



# ***THE GOTHIC TIMES***

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## **Puerto Rico Now**





# Life After Maria

by **Diana M. Sanchez** | News Editor

It has been six months since Hurricane Maria ravaged through Puerto Rico, leaving millions without water or power. Between September and November, 179 thousand people left Puerto Rico for the states according to federal data obtained by CNN. As of March 6, the government of Puerto Rico is expecting 200,000 more residents to leave the island for good by the end of 2018.

Judith Mendez, a relative of Natalie Mendez, a senior at NJCU, went to Puerto Rico two weeks after Hurricane Maria. Mendez, a nurse, traveled to the island to help the struggling hospitals. Officials told her that there was nothing they could do to help once she arrived to Puerto Rico.

When she arrived, she was housed at a community center where they all slept on cots. There was a generator in the community building they were staying in. Meanwhile, the people around them had no power. Mendez noted that there were many people already thinking about leaving Puerto Rico because food rations were beginning to spoil. Things were becoming dire for many. According to Mendez, the government did not assign duties to nurses who were on staff. The nurses took it upon themselves to periodically check up on the Puerto Rican natives.

Ivelisse Cruz, a pre-school teacher at NJCU's Children's Learning Center saw the damage that Maria caused to Puerto Rico firsthand when she went to the island for NJCU's

Alternative Spring Break. Cruz said, "I was overwhelmed with emotions when landing... Driving from the airport you could see so much damage, trees on the ground, buildings, signs falling off and homes destroyed from the hurricane. Being able to help clean up a lot



Courtesy of Robert Quinones

of the areas was so rewarding." Cruz also helped cleaned up an abandoned building which would serve as a homeless shelter. "Overall the experience was humbling, I loved being able to go back to an island I call my homeland and meet new people."

Cruz shared how her family was affected by the hurricane. In October, her cousin had to come to the U.S. to stay with his brother in Bayonne. Cruz's cousin lost his job because of Hurricane Maria. He worked for three months in N.J. to help support his family back at home. Cruz's aunt's house also caved in because of the hurricane. As a result, she is currently living at her daughter's house in Puerto Rico.

Ida Masa, the Administrative Assistant at the Hub, shared her experience when she made the trip to

the island in February. She described the devastation that you immediately see even before landing on Puerto Rico's soil. "Flying in," she said, "you can see the blue tops on the houses that lost their roofs... everything is stripped and up rooted, it was like walking in a warzone."

Masa said that many were considering leaving to the mainland. "These are all well educated, hard-working people. Some even work two to three jobs to have a good quality of life. Many People are now out of a job. The retail shops, the malls, those are all gone. There are now many people working on the power grid and no traffic lights working on certain areas of the road." Masa says that people are even volunteering to be crossing guards.

After Maria, Masa tired to communicate with her father by reaching his landline. She was able to reach him a few hours before the storm gradually worsened. But once the storm began, she had no way to contact her parents. It was not until a week later that communication finally went through. Masa wanted to retrieve her parents, but they couldn't bear the thought of leaving their homeland for good. When Masa offered to bring them to the U.S., they asked "For what? To remake my life all over again?"

Masa wants us to put what Puerto Ricans have been through into perspective: "Compare what we went through here when Sandy hit, would the United States be

able to function normally and survive six months after the fact without running water or stable electricity? Could we really match the strength that these people have shown? Would we really be able to endure all of this for so long?"

Monica Sarmiento, editor-in-chief of The Gothic Times, also has family in Puerto Rico that was deeply affected by Maria. Her grandparents live in Coamo, a town located in the southern region of the island. Sarmiento's grandparents were able to prepare for the incoming storm a few days in advance. They boarded the windows, stocked up on bottles of water and canned food to brave the hurricane. They did not lack the necessary preparations. However, Sarmiento and her parents lost contact with them during and after Maria hit. They were at the mercy of listening to radio broadcasts and checking social media for any news regarding Coamo or it's neighboring towns. A week later, Sarmiento was thankfully able to reach them. After viewing the terrible catastrophe Maria caused, Sarmiento alongwith her family quickly bought plane tickets to get them to safety in the U.S.

A month and a half after Maria, they finally got to the States. Sarmiento said, "it wasn't until they got to New Jersey that they were able to recount everything that they went through because of the Hurricane. My abuelito always got very emotional when he t

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NJCU'S STUDENTS IN PR



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told us about how dark and silent it got at night. In Puerto Rico you often hear coquí, a type of frog native to the island, croaking at night. After the storm, my abuelito said he hadn't heard a single one."

Sarmiento and her family watched the news to see the damage that Maria caused all over the island. Fortunately, her grandparents' town was not extremely effected like other

parts of the island, in fact, her aunt in a nearby neighborhood received power within a month of the storm. Her grandparents did not see the worst of the devastation until they came here and saw it on the news. "Seeing Puerto Rico in that state is what hurt my abuelito the most," said Sarmiento, "While he was grateful to be with here with us, he spent weeks anxious and paranoid about his home back there. It was a home that he and my abuelita spent years working for, one that my

aunt had grown up in, and the thought of just leaving it behind broke his heart."

Once everything settled, about a month later, Sarmiento's grandparents decided to head back to Coamo. "There was no way of talking them out of it. Even though so many families in Puerto Rico had left the island for their own safety and well-being, my grandparents went back because they did not want to leave behind the life they had built together there."

Hurricane Maria has come and gone, but one thing is for certain, it has not just heavily impacted the island, but it has also affected the lives and disposition of the people who live there.

It is not easy to leave behind a home you have known all your life, and it is even harder when you aren't given a choice.

## Visiting the Motherland Post Hurricane

by **Gabriella Rodriguez** | Reporter

Upon landing in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had heard a lot about the trauma experienced by my fellow Puerto Ricans and the dreadful living conditions that persisted for the last five months post Hurricane Maria. It was hard to predict exactly how I would feel once I arrived to the island. One thing I was certain about was the fact that there was no other place that I would have rather spent my Spring Break than in Puerto

Rico as I was also going to visit my sister, Vanessa, after almost two years of not seeing each other.

As the plane was about to land, I felt a gratifying moment that had been building up inside of me for quite a long time. Although I was eager to smell the fresh island air, I was also curious to know if that familiar island scent still existed after so much devastation. Once I exited the plane, an overpowering smell of salt ocean water and humidity hit

me in the face. In that moment, I knew I was back home. The overall energy of the island felt intense and captivating which elevated my curiosity to learn more about the aftermath and to listen to real personal stories about the hurricane.

Reuniting with my sister after so long was the most beautiful experience. Vanessa immediately explained to me that one of the reasons why the air smelled so much like the ocean water was because the shores on the west coast of Puerto Rico were facing some extremely dangerous high tides. So high to the point where water was continuously invading some of the dry land areas surrounding the shore lines. Vanessa further expressed how the post hurricane events are still causing nervousness and tension for the people who live near the ocean due to the dreadful circumstances that were faced back in September when Hurricane Maria hit.

Having the opportunity to see for myself and hear first-hand from the experiences Vanessa and her partner encountered provided me with intense yet empowering emotions. They both describe the day of the hurricane as, by far, one of the scariest days of their entire lives. The sounds of the winds hitting against their windows felt like lions roaring in fury and rage. Water was coming into their apartment from all angles to the point where they had to lay out towels and blankets all over the floors as the water continued to pour in through the windows and ceiling. Even though they live on the second floor, the gusting winds would force in large amounts of water inside their apartment. Vanessa described herself peeking out of the window during the hurricane's passing and how she witnessed mini tornados tear apart the roofs of some neighboring houses. Only



"Puerto Rico Will Rise"

Courtesy of Gabriella Rodriguez

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through constant meditation and prayer, were they able to cope and find their inner calm and peace. All they could hope for was for everything to be over but that didn't happen until, unfortunately, the next morning.

"The Apocalypse of Rincon, Puerto Rico" is how Vanessa described the next morning. Everyone in the area was traumatized, afraid and disoriented to the point where people were starting to look a bit crazy driven by their individual panic mode. Not knowing what was yet

to happen next and being left without power, everyone fell into a total survival mode with minimal access to food, water, shelter, medicine, gasoline, and more, all due to the traumatic aftermath.

Homelessness became instantly apparent for some of the more unfortunate people with no safe place to live and no access to basic resources or any means of transportation. Hospitals were quickly filled to full capacity with elders and infants who needed immediate shelter and treatment for personal illnesses and other medical conditions. Meanwhile, the entire island continued to face major power outages. In

the end, some survived, some sadly did not. There are just too many lives that were physically and/or psychologically affected by this hurricane who are still struggling to comprehend their losses and what they had to endure in order to survive.

Despite reflecting back on the horrific experience that Puerto Rico went through, Vanessa described how Hurricane Maria could actually be considered a blessing in disguise. As people struggled to survive, local communities came together to help provide each other with basic needs. Even though food and water was scarce, neighbors looked out for one another and shared

whatever they could to ensure everyone remained healthy, alive and well. The outpouring of love, resilience, and sense of community that flows freely within Puerto Rican people is the new driving force for greater unity, consciousness and strength to the island natives and residents. Due to my visit and personal experience, I can now affirm my belief that Puerto Rico is well on its way to becoming a greater island. Despite the devastating storm, the sun is still rising strong, as a renewed paradise continues to come to life.

# Alternative Spring Break: Puerto Rico

by **Christopher Diaz and Rosemary Guerrero**

**D**uring Spring Break, 15 NJCU students and five staff members assisted in cleanup and restoration throughout Puerto Rico. The University of Puerto Rico organized a schedule where we could serve the communities and still delve into the island's culture during our week. The trip began with an urban tour through Bayamón, Cataño, Old San Juan, Condado and Hato Rey. The next days would consist of more community service.

The green area of Proyecto de Cantera, our first destination, needed to be trimmed, raked and washed. The concrete surrounding the area was power washed and we were tasked with sweeping and mopping. Next, we visited Corredor del Yagüazo where we were introduced to Pedro

Carrión, a man who inspired environmental awareness in an entire community and protected the land that he loves from being contaminated by industrial factories. After a guided tour through the mangroves of Corredor del Yagüazo, we organized and cleaned the town checkpoint where future groups would pass by. We spent two days in Centro Estancias Corazón, a homeless shelter that needed help making the building livable. On the bottom floor, we painted the walls and cleaned the floors, while the top floor had formed a layer of thick vegetation and trees that needed to be cleared. We also had the opportunity to visit El Yunque National Forest and the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico.

## **A hero in the community**

Pedro Carrión is truly a hero to his community not only for fighting off companies that tried to wipe out their land, but also for fighting for the people. He spoke of the time the government cut off the electricity and water to the town because they wanted the people to leave and thought that would

be the best way to get them out. Carrión stepped in and was there to inspire the people to stay and fight for their home. He taught them how to take pride in their community and taught people to be environmentally conscious. Due to his resistance to government and industrial factories, Carrión found himself

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***Alternative Spring Break allows students to use their week of spring break to serve people in need. Students do many community service projects and have the opportunity to engage with the community and their fellow classmates.***

***The cost of the trip is based on the destination. For the trip to Puerto Rico, the cost was approximately \$1,500 per person but the subsidized cost to students was \$800. Working as a team is important from the beginning. Fundraising allowed for the total cost to drop to \$500 per student.***

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and his family in danger. He received death threats because of the uproar he caused after filing an investigation with the court. Soon after that, the FBI had to put him under witness protection.

The mental and emotional challenges troubled Carrión so much that he chose to end his life. Fortunately, the gun he put in his mouth jammed and he had an epiphany as a result.

These mental and emotional challenges led to Carrión putting a gun in his mouth, but when the gun jammed he had an epiphany.

He knew then that his fight would not end there. When asked about the efforts made after the hurricane he described an experience most definitely different from what the mainstream media has been portraying. We discussed that after the storm he was told not to leave his house or engage with the community until he was told to do so. Carrión ignored the

protocol and went out to help who he could. He stated, "there were people lying face down in their flooded homes and others were crushed by concrete that fell on them. I had to get them out, I could not just leave them there."

Supplies that had been shipped to Puerto Rico were not being handed over and Carrión was to be taxed twice if he wanted access to the them. He managed to help his community with what he had, but got sick and was sent to the hospital, where he was told to stop what he was doing. Still, once he was released he went back to work.

He was not going to give up on his people like the government had done so long ago. Carrión not only made us believe that we are not alone in this fight for humanity, and the group of people that we worked with that week helped us regain the hope we had lost. We worked hard, laughed and cried together and the bond and love we have for each other now is

unforgettable.

The restoration of Puerto Rico is far from over, however. It has been six months since the hurricane landed in Puerto Rico and as media exposure decreases, people assume that the island is back to normal. Many Puerto Ricans are still waiting for electricity and clean water to return to their homes, and there are also many that no longer have a roof over their head and are still waiting for tarps that were promised to them by FEMA. Six months in and people are surviving without a roof, electricity or clean water. The student guide of our trip mentioned that the power had been restored in her family's home just two weeks before our arrival. It is difficult to maintain awareness after such a large lapse of time has passed, but it is important to always keep in mind the situation that places far from home go through on a daily basis.



Courtesy of Robert Quinones

## NJCU's Hidden Heroes

by **Cynthia Vazquez**, Assistant Director, College of Education  
VP of The Council on Hispanic Affairs

Here, I am snowed in, feeling aggravated knowing that soon I will have to go out into the cold to shovel my car out of the snow, yet I can not help but think about the 50 percent of the people in Puerto Rico who are still living without power, making their daily lives nearly impossible to function. Hurricane Maria has just ravished the island and yet here I am ready to complain about some snow. How dare I complain?

How can I complain when it has been 149 days at the time I am writing this since the hurricane made landfall in Puerto Rico and yet 300,000 people are still without power today? What I find most interesting is that during my time volunteering with the students of NJCU, the Puerto Rican people we met seemed to express a sense of inner strength and humbleness which made me realize that Puertorriqueños are quite resilient. What truly warmed my

heart is that the people on the island who barely have anything now because of the hurricane, do not complain about their current situation. They are the most non-complainers I have ever met in my life and although they are Boricua and American just like me, they do not act spoiled and demanding. Puerto Ricans are culturally hard working, humble, peaceful people who just want to be treated as other Americans are treated, especially during a time

of crisis.

It is for this very reason that New Jersey City University - Office of Community Service and Volunteerism collaborated with the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras for a program called INIM; An Interdisciplinary Multicultural program that provides students and staff a chance to do community service in PR while also learning about its culture and history.

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The program consisted of a week filled with various community service projects where we helped clean up poor communities filled with debris caused by the hurricane, as well as help gut out and paint an abandoned building that will be soon used as a homeless shelter. What is so clever about this program is that while we helped, we also had the chance to learn about the culture and the politics that the island of Puerto Rico is currently experiencing. During one of our first projects, we volunteered to do work in a town called Cataño, Puerto Rico; a small, poor community where the residents are struggling day to day ever since the hurricane. A woman named Marlene Rivera, an Americorp volunteer of Puerto Rico, explained to me that she and her group visit this town frequently because the it is not receiving the help it needs to survive as a community. The government hopes that their lack of help will prompt the people of Cataño to move out of the area in order to re-purpose the land. Marlene explained to me that the people will not budge and feel that it is their right to continue living on land that they rightfully acquired from prior generations

of their families living there. For this reason, Marlene was there to help and was truly thankful that the NJCU student volunteers were there to serve and help as well.

During another service project, we had the honor to meet Don Pedro, a man who founded La Reserva Natural Cienaga Las Cucharillas – Corredor del Yaguazo Inc - A Natural Reserve that protects the mangroves of that town. He told us why he got involved and how he feels that it is his life's mission to protect the surrounding environment of the community he lives in for the purpose of educating about the importance of environmental preservation. Don Pedro is considered a hero by many in Puerto Rico, which made me realize that there must be many hidden heroes on the island who are truly trying their best to make a difference and protect the beauty of this enchanted island.

Although the NJCU volunteers (aka: hidden heroes) were in Puerto Rico for only one week of service, it was apparent that the island of Puerto Rico will take quite some time to get back to normal. So many homes are still without roofs relying on blue tarps, 50 percent of the people are still without power and many have been left homeless or without work due



Courtesy of Robert Quinones

to companies having to close down for business.

So what can we continue to do to help Puerto Rico?

Thankfully, NJCU's Office of Community Service and Volunteerism, would like to continue helping Puerto Rico by proposing future endeavors including student volunteers for community service as an alternative spring break trip. The idea of NJCU students volunteering to help others in need during their spring break truly accentuates the mission that NJCU has always conveyed as their motto..... "Enter to Learn and Exit to Serve."

As a Puerto Rican staff member of the NJCU community, I am thankful that we have students who are true humanitarians ready to become leaders of

positive change in this world that is presently filled with so much division and hatred.

So, in my native Spanish tongue I would like to say...

"Gracias a los estudiantes de NJCU que se ofrecieron como voluntarios durante las vacaciones de primavera alternativas en Puerto Rico! Todos ustedes son verdaderos héroes y líderes del cambio positivo. ¡Que dios los bendiga a todos!

**Translation:** "Thank you to those NJCU students who volunteered during the alternative spring break in Puerto Rico! You are all true heroes and leaders of positive change. May God Bless you all!"







Courtesy of JunSean Fung

*22 senior art majors presented their final thesis projects at the Harborside Atrium this month in the BFA exhibition show, Nova Altum.*

## Wonder Women 11: Eye of the storm

by Michi Suazo | Features Editor

Driftwood, tree stumps, plastic pollution and toxic soil are only some of what this exhibit holds. Celebrating the 11th annual Wonder Women Residency Project, NJCU Galleries and \_gaia presents Eye of the Storm which features nine women artists who are examining our rapidly changing environments and the catastrophic effects of climate change. Artists featured in the show are Amanda Thackray, Deborah Sperry, Gwen Charles, Jessica Demcsak, Linda Streicher, Olga Mercedes Bautista, Sharon



De La Cruz, Tamara Gubernat and Wendell Jeffrey.

### Deborah Sperry

Sperry's The Ark Project used wood, paper, hardware and rope to construct an upstanding ark that the audience can interact with by writing down what they want to save or writing an uplifting message. The paper is then rolled up and put through the holes of the ark as

if to stop a leak to save the ark from sinking. After this, one can get a wildflower seed ball within the ark to plant it. The ark is adorned with paper clippings of information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "Everyone is contributing to climate change but when people read about it it's hard to understand. Any reading that you do is scientific. For people it has to be a personal statement." I took two seed balls.

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**Gwen Charles**

Charles' Glacial Ablation used full color digital video with sound that seems to depict an ocean polluted by an oil spill. She recreates the ocean with man-made materials such as mylar and cellophane which replicate natural forms. She is concerned with how the ocean and Mother Nature try to find a balance with the sinking islands caused by rising tides. As islands vanish, new ones emerge from the surface which are entirely made from lava. Charles likens landscape with the human body. She says, "Ablation is a medical term that has to do with the removal of body parts but it is also the breaking and melting of icebergs."

**Jessica Demcsak**

Demcsak worked with wood she found on the road to create The Forest of Shadows and Memories. Her piece is concerned with the increasing intensity of storms like hurricane Katrina and Maria. She used acrylic to make architectural paintings on the wood to reflect the structures and lives lost in floods and storms. Looking at the tree stumps, one could not help but think about Shel Silverstein's The Giving Tree which could be interpreted as humankind's relationship with nature. When asked of her thoughts about the story, Demcsak said, "The man was a jerk but really the tree couldn't have done anything else but give. I think for every tree that falls we should put one back."

**Wendell Jeffrey**

With Tombola and the Catacombs, Jeffrey constructed an eye-catching earthy ensemble. Jeffrey is interested in how the small things are affected. She focused her piece on the invasive species of Emerald ash borers and how we spread these insects that can decimate ash trees in North America. Jeffrey's Catacomb drawings follow the life cycle of an Emerald ash borer in North America. It examines how removing a species from their natural habitats disrupts the symbiotic relationship nature has with them and, in turn, damages our habitat.

**Olga Mercedes Bautista**

Bautista concentrates on the effects plastic pollution has on marine life. Her piece was also inspired by Hurricane Sandy and the effects of devastating winds and waves on trees. Her Bonding with Plastic uses fallen tree barks, plastic bags and leaves she collected at Key Port. Products from big companies like Walmart and Delmonte fuse with the tree barks to create manufactured synthetic bark that represent the harmful culture that consumerism and materialism generates. "America is one of the top polluters in the world. More people really need to be involved."

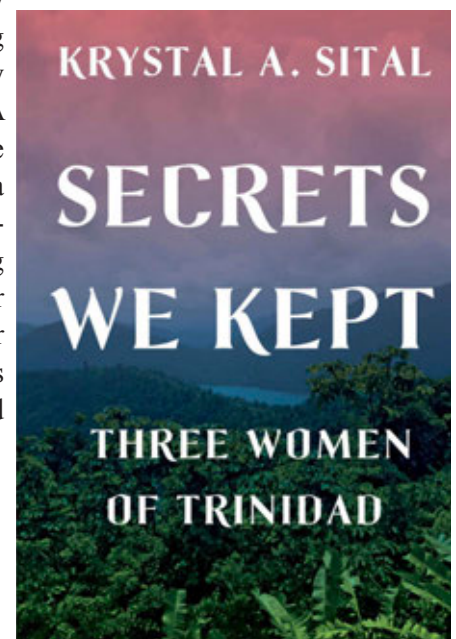
*The exhibition will be at the  
Harold B. Lemmerman Gallery  
until May 9.*



## Secrets We Kept

by **Emmanuel Lebron** | A&E Editor

In March NJCU warmly welcomed back alumni Krystal Sital as she promoted the release of her debut memoir "Secrets We Kept: Three Women Of Trinidad." The book tells a heart wrenching story of the physical abuse her mother and grandmother endured at the hands of her grandfather. "Secrets We Kept" was also recently reviewed by The New York Times Book Review and has been receiving overwhelmingly positive reviews. A packed Gothic Lounge heard Sital read a passage from her book - but not before giving her due. A number of Krystal's former professors, colleagues and friends all paid tribute to her.



# Addressing Gun Safety on Campus

by **Erik S. Ordye** | Managing Editor

With national attention focused on gun laws and mass shootings, students and faculty have been discussing safety on campus. Some are unaware of current procedures in place and all want to see visible change on campus.

Jimmy Jung, vice president of student affairs and enrollment management provided details about an action the university is taking. “NJCU is producing a video this summer to discuss how to handle emergency situations on campus. The video will be made available to students online

and an email announcement will be sent to the University community.”

However, some students are unaware of procedures such as these. One student, Michael DePinto, shook his head when asked if he knew anything about NJCU’s current procedures or guidelines in relation to gun safety. He said that he knew “nothing at all, not a thing” about them. Kelvin Escotto and Tabitha Isaac, both students, were also in the same situation as DePinto when asked about current gun safety procedures and guidelines on campus – neither knew of any.

Others in the university have concerns over the video, such as Professor Joseph Moskowitz. He questioned its effectiveness. “My sense is showing a video is not as effective as actually participating in active shooter drills.”

Harold Daniels III, a student, echoed Moskowitz’s concerns about the video’s overall effectiveness, as he felt that it was not enough and should not be the only solution. “I would start with the security... I think [the video] would be useful to some of us, but we need to capitalize on educating our security and equipping them.”

In an email interview, Jung said trainings are already in place and will continue. He said “the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Public Safety are working together to provide active shooter training to staff and students who work in frontline offices. These trainings started in 2017 and are continuing throughout 2018.”

When asked if NJCU is planning other

procedures in addition to the video, Jung said “active shooter drills are scheduled to occur on the main campus and School of Business at Harborside in the next couple of months. The drill will involve NJCU Public Safety, the Jersey City Police Department, NJ Transit, and the Hudson County Sheriff’s Department. In addition, the Division of Student Affairs will develop a number of empowerment and situational awareness workshops for students.”

Considering that safety in schools has dominated news headlines over the past months, the university is and has been making changes to protect the community. In addition to the other safety procedures, Jung said that there will be “an Emergency Response Guide... posted in all classrooms as soon as they are available.”



Courtesy of Nightscream (Wikimedia Commons)



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# Unaffordable housing developments continue to crop up around Jersey City

by Kisha Allgood | Reporter

**B**ergen-Lafayette is a predominantly African American community nestled between the wards of Greenville and West Side. The community is 10 minutes away from NJCU. The residents of the neighborhood are experiencing rapid redevelopment. Companies such as KABR GROUP, Myneni and Sons and BuildPro Constructions are building condo developments that will be out of the price range of residents.

Clifton-based KABR Group is in the process of building a five-story project that will have 58 apartments that are market rate. Market rate means that the rents, although not yet known, will be higher than most rents in the area currently. The average rent in Bergen-Lafayette is \$954. With a population of 62,000, this neighborhood has a high amount of families with children as well as single-parent households. The price of this project is \$13.5 million, and KABR Group will be getting a 30 year tax abatement from Jersey City.

Walking down Bergen and coming across Grand Street, there is another development. Myneni and Sons, a Jersey City-based company, is also constructing a five-story development with 60 apartments. Ten percent of them will be offered to veterans for 15 years. Financial statements show Myneni and Sons are building elsewhere on Grand



Courtesy of Darshan Chokshi

Upcoming and current developments in Greenville and Bergen-Lafayette

Street.

One other development, the Zenith Grand Apartments, is a project being built by BuildPro Constructions. It is located on Grand Street near the corner of Summit Avenue. This company's office is located in Ridgefield Park. The company will pay the Jersey City Affordable Housing Trust Fund

\$16,194 in order to receive a five-year tax exemption. Their project will create a four-story building with nine market rate apartments.

Another development being constructed by Myneni and Sons is located on Kennedy Boulevard between Gates and Custer Avenue. Greenville has a household income of \$48,778.

Purchased in 2015 for \$1.7 million, the plans are to build a development with 68 apartments. The proposal for the building was approved by the Jersey City Planning Board in April 2016 and the Hudson County Planning Board in August 2016.

# Officers in blue have families too

by **Kristen Hazzard** | Sports Editor

I fear for my dad's life every day. As the daughter of an African American police officer (and a school resource officer) the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida hit home for me. Serving in the military and law enforcement has been a part of my family for generations. My dad has been a police officer for 18 years and a school resource officer for about six years.

He might be here one day and gone the next. I try not to think that way, but it is sadly true. My father rarely talks about his work and doesn't have a normal eight-hour work day.

Some people may forget that police officers have families and lives outside of their uniforms. Others may think of law enforcement as the "bad guys," however there's another side to the story: There are men and women who care about their communities and take

the oath to serve and protect seriously.

A school resource officer (SRO) is typically a police officer assigned to a specific school. They investigate criminal incidents and communicate with school officials and students. SROs are there to insure the safety of students and staff. I'm grateful that my dad can maintain a connection with the students in the school district where he works. He makes his presence known to students and staff, so they are aware of who he is when he enters the school. My dad can laugh or joke with students and faculty while upholding a professional attitude. Most importantly, he takes the time to know the students.

## Innocent Lives Taken By AR-15

My first thought when I heard about the Parkland shooting

was here is another mass shooting that involved innocent people murdered by a gun. I personally have no problem with people having guns nor am I trying to take away someone's enjoyment of guns, especially if they are used correctly. The problem is when guns are in the wrong hands. It takes one mentally unstable person to get ahold of a gun and cause a massacre.

The Parkland shooter had an AR-15 which is a semi-automatic rifle with destructive capabilities. There are versions of the gun that are for military use dating back to the Vietnam War. Now civilians are able to purchase that gun. What purpose does owning an AR-15 serve for civilians? The gun shoots out high-velocity rounds, unlike a traditional handgun.

Gun violence is a problem that our government seems to ignore. When the younger

generations stage national walkouts and protests in front of government buildings across the country that shows how big the problem really is. Students are demanding gun reform, yet they're let down by the adults who create the laws to protect them. One might ask, how many shootings have to happen before a politician in Washington, D.C. can stand up to end the violence? The Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms however that continues to be a pawn when mass shootings occur. Unfortunately, gun owners fear that the government will take away every gun in America. While there are people who are for the removal of guns, a majority of Americans believe in stricter gun laws and services for mental health.

# Freeze or Roast: The Unpredictability of NJCU's Heating/Cooling

by **Sean Quinn** | Reporter

I sit in the library of NJCU, and it is atypically cool in here. Everyone around me is bundled in sweaters and jackets, while mine rests on my chair. I say this as I have often found the library to be one of the warmest buildings on campus. I won't complain, as my ancestors hail from an island where the sun rarely shines and rain is the norm. As a result I am most comfortable in cooler rooms. I can't speak for our business school as I've never been there, but the main campus

has buildings that seem to either turn into ovens or freezers at the worst times to do so. Much like the weather of Jersey City, NJCU is unpredictable with its temperature.

The first step was gauging the general feeling of the buildings in the halls and rooms I'd be able to step into. So I walked around without my jacket to gauge them. The Karnoutsos building was the hottest, with the the third floor making me sweat like the FBI raided my home. The science building was

drafty but not too bad. Rossey Hall was on the warmer side of things, likely due to the smooth jazz emanating in the hallways. Vodra Hall was average to me but it warmed as I neared the emergency exit. Grossnickle Hall wasn't bad, which surprised me as the class I took there could get uncomfortably hot. Hepburn Hall wasn't bad to me, but the constant walking may have impacted my judgement. The visual arts building was tolerable.

During my first

semester here, I was taking a class in Rossey Hall around November, when the weather grew colder and rain and snow began to arrive. For some reason, the room didn't have the heat on, leaving myself and fellow students in our jackets. In fact, the professor actually cancelled class for the day because of the lack of heat. The following class was the same issue, which forced the professor to threaten to file a complaint just to get

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the heat on (The heat was turned on a short time after). But my experiences are only a fraction of the story. I am just one man, so I reached out to fellow students and employees on campus. According to student Gabriella Villante "I have a class in the Grossnickle Hall auditorium and the heater offers little heat for how cold the room can get. Employees of the bookstore in GSub said "We have sent complaints about the

heat and cold." They added that having an adjustable thermostat would be great, as well as that there is a health risk to people in certain rooms, such as someone with anemia in a cold room.

I spoke with Anthony Rago, the Director of Facilities at NJCU. I asked him what the causes were for these swings in temperature that never seem to find a balance for what someone wants/needs. He told me "There are several factors with the temperature of a room. The infrastructure, sunlight going into a room, people requesting

for adjustments in the area, and the weather." He also said that "No two people will feel the same way about the heat or cold." (I agree). When asked if facilities received complaints, he stated that they usually only receive calls to turn on heating.

I can understand that people can have some impact on the heating, but a balance almost never seems to be reached when we need it. There has to be a more moderate approach to controlling the temperature of the campus buildings. There are health risks with this extreme

climate. Someone with anemia is at risk if they're in a cold room. But the answer shouldn't be to blast the heat to the point people begin to stick to their chairs.

It's impossible to satisfy everyone, and individual preferences vary, but only a Sith deals in absolutes. Balance is important in life, and the boiler rooms on campus shouldn't be any different. We're not asking for an overhaul of the whole system, just a little less turning of the dial.

# EVERYTHING SUCKS: "READY PLAYER ONE"

by **Emmanuel Lebron** | A&E Editor

I can't believe I am the one who has to say it. "The Walking Dead" hasn't been good in years. "Game of Thrones" is awful. It's not just T.V. There has not been a movie that I have genuinely enjoyed in a very long time. "Annihilation" had a horrifying and unsettling nightmare bear and I still wouldn't recommend it to anyone. I used to love the "A Wrinkle in Time" books as a child but the movie bored me to sleep. I'm not going to pretend like the mere fact that they roped Oprah Winfrey into a high budget sci fi-fantasy and dressed her like an anime character wasn't partially amusing, but overall it didn't do anything for me.

Am I just bitter and jaded? Absolutely. But I'll argue that the entertainment industry as a whole has just stopped trying. Lately, movies and T.V. have just become content with mediocrity. And worse yet, people have just been content to gobble it up. Do you know

how tired I am of having to tell people the same exact thing whenever they ask my opinion on something?

"Well it wasn't amazing, but it didn't suck," shouldn't have to be the most praise a thing can get. Nor should it be hoisted on the shoulders of better things just for being the least offensive way to adapt pre-existing material.

Which is why I genuinely dreaded the release of "READY PLAYER ONE." In "READY PLAYER ONE," when the creator of a virtual reality world called OASIS dies, he releases a video in which he challenges all OASIS users to find his "Easter Egg," which will give the finder his fortune and control over OASIS. Wade Watts sets out to engulf himself in the creator's life, all forms of pop culture and the minutia of everything about it, in order to seek out the keys to unlocking the egg. What follows is a sensory overload of random background cameos

and references to popular movies and (mostly) video games. If "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" and "Wreck-It-Ralph" had a wild night out listening to 80's hits, playing "Overwatch" buzzed on Monster energy drink and had a baby, this movie is that unholy manifestation of that night.

Now don't get me wrong, I have spent my entire life absorbing all forms of pop culture. You would think that this movie was born from a fever dream I had. You would think that I would be it's core audience. But I'm not. I've become so averse to this blatant and non-subtle barrage of references and nostalgia that the fact that this movie and what is certainly going to be an endless barrage of cameos and references to things I like (or used to) is genuinely exhausting to me. I could not wait for this movie to surprise me and fill me with childlike wonder and glee. I've been so burnt out on "nerd culture"

that the mainstream is making me hate and repel against the very thing that made me who I am. This movie was going to have to do a lot to win me over. Showing me the "Iron Giant" or the "Back To The Future" DeLorean in the trailers is a very cheap grab.

Well, I was proven wrong. There was in fact a fun movie in there buried under all of the references and overly obvious cameos. From a few neat unexpected sequences (being trapped in The Overlook Hotel from "The Shining" is a major highlight) to a final battle that is the cinematic equivalent of throwing every toy you own into a pile (If you ever wondered how a fight between Mecha Godzilla and a Gundam would go down, boy does this movie have a treat for you), "Ready Player One" revelled and found great joy in its geekery.

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Fair warning, it apparently throws most of the book out of the window, so if you were a fan of the book going into this a few changes might irk

you, but overall I felt like it was a charming, albeit overly nostalgic look at video games, movies and pop culture and the way some people allow it to run their entire lives. I am not going to pretend like this movie cured me of my blockbuster burnout,

but for a few bright hours, this movie reminded me of why I loved all the silly nerdy things I loved. But told me it was okay to love them, so long as I eventually left the house from time to time and got a girlfriend. Honestly, I'm pretty

sure that was the message of this movie. Spielberg is trying to say something about his audience, and I mean he has a point, but he didn't have to be mean about it.

## NJCU "In The Heights"

by **Darren Greene | Podcast Producer**



Courtesy of Marc Dalio



"In The Heights," by NJCU performing arts students, was at the Margaret Williams Theatre for two weekends last month. It was directed by Marc Dalio.

The musical takes place over the course of three days in the predominantly Latino

neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City. "In The Heights" tells the stories of Usnavi (played by Gerson Checo), the owner of a local bodega who dreams of opening a bar in the Dominican Republic, Vanessa (played by Stephanie Rosario), who works in a beauty salon, Nina (played by Miriam Navarrette), a Stanford University student, Benny (played by Prestine M. Allen Jr.), Nina's love interest and an employee of her disapproving father and more

from the Washington Heights community. The musical is soundtracked by "Latin hip hop and dance rhythms."

A few microphone issues did not hold the cast back from putting on a great show. The actors were very entertaining and displayed excellent vocals throughout the night. AJ Natale's choreography was also a highlight. The most memorable part of the musical was the "Piragua Guy" scenes, played by Angel Berrios. The set was also tremendous

and succeeded in giving the Margaret Williams Theater a New York City realism.

Lin-Manuel Miranda, best known for "Hamilton," wrote "In The Heights" while he was in college. The musical premiered on Broadway in 2008 and won Tony Awards for best musical, original score, choreography and orchestrations that same year.



# WATCHING “BLACK PANTHER” FIVE TIMES AND WHAT IT MEANT FOR ME

by **Maxine Antoine** | Op/Ed Editor

Going to the movies five times to watch one movie is not something I usually do — nor can I afford to do. However, “Black Panther,” one of the most groundbreaking Marvel movies in my eyes, meant that much to me. When I watched “Black Panther” for the first time, I felt excited to see black people with different skin complexions, including my own, play the heroes, the warriors and the love interest. I felt as though we were finally making history in the mainstream movie industry. What I loved most about the movie is that dark-skinned black women were valued and respected as equals to the man. Female dark-skinned

warriors were something I have never seen on the big screen so when I did, I could not help but feel emotional. Black males and females were seen in an empowering light. We finally broke the trend of seeing black people in roles as gangsters, prostitutes, prisoners or the angry black woman.

When I watched “Black Panther” for the fifth time, there were some things I thought that, considering it is a big budget movie, could have been fixed, such as the lack of a wound on T’Challa’s chest when he battles M’Baku. I also realized, after forcing myself to not watch it for the sixth time and having a discussion about the movie in my Film Directing class,

that another Hollywood film made one of the very few white characters a hero.

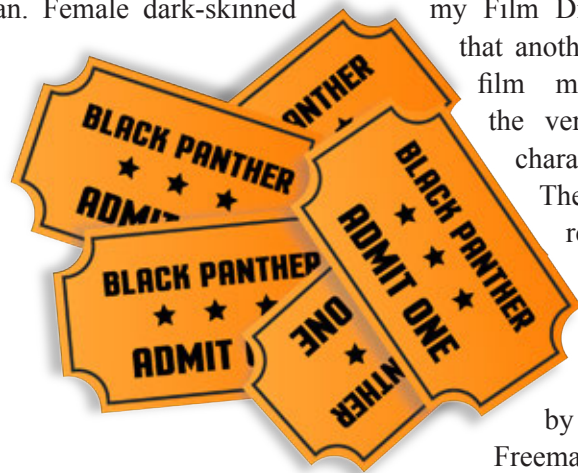
The hero I am referring to is Everett Ross, the CIA agent played by Martin Freeman that helps

save Wakanda. My

professor first mentioned how strange it was for a CIA agent to be the hero because, in reality, he would have reported that Wakanda is filled with Vibranium to the headquarters and they would have found a way to strip Wakanda of their Vibranium. When my professor said this, I found myself agreeing that it was strange and wondered how I did not realize that, even though I watched it five times.

Aside from that, I think that “Black Panther” was well done and I have been supporting it as much as I can by spending money to see it. There are people out there who do not understand why this movie was so important to the black community and they are upset over how politics seeped into a Marvel movie. However, Black Panther is not the only movie that has politics in it. “Spiderman,” according to Alex Abad-Santos for Vox, deals with drug addiction in the 70’s. “Iron Man,” according to Landon Palmer from Film School Rejects, is one of the most politically driven

movies with its commentaries on the military-industrial complex during the Cold War. Yet, “Black Panther,” another film that has a strong political message throughout is criticized for having done so. I think that movies and all other mediums of art and entertainment are influenced by politics and society which in turn influences society to do some introspection. My hope is that “Black Panther” and its sequel, which I will also watch five times, will inspire society to do more introspection and create change.



Courtesy of Monica Sarmiento

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The 4th Annual NJCU Lavender Graduation hosted by the Gothic Knight Ally Safe Zone Program will take place on April 27th, 2018 at 4pm in the Gilligan Student Union Lobby. This event is co-sponsored by the Speicher-Rubin Women’s Center for Equity and Diversity, the NJCU Counseling Center, the Office of Student Outreach and Retention (SOAR) and Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library. This event is free and open to the public and will honor the achievements and contributions of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students of NJCU. Confirmed speakers for this event include Dr. David Blackmore who is one of NJCU’s early advocates for LGBTQ rights on campus. If you are a person with a disability and require accommodations, you may reach us at 201.200.3189 or njcusafezone@njcu.edu.

# Christina Mezey: The Making of an Athlete

by **Kristen Hazzard** | Sports Editor



Courtesy of Ira Thor

Christina Mezey is one of those athletes that played multiple sports as a kid. Whether it was softball, track, soccer, cheerleading or basketball she enjoyed it all. She tried different sports in order to find her niche. As a Jersey City native, she was brought up by parents who were athletes as well. They pushed her into sports during her childhood and she's definitely happy they did. By the third grade, she started softball and as she got older, Mezey managed to get a feel for each position.

She started out playing as third baseman but worked

her way up to earn the title of pitcher in high school and college softball. At NJCU, Mezey is the only player pitching on the roster, so she has taken on a huge role this year. To prepare for this position she pitches every day to keep her stamina the same for each game. Right now, her main focus is more on running, hitting, and pitching. When she looks back to her freshman year in college, Mezey, 21, said she had to adjust to playing college softball and to the college atmosphere. Now as a junior, she enjoys being the player that she has become. Her game has elevated as she continues to keep a clear mind and not stress the little things. Mezey said, "I want to improve more on cutting down on walks, better pitching on the mound, and getting more contact on the field." An outsider might imagine an athlete would have a lot on their mind when they're on the field, but when Mezey is on the mound she has learned to zone out and let everything naturally flow. She might even sing a song or two.

Her and the team stress

the importance of keeping the positive energy in the dugout. Whether it's singing or cheering they bring that same energy to the field. Mezey said "last year wasn't a good season" but she's staying positive as she strives to do better. No matter how tense the situation, she has confidence in her teammates behind her that they will do their job. The softball team consists of younger players so they're all learning together and improving in practice. She has also noticed the rise of confidence this season from her teammates. During the off season this year, a few players from the softball team including Mezey volunteered to play on NJCU's women's basketball team in the 2017-18 season. She was more than happy to help because she played in high school and missed playing altogether.

Mezey is more than an athlete, she's also an undergraduate working on her degree in criminal justice. As a child, she was interested in criminal fiction shows such as CSI which focus on the forensics of a crime. Since she enjoys learning about the forensics

of a crime scene, she plans on becoming a police officer in the near future. However, she still plans on keeping herself involved in the sports world by coaching a softball or basketball team.



## The Gothic Times Wins Two Awards



**Editor-in-Chief, Monica Sarmiento, with Theta Pavis, advisor of The Gothic Times**

This spring, The Gothic Times took home two important awards. Editor-in-Chief, Monica Sarmiento, won an Honorable Mention in the "Iron Reporter Contest" hosted by the College Media Association. Monica competed in the contest where student reporters had less than 48 hours to produce an original article in New York City.

The New Jersey Press Association also awarded The Gothic Times a second place award for Editorial Writing. NJCU's student media competed in this contest with universities from across the garden state.

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