The Yellow Peril Is Upon Us
On coronavirus, racism, and the University.

Choreographing Our Humanity
The Columbia Ballet Collaborative’s dynamic spring agenda.
Cover by Samia Menon  ∞ Sketchbook by Tunshore Longe
SAM NEEDLEMAN, CC ’22, Editor-in-Chief
GRACE ADEE, CC ’22, Managing Editor
JAI QURESHI, CC ’23, Publisher
GABY EDWARDS, BC ’21, Literary Editor
SYDNEY CONTRERAS, CC ’23, Online Editor
SAHRA DENNER, CC ’21, Illustrations Editor
GIGI LEE, CC ’22, Layout Editor
KATE STEINER, CC ’22, Director, The Blue Jay
ISAIAH BENNETT, CC ’20, Senior Editor
DOMINY GALLO, CC ’23, Senior Editor
NICOLE KOHUT, CC ’22, Senior Editor
BROOKE MCCORMICK, BC ’22, Senior Editor
MALIA SIMON, CC ’22, Senior Editor
UFON UMANAH, CC ’20, Editor Emeritus
SOPHIA CORNELL, CC ’20, Editor-at-Large
SYLVIE EPSTEIN, CC ’23, Assistant Literary Editor
WILLIAM KIM, CC ’22, Assistant Online Editor

Staff Writers
ELYSA CASO-McHUGH, BC ’21
CHASE CUTARELLI, CC ’23
GABRIELLA FERRIGINE, CC ’20
BILLIE FORESTER, CC ’22
SADIA HAQUE, BC ’23
SAM HOSMER, CC ’23
JADEN JARMEL-SCHNEIDER, CC ’22
KELSEY KITZKE, BC ’23
NORA McSORLEY, CC ’20
JACK MEYER, CC ’21
BENJAMINE MO, CC ’23
EDEN ROSENBLOOM, BC ’23
ELIZA RUDALEVIGE, CC ’23
HAILEY RYAN, BC ’22
RAQUEL TURNER, CC ’23
TAMAR VIDRA, CC ’22
LARKIN WHITE, CC ’22

Staff Illustrators
LEA BROUDO, SEAS ’21
LILLY CAO, CC ’22
YOTAM DEREE, CC ’20
MWANDEYI KAMWENDO, CC ’22
TUNSHORE LONGE, CC ’22
AARON JACKSON CC ’22
SAMIA MENON CC ’23
REA RUSTAGI, SEAS ’22

Layout Staff
RACHEL ZHENG, CC ’22
YUMNA ALREFAEI, SEAS ’23
The Blue and White

Paying the Bills

The Hungarian Pastry Shop
1030 Amsterdam Ave.
between 110-111 Sts.
New York • N.Y. 10025
866-4230

University Housewares & University Hardware
2906 Broadway, between 113th and 114th St.
(212) 882-2798 (212) 662-2150
www.universityhousewares.com
"For all your hardware and houseware needs"

Book Culture
536 West 112th Street
broadway at 114th st.

Book Culture
536 West 112th Street
between Broadway and Amsterdam
Monday-Friday 9am-10pm
Saturday 10am-8pm
Sunday 11am-7pm
212-865-1588

Book Culture
2915 Broadway
at West 114th Street
Monday-Friday 9am-11pm
Saturday 10am-11pm
Sunday 10am-10pm
646-403-3000
bookculture.com

Advertise with us
bweditors@columbia.edu
Hailey Ryan 14 THE COST OF SLEEPING ON A WAKEUP CALL
Evelyn Yang was sexually assaulted by a Columbia doctor. Why does nobody care?

Benjamine Mo 18 THE YELLOW PERIL IS UPON US
On coronavirus, racism, and the University.

Jack Meyer 20 CHOREOGRAPHING OUR HUMANITY
The Columbia Ballet Collaborative’s dynamic spring agenda.

Eliza Rudalevige 22 DISORDERLY TIMES, DISORDERED EATING
The Columbia lifestyle is disturbingly conducive to anorexia.

Billie Forester 28 THE CONVERSATION
With writer Lidia Yuknavitch.

Lilly Cao 30 IN REVIEW
Rejecting Mythologies in the Wallach’s Contemporary Algerian Art Show.
FROM THE EDITOR’S SHODDY McBAIN DESK

The Blue and White’s constitution charges its staff to “collectively craft a publication that not only shows clearly Columbia’s exact tone, but parses and changes its contours with grace and wit.” When the 43 members of our magazine voted to re-ratify our constitution a few weeks ago, we left this lofty goal open to interpretation. As the Magazine’s new Editor-in-Chief, I hope that each Blue and White contributor will take up the charge as they see fit, aspiring with each stroke of their blue-inked quill to fuse their distinct voice with our shared mission.

Readers will find our contributors’ versatility on full display in our March issue, from Jack Meyer’s portrait of the Columbia Ballet Collaborative (p. 20) to Benjamin Mo’s description of coronavirus-related racism (p. 18) and Hailey Ryan’s indictment of Columbia’s entrenched evils (p. 14). For our first printed art review, Lilly Cao writes about the Wallach’s current exhibit (p. 30), and for our millionth set of neighborhood-institution reviews, Chase Cutarelli, Sylvie Epstein, and Jaden Jarmel-Schneider report from the new Universal Barber Shop (p. 8), Dos Toros Taqueria (p. 9), and the overlooked Nicholas Roerich Museum (p. 9). Samia Menon’s poem (p. 24) and illustrations by Tunshore Longe (Sketchbook), Kate Steiner (p. 12), and many others demonstrate that we don’t limit our ruminations to reportage.

This amalgam—faithful to the distinct and curiously beautiful structure that we’ve inherited—distinguishes The Blue and White from its fellow campus publications. We leave the crucial news-breaking to The Spectator, the uproarious send-ups to The Fed, and the immersive fiction and poetry to The Columbia Review and its literary peers. Somehow, The Blue and White is all of those things and none of them. We commit to blending and juxtaposing these genres, because we believe that the contours of Columbia’s tone are too complex to show, parse, and change in a single style.

Perhaps this is why no small number of discerning campus figures—many of them, admittedly, our own staffers—have labelled us “Columbia’s New Yorker.” We’ll take the compliment, but studious fact-checkers will note that The Blue and White was born 35 years earlier, in 1890, and might conclude that The New Yorker is actually America’s Blue and White. (Will those studious fact-checkers kindly look past the fact that The Blue and White took a brief hiatus from 1893 to 1998?)

Cover-to-cover readers of either publication know that we share a basic principle: our whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We design every component of The Blue and White with the final, collective publication in mind. We are, in that sense, a defiantly print magazine. That’s why, in addition to distributing print issues around campus, we’re launching a free door delivery service to Columbia and Barnard dorms for loyal readers and nascent fans alike. You can sign up for free on our new website, theblueanwhite.org, where you’ll also find an interactive version of the print issue; now, those who can’t access a hard copy can scroll through a cohesive publication on their screens for a similar reading experience.

Happy reading!

Sam Needleman
Editor-in-Chief
The Listings

A curated—and humbly incomplete—guide to March lectures, screenings, and other noteworthy campus events. Most events are free or offer discounted tickets for Columbia students; more information about each can be found online. Hosting something in April? Drop us a line at bweditors@columbia.edu.

Love as Art Ethic and Practice
A panel featuring black women artists and scholars, including poet Jay Délise. Worth the trek to Manhattanville. Lenfest, March 3, 6:30 p.m.

Columbia Selects: MFA Readings at the KGB Bar
The School of the Arts hosts its monthly reading featuring alumni of the Writing Program. Free admission. KGB Bar, March 5, 7:00 p.m.

Composer Portraits: Dai Fujikura
The world premiere of Gliding Wings will launch the award-winning classical composer’s installment in one of the city’s foremost experimental music series. Miller, March 5, 8:00 p.m.

The Wild I: An Exploration of Water and Poetry
Dorothea Lasky moderates a discussion among poets about water. No-brainer questions include “How can poets save the planet?” Lenfest, March 7, 11:00 a.m.

Critique 13/13 Seminar: Orientalism
Edward Said continues to cast a long shadow over Columbia, where he was a University Professor. Critical theorists Homi Bhabha and Bernard Harcourt, both distinctively bespectacled, lead a discussion on his most enduring work. Maison Française East Gallery, March 11, 6:15 p.m.

Tatiana Bilbao
The cutting-edge architect speaks at GSAPP, whose event planners have been known to offer free wine and cheese at their Monday evening lecture series. Ware, March 23, 6:30 p.m.

Book Launch for Testosterone: An Unauthorized Biography
As part of the Heyman Center’s Explorations in the Medical Humanities series, authors Rebecca M. Jordan-Young and Katrina Karkazis join a panel to discuss their latest work on the medical myths and realities of testosterone. Pulitzer, March 25, 6:00 p.m.

Kit Film Noir Festival
One of campus’ premier film events explores Jewish filmmakers’ influence on the ever-popular midcentury genre. To avoid shelling out $8 for student tickets, show up 30 minutes before each screening for a shot at free entry with your CUID. Lenfest, March 25-29.

An Evening With Brian de Palma
The Oscar-winning director, known for Scarface and Carrie, speaks with legendary film professor Annette Insdorf about his new novel, Are Snakes Necessary? His co-author, Times editor Susan Lehman, joins. Pulitzer, March 26, 6:00 p.m.

Senior Creative Thesis Dance Concert
Dance majors display their years of artistic training, showcasing student and professional choreographers. Minor Latham Playhouse, Milbank, March 27-28, 7:00 pm.

Pop-up Concerts: Brandee Younger & Dezron Douglas
Younger’s status as her generation’s preeminent harpist is particularly notable because most generations do not have a preeminent harpist. With Douglas on bass. Miller, March 31, 6:00 p.m.

COME AGAIN?! | DEPT. OF WE DON’T GIVE A SHIT

From Columbia Confessions: “I’m a prospie from Exeter Academy (Class of 2020). I got in EA to Harvard, but I just received a likely letter from Columbia. I was kind of set on Harvard, but I could be convinced otherwise :)”

MARCH 2020
OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

BARBER SHOP WARS

An unknowing passerby might mistake the name of the Universal Barber Shop, which opened in November on Broadway between 111th and 112th, as a reference to the nearby academic institution, but alas, ’tis merely to connote the salon’s aspirationally unisex clientele.

The owner, who goes by Ruben, used to work at Columbia Barber Shop, a mainstay just ten blocks uptown. Pregnant with the desire to have my hair lacerated by such a dissenter, I waltzed down Broadway and entered the belly of the revolutionary beast. At the threshold, I met a stern man with a receding hairline. “Are you taking walk-ins today?” I asked. He murmured something that didn’t quite sound dissuading, so I hesitantly sat down.

While Ruben struggled to fit a speckled cape over my puffy collar, I observed the slick black and white decor, the pristine mirrors complementing his arsenal of silver snippers on a nearby counter. “Two on the top and sides,” I requested, launching our adventure. I clutched my coat close to my body in an effort to shield myself from further interactions with the man about to shear my scalp with oscillating knives.

Yet it was imperative that I get something out of him. “Is this a new shop?” I spat out. He muttered again, then asked me where I usually go—assessing his competition, no doubt, perhaps pining for a scoop on the employers he ditched. “It varies,” I told him, which translates to: “I used to go to this cheap place by St. John the Divine, but they screwed up my hair so badly the second time, I thought I’d try your place, dear Ruben, for Columbia’s foremost publication, certainly not against my will.”

Luckily, I was in good hands. Ruben’s skill was undeniable; his razor was a paintbrush, and I his increasingly submissive canvas. His art was a dialectic of practiced grace and terrifying aggression—but if you don’t fear for your life at least once during a haircut, you probably have a shitty barber.

When the deed was done, I took out my debit card, only to realize that Ruben only accepts cash. Trying desperately not to sully our rapport, I dashed to Duane Reade, withdrew $40, and ran back to Universal, where Ruben was already serving another customer.

“Have a good day!” I managed. No response—just a severed grey lock falling wistfully to the floor.

—Chase Cutarelli

Illustration by Mwandeyi Kamwendo
DEPT. OF HIDDEN GEMS
MEETING NICHOLAS ROERICH

A nondescript townhouse, a stone’s throw from Absolute Bagels and adjacent to a banking executive’s marble mansion on 107th near Riverside Drive, houses the country’s largest collection of work by Nicholas Roerich, the Russian-born artist known for his paintings of the Himalayas.

A couple of years ago, I stumbled across Roerich while on the hunt for a new phone screensaver. He was intriguing—a writer, philosopher, activist, and painter—so I added his namesake museum to my “Why Columbia” application supplement. A year and a half in, I still hadn’t been.

On a recent Friday afternoon, I convinced my friend Theo to tag along. Our walk to the museum verged on biblical. Tape roped off a team of firemen standing around a sinkhole leading to a burst water pipe on 112th. Heavy streams threatened to overflow onto the sidewalk. The wind pushed hard against us. We hastily devoured our Ham Del sandwiches, zipped up our coats, and pressed onward.

The front door of the townhouse looked heavy. It was. In the foyer, an old couple chatted about an upcoming concert while a young one mingled around a few shelves that the museum has converted into a gift shop. A portrait of a bearded Roerich hung on the wall. Theo remarked that all men of 19th-century Russia look the same. A friendly-looking Russian man stationed behind a table with a donation box didn’t seem to understand our questions, but nodded us up a flight of stairs. He didn’t look like the man on the wall.

Upstairs, most of the paintings hung askew, like family portraits above a mantelpiece. I was struck by the bright blues and deep oranges that Roerich used to capture the Himalayas. Hazy suns set over his expansive purple skies. Travelers drag tired mules up steep mountains. Auras surround deities. On one wall, figures draped in patterned cloths—costumes for The Rite of Spring—dance around one another. Theo hummed the ballet’s opening tune, and it felt like we were living in the Core pamphlet Columbia sent us in the mail.

On our way out, we found the friendly man from downstairs setting up rows of folding chairs in front of a grand piano. I wanted to ask him what for, but I got the sense that he would be happier without the disturbance.

I look at the photos on my phone once in a while. I’m still taken by the colors, by the strange juxtaposition of the Manhattan townhouse against the mystical paintings, by the way the museum disappears into the city around it. I wonder how I convinced myself that venturing past Westside was a Herculean task. I imagine how much of the city I must be missing. Oh well, I think. See you soon, 107th.

—Jaden Jarmel-Schneider

NEW TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
DOS TOROS, BOTH ALIKE IN DELECTABILITY

When my suitemate Bella informed me in August that a branch of her favorite Mexican restaurant was opening near campus, I expected to join her for festive sit-down meals involving mocktails and lavish platos fuertes. It’s safe to say that Dos Toros, the chain restaurant with just six main menu items—from which one can, at the very least, fashion creative combinations—was not what I had pictured.

Half a year later, in the wake of the opening of our very own Dos Toros on Broadway between 113th and 114th, I checked back in with Bella to see how she was feeling, and her wise words seemed to reflect the general sentiments of her peers: “I guess what I’m thinking now is that I’m so happy because Chipotle is just way too far to walk to when...
you want a burrito.” When prompted to devise a question for Dos Toros founder Leo Kramer, she eagerly inquired, “Will we ever get free burritos?”

When I sat down with Kramer and his brother and business partner, Oliver Kramer, I began by divulging a worry of mine: as a member of the Magazine’s literary staff, I had been suddenly thrust into culinary reportage and felt out of my comfort zone. Poems are more in my domain. The Kramers were intrigued, and throughout the conversation, they riffed about California-style Mexican food in a purposefully poetic manner. “Burritos fuel you when you are trying to change the world,” Oliver said at one point. At another, Leo: “A burrito is a microcosm of the college experience.” Despite their encouragement, I resisted the urge to write a supplementary burrito-inspired poem.

Having grown up near the University of California, Berkeley, the Kramers believe that Morningside Heights is the New York equivalent of their college town. The opening at Columbia feels “like a homecoming” to them. Though the brothers had this idea years ago, they have been waiting for the perfect location. They understand that, like Bella, many New Yorkers are “hyperlocal.” As Leo put it, “If you work on 51st street in Midtown, you’re not going past 53rd.” We have the vacancy at 113th to thank for our newly accessible, hyperlocal burritos and tacos.

The Kramers revealed one piece of bad news for Bella and other guac-loving Lions. Beyond the John Jay/Dos Toros collab event that occurred in early February and the $5 burritos offered during the first week of business, Columbians can expect to pay full price. On a more uplifting note, if the Kramers hone their technical skills, we may soon be able to use Flex at the restaurant. Until then, the burritos from the Diana Center Sono Station appear to be our best and most affordable bet. To those inclined to eat off-campus: heed the recommendations of Bella, Oliver, and Leo, the three paramount connoisseurs in this writer’s eyes: steak burrito, carnitas burrito, Impossible Nachos, respectively. Shell out if you dare.

—Sylvie Epstein

DONT UNSUBSCRIBE! THE LAIC RAGER THAT ALMOST WAS

On a recent Saturday evening, I threw a party in my 150-square-foot McBain double for a group of roughly 195 Columbia students with nothing in common save a Listserv membership. For those unfortunate readers who were left out of the event of the season, allow me to explain.

The Latin American and Iberian Cultures Department’s undergraduate Listserv, known among their privileged membership as LAICUndergrads, is an email list to which many Columbia students pursuing Spanish and Portuguese studies subscribe,
and to which countless others, including yours truly, have been involuntarily added. We regularly receive department updates, announcements for new courses that fulfill major requirements, and advertisements for other Columbia Listserv regulars like roundtables and webinars. I regarded the emails as minor annoyances, but, like most students who unwittingly wind up on Listservs for organizations that do not in any way pertain to their lives, I was too lazy to figure out how to remove myself.

My fellow LAICUndergrads members seemed to have adopted the same apathetic ethos—that is, until one Sunday in February, when a particularly fed-up Listserv member spoke his mind to the general audience:

“Hello, I would like to have my email, xxx@columbia.edu, removed from this mailing list. I may have been placed on it by mistake. Thanks!”

I’m able to use quotation marks here because said member incidentally replied all, blessing hundreds of students and faculty members with his request.

Almost immediately after, another followed: “Good morning. I would like my email, xxx@columbia.edu, removed as well. Thank you.”

Within the next few hours, the email chain grew with hundreds of replies. Messages poured in from students seizing the opportunity to escape from the list, while others merely threw gasoline on the fire to contribute to the exponential joke. The torrent of pleading, trolling, and commentary was punctuated only by the occasional email threat from a Listserv moderator demanding an end to the madness: “PLEASE STOP,” one wrote. The responses became more and more absurd, and the chain devolved into something like a manic Twitter feed: “Actually can you guys send me more emails?” “Who wants to go to JJ’s rn?” “Anyone down for a LAICUndergrads party this weekend??”

That last message was mine. I then had no choice but to make “The LAICUndergrads Rager” a Facebook event. Naturally, I used the Listserv to promote the party. Much to my surprise, by the end of the week, those 200 students marked themselves “going,” cementing their loyalty to their haphazard Internet club and asserting their unity in the face of dissent.

As the week neared its end, the LAIC Rager was at the forefront of my mind. “Wait, is it actually happening?” a handful of people asked, but truthfully, I didn’t know. It was my party, but not my joke—since the beginning, it was our joke, and it thus felt like the collective’s job to deliver the punchline.

On Saturday, as 10:00 p.m. drew closer, I swept the crumbs from my McBain floors for the first time ever, put on a nice tasteful top that my roommate and I both agreed said “I’m throwing a Listserv party,” and even wrote “LAIC Rager” on the little whiteboard on my door. Exactly no one arrived.

—Malia Simon
When I met with Priya Pai, CC ‘20, after her office hours for User Interface Design, for which she is a TA, her sincere “How are you?” prompted an outpouring of my first-year worries and existential crises of the week. “Yeah, that never stops,” she replied between giggles. Her tone revealed no trace of the I’m-a-senior-and-your-petty-anxieties-are-not-of-concern-to-me attitude I confront far too often. By the time we settled into our seats in the Dodge Joe, I trusted her instantly; this Texas native has mastered the art of sincerity.

As a Computer Science and English double-major, Pai has never been one to sacrifice passion in favor of cultivating a marketable identity. “I think only being in a single field ends up being a really limited way to see the world,” she insisted, noting my mixed expression of disbelief and fascination. “It shouldn’t be something so radical!” She jumped seamlessly from a discussion about ethical data to her passion for Danzy Senna’s New People. By the time she started discussing her current research for the History Department, it became clear that her array of interests were not mere fodder for future dinner conversations, but manifestations of her genuine curiosity and desire to better herself.

When I confessed to Pai that I knew her as the former Editor-in-Chief of Quarto, the poetry-focused campus literary magazine, her face immediately blossomed into a grin. “Quarto has been one of the biggest things of college, it’s just been so—life-changing,” she gushed. “It’s so grounding to have a few hours each week to talk about art and writing, especially art and writing done by my peers.” Now the web editor, she described her admiration for the magazine’s many contributors and the inspiration she continually draws from Columbia students. “It’s such an empathetic community, and it’s so cool that we get to publish their work and lift them up.”

Beyond Quarto, Pai has been involved in the South Asian Feminism(s) Alliance, and she hopes to fuse her commitment to social justice activism with computer science in the future. During a research internship at the ACLU last summer, she did so by culling statistics from FBI databases for lawyers to use during court cases. “It was literally like, ‘here’s the problem, here’s the proof, we’re going to court,’” she recounted. “Having my research actually affect the outcomes of cases was just wild to me.”

Pai remains uncertain of what awaits after graduation, but even her indecision is somehow confident and composed. “I’m a senior about to graduate, and I still have no idea what I’m doing,” she said, laughing. “I’ve been applying to a ton of jobs, but also thinking about grad school, but also considering an MFA!” Her attitude is clearly more than a mere tactic to mask any bubbling insecurities; she seems instead to trust that the process—whatever that is—will work out for her.

The effortlessly poised Pai we know today is a far cry from the first-year who arrived on campus nearly four years ago. “I thought that I needed to cater to expectations—and not even other people’s expectations, but my own,” she remembered. “It was only when I released myself from judgment that I was able to be completely open.” Then came the opportunities and experiences that have shaped her undergrad years. Pai’s reminiscences were not as sentimental as they were direct and comforting, full of grace.

—Eden Rosenbloom
Preparing for my interview with Anna Sugrue, a Barnard senior passionate about prison abolition, I perused the internet for the most incisive questions I could find to perfectly capture her essence. Naturally, this led me to the *Times*’ “36 Questions That Lead to Love,” which I got caught up reading moments before my interview. Sugrue spotted the open tab on my computer and laughed. “What’s your idea of a perfect day?” lay at the top of my list of questions. “I think I’ll skip that one,” she said, smiling, and instead launched into an extensive discussion of her work combating the many flaws of the U.S. criminal justice system.

During Sugrue’s first two years at Columbia, she was involved with Design for America, through which she worked with the Police Reform Organizing Project (PROP), a nonprofit that exposes broken-windows policing by monitoring misdemeanor court cases, and Reflect, a student organization dedicated to improving and destigmatizing mental health treatment. But over time, she became disillusioned by the organizations. “For me, it always comes back to everything has to change,” Sugrue said, discouraged by the stunted rate of progress. She quit and started working directly for PROP, where she was so successful that the court-monitoring reports she compiled were picked up by *Politico*.

Sugrue’s work for PROP showed her that the prison-industrial complex is driven by the same pressures that underlie Columbia’s mental health crisis: “This feeling that we need to be productive and white and normative at all costs.” But, Sugrue said, her work for PROP was tangible in a way that her mental health work had never been. Through the Guggenheim Fellowship, she landed an internship working for Brooklyn Defender Services the summer after her sophomore year. During her junior year, she joined the Executive Board of the Barnard Criminal Justice initiative, eventually taking charge this year and renaming it the Barnard Prison Abolition Collective to more accurately reflect the organization’s politics and intentions.

Sugrue’s activism has become especially personal in the last year thanks to her friendship with a formerly incarcerated man named David. Last year, Sugrue and David took a class together through the Justice-in-Education Initiative, run by Columbia’s Center for Justice. The class was split evenly between formerly incarcerated people and Columbia students, enabling her to meet David, who had spent ten years in federal prison in Texas. Sugrue spoke with David every day after class about his life and his many plans for criminal justice work. Halfway through the semester, David was suddenly reincarcerated for being 16 minutes late to a meeting with his parole officer. He spent four months in prison in Brooklyn, where Sugrue called him every week. Recounting this story made her visibly upset.

As Sugrue explained to me, in federal prison, if an inmate is mistreated in any way and wants the prison to be held accountable, they file what is called an administrative remedy. While David was in prison in Texas, he filed administrative remedies for inmates who didn’t know how. He continued to help other inmates even after he moved to a halfway house in New York. They both believe that his reincarceration was a response to David’s work. Now, considering his vulnerable position, David no longer feels safe doing this work, which has motivated what is now the capstone project of Sugrue’s criminal justice activism at Columbia. With Sugrue, he formed the Student Justice League, an organization that trains students to file administrative remedies on behalf of inmates in federal prison. Sugrue said the goal is to “harness our time, our resources, our privilege, and our intelligence to hold prison administrations more accountable,” and to “bring humanity back into the system in a very powerful way.” It offers students the ability to leverage their insulation from the criminal justice system against carceral malpractice, providing a much-needed voice for individual prisoners and their experiences.

—Larkin White
We talk about privilege a lot at Columbia. Comment sections, op-eds, and seminars caution us to check our privilege, while constant reminders that we attend “the greatest University in the greatest city in the world” encourage us to celebrate our privilege. But rarely do we talk about the very real, often dangerous repercussions of living and learning in an environment whose foundation is built upon a narrative of exceptionalism. Rarely do we push beyond the conceptual and talk about privilege as a mechanism of silencing people who attempt to shatter the exclusive bubble of self-protection in which we so comfortably reside.

I have grown frighteningly indifferent to this danger. I find myself slipping into an ethos of exceptionalism—“I’m special!”—more than I would like to admit. I did not have my wakeup call until winter break, when Evelyn Yang, one of the many people who have paid the price of our privilege, called Columbia out on national television.

On January 16, Yang, a Columbia graduate and the wife of former presidential candidate Andrew Yang, said in an interview with CNN that she was sexually assaulted by Robert Hadden, her obstetrician/gynecologist, in 2012, when she was seven months pregnant. Yang explained that Hadden, an esteemed Columbia doctor, misled her into thinking she needed a C-section and proceeded to grab, undress, and internally examine her, ungloved. Yang remained silent after the traumatic appointment, hiding the abuse from even her husband and blaming herself for not realizing the extent of Hadden’s predatory nature earlier. Yang explained that gradually, Hadden began asking her unsolicited questions about her sexual activity with her husband, which were unrelated to her health or that of her unborn child.

“There was absolutely no premise for that line of questioning, and it seemed like he just wanted to hear about me talking about sex. What I kept sticking to was this: ‘OK, so my doctor is pervy. I have a pervy doctor, but I’m going to focus on having a healthy baby,’ and the idea of changing doctors was overwhelming for me,” Yang explained.

Little did Yang know that she was one of at least 70 women who have fallen victim to Hadden, a serial sexual abuser who preyed on pregnant women for years under the facade of legitimate medical practice. It was not until months later, when Yang was notified that Hadden had left his practice at Columbia, that she did some digging and discovered that Hadden had been arrested six weeks before Yang’s own assault after a patient informed the police that he licked her vagina during an exam. Hadden’s arrest, however, was nullified, and he was allowed to keep practicing with no repercussions from the University.

“Can you imagine the audacity of a man who continues to do this after being arrested? It’s like he knew that he wouldn’t face any repercussions. That he was protected. That he wouldn’t be fired,” Yang said.

It’s likely that Hadden did, in fact, know that he wouldn’t face any repercussions—that he would be protected by his longtime employer. According to Yang and the other women who are now suing Columbia University, its affiliates, and Hadden, the University “actively concealed, conspired, and enabled” Hadden’s sexual abuse as a part of a “massive coverup” to avoid negative publicity.

“It’s a name-brand university behind this doctor, using their influence to protect themselves at the expense of the victims in the case,” Yang said. It’s tragic that the University would defend their reputation over their own alumna, sending a frightening message to female community members that the University’s status matters more than its students’ health and safety.

The valiance that Yang demonstrated during her interview with CNN, in which she ultimately appeared triumphant if deeply pained, felt like the impetus for a long-overdue wakeup call on this campus to hold the University accountable for its instru-
mental role in enabling abusers like Hadden. I went to bed that night overwhelmed with sadness but inspired to contribute to this University’s rich tradition of activism by protesting Hadden. I expected to return from break and find my campus in a state of outrage, to a student body inspired by Yang’s monumental bravery, disheartened by her pain, and disgusted by the University’s role in provoking it. Instead, I quickly learned that many of my peers had no idea what happened to Yang and that many who did saw it as a tragic inevitability.

My sadness quickly turned to anger. After a week of school passed, I called my mom to ask why no one cared about what happened to Evelyn Yang. Why no rallies had been planned in protest. Why no Instagram stories had been circulating in solidarity. Why *The Spectator* hadn’t written a story on her assault. “How can my peers walk around campus proud and upright when they have no moral backbone?” I asked her.

She told me that privilege has a way of bending us. I couldn’t help but think back to what Yang so humbly said about privilege in her interview: “Not everyone can tell their story. Not everyone has the audience or platform to tell their story, and I actually feel like I’m in this very privileged position to be able to do that.”

Yang does not view her privilege as protecting or entitling her, but as an opportunity to give voice to survivors across the country. Yang’s understanding of her privilege made me realize that what was wrong on campus was not a lack of empathy for Hadden’s victims, but rather a blindness to the exclusionary culture that forms when privilege goes unchecked. At an elite institution, where student and faculty identities are grounded in a narrative of exceptionalism, this is the status quo. Members of elite circles are used to receiving forgiveness and expedited consequences, an immunity that undermines the severity of injustices like sexual assault. When people we are supposed to admire and learn from, like doctors and professors, can do harm for years unchecked, it becomes astonishingly easy to collectively overlook the culpability of those who should be held accountable.

When you do a little digging, there is nothing exceptional about what happened to Evelyn Yang; she is one member of a tragically long line of people who have fallen victim to sexual assault under Columbia’s eye.

We missed our opportunity to stand in solidarity with Yang and to express our disappointment with the University’s role in covering Hadden’s tracks. But we can view our inaction as an opportunity to reshape our relationship to privilege and dismantle our campus’s exclusionary culture. We can view our shameful inaction as an opportunity to do better, to realign our moral backbones, and to not sleep on yet another wakeup call.

*Illustration by Mwandeyi Kamwendo*
WHAT'S BEHIND THE DISHWASHER CONVEYOR

DON'T ENTER

NOTHING TO SEE HERE!

DISINFECTING BOTTLES FROM GYM

SPLASH ZONE

DELICIOUS IS IN THE DETAILS

COLUMBIA CRUSHES ENCOURAGEMENT CHAMBER

PLATES MUST SWIM TEST BEFORE GRADUATING

SHRIMP AQUARIUM FOR THE SURF-N-TURF SHRIMP BOAT

CLEAN

WE ❤️ PLATES

YAY CUPS!
The Yellow Peril Is Upon Us

On coronavirus, racism, and the University.

BY BENJAMINE MO

The Yellow Peril is virulent and mutant. Its manifestations are manifold and perhaps temporally transient, to the extent that one can distinguish two faces of the same underlying hate—but all fundamentally reflect, first and foremost, derision of the dreaded Orient. The Chinaman, the chink; the East is red. And now, through its latest metamorphosis, we have become vectors of disease, biological agents of foreignness, savage exoticism incarnate.

The troubling central mechanism of the Yellow Peril is a licensed operation of wholesale dehumanization. Only a century and a half ago, this was practical for Western colonizers in the calamitous subjugation of China; the method is imperialist by nature and covertly sanctioned at a systemic scale. Consider, for instance, the extraordinary circumstances that led President Bollinger to publicly defend Columbia’s foreign-born Chinese students against federally-advised surveillance in September. In many ways, people of Chinese descent are viewed with suspicion as a monolithic conglomeration of indoctrinated agents.

Such erasure of individuality and humanity is undeniably advantageous for the perpetrators of an oppressive social system that consigns Asian diasporic communities to the fringes of political visibility. What is deeply disheartening—truly enraging—is that the narrative of a public health emergency has been co-opted to justify and even endorse immense human tragedy. Proponents of the Yellow Peril have leveraged long-standing racist pejoratives to devalue Chinese lives, painting them as dog-eaters, monsters, savages. The convenient rendering of an entire populace as deserving of such trauma and death because of perceived cultural inferiority—and the extent to which such sentiments are normalized—is an appalling reminder of how deep-seated the Yellow Peril is, and how it threatens already marginalized communities.

This normalization of prejudice is cause for a comprehensive reevaluation of our values—at the very least, within our university communities. Damien Xu (许钟子), a first-year undergraduate at New York University from Wuhan, China, shared with me his illuminating experiences upon returning to the U.S. this year, and how they have exhibited the underlying nature of widespread racism and xenophobia. When we spoke, it quickly became clear that humor is a contentious form of interaction where dissonant sensibilities converge and conflict with one another.

With an uneasy grin, Xu recounted an exchange he had with another student: Xu explained to his classmate that he could not leave his home during the winter break because of the quarantine, to which the student responded, “So you must be excited about escaping from your hometown. That’s great.” At first, Xu was taken aback but concerned that his discomfort was an overreaction. Considering the interaction in light of the disparaging jokes he had seen posted on social media about those affected by COVID-19 (coronavirus)—his objections to which he was ridiculed for by proponents of so-called “dark humor”—he concluded that the agitation provoked by callous displays of ignorance was not solely his onus to digest, internalize.

Humor is often, by nature, provocative; it is suggestive and meant to elicit reaction. But Xu clarified a distinction between innocuous humor and humor that profits from suffering: “Now a whole bunch of people died. My hometown is under lockdown. People are dying. They can’t have their Chinese New Year… If you still think that is funny, I don’t think that fits into any moral code.” By normalizing humor that capitalizes on tragedy, Xu suggests that we consider what is lost in its delivery, and what is revealed in the tensions we choose to normalize, even ironically.

Xu also revealed to me the emotional toll of his ordeal, from his time in Wuhan to his treatment after returning to the U.S., and disclosed to me that

1. Speaking with Damien Xu, a student from Wuhan who I will introduce later, I became acutely aware of the distinction made between Asian-Americans and those born, in this case, in China. I use “we” here as an aggregate reference to Asian diasporic communities in America. In the end, I’d argue that the cause is one that calls for unity and necessitates the use of a term that both generalizes and specifies the individuals in a diaspora.
the roommates of students from Wuhan have decided to temporarily move out of university housing, choosing to seek private accommodations elsewhere. “We have 14 people from my city in N.Y.U., and we are feeling isolated now,” he said. Those affected by the outbreak, whether they are in China, the U.S., or beyond, should be treated unconditionally with dignity, with humanity, as individuals faced with a humanitarian quandary. We must be rational about, and deeply critical of, the way that the Yellow Peril may inform our present anxieties.

Even uptown, at Columbia, such compassion and empathy have been put to the test. In threatening the use of code of conduct violations to enforce quarantine and bar any exit from self-isolated students’ rooms, Barnard’s self-isolation policy called into question the right to privacy. Hostile treatment of self-isolated students from China suggests a base mistrust and antagonization that fails to uphold the core values of our institution. Instead, the animosity that the policy engenders and legitimizes dangerously feeds the social isolation that some Chinese international students already confront on campus.

Moreover, an anti-Chinese message written in Butler Library, Columbia’s community mainstay, cements the xenophobic Yellow Peril as a pillar of our university as fundamental as those that buttress Butler. At press time, more than a week after the incident was first reported, Columbia has taken no action to transparently discuss an investigation into the matter. What does Columbia’s silence reveal about its values, especially its duty to protect students who belong to marginalized groups? Perhaps inaction is in itself an act of measuring the relative value of Chinese students to the community. In its appraisal, Columbia has disgracefully found them wanting.

As an apparatus of oppression, the Yellow Peril is remarkably adept at redefining itself so as to become normalized in each new context of contemporary sociopolitics. We all have a stake in the equitable provision of voice and visibility. At the end of our conversation, I asked Xu what he thinks those labeled by the Yellow Peril should do to fight against racism and xenophobia. In a hopeful assertion, he responded: “Be determined, be focused, be humble. Don’t be afraid to speak up when you encounter any of [these kinds] of circumstances. You should stay strong. Always have a very just moral code.” What a dignified means to an end—resist and defy.
As the dancers wait in position, a single strike of the snare introduces the bass line. The notes thrum along unaccompanied till the sound of the drum taps propels the dancers’ shoulders into rotation and the music into motion. The choreographer, Danielle Diniz, watches three of her dancers through the mirror, demonstrating the outlines of her pieces’ motions while shouting out cues: “Look creepily at the audience.” Her instructions are in keeping with the piece’s dark subject matter, exploring three stages of grief. She has split the dancers into two groups for this rehearsal: Grievers and Death. The former group starts the dance by moving in jagged patterns, banging on the ground and snapping their heads in the audience’s direction. The latter group joins them slowly, approaching the dancers from behind before shadowing their movements for the remainder of the section.

This is all in preparation for a performance of five pieces put on by the Columbia Ballet Collaborative, a group that hasn’t taken long to establish a serious reputation in Columbia and New York’s dance scene. Founded in 2007 by five professional dancers enrolled at Columbia, the CBC produces one show each semester, featuring a mix of work by choreographers at and outside of Columbia. This semester, CBC has brought in four outside choreographers and one student for its show.

By targeting New York’s bustling community of up-and-coming choreographers, CBC has landed some big-name talent in the early stages of their careers. Past choreographers include the likes of Emily LeCrone, who has since received multiple commissions from the Guggenheim, and Justin Peck, who has gone on to become the resident choreographer of the New York City Ballet and landed work in major projects like Spielberg’s upcoming West Side Story remake.

This potential to work with professional talent makes the Collaborative a coveted opportunity for members of Columbia’s dance community. As the group’s artistic director, Bridget Scanlon, pointed out, “We’ve been mentioned in Vanity Fair... we have an outside donor base besides our [allocated] funding from Columbia.” And anyone from Barnard, CC, GS, or SEAS can audition to be part of the troupe, giving those passionate about dance an opportunity for professional work while they pursue a college education.

“In professional companies,” Scanlon said, “there’s oftentimes a blatant disrespect for mental health or for people’s other commitments.” But because CBC consists of and is run by college students, she believes there’s a degree of understanding toward the dancers not always afforded at professional dance companies. With five professional dancers as founders, a selective application process, and an impressive list of both choreographers and dancers among its alumni, Scanlon believes this is the closest a Columbia student can get to a small professional dance company.

The opportunity extends beyond the dancers, though. Scanlon said the choreographers for this semester’s show represent new and innovative voices in the world of professional choreography, and CBC offers a platform to have free reign over their vision.

“I’m working with pieces of a collection of music called “Murder Ballades” by Bryce Dessner,” Christina Clark, the student choreographer of CBC’s spring show, said. A dancer since the age of seven, Clark now splits her time between working as a student in the School of General Studies and as a dancer in the corps de ballet of the New York City Ballet. The driving force behind her choreography for CBC has been Dessner’s music, which grabbed her attention for its dynamic quality. “Some of them are really slow, others of them are fast, they’re all pretty syncopated,” Clark said. The rhythm of the music also strays away from easily countable patterns like 4:4 or waltz time, something Clark sees as a positive challenge, pushing her to try choreography she wouldn’t normally consider in order to grapple with a less-than-steady beat.

Aside from the music, Clark’s ideas have been partially shaped by art forms outside of dance. Shortly after receiving the news that she’d be choreographing for CBC, Clark went to the Metropolitan...
Museum of Art, where the sculptures and impressionist paintings on display made her reflect on connections between the images and movement. Describing one of the paintings that left an impression on her, Clark said, “it had a really large scale, and two figures who [were] holding shoulders and kind of running, but there was a lot of movement in the painting and I thought, ‘what an interesting position that they’re in,’ and ‘how can I sort of continue that into a choreographic phrase?’”

Another CBC choreographer seeking to encapsulate an image in movement is Alexandra Hutchinson. Her recent experiences working for L’Academie Americaine de Danse de Paris inspired her to create a piece that pays homage to the city and its culture. To do this, she plans on staging a ballet incorporating Parisian, romantic, abstract, and neoclassical elements.

The inspiration for her style has come both from her experiences in Paris and her late mentor, the prolific dancer and choreographer Violette Verdi. “She was one of George Balanchine’s muses,” Hutchinson said, mentioning her roles in some of his famous works like Emeralds and Tchaikovsky Pas De Deux, “and there are some steps that are kind of classic Violette Verdi steps like Italian Pas de Chat, so I think that I’ll have like little shimmers of her sprinkled throughout the ballet.”

Not all the choreographers, however, have their artistic experiences rooted solely in the world of dance. Danielle Diniz finds that her background in theater inevitably finds its way into how she approaches choreography. “I always have to have a theme or a storyline involved in my work,” Diniz said, “I can’t make something from, for a lack of a better term, nothing.” As Diniz contemplates the grief that accompanies loss, her piece explores the concept through three women as they journey through three stages of grief.

Choreographer Gabe Stone Shayer also views dance as a means of addressing life’s common struggles. He’s imagined and reimagined the performance he’s now putting together for CBC countless times over the last several years, and while he doesn’t view it as having a strict overarching narrative, he said it can generally be understood to deal with “the aspects of human nature within a family dynamic.” Adolescence in particular, with its disorienting mix of conflicts, desires, and ultimately growth, has shaped Gabe’s ideas.

The music is instrumental to Gabe’s idea of the piece as well. “I’m always inspired by work that conveys emotion or makes me feel something and isn’t arbitrary in movement and dynamic,” Gabe said, “and I’m hoping to embody that idea: that the music is also driving the steps and is also driving the story.” In this case, that driving force is a composition from Arvo Pärt, “Fratres.”

Gabe intends to use two versions of the same piece, each distinct in its musical character but ultimately reconcilable in a way that suits a short ballet. “I chose it ‘cause I feel like the music tells the story, and I feel like when I first heard it when I was younger it definitely embodied and capsulized my experience [of adolescence], or my thoughts for this experience.”

While the ideas and influences behind each piece may vary dramatically, the choreographers share a youthful, ambitious voice and genuine excitement about Columbia’s dancers realizing their visions.

CBC’s Spring 2020 CBC showcase will take place on May 2 and 3 at the Miller Theater.
Between any two good events lie those messy, unavoidable segments of time we like to call transitions, bumping along like school buses on a dirt road. The things that crawl out of these buses can be way worse than petrified gum under the seats or that one kid who makes too much eye contact for seven in the morning. For me, that school bus came with anorexia. Although I had already struggled with dysmorphia—and grappled with a slew of nutritionists, therapists, and a lunch lady enlisted by my mother to spy on me—my eating disorder emerged in earnest when I moved from Pennsylvania to Maine. The move itself wasn’t important; I transplanted from one tiny college town to another, following my professor father. It was the dismantling of my support system, that group of elementary schoolers that didn’t realize how much it helped me to insist on having a piece of their birthday cake or some of their coveted pizza Lunchable. When we moved, I was eleven years old, deeply shy, and soon, deeply sad.

I had a glaring lack of friends, and my family members were stuck on their own buses: it took a while for anybody to notice that I was sick again. Actually, it took eight months, an eighth of my body weight, and a visit to the emergency room. I missed the last quarter of sixth grade and spent eight hours a day during the summer shut up in an outpatient program. I was the youngest by years. They put us in the dark kitchen after lunch and played slideshows about how we were fucking over our bodies. I jiggled my legs with the pretense of running away and was rewarded with meal replacement shakes for the calories I burned.

That was the worst time in my life, but it was even worse for my parents. My doctors at the program encouraged us to use the Maudsley Method, a family-based treatment strategy for adolescents, in order to keep me out of an inpatient treatment center. Although I was still at the hospital forty hours a week, I was allowed to eat dinner and spend weekends at home. The downside was that my parents took the full force of my frustration, hatred, and unwillingness to live in a body that I deemed too big. I reverted to the coping mechanisms of a toddler. Once, I screamed so loudly during dinner that a well-meaning jogger paused to ask if everything was alright. Recently, my mom took a job nannying a 10-year-old girl before and after school; when I asked her why, she told me she missed out on having a daughter when I was that age. As a 10-year-old, I was busy telling her I hated her while she struggled to feed me.

Two months after an older girl graduated from the program and went away to college, I heard during a boredom-fueled gossip session in the common room that she had relapsed. At this point, I hadn’t yet thought about college as a concrete thing, as a chunk of my life that was coming up in no more than five years. I always had the privilege of knowing that I would go to college, but at twelve and with no more context than that which I made for myself in my eating disorder bubble, it felt like a half-rendered drawing, sketchy and malleable. I didn’t think about that girl again until I was applying for schools. In five years, the details of her face and name had completely escaped me; this somehow made it worse, allowing me to place myself in her narrative without the pesky rebukes of memory.

Understandably, when this fall rolled around, Mom and Dad were apprehensive about sending me to school, outside of their capacity to keep me alive. If the worst did come to pass—relapse—there wasn’t anything they could do to make me, a hesitant but legal adult, commit to recovery, short of threatening to cut me off financially.

The college lifestyle is disturbingly conducive to disordered eating. We forget to eat during finals week, or fast all day, leading up to the inevitable JJ’s binge. The conception of ‘normal’ mealtimes and nutritive standards as established by a high school schedule disappear. Sometimes, we even brag about our prolonged intervals of abstention, celebrating our ability to stretch our bodies and minds as far as they will go without the calories that give them that flexibility. In such a competitive place, eating itself becomes a competitive game.

Even as someone who is hyper-aware of
my own needs and recovery, the transition has not been all superfruits and nutritionally balanced pasta dishes. When I first came here, I stopped taking the anti-anxiety medication that I was prescribed at age fourteen. Then, I got dumped by my high school boyfriend. Then, I got a B— I know, a B!—on a paper. These divots in the dirt road, both small and large, rattled me so much that I punched through the window of my school bus and wanted to jump out. My anorexia had always been about weight loss, but in the pressure-cooker of college it turned into a game of control. I downloaded MyFitnessPal and began to track calories and macronutrients, at first “just to see what I was eating.” (I have a tip for all you anorexics and bulimics and orthorexics and binge-eaters and disordered eaters—I know you’re out there, because there are at least 30 million of us in the United States: calorie counting is never just about seeing what you’re eating.) Even though I hadn’t restricted myself to a certain number of calories, keeping track of them diverted a huge chunk of the negative attention that I directed toward my body.

I gave anorexia my whole adolescence; he doesn’t deserve a single thing more. Breaks and scheduled visits from my mom have kept me on track, more or less. Although I’ve fluctuated more in weight in the past six months than I did from ages fifteen to eighteen, I’m healthy. I only skip breakfast when I have an 8:40 a.m. language class. And apparently I’m confident enough to write about being anorexic.

I’m lucky, in a way, to have lived with my illness for so long. I’m at a point in my recovery where I’m comfortable relying on a support system back in Maine, the wonders of anxiety medication (prescribed to me by a licensed professional, of course), and a few close friends who know to look out for warning signs. But the facts remain that I’m never going to be done living with my illness, and I’m never going to be able to escape the terrible, thundering pull of transition. I may trade packed dirt in Maine for the asphalt of New York City, and then again for the highway or sand or gravel, but there will always be that road, that school bus, and me sitting inside. School buses don’t even have safety belts, so all I can do is dig in and fill the seats with friends.

Columbia Psychological Services has resources for students struggling with eating and body image. To make an appointment, call 212.854.2878.
The moment was still - and
I was in a wrinkle of Rockefeller Plaza and
Kate had blinked away as the sun does on beautiful days
(in beautiful ways)
and I had noticed that the concrete was blue.
So I was alone on the blue concrete and threads
of people were tugging through - tying knots
around the rink and tangling the tree and
I dreamed of a Rockette as I saw them when I was three:
an impossibly tall statue come to life
(marble as skin, red, red lips)
and wondered, as this delicately curved dancer approached me,
through the crowd, looming above, cold and lovely...
Would she trip?
The web was growing thicker, and
imagine what that blue concrete would do to her,
right before her show -
right before her Christmas Spectacular.
The bruises wouldn’t do, the bruises would be blue;
carefully, I stepped down the stairs and weaved to the Lego Store, and
through the glass I saw her, smiling, under a broken Tadj Mahal

—Samia Menon
a cockroach emerges from a pile of golden-leaf glitter.
he wonders if the shiny things he emerged from correspond
to what he will need to survive.
he fucks rationality and devours the reflected light anyways, eating as much as he can
fit into his mouth until he’s satiated. as a consequence,
he dies an agonizing death from the glitter’s poison:
a toxic plastic.
his decomposing corpus is stepped on,
over and over again,
squashed, minced, spread, and delineated
into such miniscule parts that one can no longer discern him from the very glittering
poison that caused his demise.
the glitter gets swept up
(as best as it can be)
in preparation for the next intoxication,
the cockroach amongst it, joining it in its revelry.

—Adam Glusker
I have found myself in many unforeseen circumstances in my time at Columbia: accidentally becoming really good at the Dewey Decimal System, going to 1020 wrapped in a quilt, witnessing a professor contract temporary cyanide poisoning from taking elderberry tincture instead of a flu shot, to name a few. One circumstance I never could have imagined finding myself in is defending Columbia Dining. But here I am, playing devil’s advocate harder than the Exeter boys in your CC section, about to argue that delicious really, truly is in the details.

Columbia Dining is something we love to hate, and I’ll readily admit to being no exception to this. I have been known to compare John Jay bagels to seasoned mattress pads, and Ferris alfredo to its close cousin in the white-substance department. But let’s be real: a lot of that is just talk. When we’re with our friends, it’s easy enough to take a day’s worth of stress and frustration and regret out on the food served here. I know just as well as any the collective catharsis derived from calling a grain bowl a “fugly disappointment,” among other expletives. But when you’re alone in the dining hall with no one to observe you, you definitely enjoy that Ferris pepperoni pizza at least a little bit. Yeah, it’s terrible, but it’s also kind of good. Don’t tell me you haven’t secretly felt fond feelings toward the Action Station as you ascend the Lerner ramps hungry, cold, and tired. What’ll it be today? A stir-fry? A spicy-chicken-wrap-ish-type-thing? Either way, it’s cheesy and hot and, again, kind of good, in a weird and wonderful way. And those drink machines with 18 different kinds of cancer-causing hot-pink sparkling Minute Maid beverages? Don’t pretend you don’t hit that up on the regular.

The point is, Columbia Dining does alright as long as you know what to expect, and maybe that’s what they’ve been trying to tell us all along with their ubiquitous slogan. Delicious is not in the overall quality of the meat and dairy. It’s not in the soups or the salad bar offerings, and it’s certainly not in the general attention to salt and seasoning. But in the context of your busy college life, Columbia Dining is but a minute detail, and given how shitty that busy college life is, Columbia Dining is relatively delicious.

I can recall a night in the deep, dark winter of my freshman year on which I left my evening Spanish class hungry as hell and in the mood for some Ferris cuisine—not merely accepting defeat, but actually craving Ferris. I had learned by then that some food stations should not be touched with a ten-foot pole. But the glass case? A font of potential—and a consistently short line, thanks to its strategic lack of a self-serve option by which one could pick all the berries out of the berry salad). On that particular night, I tried the brie and mango sandwich for the first time, and, dear readers, I seriously enjoyed it. I even added it to my Ferris classics repertoire, which is no easy club in which to earn a spot.

I see you dining hall haters getting seconds—thirds!—at the pasta bar, loading John Jay parmesan into a Ziploc for a midnight snack. So give it up. It’s not getting any better. The brie and mango sandwich, on the other hand? Also not getting any better. But not any worse either! And that, dear reader, is a secret reality that you’d do well to embrace—the most delicious of details.
in the Details?

I have watched *Ratatouille* enough times to know quality food when I see it, and my well-trained palate senses very little deliciousness in Columbia Dining’s details. I eat in the dining halls as much as the next work-study kid who cringes at every $7 Venmo request to pay for party decorations I didn’t even notice. Hell, I’ll pass out at my desk to avoid ponying up for a cup of coffee. But sometimes, even on my near-minimum-wage, part-time salary, I’ll save up for a weekend escape to a more luxurious dining experience—Shake Shack, perhaps—when the details prove less delicious than disgusting.

It should be known that I am a famously pathetic cook, meaning I have absolutely no right to be saying any of this. Columbia Dining could rightly tell me to stick this where the sun doesn’t shine and feed myself, and I’d be hospitalized for malnourishment, poison, or both within a month. Friends and family alike will attest to the fact that any morsel of hand-eye coordination I manage to muster in my everyday life escapes me the moment I set foot in a kitchen. My weeks of studying fluid dynamics and gas laws fail me when it comes to remembering that a pot of water must be covered in order to boil before sunrise. I have exploded my share of microwave dinners, left ovens off when they were supposed to be on (and on when they were definitely supposed to be off), set grease fires, mixed up solid and liquid measuring cups, smashed eggs, broken plates. I once put a fully cooked (by some miracle of God) meal under the running faucet with the dirty dishes. Whenever I enter a kitchen, things somehow start going wrong—even if I’m not the one doing the cooking. Basically, I’ve been cursed by the culinary gods.

And even I, incompetent as I am, know you’re supposed to remove the hair from the mashed potatoes before you serve them. Two years ago, my boyfriend gave me mono and blamed it on a John Jay apple, and I wasn’t even suspicious. When writing poetry, I’ve conjured the pink peony glow of undercooked John Jay chicken and the flecks of Prussian blue in Ferris scrambled eggs. JJ’s is out of chocolate milk as often as Ferris serves country fried steak.

No culinary mishap compares, however, to the scenes I’ve observed in the dining halls. I’ve had chairs stolen out from under me as I tried to sit down, brought another over, and had that one stolen when I looked away. Freshman footballers have helped themselves to seats next to me, spilled lemonade all over me and my food, and left to find somewhere better to sit, abandoning me to their mess. I’ve heard some students lambaste the overworked staff behind the glass over the menu options, and seen others leave plates full of half-eaten food on the tables for someone else to deal with. What’s even less delicious than the dining hall details? Shitty students.

I’ve learned a lot from my Lit Hum readings because I complete them at the last minute during weekly camp-outs on the couches in JJ’s. Quotidian life in the bowels of campus has proven far more revelatory than Augustine’s charming distaste for women and their right to personal liberty. I have seen messes left on those tables suitable for whatever ring of Hell to which Dante condemned the rude-to-service-workers. I have respectfully averted my eyes from emotional breakdowns and witnessed greasy-fingered first dates, all while the black-aproned saints of the JJ’s kitchen mill around, swiping empty cardboard—are they plates? Bowls? Buckets?—and trying not to think about what that sticky stuff on the table really is. No wonder I found a staple in my sushi last week.
With Lidia Yuknavitch

By Billie Forester

Lidia Yuknavitch has written novels, essays, and a memoir, The Chronology of Water, which was a finalist for the PEN Center USA Award for creative nonfiction. She recently released Verge, a collection of short stories that she describes as "a polyphonic love-letter to characters who live in the liminal spaces of their material conditions." Billie Forester, a Staff Writer at the Magazine, spoke with Yuknavitch via email last year.

Content Warning: Yuknavitch's work deals with many sensitive topics, and some of them come up in the interview. This content may be triggering for some readers.

B&W: On your website, you have a list of things that you say have “informed, deformed, and reformed” your writing. The seventh one states: “I believe in art the way other people believe in god.” Have you always held this belief? If not, how did you come to discover your faith in art and discover your voice as a writer?

LY: Well, early on in my life, the “systems” around me broke down, became useless, or brought me directly to injury. For example, my father was our abuser, my “family” fell apart (sister left home, mother an alcoholic, me acting out, father abusive), my so-called religion (Catholic) became an unsafe space (I thought the whole thing was dubious at a young age... all the stories about women and girls kept them quiet and obedient and subservient).

So when I was coming of age in the world and entering young adulthood, I had a nuclear rage in me — a giant energy I didn’t know what to do with. Self-expression in the form of making art saved me from self-destruction (the counter impulse). I found this path around the age I went to college—after I flunked out twice and clawed my way back in—I found this path through painting and drawing and writing. Making images and stories gave me a place to put pain and rage when the world didn’t offer much to me as a girl/woman.

B&W: Within the past several years you have become quite a public figure, especially within the feminist movement. Do you feel that it is important to keep a separation between yourself as an individual and your figure as a prominent writer, or are they one and the same for you?

LY: That is a good question. It’s a little bit of a painful question. The reason is, I have always experienced a RIFT between my public and private self. Perhaps with more therapy and maturity I can heal that rift or integrate more successfully. I am a DEEPLY private person who has chosen a life that requires a LOT of public labor. I wouldn’t say I’m performing something different from who I am when I am doing public labor, but it is labor. When I am at home alone with my family or my art or just sitting around in my underwear I am my deepest form of self. So I suppose where I am at right now at age 55 is: My public labor of art and heart is for others, to help others find their own voices or forms of expression. My private life is where I can fold up and create with abandon. If I could, I would stay inside the artistic process and never come out. But that’s likely not healthy and there are good reasons to come out (the people I love for instance and collaboration).

B&W: You have been very prolific over the past several years, publishing an impressive number of highly ambitious and complex works. What advice do you have for writers trying to stay committed to personal writing in the seeming deluge of academic writing required of college students?

LY: OH MAN. Yes. That is difficult. And yet, partway through getting my Ph.D. in literature, I started to realize that all the theoretical and academic stuff I was required to read and write was also actually a portal, an opportunity space where I might gather more art-making juice. I can see my Ph.D. work inside all of my novels. I can see how the helix made from intellectual pursuits and artistic pursuits made me who I am. So my advice would be don’t make a battle out of it. Make a portal. Also make them let
you do some hybrid projects where you combine academic and creative modes — like criti-fiction. Or hybrid forms of writing. Enough fancy people have books out in the world now where we can ask for that as students.

_B&W:_ I understand that you swam competitively as a child, and even was on the Olympic team, which you document (amongst many other things) in your memoir _A Chronology of Water_. How does your identity as an athlete interact with and/or influence your identity as an artist?

_LY:_ In my athlete years, swimming got me out of the dreaded Oedipal death house; as an older woman, swimming is like a meditative practice for me which helps me not go nuts. Writing made the rest of my life possible when I thought I didn’t want to be alive any longer. I’d say water and writing both brought me back to life.

_B&W:_ You mentioned painting and drawing as well as writing. Do you still make images as well as writing? How do you feel that the art of writing interacts with visual art and other art forms?

_LY:_ If I wasn’t a big chicken I’d produce work that contained both image-play and word-play. For instance I’ve always wanted to create an illuminated manuscript (old school, like Blake). But I’ve very chicken when it comes to my own visual art. My father kind of killed my joy about it so my joy is very private. Maybe when I’m 85 I’ll “risk it.” Ha…I will say this–or I’ve been told this too–my writing is highly visual. I see stories in images and image systems. Likely why I’m such a film junkie. I see narrative.

_B&W:_ You mention that you feel your private time is when you can immerse yourself in the creative process, and also that you have been looking to shift your energies more towards collaboration. Does collaboration feel natural to you or do you have to work in collaborative practices into your creative process?

_LY:_ NO it does NOT feel natural to me because I’m a HARD CORE introvert! Ha… RUN AWAY!!!! Once I’m inside the motion of it though, I love it. It’s as if my body remembers something that I do not. Perhaps it’s a pack or squad feeling.

_B&W:_ After flunking out of college, how did you get the motivation and strength to try again and again and to fight for your education?

_LY:_ I’m not sure it was strength. I think it may have been rage mixed with desire. Rage in terms of what had been done to me and who the culture asks women to be and the desire to write like I was staging a break-out from cultural inscription, or a break-in to retrieve my own heart.

_B&W:_ Do you feel that writing is something you do for yourself that you then share with the world, or do you keep your readers in mind as you write?

_LY:_ I guess I sound like an asshole if I say I don’t think about readers when I write, huh. Sigh. I will say this: I think about trying to create word and story bridges out toward the world. I’m a fundamentally alienated person at heart, and writing helps me imagine that I too am still a part of the world. I’m one of the people working on bridges between us. With legions of other people, mercifully.

_B&W:_ Your retelling of the Joan of Arc was so innovative and made a historical character feel so present and relevant to me as a reader in the present day. How did you encounter this idea? How did your Catholic upbringing inform this novel?

_LY:_ THANK YOU! That book was very important for me to write. Well, I was originally visited by Joan of Arc in a dream. We were standing together outside of my childhood home, which was also on fire. She turned to me and said, “No one is going to save you.” The dream scared me but later in life after I researched the hell out of her and learned everything I could I felt lucky. She was right, of course. I had to get myself out of that house or die. It is a truth that has served me many different times in my life. My literary interest in her when I wrote _BoJ_ had to do with our current Zeitgeist, my concerns about climate change and power systems and my boredom with superhero movies (I love some of them but am weary of the unending narratives and tropes that keep us inside very old and very tired ideas about heroism, gender, identity). We don’t need another hero (thunderdome!!! ha). We need to bring ourselves to life with fierce fire.
Rejecting Mythologies in the Wallach's Contemporary Algerian Art Show

By Lilly Cao

When viewers approach the Wallach Art Museum’s nascent Manhattanville galleries on the sixth floor of the Lenfest Center of the Arts, they are confronted by an expansive painting of three women standing by a rocky landscape. Set against a flat blue and red background reminiscent of Barnett Newman, the rocks and figures are outlined with wavering tan lines, the washy black infills of the women’s clothes revealing the painter’s hand. These two seemingly contradictory styles—panoramic abstraction versus the tactile experiences of daily life—create, it turns out, the central tension in Waiting for Omar Gatlato: Contemporary Art from Algeria and Its Diaspora, on view for free until March 15.

The exhibit amalgamates its name from two distinct narratives: Samuel Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot and Merzak Allouache’s film Omar Gatlato. According to curator Natasha Marie Llorens, both stories reject “European regimes of knowledge” and instead center on their protagonists’ day-to-day lives. Applying this framework to the contemporary history of Algeria, Llorens convincingly collects artworks that mediate this line, challenging both national mythologies and colonial philosophies while emphasizing prosaic experiences through found-object art and vernacular photography.

Amina Menia’s stark photos of commemorative stelae, for example, question the role of nationalist ‘public art’ in undemocratic Algeria, while Sadek Rahim’s carpet fiber, entitled Cube, asserts the advantages of physical experience in a rather literal manner. Likewise, where Sara Sadik satirically investigates the social incongruencies of France and Algeria in the highly conceptual MEKTOUB, Fethi Sahraoui’s Triangles of Views rejects this teleological approach and presents a spontaneous collection of everyday photographs instead. Llorens’ success thus lies in her dual commitment to presenting conceptual and material expressions of her abstract theme.

One of the show’s standout works is Dania Reymond’s Le Jardin d’Essai, a 42-minute film whose title translates to “The Trial Garden.” Following a small cast of people directing and acting in their own miniature movie, Raymond cleverly intersperses the idyllic movie narrative with the uncomfortable realities of the filming process. Tranquil violin music and thoughtful monologues are interrupted by tips from the director, and at the end of the film, the project halts for lack of funding. Set in a colonial-era botanical garden in Algiers, the film reproduces the same intersection of fantasy and reality that occurred during French occupation. The other film in the exhibit, Louisa Babari’s Close-Combat, presents a racing visual and auditory narration of a text by Seloua Luste Boulbina on Frantz Fanon, a welcome inclusion for Columbia sophomores eager to encounter the great anticolonial thinker’s work later this spring. The minimalist flashes of text and markedly high-brow academic language feel out of place among more vernacular pieces, calling into question the place of academia in the realities of daily life.

Waiting for Omar Gatlato is an incredibly important exhibit that both sheds light on often overlooked Algerian narratives and resists the hegemony of European philosophy that our Core prides itself on. Where Llorens might fall short is not in her rigor or comprehensiveness, but in her small-scale arrangement choices: At one point, she appears to divide two components of the same artwork by Lydia Ourahmane, bewilderingly placing each part on near opposite ends of the exhibit. But a few odd arrangements ought not stop you from making the short trek uptown.
Told Between Puffs

In which our hero searches for a roommate.

BY SADIA HAQUE

As January turned into February and students, at last, began to settle into the second semester, there was one thing on everyone’s mind: next semester’s living situation. For many, this meant trying to convince their friends to move into the same dorm building. For others, it was fighting for the chance to get the ideal single with a private bathroom, kitchen, and fireplace. Verily Veritas, however, had completely missed this memo. Having returned from a winter break spent basking in the remaining glories of the semi-burnt Amazon, he was more focused on acclimating to New York’s bitter cold and the United States’ particular brand of fascism. Yet, as he sat through his morning class, he couldn’t help but overhear his peers’ anxious whispers about housing.

“Am I supposed to already have that figured out? he wondered thoughtfully as his professor rambled on about the trauma she received from watching her cat spit out a hairball as a child. When the class ended, Verily resolved to find out what everyone else was thinking.

He turned around and inquired of the disheveled first-year behind him: “I ask you with the utmost sincerity to divulge to me your future living arrangements, if it is not too arduous of a request.” The boy quickly packed his bag and ran out of the lecture hall.

A relatively generous student who had witnessed the dismissal walked up to Verily, put her arms around him, and said, “Well if you ask me, you should look for a room in Wien. At least, that’s what I’m doing. It’s nothing fancy, but it gets the job done.”

Verily looked at her with a mixture of suspicion and intrigue. “Does Wien have options for doubles? I currently reside in a single and have recently determined that the solitary life is no life at all.”

“Um, I think they have some, but don’t you think you should find a roommate first?” she asked, then paused. “Unless, you know, you’re cool with anyone.”

“You are right! I must find a roommate,” Verily proclaimed, and he marched out of the building and onward along the snowy walkways. He thought aloud, his words echoing in the blustery wind: “Now, the question is, how do I find a compatible roommate among the thousands of petulant, undeserving students who attend this institution?”

As he pondered his dilemma, he spied a flyer on the ground and screamed, “Eureka!” He quickly made his way to Butler to transform his idea into reality.

After printing out five dozen copies of his flyers, he planted himself near the Sundial, passing them out to unassuming strangers. Most people ignored him, but many were drawn to his clarion call: “I REQUIRE A HALF-DECENT COMPANION! UPSTANDING CITIZENS, APPLY!”

Finally, after hours of rejections, someone decided to give Verily a chance.

“Are you chill with anything?” asked The Boy Who Decided to Give Verily a Chance. “Cause I’m pretty chill when it comes to the roommate thing. I just need another person in the room to be able to sleep. And I do a ton of coke every morning.”

“There are no requirements,” Verily stated. “Although you must be willing to donate shelf space to my library and extensive candle collection.”

“Sounds cool! We should do it. Which dorm are you thinking of moving into?”

“This is my first foray into this realm.” Verily replied. “Although I’ve heard excellent things about Wien. We shall live there.”

His new roommate began to protest, arguing that two seniors could do better than a Wien double, but Verily had no interest in listening. As he walked toward Lerner, following the path of his appetite, a thought came upon him: “Oh, dear! I haven’t a clue what my new companion is named!”
STUDY. EAT. SLEEP.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE CAN ONLY HELP YOU WITH ONE OF THEM.

If it’s fresh, and in season, it’s right here at Westside Market. From perfectly picked produce, to perfectly aged cheese, to perfectly prepared hot dishes, catering platters and so much more. That’s what our customers have come to expect at any of our Westside Markets. And that’s what we deliver (and we also really do deliver - right to your door). Add the most attentive and friendly customer service you could want, and it all adds up to Westside Market.

So if you want great taste, look no further than Westside Market.

PLEASE COME VISIT ANY OF OUR SIX MANHATTAN LOCATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2980 Broadway</td>
<td>212.292.3367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9589 Broadway</td>
<td>212.386.6022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 Seventh Avenue</td>
<td>212.387.1771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 Third Avenue</td>
<td>212.253.8400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185 Third Avenue</td>
<td>212.254.0017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1407 Lexington Ave</td>
<td>212.348.2382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEW TO 110TH STREET LOCATION

MADE TO ORDER

WESTSIDE MARKET GRILL

BURGERS, FRIES & MORE