth for years.

Dume sees him as a good leader. "He knows how to teach an usher to eventually become a house manager," she says.

"I didn't have that much support growing up," says Dilemuth, so "if I can motivate and help people out now, sometimes that's the difference."

Self-motivation fueled Dilemuth's latest venture, his short film, "Night Runners." It was his first finished project, which he wrote, produced, and co-directed. In the film, two thieves, Louie (Dilemuth) and Julio (Quincy Chad), botch a robbery and escape to a suburban house where they are haunted by the eponymous Night Runner (Morgane Ben-Ami), a vengeful, hooded woman from ancient times. It serves as a prologue to a feature-length film still unwritten.

After writing it, Dilemuth held onto the script for a year before sending it to a producer-friend who told him it would cost more than he was willing to spend. Dilemuth decided to invest his own money, confident he could do it for cheaper, and did all the legwork to put the film on camera within five weeks.

"I felt I needed to just do something," he says. Before he began filming, he had been searching for a house to use. He

phoned Ovalles, who had just bought a house with his wife. Although reluctant at first, Ovalles finally agreed to support him.

"He's a go-getter," says Ovalles, shrugging. "He's gonna figure out a way to get what he needs to get done, done. Even if it means my wife being upset at me for a couple of months because I gave the house away."

Dilemuth wrapped up "Night Runners" within five weeks, but went over budget and had little money left. Still wanting to push the film forward, he launched a Kickstarter project on July 9 to fund marketing and submit to film festivals throughout the country, including its first---the Nightmares Film Festival in Columbus, Ohio. As of Aug. 8, backers had pledged about \$2,000 more than his initial goal.

Including his role in "Night Runners," Dilemuth has played many "thug" roles over the years, as a drug runner in the season three premiere of "The Blacklist," and as a gangbanger in both "Dope Fiend" and a season 4 episode of "Person of Interest." He believes he is often typecast for "thug" roles because he is ethnically ambiguous with a somewhat deep raspy voice; he actually does not mind as long as they do not fall into a certain stereotype, the loud, "Oh, I'm a thug!" type, as he puts it.

He says doing "Night Runners" was an opportunity to combine his acting with his love of horror movies, and portray a "thug" character with a backstory. "If it's very much a tough character who has depth and there's some sort of emotional involvement," he says, "that's something I can get into very easily. That's something where I can mix my experiences with what's written on the page."

Things I Don't Say at Work

By Mariah Dwyer

No, sir

I don't care if the deal ends at 5 p.m.

And it's 4:45 p.m.

No, madam

I'm not going to repeat the offer

For the fifth time

You don't get it so go away

No, sir

This is not an attitude

The music is loud

And I know you can't hear me

No, madam

I don't like working here

I know you see me dancing

But that's the only way I can keep myself awake

No, madam

We don't take coupons on food

Go to McDonald's

They will make food your way

No, sir

I will not not charge you for coat check

Sorry

I need to make money too

No, madam

I will not accommodate

You and your party of 25

Go have a damn cookout

No, sir

I don't care if you're mad

Go ahead take to the blogs

Anyone can take to the blogs

No, madam

I will walk away from here

Go in the back and talk to my coworkers

About getting drunk because of you



Actor Angel Dilemuth working the control panel at the Lovinger Theater. Photo by Jean Carlos Soto.

Starfinder: An Updated Pathfinder for the Stars

By Juan Vasquez

Published on Aug. 17, Starfinder is the latest, long-awaited role-playing game from Paizo Publishing. It mixes pulp-style fantasy and derring-do sci-fi. Think “Star Wars” with more fantasy influences. Perhaps the game’s greatest strength---and some will argue, its greatest weakness---is its similarities to Pathfinder. Despite a few minor changes, if you know the rules for Pathfinder, then you will have a much easier time learning Starfinder. This makes the game not only an enjoyable read, but an absolute blast to play.

On the plus side, the game’s simple premise makes it very engaging. Much like Pathfinder, the core rules are divided into two parts, the player’s guide and the game master’s guide. This is great because you do not need three core books for players, game masters, and monsters as with Dungeons and Dragons. Players create spacefaring adventurers and romp around in a science fantasy setting akin to Spelljammer and Dragonstar.

Character creation is also very similar to Pathfinder’s; each character has a race and a class. There are there are six races in total, whose unique variety presents an amazing homage to the works that inspired the game. The character classes themselves are designed to be gaming staples and fit well within the setting---the envoy, mechanic, mystic, operative, solarian (a Jedi-style character), soldier, and technomancer.

In addition to these classes are character themes, which seem to have some similarities to characters’ backgrounds in Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition.

These include ace pilot, bounty hunter, icon, mercenary, outlaw, priest, scholar, spacefarer, and xenoseeker, and are supposed to add several customizable features to characters without being overwhelming to the player. Besides detailing a ton of gear that players can purchase, steal, etc., the book also covers rules for vehicle and space combat, which is a welcome addition.

However, its similarity to Pathfinder’s rules leads to one of the game’s biggest problems. Much like Pathfinder, Starfinder is very crunch heavy; mathematics and quick calculations play a hefty role in the game’s mechanics. For seasoned grognards, this brings very little concern, but for the uninitiated, this can easily be a baptism by fire, especially if

this is their first attempt at role playing.

In terms of presentation, however, the art is much better than the iconic masterpiece of the Pathfinder core rules cover art. With no disrespect to Wayne Reynolds (artist of the Pathfinder core rulebook), the art presented in Starfinder is sleek and modern. Given that the book’s artwork is full-color and presented throughout the book, Starfinder gets high marks for its production value.

Overall, I am in love with Starfinder and I look forward to running a few games. Sure, it is a bit on the “Mathfinder” side, and some of the subtle rule changes may leave you scratching your head. Despite these details, the game is a welcome addition to any gamer’s library.



Explore the galaxy with Starfinder. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.

Lehman Students Favor Costumes That Go Against Predicted Trends

By Leah Liceaga



Comic book superheroes and villains remain popular Halloween costumes. Photo courtesy of Flickr.

This Halloween, some Lehman students have different---and grimmer---costumes in mind than those trending nationally. Biology major Francisco Aquino Ramirez, for instance, said that while his favorite costume from past

Halloweens is Batman, this year he plans to dress as a Catrin, a male version of the traditional Catrina, a figure associated with Día de los Muertos.

Senior, and English major Mariah

Dwyer also wants a scarily powerful costume. "I'm either going to be Poison Ivy or the Red Queen this year," said Dwyer, who plans to attend Oktoberfest this year and go trick-or-treating. In the past, Dwyer has

dressed as a witch, a police officer, and a teacher.

These choices diverge from mainstream tastes, which can be on the lighter side. “Princesses and superheroes are always popular,” said Wayne Baker, owner of Frank Bee Costume Center and Frankie’s Carnival Time, located on 3435 E. Tremont Ave. Baker added that movies create particular interests in costumes. “Captain America, Iron Man, ‘Game of Thrones’...surprisingly a lot of people want to be IT [the clown]. It’s a mix of what’s new in the movies and what’s classic.” Baker also noted that sexy costumes have become popular in the last decade; listing the sexy cop, sexy nurse, and sexy Batgirl.

Jasmine Monserret, an employee at the Party City on White Plains Road, concurred. “Adults costumes, for females it would be something sexy, short skirt, and something to show off their body,” Monserret said. “For males, it would be Michael Myers, Jason, or Freddy Krueger.”

Quartz magazine also predicted that the clown, Pennywise, from “IT,” Belle from “Beauty and the Beast,” and the kid protagonists from “Stranger Things” would be the most popular costumes for Halloween this year. Also on its list were characters from “Game of Thrones” like Jon Snow or Daenerys Targaryen, “Wonder Woman,” and “Beauty and the Beast,” whose live-action films both came out this year.

Yet Lehman students are leaning towards more sinister looks. Stefanie Nolli Gaspar, another Lehman student, with a double major in Latin American and Caribbean studies, and anthropology, said this year she plans to try something new, and dress as a dark angel. Her favorite costume ever, she added, is that of a schoolgirl since she’d never worn a uniform before then.

Michelle Santillan, a senior and

“There’s such a variety today, of costumes, that you can be anything you want to be.”

– Wayne Baker, owner of Frank Bee Costume Center and Frankie’s Carnival Time

English major, plans to take it easier this year and just use face paint, though she hasn’t decided on what

to go as yet. “I’ve done the Queen of Hearts, and I’ve done vampires,” she said. “The rest is just hair color change and make-up.”

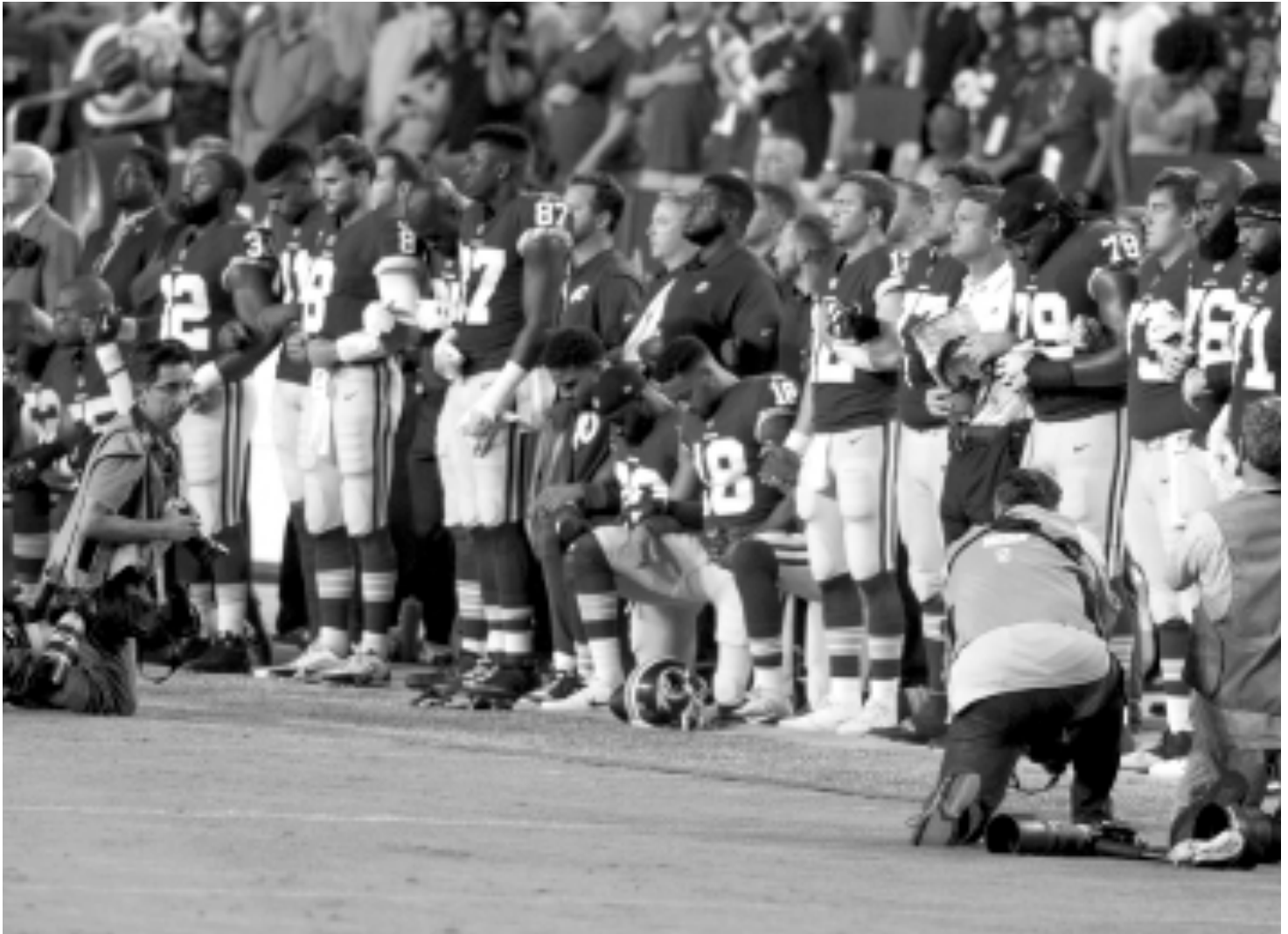
Baker praised the versatility and diversity of today’s costumes, adding that he likes all costumes, including scary ones. “I like Jason, I like Michael Myers, I like Chuckie. I was a big fan of Freddy Krueger at one time. There’s such a variety today, of costumes, that you can be anything you want to be.”



Traditional Catrina costumes, associated with Día de los Muertos. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.

Most Lehman Students Back #TakeA Knee, but Some Call Disrespect

By Jorel Lonesome



Members of the Washington Redskins kneel during national anthem before football game. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

On Sept. 1, 2016, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick refused to stand for the national anthem before a preseason game against the San Diego Chargers, instead choosing to kneel. Following this, NFL protests gradually began to spread among different football teams and other leagues such as the NBA and MLB, and starting a national controversy. Most Lehman students and staff who spoke to the Meridian voiced

support for the protests as part of a necessary conversation about racism in America.

“We need a larger voice,” said Samantha Anglero, 26, theatre major at Lehman. She added, “It’s centered around people of color tired of oppression. It’s a safe way of protesting where athletes are doing the right thing when America fails to do something about its flaws.”

Other Lehman students and staff concurred. “The protest now has nothing to do with Colin. This derived from the police brutality against people of color,” said Christopher Milton, director of pathways to student STEM success at Lehman.

“Racial injustice, most definitely,” agreed David Williams, 27, a junior and recreational therapy student at Lehman.

Kevin Rivera, a graphic designer and part time computer graphics and imaging major at Lehman, views it as a shift in historical perspective, “For one, it’s [about] inequality,” he said. “The pledge was written and took place during a time when it doesn’t apply to us now, especially people of color. More people are starting to see it as a serious issue. It went from pro athletes to people kneeling at work or at school. That is why it’s a mass attack by the whole NFL league.”

Indeed, since the protests took off, the NFL is now considered the least popular sports league in America. According to a zerohedge.com article dated Oct. 8, from the end of August to the end of September, the NFL’s popularity ratings dropped from 57 to 44 percent, and it has the highest unfavorable rating---40 percent---of any big sport, according to the Winston Group survey. The same research found that the attitude of those fans went from 73 percent favorable and 19 percent unfavorable to 42 percent favorable and 47 percent unfavorable, a remarkably sudden turn against the sport.

But while the majority shifted to disapproval, some feel that outright protest is going too far. In particular, a number of army veterans feel disrespected by recent protests.

“I understand that players like Colin Kaepernick is standing up for racial injustice and violence against blacks by the police. I get that, but this is the American flag. They need to understand, you’re disrespecting those that served in the armed forces,” said Jerry Giles, 60-year-old Vietnam War veteran. He added, “We’ve put our lives on the line to protect this country and kneeling sort of feels like a slap in the face.”

“You have young men and young women dying overseas for America,” said Annette Wyss, 21, a marine recruiter. “I don’t think kneeling during

“As a navy vet, I fought for their rights to protest against racial discrimination and our frustrations of inequality in the U.S.”

- Kevin O’Carrol, U.S. Navy veteran

the anthem is appropriate.”

However, U.S. Navy veteran Kevin O’Carrol from Queens, New York disagreed and felt it’s okay for people to express their freedom of speech. “As a navy vet, I fought for their rights to protest against racial discrimination and our frustrations of inequality in the U.S.,” he said. “America isn’t perfect like any other country. It needs to be critiqued. There’s more things besides racism that is dividing us, but these are one of those that has lasted for so long and doesn’t seem to die out anytime soon.”

Milton echoed O’Carroll’s stance. “No man or woman has to stand for the flag if they don’t want to, because it’s a free country. I think it’s a travesty. The First Amendment allows us to express freedom of speech here in America, but when people of color do it, and it

doesn’t agree with the mainstream, we’re shunned upon for it.”

Anglero agreed. “I think pro athletes should represent their rights for the U.S. constitution to express themselves when they feel they need to,” she said. “It’s not dishonorable at all to kneel or raise your fist when the national anthem plays, if you feel your country does not seem to treat you equally for the color of your skin.”

“This is their right to peaceful protest,” Rivera said. “I think there’s a form of injustice that should be voiced. Colin Kaepernick has been protesting for a while and he’s not on a team now. The NFL says they’ll support the players, but they still aren’t having him play in the games. That just shows us how much they care about colored people.”

For Mouro Sow, 26, entrepreneur and Lehman graduate said, “The protests are necessary and is a conversation that needs to be discussed.” Yes, he said, players are protesting “due to racial divide. But it’s not to disrespect America and the soldiers that have fought for this country. I think you’re even more patriotic by standing up for injustice and police brutality no matter what your skin color or background is.”



The Oakland Raiders take a knee. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

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the Urgency of Fighting for a New World

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Broadway and 116th Street

Hosted by the **Lehman College International Socialist Organization**

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- 100th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution
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- What is Social Democracy?
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- Reform or Revolution: How Do We End Capitalism and Win Socialism?
- Dividing Both to Conquer Each: Racism and Capitalism
- Rust Belt Reactionaries: The US Working Class Today
- Gender, Sexuality and Socialism
- Two Souls of Socialism: The Fight for Socialism from Below
- With Friends Like These...The Democrats and Social Movements
- Marxism and the State
- Why Anti-Imperialism Still Matters
- No Bans, No Walls: Trump, Immigration and Economic Nationalism
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