



# The Viking News

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## WCC Confirms Live Classes, Flex Options and Tuition Hike

# 30%

Approximately 30 percent of classes will resume live instruction

# \$25

Tuition will increase \$25 per semester, \$50 total for 2021-2022

# 10%

College enrollments are down 10 percent across the nation

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by Vanessa Gonçalves and Emily Moriarty

As WCC transitions from the Covid era to a post-Covid one, the school has approved a plan for the Fall semester. Approximately 30% of courses will meet live in classrooms on campus as well as at extension centers across the county. The remaining courses will be divided among an array of options: synchronous remote (the Zoom model in current use for the majority of classes); asynchronous remote (known simply as "online courses" prior to the pandemic) and hybrid models (flexible combinations of both).

The Board of Trustees has approved a tuition increase of \$25 per semester, for a total increase of \$50 per student for the academic year 2021-22. In announcing the increase, the Board noted that prior to last year, there had been no tuition increases for five years. It was decided that small increases over time were preferable to large ones at one time at a later date.

The increase is in response to declining enrollments at the college. In an

interview with The Viking News, President Belinda S. Miles said that decreasing enrollments at institutions of higher learning across the nation are currently averaging 10%, a trend from which Westchester Community College has not been immune.

Dr. Miles says her administration is anticipating a 3-5-year enrollment growth trajectory, but current declines will almost certainly mean budget cuts in the near term. A tuition increase could not be ruled, she said. "These are decisions for the Board of Trustees to make."

At its April 21 meeting, in addition to its other business, the Board approved the tuition hike, as anticipated.

A small sampling of about 20 students interviewed by The Viking News revealed a generally favorable response to the mixed selection of courses available next fall. Asked about the tuition hike, most students, while viewing any increase unfavorably, expressed some degree of relief that it was not a larger one.

## SGA Survey Says 10% Have Felt Discrimination

by Mac Collier

In a survey conducted by SGA, nearly ten percent of student respondents said that they had experienced some form of discrimination while attending WCC.

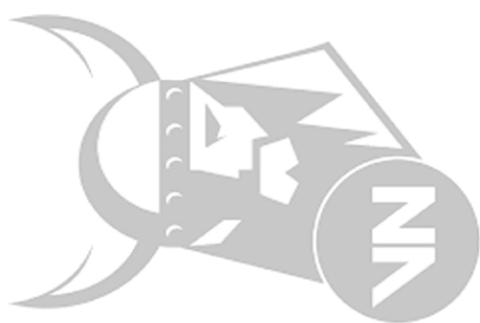
The results of the survey were made public at an SGA Town Hall meeting on March 25. They have since been publicly reported to the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. All three presentations were made by SGA Secretary Sebastian Loreti.

According to SGA President Gianna Jimenez, the student leadership initiated the survey after an incident of perceived discrimination by a professor was recorded by a student and went viral on TikTok. Recording of classes is generally forbidden by already existing school policy. Violation of the rule can lead to disciplinary action. Jimenez explained that after this incident, SGA immediately began working to advocate for students to ensure that they're being protected from discrimination.

To that end, SGA put together a survey asking students if they'd experienced any discrimination at WCC. The anonymous survey received 488 responses. Based on the total number of students currently enrolled at WCC (between 11,000-12,000), says SGA, the number of respondents was enough to be considered a statistically accurate representation of the WCC student body.

The survey asked students if they had ever felt discriminated against while at WCC. The results were: 10% responded "Yes," 81% responded "No," and 9% responded "Unsure."

(Continued on pg. 2)



# NEWS

## SGA Holds Final Town Hall

by Mac Collier

The Student Government Association capped a busy year of facing the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic by hosting a virtual town hall meeting on March 25. This was the final SGA Town Hall of the school year.

The event began with introductions from the SGA Executive Board and Senators. Several of these students, who are nearing the end of their tenure with SGA as well as their time at WCC, took the opportunity to talk about the positive benefits of serving in student governance.

Dr. Rinardo Reddick, Chief Diversity Officer and Title IX Coordinator, also introduced himself and gave a commendation of the SGA's hard work before ceding the floor to SGA

President Gianna Jimenez.

Jimenez then gave an address on the "State of SGA," beginning with the group's stated mission: To "represent the student body's best interest by effectively communicating and collaborating with administration, faculty, and students." She spoke about the initiatives undertaken by her administration to fulfill that mission, with particular emphasis on sharpening the focus on mental health awareness and improving communication between the faculty and students. The pandemic, with its well-documented impact on mental health and the disconnect that can come with virtual learning, only cemented these priorities, she said.

Jimenez then gave the floor to Secretary Sebastian Loreti who read the results of the discrimination survey (see page one).

## Survey Says Students Face Discrimination

(Continued from pg. 1)

Of the students who responded "Yes," a majority (81%) indicated that it was a member of the faculty who they felt had discriminated against them. The majority of those answering yes did not report these incidents to the school, which Loreti highlighted as a key fact. If discrimination is not reported, said Loreti, the school's administration won't have a full picture of the problem's scale.

Many students identified fear of retaliation or not being taken seriously by the school's administration as their reason for not reporting discrimination. With these facts laid out, Loreti then went over the two resolutions that had been passed.

The Dignity and Respect Act pushes the school to do more to investigate and hold perpetrators ac-

countable for discrimination, as well as to mandate diversity training for administration, faculty, and staff. The Student Protection Act aims to ensure that students feel safe to come forward and report discrimination without fear of retaliation. It also formally endorses recommendations to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at the college in a report from the Faculty Senate's Diversity Committee as well as from Dr. Reddick.

The SGA has since passed the Student Support Act, a third resolution which focuses on how the student government itself will help students who experience discrimination. The overall goal is to ensure that reports of discrimination are "dealt with as soon as possible in a way that respects everyone's dignity and character," Loreti concluded.

## News Briefs

by Mason C. Nayyar



Dr. Miles and Chancellor Malatras bump elbows. Photo: WCC Creative Communications

## SUNY Chancellor Visits Campus

SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras visited the WCC campus on Friday April 16 accompanied by New York State Senate Majority leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and State Senator Shelley Mayer.

The occasion was the announcement of an increase in the budget of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at the college. EOP is a SUNY program designed

to help students in need of special academic assistance as well as financial support. In a ceremony held at the Gateway Center, Chancellor Malatras announced a 20% increase in the EOP budget, the biggest in the program's history. On hand were WCC student Tamiis Mejia and SUNY/Purchase student Yasmine Compaore, both of whom spoke of the crucial difference EOP had

played in their academic careers. The Chancellor told the mask-clad audience that EOP students have a 75% graduation rate compared with 65% for non-EOP students. WCC President Dr. Belinda S. Miles expressed her thanks to the Chancellor and the state legislature for this significant increase in funds available to the college to help some of its neediest students.

## WCC Adopts Preferred Name Policy

It's now possible to have your preferred name used on class lists at WCC, following the recent implementation of the "Preferred Name Policy," which allows students to choose the way they are identified by teachers and classmates.

The new policy follows three and a half years of lobbying for the change by the LGBTQIA+ Task Force. It started because of a problem many transgender students face, which is being called by their "deadname," the name that they no longer identify with, due to its being the name professors see on their rosters. Recognizing that this can be traumatic for the transgender

community, the Task Force acknowledged the problem and took action.

According to Jade Watts (they, them, their), one of the leaders of this initiative, "Through a really thoughtful and effective collaboration with many departments and groups on campus, we inquired and tested if a preferred name policy can logistically work, then gained feedback and approval from the folx who would be most impacted by the policy."

The campaign was well received, according to Watts. "When bringing it to the SGA, Faculty Senate, and Cabinet, I don't believe one person voted against the policy. It was clear the level

of enthusiasm and commitment folx across the campus had," they said.

The change only applies to the attendance and grade rosters by which students are identified by faculty. Efforts are underway to include Blackboard and Degree Works in the policy change. The college's web site states that legal names must be used in most other cases.

It is not only transgender students who can benefit from the policy change. Anyone who would like to have their preferred name in the system can apply for a change.

# ‘Racism Will not Be Tolerated Here’

*Gratitude, Fervor, Commitment Mark President’s Response to SGA Survey*

by Vanessa Gonçalves  
and Emily Moriarty

Responding quickly to an SGA-conducted survey that revealed anonymous accusations of racial bias on campus, President Belinda S. Miles has strongly condemned all forms of racial discrimination at Westchester Community College, drawing, in her words, “a line in the sand” on the issue and stating forcefully that “racism will not be tolerated here.”

In a somewhat unusual move, the president requested a meeting with The Viking News editors to underscore existing college policy as well as her own recent declarations that discriminatory behavior on the part of any member of the WCC community is unacceptable. In an interview conducted by The Viking News, Dr. Miles re-confirmed the position she has taken while addressing the Student Government Association as well as in the latest letters to the WCC community issued by her office on Friday afternoons. On April 9 she expressed a policy of complete intolerance of discrimination, which she called “unlawful, hurtful, and counter to our core institutional mission and values.”

Stressing the need to create a welcoming atmosphere, Dr. Miles said, “It’s not enough to open



Photo credit: WCC Creative Communications

the door—we are after all a traditional open door institution—we have to be intentionally inclusive and culturally responsive.” Inclusion is not the final goal, she indicated. Rather, we must do more: “We must help students with empowerment,” she said. In order to be able to render this help, she said, “We all must examine our own cultural competencies.”

Asked about steps the administration will take in response to the survey, Dr. Miles pointed out that since the survey did not ask students to identify themselves,

there is limited opportunity for specific actions, since “we can’t investigate anonymous claims.”

But she stressed that anyone who comes forth with a claim will be listened to and will not risk retaliation in any way. Dr. Miles emphasized that fear of retaliation should form no part of a student’s decision to report a concerning incident, since it is “not only against our policy but is against the law.” She revealed that the WCC Board of Trustees is in the process of drafting a college-wide policy that will include assurances that

the school will thoroughly investigate reports of discrimination.

Dr. Miles’ remarks echo other efforts undertaken by her administration as well as the Faculty Senate to maintain a discrimination-free campus. These include the hiring of Dr. Rinardo Reddick as Chief Diversity Officer and Title IX Coordinator for the college. Dr. Reddick was in attendance at the Town Hall event in which SGA announced the results of its survey.

The Faculty Senate was also the recent scene of activities related to the issue

of discrimination. The survey itself was the subject of a presentation by SGA Secretary Sebastian Loreti to the Senate at its April 14 meeting, at which President Miles, Vice-President and Provost Vanessa Morést, Dean Karen Taylor and other college officers were present. Loreti noted in his remarks that a number of faculty members were visibly moved by portions of his report. At least one faculty member, Prof. Sheldon Malev of the Psychology Department, later invited Loreti to address a class.

At an earlier Senate meeting, Dr. Ekta Bhatia and Dr. Erik Fortune, representing the Senate Diversity Committee, had proposed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy with specific recommendations for enhancing faculty sensitivities towards minority groups. The policy was later endorsed unanimously by the Faculty Senate.

Dr. Miles mentioned other initiatives aimed at making incoming students feel welcome in their new surroundings, including a Title V grant from the Federal government being used by the college to provide 1-credit courses to new freshmen with the specific aim of giving these students “a sense of belonging, so they know where they fit in.”

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# OPINION



Photo credit: Ruby Gauchman

## Police Brutality: Students Keep the Dialogue Going

by Adam Adamu

It has been over a year since we lost Breonna Taylor and 11 months since we lost George Floyd, both murdered by police in separate incidents,

On the evening of March 13, 2020, 26-year-old EMT first responder Breonna Taylor was shot dead in her sleep in Louisville as police raided her home with a no-knock warrant. Two months later, on May 25, 2020, the world witnessed policeman Derek Chauvin force his knee on the neck of George Floyd for over nine minutes, leading to his death.

Each case ignited protests around the world against police brutality and systemic racism.

But have these efforts helped put an end to police brutality, or at least reduce it? Sadly, not yet.

Whenever these shocking incidents occur, we scream, we protest and we rail against systemic racism. At the end of the day, we still end up back where we started—with Black people being brutalized or killed unjustly at disproportionate

rates by those sworn to protect and serve all citizens.

One way we can help to alleviate the symptoms behind these tragedies is by keeping the conversations going and ultimately gaining more knowledge about this social pandemic. These two cases continue to spark discussions among students at Westchester Community College.

“I was really shocked and disappointed,” said Jose Ramos, a performing arts major and DJ for Power 88.1. “There was no sympathy; they were left to die with no aid. We are all humans and should not be treated differently because of our race.”

The gravity of these never-ending tragedies has prompted allies to speak out and attend protests in their respective neighborhoods. Many have used their voice and answered the call to action.

“I felt the need to go to protests,” said Chelsea Green, an environmental studies major and president of the Environmental Club at WCC. “Breonna Taylor’s [death] was heartbreaking,”



Photo credit: Ruby Gauchman

sh continued. “The police only got charged for the bullet that went into the other building, which I found very dehumanizing. We need white people to listen and become genuine allies. Green stresses that there needs to be police reform.”

Our communities continue to be plagued by death at the hands of police. The recent killing of Daunte Wright on April 11, yet another unarmed Black man, not far from the happenings of the Derrick Chauvin trial in Minneapolis, leaves us hopeless.

We cannot say things are getting better when this abuse of power continues to penetrate our society. We cannot accept this as busi-

ness as usual.

On April 20, Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter in the death of George Floyd. While we celebrate this taste of justice, there remains much work to be done.

We as a society must all continue to come together to combat systemic racism and police brutality. We must continue to educate ourselves on these issues and make demands because it is the only way that we can move forward.

Our voices must remain loud. Change does not happen from one day to the next. This is an uphill battle, but we stand stronger when we stand together.

## How Can We Fix Gun Violence?

by Mason C. Nayyar

Recently, life has begun to feel more normal again. Unfortunately, it is not just the waning of the pandemic that is contributing to this feeling, but the return of a very unwelcome phenomenon: Mass shootings, which are fast becoming part of a new normal. We have been shocked—although many of us are sadly becoming numb to it now—by the news of the multiple death shootings in Colorado, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Rock Hill, SC, Muskogee, OK, and many others. CNN reports 45 mass shootings since the Atlanta spa massacre.

According to the Violence Project, which maintains a mass shooting database, there have been at least 29 shootings with 4 or more fatalities in the last 5 years alone. If we count those with more than 2 fatalities, the number rises to a shocking 2,500 shootings since Sandy Hook in 2012, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

There is on average one mass shooting a day in America. It is a problem that seems to grow constantly. Each time it happens, heated discussions take place, but nothing changes, and the shooting continues. There are those who argue that ‘guns don’t kill people, people kill people.’ However, the fact of the matter is something that really shouldn’t need to be stated: People kill people with guns.

The U.S. has the 32nd-highest rate of deaths from gun violence in the world—far greater than that of other developed countries.

There is no excuse for the wealthiest country in the history of the world, a country that claims to be the best, to have its people subjected to this kind of violence.

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For all inquiries, letters to the editor  
and submissions, contact  
[EditorInChiefVN@sunywcc.edu](mailto:EditorInChiefVN@sunywcc.edu)

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## Editorial

### *Accountability, not Justice*

by The Editorial Board

On April 20, twelve jurors found Derek Chauvin guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of George Floyd.

While some might perceive this verdict to be a cause for celebration, it is merely an act of accountability in a system that has a long history of not being held accountable. How can we even talk about justice when just minutes before the verdict was read an Ohio cop shot and killed Ma'Khia Bryant, a 16-year-old Black child?

When coverage of a police killing is interrupted by news of another police killing, justice is not being served. While this historic verdict is important, there is something that needs to be made abundantly clear. George Floyd did not die

for police reform. He is not a martyr. He is a victim added to the long list of victims that have died by the hands of the police.

Justice would have been seeing George Floyd alive today. Black people should not have to continue to die for people to see that the system is flawed.

Where do we go from here? There is neither time nor space for nuance in discussions about violence against Black people. Simply put, it is not only the criminal justice system that requires reform.

We need to take individual responsibility and take the intentional steps to be better allies, advocates and activists within our society.

The first step is to admit that we should not have to see a recording of police crime against a Black man to know that Black people

are still in danger in this country. And we need to admit that we should not have to depend on surveys to tell us that discrimination is a constant threat everywhere, including our own college.

The next step involves action. We need to start being concerned about the lives of Black people before the injustice occurs, not after. We need to institute a system of monitoring that stops the injustice, not one that argues and suffers over it afterward.

A way must be found in our schools and in our society to take preventive rather than corrective action. It is within our power, both individually and collectively, to undertake these life-saving imperatives. The crucial question is: Do we care enough to do so?

### *What Can Students do about Gun Violence?*

(Continued from pg. 4)

Guns are undoubtedly part of American culture. The second amendment—the right to bear arms—is very real; there is no debating it. However, is there a way that we can keep that culture, and that right, in a way that doesn't sacrifice the safety of our fellow people? The Prevention Institute, a non-profit agency located in Oakland, California, believes that there is. They have proposed a list of recommendations, which include:

Sensible gun laws: banning assault weapons, insisting on background checks

Gun safety culture:

mandatory licensing, training, and safe gun storage

Public health solutions: mental health counseling

Putting these suggestions into action would put a big dent in much of the gun violence in America. The only way we can do it as a society, however, is to call on our elected officials to implement these policies. Only when more people communicate with one another, and realize that we can solve this problem if we act together, can it be done.

Yes, you have every right to own a firearm, just as you have every right to own a car. But you cannot drive a car without a license, and you shouldn't be able to

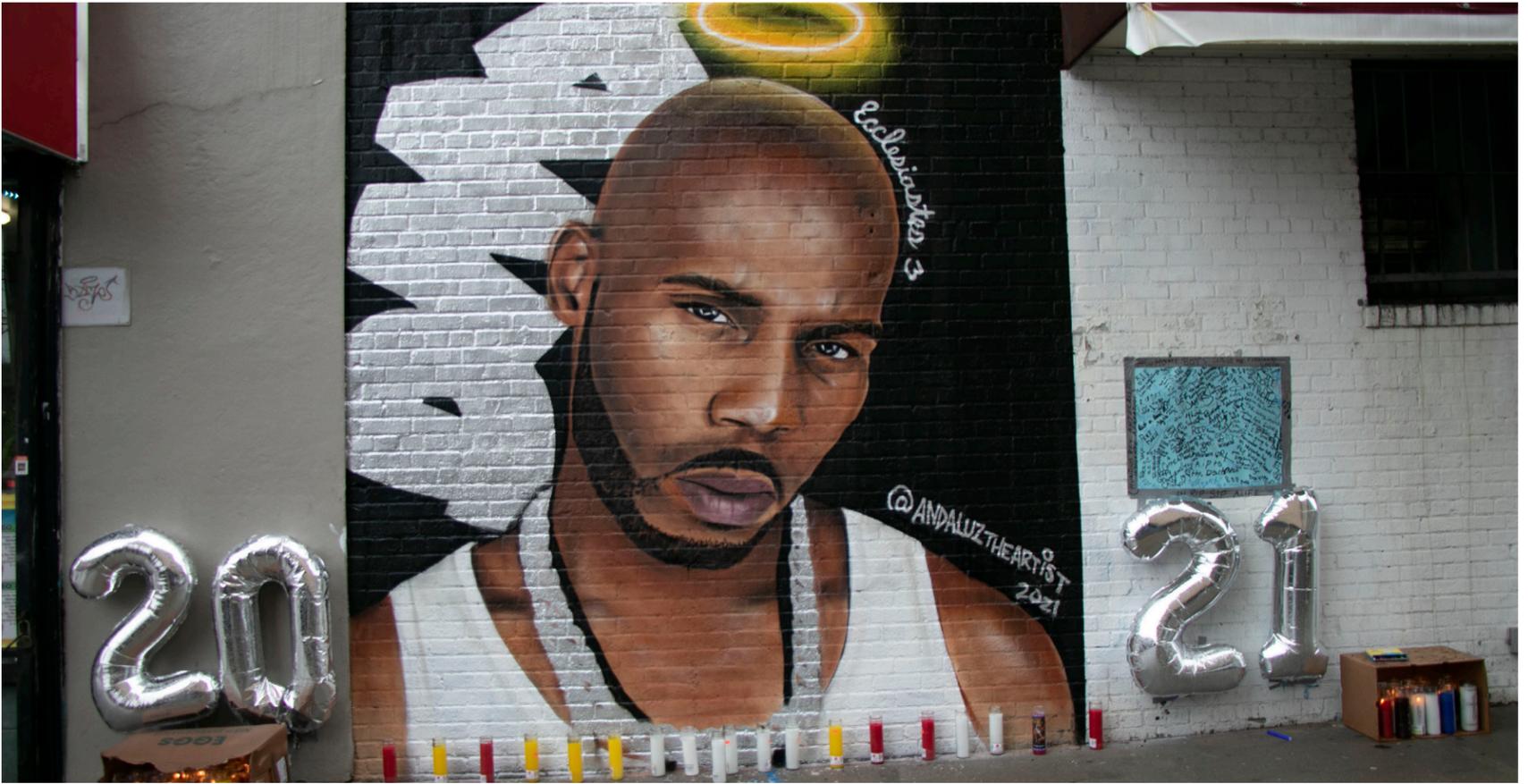
own a gun without one either. These simple measures could save thousands of lives, and thousands more from the trauma of losing someone close to them. And they could save millions from the fear of such events.

We can do it: Start asking elected officials and others to do something simple: Come together and talk.

More on the Prevention Institute:  
[preventioninstitute.org](http://preventioninstitute.org)

More on mass shootings data collection:  
[theviolenceproject.org](http://theviolenceproject.org)

# FEATURES



DMX mural painted outside La Estrella Tropical restaurant in the Bronx.

Photo credit: Adam Adamu

## All Dogs Go to Heaven

*A troubled life, a storied career and one hell of a bark, DMX lived on gusto, grit and, ultimately, grace*

by Adam Adamu and Jacob Nawy

Earl Simmons, better known as DMX, was a complicated man, and the legacy he leaves behind is as complicated as he was.

X was born in 1970 in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. and moved when he was five to nearby Yonkers, where he spent his childhood. X was abandoned by his father, so he was left to live with his abusive mother in a poverty-stricken household. He bounced between various institutions and group homes.

When he was 14, DMX ran away and lived on the streets with stray dogs that he befriended. He then met a rapper named Ready Ron. Ron took X under his wing. X idolized him; he was like an older brother. Unfortunately, this trust was misplaced: Ron tricked X into smoking marijuana laced with crack. He was just a kid who had never used any drugs before. This act of betrayal proved to be the genesis of DMX's lifelong struggle with addiction.

Any DMX fan knows

that inner struggle, contradiction, and duality are all common themes in X's music. "DMX, I mean, he was raw and told you the real," says Dj Spinz, an avid fan. X dealt with these issues intimately in his daily life.

Considering DMX's intimidating persona, his willingness to publicly expose his vulnerabilities was somewhat ironic, and it really set him apart from other rappers. In interviews, he would be quite candid about his personal challenges. As over-the-top as a lot of his music was, many of his songs touched on real experiences that hurt him and altered the trajectory of his life.

He had multiple tracks, such as "Stop Being Greedy" and "Damien III," that explicitly juxtaposed the two sides of his paradoxical personality. X used lots of different imagery and metaphors to portray this distinct divide that existed within him. Sometimes he explained it biblically by referring to the Devil and making efforts to get closer

to God as a devout Christian.

At other times, he said that he had two separate personas: DMX was a criminal with a drug problem, while Earl Simmons was a man who just wanted to live a happy and moral life. When X was older, he revealed that he was bipolar. In retrospect, that revelation explains a lot about his music, and the way that he would rapidly oscillate between these two facets of himself.

"You can hear pain in his music," says Radames Ocasio, music aficionado and manager of WCC radio station Power 88.1. "He was also battling many demons that he never reconciled, which ultimately led to his demise."

It was clear that X felt guilty about things he'd done in his past in order to survive. However, instead of criticizing him, we should examine the world he was born into that led him down this course. He was somebody who was destined for a life of misery and suffering,

but he managed to defy his fate and create a legacy that will stand the test of time.

DMX's pain and trauma fueled the anger that echoed throughout much of his music. That rage gave a voice to the voiceless. Some might believe that his art could only be forged by going through the struggles he endured, but if DMX had been free from the restraints that society shackled him with, his genius might have been able to carry him to even greater heights. He might even still be with us today.

DMX's authenticity and genuineness always shone through, and it made him a beloved icon of the people. We must strive to improve the world we share so that those who will come after us don't have to suffer like X did. Before his passing on April 9, he said that he wouldn't wish the pain he endured on anybody, not even his worst enemy. We all owe it to Earl Simmons to make sure that nobody is ever tortured like that again.

# WCC Carries Earth Day Year-round

*Students' efforts go beyond a single day*

by Mac Collier

“April 22. Earth Day.” In a bold, minimalist advertisement in the New York Times, these four words loomed large. The provocative subheader reads, “A disease has infected our country...Its carrier is man.” In between is a list of man-made environmental pollutants from smog to pesticides.

The year was 1970, and ads like this were introducing the concept of Earth Day to Americans for the very first time. The ad campaign, and the name Earth Day itself, can be credited to Julien Koenig. A visionary in the world of Madison Avenue advertising, Koenig was behind famous taglines such as “Takes a Licking and keeps on Ticking” for Timex and “Think Small” for Volkswagen. Unlike these prestigious corporate ad campaigns, Koenig was not contracted to brand the first Earth Day — he reached out to the organizers himself, volunteering to help.

Koenig’s branding was a success: 20 million Americans, or 10% of the population in 1970, participated in the first Earth Day. Fifty-one years later, Earth Day is still on the calendar but now as a global event.

The original Earth Day organizers got the idea from the civil rights and anti-war activism efforts of college students in the 1960s. They hoped to turn that energy towards the issue of environmental pollution, which was only just beginning to garner widespread attention.

Just as Earth Day’s original founders had intended, schools, colleges, and universities have continued to run events or activities on Earth Day for the last half century. Today’s students, with their demonstrated zeal for activism, continue to lead the charge in climate protests around the world. Notable examples include hip-hop artist Xiuhtezcatl



WCC’s green efforts include solar paneling.

Photo credit: WCC Creative Communications

Martinez and teen-age environmental activists Greta Thunberg of Sweden and Howey Ou in China.

At WCC, students have continued the fight throughout the academic year 2020-21 despite the dampening effect the pandemic and social distancing have had on student life. Involved student groups include the Environmental Club as well as the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, which recently began a litter cleanup initiative called Trash Tuesdays.

The Environmental Club has hosted five virtual panels on different topics related to environmentalism, featuring expert speakers. The topics ranged widely: environmental politics, regenerative agriculture,

**“Something that we’ve actually benefited from in being online is being able to talk to experts from all across the country.”**

**-Chelsea Green,  
Environmental Club  
President**

water and natural resource conservation, an info session from the activist group Extinction Rebellion and,

most recently, a student panel on the climate crisis.

The president of the Environmental Club, Chelsea Green, says that these panels have revealed a positive side of the current remote learning situation. “Something that we’ve actually benefited from in being online,” she says, “is being able to talk to experts from all across the country.” Education is important to the WCC movement. The school’s Native Plant Center, for example, has served as a valuable resource in educating people about the natural environment.

But for many of the students and faculty involved in these efforts, the goal goes beyond simply raising awareness of environmental issues. They’re actively pushing the school to commit to more sustainable practices. The SGA Senate established an ad hoc Green Committee last fall, which allows students to advocate for changes at WCC more effectively than they would be able to through a student club. The Faculty Senate has their own Environmental Committee as well. They hosted the fourth annual WCC Environmental Symposium.



Photo credit: L.A. Times

“The biggest thing is the plastic ban,” says Green. “When I joined the Environmental Club last spring semester, they were proposing a plastic water bottle ban specifically, and then that evolved into an overall tackling of disposable, single-use plastic on campus.” SGA, in collaboration with the club, passed a resolution that formally recommends a plastic ban at WCC.

Leading up to this were some early steps, which included the setting up of a survey and petition to show student approval of WCC’s taking actions to make the campus more sustainable. Student support is always welcome, says Green, emphasizing that a student doesn’t have to be involved with the club to help show

their support. “They don’t have to come to every single meeting, but having them do the survey, sign the petition, share it with everyone: That shows the school that this is what students want.”

For the students who are highly involved, student activism in the remote learning era involves attending a lot of Zoom meetings: SGA Senate meetings, town halls, Board of Trustee and Faculty Senate meetings. According to the WCC campus activists, the goal is to be noticeable enough to make people realize that students are passionate about this issue. Arriving en masse with matching names and Earth Day icons is a COVID era substitute for showing up with picket signs and posters.

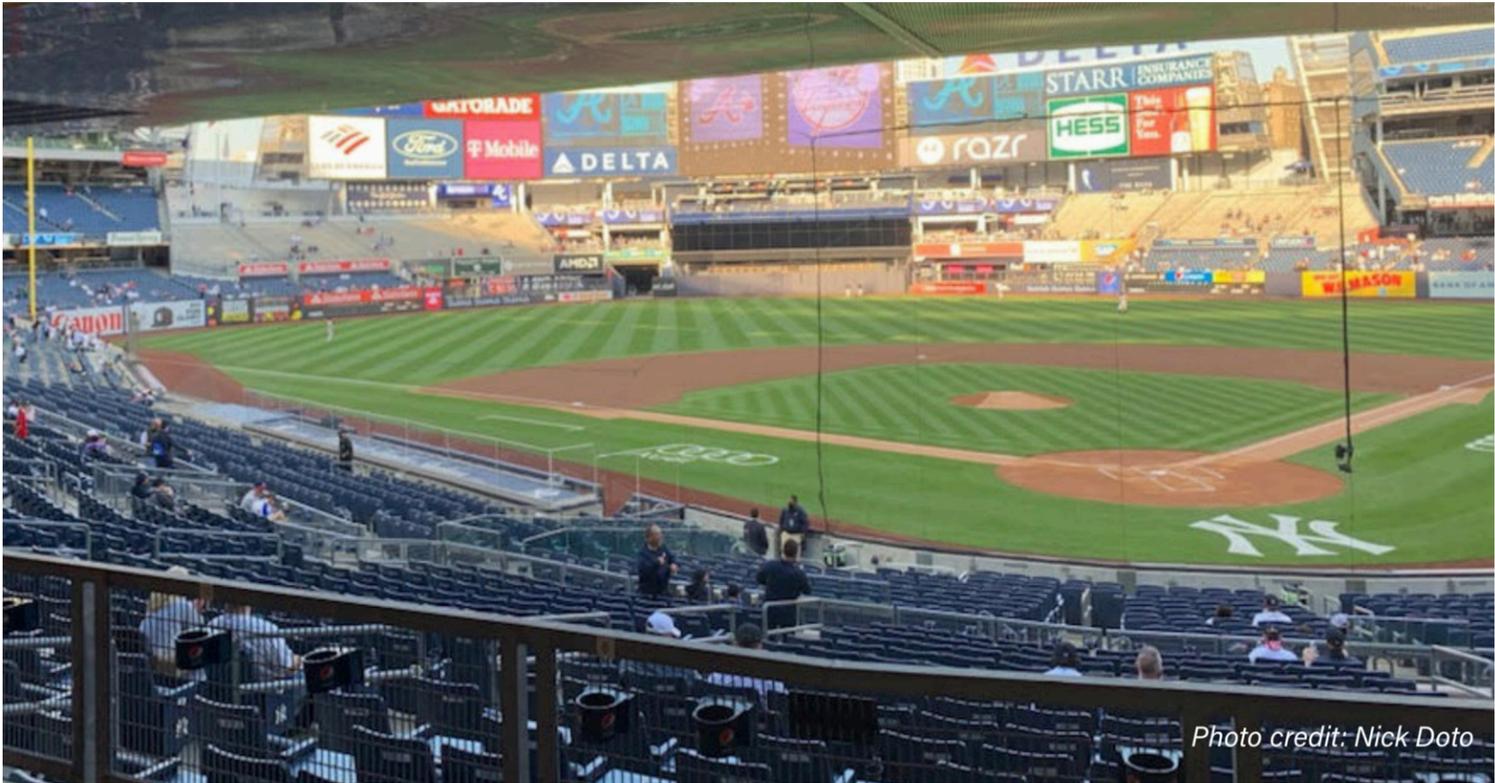


Photo credit: Nick Doto

# The Bronx Bombers Are Back

*Yankee Stadium re-opens its gates at a reduced capacity*

by **Liam Murphy**

On April 1, Yankee Stadium welcomed fans for the first time since 2019. When Yankee pitcher Gerrit Cole stepped out on the mound, it was his first game with fans in the stands since signing his nine-year deal prior to last season. “It’s a lot different,” Cole said. “Just to feel the energy of the people in the park was welcome.”

Under state guidelines, large outdoor stadiums are permitted to fill up to 20 percent of capacity. To enter, fans are required to show a valid COVID-19 vaccination card or a negative COVID test within 72 hours of the event.

Among the opening day attendees was WCC student Nick Doto. “Usually, the tickets for opening day are very expensive, but this year they were pretty cheap,” he said. “I had never been to opening day and I thought this year would be a great opportunity.”

Asked about the experience of being there at the start of a new season, Doto said, “It was just like a regular game except there were a lot less people. There were about 10,000

people there and Yankee Stadium holds 54,000, so it looked empty. But the crowd was loud for the amount of people there.”

There were some other differences as well, said Doto. “I had to get tested in order to enter the stadium. Everyone wore masks but social distancing didn’t seem to be taking place. There were no vendors going around selling anything, but there were people walking around making sure everyone was wearing their masks.”

Asked to assess his team’s chances for the year, Yankee manager Aaron Boone said, “We understand we’re a talented team, but we also understand we haven’t done anything yet. We hope that we’ve started to lay a foundation to be a championship club. It’s a lot of guys that have obviously, in a lot of cases, been here now a few years and have experienced a lot of highs, playoff success, playoff failures, disappointing ends to the season.”

But Boone is optimistic. “We’ve added people to the mix that we feel like can be ingredients to help us get over the hump,” he says. “But I feel this team is a very hungry group. We



want to kick that door in in the worst kind of way.”

Sharing Boone’s optimism is WCC student Kyle Sullivan, who says he is looking forward to this season because he believes the Yankees will overcome their recent shortcomings and “win a World Series.” Sullivan points out that the last couple of years have been tough for the Yankees. But he thinks that with the help of Gerrit Cole and Aaron Judge the Yankees “[have] a championship coming right around the corner.”

Sullivan is looking forward to his first stadium game. “I would love to go to a game,” he says. “It’s unlike anything else, honestly. You just really feel the crowd, it’s a crazy feeling.”

Opening day was not

*Top: Yankee Stadium 2021. Restrictions have thinned crowds across MLB.*

*Bottom: A ravenous pack of Bronxians rally at the 2019 ALDS.*

*Photo Credit: USA Today*

a lucky one for the New York team, as the Bombers disappointed fans with a 3-2, 10-inning loss to the Toronto Blue Jays. The Yankees looked good early on with a two-run home run by Gary Sanchez in the bottom of the second inning. And Gerrit Cole had eight strikeouts, the second most strikeouts on opening day in franchise history.

Yankee Stadium was at the fullest capacity allowed by law for opening day. Fans hope the Yankees themselves will soon be performing at full capacity as well.