Health Sciences students get vax then give vax

By Ben Levitt
Senior Reporter

Health Sciences students got their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, then administered shots to locals and faculty members who qualified under the state guidelines, at a clinic in the gym on January 28 and 29.

Altogether, 510 doses were administered over the two day period according to Director of Nursing Education Liz Mizerek, about half of those doses went to students and faculty who qualified, while the other half went to members of the community who qualified.

When asked how the college received the doses for the clinic college president Dr. Jianping Wang said that after a meeting of the New Jersey County Colleges Council (NJCCC) the group sent a letter to Governor Murphy asking him to “put us on the front burner.”

Dr. Wang says the college administration was originally optimistic about possibly opening back up for the Summer sessions but is hesitant given “the delay in vaccine distribution.”

She went on to describe things that are needed besides just needles, vials, and band-aids, like “ensuring you have bottles of water for your volunteers, somebody feeds them, shows them where the bathrooms are.”

She explained that about 100 students from Mercer health programs received and administered the vaccine and added “It has been a wonderful experience for our students. It’s augmenting their education, getting them more hands on.”

In addition to running the clinic, Mizerek has also received both doses of the vaccine. She says that when people ask her how it went she responds “My arm was a little sore. Big deal. It’s better than getting COVID.”

One person who volunteered at the clinic was Dr. Wang, says the college administration was originally optimistic about possibly opening back up for the Summer sessions but is hesitant given “the delay in vaccine distribution.”

By Ashley Jackson
Senior Reporter

In the summer of 2020, despite a raging pandemic, millions of people took to the streets to join a protest movement for racial justice.

Many said they were inspired to take action after watching the video of George Floyd, a Black man murdered by a police officer who knelt on his neck for almost 9 minutes. Others said Floyd was just the tipping point following a long line of Blacks murdered at the hands of police.

There were protests nationwide and here at home, including a peaceful protest in Hightstown where the police attending took a knee in solidarity with the protestors, as The VOICE reported.

Organizations of all kinds found themselves grappling with a history of racial injustice. Depictions of subversive Black characters used on products such as Uncle Ben’s rice and Aunt Jemima syrup suddenly faced scrutiny. Higher education also faced a reckoning. For example, Princeton University, after existing four years earlier that it would not rename it’s school of public policy, named after famed segregationist president Woodrow Wilson, changed their mind.

Here at Mercer, it was also a time for increased examination. Although other efforts preceded it, Mercer’s new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, has taken on an updated form. It is now a [presidential] administration.

If things could speed up in the next two months we might be able to squeeze in summer.

The primary person who organized the clinic was MCCC Director of Nursing Education Professor Elizabeth Mizerek. She said, “We worked very closely with the Mercer County Division of Public Health and some local health agencies to ensure that we had all the necessary staff and equipment.”

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The new program consists of five modules where participants learn the latest laws and regulations, basic cultivation techniques, counselling, as well as how to successfully run a dispensary.

Cannabis, also known as marijuana, while highly controversial since the start of the War on Drugs back in the 1970’s, is undergoing a complete transformation. First marijuana was legalized for treatment of pain connected to some illnesses. Then states, starting with Colorado in 2012 began passing laws legalizing the drug.

New Jersey has joined 14 other states passing a bill allowing the recreational sale of cannabis, but it is stuck in a loophole since that state still does not allow the possession of it. While New Jersey waits for Governor Phil Murphy’s decision whether to sign, MCCC is preparing for the future.

The course was created and is taught by Sarah Trent, an attorney and public defender who is now founder and CEO of Valley Wellness. Trent says she realized that the current NJ Medical Marijuana Program was missing plans for patient availability. With her legal background she tailor-made a course to introduce everyone and anyone interested in joining the cannabis industry.

“I saw a need for expanded access for patients,” Trent says, adding, “What I saw was in applying for that permit, how am I going to get a workforce that is trained and educated and simultaneously educate the community about medical cannabis and the benefits?”

The new program at Mercer has already garnered attention from students in and around Mercer County, pushing past the expected maximum participation of 50 students.

Former MCCC graduate Sam Padro took the course while it was being run at Raritan Valley Community College and described the class saying, “That class has changed my life.”

Padro, who was previously a police officer in Burlington, New Jersey says he’d encourage anyone who is interested to take the course.

Sam, who now works at a dispensary, says, “[The course] goes into everything you need to know getting into the industry.”

Andrea Bash and Shan Bercaw, two coordinators in Mercer’s Office of Continuing Studies, which works to provide the community with useful non-credit programs, organized the cannabis training. College president Dr. Jianping Wang says, “I hope the future is about building a stronger and healthier community that would reduce the negative impact on low income, minority communities.”

The college will offer the course for summer classes from May 3 through to June 4. Those interested in taking this course must be at least 18 years old. The course is $500 or free to veterans.

DEI Committee seeks ways to support diverse campus

Continued from page 1

collective of faculty, staff, and students making an effort to examine how MCCC can be the most supportive atmosphere possible for all.

The DEI is lead by co-chairs Stacy Denton, director of Upward Bound, and Professor Andrea Lynch, who are both women of color. The committee itself is comprised of volunteers from every race, ethnicity and background.

As it came together in this new form, the DEI committee began work in four specific areas: purpose, people, partnerships, and professional development. Each area has a variety of components, areas where the DEI aims to effect meaningful rather than superficial changes.

These changes include hiring a more diverse staff, re-evaluating courses and curriculums, creating a lecture series to educate the community, providing more resources to students, and establishing a social connection app.

The organizers say they hope to carry out the goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Plan within three years. “We need to be intentional, consistent, and persistent over time,” adds Dr. Lynch. “We care about the students, and we came forward strong in that. It was a really collaborative process to put this all together.”

The organizers say they hope some students have already taken their experience with the DEI committee as an opportunity for self reflection and creativity.

Amelia DeGuzman participated in the DEI committee’s Anti-Racist Discussion Group last semester, and she was introduced to a TED Talk by novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that examined the stories that people can use to sum up others based on dangerous stereotypes.

DeGuzman says this motivated her to create a short-run publication that combats the single story narrative called Your Stories: an Anthology of Personal Experiences. (More info on page 6)

“As a writer, I think language can be an incredible medium of healing,” DeGuzman says, adding, “I want to share that magic with others, to help people find that channel of expression that has been so integral to my own emotional survival.”

In the Diversity and Inclusion Plan it says, “One of our long-standing goals is to foster a campus culture that celebrates diversity and inclusiveness, and respects and supports the personal and intellectual growth of all students, faculty, and staff.”

MCPC adds non-credit cannabis training program

By Elijah Parkman-Williams Senior Reporter

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More students could participate when Honors fees were lowered

By Lawrence Boadi

College students seeking a challenge often find themselves in classes that don’t fulfill their intellectual abilities. The Mercer Honors program offers options for this population.

In terms of reaching as many students as possible, changes in the program over the years has caused shifts in how accessible Honors classes are for diverse populations of students.

The underlying question of whether or not the Honors program is able to reach students from all walks of life can be boiied to one main issue: price.

Back in 2013, the college, which had already established an Honors program on its own, outsourced it to a for profit organization called American Honors.

American Honors was aimed at offering outside networks for students to tap into but it was accompanied with a hefty price tag.

Eugene Mok, current Honors Program Coordinator and Success Coach, was not in his position at the time of American Honors, but he does have knowledge of the program.

Mok says, “It was extravagant. It seemed like it was just way too much.”

Based on tuition data available for 2015 to 2016, American Honors cost students an additional $1,120 per semester beyond regular tuition.

The current price for The Mercer Program Honors classes is an additional $40 per credit. The prices stack up quickly. With honors Biology (4 credits) or Honors English (3 credits), this is an additional $160 for Biology and $120 for English.

But most students take only one or two Honors classes per semester, meaning, at most the fees will add up to about $280, a quarter of the cost of American Honors.

Some students in the current Honors program are also getting large scholarships and transferring to top tier four-year colleges and universities such as Princeton after leaving Mercer. Two Honors students transferred to Princeton last year.

Griffin Jones, a Causian student who graduated from MCCC in 2017, said there was less racial diversity in the program when he was in it and it was part of American Honors.

“I think most of the people within my classes were white,” said Jones.

He added, “There was a fee that led to that impact.”

The company, American Honors, according to its website, is currently offered at two locations.

Former Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. David Edwards, who has since moved on to a job at Camden County College, worked to end the partnership with American Honors before he left in 2017.

He said at the time, in an interview with The VOICE, “In my first day of service at community college it became clear to me that there’s that thing out there called social justice [and that means] that everyone has a right to [college education], whether they came from a middle class background, like I did, or whether they are that student I just described who no one in their family has gone to college.”

For those who find the current prices outside of their price bracket have the option of financial aid to lean on.

Dr. Bettina Cahoon, director of the current Honors program, states, “We started the Mercer Honors group after we ended the partnership with American Honors, reducing costs. And financial aid will cover most of the fee.”

However, there are some students that say the cost isn’t worth it.

Francess Akumagutu, an African-American nursing student is one of few who said he would have to pay out of pocket to take an Honors class. Akumagutu said, “I was excited to take the classes, but when I found out the extra money required, I had to decline.”

Others feel the cost is worth the reward.

Kyle Goldware, an African-American Communications major at MCCC, is currently in the Honors program and pays out of pocket, but says the program is meaningful and inclusive.

Goldware says, “I do feel included. They do Honors meetings and reach out through emails. Eugene always sends emails and motivates us students when he can.”

MCCC one of two vaccine hubs in Mercer County offers clinic

Over the weekend, Mercer County College hosted a clinic to give Moderna shots to those over 18. The clinic was held at the MCCC Kirkwood Campus in Hamilton, N.J. and there were over 600 vaccinations.

The Spring 2020 Honors Journalism 2 class included high school jump start students, students who had taken time off before returning to college in their mid-20s, members of the Rainbow Alliance and ethnically diverse students.

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-Kyle Goldware, Honors Student

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Stations and socially distanced waiting areas allowed processing many recipients of the vaccine quickly.

Continued from page 1

Mercer Math Professor Jamie Fleischner. She says, “People went in, they were on the list. They had forms to fill out. It seemed to run very smoothly.”

Professor Fleischner said the hardest part of volunteering was turning away people “who had not made an appointment and were asking if there were any vaccinations.”

Locals have to go through the state system to get assigned a spot at MCCC.

Mizerek said the college is hoping to be able to conduct another clinic, but that many factors will impact the effort such as availability and the weather.

As of this writing, New Jersey has been given 1.02 million first doses from the federal government and 822,080 people in NJ have received a first dose of vaccine which is 9.3% of the overall population. But lack of doses limited number of doses made available to Mercer County.

This is of no fault of the County Government. “It was extravagant. It was all the fees will add up to about $280, a quarter of the cost of American Honors.

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**Creative Corner**

**After the Burning of the 3rd Precinct**

By Amelia DeGuzman

Last night I walked down the pond
But this monster wants more.
I won the Trophy of agony,
When will the time come.
So, put it away for another day,
Wait your turn the yearning will end.

Someone doesn't care,
I wanted to watch the bright moon
Share the pain, be apart.

Blood pumps and cringles in my veins
Wanting to be normal again.

So, I sit and want,
Life has made me go.
The Wolf howls help,

**The Flower by The Wall**

By Angel Kermah

The same way they are marked to respond to trauma.
Cultivated plants and seeds just left to a hot.
A psychological process that is not normal.

I explore only through my roots.
My body.

Did I tell you I wanted to be touched?
How she whooshed, leaving secrets in my thistles.

**Withstand**

By Jason Norton

The Wolf howls help, life has made me go.
So, I sit and want, wanting to be normal again.
Blood pumps and cringles in my veins share the pain, be apart.
Someone doesn’t care, will your turn the yearning will end.

So, put it away for another day, when will the time come.
I won the Trophy of agony, but this monster wants more.
A beautiful flower by the wall.

I wither.

How dare you turn my soil into dirt?

I wither.

Am I still a beautiful flower?

You uprooted me.

You made me drink it.

You bled on my thorns.

You engirdled your befouled, calloused hands around me.

But you plucked me.

I explore only through my roots

My body.

This is my only home.

Leaving nippy, vanishing kisses

The way She danced in curling wisps, double-helixing up and through my stem

I loved the way the wind would whistle amongst my thorns

Did I tell you I wanted to be plucked?

By Angel Kermah

The Flower by The Wall

Arts & Entertainment

By Mandy Sidhu

Reporter

Netflix released a five episode series called Lupin back in early January. Filmed in French and dubbed into English it might not seem like a show that would catch on with US viewers, but according to CNET it garnered 76 million views within the first two weeks.

The tale, a cross between Robinhood, James Bond, and Sherlock Holmes, is based on the popular book by French author Maurice Leblanc in 1905.

Much of the series’ success hinges on the strong performance of lead actor Omar Sy, who is being compared to Idris Alba for his talent, charisma, and flashing smile. His resume includes X-Men: Days of Future Past, Jurassic World and other blockbusters.

In Lupin, Sy plays a master-of-disguise, sleuth, and gentleman thief, the son of a Senegalese chauffeur who was accused of stealing a priceless necklace from his wealthy employers. In jail, his father commits suicide, but as a grown man Assane learns it was a murder and sets out to uncover the truth.

So what makes this series unique and relevant? Is it smashing barriers or reinforcing stereotypes?

First of all Arsène Lupin in the original book was not Black, let alone an immigrant.

The Netflix series counters the standard idealized notion of the hero as a wealthy, white, male.

Assane’s father, Baba Kar, is a windowed Senegalese immigrant who is framed for a crime he did not commit, and forced to make a false confession by corrupt, racist authorities.

The series begins with Assane planning and carrying out an elaborate heist at the famous museum, the Louvre, stealing back a necklace that has been lost and found, the very one his father was accused of stealing.

Lupin tugs the audience between the law and its victims. The justice system is shown as inherently racist.

The series with Assane as the main character, the character counters the standard idealized notion of the hero as a wealthy, white, male.

OMAR SY, who has appeared in a variety of blockbuster films, stars as a sleuth, avenger, and master of disguise in cross-over hit French TV series Lupin on Netflix.

He later tells his accomplices that his employers see him “but they don’t really look at [me].”

There are also flashbacks from Assane’s childhood where he is bullied in school for being Black. His skin is called “a costume.”

However, as an adult, Assane anticipates the racist experiences of day to day life, using them to his advantage.

“My goal is to do what we’re on the bottom, they don’t look, Assane says. “And that is to do that we’re going to be rich.”

While the series is a megahit, it has faced some criticism for its focus on the Parisian, primarily white elite class.

Director Louis Leterrier says it was intentional. “I liked the ‘gentleman thief’ aspect a lot but I wanted to subvert it and give it a social angle,” he told the New York Times.

“I found the idea of a 6-foot-2 Black man sneaking around in both high society and the underworld interesting.”

Netlfix has promised a second season but hasn’t announced a release date. While fans wait impatiently, it’s clear there is a winning combination to Sy’s brilliant performance and the underlying themes of race, class, and immigration which are more relevant today than ever, in the US and worldwide.

Cicely Tyson, award winning actress and model, who challenged stereotypes of Black women for decades, died at the age of 96 on January 28.

She was vocal about choosing roles where Black women were shown as strong, complex individuals such as her Emmy nominated portrayal of Coretta Scott King, the wife of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In her last interview, with host Gayle King of CBS’s This Morning, less than a week before her death, Tyson said, “Whenever I’m offered a script, what I’m interested in when I get it is what I mean. Who was that character, and why did they want me to play it? And when I get to the point where I feel like her, I feel like I’m thinking in my mind, then I know there is something about her.”

Tyson told King she fell pregnant at 17, and wanting to pursue acting to support her child, her mother threatened to kick her out of the house. Her mother opposed an acting career, and when Tyson pushed back, her mother did not speak to her for almost two years.

Tyson said, “She thought I was going to live in the den of inequity because she grew up in the slums, lots of prostitution walking up and down the streets, and that’s all she knew about movies.”

Tyson told King her mother eventually came around when she saw Tyson performing on stage, and the two had a strong relationship until her death.

Tyson’s career spanned seven decades, from her debut in 1951 in the NBC television series Frontiers of Faith to her role in the Netflix film “A Fall from Grace” in 2020. Altogether, Tyson appeared in 29 films, at least 68 television series, and 15 productions on and off Broadway.

Tyson won many awards, including an honorary Oscar. She was in notable films that challenged Black stereotypes such as “Sounder” about a woman who provides for her family by cleaning homes after her husband is imprisoned for stealing food. The role won her an Oscar nomination.

In The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, she played a woman who recalls her life of prostitution walking up and down the streets, and that’s all she knew about movies.”

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Netflix has promised a second season but hasn’t announced a release date. While fans wait impatiently, it’s clear there is a winning combination to Sy’s brilliant performance and the underlying themes of race, class, and immigration which are more relevant today than ever, in the US and worldwide.
What is the single story narrative?

In a 2009 TED Talk that has more than 8 million views on YouTube, novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains her concept of the “single story narrative” in which individuals get summed up by experiences and stereotypes when someone else condenses their identity into a single story. She says we are all prone to this problem at some time or another as we come to rely on limited information given to us by media and society at large. She gives an example of her own childhood in which her family had a boy who worked in their house whom she imagined to live in a ragged and poor community, but when she encountered it she realized it was vibrant and complex. She also describes professors who criticized her writing about Africans because they weren’t “authentic” enough, because they didn’t portray people living in war-torn, corrupt, and impoverished societies. She warns of the harm that single story narratives can cause if we don’t choose to think beyond them.

Mercer Students: Our Single Stories

A single story that has been told about me is that some people assume I can’t speak proper English. Immediately they get my accent. It’s the same English that I speak, I just sound different because of where I was born. Sometimes I’m being overlooked in class to read or to talk because I have an accent, maybe because the professor would think I can’t speak proper English.”

“I was experiencing domestic violence for about twelve years, and every single day I was told I was not good enough, and I couldn’t do much about it. I had to be with this person in order to be “right.” But as the time went by, I realized that was not true. I was not the person that he was telling me I was.”

A single story that has been told about me is that I grew up really poor. People don’t think that poor kids are smart. They don’t. It’s not part of the narrative. So on more than one occasion through-out my life, when people found out that we were homeless, they were like “Wow you’re so smart! It was very strange to people.”

“I came from India and here my basketball coach came up to me and said: ‘How do you speak fluent English?’ or ‘How are you managing to speak proper English?’ I think, what do you mean? Even though I came from India, I went to an international school.”

“A single story told about me is that when I went to another university, a four-year university, was that I had been associated too much with the white community at that college. A lot of the Black people in Black clubs, said that my absence in their clubs and presence in the Business focussed clubs was misguided. It wasn’t the best experience, but I’m glad I went through it. Now I have a better understanding of being a Black person, a proud feeling that I am doing this for me.”

What is the story that people have used to define you? Do you want to share it? Learn more at tinyurl.com/submit-to-your-stories

WHAT TO WATCH FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

13th
Directed by Ava DuVernay (2016)
This documentary film examines the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution whereby slaves were freed but could still be imprisoned and forced into labor leading, 150 years later, to the explosion of the prison industrial complex which disproportionately affects Blacks to the detriment of all society.

DANCE DREAMS
Directed by Olivier Bokelberg (2020)
The full title is Dance Dreams: Hot Chocolate Nutcracker. This documentary follows the Debbie Allen Dance company as it prepares for it’s radical annual performance of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker. The performance is a radical reinterpretation featuring almost all student dancers of color.

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO
Directed by Raoul Peck (2016)
Based on the unfinished manuscript of James Baldwin and narrated by Samuel L. Jackson, this documentary examines an archive of papers, notes and letters Baldwin wrote in the 1970s, reflecting on his experience in the heart of the Civil Rights movement.

SO WHAT
Directed by Patrick Murphy
This PIXAR film follows the story of a boy who always wanted, when he was young, to achieve his dream of becoming a famous jazz musician.
The Hill We Climb

-Amanda Gorman

When day comes we ask ourselves, what is the dream that’s not being acted out in all of us? The loss we carry, a sea we must weather. We’ve learned too well the cost of not listening. And yet we have never lost hope. For even if we don’t get what we want in the moment, we know that we’ll keep pushing and we’ll keep pushing.

We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation, because we know our tradition and hard work will be the inheritance of the next generation. Our burdens become our blessings. But one thing is certain: if we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy.

Our blunders become their burdens. But one thing is certain: if we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy.

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands above us. At the time we ask ourselves, how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us? But in all the bridges we’ve made, we’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace. And yet the dawn is ours again. We rise from the golden-limbed hills of the west, where our forefathers first realized revolution.

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And yet it’s the part I didn’t know: how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe? Now we understand that this group of people who found strength to endure and thrive.

This HBO mini-series reveals the life of famous 1920s jazz singer Ma Rainey, focusing on her fierce personality which she relied on to overcome the obstacles put before her as a Black woman. It features a tour de force performance by Viola Davis and an equally impressive one from Chadwick Boseman, the last before his death.

CRACK: COCAINE CORRUPTION & CONSPIRACY

Directed by Stanely Nelson (2021)

This documentary revisits the devastation wrought on inner cities and Blacks in particular by the crack epidemic of the 1980s. It looks at archival footage of presidents and famous figures who used the threat for political gain rather than seeing it as a public health crisis.

Amanda Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet. She read her poem “The Hill We Climb” (left) on January 21, 2021 for the swearing in of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.
After Netflix burnout people turn to Little Free Libraries

By Kayla Janetti
Reporter

While most Americans are home due to the statewide shutdowns, many new trends have surfaced throughout the course of the pandemic. People have begun to record themselves doing the newest TikTok dances, foster puppies, attempt to make Dalgena Coffee, read books from dainty libraries, and so on.

Daniel Adomina, an MCCC Honors College student, says he sometimes falls into the recurring cycle of media consumption. He says, “Sometimes I have to catch myself after spending hours or days bingeing a show, movies, being on my phone or computer to take some time off consuming media.”

One trend that is offering an alternative to screens is Little Free Library book-sharing boxes. According to Little Free Library’s website, they are a worldwide nonprofit organization on a mission to spread literacy, community, and creativity through Little Free Library book exchanges.

Dr. Pamela Price, MCCC’s Director of Library Services, says of Little Free Libraries, “Personally, I find them to be a great book resource for kids.”

This result fits Dr. Price’s predictions. She said, “Once libraries had to close due to the pandemic, it was only a matter of time before the Little Free Libraries movement really started to catch on because it gave people an opportunity to share books they had just read with others who may not have read them.”

As rewarding as it is to own a book-sharing box, some box stewards say there are also a few downsides. Jacqueline Fernandes, another steward in West Windsor, said for a time people were taking books and not returning them. “I’m sure they’re enjoying it. I don’t grudge them that, but they’re not returning books,” Fernandes said, but a week later she says she started to notice the trend reverse and that people were replacing her books.

Dr. Bettina Caluori, MCCC’s Director of the Honors Program, says she knows about Little Free Libraries and thinks they would be great to have at Mercer.

“I think that going to a Little Free Library would be more like ‘I’m doing this for my own self. Nobody’s going to grade me. Somebody else has recommended it or put it in this library for a reason’.”

Learn from me: Hershey’s Kiss history

In her ongoing “Learn from Me” column, Laurie Gallagher offers explanations and tips for students on every day offices, with support from the staff of The VOICE.

By Laurie Gallagher
With support from the Staff of The College VOICE

It’s Valentine’s Day time and a good time for kisses, especially the chocolate kind. But where did the little foil wrapped pyramids come from?

According to an article by Rachel Janek in TIME magazine, the real story starts with Willbur Buds, a company that still exists and started making the classic kiss shaped treats in 1894, 13 years before Hershey’s.

But it was Milton Hershey who figured out how to make his candies quickly, on an assembly line and he was the one who chose to wrap them in foil with their little flag. For many years they were hand wrapped by employees. The Wilbur Buds did not have any wrapping.

Interestingly, both Henry Willbur and Milton Hershey were from Pennsylvania, only a few towns away from one another and only a 2 hour drive from MCCC’s campus. Too far for an Uber, but a good choice for a day trip with a friend if you want to go to Hershey Park.

Right now we’re cooped up with covid, but the theme park, which features roller coasters, a water park, and a chocolate themed dining room is planning to open for safe activities, especially the outdoor kind.

But back to the kiss. According to Beth Kimmerle, author of Chocolate: The Sweet History, which is described in the TIME article, in the 1960s Hershey started experimenting with different colored foil wrappers for their kisses.

She also says, “Candy is about a psychological connection, it’s not just the taste,” and adds, “If you watch people eat them—and I have—it’s always fascinating what people do with the wrapper and the plume. There’s no other way to describe it, it’s a caress.”
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See past the sound
We must confront accent prejudice

**VIEWPOINT**

Beryl Zonese

As an immigrant from Cameroon, West Africa, I have been questioned on several occasions about how I speak English fluently. Often, I am faced with an immediate assumption that the English I speak is not “proper English” because of the subtle difference in pronunciation and accent.

But English is one of the primary languages of Cameroon as well as numerous African countries once colonized by the British. South Africa, Ghana, Botswana, Namibia, Liberia, Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Lesotho and the list goes on. According to the State Demographics Data from Migration Policy Institute, about 120,000 African born people live in New Jersey.

While people are becoming increasingly accepting of visible differences like race, there is silent discrimination that occurs when confronted by invisible differences like accents, especially if the speaker is from an ethnic minority background.

Goodie Okechukwu, a writer with expertise in accent bias and inclusion, states in her article “Accent Based discrimination, a not so new Paradigm” that effective communication is the means by which our connection to others are deepened. Accents are likely to pose a barrier to effective communication when the listener lacks goodwill. Without this goodwill, the accented speaker’s degree of communicative competence is irrelevant.

This is a situation that I and other students not only from Africa face on a daily basis.

Mercer student Kenneth Thomas Baidoo, who is from West Africa and majoring in Computer Information Systems, says sometimes when he speaks amongst his American friends who have the native accent, he finds himself curving his words to sound more native because when he speaks with his accent, they do not make an effort to listen.

Okechukwu points out that one’s accent is part of their identity. As an African in America, I am often referred to as “African American” based on the color of my skin. But that term is typically attached to a different population, and speaking immediately reveals something about my own social and cultural identity that clashes with expectations, whether consciously or unconsciously.

According to an article for the American Psychological Association by Rosina Lippi-Green, listeners who have prejudice against accents can not hear what a person has to say because “they consider accent as a litmus test for exclusion.”

The stereotypes around accents are not new but little attention is given to this. It is overlooked despite its importance in effective communication amongst students and faculty members.

Educational institutions can help reduce this stigma by creating more awareness on campus. A starting point is recognizing the existence of accent-based discrimination, and creating awareness about it by incorporating it into the already existent anti-discrimination programs.
Kamala Harris: What do all those firsts mean?  
My VP looks like a complex person who shouldn’t be reduced

law professor Lara Bazelon describes some of these discrepancies. Harris has been criticized for her involvement in allegedly wrongful convictions and outrageous policing, as well as her voting record on issues like drug policy and use of police body cameras. Most of these issues disproportionately affect minority populations.

Just a few weeks ago, the libertarian magazine Reason called out The Washington Post for attempting to “memory-hole” Harris when The Post edited her tasteless banter out of an interview conducted in 2019, while she was on the campaign trail for her presidential bid. In the interview, she is depicted mockingly imitating an inmate begging for food and water, while comparing her strenuous campaign to imprisonment.

As a student who is familiar with the semi-delirium of overwork and sleeplessness, I can be forgiving of the bizarre statements. But they were made on the record, and the effort to scrub them from her history is a prime example of a spirit of inauthenticity that she sometimes displays. The tactful omission of problematic stances she has held in the past feeds this image.

It isn’t just her negative track record that is overlooked when we put her on our historiographic significance. Many of Kamala Harris’ admirable achievements and credentials—those things that construct her unique self—are being flattened into the identities of Person of Color, First-Generation American, and Female.

There is profound value in the positive experience that a young person may have when they can see themselves in a prominent figure. The flood of #MyVPLooksLikeMe posts on Twitter feels like the digital equivalent to the staging of The White House.

It is easily followed by the assumption that just because a politician looks like you, means they are going to support issues important to you. This is something that politicians can take advantage of. Issues of institutionalized racism, classism, and sexism are not adequately confronted by her symbolic presence, no matter how potent.

With the election of President Biden and Vice President Harris, we have reached the end of the relentless horrors of the Trump administration. It would seem that the outrage parade is finally over, and the nation can begin to unpack our collective trauma. The eagerness to make meaningful change is embodied in Harris’ current political reputation. It feels like we can, at long last, unclench and operate with hope.

We may feel the temptation to disengage from political discourse, to stop checking our Twitter feeds with dread. But we have a responsibility to stay engaged, and no longer settle for the ceremonious lip-service of the status-quo. The intensity of amoralitiy in former president Donald Trump— and isn’t that former just such a sweet word— did serve, at the very least, to harshly illuminate the dysfunction that is corroding some parts of the American government. It was so extreme, you simply couldn’t look away. The fatigue is real and now, the relief is incremental.

Yet the push for minority representation and material change is ongoing. If we stop to catch our breath, how hard will it be to recall the will, in this awful age of COVID and chaos, to turn our attention back to the painful truths brought to light over the last four years? This is not to say that celebration is undue, but it could be conveniently exaggerated to draw attention away from the many dysfunctions that are not going away with Trump. These flaws are embedded in our institutions.

Ultimately, the question remains to be seen as to whether Kamala Harris will act according to her recently adopted public image, or according to her previously established personal beliefs. Of course, there is a third possibility: people can change. Perhaps the extremity of the Trump era may have some positive outcome, if, when confronted with the embodiment of harm and hatred, it may have changed the way some politicians see themselves. If this can cause those on the fence to question conservative-leaning political stances, that is truly something worth celebrating.
Dear Homebound Harry,

Try saving a photo of the campus to your computer and using it as a Zoom background. It'll feel just like you're there, except now you don't have to wear pants. -The VOICE

Dear VOICE,

I started MCCC in the fall and have never been on campus. I don't have any school spirit. Thoughts?

-Yay Yellow and Gold

Dear Yellow and Gold,

Grab a sharpie and your least favorite pair of sweats and draw a big Mercer M right below the knee. Congrat on your new swag!

-The VOICE

Dear VOICE,

Textbooks are so expensive, and I am a graduate? How can I use them after I away once I'm done class!

-Bookish Bob

Dear Bookish Bob,

Textbooks have a lot of hard-cover books can double as step-stools! Bonus round, placemats. Bonus round, brand new paperweights, fun uses. Think of them as swag!

-Congrats on your new

Dear VOICE,

I have a huge crush on another student in my Zoom class. How do I get their attention?

-Pining Paul

Dear Pining Paul,

Go the extra mile by tagging them in a TikTok with a doggo. Everyone loves doggos.

-The VOICE

Dear VOICE,

What's a saying that helps you through a difficult class? Calc is kicking my butt.

-Mathless Maddie

Dear Mathless,

"Every pizza is a personal meal" can sometimes put you at war with yourself. One side will have to surrender if you want to move forward. Let your better angels prevail.

-Dear VOICE

Dear VOICE,

You forgot something important somewhere. It's going to turn up but worry it could set back your plans in progress. It is okay to say no. The chance will still be there later.

-Pining Paul

Dear Pining Paul,

"Every pizza is a personal meal" can sometimes put you at war with yourself. One side will have to surrender if you want to move forward. Let your better angels prevail.

-Just keep swimming, Pisces, that is your forte. You have the tenacity, determination and grit. But how do you do it on your own? Step up and take the opportunity but worry it could set back your plans in progress. It is okay to say no. The chance will still be there later.

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-The VOICE