



# THE EMPIRE



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second volume, first issue of  
THE EMPIRE!

THE EMPIRE seeks to provide an outlet for the Horace Mann student to inform the school community on the city and state of New York. Whether it be through the keyboard or the camera lens, those who have contributed to this magazine have each done their part in bringing both themselves and their peers closer to the city around us.

THE EMPIRE Co-Presidents,  
Justin Gurvitch and Ryan Finlay

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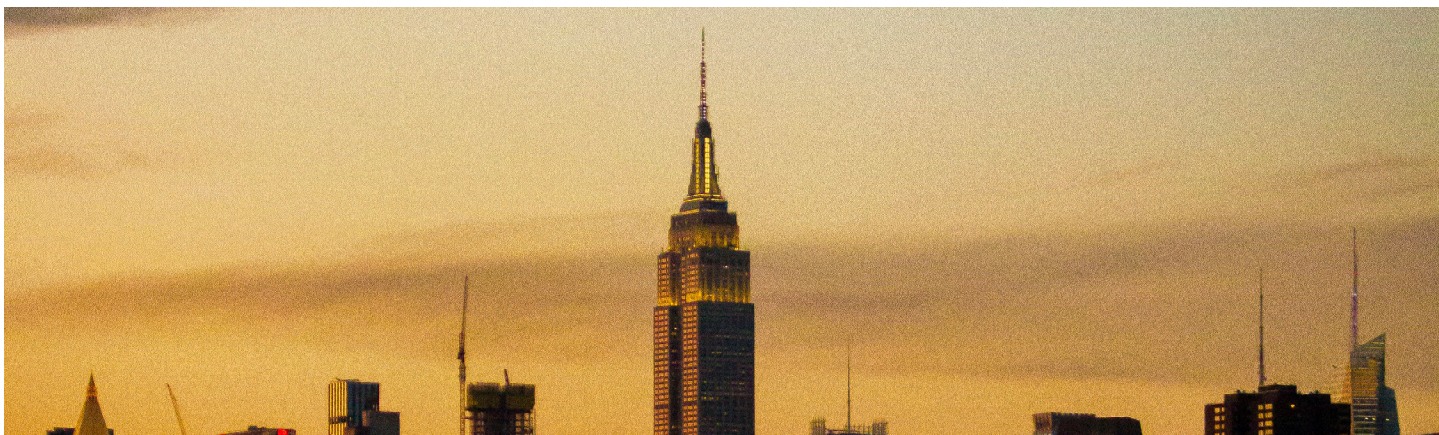
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Front Cover: Times Square, during the pandemic. Photograph by Julian Silverman.

Back Cover: The recently constructed Central Park Tower, rising through the fog at sunset. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.

Left: The Empire State Building. Photograph by Julian Silverman.





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## Cuomo's COVID Performance | Justin Gurvitch

On March 1, 2020, New York State reported its first case of COVID-19. Ten months later, the popular memory of what happened next goes like this: whereas the federal government offered little in the way of organized guidance or assistance to beleaguered states, New York State, with its powerful governor, Andrew Cuomo, acted with comparative swiftness. Concurrently, Cuomo's daily press conferences were broadcast nationwide and cemented him in the public imagination as the tireless defender of New Yorkers. So, when New York, which had been the ground zero of the pandemic in the spring, became the state with one of the best-coordinated and robust treatment initiatives, he was perfectly-positioned to capitalize on the state's (relative) success. In doing so, Cuomo emerged as the nation's symbol of effective governmental proactivity and a model public servant. In fact, the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences announced that it would be awarding him the 2020 International Emmy Founders Award for his 111-day period of daily briefings. In reality, however, he has revised history, misrepresenting his handling of the pandemic to the public while politically profiting off of this distortion. Through a combination of

appropriating others' ideas, plausible deniability, and manipulation of the media, Cuomo has cast himself as the savior of New York and America's prescient COVID czar, the facts notwithstanding.

In early March, during the initial stages of New York's pandemic experience, the governor's approach to the virus was one of laissez-faire absolutism rather than active, collaborative prevention. While it is true that Cuomo declared a state of emergency on March 7, six days after the state's first case, he then avoided statewide action for weeks. At a press conference on March 17, nearly three weeks after the first case, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, with whom the governor frequently clashes, announced that city residents should prepare themselves for an imminent "shelter-in-place" order following news that the city had nearly 1,000 confirmed cases. The following day, however, Cuomo appeared on a New York Times podcast, stating that "for any city or county to take an emergency action, the state has to approve it[, and that he] wouldn't approve shelter in place." His reasoning, much like that of then-President Donald Trump, was that the cure must not be worse than the problem itself: "Quarantine in place, [and] you can't leave your

home," Cuomo said. "The fear, the panic is a bigger problem than the virus." He then stripped local officials, including de Blasio, of the authority to order a shutdown for their respective municipalities while continuing to describe the virus as a "bad flu."

In the absence of action came grandstanding and, more importantly, contagion: a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation in April found that had the state and city issued social-distancing orders one or two weeks earlier (closing schools, stores, and restaurants, for example), New York's death toll could have been reduced by 50 to 80 percent and the economy would have recovered sooner. Even members of Cuomo's own party have criticized his mismanagement: when asked about the state's protocols, Stephen Levin, a Democratic City Councilman, stated that "Everything was slow. You have to adapt really quickly, and nothing we were doing was adapting quickly." While Cuomo asserted that everything was under control and that life could progress normally, a crisis actively unfolded. And, even when cases began to exponentially rise, he continued to drag his feet on imposing more substantive guidelines. Precious days after the term "social distancing" had been widely praised by medical



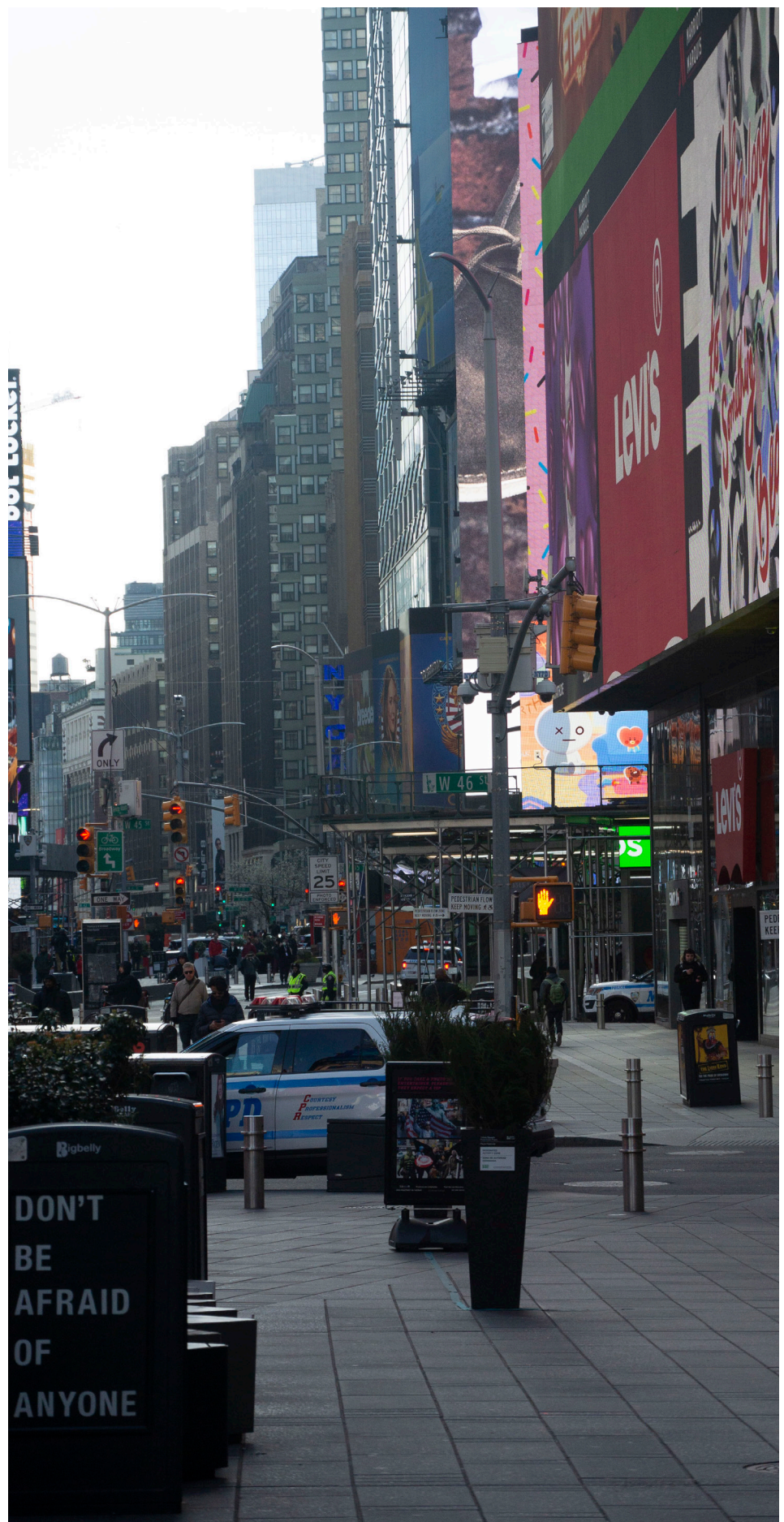
Left: Hospital staff outside of Lenox Hill Hospital. Photograph by Julian Silverman

Below: Times Square during the pandemic. Photograph by Ryan Finlay

authorities, Cuomo still refused to limit gatherings to anything smaller than groups of 500 people, for example. Throughout the period during which comprehensive testing, tracing, and quarantining could have nullified the most disruptive and destructive effects of the pandemic, the governor prioritized short-term public comfort over longer-term consequences—that is, the lives and prosperity of the people from whom he derives his mandate.

Furthermore, few of Cuomo's vaunted orders were originally-conceived, and he could not resist slighting de Blasio at every turn throughout the pandemic. The governor and the mayor have historically been at odds with each other about a plethora of issues, and the pandemic presented yet another arena for the familiar rivalry; this time, however, the stakes were far higher. After a weeks-long period of deliberation and pressure from Cuomo, de Blasio (who had been slow to act as well) prepared an announcement on March 15 that city public schools were to be closed immediately. City Hall informed the governor of the decision, which prompted him to exploit the news and snub his metropolitan adversary. Just hours before de Blasio's planned statement, Cuomo appeared on television to announce the shutdown of the largest education system in America. His impromptu press conference was nationally-publicized. In doing so, the governor not only upstaged the mayor but also firmly cemented himself as the face of the pandemic response, thereby linking himself to any and all future victories against the virus.

With this new legitimacy stemming from the public's perception of him as the expert, Cuomo became more assertive in his COVID leadership. As other large states such as California issued stay-at-home orders, the governor continued to ignore urgent requests for a statewide quarantine from dozens of high-level public servants. He appeared on CNN on March 19 to defend his stance, stating in response to the officials' pleas that, resorting to his refrain, "the fear [was] more contagious than the virus." When new statistics offered a grim forecast, however, he once again presented a city plan as his own, reversing his former laissez-faire policy and ordering a total shutdown effective March 22. He was soon widely praised for his proactivity and foresight in doing so, and he reached unprecedented levels of popularity on both sides of







the aisle.

Perhaps the single-least-excusable blemish on Cuomo's pandemic record is his order that filled the state's nursing homes with patients who were known to be COVID-positive. In general, nursing homes tend to be weak points in any healthcare system's infection response capability: their residents, the elderly and the infirm, live in close quarters; staff often lack paid sick leave, encouraging them to continue working even if they experience symptoms; and outside visitation is common. Consequently, both they and their residents are highly susceptible to infection, and their quarantine is known to be of high priority.

During New York's COVID surge in late March, however, hospitals across the state were rapidly overwhelmed by the crush of virus patients. The Cuomo administration saw nursing homes as a vehicle to open up beds and ameliorate the stressed healthcare system, and in doing so he ignored the concerns of physicians who worried that transferring hospital patients to nursing homes could create an environment in which the virus could rapidly spread. On March 25, the state's Department of Health, acting on behalf of the governor, sent an advisory to every nursing home in the state with the express order that "no resident [...] be denied re-admission or admission to [a nurs-

ing home] solely based on a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19." The directive continued, stating that nursing homes were "prohibited from requiring a hospitalized resident who [was] determined medically stable to be tested for COVID-19 prior to admission or readmission." In many cases, this took the form of a vicious cycle in which elderly patients were transferred to hospitals for stabilization, became infected during their stay there, and inevitably spread the virus upon their return to the nursing home.

Cuomo reversed the order in early May after public pressure, but the damage caused by his refusal to recognize COVID's contagious potential had already been done. Thousands of infected patients had been transferred to nursing homes over the six weeks before the governor's policy reversal, and COVID ravaged New York's nursing homes. It lingered for months after, too. As of November 25, the state's official count of confirmed COVID-related deaths at nursing homes was 3977, the number of presumed COVID-related deaths at nursing homes was 2783, there had been 127 confirmed COVID-related deaths at adult-care facilities, and 52 presumed COVID-related deaths had been reported at adult-care facilities. In total, these statistics amount to nearly 7,000 deaths. Additionally, nearly 40,000 nursing home staff—approximate-

ly a quarter of the state's workforce—had become infected by early June. In contrast, one of the only regions to have no nursing home deaths while the order was active was Rensselaer County, where the local government secretly disobeyed Cuomo and refused to admit infected patients (there has since been an outbreak there). Even in the early stages of the pandemic when scientists were working to understand the basic properties of COVID, it was common knowledge that the virus was, as many viruses are, infectious. Regardless, Cuomo approved this plan.

In response to criticism of his controversial nursing home advisory, Cuomo, through the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), published a report to present the nursing home crisis from the government's perspective. In the 33-page document, entitled "Factors Associated with Nursing Home Infections and Fatalities in New York State During the COVID-19 Global Health Crisis," NYSDOH shifted blame from flawed government policy onto healthcare workers, who it stated had "transmitted the virus unknowingly." At the same time, it asserted that admission of infected patients "could not [have been] the driver of nursing home infections or fatalities" and that there existed insufficient evidence to determine if the Cuomo administration's lax visitation



Left: A mobile morgue outside Lenox Hill Hospital during the Spring of 2020. Photograph by Ryan Finlay  
 Below: Ambulances outside Lenox Hill Hospital. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.



policies—that is, allowing visitors to enter without having completed a COVID test or a symptom check—had contributed to the virus’ spread.

The report also praised the governor’s response to the pandemic, highlighting statistics that showed New York’s superior performance as measured by nursing home deaths per capita. While NYSDOH argued that 45 states had reported higher fatality percentages than the Empire State, it neglected to clarify that the department only counted residents who physically died in a nursing home; patients who had been transferred to hospitals or other facilities and those who had been taken in by family members were excluded from the report. Furthermore, the governor has refused to release the expanded statistics of all patients, spurring an inquiry by the Department of Justice that he has slammed as little more than a political charade. In fact, a whistleblower recently revealed that the Cuomo administration deliberately withheld information from federal authorities to avoid an investigation by the Department of Justice—that is, to preserve Cuomo’s false reality. Independent analysts have in fact determined that New York likely has over 10,000 nursing home deaths—far more than the governor’s report claims. The fact that official numbers likely misrepresent the data in the state with the highest death

toll severely undermines the credibility and reliability of the report and, by extension, Cuomo himself.

Having established himself as America’s leading bureaucratic authority on the virus, Cuomo necessarily tied himself to the state’s failures in addition to its successes; that said, he has repeatedly favored denial over responsibility. In March and April, a number of New York counties were unable to contain COVID as a result of Cuomo’s aforementioned stripping of their authority, but Cuomo has refused to acknowledge his role in enabling viral spread. In the Rockland County town of Ramapo, for example, a small outbreak emerged on April 2. County officials moved to impose a quarantine, but they never received approval from the governor. As a result, the county became a hotbed of infection. When asked about his radio silence, Cuomo stated that his office had been unaware of the request. The Rockland County executive responded that he was “dumbfounded” at the governor’s oversight.

Furthermore, while Cuomo delivered a vision of competent government during the spring’s virus surge, he has now turned to prevarication. At one of his Emmy-award-winning press conferences on November 18, reporters from across the aisle told the governor that they were confused about his plan to reopen New York

City’s schools and asked for clarification. Currently, there is no unified state/city plan; rather than admit as much, however, Cuomo lashed out at the reporters, accusing them of being part of a bipartisan media conspiracy to undermine him.

In early April, Cuomo stated in an interview with the New York Times that “Every action [he] took was criticized at the time as premature [but that the] facts have proven [his] decisions correct.” The facts, however, present Cuomo in a less-heroic light. He stalled a statewide lockdown for precious weeks, unnecessarily endangered the state’s citizens—particularly the elderly—and has yet to own up. The governor does deserve credit for his handling of New York’s pandemic response. Regardless, it is important to keep in mind his mismanagement of key issues and rebuff his attempts to whitewash his COVID legacy. On October 13, Cuomo published *American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic*, a largely-self-aggrandizing book with little discussion of his failures. That is the Cuomo that will be remembered; for the sake of posterity, both his triumphs and tragedies must be recorded. In other words, critical reflection and analysis, not Emmys, are New York’s prudent path forward. ■



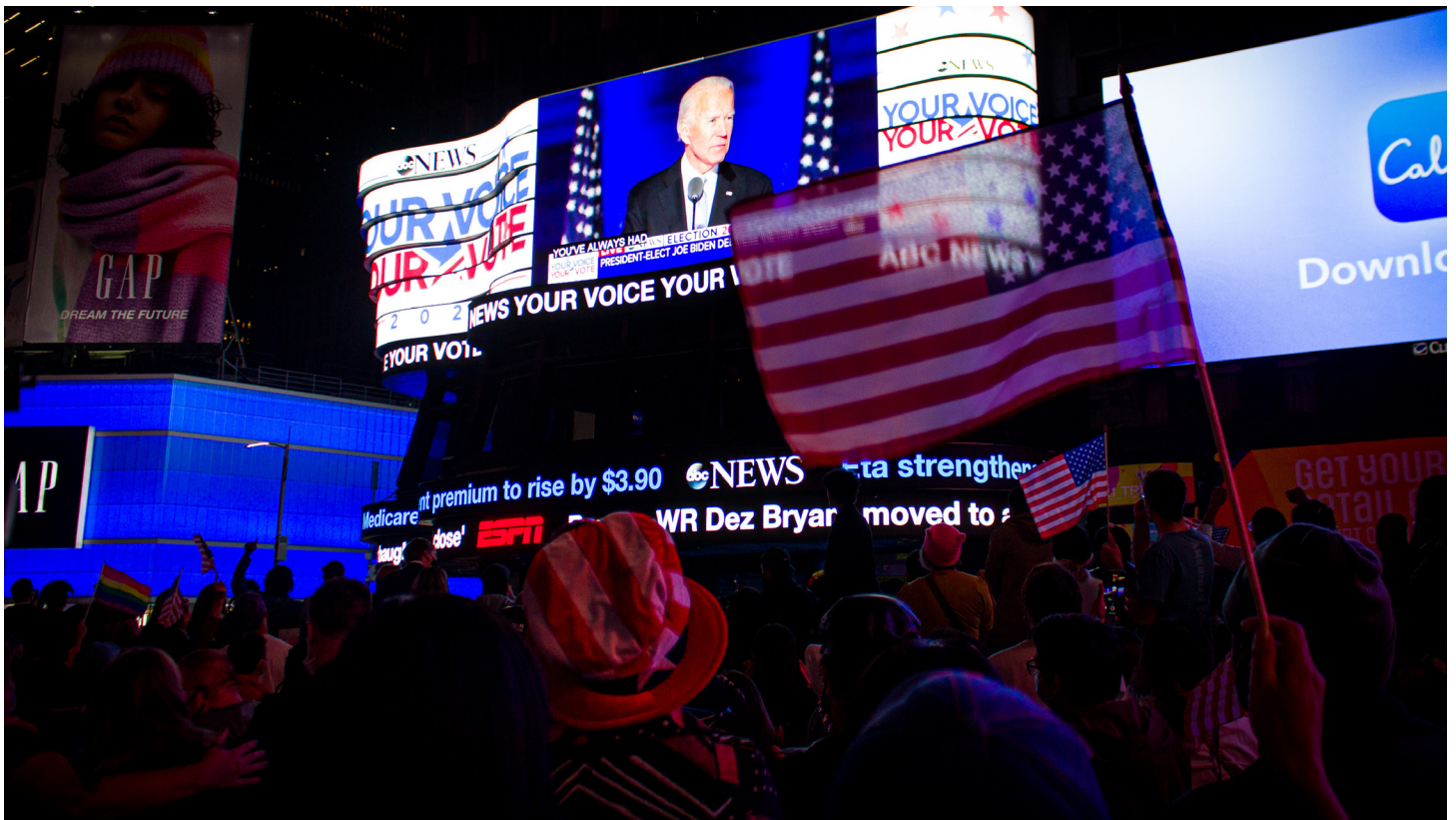


Above: "Proudly Flying"  
Right: "46"

Times Square, Manhattan  
Times Square, Manhattan

November 7, 2020  
November 7, 2020





## Through My Lens: Election Week 2020

### Julian Silverman

In a year as unusual as this one, it only made sense for the 2020 election to be anything but normal. As Covid numbers were breaking records daily, the debate over the legitimacy of mail in ballots took center stage, and President Trump floated the possibility of not conceding, many cast their votes wondering what the future held. With tensions running high on both sides, the one thing that people suspected was that election day and post election day conflicts were close to inevitable. So, as November 3rd neared, the country began to brace for the worst. Stores began to board up, it was clear on social media that people were ready to protest, and I, camera charged, was ready to document anything that went down. While not knowing what to expect, having recorded the lockdown and the Black Lives Matter protests, it was a given that I would continue documenting the trauma and drama of 2020.

At 5:05 am on election morning, I walked out my front door on the way to catch one of the first 1 trains of the morning. I was headed to midtown, hoping to document a city on edge before my 8:25 class. I exited the Times Square stop and was met with the

unusual sight of boarded up stores. Walking up 7th Avenue, every store was either covered in plywood or surrounded by workers, having toiled through the night to put up the last planks of wood. While not as eerie as empty Times Square during late March and April, this sight came close. From here, I made my way south until I reached 14th Street. And just like Times Square, 14th Street felt like it was bracing for a storm, with barely a single storefront left uncovered. With that said, the city was already bustling. Despite not even being 6 am yet, lines, stretching for blocks, were already forming outside of polling places. These New Yorkers were determined to have their voices heard. From Union Square, I biked to Trump Tower, passing blocks upon blocks of boarded up stores along the way. Despite barricades along both sides of 5th Avenue and multiple armed NYPD officers, the area was fairly quiet. So, I began to make my way home, wondering if I would be out to document a different feeling city in less than twelve hours.

But, with my camera charged and ready to go and my ears to the streets, election night came and went without any conflicts.

After President Trump's premature declaration of victory in a middle of the night press conference, America woke up to day two of election week without a clear winner. As more results came in from key swing states and the President began to call for an end to counting, the city roared to life. Starting in the early afternoon Wednesday, protests in opposition to the President's self declaration popped up around the city. By 6:30pm, I was back at Trump Tower for the second time in 36 hours. After some brief words by the organizers, a group of protesters, stretching slightly more than half a block long, began to march, followed by sixteen police cars and surrounded by dozens of officers in riot gear. The protest proved to be entirely peaceful, except for one arrest, with protestors chanting "count every vote" and "this is what democracy looks like." Unfortunately, not all protests in the city were like the one I was marching with. As we neared 42nd Street, I saw a video on social media of police kettling and arresting protesters in the West Village. Quickly, I was on the subway downtown. Roughly 20 minutes later, now around 10pm, I arrived at an incredibly tense scene on the northside





of Washington Square Park. NYPD officers in riot gear were standing on the edges of the street, while protestors continuously chanted and blasted YG and Nipsey Hussle's notorious, anti-Donald Trump song "FDT." Despite a few isolated clashes and words exchanged between some individual officers and protestors, the scene remained fairly conflict free, despite the tension. So, feeling that the night was over, I headed towards the subway at Union Square. But, as I approached the corner of 14th Street and 4th Avenue, I watched dozens of officers in riot gear and on bicycles kettle (confining, often by force) and arrested at least 30 seemingly peaceful protestors, with a few being press and fellow photographers. The arrested protestors were then placed in police cars and vans, while the officers on police bikes rushed towards and forced the remaining protestors out of the street. Other than a few counter protestors, the rest of the night remained peaceful. By 11pm, I was

on the subway home, looking through my shots, and processing everything that I had just witnessed. As a photographer, I always attempt to stay neutral and avoid an agenda, but it was hard not to be overcome with outrage after what I had just witnessed.

Like many others, I was checking the election results constantly as they slowly came in from swing states across the country. Then, after days of waiting, the election was finally called for Joe Biden on November 7th at 11:24am. Within seconds the city came alive. Not even three minutes after the call, I joined the growing crowds outside. Hopping on a Citibike, I made my way through the Upper West Side towards Columbus Circle; stopping along the way to document the pure joy and relief of many New Yorkers. After joining a growing crowd in Columbus Circle, outside Trump International Hotel, I slowly moved towards Washington Square Park, making stops along the way at Trump Tow-

er, Times Square, and Union Square. But, no matter where I was, the city was celebrating. People were cheering and hugging each other, shedding a few tears, waving American flags and even popping bottles of champagne; this was in stark contrast to the city's dark mood only three days earlier. In a city that still feels somewhat dead after the Spring's lockdown, this day truly felt like the pre-Covid city that we all remember. So, after walking over 10 miles, I arrived in Times Square in hopes of catching President-Elect Biden's victory speech. Clearly I wasn't alone in this thought because I walked into a hoard of people lining 7th avenue and watching the next president speak on the big screens. Watching and reading the captions on the screen intensely, supporters waved American flags as cars with people standing out the sunroofs honked and yelled as they passed through a Times Square that was completely dead and boarded up only four days earlier. After



Left: "Boarded Up" East Midtown, Manhattan

November 3, 2020

Below: "Standoff"

Washington Square Park, Manhattan

November 4, 2020





Top: "Bike Squad"  
Bottom: "Biden 2020"

Union Square, Manhattan  
Times Square, Manhattan

November 4, 2020  
November 7, 2020



nearly 15 miles of walking, I was finally home and reflected on a type of day that I had never experienced before. November 7th was truly a once in a lifetime experience.

Overall, the election week of 2020 saw

its fair share of emotions in New York City. Starting off boarded up, the city ended the week with a full-blown celebration. In between, New Yorkers demonstrated all the mix of emotions that election week might have brought anywhere else: anxiety, hope,

fear, and outrage. In the end, I am thankful that I was able to capture yet another historic event in such an intense year. ■





Top Left: "The Next Generation"  
Top Right: "Generational"  
Bottom: "God Bless America"

Columbus Circle, Manhattan  
Times Square, Manhattan  
Times Square, Manhattan

November 7, 2020  
November 7, 2020  
November 7, 2020





# Gentrification in the Kingsbridge Communities

## Tuhin Ghosh

Gentrification is an economic phenomenon that has rooted itself in many parts of the United States of America and around the world. Its ramifications and potential can be clearly seen very close to Horace Mann, in the Bronx, where the wealth disparity between the Riverdale and Kingsbridge neighborhoods has provided the base for this phenomenon. Though it is imperative to alleviate this issue, it is also pertinent to look at the reasons behind the wealth disparity of the Riverdale-Kingsbridge area and its effect on gentrification in Kingsbridge itself.

First, what exactly is gentrification? The Urban Displacement Project defines it as “a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood - by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in - as well as demographic change.” As residents with more wealth move into these neighborhoods, they will attract higher-end businesses and pay more taxes. Government spending, amenities, and rents increase, attracting more wealthy individuals and families which creates a cycle. Though this seems to be good for the neighborhood, the less wealthy families are left behind to pay increased property taxes, widening the wealth disparity. Smaller businesses will be pushed out by larger establishments that cater to the needs of the newer residents.

Furthermore, in certain instances, there is also an ethnic shift, and people of color have often been the longer-term residents of the neighborhood. Even if these individuals can financially remain in the neighborhood, the sense of community and be-

longing is lost due to the influx of people of a generally higher socioeconomic status and different ethnicity. Gentrification in Kingsbridge follows similar patterns but is unique in its own ways.

The current wealth gap that exists in the Riverdale-Kingsbridge area is not due to gentrification but actually due to the types of residents who moved into each neighborhood. Originally, wealthy merchants, especially Jewish and Irish, constructed their homes and mansions in Riverdale during the mid-nineteenth century. Along with the spectacular views of the Hudson River from Riverdale, the neighborhood was also close to Manhattan and free of the dust and grime of the city. The opening of the Henry Hudson Parkway in the 1930s encouraged the growth of Riverdale.

There were many Irish immigrants in Kingsbridge as well, but through the twentieth century, more Dominican residents moved into the areas around Broadway. According to a report in 2015 by the New York City Department of Health, 66% of residents in Kingsbridge and some other surrounding areas were Hispanic.

Furthermore, cooperative housing, such as the Amalgamated Housing Cooperative encourages residents with a “moderate income” to apply to rent one of the affordable units, according to their website. The program to construct the development, just south of Van Cortlandt Park, began in 1927 and the latest building was built in 1970, prompting families with lower-income, compared to Riverdale residents, to move to Kingsbridge. Due to the prevalence of such families in the Kingsbridge area, government spending and job opportunities

were much more limited which caused these families to become even poorer.

Ultimately, though these factors, which were the root of the current wealth disparity of the Riverdale-Kingsbridge area, are not related to gentrification, they have laid the foundation for the gentrification of Kingsbridge in coming years.

For example, the Kingsbridge armory was used by the military from the early 1900s, but it was used as a homeless shelter later on. The necessity for the shelter originates from the wealth disparity mentioned previously.

A renovation plan, nevertheless, was proposed to transform the armory into a set of ice skating rinks which could be used for a variety of purposes according to the Mayor’s Office of Environmental Coordination. Phase 1 of the renovations began in 2016, and the armory has the potential to be one of the largest ice-skating rink facilities in the world or even used for NHL games. This could be the first of many such renovations which attract higher-income individuals to the area, beginning the process of gentrification in Kingsbridge.

There is almost no evidence that ice-skating is popular in the Bronx, which signifies that the rinks will be used by outsiders. The development of hockey teams or a liking of ice-skating in general for the Bronx will be gradual, during which gentrification may have already taken place.

Another step towards gentrification is the proliferation of housing developments such as one led by developer Alan Bell at 2700 Jerome Avenue, which has been completed right across the street from the armory. Though 40 units were guaranteed to go to



homeless people and the rest to low-middle income families, this guarantee is only backed by the developers. A brief pamphlet by NYC Housing Connedt details that prospective families may apply for affordable housing in 45% of the units in the building. The other 55% will go to members of the Bronx Community Board 7 and municipal employees.

If the developers retract from their promise of the 40 units to homeless families, they can also change this agreement when the renovation of the armory finishes to invite outside families to reside there. This housing development could possibly be linked to the armory to support gentrification in Kingsbridge.

The development of the retail corridor of Kingsbridge, a set of strip malls and large corporation retailers along Broadway, will aid gentrification. With the integration of brands such as BJ's, Aldi, and TJ Maxx, the retail corridor would be ideal for higher-income visitors who may be looking to move to Kingsbridge.

A report detailing the concerns and recommendations of the Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., in 2014, describes the ways in which the corridor could be improved. This report recommends measures such as creating new parks and instituting plans to integrate Citi Bike to "make the area more attractive to shoppers and residents alike". This common sentiment in the report shows that government officials were actively attempting to make Kingsbridge more aesthetically attractive which would have aided the process of gentrification.

It is relevant to mention that these recommendations stem from the lack of government spending in cleaning public areas such as the retail corridor. Clearly, this lack of spending shows how the roots of the wealth disparity in the Riverdale-Kingsbridge communities have led to the opportunity for gentrification. The presence and further innovation of this retail corridor would be the final touch to the trifecta of factors pulling in new residents: attractions such as the armory ice skating rink, locations for residence with new housing developments, and finally the opportunity for shopping.

Attempts to reduce the effects of gentrification, such as mandating a certain amount



of affordable housing in the new developments, have been made. However, if the community and businesses around the aforementioned apartments are no longer the same, many residents may not find it worthwhile to remain in the area. If the older residents vacate these spaces, wealthier families will take advantage of the opportunity, only increasing the consequences of new developments.

Ultimately, the history of the wealth gap

in Kingsbridge has provided the base for rapid real-estate development and community innovation. If Kingsbridge continues on its trajectory, soon its communities will be unrecognizable compared to what they were a few years ago. The case of Kingsbridge is one of many where gentrification is beginning to take hold, but the history of its wealth disparity makes its case unique compared to even surrounding neighborhoods. ■





## New York City's Homelessness Crisis During the Pandemic | Esha Patel

While it seems that there are more homeless people on the streets of NYC, this problem is not new to the city. Covid-19 seems to have exacerbated the homelessness crisis in NYC. Before the pandemic, millions of New Yorkers were already living at the poverty line. One in four New Yorkers were paying their rent with more than half of their income, according to the Bowery Project. With New York City's unemployment rate topping state numbers, at 13.1 percent, many people living in poverty have lost their incomes, city homeless numbers for both individuals and families have spiked.

The nonprofit Coalition for the Homeless reported that in September of this year, 57,252 homeless people were in municipal shelters. Of that, there were 12,690 homeless families and 18,745 homeless children, and these statistics have not substantially improved for years. With the pandemic causing NYC schools to move towards either hybrid or complete online schooling, another burden is put on homeless families: adjusting to online learning. Even with city-issued laptops, homeless children

in shelters still face challenges with remote learning, like having access to either slow or no wifi at all. For children experiencing homelessness who do not live in shelters, online learning can be even more difficult. With parents unable to send their children to school during the pandemic, working parents who are experiencing homelessness that cannot work remotely are strained by the challenge of finding childcare while they are at work during the day.

Individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the city are particularly vulnerable for COVID-19. Not only do they experience challenges accessing healthcare, but also lack access to shelter where they can appropriately social distance and isolate themselves. During the pandemic, organizations like Care For the Homeless (CFH) have continued to provide New York homeless populations with medical and mental healthcare at various locations throughout the city. The CFH found that over 50 percent of their adult patients have overlapping/comorbid conditions which include asthma, diabetes, and hypertension. These underlying medical conditions

put individuals at higher risk for complications during recovery from the Covid-19. Therefore medical experts have advised people with underlying conditions to be especially cautious during the pandemic. However, shelter conditions in the city, where the majority of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness sleep, lack private space for people to distance themselves. In addition to presenting homeless children with education challenges, homeless people who are at high risk for COVID-19 have become even more vulnerable due to their lack of private space within shelters.

In the month of April alone, 58 homeless people died of COVID-19, 54 of which were among the homeless population living in shelters. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, the number of COVID-19 deaths in April was 157 percent higher than the number of deaths among homeless New Yorkers in shelters during an average month in 2019. These statistics draw attention to the primary challenge that shelters have faced during the pandemic: implementing safety precautions. However, implementing the pandemic safety pre-





cautions like social distancing and separation of individuals is impossible in shelters where there are communal bathrooms, dormitories, and dining areas. Also, maintaining sanitation of these communal spaces in addition to maintaining personal sanitation like washing hands, can be difficult in shelters. Therefore, over the summer, the city relocated homeless shelter residents to hotels all over the city which were empty as a result of the city's drop in tourism.

In August, when the city moved shelter residents into the Lucerne Hotel, local residents responded with an uproar of criticism. Residents created a private Facebook group called "Upper West Siders for Safer Streets," which currently has more than 15.2 thousand members. Local residents who were upset about the city's decision to move the shelter residents voiced concerns about crime to justify their reactions. But, does homelessness translate into crime? In an August New York Times article, Amanda Fialk, a clinical social worker who is a resident of the area, called the behavior of people on Facebook "'tone-deaf, racist, biased, [and] privileged.'" On the other hand, commenters on the page have said that they

have seen men use and sell drugs openly and threaten pedestrians. Gary Kokalari, another resident of the neighborhood, was also quoted in the article, saying that he had seen an increase in public intoxication and drug use in the neighborhood following the move, aligning more with the Facebook commenters than Fialk. He also added that residents are concerned about going outside now.

In recent weeks, a group of Financial District residents who call themselves the Downtown New Yorkers, Inc., lost their lawsuit which attempted to block the forced relocation of homeless men from the Lucerne Hotel to a former Radisson Hotel in the Financial District. The backlash that the city has received calls attention to the list of challenges that the city has faced in managing the homeless population during the pandemic. If communities with the reputation of being some of the most liberal neighborhoods in the whole country are pushing away the growing population of people experiencing homelessness that are in need during a world wide health epidemic, where can this vulnerable population go to remain safe?

So what's next? How can the city ensure the safety of homeless people as the city heads towards another spike in the pandemic? How can the city help those who are experiencing homelessness as New Yorkers face economic uncertainties that, paired with these public health concerns, will likely further exacerbate the city's homelessness crisis? The city has made progress on making shelters more fit for online schooling by working to install Wi-Fi in city-run homeless shelters. In the case of another shelter-in-place, like the one issued earlier in March, frontline services which provide essential resources to homeless populations, like food banks and soup kitchens, will suspend their services. If this occurs, there will be a surge in need for resources amongst homeless New Yorkers, thus straining organizations', like Coalition for the Homeless', resources. Donations to non-profit organizations like these would help the New York City homeless population have access to resources like meals, healthcare, personal protective equipment, and other services. ■





## The Power of New York: The Collapse of Boss Tweed's Tammany Hall | Thomas Grant

New York City has always been rife with political corruption. From shady business dealings to violations in food and building inspections, there are city officials, even today, discovered seeking to benefit themselves at the expense of the hard-working residents that they are supposed to represent. Yet, today's corruption is but a small glimmer of its past: The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a political machine unify government, media, and business under the control of a single entity, in turn establishing a model of urban bossism that would serve as a template for aspiring bosses in the following decades. William Tweed, or Boss Tweed for his greedy nature, would prosper in his position as head of Tammany Hall, further expanding the entity as a powerhouse that held a stake in New York politics.

The origins of the great Tammany Hall stem from its humble beginnings in the 1780's as a response to the growing influences of the city's aristocratic elite. The leaders of the elite had managed to limit suffrage to freeholders, thereby strengthening the Society of Cincinnati. A collection of Continental Army officers, the Society of Cincinnati had a more monarchical and centralist agenda; William Mooney's Society of St. Tammany sought to create an opposing society that was native in character and democratic in principle and action. For

more than three decades after its founding, on May 12, 1789, the society served this role representing the middle-class opposition, rather than the lower-class opposition, to the policies of the Federalist Party and the elite.

In 1805, the Society of St. Tammany had obtained a charter of incorporation from the state legislature, allowing them to assume their role as a charitable body that would provide relief and services to its members. Organized in a collection of general, nominating, corresponding, and ward committees, the general committee of a mere thirty members would gradually expand to encompass thousands of members from every section of New York. The Society of St. Tammany established Tammany Hall, which would serve as the meeting place for its members that would protect them from opposition and conflict. When met with this opposition from the Irish in 1817, Tammany Hall was forced to expand its membership from solely "native born patriots," naturalizing the immigrants into their ranks of male suffragists and fighters against oppressive policies to democracy. The ensuing decade saw the entity wage a successful campaign to extend voting rights to all propertyless white males, garnering widespread support from the majority of the working class.

By 1868, Tammany Hall had morphed

from a suffragist society into a political powerhouse. Under the leadership of William Tweed, the Democratic Party-affiliated machine even formed ties with the Republican Party. Although there were two different degrees of Republican involvement in Tammany Hall, this partnership bloomed into policymaking, business deals, and spoils that benefited both those whose relationship with Tweed was purely transactional and those who openly participated in Tweed's expansive political and business enterprises.

Tweed capitalized on the connections of his political machine. Seizing what is now estimated to be between thirty million and two hundred million dollars from the public treasury, the Tammany Hall leader could be found in his Fifth Avenue mansion flaunting a large diamond stud on his shirt. By the late 1860s, he had become one of the largest landowners in New York City. Tweed even utilized newly chartered savings banks run by the Police Commissioner to route city money to Tammany projects, creating for himself an almost limitless supply of funding that could be utilized for his own ends.

Tammany Hall's embezzlement of city funds gave way to opposition from the city's Republicans, however. Realizing that the political machine would sweep city and county offices in the late 1860s, the poli-



cymakers in Albany consolidated power through the Charter of 1857, placing the majority of everyday governance into the hands of Republican-appointed Metropolitan Boards.

In response to the Charter, Tweed, at the time a state senator from the Fourth District, colluded with certain Republicans who would support the devolution of taxing, spending, and other basic municipal powers to shift these aspects of government back to Tammany control. The subsequent “Tweed Charter” of 1870 returned control of New York into the hands of the Tammany officials in New York City. Along with the “Tweed Charter’s” Tax Levy bill, a Board of Audit was created that included prominent members of the political machine, and trusted members occupied a variety of important positions in the state government. As a result of the legal reforms, Tammany Hall tripled city debt and laundered money through inflated bills to preferred contractors, benefiting their constituents at the expense of the city’s well being.

As Tammany’s corruption became more apparent, so did the opposition against it. When some of the political machine’s own members leaked incriminating evidence of the entity’s corruption to the New York Times, these opponents capitalized on the information accordingly. In a series of damning articles beginning in July 1871, the paper disseminated information about Tweed’s corruption all across New York. In a combined effort by Harper’s Weekly and a handful of other newspapers, the press campaign exposed the parasitic entity of Tammany Hall that had been preying on the livelihoods of hardworking New Yorkers for decades. Harper’s Weekly cartoonist Thomas Nast played a crucial role in the dissemination effort, as his graphic portrayal of Tweed’s greed and power could be easily understood by Tammany’s illiterate constituents. The boss was depicted as an enormously bloated man, drawn as a direct contrast to the skinny and starving New Yorkers who toiled each day to survive. Nast, a German immigrant, felt that Tweed undermined the equal opportunity that fueled the American Dream narrative. In his desire to preserve such a narrative, his cartoons became so influential that Tweed allegedly ordered Tammany officials to “stop them damn pictures!”

Such a portrayal, however, undermined the objective truth of the boss’s relationship with New York. Tweed was able to stay in power not through his displays of greed or

corruption, but rather through his displays of generosity and political consciousness. He was a good family man and an even better influencer, establishing legislative programs to open schools, orphanages, almshouses, public baths and the Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospitals. Although his thievery extended for millions of dollars, the millions more that he pumped into city infrastructure made his tenure as boss appear a little more robin-hood-esque.

Further exaggerated were Nast’s portrayals of Tweed as a dominant force in New York politics. The population of the city’s upper and lower classes meshed together in a system of economic competition, diversifying public interest toward a variety of groups. Tammany Hall was just one of these groups, representing the desires of immigrants subject to the oppressive business practices of the elite. By appealing to these immigrants, Tweed did more to better



Left: View of Williamsburg Bridge. Photograph by Juliette Shang  
Above: The Statue of Liberty. Photograph by Julian Silverman





the condition of New York than redistribute wealth; he gave a voice to the voiceless, and consequently, power to the powerless.

In his effort to concentrate power for his constituents, Tweed posed a challenge to the entire Republican establishment during the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant. Corruption circles such as the Whiskey Ring, Indian Ring, or Credit Mobilier defrauded millions from the government, transferring wealth from the hands of hard working Americans to the clutches of the elite all across the country. By painting Tweed as a scapegoat for the entirety of corruption in New York politics, the Republican Party attempted to weather public backlash for their own malicious practices.

The media barrage succeeded for Republicans - following the 1871 election, a litany of fraud, forgery, and larceny charges were brought against Tweed and his allies. Tweed was forced to resign as public works commissioner, state senator, and head of Tammany Hall. Although the first criminal trial against Tweed resulted in a hung jury, the second trial ended with a conviction on misdemeanor charges with a sentence of a \$12,500 fine and thirteen years behind bars. When in 1875 an appeals court reduced his

fine to \$250 and his jail time to one year, Tweed was released from Blackwell's Island in New York after nineteen months, whereupon he was rearrested a day later on civil charges.

After escaping Ludlow Street jail on December 4th, 1875, a civil jury found Tweed liable for over six million dollars in March of 1876. After fleeing to Spain, he was subsequently arrested and deported after mistakenly being identified as a child abductor from Nast's cartoons. He would die from a heart failure in April in the same Ludlow Street jail that he had broken out of two years earlier, powerless, broke, and alone.

Now infamous for its corruption, Tammany Hall persisted after Tweed's death. Although enjoying a resurgence under Richard Croker in 1886 and his successor, Charles F. Murphy in 1902, thirty years later, reform efforts by New York City Mayors Fiorello H. La Guardia and John V. Lindsay, among other figures, brought an end to the once influential power of the now powerless political machine. It finally collapsed in 1967 as nothing but a warning to those politicians who seek to better themselves at the expense of the people of New York that even the most powerful political machines

will eventually crumble to the power of democracy, or so the common narrative goes. Yet, a closer look at Tweed's Tammany Hall will reveal an entity that tried to make the conditions of New Yorkers better, that crumbled to the power of democracy and media manipulation. ■

Left: Apartment buildings in Carnegie Hill, Upper East Side of Manhattan. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.

Below: The Flatiron Building, Manhattan. Photograph by Julian Silverman.









## New York City Riots: Now and Then | Logan Dracos

New York City (NYC), as one of the largest cities in the world, is sometimes subject to violence. For this article, I will be ignoring the external violence that has afflicted the city in the past (Such as the September 11th attacks), but rather focusing on the turmoil created by the citizens of the Big Apple. By this, of course, I mean the various riots - defined by Merriam Webster as instances of "violent public disorder" - that have happened in all parts of New York City going back to its founding. That said, I do not mean for this to be an anthology, but rather for it to highlight prominent riots of the city's past. I will then compare them to those we have seen both over this summer in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement as well as to the riots as a result of the 2020 presidential election this past November.

The very first recorded riot ("violent public disorder") in New York City occurred in 1712, when the population of the city was between six and eight thousand people, around one thousand of whom were enslaved. On April 6th, a group of slaves snuck out from their quarters under the cover of night and set fire to an outhouse, serving as a signal to other slaves to start their revolt. Somewhere between 50 and

100 slaves, armed with axes, guns, and knives, attacked the whites of Manhattan. Nine white citizens were killed, with another six wounded. However, this first event was only a signal of the ones to come over the next three centuries. Eight other notable riots (with a sum of about 80 dead and 200 injured - four riots had no casualties) happened between the very first one and the largest riot in New York's history, the New York City Draft Riots.

The year was 1863, and tensions in New York were at a peak. At the time, products from slavery comprised a large portion of the market coming through NYC - cotton alone was 40% of the goods shipped through its harbor. The announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation raised the tensions yet again, as merchants and traders raised concerns about whether or not they would have business after the Civil War. White antipathy towards Black people rose higher and higher and burst when the announcement of conscription came to NYC. The law stated that any able-bodied men between 20 and 35 would be subject to a lottery; however, Blacks were exempted from this law because they did not count as citizens. The riots started with "thousands of white workers - mainly Irish and

Irish-Americans [...] attacking military and government buildings." This, however, was just the start. Later that same day, the rioters had fixed their sights on the Black population of NYC. The rioters especially targeted Black men. The mobs lynched and murdered nearly 1,200 Black men, and beat another two to eight thousand (nearly the entire NYC population during the first riot). In addition to these horrific figures, the rioters targeted "white abolitionists and women who were married to Black men." Compounding the tragic events was the fact that a mob of several-hundred people pillaged and burned the Colored Orphan Asylum, placing hundreds of children out on the streets (they did not attack the children). Finally, after three days of intense civil unrest, 4,000 troops who had fought in the Battle of Gettysburg arrived and dispersed the mobs, ending the riots the next day.

After the Draft Riots, the number of riots in NYC continued to rise. Just seven years after the Draft Riots, the second deadliest riot occurred: the Orange Riots. At the time, tensions between Protestants and Catholics, which had only grown since the immigration of the Irish Potato Famine period, ran high in the city. On July 12, 1871,



Left: Former site of the NYC Colored Orphan Asylum. 5th Ave, 43rd to 44th streets. Photograph by Julian Silverman.

Below: A scene from the Summer protests in NYC against systematic racism. Photograph by Julian Silverman.

a large group of Protestants assembled for an annual march through Manhattan. Having been taunted extensively during the previous year's march, Catholics confronted the Protestants, and the standoff rapidly devolved into borough-wide fighting. Seemingly tame in comparison to the numbers of the Draft Riots, the Orange Riots yielded 70 dead and more than 150 wounded. The protests that I would like to compare to these nineteenth-century riots are the ones we experienced in 2020 - along with the otherwise peaceful protests against police brutality following the death of George Floyd.

This article is not a piece on the injustice in America, nor is it a piece on the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or the many others like them. I will strictly discuss George Floyd as the catalyst for a series of protests and related riots that occurred in NYC. Starting May 28, 2020, peaceful protesters gathered in NYC. On the first day, nearly 100 protesters gathered in Union Square Park and marched to City Hall. The next day, the peaceful protests continued, but this time with police push-back. Police pepper-sprayed and tackled protesters, and, that night, the first arrest of the George Floyd protests occurred when an individual threw a molotov cocktail at an abandoned police van. Other protestors were mildly injured, with one reporting a concussion. These incidents on the second day of protests would be representative of the police and citizen violence that would occur in the following days and weeks. Looting was a common occurrence, with criminals often using the pretext of the protests to steal from and ransack boarded-up and exposed stores.

The image of 19th-century protests and 21st-century protests are vastly different. My first thought is how we now protest as people against an ideology, as opposed to a few centuries ago when people would attack people. We, as a society, have transitioned from hating others for their external appearance to attacking a group because they systematically do so. The George Floyd protests were against systematic white supremacy in America. In contrast, the white Draft Rioters specifically targeted Black citizens out of feelings of indignation and resistance toward being drafted into a war in which they had no desire to fight and into which blacks could not be drafted. Protests now represent a larger, equali-

ty-seeking objective rather than existing to scapegoat and punish a specific community. On the subject of groups who systematically attack an ethnicity because of their appearance, the police have improved their response times to protests. Although these most recent protests were spawned from police action, the police have attempted to minimize the side effects of their actions. The police arrive at the scene of protests on the same day they start, causing fewer casualties within the protests. During the Draft Riots, it took three days for troops to arrive in NYC and stop the protests; on the other hand, the George Floyd Protests received a rapid response. Most times the police were even present before the protest turned violent. This could also be why we see police brutality at peaceful protests: police operate under the framework that they must stifle intense protests - release the building pressure, so to speak - before they erupt into violence. According to the

NYPD Patrol Guide, their mission is to, "enforce the law, preserve peace, protect the people, reduce fear, and maintain order." three of these five goals are completed by stopping peaceful protests before they cause any real damage to the city or any of its inhabitants. However, the last two, "reduce fear," and "protect the people," are debatably being fulfilled and are even potentially being violated. A 2020 internal report assessing the NYPD's response to the George Floyd protests determined that many officers were unprepared for the protests, and as a result resorted to "excessive enforcement" that, as the New York Times explains, "only heightened tensions with demonstrators." However, the history of NYC suggests that stopping a protest early is the best course of action. This legacy of violent protests carries into our modern era, charging peaceful protests and transforming them into clashes between the people and the police. ■







## The Corrupt Life of Roy Cohn

Darson Chen

Roy Marcus Cohn, '44 was born on February 20th, 1927, and might be best known as one of Senator Joseph McCarthy's top aides, alongside him in accusing various U.S. citizens and government officials of being Communist spies. He famously argued to sentence Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, two of those accused, to the electric chair. His career as an attorney kept him out of jail despite numerous allegations and charges against him. His clients learned from his example. His ruthlessness, knowledge of the law, and prolonging of trials caused him and many who he taught to be corrupt.

Graduating from the Horace Mann School, in 1944, Cohn was a highly intelligent individual. He had many notable achievements, graduating from Columbia University by the age of 19 and Columbia Law School in only another year. By the age of 21, Cohn was working under Irving Saypol, a US Attorney, who convicted 11 members of the Communist Party for conspiring against the United States government.

It was now 1951, and Cohn was the prosecutor of the famous Rosenberg Trial while working under Saypol, where he argued they were guilty of transporting secret documents to the KGB. Though his job was

to prosecute the Rosenbergs, which he successfully accomplished, he had both Julius and Ethel Rosenberg sentenced to the electric chair, as opposed to the alternative of a prison sentence. Advocating for the execution of convicted spies instead of simply imprisoning them displayed his anti-Communist sentiments. The Rosenbergs were the only people executed for spying during the Cold War, and their fate is still controversial; Cohn's notoriety in the Rosenberg Trial was brought to the attention of Edgar Hoover, the FBI director, who put him under Senator Joseph McCarthy.

During the Second Red Scare and the spread of McCarthyism, Cohn was able to learn from the senator and from the experiences he had working with him. Cohn stayed in McCarthy's staff as Chief Counsel and McCarthy's inquisitor in Senate hearings that denounced many citizens. During the Second Red Scare, McCarthy denounced many government officials, like the Secretary of State George Marshall, and civilians, like Owen Lattimore, the director of Chinese Studies in the University of Leeds. These denunciations and accusations caused many innocent civilians and influential government officials to be scandalized and often put in jail, for Cohn and McCarthy did not actually have any leads

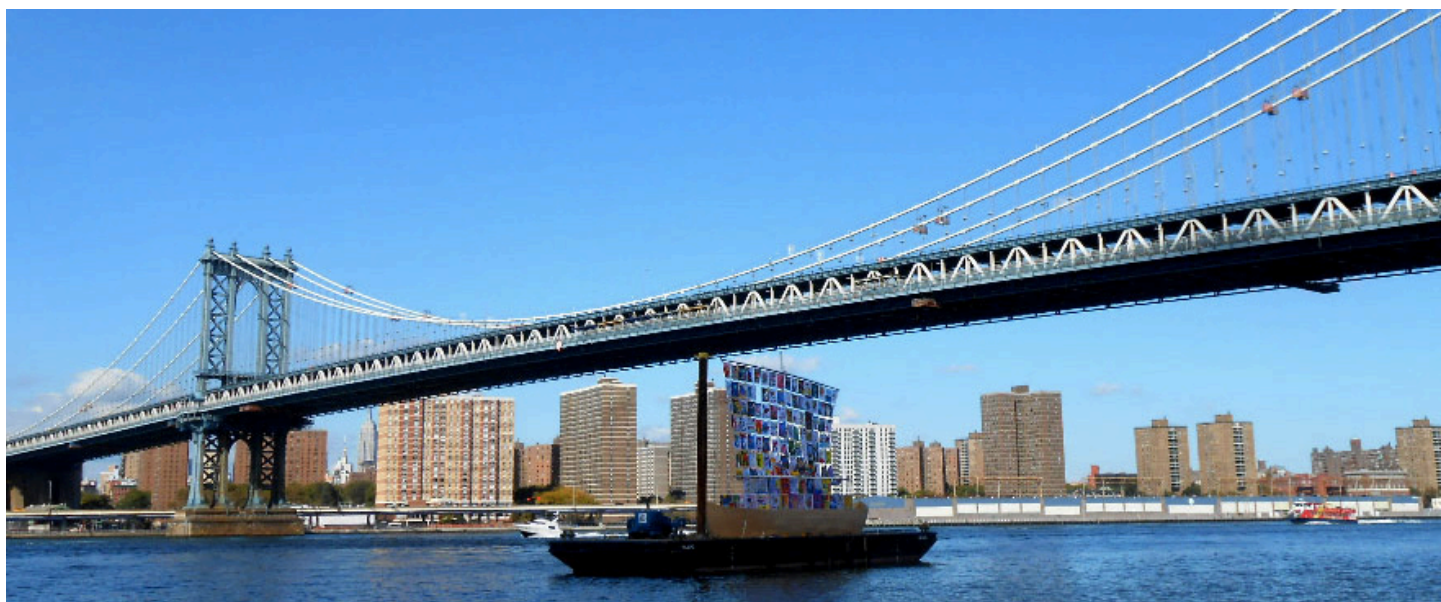
or known spies.

The Rosenberg Trial sentence may have been correct or inhumane, but the imprisonment and scandals on law abiding and influential citizens is beyond controversial but corrupt. However, Cohn continued his work with McCarthy and scandalized other government officials to satisfy McCarthy's power greed and other influential citizens to silence their critics.

In this time with McCarthy, Cohn may have learned to ignore the press and negative publicity, for McCarthy carried on his actions through the staunch protests against his actions. He continued despite a Senate investigation that found no evidence that the list of 205 names McCarthy claimed he possessed either contained any actual conspiring Communists or even existed at all. President Dwight Eisenhower openly denounced his actions, which put over 2,000 government employees out of work. However, not even the president's disapproval stopped McCarthy; his smears and bullying tactics were revealed on national television when attorney Joseph Welch responded to McCarthy's suggestion that a lawyer on Welch's team had Communist affiliations, delivered his famous lines: "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness... Let us



Left: Westside apartment buildings reach above the trees of Central Park. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.  
Below: The Manhattan Bridge over the East River. Photograph by Juliette Shang.



not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency?" With these lines, McCarthy lost all his popularity; it took the censure from his fellow Senators, the Republican Party, and the entire press to silence McCarthy.

Cohn exhibited this stubborn and non-compliant attitude to get what he wanted in the future, regardless of the law. In his later years, he told a mentee of his that he spent "two-thirds of his adult life under some indictment." Though without a government official to keep him safe, Cohn participated in rampant corruption following his years with McCarthy. He became an attorney and used his legal knowledge to ensure he was not caught for his crimes, only being charged for them. Many of the FBI files for Cohn charge him for his \$50,000 bribe to the then-chief assistant U.S. attorney to keep stock swindlers from being indicted. Cohn was tried but found not guilty in 1964 for this accusation. Cohn was tried again for his alleged actions with McCarthy but was then acquitted in 1969.

It was now 1971, and Roy Cohn met Donald Trump and began a long friendship. Trump was the mentee Cohn told that he had spent the majority of his life under indictment. When Trump wanted to build Trump Tower, he went to the New York mobs, for they controlled the concrete business at the time. At the same time, Cohn was an attorney for Anthony Salerno and Paul Castellano, a mobster and a mob boss. Trump bought concrete at inflated prices from firms controlled by mobsters, accord-

ing to journalists' reports.

Trump and Cohn always countersued against their charges, despite always failing. However, they always got their way; Cohn countersued the government for \$100 million dollars for its claims against Trump. Cohn's lawsuit failed, but it dragged on the lawsuit, eventually leading the government to drop the charges against the Trump Organization's racist policies for African Americans. Cohn single-handedly saved millions of dollars for the Trump Organization while teaching Trump one vile lesson he still uses: Prolonging charges will have them dropped.

During the 2020 election, Trump continued to claim many ballot votes were biased against him even after many news outlets continuously reported that there was no evidence of voter fraud, and when his Attorney General, William Barr '67, could not find any evidence either. Trump has prolonged this affair by dragging it on, relentlessly going to court with no evidence not to win the case, but to drag the case on so no one wins. His actions mimic Cohn's when Cohn prolonged the trials for him in the 1970s.

During the 1970s, Roy Cohn helped Trump fend off threats to the Trump Organization's projects through bribery and blackmail, while also teaching the young Trump how to use situations to his advantage and to never back down against the law. For instance, after the Orlando Massacre in 2016, Trump warned of a terrorist attack by Muslims and suggested a Muslim fifth column in the U.S. When protests arose,

calling him racist and unconstitutional, he still continued his executive order banning Muslims from entering the country for 90 days, Syrians from ever entering the U.S., and refugees from entering the country for 120 days. The Supreme Court found many portions of the executive order racist and unconstitutional, yet Trump continued with his Muslim Ban 2.0, sparking further protests and Supreme Court actions. Trump followed Roy Cohn's philosophy to obstinately do as one pleases, regardless of the rules broken.

Though never incarcerated, Cohn had nearly all of his possessions seized by the IRS when he died on August 2nd, 1986, at the age of 59. His act with McCarthy displayed his rampant corruption and his foul philosophy where Cohn always got his way by any means necessary. He never paid his taxes; he repeatedly lied, committed bribery, and money laundered but was never jailed due to his prolonging of the charges until they were dropped. He taught his corrupt ways to his clients and defended mob bosses.

Cohn's corruption was again exemplified when he advised Trump to continue his lesson to prolong cases in law until the charges are dropped. Though not illegal, the act allows Cohn, and now Trump, to avoid punishment for his harmful, illegal, and fraudulent activities. ■





## Protecting and Purifying: New York City's Watershed Program | Claire Goldberg

For 200 years, New York City has depended on its upstream communities to protect its drinking water. The city's watershed, the source of its unfiltered drinking water, consists of 1,900 square miles of land and is divided into two systems: the Catskill/Delaware Watershed, which supplies 90 percent of the city's drinking water, and the Croton Watershed, which supplies the remaining 10 percent. However, due to increased development on these lands and nonpoint source pollution (pollutants released in a wide area) from agriculture, the water quality in the 1980s was slowly degrading, and the city had to do something about it.

In 1989, when an amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1986 mandated that all surface drinking water sources had to meet certain quality standards by 1993, the city was faced with a six-billion-dollar dilemma. To the city, the amendment meant one of two things: costly the construction of a water filtration facility, or they could innovate. In 1997, New York City chose the latter and enacted a pioneering environmental protection program with no losers. The program was the Watershed Agreement, a commitment of \$1.2 billion to both economic and environmental prosperity.

In September of 1990, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a first draft of what would

become the Watershed Agreement, which promised to protect water quality within the watershed to avoid having to build the water treatment plant. The agreement is a "payment for ecosystem services" (PES) program, an approach to nature conservation in which farmers or landowners receive payments in exchange for preserving their land or watersheds, which provide an ecological service.

In essence, PES programs let the environment do the work, and we humans are the beneficiaries of our eco-friendly behavior. In the process of protecting water quality, the program also planned on promoting eco-friendly agriculture and development, improving upstate farmers' living standards, and providing an economic transfusion into local communities. Moreover, not only would the program help New Yorkers evade elevated taxes, but it would also help upstate farmers and the environment as well. The program has taken an adaptive management approach, which means that it records its successes and failures and uses them to incrementally make improvements and adjustments. As one of the first PES programs in the country, the Watershed Agreement paved the way for more economically-sound environmental programs that could possibly be the key to solving the worsening climate crisis.

To solve the problem of nonpoint source

pollution, an inherently widespread problem, the program had to approach water contamination from a number of directions. In fact, the Watershed Agreement was tri-fold: it included a land acquisition program, watershed rules and regulations, and watershed protection and partnership programs. Together, the program attempted to buy land upstate, protect its reservoirs from pollution, improve treatment plants and septic systems, and provide subsidies for eco-friendly economic development and agricultural behavior. At the same time, it aimed to preserve the "economic and social character of the Watershed communities" by including local community members in all decision processes.

The land acquisition program was a means to purchase property in the watershed in order to create buffer lands around key reservoirs. The buffer land was meant to prevent broken septic tanks or agricultural runoff from contaminating the city's reservoirs with an overload of nutrients, thus bettering the quality of the water that reaches the city's faucets. The land acquisition program is completely voluntary - landowners could sell their land at their own discretion - in exchange for a subsidy. All land acquired by the city has conservation easements, legal agreements that limit uses of land to protect its conservation values. Farmers could also sell conservation



Left: The Croton Aqueduct, now a pedestrian bridge between Manhattan and the Bronx, as it crosses the East River. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.  
Below: A similar view as depicted by the photograph on page 22, but taken a year earlier - in 2019. Photograph by Ryan Finlay.



easements to the city as well, promising to protect their land from development that would pollute water sources while retaining private ownership. In some cases, farmers receive a substantial check in the mail for simply putting up fences on their property to prevent livestock from defecating near water sources.

The agreement also enacted watershed rules and regulations, that describe permissible (eco-friendly) activities within the watershed and eliminate harmful activities. The regulations control pollution sources such as wastewater treatment plants, sewer systems, septic systems, and stormwater systems, through reducing water-contaminants to prevent the degradation of the water supply. The upgrading of these plants and systems protects water sources from the contamination of sewage, a proposition that protects the environment and the water quality.

Lastly, the watershed protection and partnership programs established the Catskill Watershed Corporation, a non-for-profit organization that would manage different partnership programs that would protect water quality, and the Watershed Protection Partnership Council, a council of lo-

cal community-members who assist in the protection of water quality and preserving community character and economic vitality, measured by a number of factors such as unemployment rates, poverty, median income, crime rates, and educational achievement. This council ensures that the members of upstream communities are protected and benefiting from this system as well.

Not only does the program stack up in theory, but its results have also proven highly beneficial. Since 1997, the city has spent around \$2.5 billion dollars on protecting the ecosystems in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed. That money has been used to upgrade 42 wastewater treatment plants, buy land to prevent ecologically-harmful development, stabilize stream channels to prevent erosion, replace failing septic tanks, help dairy farmers control nutrients from their manure, and the list goes on.

Through these programs, the city has successfully improved water quality, forestalling the need to construct a filtration plant that could cost up to \$10 billion (with yearly maintenance costs), not to mention the millions of dollars that would be the annual operating expenses. Of the New York

City water system that supplies one billion gallons of fresh drinking water to 9.5 million people, 90 percent of it comes from the Catskill/Delaware watershed. According to Jay Lund, a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, the Watershed Program is “a remarkable success.”

The program demonstrates that both community vitality, the environment, and the economy have something to gain in PES programs. However, the program’s triumphs come under an increasing threat as climate change progresses and presents new challenges, like stronger and more frequent large storms that increase erosion and contaminate the water sources with too many nutrients. Luckily, due to its adaptive management strategy, the program has continued to adopt new measures to transcend these challenges, like directing more money and efforts into stream bank restoration that prevents erosion. Even with the climate challenges on the horizon, the program’s successful and adoptive nature should serve as a sign to places across the country of the possibilities that lie in watershed management, and, more largely, PES programs. ■





## New York City's Tax Problem, and Why the Rich Are Fleeing the State | Max Migdon

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to make its way through the communities of New York City, infecting almost 10,000 people per day, some of the big apple's flaws are being brought to light. Wealthy people had been leaving the state and city for decades, however, in the past few years this rate has accelerated primarily due to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed by President Trump and Congress in 2017. The tax code included a new provision known as SALT, and, according to CNBC, this new provision to the tax code, "limits the deduction of state and local income taxes," thereby "creating incentives for wealthy New Yorkers to move to Florida or other lower-tax states."

Back in late 2019, before COVID-19, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo blamed "wealth flight" for the state's \$2.3 billion revenue shortfall that the state had at the time. "Tax the rich, tax the rich, tax

the rich," he said. "We did. Now, God forbid, the rich leave." SALT, combined with COVID-19 and the appearance of increased crime, has caused wealthy individuals to flee. Now, in 2020 in the midst of a global health crisis, the state's budget shortfall has only further increased to a deficit of over \$14 billion.

According to Michael Hendrix in a New York Daily News opinion piece, "New York risks an urban crisis echoing the 1970s, a moment when the city could no longer take growth for granted." Across the entirety of the New York metropolitan area the housing vacancy rate was at 2.7 percent in July and is continuing to rise. In Lower Manhattan alone, vacancies are at a record 4 percent. Hendrix also notes that "while the vacancy rate may seem low, it does not account for those who left the city amidst the lockdown and have yet to terminate their lease." Moving company Roadway

Moving has reported "insane" demand from residents moving away from the city. The company noted that this demand largely consisted of "higher net-worth individuals."

According to Hendrix, New York City has experienced momentary crises before. However, Hendrix says that "history shows that short-term shocks become long-term disasters when the city's economic base erodes along with its tax revenues." Former chair of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan issued a report in 1975 on the city's financial crisis and laid the blame on "years of business as usual," pointing his finger at high taxes, big union contracts, and called for New York City to roll back its "archaic" rent control laws. In the 1970s, the city was being "outcompeted" by the suburbs for people and their jobs. Over time, through the 1980s and 1990s, the city grew more economically sound through a series of





government initiatives, however, since the year 2000 government spending in the city has increased over 142 percent while the population has only grown 6.8 percent. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State and City were already facing significant budget challenges as spending continued to outpace the growth of the taxbase. During de Blasio's time in office alone, the average full-time government salary has risen 20 percent while the city's payroll has increased by 36,520 employees. According to Freeman Klopott, a spokesperson for the Cuomo administration's Budget Division, said, that solutions which had worked in the past might not work anymore. "Today's highly progressive tax code and dramatically different tax base is incomparable to those of over 30 years ago, particularly in a modern environment where the workforce is highly mobile – more clear now during the pandemic than ever before."

Many are aware of the city's budget crisis, and have been hard at work attempting to find solutions to the issue. One Democratic proposal to raise revenue for the city and in particular, education, would be for a wealth tax. According to the New York Times, this proposal would "increase the tax rate on millionaires to 9.62 percent for those who make up to \$5 million, 11.32 percent for those with income between \$5 million and \$100 million, and up to 11.85 percent for those who earn more than \$100

million." Currently, the tax rate for people earning more than a million a year is 8.82 percent in New York State. In other states such as California this value is as high as 13.3 percent, while in states like Texas, Florida, or Washington, this value is 0 percent as these states have no state income tax. According to Justin Fox in a Bloomberg opinion piece, most New Yorkers fleeing are going to Florida, a low tax state. However, Fox notes that a significant amount of the people leaving are not the wealthiest individuals. He notes that some are wealthy but not all, suggesting that the exodus is not merely due to taxes.

There is also a proposal for a "billionaire's tax," which would tax the unrealized capital gains—the appreciation of assets not yet sold—of New York's 120 billionaires. According to the Times, the proceeds from such a tax would be redirected towards workers not eligible for unemployment insurance or federal stimulus money. According to the Wall Street Journal, certain advocacy groups like Make the Road New York, which works with undocumented immigrants in the city, also supports taxing the financial transactions and unrealized capital gains of high-wealth individuals.<sup>1</sup> According to the Gothamist, New York's financial sector has seen an 82 percent increase in profits in 2020, compared to the same time period in 2019. Globally, billionaires have seen their wealth increase

by 27%, furthering the devastating world economic inequalities.

Queens state senator Jessica Ramos has laid out a proposal for a "worker bailout fund," where eligible workers could receive up to \$3,300 a month. Among the eligible would be recently incarcerated New Yorkers as well. Ramos said that the pandemic "exposed and exacerbated every single one of the holes that already existed in our safety net, in every aspect of our lives...[the bill] was designed around the idea of reinvigorating the social contract." The funding for this proposal would come from a tax increase on wealthy individuals. Critics to such taxes, like state Senate Minority Leader Robert Ort, a Republican from Niagara County, said that "New York is one of the highest taxed states in the nation, and raising taxes will result in the continuation of the exodus from this state."

Jonas Shaende, a chief economist for the Fiscal Policy Institute, which advocates for new taxes on wealthy New Yorkers, said that "taxes were much higher in the past, and the difference [between New Jersey and New York] was quite high, and still wealthy New Yorkers chose to live and work in New York simply because it's a good place to be." According to Shaende, New York life is one of vibrancy and excitement, along with a highly educated workforce and a robust labor market willing to work and create market value. J.W. Mason,





an economics professor at CUNY's John Jay College, concurred: "They're located here because of the amenities of the city. That's why they're choosing to locate in a high-cost area," he said. Dan O'Flaherty, a professor of urban economics at Columbia said "the rich people will go away if Central Park is a mess and there are no theaters and the subways are not working."

As reported by the Daily News in an opinion piece, a typical high earning New Yorker will pay as much in income tax as 196 median wage-earning New Yorkers, combined. "The city's tax revenue depends on a critical mass of people wanting to live, work, and play in the Big Apple — a prospect that is not so clear today. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo's budget director, Robert Mujica, notes that about half of the state's personal income tax revenues come from the highest-earning 2 percent of New Yorkers. This problem is not localized to New York, however. Adam Michel, a senior policy analyst for the Her-

itage Foundation, a policy institute with an significantly conservative and anti-tax point of view, notes that the most recent Internal Revenue Service data from 2016 shows that the top 10 percent of income earners in the United States account for 70 percent of all federal income taxes.

Many experts worry that in New York, many of the wealthiest individuals who fled the city in the spring may never return, taking their tax dollars with them. In a New York Post opinion piece, Robert Ort estimates that if only 3 percent of New York's top 1 percent of earners left the state, they would take more than \$500 million in tax revenue along with them. Mr. Cuomo told CNBC in 2019 that "even if a small number of taxpayers leave, it has a dramatic effect on this tax space." According to The Hill, 46 percent of New Yorkers leaving in 2019 are in a tax bracket earning more than \$150,000 per year. The unfortunate reality is that many of those who remain in New York will be those without the means to

leave.

According to the Daily News in an opinion piece, the New York State and City governments will have to make "tough choices" in the coming months in order to avoid a vicious cycle of swinging budget cuts or enormous tax hikes. Hendrix has stated that some experts have ideas such as "turning the city's Small Business Services office into a regulatory concierge navigating (and cutting) red tape, [or]...pushing for better, data-driven management of the city's sprawling bureaucracy." Hendrix claims that the New York City government could adopt policies to lower its future debt burdens by reconsidering the large amounts of capital expenditures such as putting its "immensely valuable" real estate assets to better use.

The Governor, on the other hand, believes that "there is no combination of savings, efficiencies, tax increases that could ever come near covering the deficit." Instead, Mr. Cuomo has been pushing since





the beginning of the pandemic for federal funding to help state and local governments cover their budget shortfalls. Early on in the fall he said “hospitals, schools and public employees have done heroic work during Covid and must now be protected, especially as we reopen schools and

anticipate additional health challenges in the fall...there is no combination of state efforts that will address this financial crisis without federal assistance.” However, with the new COVID-19 stimulus package signed by President Trump on December 27th, some aid was provided to the city,

with \$1 billion in funding for the MTA to help avoid significant budget shortfalls, but this is likely not enough to solve the city and state’s budget crisis. ■





## A Map in the Right Direction: The MTA's Real Time Subway Map | Ryan Finlay

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has employed a number of graphic representations of the New York City subway system over the years. Simplifying while still accurately portraying the tendrils of the immense system has been a particularly difficult challenge for graphic designers. However, the MTA's newest map is a technological leap forward. On October 20, the map was released in beta form on an MTA website called "MTA Live Subway Map," where users can test the features and see for themselves how revolutionary it is. While the map is imperfect and lacking in some key respects, it is a promising example of what may be in store as it continues to develop.

### The Creation of the Map

The Live Subway Map is the first redesign of the New York City subway map in 40 years. The map is the product of a program created by Governor Andrew Cuomo called the Transit Innovation Partnership, seeking to offer private companies the opportunity to help solve problems facing NYC transit. Work & Co, a digital design firm, was selected by the program to develop a modernized subway map, at no cost to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The designers at Work & Co say on their website that their map combines the best elements from previous maps.

During the 1960's, the city had acquired each formerly privately owned subway system built in the city and was left with the conundrum of how to unify the systems into a single entity. Massimo Vignelli, an Italian designer, was hired for the job of designing a map which could accomplish such a feat. Previous maps had treated each former company's infrastructure as separate. The lines built by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, for example, were not included on maps of the lines built by the Brooklyn and Manhattan Transit Company, despite the fact that they were both under the control of the city after 1942. Vignelli sought to solve this problem through his design. He approached cartography as an artistic opportunity, and the resulting map did not disappoint in this regard. The landmasses and subway routes were distorted to conform to 45 and 90 degree angles. Few parks were included, and those that appeared were gray blobs. The waterways were beige. When the map was released in 1972, it was an artistic masterpiece, but a cartographic failure. The map's separation from geographic reality only confused subway riders. The confusion lasted seven years before the map was finally replaced.

The task of replacing Vignelli's map was directed to John Tauranac, and the team of graphic designers at the Hertz & Associates design firm. Nobuyuki Siraisi, a trained

sculptor and painter among the designers, was pivotal in creating the map most of us are familiar with today. He rode every single subway line in the whole system with his eyes closed, drawing out the path of the train he could perceive on paper. This was translated to the final map, creating a visual representation of what subway riders were actually experiencing on their commutes. Another one of the designers at the firm, Susan Shaw, felt that the map should serve the role of orienting riders not just within the system, but within the city that encompassed it. She was responsible for including the bodies of water within Central Park. The landmasses in the replacement map were still exaggerated, but less so. The most exaggerated portions were of Downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn, where the density of subways is the highest. The replacement map was released in 1979, and has undergone minor changes since then.

The most notable development in NYC subway map design was in 1998, when the map was first digitized. Staten Island and the Staten Island Railway (SIR) were included in the subway map for the first time. Previously, the SIR had been treated as an entirely separate entity, given the lack of rail connection between it and the rest of the system.

The map released by Work & Co sought to combine the best elements of both





through its digital version. When the map is zoomed out the farthest, the routes of each line vaguely resemble Vignelli's design, while zoomed in further, the lines almost exactly mimic the paths of the real subway lines.

### The Map

As you open the website, you are greeted with a pop-up that asks whether the site can use your location, allowing you to see yourself in relation to the subways around you. Behind it, the color coded curves of each subway line shine before a gradually unfolding graphic representing the forms of the surrounding landmasses, with blotches of light green and swaths of light gray showing the locations of parkland and waterways. At the top left of the screen, a board will display the color coded numbers and letters for each line, flashing with an exclamation point if the standard service is currently being disrupted. Above it are tabs which will allow you to switch between a view of the system as it is currently, and how the system will look later in the week, depending on plans for closures or construction work. During the day, there will be a tab to view the system as it will appear that night, and vice versa. Lines which are not in service are shown as faded from the other lines, and those which are only servicing one direction are striped, and the dots representing stations are replaced with triangles pointing in the direction of service.

Clicking, or tapping, on one of the subway line icons on the top left will highlight the line on the map and display messages about any planned work or service changes. This feature can also be used by pressing the letter or number of the desired line on your keyboard, if you are viewing the site on a computer. Clicking or tapping on one of the stations will display the arrival board for every line servicing the station.

As you explore the map, however, its shortcomings are immediately evident. While a promotional video advertises that the site is designed to be user friendly and glitch free, that is not always the case. Unless the user has an abnormally strong internet connection, the experience of navigating around the map will be aggravating at best. The map is supposed to allow the user to click and drag-tap and drag in the case of the smartphone-to move around the map, but any attempt to do so will yield minimal results. It can shift in reluctant spurts or simply not respond at all. It is easier to use the arrow keys to navigate, although the movements still lack grace.

One of the helpful features of the map's structure is that the amount of information displayed is dependent on how zoomed in the user is. In the widest view, the station names and parks disappear, allowing for a pure view of the path each line carves through the city. The electronic form is an invaluable asset when it comes to capitalizing on a New Yorker's sense of direction. The shapes and proportions of the land

masses are geographically accurate, bringing an end to the struggle over the exaggerations and simplifications necessary for the previous maps to fit the entire city on a reasonably sized poster or pamphlet. This also allows the subway lines to be arranged according to geographical accuracy as well, though the graphic designers took liberties in making the system as easy as possible to comprehend. A simple example would be the depiction of the shuttle between the Times Square and Grand Central stations. The map shows the line curving northward as it nears Grand Central Terminal. Simply standing on the corresponding platform in the station will inform you that the curve does not exist.

As the user zooms in, new layers of detail are revealed. Streets appear, and zoomed in the furthest, entrances to the subway station show up as squares with arrows pointing down. The inclusion of entrance locations are made useless, however, by the lack of any depiction of the subway station layout. The map does not inform the viewer how to reach these entrances or whether or not they only lead to trains going in a single direction. In addition, the station entrance icons are often covered by other elements of the map, creating the appearance of haphazard organization. Next to the station names, a wheelchair icon notifies the viewer which stations are accessible for the disabled. However, unlike the stairway entrances, elevator locations are not shown on the map.





Perhaps the most exciting feature is the subway trains themselves, which are shown in real time travelling through the system. They are represented by dark gray rectangles. They seem to slither along the tracks as they follow the curves, disappearing as they arrive at a station and reappearing as they depart.

### **The Map's Potential**

Work & Co's contribution to the subway system opens up new doors for how commuters can understand the system around them. Due to its location on a website instead of an app, coupled with its voracious appetite for internet connection, it isn't practical enough to be used widely within the subway system yet. A user would not seek, nor have the ability to seek, to use the map to check where their train is in the tunnel, or to check how much longer it will take for their train to arrive at the station. It's just not practical. Instead, the map currently serves as a graphic representation of the often confusing service change notices currently posted throughout subway stations and MTA apps and websites. However, it should not stop there. While there are

plenty of aforesaid layout and connection issues that need to be addressed, there are other steps that should be taken to advance the map further as the future for navigating New York transit.

The digital map should be moved to a custom MTA app where it can be personalized by users. The map could retain information such as a user's home address, place of work, or other frequently visited locations, allowing for route planning that takes service changes into account. This would combine the current map's ability to display service changes and arrival times with its display of the user's current location.

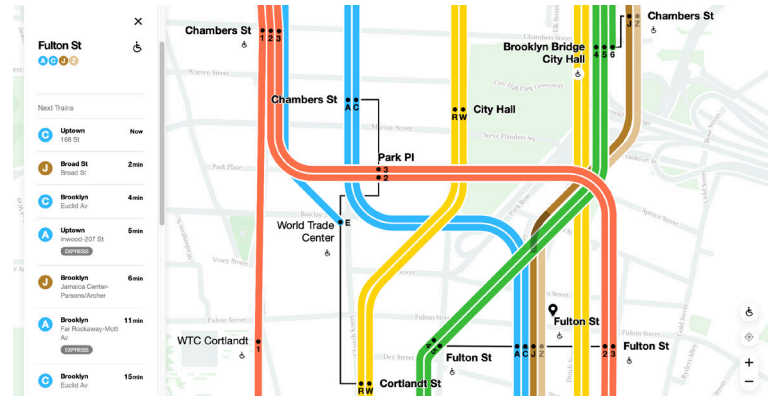
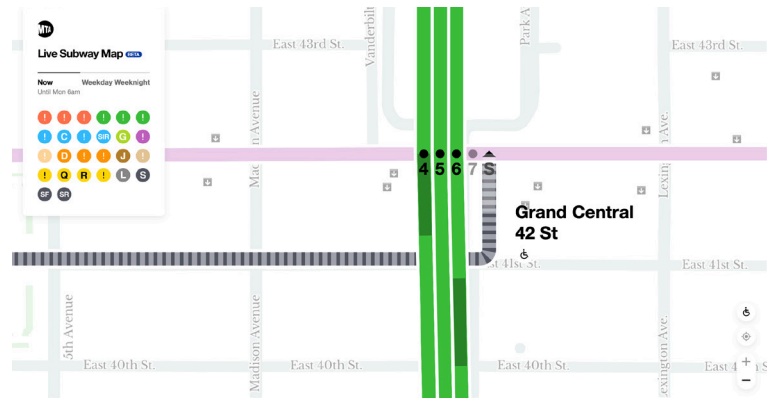
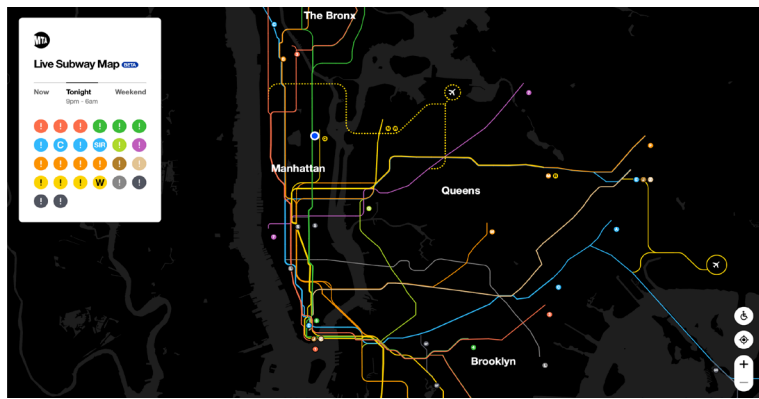
At present, when a user clicks on a station, the map zooms in on that station, where the entrances are displayed, the accessibility is verified, and the arrival board is shown. In the future, the map should be enhanced so that when a station is clicked on, the view also goes into a partial three dimensional mode, where the station layout is displayed. Street access, stairways, elevators, escalators, turnstiles, and platform locations could all be displayed in this advanced view of a station. If the user were

using the navigational capabilities of the app, this view could also display the suggested routes through the station for the user to use for transfers during a commute, taking into account escalator or elevator closures as they occur.

The map could also display other types of transportation. Perhaps a sidebar could be added along the left side of the screen, next to where the subway line icons and messages are currently displayed. This sidebar would contain tabs to view similar live maps of the Bus, Long Island Railroad, Metro North, NYC Ferry, and Citibike systems. The navigational mode of the app would have the ability to combine these maps for longer or more complex travel.

During the time of Covid, when the MTA is struggling with crippling fiscal troubles, it is comforting to see that there are still steps being taken to modernize and improve the subway system. As the live map continues to evolve, it shall be a reminder that crises are, more often than not, temporary setbacks in the grand scheme of progress. ■





Far Left: An empty subway car during the pandemic. Photograph by Julian Silverman.  
 Top Left: The live subway map, showing service at night.  
 Top Right: The live subway map. The shuttle between Grand Central and Times Square is depicted as single directional.  
 Middle Left: The live subway map. The organization of subway lines through Downtown Brooklyn has been simplified by the graphic designers.  
 Middle Right: The live subway map. The Fulton Street station is selected, showing a complete timetable for train arrivals.  
 Bottom: The Broadway - 116th street subway station during the pandemic. Photograph by Juliette Shang.



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