I feel safe walking around my own neighborhood late at night. I have never been followed around a clothing store by a security guard. I have never witnessed someone of my own race victimized on video. My family has never been targeted by the police for crimes we did not commit.

I've always been aware that I have privilege as a white woman in America, but looking into the eyes of people I deeply care about and hearing their cries as they speak to their experiences of what I listed above -- I wasn’t just aware of my privilege. I felt my privilege crawling along my every limb.

On Tuesday of this week, on what was meant to be the day that the latest copy of the paper was to be produced, the Corsair advisor - and my personal journalistic role model - Ashanti Blaize-Hopkins took a day off from her maternity leave to host a safe space for the staff to voice their thoughts and feelings in response to George Floyd’s murder by now-former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

The vulnerability in the air as more than 10 staff members spoke to their own anger, hardships, and traumas experienced as people of color in today’s America was admirable beyond belief. I felt immensely grateful to listen.

From the start of my journalism career at age 14, I was told I was officially in the storytelling business. I was to act as a vessel that was relied upon by the general public to tell the stories of those who were not able to tell their tales themselves. Whether that be politicians or protestors, I was told that neutrality and factuality were priority.

In hearing these stories spoken by the people who had experienced them, rather than told by people who look like me, I realized how much power their voices added to their experiences. My friends and advisors at The Corsair have helped me realize that in a world so divisive, staying neutral and objective can often cross the line into passivity.

Through discussions with my peers and online resources recommended to me by friends, I’ve come to realize that the lessons I had been taught about “journalistic integrity” were simply extensions of my privilege as a writer who can separate myself from the issues because my activism can be considered optional.

I do not want my activism to be optional any longer.

Yes, it is difficult for me to acknowledge that I only ever wake up thinking about police brutality when the streets are flooded with protestors. But, I welcome the discomfort. I want to understand. I want to keep talking to my fellow staff members about things that I could never understand from my own lived experiences. I want to keep listening, and I want to keep learning so that I can further understand how to be of help.

This is because, in the words of my friend and Corsair culture editor Tatiana Louder, living as a person of color holds “so much nuance, and it is non-researchable. It is a part of life experience that so many of our readers are privy to.”

It will likely take years for me to fully recognize the ways in which my experience as Editor-in-Chief of The Corsair has shaped me for the better. In February, I thought that the biggest obstacle of my term as “Captain Sedz” - as managing editor Jack Hughes likes to call me - would be the Santa Monica College (SMC) Associated Student board elections in March. At this point, March 2020 feels like at least three years ago.

Guiding this semester’s staff amidst a global pandemic and social justice protests that are still currently rocking our nation has been an absolute pleasure. In spite of the intensity and heaviness of the circumstances, I have never felt more grateful to be a part of something as I am The Corsair.

In The Corsair, I have found strength, purpose, and community. I feel more equipped than ever to help others find the same in whatever ways I can.
LA Mayor Announces New City Reform

Kiran Baer | Staff Writer

After ten days of nation-wide protests against police brutality in response to the death of George Floyd, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced a series of reforms to be made to the LAPD. The changes, all of which are expected to be fully implemented by the end of the year, include cutting $100 to $150 million from the $3 billion police budget to fund a new initiative directing $250 million toward “communities of color and women and people who have been left behind,” according to Garcetti.

The remaining $100-$150 million will come from smaller across-the-board cuts which have yet to be determined. The specifics of the new directed spending have also yet to be announced, though Garcetti noted that the Juvenile Diversion System will be significantly expanded.

The reforms will also include a temporary moratorium on new entries into the CalGang database, a state-wide list of suspected gang members. This list, which has drawn stark criticism from many civil rights groups, cites that more than 90 percent of the 90,000 entrants are black and Latino men. It is possible to be added to the database without an arrest or documented “suspicious” activity.

Proponents of the list say that presence on CalGang’s list is inconsequential, and that CalGang is only used as an investigating tool to help clue detectives and prosecutors if they’re heading in the right direction. Garcetti clarified that the moratorium will be temporary, and that the city will be using the time to review the process and requirements in adding to the list.

In the same press conference, Eileen Decker, President of the Los Angeles Police Commission, announced a series of changes within the Police Department, saying that she and her colleagues have been “listening to and hearing” the public and are working to establish “an aggressive reform agenda.”

Chief among these changes is the new requirement for all police officers to report and intervene when they witness uses of “excessive force,” though Decker did not go into detail about what defines “excessive force.” Decker also announced several other changes, particularly in the training and beginning processes of accepting officers from the police academy. These reforms include: Changing the training process for cadets to “accurately portray the history of the police department,” expanding mental health training throughout the police force; providing implicit bias training to all officers by the end of the year; changing the process of reviewing officers that raise red flags as being potentially “problematic” in the future including complaints of excessive use of force; modifying training and current policy in regard to dealing with protests and high-tension situations, including expanding de-escalation training; adding 900 new officers to the force specializing in mental health by the end of the year; expanding community outreach; making crime, police, and other relevant statistics easily accessible to the public.

Decker did not specify how the city would be able to pay for the new additions and changes to the police force, though she did note that the police are actively participating in identifying areas for the $150 million to be cut. Decker also said the Police Commission would be revising its stance on several issues including supporting legislation to a special independent prosecutor or office to investigate incidents of police brutality, and legislation to expand juvenile diversion programs.

Mayor Garcetti also announced that Los Angeles would be establishing a new Department of Civil and Human Rights, which would be dedicated to investigating and maintaining civil rights in several areas including education, commerce, and housing. Within the department, an Office of Racial Equity will be established focusing on research and community outreach. Both the Office of Racial Equity and the new Department are expected to be up-and-running by July 1.

In Los Angeles and Santa Monica, responses to the protests have led to calls for the resignations of Los Angeles District Attorney Jackie Lacey, and Santa Monica Police Chief Cynthia Renaud in light of several videos showing police passively watching the looting that has swept the country, and directing most of their forces to deal with peaceful protesters instead of looters. Most community leaders and protesters have drawn a distinct line between the protesters and the looters, with most openly denouncing them as being derogatory to their cause and completely unrelated.

How Petitions Work

Aleah Antonio & James Shippy | News Editor & Staff Writer

In light of the recent death of George Floyd, multiple petitions surfaced on the internet in order to call for charges against Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer who had killed Floyd. Other petitions regarding deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other deaths from police brutality are being widely spread through social media, reaching over a million signatures each. Petitions are nothing new and are one of the founding rights Americans have used to induce social change.

A petition is a request, usually towards a government agency or public official, to do something, whether it be passing a law or filing a lawsuit. Most petitions are usually created to raise awareness about a particular cause. Historically, petitions have mobilized people and reinforced various perspectives. The right to petition is guaranteed to every American, protected under the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

According to the American Bar Association, four types of petitions exist: political petitions that call for legislative action on a state or federal level; legal petitions that ask courts to issue specific orders in lawsuits; public purpose petitions that “ask officials to take or not take a specific action”; and internet petitions, which are conducted completely online and are the most often used in the modern age.

For petitions to make it to the White House, petitions created on We the People, the petitioning system started under the Obama administration, are required to reach 100,000 signatures within 30 days. Once a petition reaches that threshold, it is to be put into a queue to be reviewed by government officials. However, petitions created under the Trump administration that have reached the threshold have since been unresponsive.

The Black Lives Matter organization is one of the most recent and notable petition spearheads. Their initial call to action was to bring awareness and disproportionate “state sanctioned violence” and racism against African Americans after the Trayvon Martin murder in 2012. After George Floyd’s murder by police officer Derek Chauvin was caught on tape, and he was not initially charged, citizens began to protest here in America and worldwide.

Some petitions have utilized smaller but effective forms. University of California, Los Angeles graduate Preston Fusci used Instagram and posted on his birthday for friends and family to endorse the Black Lives Matter organization. Preston included incentives with this petition such as sending texts to donors about his favorite memory with them. He was able to raise over $732 for the cause.

“I decided to endorse for my birthday because after the long string of terrible events that happened this year,” Preston said, “Especially with everything going on right now with BLM, I wanted to remind everyone that we can still do some good and try to make the best out of a terrible situation...I found [the Equal Justice Initiative] to be the most transparent with what they do with people’s money. So I felt the most comfortable backing that organization up with me and my friends’ money,” said Preston.

The popularity of digital petitions has increased over the years. Due to the ease of participation on social media, people have become more involved in causes and display their participation to more people. #BlackLivesMatter has recently been included in over 19 million posts on Instagram. People from all walks of life including celebrities, politicians, and athletes have joined in on the movement to address police brutality and structural racism against African Americans. The overall impact of renewed interest in Black Lives Matter remains to be seen.
A Week of Nationwide Protests

Aleah Antonio & Michael Goldsmith | News Editor & Staff Writer

Protests originally forming in Minneapolis over the death of George Floyd by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin have quickly spread nationwide, as many organized protests continue to take place across Los Angeles County and neighboring cities. Los Angeles protests sparked as early as May 28 and public officials have since called for police and military intervention.

“The whole system is fucked,” said Felicity Clark, a participant in a Downtown Los Angeles protest on March 29. “[Police are] here to protect property, not people at all… they’ve definitely been aggressive. I mean, not to say our side hasn’t been aggressive too. We’re fucking mad.”

Multiple peaceful protests have occurred daily in the Los Angeles area. Wednesday saw two separate marches convene at the intersection of Santa Monica Blvd and La Cienega Blvd in West Hollywood. Hundreds of vehicles mixed in with thousands of protesters as a small law enforcement presence stood by and blocked off the intersection to outside vehicles, allowing the demonstrators a clear path.

Former SMC student Ginger Duran and her friend Erika Johnson handed out bottles of water and snacks from the back of their slow-moving Range Rover to walking demonstrators as they headed towards Santa Monica Blvd. “We were here yesterday just walking, but today we decided to do the water and snacks,” said Johnson. They got out of their vehicle to join in a moment of silence once they reached Santa Monica Blvd.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency on May 30 for Los Angeles County and the city of Los Angeles. Part of that order included mobilizing and deploying the California National Guard to help assist with the continued civil unrest in the area.

L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti issued a curfew beginning Saturday evening to the entire city effective from 8 p.m. to 5:30 a.m.; the curfews continued to fluctuate in terms of time throughout the week, giving as little as one hour notices. The curfew was meant to “clean up the debris, [make] sure shops are secure… [and make] sure that downtown residents can safely go around downtown and leave and come into their homes,” according to Garcetti’s press briefing. Garcetti halted curfews as of today.

These protests are in response to the death of George Floyd after an interaction with law enforcement. Floyd’s death on Monday occurred when Chauvin had knelt down on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Chauvin was arrested four days later on charges of second and third-degree murder and manslaughter. Third-degree murder, defined by the state of Minnesota as murder “without intent to effect the death of any person,” would decree Chauvin with a maximum 25 year sentence. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison later upgraded the murder charge against Chauvin to a more serious count of second-degree murder. Three other officers at the scene of Floyd’s interaction with Chauvin were also charged with aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter and aiding and abetting second-degree murder.

Each of the 50 states has participated in a Black Lives Matter-related protest since Floyd’s death on May 25, with events having taken place in over 430 cities nationwide. The movement has also garnered international support within the last week, with protests taken place in countries like Canada, Britain, and even Syria. Many have taken place in violation of restrictions limiting mass gatherings due to the coronavirus pandemic.

While the vast majority of protests locally and nationally have been peaceful, there have been isolated incidents of looting. A peaceful protest in Santa Monica, Calif. on Sunday was overshadowed by widespread vandalism and looting. Santa Monica Police Chief Cynthia Renaud said that 95 percent of those arrested during the looting did not live in Santa Monica. Santa Monica city officials stated that they believe the vast majority of the looters were not associated with the protest.

Many local business owners say they understand the pain and anger over Floyd’s death. John Grondor, owner of The Craftsman Bar and Kitchen on Broadway, stood watch outside his restaurant one block east of Ocean Ave.

“It’s just unfortunate that the message gets lost. We really need to get this message going, you know, I’m really all for it. We even put up a sign [on the store] that we are out protesting [earlier today]...let’s go exercise our right [to protest].”

Floyd’s case is not a lone incident, with his death following the recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Arbery was shot dead after being chased down while jogging in a neighborhood near Brunswick, Georgia. Gregory McMichael and Travis McMichael, a father and son, were arrested and charged with murder two days after video surfaced of the killing. Taylor was killed by Louisville police after they executed a no-knock warrant on her apartment and shot her at least eight times. Taylor’s mother has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against three officers.

As Floyd’s funeral took place this afternoon in Minneapolis, activists nationwide continued demanding social change through donations to protestor bail funds and black-run activist organizations. Many have signed petitions to hold accountable those responsible for Floyd’s death.

Missael Soto contributed to this report.

Above: A protester holding a sign in front of the police car burning on Fairfax, on Friday, May 30, 2020, in Los Angeles, Calif. (Yasamin Jahari-Tehrani/The Corsair)

Left: The police arrest a protester and drag him on the ground during the Black Lives Matter protest, on Monday, June 1, 2020, in Santa Monica, Calif. (Maxim Elramusty/The Corsair)
Protests Continue in Los Angeles

Above: Protestors kneel in front of police, while holding up signs in relation to the murder of George Floyd and the demand to end police brutality on Ocean Avenue in downtown Santa Monica. Santa Monica, Calif., Sunday, May 31, 2020. (William Franco Espinosa/The Corsair)

Below: Thousands of people are protesting the death of George Floyd, on Friday, May 30, 2020, in Los Angeles, Calif. As the protesters get violent, L.A. Mayor Garcetti calls for the National guard and orders curfew for the entire city of Los Angeles. (Yasamin Jafari-Tehrani/The Corsair)
The Broad Stage Announces Plans to Reopen

Rebecca Hogan | Staff Writer

During a time when many Performing Arts Centers are unsure about what the next season may hold, Rob Bailis, Artistic and Executive Director of The Broad Stage, along with Santa Monica College (SMC) Superintendent Dr. Kathryn Jeffery, and The Broad Stage Board President Richard Kendall, announce The Broad Stage’s impressive 2020/21 Season.

The Broad Stage, located at the Performing Arts Campus of SMC, along with SMC said they “realize that this announcement comes at a delicate time, as the arts are reeling from the pandemic,” and guidelines for reopening the country and reinventing daily life are continually in flux. Rather than keeping the arts on hold, Bailis, who is in his first season leading The Broad Stage, said, “I believe performing arts organizations grow in the soil in which they are planted…”

“There is an inextricable bond between the needs and nature of a given community and the artists whom they call to illuminate, perplex and evolve their way of life. This is never more important than in times of crisis.” Bailis has been committed to “planning a season that must respond to these urgent conditions and uncertainties.”

In response to COVID-19 health concerns and safety protocols, Bailis and his new leadership team consisting of Chief Operating Officer, Matthew Rimmer and Chief External Affairs Officer Shana Mathur, have worked together with SMC, the City of Santa Monica and Los Angeles County to create modifications for the 2020/21 Season. Rimmer said they have also been in conversation with “performance venues throughout the region on how to return safely to public performances indoors, including ingress/egress, queuing for restrooms and concessions, required faciul coverings and enhanced sanitation procedures.”

Mathur is also aware of the emotional toll on audience members who in a pre-COVID world frequented live performances. The double-edged sword is audience members who are saddened by staying away from the theatre, but anxious to return. To these audience members, Mathur says, “the safety and personal comfort of our [Broad Stage] customers are paramount. We want people to purchase tickets with confidence, knowing that we guarantee refunds for cancelled performances, or even if they have a change of heart due to uncertainties associated with gathering in person. We are hoping that people will invest in the future with us by buying tickets now, in support of the artists who champion our stages and the broader community which we serve.”

Superintendent Jeffery further emphasizes the commitment of SMC to support the performing arts and the community. She said, “for twelve seasons The Broad stage has become a Santa Monica College symbol of hope, optimism, and a clarity of vision through the artists on our stages… as we always consider safety, we intend to keep that beacon shining as bright as possible...”

The new season will be condensed, with performances taking place inside The Broad Stage’s three performing arts spaces from mid-January through July 2021. The season will begin outdoors with the Fall 2020 world premier of the theatrical chamber opera, “Birds in the Moon” by Mark Grey and Julia Canosa serra, directed by Elkhaham Pilitzer.

“This opera is transported in a shipper container which transforms into a state-of-the-art, self powered stage,” said a representative from the Broad. This format “will take the performance to a variety of outdoor locations around Santa Monica where social distancing protocols will be in place.”

The performance includes an instrumental quartet, a singer, an actor, soundscapes and video projections. The opera symbolically addresses immigration, migrants, human rights and choices made by necessity. It depicts this “desperate search for a better world, as a migration or desperate flight to a better life.”

Another unique offering is the Los Angeles premiere of Heartbeat Opera’s “Fidelio,” where actual prisoners sing the parts of prisoners in the opera by combining live performance with video from people who are incarcerated and in prison choirs across America.

More outstanding season 2021 performances include Grammy winning artists Diane Reeves, Chucho Valdez, Joe Lovano, Stanley Clarke, Takas Quartet, Munyungo Jackson, Keb’ Mo’, Yo-Yo Ma and Austin Mann, as well as a stellar lineup of dance, theatre and poetry.

Bailis said, “as we face these challenging times filled with frustration, grief and loss, I am all the more moved to introduce a group of artists whom I know we can turn to for healing, inspiration, and perhaps even if they have a change of heart due to uncertainties associated with gathering in person. We are hoping that people will invest in the future with us by buying tickets now, in support of the artists who champion our stages and the broader community which we serve.”

Ticket sales will be offered to the public beginning June 3. The Broad Stage offers SMC student rush tickets and spotlight talks, as well as Q&A’s, master classes, and open rehearsals for some performances. For more information please visit thebroadstage.org.

What is the Culture of Chaos?

Tatiana Louder | Culture Editor

An older black man swept up heaps of shattered glass from the floor of his nail salon. The glass front door of his business had been smashed in the upsurge of protesting for justice in the killing of George Floyd that led to property-destructing outbursts in downtown Santa Monica, late Sunday afternoon.

“Guess what it was, from my understanding,” said Ira, owner of a Santa Monica nail salon on Main Street who wished his last name to remain anonymous. “Girls. Girls. Girls. That got… whatever they need to recreate ic, but where. "We're not doing property we are new. Shit. I had a chain too, but I took it off over while driving in El Monte."

While the Santa Monica resident worked off his goods, he also showed concern for the actions, he saw the uproar as inevitable in time. “I did it for the cause. Everybody gets tired of that shit. If you live in the hood, you get tired of that shit,” said the man. The man also said he had been harassed by officers the previous week after being pulled over while driving in El Monte.

After nightfall, once the police had regained armed control over most of the Mall’s perimeter, an anonymous adolescent boy figures slip into the gated barrier on the Bloomingdale’s side of the shopping center. “They hopped the fence,” he said, “two.” They hodged the fence, he said, “two.” The rest of the teenagers protests stood around, empty handed, save for signs but still in awe. The boy said, “Look if you steal something that’s like a [Rolex] watch: $50,000.”
How The Corsair Pulled Through

Carolyn Burt | Digital Editor

Showing up to the Center for Media and Design on March 12 felt unlike any other day at Santa Monica College (SMC). It was only a month into the Spring Semester, and my first on the Corsair staff. After just our first few meetings I wished I had signed up for the course earlier, knowing this was to be my last semester at SMC before transferring in the Fall. I could already see my skills as a writer were drastically improving. I was pushing myself outside of my comfort zone as a journalist, and I finally felt like I had found my community at SMC. As we filed into the newsroom that day, it dawned on me how while I still wished I had been a part of the staff sooner, it was now for a new set of reasons.

There was a sense of comfort when our journalism professor, Ashanti Blaize-Hopkins, began class that day along with Gerard Burkhart, our photojournalism professor. The two, who both serve as advisors for the Corsair, led a discussion of how the class would continue online. Up until that point the biggest change we had prepared for was that Blaize-Hopkins would be going on maternity leave come spring break and professor Sharyn Obatz would be stepping in to fill her role.

“I think from the beginning, Burkhart and I decided that it was best for us to be transparent with the staff,” said Blaize-Hopkins. “I think, by us being honest about how we didn’t know what this was gonna go, you know, by us just saying, ‘Look, guys, we’re trying this, this is new, this is bizarre territory, and we’re gonna try and make it work.’ But you know, we need your help to try and make it work.”

Reality hit on March 19, the first Zoom session for our newly online class. While only a week had passed since we had seen each other in person, it felt like a lifetime. Many of us on the call were in the same boat, dealing with spotty wifi, learning to mute ourselves if we weren’t talking, and some parents now finding a balance between their classes and kids all while at home.

Despite it all, we showed up that day because we determined. We wanted to keep writing, to better ourselves, and grow from this experience.

That dedication felt by the Corsair’s Editor-In-Chief, Jackie Sedley. “I have never seen a group of people who only knew each other for a month in person, find a way to continue to collaborate, continue to grow, and continue to increase their abilities, week by week, even with a newly virtual format,” said Sedley.

Sedley along with managing editor Jack Hughes, met that following Sunday where they decided the Corsair would continue to produce a bi-weekly newspaper that solely lived online. “The PDF publication was something that was really important to both Jack and I. It was something that we felt like showed our abilities to collaborate.” said Sedley. “We knew that we wanted to keep producing those PDFs, even if they weren’t going to be printed.”

Hughes noted the educational opportunity producing a college newspaper provides, “Jackie and I, we have tried to maintain that environment for the entire staff. This is a huge learning experience, and we didn’t have this capacity... We want to inspire people becoming a part of solutions. We celebrate choices that make the world a better place, we do so in a way that shows that all of us have this capacity... We want to inspire people and make them feel not alone. We all have our stories and our challenges. We focus on everyday people, not people who are unattainable.”

Regarding his own experience in living a life that uplifts and inspires others, Denim says, “If you go through rough times you look for people who may be going through rough times too...[and] say, I get it, let’s talk, how can I help?”

Carlson says, “We are on a mission to inspire and remind you that you are Crazy Amazing. It is as simple as saying, ‘yes’ and responding to the needs that are right in front of us. Remember that every little kindness has the potential to create Crazy Amazing Human experiences.”

Inspiration is Just a Podcast Away

Rebecca Hogan | Staff Writer

Science has shown that, “Thinking positive, happy, hopeful and optimistic thoughts decreases Cortisol [the body’s stress hormone] and produces Serotonin [the body’s natural anti-depressant], which creates a sense of well-being. This helps the brain function at peak capacity.”

The Mental Health Foundation’s book, “Doing Good Does You Good” says, “It’s often said that ‘it’s better to give than to receive,’ but this is actually backed up by research. While it’s easy to feel too busy or stressed to help others... evidence shows that doing good for others is actually beneficial for your mental health and well being. It can help reduce stress, improve mood, self-esteem, longevity and happiness. From volunteering, to random acts of kindness, your good works can help others and yourself.”

With these facts in mind and an awareness that many people are feeling discouraged and helpless during these uncertain times, the longtime friends and bandmates, Katrina Carlson and Jefferson Denim say, “[we] felt compelled to create and co-host a podcast that would share the inspiring stories of everyday humans doing crazy amazing things... people who utilize their time, talent and resources to give back, pay it forward and just make a really positive difference.”

This resulted in the “Crazy Amazing Humans” (CAH) podcast, which now consists of seven episodes on YouTube and several other platforms. In the introductory episode, Getting to Know You, Carlson and Denim immediately connect with the audience in a sincere and transparent way. They have an innate ability to create a personal relationship with their listeners and viewers.

It is clear that they themselves are crazy amazing humans who effectively dedicate their skills, talents, and empathetic gifts while drawing from real-life experiences to create a sincere interaction with their podcast guests, bringing inspiration to their audience. Carlson and Denim are both accomplished professional musicians, singers, and songwriters. Each podcast episode has its own individual song performed by them. Both have strong ties to the Santa Monica community and are involved in several non-profit organizations. Carlson has lived in Santa Monica for over thirty years. She and her family are host to the well-known Santa Monica Halloween House, which is visited, free-of-charge, by an estimated 15,000 people every October.

The CAH podcast episodes, one through seven, span a wide range of guests. From a teenage paralympic track champion who founded a sports organization; to a behind-the-scenes look at the award winning documentary, “The Heart of Nuba” which follows an American doctor working in a war-torn region of Sudan; to an Oceanscape photographer dedicated to raising “blue consciousness.”

Every episode ends with inviting listeners to connect and be heard by emailing comments, questions, or sharing their own Crazy Amazing Humans story or experience. Carlson says, “Our mission is to find stories of people from all walks of life who are choosing to write their own narratives by becoming a part of solutions. We celebrate choices that make the world a better place, we do so in a way that shows that all of us have this capacity... We want to inspire people and make them feel not alone. We all have our stories and our challenges. We focus on everyday people, not people who are unattainable.”

Press (AP) Style Guide.

Once the article is finished, it’s uploaded to Google Drive for the layout team, made up by Sedley and Hughes who tag team by taking on different sections. They use Sedley’s computer as the home base as they insert the articles in as soon as they’ve gone through the read-through process and format both the stories and visuals.

We all rejoin on Zoom for one final look through before we upload our publication onto the website. It’s a rewarding moment as it’s the first time many of us get to see how our hard work throughout the day has come together. We stay on the call as the PDF is uploaded online by Sedley, replicating the moment we’d gather around her desk with anticipation as she sent it off to the printer, bursting into cheer when we’d gotten confirmation the print shop had received it.

This semester hasn’t been what any of us intended. Absent of the moments of sitting around the newsroom, movie nights filled with team bonding, and grabbing lunch together from the food trucks down the street. However, now more than ever I’m incredibly grateful for the team I’ve gotten to know throughout this course. Especially over the past few days I’ve witnessed our photographers and writers as they cover the many Black Lives Matters protests taking place throughout Los Angeles, showcasing their dedication in the midst of a global pandemic. It’s apparent that this is a team that takes their role seriously, telling the stories that need to be told, and understanding it’s their responsibility as a journalist to tell them.
SMC Graduates Defy Odds

Chrissa Loukas | Staff Writer

Santa Monica College (SMC) students will celebrate their achievements virtually on June 26, as the 2020 graduation occurs in the midst of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and more recently, civil unrest. These are hardly conducive to a celebratory environment. Students were initially disappointed that they wouldn’t be able to walk on stage. SMC student Melody Hagedorn, said “I am not going to lie, I was bummed about it just cause the walk on stage is always a fun opportunity, you know, to celebrate with all your friends and family. But, I’ve come around to realizing that it could still be just as fun and rewarding,” as she shared her excitement on hosting a virtual graduation party.

SMC student Mariane Christina Kacou from the West African nation Ivory Coast said, “When I first came I think I felt like, cause I’m French my first language is French, so I felt like you know I didn’t understand English that much. I was really lost and all my classes were so fast and I just needed the time to just like catch up.” SMC student Norma Edith Aceves, was forced to leave SMC after she completed her general education classes. She was a single mother and was only able to complete her degree after she met her husband, while taking one class at a time online. Despite the obstacles many SMC graduates are proud to be part of this community college. Tunisian student, Skander Zmerli congratulated this year’s graduates and said, “You’re going to remember all the hard times and the great times you’d gone through while getting there; so be proud of yourselves because you made it, and you do deserve it.”
On Saturday, May 30, crowds gathered throughout Los Angeles to protest against police brutality after the death of George Floyd, who was killed by now-former police officer Derek Chauvin. The protests, which took place in Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and Downtown Los Angeles, were filled with members of the community who held up signs to express their hurt, outrage, and demand for change.

These protests continue to take place in the midst of the global pandemic, and despite California beginning to reopen, coronavirus is still a threat. Many protestors wrote on their masks to convey their message such as “No Justice. No Peace,” “Say Their Names,” and Floyd’s last words (as well as the late Eric Garner’s) “I can’t breathe.”

As the peaceful protests turned violent, Mayor Eric Garcetti put a citywide curfew into place. The emergency alert was sent out just an hour before the 8 p.m. curfew, giving protestors little notice. Garcetti also called for reinforcement from the National Guard to “support our local response to maintain peace and safety on the streets of our city,” said in a statement from the official Mayor of L.A Twitter account.

In the days since, the protests and citywide curfews have continued; with over 2,700 protestors arrested, according to Los Angeles Police Chief Michael Moore.

On June 3 news broke that Thomas Lane, J. Alexander Kueng, and Tou Thao, the three other police officers present at the scene of Floyd’s death, had been charged with aiding and abetting murder. Chauvin, who had been originally charged with third-degree murder, has now been charged with second-degree.
THE CORSAIR

LAPD Chief Michael Moore oversees the response to protests in the Fairfax District of Los Angeles, Calif., on Saturday, May 30, 2020. (Maxim Elramsisy/The Corsair)

A man holds a photo of George Floyd during the protests against police brutality in Los Angeles, Calif., on Saturday, May 30, 2020. The protests were sparked by the death of Floyd during his arrest by an officer with the Minneapolis police department. (Yasamin Jafari-Tehrani / The Corsair)

A protestor takes a moment of reflection amidst explosive protests in the Fairfax District of Los Angeles, Calif., on Saturday, May 30, 2020. (Maxim Elramsisy/The Corsair)
On a bright Sunday, the last day of May 2020, hundreds of demonstrators marched through Santa Monica to protest police brutality towards minorities. The protesters were mostly young, and were expressing their anger with signs and chants. Many of the signs displayed the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which is the name of the grassroots organization in the forefront of keeping the police brutality issue in the news, and in the public’s attention.

Protests in Santa Monica
Marco Pallotti | Photo Editor

Protestors confront police at the entrance of the Santa Monica Pier on Ocean and Colorado Avenue in downtown Santa Monica demanding justice for the murder of George Floyd and against police brutality in Santa Monica, Calif., on Sunday, May 31, 2020. (William Franco Espinosa / The Corsair)

Protestors march down 4th street in downtown Santa Monica demanding justice for the murder of George Floyd. The protest started peacefully but tension eventually built up and looting started. Eventually the city of Los Angeles implemented a second curfew beginning at 6 p.m. Sunday to 6 a.m Monday. Santa Monica, Calif., Sunday, May 31, 2020. (William Franco Espinosa / The Corsair)

Protesters on Ocean Avenue, in Santa Monica, Calif., on Sunday, May 31, 2020. (Marco Pallotti / The Corsair)
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There were two marches. One started at City Hall, and marched to the pier, where the Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) stopped them and penned them in right in front of the pier. The other march began on Montana Avenue, and later marched down Ocean Avenue, hoping to join up with the other group of protesters. The SMPD, however, kept them separate, even using tear gas to move the crowd on Ocean Avenue back from the pier group.

The police declared the marchers to be an unlawful assembly, and for a while things looked tense. An organizer with a bull horn negotiated with an SMPD sergeant, and related their conversation to the marchers. After several minutes, a compromise was agreed upon, and the protesters were allowed to disperse into Palisades Park.
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In front of Los Angeles (LA) City Hall on May 31, 2020 many protestors gathered in response to the recent killing of George Floyd by former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. While I was taking photographs, I heard a protestor shouting and screaming at the police officers standing in front of City Hall. When he yelled, I heard the pain and sadness that was coming out of him, as he began shedding tears. Asking and begging for the police brutality to stop, he began to hold onto the metal fencing keeping the protestors separate from the police. While grabbing on, he was moving the divider back and forth; many other protestors saw and were scared that this might ignite police to move forward and disperse the crowd.

A group of young men held him back and began to talk to him. They were telling him, “I know the pain you’re feeling, we all do,” while putting their hands on his back to give him support. They continued, saying “don’t give them a reason to shoot, we don’t need any more names.” I saw the pain in all of their eyes. They were filled with tears while they stared directly at the initial protestor, begging the young man to stop. The emotions were high; I felt their pain and knew exactly what they were feeling because I had the same emotions too.

“Don’t we need anymore names”

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Mis Esperanzas

Being the son of two Mexican immigrants, I know the struggles of growing up with fear that your life can change in a matter of seconds. I know the feeling of not knowing what will happen when being stopped by police, and the fear that runs through your body. My parents raised me to want something bigger for myself and my future family. They don’t want me to face the struggles they faced while building their lives in America.

Growing up, I never understood why my parents were so protective whenever I left the house, whether I was going out with friends or just going out on my own. As a kid I didn’t pay much attention to the news; I was just focused on running around and having fun. In 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old kid, was murdered. He was four years older than me at the time, and it was then that I began to see why my parents were constantly worried.

When I saw two young Latinos holding up the Mexican flag at the LA protests, showing they’re in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, it was overwhelming. Seeing Latinos show up to stand alongside Black Lives Matter, is the change and unity my parents have been wanting to see since coming to America. I don’t want to live in the same world that my parents had to live through and I know they do not want that for me.

Change may not come overnight, but seeing the thousands marching in LA and millions marching all over the world now for change - not only against police brutality toward African Americans but for a more peaceful world - It brings me hope. I feel hope and joy knowing that we are moving in the right direction.
Downtown Santa Monica Looted

Marco Pallotti | Photo Editor

On Sunday, May 31, on Ocean Avenue, near the Santa Monica Pier, looters descended on the downtown shopping area of Santa Monica. Dozens of stores were looted and windows were smashed.
On the afternoon of Sunday, May 31, while a Black Lives Matter protest was happening on Ocean Avenue, looters converged on the Santa Monica downtown shopping area, only a few blocks from where the protestors were being closely watched by police.

Dozens of stores were looted, and some were set on fire. After the looters finished their work, downtown Santa Monica was a mess: broken glass, jetisoned stolen merchandise, and other detritus lay in the streets.

The next morning, groups of locals, both young and old, showed up to help clean up the mess that the looters had created. Trash was removed, graffiti was cleaned off or painted over, and before noon the streets began to look a lot more like normal.
Overindulged in Privilege

Tiana Hunter | Staff Writer

As we enter phase two of California’s safer at home order, many California residents are beginning to become fed up. For a while this wasn’t a problem, but now our privilege is showing.

Since March 19, residents were advised to stay home and only go out for essentials or if they were essential workers. Residents now have the options to go to parks, beaches, and certain open trails (in addition to being required to wear a face covering). The laws also forbid large gatherings.

A massive crowd of hundreds, sharing the mutual thought that we should start opening businesses and the economy, gathered on May 1 in Huntington Beach. In a livestream of the protest posted by the Sacramento Bee you can hear protesters screaming “Traitors!” to police. Many are mistaking being inconvenienced with being “oppressed.” However, if we just abide by the order, we could be done with the stay at home faster.

They still have their freedoms and choices in the palms of their hands, despite new rules that will benefit everyone in the long run. Some are not wearing face masks at all, in addition to starting Facebook groups for bigger outdoor protests and being completely rude to those who abide by the order. For example, just last week in Dana Point, a woman went to a Gelson’s grocery store and proceeded to try to enter without a mask. When told by a greeter she could not enter, she asked for a manager, stating she has a medical condition where she can’t wear face masks. She then went on to say that she was facing discrimination because she was not allowed to enter the store without a mask and said she would sue the store and company. This coming after the store manager gave her an option to accommodate her by having someone shop for her.

She’s not the first, nor the last, to reveal how much privilege they are using to having.

Cameron Verge is a Political Science Major at Santa Monica College, who works at a Target in Culver City. “Customers are forgetting that we are dealing with the same struggles as they are during this time. We all have families and people that depend on us to stay safe. Yet these customers lose sight of that and they’re extremely rude and overly pushy,” said Verge. “Take it out on us when we don’t have the item they want. It’s just bad during this time because part of me wants to let them have a piece of my mind but I know I just have to keep it professional.”

Not only is this a problem, but Facebook groups put together for those who want to protest and be above the law are full of hypocrisy about oppressions. Groups like ReOpenOC and ReOpen California have many residents complaining how they are oppressed and their constitutional rights are being taken away, when it’s really just them not wanting to be inconvenienced by wearing masks.

“We THE PEOPLE run this. This is our show not theirs. They work for us. People can bow down all they want... Don’t need an excuse to exercise my constitutional rights. You can wear a mask. You can be a sheep. I refuse,” said Adam Kiefer in #ReOpenOC Facebook page about having to wear a mask to attend a Huntington Beach city council meeting.

Another example of people not following the order and showing their privilege is the hundreds of California residents going out to the beaches maskless. Wearing the mask while out is to prevent you from spreading COVID-19. Even if you feel perfectly fine, you can still have it. Many have reportedly been asymptomatic when diagnosed with it.

It’s very selfish and dangerous to possibly expose others to this sickness because you feel it’s not a serious matter. This also includes those who are going to the beach in large crowds or having social gatherings with more than five people. It is the very definition of recklessness.

How much more selfish and thoughtless can you be? Imagine how fast things will spread once you have a gathering of 10-15 people in your home. This shutdown is only exposing those who have never been told “no” in their life.

When you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like discrimination.

For a long time, people thought they were above rules; but now with COVID-19, everyone needs to listen to the orders not just for the safety of themselves, but also for the rest of us. Not obeying the stay-at-home order is only delaying the possibility of our state slowly opening back up.

The more we ignore what is asked of us, the longer we are stuck in this situation. We can’t progress unless we work together to stay home. Are we so privileged that we can’t see we are hurting ourselves by not actually practicing the social distancing rules?

Masks Redefining American Life: Pandemic to Protests

Drew Andersen | Staff Writer

Masks are defining life in America. People wear a face mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has already killed over 100,000 Americans before the start of this month. Today, any cautious American does not leave home without wearing a face mask.

Masks are redefining life in America in political terms. Atreecent Black Lives Matters rallies, demonstrators wear masks that say, “I Can’t Breathe” in solidarity with George Floyd and other victims of police brutality. In stark contrast, masks hide the identities of criminals that loot stores in the wake of Floyd and other victims of police brutality.

“Remember masks are like pants. If you are actually practicing the social distancing rules, you can still have it. Many have reportedly been asymptomatic when diagnosed with it.

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Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. He said, “COVID-19 has literally only existed on planet Earth in humans for maybe two months. There are no vaccines or antiviral drugs to prevent or treat human coronavirus infections.”

Public Safety Policy in Los Angeles now requires that people wear a mask along with observing social distancing and washing hands frequently to avoid viral infection. Stores and offices that may be open during the ongoing quarantine restrictions require that people wear a mask before gaining entry.

There are all styles, shapes, and colors of masks worn by people in public. Not every face mask is created equal. A shortage in medical style face masks created a cottage industry in cloth face masks. Cloth face masks may appear fashionable; however, they are less effective in filtering out COVID-19.

Holding the fabric up against the light may reveal the tightness of the weave to act as an effective filter. The tradeoff is between the fabric’s filtration and the ability to breathe without discomfort.

Communities across California have an urgent need for masks. There is high demand for quality masks in response to the spread-
Who’s Next? Am I Next?

Deshawn Pouper | Sports Editor

For some people, their reality is a day filled with optimism and hope, while for some us our daily dose of reality is filled with fear. We fear not making it back home when we leave out the front door. We fear being pulled over while driving because of the unknown that can come along with that encounter. We fear going into certain neighborhoods because of how we will be perceived and profiled. There’s mothers and fathers who are in constant fear when their sons and daughters walk out the front door. You get the picture?

As a black man in his early 20s, having seen all the brutal murders that have been happening to men that share the same skin color as me is discouraging, infuriating, maddening, and disturbing. It’s discouraging, and infuriating to see the police, who are supposed to “to protect and to serve”, violating the very oath that they take when they are sworn in as an officer by murdering black men and women. With the senseless murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, once again the world is put on notice to see the excessive force, and unnecessary violence that law enforcement uses often amongst many black men and women.

My interactions with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) have been just like many other black men, young and old. For example, while in my third year of high school, I was walking with two friends afterschool. We were met by two Los Angeles Unified School Police and their question to me was “Do you go here? Do you have identification?” I had been at this school since my freshman year and I was in my third year attending the school, where I put my health on the line playing for their football team. I had previously had a run-in with these two officers, but nothing confrontational. I responded to them, confused, “no I don’t”, and just like that I was asked to turn around because I was going to be put in handcuffs and taken to the office.

The encounter turned sour when I put my backpack down, it was asked that two officers started to put me in handcuffs while I asked, “why am I being arrested?” But instead of receiving an answer, I was slammed into a parked van that was in the schools parking lot. I blanked out. After tussling with the two officers, I started walking with them to the office, but as I was walking, one officer held on to me by the handcuffs and started swaying me side to side. As I swayed back into the officer, we fell. This time my mind was focused on one thing, and that was just hoping I could get through this tussle without being beaten by a baton, or worse, the officer I fell with’s gun going off.

This instance with law enforcement wasn’t an eye opener to me because of how this could’ve turned out differently. I was lucky enough to be able to come out of that encounter unscathed, physically. I’ve never felt so hopeless before in my life. Even to this day, I think about that incident often, and the aftermath of that incident.

Ultimately, I wound up getting expelled from that school. A teacher who was helping me prepare to go to college after my senior year I no longer had contact with because if I were to step on the school premises, I would be arrested and taken to a juvenile detention center. Unbelievable right? All from “trespassing.”

This is just an example, and a minor one, compared to the excessive force that we’ve seen caught on camera that ultimately winds up turning into killings of black men. But this is how it starts. It feels as if the LAPD has a tactic to scare you, and belittle you because of how the authority they have.

Another example: sitting in my car on the phone, about 12 feet from the front of my house, LAPD crash unit drives by. They flash their spotlight on me but give me a little head nod, weird enough. As they passed by, I kept an eye on them through my sideview mirror. Before they hit the end of the block, I noticed all their lights shut off. They make a right turn around, and double back. Before I knew it, two LAPD officers were getting out of their cars blinding me with their flashlights in one hand, with their other hand on their holstered guns.

Now you may wonder how I could see an officer’s hand on their weapon when I was blinded. Having LAPD use their spotlight on you is a constant, whether you’re sitting in front of your house or driving in your car (how in the world does that work for safety?). You have to learn to try your best to see while squinting, because any sudden movement can get you shot.

But back to the story. As the officers were outside of my car and commanded me to step out so they could search it, my mother came outside, along with my brothers and my neighbor, to see what was going on. The police’s explanation for searching my car was that I looked suspicious and that my music was loud. When my neighbor asked what was going on, my mother told him the reason. My neighbor responded, “That kid sits in his car all the time and doesn’t cause trouble, they’re just trying to mess with him.” After they were done searching and found nothing but a spotless clean car with my work shirt in the trunk, they decided to proceed with their night. However, it wouldn’t be the last time that I would see those two same officers.

No less than a month later, I had another encounter with them. Again, they blind me with their flashlights, but they don’t drive away this time. Commanding me out of my car once again, I notice one hand on their weapon but their other hands empty. What a coincidence that I come across the same officers who I’ve just faced and in the same spot in front of my house. As I’m getting pulled to the side, right on the steps of my apartment, my mom comes outside again and she asks what’s going on. This time, for no reason at all, they just wanted to do a search.

But in other words, those searches were to check to see if I had drugs, weapons, or whatever it was they could find to take me to jail. Keep in mind I’ve never been involved in a crime, done drugs, been in a gang or anything that would make me a threat to society; but because of the color of my skin, I’m automatically a threat until proven otherwise. This is part of the racial profiling black men and women have to endure way too often. Those two encounters left a traumatic mark on me, never having before met someone who perceived me as such a threat to the point where they may want to shoot me.

I used to be confused and hopeless because of those experiences, which left traumatic marks on me. Now, I feel pain, anger, and rage because it seems that this will never stop. The police brutality will never stop, racial profiling will never stop, the injustices that serve against black men and women will continue to happen. At what point will it stop? At what point will Black Lives Matter?