

zoom fatigue is real...

The George Floyd Trials Come to Decisive End

Written By: Aliyah Carroll

George Floyd's death sparked public outrage and debate last year. On May 25th, 2020, Floyd was arrested for purchasing cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. This act led to his arrest and deadly encounter with police officer, Derek Chauvin. According to video camera footage and multiple witness reports, Chauvin was seen kneeling on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 15 seconds.

After repeating the words, "I can't breathe," 25 times, Floyd passed away under Chauvin's knee. The footage of Floyd's death was filmed and released to the public. Following his death, Black Lives Matter Activists lead a series of protests and riots across the nation. Protests erupted in 140 cities and have led to the activation of National Guard in at least 21 states, The New York Times released last month. BLM activists during this time were calling for justice to be brought to Floyd's death, an end to systematic racism, and defunding to the police.

Chauvin was arrested four days after the death of Floyd and charged with second degree murder. Merely a year later, justice was brought to the death of George Floyd. The trials against Chauvin began on March 29th

and ended earlier this week, on April 20th.

The National Radio Public News Organization closely documented the trials, week by week. The first week of Floyd's trials addressed witness testimonials from those who were at the scene of Floyd's encounter with law enforcement. The second week touched base on the actual death of Floyd and Chauvin's prosecution. One major and controversial aspect of Floyd's death was how he died. The trials heavily debated the cause of his death and whether or not Chauvin was utterly at fault for Floyd's death. Chauvin's defense team claimed that Floyd died from sudden cardiac arrest, due to heart troubles that he had been dealing with before his arrest.

Dr. David Fowler, a former chief medical examiner suggested that Floyd's death resulted from several factors. Fowler believed that Floyd's death was from his pre-existing heart conditions, drug usage, and exposure to vehicle exhaust from the police cruiser. Other medical examiners had different accusations. CNN reported that several other medical examiners believed that Chauvin's use of force was the reasoning for his death and that Floyd died from oxygen deprivation.

Police officers in Chauvin's department also testified in the Floyd Trials and argued that Chauvin's lengthy restraint was unjustified and that he violated the department's policies on use of force. ABC News reported Chief Arradondo's testimony, "Clearly when Mr. Floyd was no longer responsive and even motionless, to continue to apply that level of force to a person prone out, hands cuffed behind their back - that in no way, shape or form is anything that is by policy," Chief Arradondo said. "It's not part of our training and it's certainly not part of our ethics or values."

The jury ended the trials with finding Chauvin guilty of second and third degree murder. In addition, Chauvin was convicted of second degree manslaughter. According to Minnesota laws, second degree murder carries a maximum sentence of 40 years

in prison. Third degree murder is punishable with up to 25 years in prison. Lastly, second degree unintentional manslaughter carries a maximum of ten years in prison. According to The New York Times, Chauvin's bail was revoked and he was immediately taken into custody. Chauvin's ultimate sentencing is expected to take place within the next two months.

Chauvin's prosecution has finally brought justice to the death of George Floyd. While countless nights of civil unrest have plagued our nation this last year, activists fled to the streets in celebration, following the verdict of the trials on April 20th. Floyd's death was, sadly, a reminder that police brutality is still an issue we face as a society. Many activists are currently calling on Congress for police reform in hopes to help put an end to fatal police shootings and unnecessary brutality.



image courtesy sharemylesson.com

Student Loan Forgiveness: Blowin' in the Wind?

Written by: Nathan Fournier

Back in May of 2020, then Democratic nominee President Biden stated on The Stephen Colbert Show: "I proposed with the House and Nancy Pelosi, put it in the plan, to immediately provide \$10,000 in debt relief as stimulus right now. I've also proposed that, if you come from a family where you are making less than \$125,000 a year, you in fact can go to a state university for free." The U.S. Department of Education has reported that by December 2020, 43 million Americans owed the government a whopping 1.7 Trillion dollars. There are still many question marks left in Americans' heads on whether or not they will see a difference within their student loans: "How much will be forgiven?", "When will this be forgiven?", and "How will this be done?"

For many students, like myself, seeing many different things each day about this topic can get very confusing very quickly. Here are some points that can clear this up. According to CNBC, President Biden has the

option to forgive student loans via executive order, although President Biden has not stated whether or not he supports cancelling all \$1.7 trillion dollars as of yet. Forbes states how "[Senator] Warren and her allies have been pushing President Biden to cancel \$50,000 in student loan debt for every borrower through executive action." Senator Elizabeth Warren says that student loan cancellation will help boost the economy.

Another large question within this topic is whether or not \$10,000 or \$50,000 will be erased from debt. Mark Kantrowitz is a nationally recognized expert on student financial aid and paying for college. He states from CNBC that "until legislation is signed into law, you can't count on anything," and that "If all federal student loan borrowers got \$10,000 of their debt forgiven, the outstanding education debt in the country would fall to around \$1.3 trillion, from \$1.7 trillion." This would equate to around 15 million people, according to Forbes. But, if it takes

a turn and Biden listens to Warren and others and goes through with the \$50,000 cut, it would shrink the country's outstanding student loan debt balance to \$700 billion. Meanwhile, the debt for 80% of federal student loan borrowers, or 36 million people, would be gone entirely, as claimed by Kantrowitz. This could benefit many Americans facing student loan debt. The amount of student loan debt can be a factor whether or not to pursue a certain career, or when they are able to buy a home.

Although it would be generous for every student to receive this forgiveness, there could be some restrictions within this situation. Some politicians, like Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer suggested that it should go to individuals who earn under \$150,000 a year, stated in Forbes. If President Biden were to make the executive action to forgive student loans, it would only go towards federal student loans, not private loans. It is possible President Biden does not take the route of using executive

action, and leaves it in the hands of Congress. According to CNBC, if Congress became a part of this situation, Democrats would most likely use the "Budget Reconciliation" to get it done. Coming from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, they state that a budget reconciliation is to "quickly advance high-priority fiscal legislation. Created by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, reconciliation allows for expedited consideration of certain tax, spending, and debt limit legislation." With Democrats' slim majority, it is possible that they can pull through with this or not.

Hopefully, we will have an answer on these many situations that are still up in the air on student loan forgiveness by the next semester. Forbes estimates a date of September 30th; this is when an extended moratorium on most federal student loan payments and interest will expire. As we can see this virus has truly impacted us in many shapes and forms, and our wallets have seemed to become the biggest victim of all.

Editorial: Ban Assault Weapons – Save Lives

Written by Nicholas Brown

What is the best way to know that life may be returning to normal? The restaurants opening? Children returning to school? Being able to see family after a long tough year? No, the indicator life was returning to somewhat normal for Americans was mass shootings picking up right where they left off.

These cruel, demonic and preventable instances have tainted America and put fear in almost every single one of us. The issue we often see over and over again in these shootings is the use of an Assault Rifle type gun or semi-automatic firing weapon. Since 1999 there have been 115 mass shootings, 941 people injured and 1,431 injured according to Axios. One hundred and fifteen of these attacks -- 32 percent-involved semi-automatic rifles. Although these guns accounted for just 32 percent of attacks, they accounted for 40 percent of deaths and 69 percent of all injuries according to a study done by *Mother Jones's* dataset, Axios analyzed just shootings focused after 1999, the year the Columbine Massacre took place.

Why do these guns account for so many deaths and injuries on the larger scale? According to Dr. Kulvinder Bajwa, a trauma surgeon at the University of Texas Health Science Center and active U.S. Army reservist, the U.S. Army uses this type of weapon because, "they're meant to kill but if they

miss, there are severe injuries, so either way you take somebody out of the fight." The purpose of Assault Rifle and Semi-Automatic type weapons is to kill and inflict as much damage as possible so why are they on our streets.

To put the absolute brutal nature of these weapons into perspective, stop -- count to thirty two. That is how long it took a gunman on August 4th, 2019 to kill nine people and injure 27 more according to *CBS News*. Just a normal night for most in a town bar turned into their last and for the others a night they will never be able to forget, no matter how hard they try. This is not something we should have to fear every time we leave the house and for me it is. I can say I am afraid for my mother to walk into a grocery store, or my brother walk into his high school, or even myself when I sit down in the movie theatre and have to check for the exits all because of that idea someone might stand up and start shooting.

In 1994 our country enacted the Federal Assault Weapons ban which states "prohibited the manufacture for the civilian use of certain semi-automatic firearms that were defined as assault weapons as well as certain ammunition magazines that were defined as "large capacity" according to the Library of Congress. It was a 10 year ban that ran through 2004, and saw significant results. From 1994-2004

the number of mass shooting deaths was 53 human lives. Post ban from 2005-2017 there were 309 deaths, with an increase average death toll in mass shootings rising 4.8 per year during the ban to 23.8 per year after According to 2018 *Washington News Report*. From 2004-2014 there was a 183 percent increase alone in mass shootings according to *Politico*. So we saw an extreme increase in deaths per incident and also then number of incidents overall.

A similar plan was suggested in 2013 by multiple senators but was shot down, and other considerations to gun control run into the big argument of the 2nd amendment and the right to bear arms. Back in 1994 when the ban was enacted there were still 1,000 rifles/weapons that fit the ban in private hands but not nearly as many incidents because they were not available to get at will. The data clearly shows that while Assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons are off the street the chance of you being a victim to a mass shooting is significantly lower. There have been calls to enact a similar ban and with how this year has played out with already 20 people killed and seven injured there must be something done. Does the ban have some infringement on the 2nd Amendment, yes but much better than taking it away altogether. The assault rifle and semi-automatic type weapon have wreaked havoc on our country, family, friends

and innocent people just like you and me for too long.

We must look to congress and our president to fix this issue before it claims another victim. Children are returning to school and places are becoming more populated now that COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted. There is no better time to step in and take control of a situation that is out of control, our founding fathers wrote the constitution with the intention of this country being safe and growing into a large well established Super Power. That is not what the people on the outside see. They see a country that is split in half running around with guns and solving issues with violence. We have all heard the term "Guns don't kill people, people kill people" but is the gun is not available the act is much harder to carry out. This should not be an issue that divides our country any further. We keep looking at this issue as it is not our problem, at least not until one of our own family members or friends ends up a victim of a senseless mass shooting. People may be unhappy the right to buy assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons is taken away but they will be far more upset if they were to have to bury their mother or child due to a mass shooting. There is not simple fix to this problem but we had a solution that seemed to work at one time, so what harm can be done by trying it with it ore updated and adapted to the 21st century? Only time will tell.

HEY YOU!

Join the Spirit Crew!
(please)

The Spirit is the Student Voice of NCCC

Tuesday, April 26th, 2021

The Spirit

Issue 5 Spring 2021

Your paper... NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE ...your voice!

Join The Spirit!

We need writers and editors! We want your help! Anyone can contribute!

Email spirit@niagaracc.suny.edu for more information!

NCCC Grapplers Pin Victorious Season

Written by Jacob Massaro

Any sport, especially wrestling, takes immense grit and determination. Friday, March 12th kicked off Niagara County Community College's 2021 wrestling season. The first matches were held at Lackawanna College and the Thunderwolves were set to face off against the visiting Garrett College, and the hosting team, the Lackawanna College Falcons. The Thunderwolves reigned in the new season with an impactful victory over both teams, 39-16 against Garrett, and 40-3 against the Falcons. There were several Thunderwolves who went unbeaten on the day; freshman Matt Ash (125) and the sophomore trio of David Crow (157), Steve Liebler (184) and Josh Thibeault (197).

The next match was set versus Jamestown, at Jamestown. The Thunderwolves, ironically, didn't shock many, as they came back to win by a score of 27-17. According to the Official Home of NCCC Athletics, "Sophomore heavyweight Maurice Jackson earned NCCC's lone pin, while the trio of freshman Cole French (149), sophomore Steve Liebler (184) and sophomore Josh

Thibeault (197) each won via technical fall. The sophomore tandem of David Crow (157) and Tommy Berner (165) won tight matches by decision. Ross Abram (174) won by pin for JCC, which jumped out to a big lead with wins at 125, 133 and 141 pounds." It can be said without a reasonable doubt that now with NCCC being 3-0 on the season, their wrestlers are definitely a force to be reckoned with.

As if the first time wasn't enough of a 'smacketh-down', NCCC defeated Garrett College once again in the next meet. They beat the college 37-9. To once again reference the Official Home of NCCC Athletics, "NCCC sophomore Maurice Jackson picked up his second consecutive pin at 285 pounds, which was preceded by pins from classmates Josh Thibeault (197) and David Crow (157). Sophomore Steve Liebler (184) and freshman Zach Ash (133) won by tech fall, while freshman Matt Ash (125) earned an 8-4 decision." There was clearly no other outcome that could be attained; NCCC had no trouble beating the same team twice in one season, in matches that weren't too far

apart from each other.

Jamestown was another team they would meet once again, in the last match of the regular season. The spectacular victory of 31-12 propelled NCCC to an unbeaten record, the only time in the program's history that this feat had been achieved. The OHONCCCA yet again showcases the personal results of the wrestlers from this meet "Sophomores Steve Liebler (184) and Maurice Jackson (185) each won via pin fall to lead NCCC. It is the fifth consecutive pin for Jackson, while Liebler remained unbeaten on the season. Winners by decision for N-Trip included: freshman Matt Ash (125), sophomore Jacob Mancuso (149), sophomore David Crow (157) and sophomore Tommy Berner (165). Ash, Crow and sophomore Josh Thibeault (197) join Liebler among the unbeaten ranks heading into next week's National qualifiers."

For the third time, and the most important time, the Thunderwolves were yet again set to face Jamestown for the Region III Championship. The school won its 24th Region III Champion-

ship, led by nine-time regional Coach of the Year Keith Maute. This team of exceptional men won decisively against their opponent 34-15, with all of the aforementioned wrestlers having tremendous seasons; they truly worked hard for every win and they didn't stop winning either.

After the season, it was revealed that former Niagara County Community College All-American grappler and Niagara Falls native Rashad Evans is one of three men being inducted into the NJCAA Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame Class of 2021. According to the OHONCCCA, Evans "was a two-time NJCAA All-American at NCCC. He finished fourth in 1999 before becoming a National Champion at 165 pounds in 2000. He then transferred to NCAA Div. I Michigan State University, twice qualifying for the NCAA Tournament." There is truly no one more deserving of this achievement than Rashad Evans. We all look forward to the 2022 Thunderwolves Wrestling season as this one end son the highest note possible.

Vaccine Troubles Stoke Pandemic Fears

Written by Jacob Massaro

With COVID-19 affecting the world as much as it did within the last year, anticipation was high for a vaccine to help immunize the population. Up until April 12th, over 6.5 million Americans have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The FDA issued a statement recently in regards to why the recall has occurred. There are more than several incidents regarding reactions to the vaccine that were only experienced by individuals after taking the J&J vaccine. According to Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research and Dr. Anne Schuchat, Principal Deputy Director of the CDC; "CDC and FDA are reviewing data involving six reported U.S. cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals after receiving the J&J vaccine. In these cases, a type of blood clot called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) was seen in combination with low levels of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia)". This type of blood clot is rarer than most and has to be given alternative treatments. Compared to other clots in which an anticoagulant drug called heparin would be administered, it could not be used in these specific instances due to health risks involving that treatment.

I recently caught up with Niagara County Community College Journalism professor James Murphy, to get his take on how he felt about the recall, and how it could affect those who have already received it; "This situation creates doubts and

fears in people's minds, which is bad as society deals with the COVID-19. We need to deal with the situation sensibly, not in a panic." Also expressing concern on the fact that many who receive the vaccine will be fine for the most part, it is important to keep things in perspective and keep everyone calm during these turbulent times. Rushing the vaccine out as quickly as they possibly could definitely had the benefits of helping the population of the U.S. get vaccinated and immunized. However, this situation is a double-edged sword, as even though extreme side-effects such as the blood clots was not common and only experienced by a small number, we need to be vigilant regarding all side effects relating to the COVID-19 vaccine.

As recently as April 23rd 2021, CNN reported that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is allowing the vaccine to be re-released. The catch is that it must now have a warning that explains the risk of blood clots. While the reactions from the vaccine have differed in severity from person to person, with the recall and re-introducing one could feel more comfortable about receiving one of the other two vaccines as opposed to this one. As new developments continue to be released, will we all continue to learn more about other COVID-19 vaccine-related situations such as booster shots and even a possible updated and modified Johnson & Johnson vaccine? Only time will tell, and the public has to be vigilant.

The Spirit Staff Says "Farewell!"

Written by Madeline McGuire

The end of the semester has finally arrived and it has been quite a semester. So much has happened in the past year to make this spring semester quite an interesting one. There have been many ups and downs throughout the past four, almost five, months. COVID-19 has not been very kind to students, especially college students. College is hard enough for us as it is, and now we have this horrible virus making things a lot tougher for us. However, thanks to many helpful resources such as Blackboard, it has been tolerable.

One of the things about this semester that has been tough is the fact that most of the classes are still online. Although, there are some classes that are either hybrid or all in-person. Thankfully, NCCC is finally starting to open back up completely again. However, it has not been easy to do everything online. From Zoom calls to getting everything in on time, to organizing all of your classes and your work for each class, many students are most likely taking classes full-time and have had a lot on their plates this semester. Well, NCCC has finally made it to the home stretch.

Thanks to all of the resources available at NCCC, this semester hasn't been too difficult to handle. Blackboard has always been a huge help because there are so many ways to get any kind of help students may need from there. They can always contact the professor or fellow students by email or course message.

The NCCC website has also been very helpful, especially with COVID-19 testing information.

Thankfully, the school has its own testing site right on campus, so that has made everything a lot easier for students and staff to get tested quickly and with no issues.

Many students have had wonderful things to say about this semester at NCCC. Here are what a few of them had to say about being a part of The Spirit staff:

"I am very thankful for the opportunity to have been able to write for, "The Spirit." The school newspaper is a remarkable way for students to get a touch of what being a journalist feels like." -Aliyah Carroll

"I'm so grateful that I was able to take this class and be a part of The Spirit this semester. This has truly taught me the fundamentals and how to apply them in the real world. Thank you to everyone and Mr. Murphy for making this amazing newspaper possible!" -Nathan Fournier

"I am extremely grateful to have been able to join this class and write for The Spirit. Everyone has done an amazing job this semester with every article. I am especially grateful to Mr. Murphy for helping us along the way and for giving all of us this amazing opportunity!" -Madeline McGuire

As for *The Spirit*, this semester has been very successful because there has been a great team of journalists behind every single copy and amazing professors making it all happen. Here's to the next semester at such a wonderful school! Hopefully, things will only get better for everything and everyone here at NCCC!

I am Planning to Graduate in May. What Should I Do?

Please submit a Graduation Application. The deadline to file for May graduation is **April 30**.

If you plan to earn more than one degree and/or certificate in the Spring semester, please submit a graduation application for both.

- Apply through Banner Web:
 - Click on “Student Records”
 - Click on “Apply for Graduation”
 - Select the major you are applying for. If you do not see your major listed, please contact the Registration & Records Office at 716-614-6250.
 - Indicate if you plan to attend Commencement and select how you would like your name to appear on your diploma.
 - Verify the information you entered is correct and click “Submit Request”
 - You can view your submitted application under the Student Records tab of Banner Web at any time.

When are Final Grades Posted and How Do I Get Them?

- Final grades will be available after 4 pm on May 10. Grades are not mailed. To obtain your final grades, you must log into Banner Web, click Student Records, click Final Grades, and click Submit.

When Will my Transcript with Final Grades be Sent?

- If you submitted an online request for an official transcript that includes Spring final grades, the transcript will be sent after final grades have posted on May 10.

Suggestions for Success

Hello Students!

The end of the Spring 2021 semester is fast approaching and with it many important deadlines! Final Exam time is upon us. Be sure that you know when your exams are scheduled for each class (schedule can be found on the marquee of the NCCC homepage). If there are any conflicting times you should make arrangements prior to exam time with your individual professors. Also, make sure you not only know the dates and times, but also the room numbers of each exam if they are in person assessments. Please note that the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) will be available up to and including the last day of classes for the semester.

If you are to graduate this May (or even over the summer), be sure to fill out your paperwork to ensure that you earn your degree. Do not forget about NCCC’s Commencement 2021. You have earned the right to be represented at graduation. This year’s commencement ceremony will be held virtually on Friday, May 7, 2021 at 7:00 pm. On Saturday, May 8, 2021 graduates and their families are invited to sign-up for a special opportunity to come to campus to pick up their diploma cover, pose for photos, and enjoy some treats. To participate, you must sign up for this event at: <http://niagaracc.suny.edu/commencement/>.

Because of the pandemic, and the ever-changing responses to it, for more information and updates, please visit the website at: <http://niagaracc.suny.edu/commencement/>.

Good Luck to you all in your final exams and to those who are moving on from NCCC, Congratulations!

Best Regards Always,

~ The Student Success Committee of NCCC

The Spirit Staff
Spring 2021

Faculty Advisor

Marc Pietrzykowski

Faculty Mentor

James Murphy

Editors-in-Chief

The Committee



Staff Writers

Nicholas Brown

Aliyah Carroll

Nathan Fournier

Jacob Massaro

Madeline McGuire

Alecia Peake