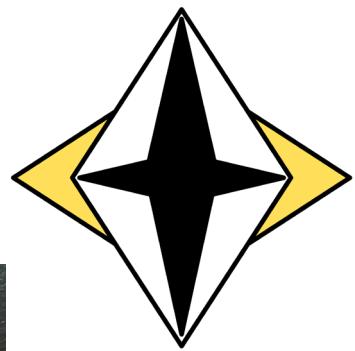


The Black Star



Journal



The Valediction Issue

Issue #08

April 19, 2024

From Us To You

In our final issue of the year, as we prepare to say goodbye to friends and classes, and for some, to four years at Brown, we come together in reflection. This year, the *Black Star Journal* has seen immense growth. Since September, our masthead and publications have doubled, and our role as a platform for Black student voices has elevated immensely. Through strong and sensitive prose, poetry, and journalism, we continue to showcase the need for our platform for Black voices at Brown. We are so proud of our writers' steadfast commitment to broadening our reach and sharing their stories.

Though reflection can often be somber, with this issue, we celebrate. We celebrate our seniors, who have given so much time and care to founding and building the *Journal*. We are so, so excited to see where you go from here. We celebrate our staff whose drive to create allows our legacy to live on. And finally, we celebrate our readers. Thank you for all your support this year.

From us to you,

Naomi and Destiny

Naomi Umlauf
Destiny Wilson

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Thank You

Words by Amiri Nash
Art by Martine Niwe

I will always remember my time at the *Black Star Journal*. When I think back, time seems to have passed instantaneously. All of it went by with one gust of sudden wind. One day, an idea, and, *like magic*, a newspaper. I was nineteen and a sophomore. When I first had the idea to start a Black publication, I knew immediately that I needed Keiley — who I hadn't yet met in real life — to be my right-hand woman. The feeling was instinctual and natural, and I've never been more glad that I trusted my gut. After writing a piece for Keiley's blog, *Maythid*, during the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, I knew that Keiley was committed to facilitating spaces for Black writers and creatives to explore their ideas. I wanted to learn from her and work towards something new together. Keiley is like no other. I will always remember our early chats in the Ratty, our brainstorming sessions in the Brown Center for Students of Color, the impossibly late nights in the Harambee House lounge — the old one in Chapin House. I will always hold close to me the memories that are just mine and hers to keep; our shared process of dreaming to life a space for Black students to explore their talents as writers, creatives, and thinkers. The BSJ would never have been possible without her.

There are few words to describe the amount of joy I get from sitting in the back of BSJ meetings as a senior, and seeing so many faces, some familiar and others unfamiliar, who all want to share their gifts with the world through the BSJ. I can not describe how happy it makes me to see Naomi and Destiny, the current Editors-in-Chief, running meetings and taking the newspaper to places I could not imagine. I have watched them grow from new staff at the publication to running it entirely. I am so proud of them, and all of the staff. I am so grateful to all who have helped out — students, alumni, and faculty — the publication is here because of them and their presence. I am grateful for the help of Stages of Freedom Bookstore as I learned to navigate Providence as a guest standing on the shoulders of many Black

artists from Rhode Island who came before me. I am grateful for those who critiqued the publication and pushed me to become a better leader. Although sometimes challenging and painful, all of it has made me who I am today. Most importantly, all the people who contributed their creative labor to the publication, and gave the BSJ a heartbeat. I have so much love in my heart for the family I've come to know as a Black student at Brown. The BSJ has been the highlight of my college experience, and the joy of my life.

There is no better feeling than reflection. I remember waking up before the sun rose on print days, texting and calling Keiley, the excitement rising and falling through my body at once. I can still feel the cold air hugging my face, standing outside of dining halls with Grace, handing out newspapers to anyone who would take them. I remember having James carry the papers up the Harambee stairs after they were delivered, his grounding spirit an anchor in my life. I can still hear the late-night phone calls with friends and family, asking for advice. I was so nervous, but every time I was afraid I was going to fall, I was picked up by someone I loved. All of the small favors, and little things, have led to this big and beautiful project.

Knowing that these are my last few days to experience the Black Star Journal as a student at Brown is a bittersweet feeling. I will miss it so much. I will miss all the good feelings. But I know that I will take them with me wherever I go, and I have a tremendous amount of gratitude and love in my heart. I am so proud of the work put into the BSJ. I am so happy to remember all of those moments this way: a flash of light, a fast and quick burst of joy, a long and slow awakening, a dream, a beginning — and now, for me — an ending.

Thank you all so much for having me. I've had so much fun.



The Black Star Journal

The Valediction Issue
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April 19, 2024

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Aisosa Idahosa

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The Black Star Journal

The existence of your beauty
dripping down my soul
fills my mind with peace.

Striking me with your attention
invokes an increased awareness of my being
and consumes my thoughts with your presence.

Your voice drags me across a room,
conjuring a childish smile
and resulting in great inner turmoil.

Laughter that feeds the room
and pulls a blanket of warmth
over my body.

Colors surround you,
alluding to a picture of us
that could never be.

Your joy nourishes mine
and removes all logic,
while a wave of endless possibilities crashes into my heart.

Aura

Your kind and attentive gaze
leads me to crave your embrace,
a want I can never satisfy.

Our devotedly formed attachment
that seems filled with affection
for its creation.

Eyes that draw me into you
and hold me there
while controlling my every breath.

It is as if someone took hours and hours to draw you
and you were written just for me.

Words by Sanai Rashid

When I think of the love I hope to someday share with my partner, I think of my parents.

The sort of love that is as sweet and sticky as prunes in July.

The sort of love where laughter replaces tears.

The sort of love that stands out like a lighthouse on the seaside, offering a place to call home.

The sort of love that returns.

As children, one of the first things we learn how to do is mimic. To imitate the actions we see before us, learn from them, and adopt them into our own routines.

As we grow older, we begin to understand that it is impossible to ever completely mimic anyone. That the reality we possess can never be a carbon copy of somebody else's story when we are the ones replacing the ink cartridges of our existence, printing new colors into our lives.

However, while we may not be able to replicate, we can integrate the inspiration we find in others into ourselves.

Instead of using a copy machine, we can use the printer to draw out the different images and words that we can cut, glue, and paste into the collage of ourselves.

So, when I think of the love I hope to someday share with my lover, I draw from my parents. But I also draw from my mother's parents, Mimi and Papa, and my father's parents, Ummi and Baba. And soon in my mind when I think of love, I no longer see pink and red hearts, but instead I see a milky way.

A collection of dust, stars, and gas, the fragments of those who I love. Those who have displayed to me what love can be, for me to one day create my own bend in the time continuum and sketch my love story into the generations of Black love that have come before. The type of Black love that rustled in the stalks of the sugar plantation, the booths of a diner down South, the sheets of a sticky project building, to let me sit on my bed on a hill in a city my ancestors may have never even knew of to ponder the question of their love.

(A Wednesday night. Over Zoom, she listens to three stories of love, two humans in each box. In the upper left corner: Ummi and Baba in their apartment in Brooklyn that smells of incense, Smokey Robinson albums, and couscous. In the next box: Mimi and Papa in their home in Long Island, NY that smells of leather couches, garlic powder, and fresh paint. Below: Mommy and Daddy in their home only a couple of blocks away, that smells like lemon hand lotion, sage, and new coffee table books. They talk, she listens, and records.)

Baba: And the question was, *Would you like to come to a dance with me on Friday?*, but you don't have to give me the answer now.

Ummi: He came over and we just sat on the stoop. And we were talking for hours and hours, you know?

Papa: Just by fate, when I left my brother's house coming out, maybe two hours later, she was coming out to the store at the same time and we ran into each other again.

Mimi: Listen I was like, I don't even know this guy! Going into the car with him, hmpf. But then we exchanged numbers.

Daddy: It was like a pre-summer program. And I was taking extra classes. Just for fun, I guess. I didn't need any extra classes.

Mommy: Until, Auntie Crystal saw him one summer a few years later and gave me his phone number so we re-connected. We spoke until like three or four in the morning about life and everything that we did from high school to now me going into law school.

Mommy: I was gonna say, Sanai this is cool, because you kind of get to see love in different spaces.

Papa: Valley Stream State Park.

Mimi: Guyana.

Ummi: The stoop.

Daddy: Kites.

Papa: But I guess I'm saying that with Black love comes a lot of perseverance in struggles that you have to overcome. But we do it so naturally that some people don't even know that we're going through it.

Ummi: We have a rich culture that is ingrained in love, you know?

Mommy: I think there's a difference about Black love because for so much of our history, it was the thing that we own that we had for ourselves that we could share without being directed. It was also black love that sustained us through so much hardship. So when you say *I love you*, we are talking about what is present.

Mimi: It's rooted after time. It's rooted in the ground for each other.

Baba: We love each other so much as a people.

Ummi: Because Black love is a conference, a whole family, you know, and whatever you want for yourself, you want for your family.

Mommy: So much of how we make our movements is so that you see how to carry this further.

Daddy: Love is generated and appreciated.

Mommy: It is like small things; like Daddy calling me from Chip City, and saying hey, *do you want a chocolate chip cookie?*, or just coming home with one of those things.

Ummi: I know the struggles my parents went through.

Mimi: No matter the seasons, because they're going to be seasons of fruitfulness and seasons of barenness, you know that person's Got Your Back.

Daddy: So we make sure that all these things that we are doing, we are talking about it and we are living it. And we are seeing our children become the recipients of that.

(The Zoom meeting ends. Forty minutes have passed. Because perhaps no amount of time is enough to talk about love. Perhaps love is in a constant bake of time, an amalgamation of stories, histories, kisses, and pecks that make the heart-shaped sweet potato pie in the oven. Generations upon generations will walk by, see the glow of the oven light, watch it bake, poke the pie with a stick, watch it bake, watch it bake, and watch it bake until the scent of love fills the room. You put it back into the oven. Just ten more minutes should be enough.)

A Heart Within A Heart Within A Heart: Three Stories of Black Love

Daddy: I said I liked reading books.

Mommy: It was like the first or second week that I had orientation at Brooklyn Law School. He said he could meet me at the bookstore downtown, Borders Bookstore.

Daddy: I went there once before. I didn't really look at any books. I liked the apple pie. No, nuh-huh no. It was blueberry pie, it was blueberry pie.

Baba: We laugh a lot. We laugh a lot. We have fun together. And we dance together. And we watch TV together.

Mimi: We get up in the morning, and we ask what are your plans today? What do you want to eat? What are you going to do? I'm always saying, Lonnie, where are you? And he's always saying, Jackie, where are you?

Baba: Even the neighbors of the building say, y'all our favorite couple.

Words by Kevin Carter

The Time Is Now: *Our Generation's Call to Address Black Men's Mental Health*

Our generation is in a unique position when it comes to mental health. Our progressive attitude toward this topic has motivated our efforts to destigmatize mental health, especially amongst men, giving us a pivotal opportunity to redress the taboo that's been built around mental health for centuries. However, at the same time, we are facing mental health issues at a rate far greater than the generations preceding us, despite them being deliberately evasive of the topic. For this reason, we are widely perceived as the most depressed generation, and this can be attributed to school shootings, social media, and the pandemic, to name a few factors. This title holds especially true for males in our generation. In the U.S., men die from suicide at a rate four times higher than that of women (National Library of Medicine). Although this is a shocking statistic, I would expect that many people wouldn't be surprised by it. Here's why.

Men's mental health

As a man, the stigma around mental health is produced by deeply ingrained gender norms, which tell us that men should be stoic and rational, bound to our innate obligation to protect and provide. Within these stagnant walls of manhood, there is no room for emotions, and so we as men are taught to discard them at a very young age. Initially, being taught to be tough and resilient isn't a harmful lesson, but when this notion of enduring physical pain transfers into the notion that we must also sequester our feelings, it becomes fatally detrimental. This is a prime example of toxic masculinity, which, for example, manifests in the belief that boys shouldn't cry. Once again, it seems harmless when it's in the context of a sad movie, or losing a game. But when you experience a tragedy that warrants emotional expression, this internalized belief dismantles the grieving process, creating a much deeper problem.

Black men's mental health

As a Black man, there is an aspect of intersectionality that applies to these struggles. Race acts as a multiplier to all of these gender-induced stressors, as Black men in particular face a greater expectation to meet masculine criteria, and this places a heavy burden on their mental health. This is evident through statistics that show that suicide is the third leading cause of death in Black men ages 15-24, and Black men are four times more likely to die from suicide than Black women (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities). At the end of the day, this is only a representation of those who experienced the worst outcome of poor mental health; countless others have dealt with mental health issues that aren't accounted for by these numbers. Furthermore, the mental health stressors of being Black aren't limited to the stressors of being a man; they also include racial stressors such as systemic racism and historical trauma. Due to systemic racism, Black men experience disparities in household income, which in many cases forces them to take on loans for higher education and accrue student debt, a substantial stressor for college students who may feel as though the need to pay their loans outweighs the importance of their mental health. On the other hand, historical trauma from centuries of slavery and oppression causes Black men to be more susceptible to anxiety, depression, and PTSD. When combined with adverse environmental conditions such as growing up in a poor neighborhood or single-parent household, Black men are faced with circumstances that are conducive to mental health problems. And yet, there still are various barriers inhibiting them from receiving the treatment they need, like incompetent health insurance, cultural mistrust of health professionals, and misdiagnoses from health professionals. (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities). However, the biggest barrier lies in the stigma that prevents Black men from even recognizing the problem at hand and the need for help.

Black men's mental health at Brown

Black men at Brown are no exception to these conditions impacting mental health. Talib Reddick ('26), a voice who's contributed to the discourse around men's mental health at Brown, spoke on his experience as a Black man at Brown dealing with mental health. He described feeling ambivalent towards his positionality as a Black man at Brown.

"On the one hand, there's a feeling of accomplishment, and on the other hand there's a feeling of loneliness," he points out. "We managed to make it through this extremely selective process, but at what cost when this institution does not have much room for people who look like us?"

Talib is confronted by this mental conflict every time he passes through the Main Green, which evokes a bittersweet sensation. Initially, this is a part of campus that envelops you in the beauty, history, and prestige of Brown University. But for Black men, this is accompanied by the grim knowledge of how this university was built off of the exploitation of our ancestors. It is hard to make sense of this alone, and this is why Talib stresses the importance of improving the bonds and support systems between Black men on campus.

Talib's words resonated with me deeply. My personal experience has been an emotional rollercoaster, and for a long time I downplayed what I was going through and refrained from seeking help with the belief that it would make me less of a man. But after having candid conversations with friends and family I began to realize the importance of mental health, and the need for me to invest in it the same way I do physical health. Since then, I've embraced practices that cater to my mental health such as journaling, meditation, and even counseling.

Unfortunately, there is no panacea or perfect method to dealing with mental health issues as this will vary from person to person. However, one initiative that our generation must capitalize on while we have so much traction behind mental health is preventative solutions. American Psychological Association CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr. preaches that instead of focusing on treatment, there should be a more upstream approach made to address the existing conditions causing mental health problems. We should strive to transform these adverse environments into spaces that nurture the mental health of Black men (American Psychological Association). This means that if our generation truly aims to spearhead a movement for mental health, we must focus on the roots of these problems, digging out the weeds of toxic masculinity and racism so that Black men can blossom into holistically healthier individuals.

The Student Body's Main (Green) Struggle for Justice and Unity

Words by David Jesse Mathis

Throughout history, protests and other forms of collective action have been a catalyst for change, but also for building solidarity and even lasting friendships between the members of movements. Movement builders have had to create these friendships and close connections in order to protect themselves from oppression and effectively create change. Here at Brown, the campus climate has shifted so much in recent years that activism has become a central component of the environment, and it has been this activism that has simultaneously created division and unity.

Aspects of this activist work have made me feel fearless. Surrounded by those fighting for a cause I care so deeply about, I've been inspired, but more importantly, felt connected to other students through advocacy. Over the fall semester, coalitions were built on shared conviction, trust, and a deeply held belief that we students could create change. As time passed on throughout the first semester, I found myself and others through the unity of protest, and the outpouring of passion that created a force for change, but also a collection of people who are united within and beyond these actions. But these same protests and organizations that struggle for the cause of Palestinian freedom and justice, specifically, have also created division and tensions within the greater community here at Brown, with students disagreeing fundamentally and ideologically. Because of the genuine emotional investment in the well-being of all of those in Palestine and Israel, any and every decision made by students and the administration surrounding it has had an incredible impact on much of our student body.

Our campus wasn't always this active. Throughout much of the pandemic and the following years, student protest and activism was less prevalent due to collective isolation. But now, being an activist is more accessible than ever at Brown, with increased involvement leading to greater controversy and polarization but also shared joy and community. As a freshman, this campus climate has been my introduction to Brown and has simultaneously been an exciting and intimidating welcome. My ways of creating friends and forming relationships have morphed and shifted due to protest, as it is one of

the ways in which I have found community and felt like a part of something greater at Brown. This can be true for students on all sides of the activist and non-activist spectrum.

The diverse ways in which protest comes into being, whether a sit-in, boycott, rally, teach-in, or silent demonstration are all innately the same. They are intrinsically tuned to create actions and feelings of solidarity, as those who engage in civil disobedience must support each other through times of greater risk, and know that supporting one another can also create a greater force of momentum and impact around the movement. Even the inclusion of many Black students in our school that we see today would not be possible without protest, specifically the 1968 walkout and 1975 occupation of University Hall. This represents a parallel through time and space to the environment we see on campus today when students are fighting for the rights of those millions of miles away, as our concept of justice expands across physical and national boundaries and borders.

But where these protests often occur has a great deal to do with this building of community in and of itself. The Main Green is a central feature of campus which is used in many different ways. Between lounging, loving, and joking conversations, study sessions, and all kinds of beautiful and poignant moments, the Main Green is part of what makes Brown unique. At the Main Green, the student body comes together to experience individual and collective parts of their lives. With events like the recent solar eclipse, the annual April 20th tradition, and the Spring Weekend concert, the Main Green is used to create joy and unity for all students. This centers our student body and lets us celebrate good times together, even as division and pain are extremely prevalent in our university.

The Main Green also connects Brown's physical North and South campus. This representation of the Main Green presents itself both as a spiritual and physical one, creating many kinds of unity for all of us, and being used as a space that all students have the privilege and opportunity to enjoy. The Main Green is built on and continually creates joy, justice, peace, mayhem, and so much more for our students at Brown University.

An ode to my mother

Words by Rohey Jasseh

An ode to my mother

to understand my feelings for my mother you must know

she was born in a land still under occupation

she lived in streets flooded so brilliantly with blood in the name
of salvation

she bathed with the martyrs of her family on their last days
known alive

memorialized her friends in the same breath she swore allegiance
to the government that killed

them

Does she know any better than the life she has lived?

now, when she screams, i must question

if i can be upset with a girl who just learned the power of her
words

In essence this is an ode to my mother

it may not sound like it but it is

our love has always been painful and tender

Suffocating and refreshing

*When she called me days ago, now when I am miles away from the
strength of her judgment and the pain in her eyes, i understand my
love for her so potently*

in this way this is an ode to all mothers like mine

grief

shaking,
my mother turned down a road
Fear guided her hands
calloused with guilt not hers

Not mine
The boy down the street died in front of her eyes
Fox news says black on black crime is the issue
Fox news says black bodies burn but we pour the gasoline

Hands pressed into the soil, he died
Mother weeps

My mother says
She grieves for her
For mothers that never get to be

There lives no line
Between her and theirs
pain knows no boundary

Feelings that muddle into loose knots
Trappings of one, two, three broken souls

'Here' she says
'We lay them down here'

Grief carried us, i know

Speech

I am sick of hearing my own voice
Filled with anguish
With passion
With power
It seems no one else hears anything

But i do, i hear my cries
My fears
My dreams
But dreams are nothing without calluses

This is where girl learns to think for herself
Surly, little girl does not know anything
Little girl does not know freedom
Does not know unconditional love
Does not know safety
But girl has always known the sound of her own voice

Quiet as it is, I imagine my voice as my grandmothers
Wrapping round me, firm and constant
I hear her when the uncertainty runs deep
Reminding me to never forfeit my tongue

How this tongue has protected us through generations
of pain, through death painted barbed wire around our
throats
Daring us to speak louder, louder we are
Oh how this tongue lives in me
In my own voice
Restless to be heard

Monopoly Baby

Words by Nelsa Tiemtoré

reader: "I am having a hard time wrapping my mind around an event that happened. Someone hurt me deeply but I can't seem to find ways to stop blaming myself for what happened. It's like a recurring nightmare playing on repeat time and time again...."

The journey starts like this: pick your monopoly piece.
 Fastforward: you're halfway through the game and
 you got 5 hot new properties along the way
 dear _____, you know what your name is
Take 1 step back
 actually you don't deserve my acknowledgement
 as you will never know of the punishment—oh the punishing
 that you bestowed upon me for 5 months now—oh the crying
Take 2 steps back
 you know what you did...no contact, but the damage wasn't compact
 it was expansive elusive ever growthing and looming
Take 4 steps back
 scars that cut so deep into my soul, now manifesting
 as physical aches and pains they are forever growing
 aches and pains that continuously bruise and bruise again and again
 a cut, then, a bruise, then a scab that peels—oh the peeling
Take 8 steps back
 but i know the skin peeling is a sign of my healing
Take 4 steps forward
 peeling back the layers to reflect on the essentials
 why, how, when, who, and why?
 and most importantly why—oh the questioning
 why me? why you? why just why?
 echoes of why thunder through my core
 but i find no answers as i cry
 my brain cannot imagine a why
 but i know that you can
 you were the why
Go to jail card...
 but i can't seem to get it through my head
 little things serve as reminders that bite and sting
 the thorn on a rose, when the phone is ringing
 when a friend makes a joke, when i'm stretching
 — all reminders
You're still stuck in jail
 oh wait, didn't he commit a crime?
Stop! Get back to the playing board
We're not talking about real life here
So you're still stuck in jail
and oops you've lost all 5 properties
 i'm on a journey to the healing front
 the imaginary line between my why and your why
 the meadow in which i can be freed of
 the labor of carrying this pain...it disappears
 and we can all be happier here
 but for now i'm playing the wrong game
 i happen to be stuck in jail in monopoly
 and he got to walk away free

Art by El Boveda



dear reader,

"I cannot begin to imagine what you have experienced and what you are going through currently, but know that this is not the end. You can heal and rebuild. Do not give those that have caused you harm power by blaming yourself for their actions. You deserve peace and while the path to said peace may be long, it is not impossible. Every trail ends at some point and you can get yourself on the right path, even if you have been on the wrong one. Eventually, you will find your way back to you"

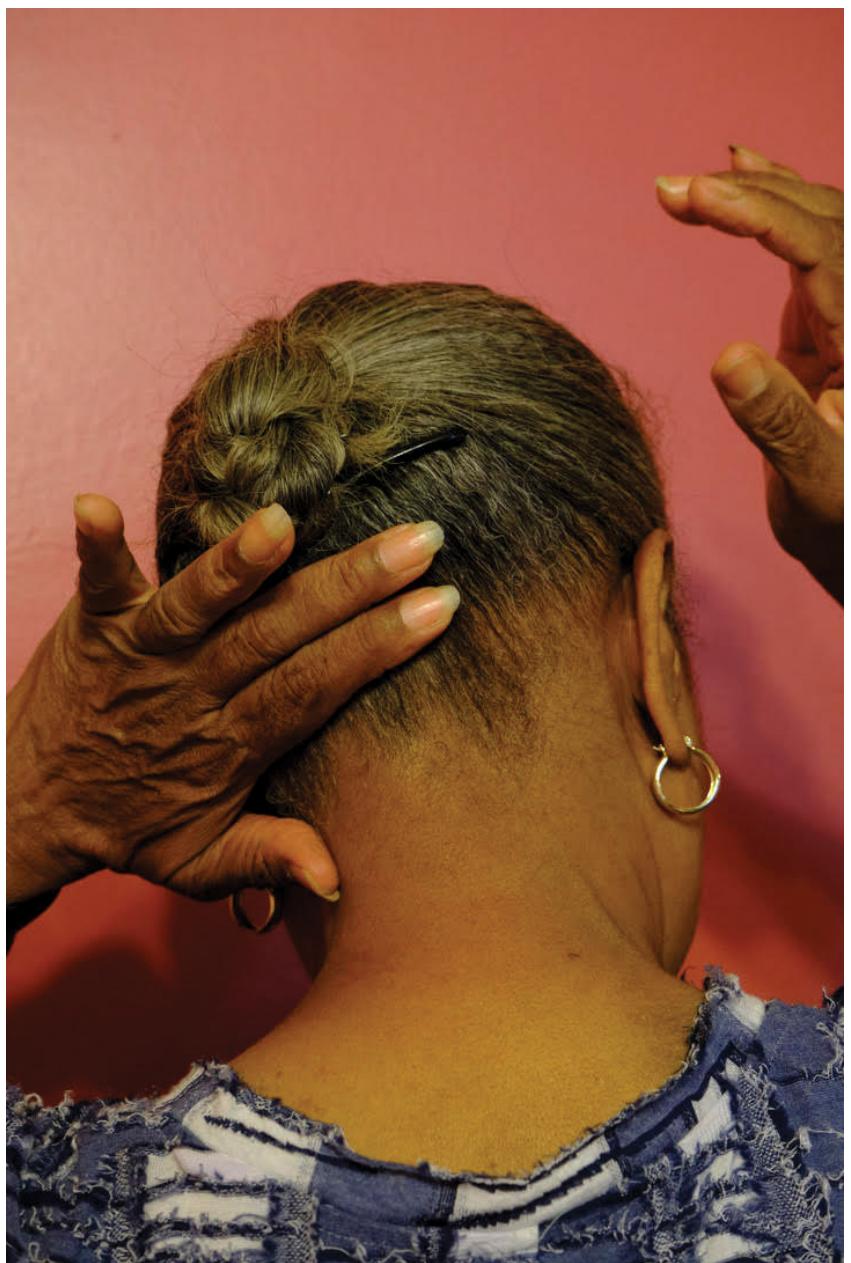
Reflections



“Boy”



“Mimi”



Art by Keiley Thompson

state of becoming

I am not many

or any

of the things that I say I am when I say I am those things.

I am the opposite of everything and

the absence of nothing and

the thing you can't quite put your finger on because

you can't remember her name

And it's slipped right out of your grasp

And you're reaching anyway

I am not a writer much these days

because I recycle old words

I used to say when I thought that I was smart.

now I am a copycat trying to be clever

chasing each letter like it will lead me to gold.

I am not a friend much most times

because no one else is home as much as I am.

So the phone rings

and the playground swings move all on their own

no push, no pull, no tugs.

I am not a girl very often

because I am something of a blob

made of bones and squishy insides that

clench when I think for too long

about being my mother's daughter.

tunne]

i was waiting for you at the end of the

[the time i spend here
 f o r g o t t e n
 h o p i n g
 to know when
 the light]

waiting for the light when it turns
 on, it'll turn on, and the light will
 know the darkness that i bring from
 the start of the

Rhode Island Must Ban Legacy Admissions

Words by Tristan Ward

Last year, the Supreme Court made a momentous decision on the continuation of Affirmative Action regarding race in college admissions. In a 6-3 decision, the conservative majority of the Supreme Court decided it was time to retire the practice of race-conscious admissions that sought to right the wrongs of the past. The goal of race-conscious admission practices was to ensure that qualified people of color weren't immediately stopped at the door due to their race. Race is another factor in the holistic admission process utilized by public and private college admission officers to assess an applicant's candidacy for admission adequately. Affirmative Action stemmed from Lyndon B. Johnson's Executive Order 11246, which posited that there couldn't be any discrimination regarding ethnicity, color, religion, and sex, which was added later. Thus, some college institutions implemented a quota system for historically underrepresented students, which was challenged and ultimately gutted in the Supreme Court case Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke. However, the Supreme Court would allow universities to utilize race as one of many factors in college admission. This admissions practice was the status quo up until now, ultimately leaving universities to figure out how to comply with the law and leaving qualified minorities' futures in limbo. There is evidence that minority students will eventually be harmed in this process because the University of California system ended the practice, and minority enrollment dropped drastically even with recruitment practices implemented to attract high-achieving Black and Hispanic students. This decline included students who were very qualified for admission at California's competitive public schools instead of choosing less competitive universities because fewer students looked like them, which hurt their earning potential.

Since Affirmative Action was banned on the national level, the same scenario that played out in California will most likely repeat itself across the board. This means high-achieving Black and Hispanic students will inevitably feel ostracized, unable to see themselves represented on campus. Additionally, many high-achieving Black and Hispanic students won't consider competitive universities due to the lack of diversity on campus following the ruling.

More importantly, it will most likely be challenging for Black and Hispanic students to be accepted to university since universities are looking to follow the law of the land, which has a lot of gray area. The banning of race-conscious admissions won't just be far-reaching in the racial makeup of universities but also in the racial makeup of the professional world where universities, especially competitive universities, are feeders. Since the Supreme Court banned racial-conscious admission, one would believe that universities would ban their legacy admission practice, in their admission processes since they provide preferential treatment to certain groups. Legacy in college admissions considers whether the student has a familial connection to the university. Private universities, especially top universities, typically utilize legacy admissions. According to the New York Times, a legacy student is four times more likely to earn admission at a competitive university than a student with the same academic credentials that is not a legacy. If students come from the top 1%, they are five times more likely to gain admission to a competitive university. In addition, a large percentage of legacy students are wealthy and are white, so this practice inherently advantages those who have economic means and disproportionately hurts people of color.

In light of the Supreme Court banning race-conscious admissions, Brown recently made a significant decision regarding their legacy admission practices. They decided to continue the practice of considering applicants' connection to Brown. Their reasoning is that applicants with connections to the University tend to have strong academic credentials, decide to go to Brown, and continue to foster Brown loyalty, pride, and ideals. They also posit that removing Legacy can hurt people of color who have graduated from Brown previously. This reasoning is inherently flawed. Brown receives more qualified applicants than they have spots for and though there are people of color who are already advantaged because they've obtained a Brown degree, the vast majority of people of color don't have one. Given that more people of color lack a Brown degree than possess one, should children of Brown degree holders receive an admission advantage over children of non-degree holders?" I am African American and I want to provide my future children with all the advantages and opportunities to succeed. Even though I would like them to have an advantage in the admission process, it is not fair. Brown's only sound argument is that legacy students are likely to accept their admission offer, but can't Brown sacrifice the possibility of more students declining their admission offer in the pursuit of equity?

Instead, I argue that the real reason why Brown is still "evaluating" this admission practice is that it encourages alumni to continue supporting the university and ultimately will increase donations from Brown alumni. It is a win-win for both the University and the applicant's family, but it harms non-legacy students, especially low-income students and students of color. Brown even acknowledges this in their report, stating that if they ended the legacy practice, there could be benefits for low-income and first-generation students.

In reality, Brown likely has no interest in taking any action to eliminate legacy admissions even though it benefits a class of people who are already privileged. Brown is a private university, or in other words, it's a corporation first and an educational establishment second. Its goals aren't to serve the public's interests but rather to serve its interests. Brown will only make the admission change if the drawbacks of the legacy admission practice outweigh the benefits. For example, if Brown receives fewer donations or applicants due to their admission practice, they would likely make the change because it hurts their bottom line. In contrast, a minority of Brown students protesting Brown to change their admission practices would likely not affect the evaluation of Brown's legacy admission process. There may be an exception to this rule: Wesleyan University, a private University that recently stopped considering "legacy" in its admission practices after the Supreme Court decision. It is commendable that Wesleyan took this stance while many of its private peer institutions didn't take the same stance because there is more to less than there is to gain.

This is why America's working class mustn't leave it up to universities, especially competitive private colleges, to decide based on legacy admission. University officials will continuously pursue what is in the best interest of their University instead of what is fair for all students attempting to earn a coveted seat. If the government deemed that Affirmative Action was unfairly advantaging certain groups in admission processes, then it would be negligent for them not to take action regarding legacy admissions, which is quite clearly advantaging an already privileged group - legacies. This isn't a radical solution. Colorado and Virginia banned legacy admissions statewide for public universities. There is also a bill in the Connecticut legislature, Senate Bill 5034, which has gained significant traction and will ban legacy admissions in both public and private universities. There has been pushback from most colleges except for Wesleyan and the chancellor system Connecticut State College and University. Even the University of Connecticut, a public land grant university that doesn't even utilize the legacy admission practice, pushed back on the bill because they believe it would infringe on the University's autonomy. Jeremiah Quinlan, the dean of admission and Financial aid at Yale University, an Ivy League University, was staunchly against the bill's passage. In addition to stating that universities should have autonomy on all fronts in making decisions regarding their affairs and how this decision could lead to a slippery slope against academics, he also added, that it doesn't tackle the crux of the issue, which is helping and providing resources to disadvantaged students so they succeed in school and beyond, regardless of their post-secondary plans.

I have two responses to this. First, the United States has already shown that it infringes on the autonomy of the freedom of universities with the Supreme Court ruling on race-conscious admissions, which will significantly impact the diversity of the class, so there is a precedent of federal intervention in university affairs. Additionally, the federal government only intervened in the Affirmative Action case because the plaintiffs asserted and the majority of Justices agreed that Affirmative Action was discriminatory even though the aims of race-conscious admissions weren't discriminatory at all. Legacy admissions are inherently discriminatory practices where one group is given preference over the rest of the applicants, and as a result, the federal or state governments must step in as well. As Democratic Connecticut state senator Derek Slap stated in his reasoning in his endorsement of Senate Bill 203, if two students are equal in every aspect, the students with legacy status are six times more likely to gain admittance. So, if that is the case, Quinlan's points fall because legacy students have an advantage in the process, even controlling for grades and test scores. Therefore, universities like Yale must have ulterior motives for accepting these students at such high rates. These reasons were mentioned before, but the largest one is donations. That said, Quinlan is correct that the education system in Connecticut is inherently flawed and needs to be fixed and invested in. Still, these two issues aren't mutually exclusive. Two things can be true: legacy admissions and CT education need to be addressed to pursue equity.

In light of the aforementioned inequitable nature of legacy admissions, Brown's decision to keep their legacy admission practice is wrong, especially at a period where race-conscious admissions are illegal. We can't count on Brown to act; instead, we must depend on the people's will. We must make our voices heard to Rhode Island legislators to follow in the footsteps of the Connecticut legislature so college admissions can be fairer for everyone.

So, Just How Many Cops Does it Take to Make Our Subways Safer?

Words by Karma Selsey

In early March, New York Governor Kathy Hochul deployed 1,000 state police and National Guard members to subway stations across New York City. This was done to mitigate major crimes after seeing a recent uptick at the beginning of the year. This follows Mayor Eric Adams' move to deploy an additional 1,000 New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers in the city's subways in February. According to NYPD data, 2023 saw the highest number of subway crimes since 1996 despite crime rates being lower overall throughout the city. To some, the increase in police presence may signal a positive change in public safety, but for many New Yorkers, the effects remain unclear. This is not the first debate in New York City about the presence of law enforcement on public transportation. Before Adams, the city's former mayor Bill de Blasio used the NYPD to curtail fare evasion, resulting in strong backlash from many Black New Yorkers who felt they were being disproportionately targeted. Today, New Yorkers directly affected by the shortcomings of these new policing policies are once again discontent.

Hochul's move to introduce the National Guard means more random bag checks. This invasive crime deterrent method will only increase with the National Guard's involvement. As a result, her decision was met with much criticism from people across political lines. Some saw this as an authoritarian maneuver, and others noted that the presence of long guns would make subway-goers feel less safe, not more safe. Hochul has since ordered the removal of the National Guard officers' long guns. However, just a week after Hochul announced the new deployment, there was a shooting on a Brooklyn subway platform. Although the gun owner was the only casualty, passengers and the city at large were shaken. Once again, the efficacy of increased law enforcement presence was brought into question.

Another subway-related death took place just weeks after the A train shooting. A man was struck by a 4 train at the 125th Street station after being pushed onto the tracks by the perpetrator. That same week, women across the city reported being punched in the face while walking outside. Most of the attacks took place in Union Square and Times Square, some of the most heavily policed areas of the city. During this time, many women took to TikTok to describe their fears, share safety tips, and describe disappointing attempts to report their assaults to the NYPD.

S, a Black lifelong New Yorker and current student at Smith College spoke with me about how the intersections of her Blackness and womanhood have impacted her experiences with policing in the city. She explained that while she feels a certain amount of safety when there are officers around in the subway station—especially if they are Black—she has also been let down by them on many occasions. S recounted going up to an officer after losing her Metrocard in middle school. She asked to be let in through the emergency exit door to avoid evading the fare. The officer simply replied, "What am I supposed to do with that?" and ignored the rest of her pleas. S also described another encounter in which she witnessed a police officer step into a train car where a man was visibly masturbating and step right back off without addressing the situation. As a young woman, she felt particularly unsafe around the man but couldn't rely on the one person whose job it was to deal with predators.

Overall, S expressed that Hochul's decision regarding the National Guard seems invasive and extreme, especially given how ineffective the presence of law enforcement has been thus far. She believes this feeling of invasion would likely just discourage people from taking the train altogether.

As discussions about public safety across the city continue, it is clear that simply responding to incidents of violence is not enough. Addressing the root causes of why people commit crimes is essential to behaving proactively and preventing crimes, rather than showing up at the scene after something has occurred. By throwing more law enforcement into the subways to mitigate crime, Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams failed to make the city safer. Instead, they set a precedent in which New Yorkers must rely on the NYPD as their first line of defense, regardless of its history of police brutality and frequently inadequate responses to assaults. For years, people have advocated for the NYPD's bloated budget to be reallocated to other community services that directly address mental health, education, and homelessness to ameliorate common origins of crime. It is imperative that those in power finally listen.

"Hochul's decision regarding the National Guard seems invasive and extreme, especially given how ineffective the presence of law enforcement has been thus far"

Words by Madelyn Amoo-Otoo

Cobalt and Copper Mining Abuses in DR Congo

The cobalt mining industry in the DRC presents a complex web of ethical dilemmas, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses that demand urgent attention. While the mining of cobalt is a crucial component of the production of lithium-ion rechargeable batteries used in smartphones, tablets, laptops, and electric vehicles, the cost of its extraction in the DRC is steep, both for the environment and the local population. How can the ethical and environmental challenges associated with cobalt mining in the DRC be addressed to ensure sustainable practices and protect human rights?

Reports from various sources highlight the prevalence of modern-day slavery, child labor, and hazardous working conditions in artisanal cobalt mines. In an NPR interview titled, "How 'modern-day slavery' in the Congo powers the rechargeable battery economy," Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health fellow and researcher of modern-day slavery, human trafficking, and child labor, Siddarth Kara, described mining conditions in the DRC: "People are working in subhuman, grinding, [and] degrading conditions. [Workers] use pickaxes, shovels, stretches of rebar to hack and scrounge at the earth in trenches and pits and tunnels to gather cobalt and feed it up the formal supply chain."

Not only is the mining of cobalt incredibly backbreaking but individuals are forced to take part with very few alternative options. Kara continues to describe that there are almost no other options since mining is so prevalent in the DRC. Citizens have been displaced since their homes, villages, and farmland have been bulldozed to be replaced by mining concessions. There is also pressure from armed forces to

participate in mining due to poor socioeconomic status and a lack of worthwhile higher-paying jobs in the area (even though the mining only pays a dollar or two a day).

The expansion of industrial-scale mining operations has promoted child labor and trafficking. Kara continues, "There's money to be made in every corner and every direction. And you've got these militias. Sometimes they're called commandos and they will abduct children, traffic children, recruit children from even other parts of the Congo. I met children who had come from hundreds of miles away and had been brought through militia networks down into the copper cobalt mines to dig. And as they dig and earn their dollar or two, that's what funds these militia groups." This heartbreaking reality for children in the DRC should be impermissible. Some children in the DRC are forced to participate in mining to help support their families, while others are trafficked. Congolese children are some of the most vulnerable in the population; they are exposed to the extremely violent and dangerous conditions that occur during cobalt mining.

Furthermore, cobalt mining contributes to air and water pollution, and toxic contamination of local ecosystems. Sustainability consultant, Charlotte Davey, describes "The Environmental Impacts of Cobalt Mining in Congo". She described the environmental conditions as "[a] hazy air surrounding the mines, full of dust and grit, and toxic to breathe." Cobalt, once hailed as a miraculous metal, is now transforming into a hazardous substance due to irresponsible disposal practices. This toxic dumping is causing severe damage to landscapes, water sources, and agricultural fields.

Additionally, in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Lubumbashi comparing newborn children of families born within close distance of mining zones in Lubumbashi with those who were not, the risk of birth defects such as limb abnormalities and spina bifida was greatly increased when a parent worked in a copper or cobalt mine due to toxic pollution caused by the extraction of cobalt. Furthermore, the researchers were able to link "increased risk to the high levels of toxic pollution caused by the extraction of cobalt in southern Katanga, named one of the 10 most polluted areas in the world."

Informed individuals should be conscious of the technology industry's effects on the people and environment in the DRC. The global surge in cobalt demand is driven by consumers worldwide, leading to widespread environmental consequences. Prioritizing worker safety and environmental protection not only benefits Congolese miners but also supports global efforts against climate change. Consumers should understand that discarding old electronics containing cobalt for newer models can have detrimental impacts on others' lives. Concern for Congolese miners should translate into tangible actions beyond online activism.

It is essential for countries and companies that consume cobalt to emphasize ethical sourcing practices and ensure transparent supply chains to prevent human rights violations. Efforts should concentrate on enhancing working conditions, enforcing regulations, and promoting sustainable mining practices to mitigate the adverse effects of cobalt extraction.

Florida. Education. Erasure. History. These are some of the words that I used to refine my search for the perfect topic for my final BSJ article. Thus, in scrolling through Florida's current events in the realm of education, I stumbled upon a New York Times article from March titled "University of Florida Eliminates All D.E.I.-Related Positions." Perfect.

In adherence with Florida's regulations, UF closed the office of their Chief Diversity Officer and terminated 13 full-time positions and administrative roles. This law, which also limits the discourse of "identity politics," was signed to silence misrepresented and marginalized communities. Sadly, UF is not the first school to make such moves; both the University of North Florida and Florida International University in Miami have either already removed or begun to phase out their DEI programs.

If you are someone who keeps up with the news and politics, and even if you are someone who does not, you likely know of Ron DeSantis. As Florida's governor, and former candidate in the 2024 presidential race, DeSantis is one of the more outspoken members of the Republican Party, specifically known for his views on "woke" rhetoric, as he might call it. Subjects such as women's rights, the LGBTQ+ community, immigration, and race studies dominate much of his agenda, despite him wanting to eliminate all discussion of these topics. In fact, his 2022 Stop WOKE Act has prohibited Florida public schools from teaching subjects that are related to race and gender. Even further, the act attempts to restrict how employers implement mandatory workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training programs, where discussions of race, gender, and discrimination are not only prominent, but at the forefront. With this overt erasure, the act arguably violates the First Amendment, as we have seen when DeSantis successfully banned books and made classroom censorship the norm. As per recent news, the University of Florida, located in Gainesville, eliminated all positions and programs related to DEI to comply with new Florida laws that restrict public funding for such initiatives.

All positions. Let that sink in. Now the state will no longer provide public universities with the funding necessary to maintain those working at and those benefiting from DEI initiatives. We recognize this as part of Florida Republicans' agenda to spread fear and control the narrative.

When I saw this news, I immediately reached out to a trusted family friend who is in her junior year at the University of Florida. Goldi Lieberperson, a political science major, is passionate about civic engagement and activism. I asked Goldi about the student body's initial reaction to the elimination of DEI from her campus, and she told me that students have "fiercely opposed the actions of the Board of Governors (BOG) against DEI. There have been protests, op-eds, and a multitude of meetings within student organizations

The Vanishing Act: How Florida is Moving to Erase DEI

Words by Helena Evans

and Student Government to discuss the topic." She even went on to tell me that there have been several instances where senior leadership officials have discussed their "less-than-positive feelings" about the decision with her during private conversations.

Honestly, I was shocked when I first heard this; I had been under the impression that the resulting discourse would have been the opposite. I believed that the UF student body leaned predominantly to the right; I assumed that the outspoken voices belonged to those in agreement with the decision to end DEI initiatives. Instead, Goldi describes UF as being a "highly politically active campus that attracts motivated students and thinkers from all over the world." Interestingly, she did maintain that there is a lot that students still do not know. "We don't know what the future of funding looks like for identity-based facilities (such as the Institute of Black Culture and the Institute of Hispanic-Latino Cultures)," which she describes as "two beautiful buildings that serve as safe spaces for people/allies of these backgrounds." Even still, with these mechanisms in place, "the memo' instantly eliminated the Chief Diversity Officer's office," Goldi tells me, and I can hear her shaking her head through the phone.

Goldi has experienced some of the effects, given that she works for UF Housing. She explained to me that "since the order from the BOG, the department of student life has shifted its verbiage, but not its values." She explained to me that when they were recruiting new RAs for the year, they were given instructions not to use the words "diversity," "equity," or "inclusion," and they were forbidden from including personal pronouns in their introductions. Instead of giving in or shutting down, the students used a thesaurus to create a list of equivalents to the aforementioned words. They actually created pronoun stickers to wear on their nametags as a way around the new rules in order to continue making students feel safe and seen.

DEI is not a crazy conspiracy derived from left-wing extremists as some conservatives believe. DEI fosters inclusion and helps students from all backgrounds feel safe so that they can succeed on their campuses. In banning DEI from schools, people like DeSantis are creating an atmosphere where already marginalized people become more marginalized, too afraid to speak up and shine — and in the so-called "Sunshine State" no less.

Unraveling the Rise in Black Political Conservatism

Words by Chris Maron

I. Background

Black voters have been predominantly loyal to the Democratic Party since the Civil Rights Movement. Given the Party's endorsement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, along with its sustained liberal standpoints on economic and social issues, it is clear why most Black people have maintained their support. Moreover, even Black people who are not attracted to the Party on ideological grounds have still traditionally voted Democrat to avoid the social repercussions of identifying as Black Republicans.

With certain provisions of the Voting Rights Act set to expire in 2032 and the dominant grip that conservative ideology has on the United States Supreme Court, there is potential for regression in racial justice progress. Therefore, it is imperative that the trend of Black support for the Democratic Party continues in the 2024 presidential election. Despite these concerns, scholars have identified a gradual rise in the number of Black Republicans. According to a 2024 New York Times poll, about 23% of registered Black voters plan to vote for Republican candidate Donald Trump, a substantial increase from the 12% Trump earned in the 2020 election.

While it may seem paradoxical, this shift toward conservatism can largely be mapped to the liberal civil rights achievements we have seen thus far. The decreased yet still existent level of racism in America has allowed some Black people to develop ignorant, apathetic, or even opposing attitudes towards topics of racial and social justice. These attitudes, coupled with the reduction of social pressure inducing Black people to vote Democrat, help explain the burgeoning number of African Americans who harbor politically conservative values.

II. Changing Attitudes

America has an extensive history of intense and widely prevalent racism. During the Jim Crow Era, for instance, efforts to oppress and disenfranchise minorities were explicit. Discriminatory laws, violence, and intimidation were employed to keep African Americans segregated, uneducated, and marginalized. As a result, nearly all Black people were forced into poverty, and those who were able to find employment worked low-paying manual labor jobs.

Over the past sixty years, American society has evolved to become a much more inclusive environment, with the average African American having far better living conditions. Additionally, Black unemployment rates were at a record low of 5% in March 2024 while "40% of African Americans [could] consider themselves members of the middle class."

Despite this progress, racism in the United States has not been eradicated, rather it has been transformed. Most contemporary forms of racism are covert and far more difficult to track. The negative perception of African Americans stemming from the blatant practices of discrimination mentioned above is still deeply entrenched in American culture. A consequence of this distorted perspective is the "myth of the criminal Black man": a stereotype that presumes Black people typically possess deplorable qualities akin to criminals. Prejudices of this kind cause race to continue "to play a dominant role in shaping employment opportunities," limiting options for Black people and making them more susceptible to criminalization.

This stereotype is applied more frequently to poor African Americans as "many of the stereotypes traditionally associated with Black people are also associated with the poor." Hence, the threat of modern racism may appear minimal to many middle-class and affluent Black people, framing racism as less of a collective issue for those groups and obscuring the nexus between the racism of the Jim Crow Era and racism today. For example, a 2022 poll revealed that only 68% of Black adults identify racial discrimination as "the main reason why many Black people can't get ahead," which would have been an inconceivable notion during the Jim Crow Era. In effect, the benefits of the civil rights progress we have seen thus far have bred ignorance of the need for anti-discrimination

policies often forwarded by Democrats, resulting in a correlative decrease in Black support of the Party.

Nevertheless, even those who recognize the disguised racism that still exists in society do not necessarily endorse liberal approaches to counteract it. Privileged Black people may hold apathetic perspectives on racial justice if they have "self-interested reasons to defect from the in-group norm of supporting the Democratic Party," such as "Black business owners who want lower taxes." Namely, Mayor of Dallas and former Democrat Eric Johnson praised the Republican Party's dedication to "lower[ing] taxes and [creating] a friendlier business climate" despite its conservative stance on racial topics like diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Further, social justice progress has, in a way, provided some Black people with newfound reasons to disapprove of the Democratic Party. Socially conservative positions have always resided in the Black community, "such as those in favor of prayer in school and repression of LGBTQ rights." American society's enlarged sense of inclusivity has allowed liberal Democrats to pursue more expansive projects, including securing rights for women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. In the past, these inclinations have had little bearing on African American voting behavior. Now, however, "Black Democrats' views on the moral acceptability of homosexual relations are almost identical to those of Republicans."

Overall, the increase in African Americans voting Republican can be attributed to the growing economic and social variance among Black people—a product of the decline in racism. The less blatant and pressing nature of modern racism has engendered widespread ignorance of discrimination that still occurs while allowing some to be apathetic or opposed to efforts to extend racial and social justice.

II. Reduction of Social Pressure

Notwithstanding, political scientists do not deem these ideological shifts alone as impactful enough to prompt a rise in the number of Black Republicans. Developments of political conservatism within the African American community are often suppressed by racialized social constraint, a process in which Black people disregard their dispositions and support the Democratic Party "in pursuit of social acceptance" or in avoidance of "negative social sanctions." A critical factor that explains the effectiveness of this process is the isolation of Black people emanating from the legacy of America's profound history of racism. This isolation has limited the racial diversity of social interactions for African Americans, making Black social networks and institutions significant in the typical experience of Black people.

Nonetheless, decreased racial discrimination has permitted Black-white segregation to reduce by roughly 23% in the last 30 years. While positive, this integration has diminished the cruciality of African American social networks—especially among Black conservatives. Additionally, institutions like Black churches have been used as platforms to discuss political and social movements. Yet, these institutions are declining, as research shows that "young Black adults are less religious and less engaged in Black churches than older generations." The dwindling leverage of Black social networks and institutions such as Black churches has weakened the potency of racialized social constraint, providing less incentive for African Americans to vote Democrat.

IV. Conclusion

In sum, the changing attitudes of Black people, combined with the reduction of social pressure to vote for the Democratic Party, offers a useful narrative in understanding the influx of Black Republicans. Even so, this trend may not be detrimental to achieving social justice. Some scholars have suggested that Black people "could force the parties to compete for their support" if they were "more strategic with their vote." Perhaps this suggestion is accurate, and the rise in Black conservatives provokes the Democratic Party to produce more substantive improvements to the lives of African Americans, restoring its reputation



Rites, Reason, and a Little Bit of Blues

Words by Kaile Minor

After viewing a salon of *Providence Garden Blues*, a play in pre-production here on campus, I sat down with Lisa Biggs, a professor in the Department of Africana Studies, to learn more about the play and Black artistry on Brown University's campus. Colloquially known as the BasPas for its faculty founder Dr. George Houston Bass, the play itself is being produced in the Rites and Reason theater, a space on campus with deep ties to student activism and Black artwork.

Brown's history in relation to its Black students has long been one defined by protest. From our inclusion in the school to the fomentation of our spaces around campus, protest has always been the catalyst. While this can often feel like our existence on this campus is a fraught one, it must also engender a sense of pride. Being Black at Brown means that your presence is the legacy of academics who believed so strongly in their education and value in this institution that they risked suspension, expulsion, and further disciplinary measures to ensure they were welcome. Ironically, there exist present-day parallels where, in a similar spirit of university accountability, Black and other students of color have been facing similar punitive measures for their protest of Brown's involvement in Israeli apartheid. There is then a kind of camaraderie that exists between generations of students; a solidarity born from a refusal to accept the marginalization and complicity at the hands of the university.

“Names change and time passes and yet throughout the years we, Black students, are steadfast in the presence of our art on campus”

In 1968, 80 Black students walked out of classes to demand more curriculums on blackness, Black faculty, and spaces for Black artistic expression. Leading up to this walkout and amidst the cultural thirst for Black art, students at Brown and Pembroke took it upon themselves to independently bolster Black art around campus. Inspired by works in New York such as *The Dutchman* and *The Slave* by Amiri Barakas, Black student artists staged theater on campus, ultimately producing a Black Arts Festival in 1969. In these moments, Black students' passion for artistic expression and their desperate need for an outlet in a university that obscured them prevailed over the sanction of the greater institution. Their action preceded recognition and when their voices, their art, and their vitality became too loud to ignore, the University responded and the Rites and Reason theater was born.

A new space for Black theater production, the Rites and Reason theater was originally run by Dr. George Houston Bass, a playwright himself and former secretary of Langston Hughes. Rites and Reason was originally an umbrella organization for Black creatives on campus. Memory of these organizations is kept in archives such as a posterboard shared with me by Professor Biggs depicting the different campus groups represented by Rites and Reason at the time. Expression spanned disciplines including Afro dancers and drummers, the Black chorus, writers, visual artists, and a jazz band. "As time goes on, student organizations come and go," Professor Biggs tells me. Yet, when I think about Black organizations today, all I see is rebirth and growth—Oja, Shades of Brown, Black Star Journal. Names change and time passes and yet throughout the years we, Black students, are steadfast in the presence of our art on campus.

In a similar vein of rebirth comes Providence Garden Blues (PGB). A play originally written by George Houston Bass in the 70s, PGB was the creative result of undergraduate oral histories conducted in the neighborhoods surrounding Brown's campus. These oral histories captured the experiences of Black and white senior citizens in Providence, then wove a story from these oral histories, centering the displacement in East Providence during gentrification. The story follows Ms. Marie—a woman who houses an eclectic group of senior citizens after they have been displaced from their homes—after she is told by one of the boys she raised that her house is next for demolition. Fascinatingly, the play was produced once in 1975 then lost in Churchill House for the next few decades. In 2018, upon the looming remodel of the Africana Studies building, Professor Biggs and a group of graduate students underwent the task of searching through and archiving a closet which housed work from the department from decades prior. It was in this excavation process that they found a pre-production script and preserved film reel of Providence Garden Blues. That Africana Studies is a field deeply connected to the past makes this discovery all the more serendipitous. The archival discovery of PGB enables an understanding of Black theater's history at Brown and alights exploration of themes that still find themselves relevant in Providence today.

Keeping with the original spirit of community collaboration, Professor Biggs is working with the Providence community, using local actors and musicians, to reimagine PGB. There are challenges posed in re-producing this play, namely making it understandable and relevant in a modern context while keeping the original work true to its message. Biggs is thus making minimal, but clarifying, changes to the script and reimagining the musical accompaniments with a team of musicians. The film reel found in Churchill House had enough audio that they were able to augment the score using AI software, however the lyrics, often patchy in areas, are undergoing similar changes and reshaping to the script. These changes are made to preserve the integrity of the artwork, and bring its original beauty to a present-day audience. Brown's archive now contains playbooks from its original production, a full reel of the production, and images from rehearsals. Piecing them together has been a task, but nonetheless a fulfilling and exciting exploration into the rich past—and relevant present—of Black art, Providence history, and the convergence of the two through Black students' artwork at Brown.

It is almost a near miracle that the play was so well preserved, however, similar to the reimagining of so many Black organizations, it seems like there is something permanent about Black art on campus. That it existed once, it will always exist again in some form or another. For Providence Garden Blues, that means a new production on campus, in Rites and Reason again, and for us, that our legacy will remain here for decades to come.

The Black Star Journal



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