

From Campuses to Courtrooms: International Students Challenge ICE Deportations

International students have forced the Trump administration's hand

BY ISA RANGEL
Co-News Editor

AFTER months of turning student visa policies into an attack on international students, the Trump Administration is doing something unfamiliar – retreating.

On Friday, April 25, the Trump administration very suddenly acted to restore thousands of international student visa privileges to those whose academic careers have been upended by the government's latest moves. Justice Department Lawyer Joseph F. Carrili has since reported that ICE will be revising the system used for terminating these visas, and, at least for now, will be restoring legality and student records for international students nationwide.

A statement announced in court revealed that immigration officials are working to revise their system, called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), that will properly review and terminate records accordingly. By that Friday evening, there were more than 240 SEVIS records that were restored over 64 different schools.

This sudden reversal comes as both a relief and stressor for many. The Trump Administration has moved to cancel nearly 5,000 visas in recent weeks, and while the temporary fix is welcomed by those fighting in court, it's stressed that it was just that — a temporary fix. "This is a Band-Aid, but not yet a successful surgery," explained Clay Greenberg, an immigration attorney representing several students in New York.

Several universities have since released statements in solidarity with their students, urging students with SEVIS



Student protesters outside Columbia University in New York (Photo via Jason Decrow/AP)

terminations to hire a lawyer and to stay in the United States over summer in fear that they may not be let back in for the following semester. George Mason University in Virginia advised students to reach out to their academic advisors to discuss continuing with their schoolwork. Similarly, the University of California said that they are developing ways to keep students on track with their education, according to UC Office of the President spokesperson Rachel Zaentz.

Although the govern-

ment's changes to restore SEVIS may ease the anxieties of many international students, it has not helped those whose legal statuses have already been revoked, such as Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil, a student who was detained on accusations of antisemitism and supporting Hamas. Khalil is a permanent U.S. resident and pro-palestinian activist.

In recent months, ICE's aggressive campaign has been targeting international students by using alleged

"criminal histories" or minor infractions, with some students even seeing their SEVIS status terminated even if they have never been convicted of a crime. After some students' visas were cancelled after arrests that never resulted in charges, many concerns were raised among immigration attorneys regarding potential violations of due process.

While ICE continues to maintain that the scrutiny is necessary for national security, federal judges dealing with the increase in immi-

gration cases are beginning to question the true motives behind the agency's excessive raids.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio threatened that students involved in Pro-Palestinian activism might risk having their SEVIS statuses revoked on the grounds of allegedly hindering U.S. foreign policy interests. Many have since compared ICE's campaign to the heightened post-9/11 surveillance of Muslim students in the early 2000's.

As for now, international students can claim their temporary but hard-fought victory. As the situation develops, both universities and students nationwide remain hopeful, and are continuing to advocate for their student body and the policies that are supposed to uphold their academic freedom. The Trump Administration's retreat, though welcomed by immigration advocates, still leaves questions on what exactly their future policy changes have in store for students across the globe.

Pope Francis Dead at 88

Pope Francis passed away on Easter Sunday after serving as the head of the Catholic Church for 12 years, who is the next pope, and how does the selection get made? **PAGE 4**



The Genius of Ryan Coogler's Sinners

Ryan Coogler's magnum opus examines themes of identity, community, family, and religion. A film featuring masterful performances from seasoned actors and novices to the big screen, Coogler delivers a masterpiece. **PAGE 3**



Mohamed Elsayed Wins National Championship

LIU Epee Mohamed Elsayed took home a national championship **PAGE 10**

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About Us

Seawanhaka is the student newspaper of Long Island University Brooklyn and the only on-campus news source since 1928. Celebrating our 97th year of publication, Seawanhaka strives to bring fair and balanced news coverage to the Brooklyn campus community regarding a multitude of relevant subjects.

Seawanhaka has served LIU as a viable source of information, and a means to prepare Journalism and Media Arts majors for successful media careers. Seawanhaka's student staff operates the newspaper under the tutelage of LIU's first-rate journalism faculty members.

All reporting, editing, and publishing is completed by a team of passionate students who believe in freedom of expression and of the press, afforded to us by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. With an archive of 95 volumes, over 800 print and online issues, as well as an enhanced online presence, Seawanhaka continues to deliver the best coverage of local news, sports, and the arts. Additionally, yet most importantly, Seawanhaka serves as a voice for the students of LIU Brooklyn. Students of all majors are encouraged to join Seawanhaka to have the chance to publish work or polish writing skills. Staff meetings are on Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. in room M-416. Diverse views are presented in Seawanhaka and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or official policies of the university.

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To LIU Brooklyn students, faculty, staff, and alumni

It is May, meaning we are almost at the end of the academic year. For many, this is cause for celebration. All of the hard work done by students over the course of the semester is coming to an end, and Summer is nearly upon us. For us seniors, it means the end of our time here at LIU. For an Editor-in-Chief, it means the last print edition that I have gotten to spearhead.

This print has proven to be the most difficult one yet for a myriad of reasons, and while I could take the space here on the print to complain about it and air out my grievances, I instead believe it would be a better use of my time to talk about the good.

First and foremost, I truly believe I have the best staff of any student organization on campus. My wonderful editors and writers come into our weekly meetings eager to write, to tell the stories that interest them, to pursue the truth and be creative. I love receiving a new piece from each and every one of them, seeing their unique takes on whatever topic they may have written about that week. I could not do what I do if it weren't for my fantastic staff, not only do they make my job easy, but they make it worth doing. Our weekly meetings have been the highlight of my week each and every year I've been on Seawanhaka, from the time I was a staff writer, to Sports Editor, and now Editor-In-Chief. Something about Seawanhaka attracts the most creative, bright, and hilarious individuals LIU has to offer. The weekly meetings are certainly an early contender for what I will miss most about LIU.

We are currently living in a very tumultuous society, one where nothing seems guaranteed. Yet, in the face of the uncertainty that we all face every single day, my staff shows up week in and week out looking to report. I feel honored to have been a small part in leading this next generation of great journalists. Even though not all of our staff studies in a communications field, every single person on staff has done a commendable job in their respective roles, and I have no doubt that whatever the future may hold for any of us, the members of Seawanhaka have as bright of futures as any group of students I've seen at LIU. The next generation of writers, psychologists, nurses, computer scientists, you name it, they are on our staff, and they are awesome.

I think one of the most diffi-

cult things about being a student in partiuclar, but really anybody just trying to find their way in life, is making your voice heard. The Seawanhaka staff has fearlessly made their voices heard on the topics that are important to them.

To that point, if you are a person in a position of power, especially at the University level, I sincerely implore you to do one thing: *listen*. It doesn't hurt to listen. One of the best skills you can have as a leader is to listen. It would be a dereliction of duty to the highest degree as an editor if I did not listen. I listen to my staff when they have ideas or have troubles, I listen to my readers when they have concerns about the content we publish or the way things are covered. As a leader of a student organization on campus, I've had plenty of experiences where I felt our voices were not heard. I hope that trend is soon to end.

A lot of my success as Editor-in-Chief can be attributed to those around me. Obviously, I would not be able to handle the tasks and responsibilities were it not for my fantastic editors, and to them I am eternally grateful. I wouldn't be able to operate as efficiently if it weren't for the support of our faculty advisors, Dr. Bird and Dr. Hemley, who always inspire us to go above and beyond, but also believe in the vision of the students. I of course wouldn't be able to do this job at all were it not for my predecessors, Melissa Fishman and Reyna Iwamoto. Their belief in me to be able to lead this publication has continued to motivate me to this day, and they made the transition as smooth as silk while preparing me for any and everything that came my way.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Dr. Gregory Barton and Dr. Scott Angarola. I don't know if there's a person who I am not related to by blood that believes in me more than Dr. Barton. Despite his busy schedule, Dr. Barton has always been there for me over the years when I've needed help or a guiding hand. He is the crown jewel of LIU, and our community is so incredibly lucky to have him. Dr. Angarola has always encouraged me to work hard; to do more. He truly sees the best of the potential in everybody, and I've been lucky to have him in my corner. Of course, my wonderful family has always been exceedingly supportive of me and my endeavors, and they are certainly my biggest fans.

I also have to give a massive thank you to our printing partner, Richner Communications, who have done a fabulous job with Seawanhaka for years, and have been as patient as possible, and have gone above and beyond the call of duty to bring this physical print to life year after year. They have been phenomenal partners, and we at Seawanhaka are incredibly grateful for them and their wonderful work.

All of this is to say that my experience at LIU has been a long, curvy road filled with ups and downs. I'm certain that's an experience that every LIU student can attest to. I think college is a situation where you can truly carve your own path and make the best out of your own situation. While I'm obviously hopeful for what the future holds, I am very proud of the work I've done with and on Seawanhaka over the years, and if that is my greatest legacy, I wear that like a badge of honor. It has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life to lead such a storied and historic publication with such a wonderful, diverse and joyous staff. No matter what happens down the line, nobody can take this experience from me, from *us*. This all wouldn't be possible without you reading this right now. Seawanhaka is a community effort, it is one of the oldest student newspapers in New York, and it's been able to run strong thanks to the student and faculty support of LIU. We have a wonderful little community here, and I am privileged to be a small piece of it's history.

My managing editor, my right hand man, Jaeqwon Suarez has been named Seawanhaka's next Editor-in-Chief. Jaeqwon brings an unparalleled work ethic with an infectious personality that lights up every room he is in. I have no doubt in my mind he is going to do fantastic things with this publication and leave behind a storied legacy that will be hard to follow. This may be the end of my journey here at LIU and Seawanhaka, but it's nowhere near the end for this publication, it's in great hands moving forward.

I hope you all enjoy the print! It is a fantastic collection of works that our staff worked hard on the entire semester. A wide range of topics are covered, so there should be something for everybody! Thank you for picking up a copy!

Sincerely, For the last time,
Joseph Simile, Editor-in-Chief

The Genius Of Ryan Coogler's *Sinners*

BY JOSEPH SIMILE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

RYAN Coogler's breakout horror film *Sinners* has quickly become a box-office darling, and it is not slowing down. *Sinners* has grossed over \$123.2 million domestically and \$163.2 million globally over its past two weekends. It wasn't just a strong opening weekend that has given *Sinners* its success, *Sinners*' second-weekend drop was just 6%, the lowest for any film opening north of \$40 million since James Cameron's *Avatar* in 2009, and it's the lowest mark for a rated R movie of that size in history.

Sinners is Coogler's fifth feature film, and while it may be crazy to say for a director who has grossed over \$2 billion worldwide at the box office; it has a very strong case to be Coogler's magnum opus. *Sinners* currently holds a staggering 98% on Rotten Tomatoes, but to analyze the film as a whole, we have to analyze the individual parts that come together to make a masterpiece of a sum.

It's important to set the stage. *Sinners* stars Michael B. Jordan as a pair of identical twins, Smoke and Stack, who return to their hometown in the Mississippi Delta after working for the Chicago outfit. Jordan, despite wearing nearly identical clothes differentiated by colors (Smoke in blue and Stack in red), delivers an incredible performance depicting two very different characters, toeing the line of twin familiarity while showcasing their different motivations and tendencies.

Hailee Steinfeld, Jack O'Connell, Wunmi Mosaku, Jayme Lawson, Li Jun Li, Omar Miller and Delroy Lindo all play incredibly captivating characters who truly help bring the setting to life, and all are worthy of further explorations of their respective characters, but the true standout performance came from Miles Caton, who's only 20 years old.

Caton had minimal on-screen acting experience before *Sinners*, but delivered a performance that truly stood out above the rest, portraying Sammie "Preacher Boy" Moore, the cousin of the SmokeStack twins. Preacher Boy earned the nickname on account of his father being a pastor, but Moore's passion and drive lie in music. As an aspiring blues musician, he demonstrates a naturally gifted talent on the guitar and with his vocal cords. Preacher Boy spends the entirety of the film as something of a novice when it comes to life experience, watching his cousins operate meticulously to open their juke joint on time.

Preacher Boy goes through the movie with something of a hopeful glimmer in his eye, while taking in the ex-

While this article attempts to avoid spoilers when possible, the exploration of the film's themes will inherently spoil some plot events of the film, and there is extensive discussion of the film's ending.



Photo via Entertainment Weekly

perience of a true night out at the Juke Joint before delivering the performance of a lifetime.

The story draws clear inspiration from the blues culture of the Mississippi Delta, and its religious themes reflect that. Preacher Boy's playing of the blues drawing in the vampires is a clear reference to the great blues musician Robert Johnson, who, according to an old Delta adage, sold his soul to the Devil in order to gain the ability to play the blues as beautifully as he did. The blues, for a long time, were seen as the antithesis of Gospel.

Similar to the tale of Johnson, Preacher Boy defies his pastor father's wishes by pursuing the blues. Preacher Boy's playing of the blues wows everyone, including

veteran musicians. There is a scene while Preacher Boy plays at the Juke Joint where he summons and connects with musical spirits of the past and the future of the African diaspora, showcasing tribal music, funk, rock, R&B, and hip-hop. Many described Johnson's playing as being something no other man can replicate, a style that was truly one-of-a-kind and something of an enigma.

The setting of *Sinners* is as much of a character in the film as Smoke and Stack. Set in the Mississippi Delta in 1932, surrounded by sharecroppers, racism, and Jim Crow. As much as the film shows you, it also informs you of how much Jim Crow and racism are an overarching fear in the back of character's minds. Preacher Boy

asks his cousins if they have Jim Crow in Chicago, assuming that they don't in the north, to which the response was that Chicago is just Mississippi with tall buildings.

The Ku Klux Klan also plays a major part in this film. The twins clock Hogwood as a member almost immediately in the film, and they were correct. The couple that Remmick turns when he makes his first appearance were also depicted as Ku Klux Klan members. At the end of the film, the KKK attacks the saw mill, as warned by Remmick. This attack had nothing to do with the vampire outbreak, it was a planned attack that was going to happen regardless, on account of the twins being black. The primary source of a physical threat is the vampires, but the attack also de-

monstrates that the Juke Joint was doomed from the start. If the vampires weren't in the movie, the twins were likely to die. The KKK members were always going to show up and attack.

As much as the film is about hate and physical threats, it is also so much more about community and family. The title "*Sinners*" is inherently ambiguous in the context of the movie; there are clearly sins being committed throughout the film, yet the film doesn't condemn them, especially as they work in favor of bringing together the community. Smoke and Stack are able to buy the land of the sawmill and open the Juke Joint by robbing; their alcohol stash came from a robbery, crossing the Chicago Italians and Irish, and pin-

ning the respective robberies on the opposite group.

To even get to that point, both Smoke and Stack abandoned their partners to chase their Chicago dream. Stack abandoned Mary, who waited for him to return despite that never being his intention. Smoke left his wife, Annie, after the death of their infant daughter. Both Smoke and Stack make the decision to abandon their significant others. Smoke's decision partially lies in the grief he feels of losing his daughter, while Stack felt it was best to protect Mary from the danger of being with him.

While the Juke Joint was brought to life to be a profitable business venture, it was also about the community. People came together, and for one night, got to be free. They got to gather and drink and eat and dance, they got to be one.

Even in the case of the vampires, who serve as the antagonists of the film, they truly seek out community. Remmick, the leading force of the vampire herd he turns, specifically wants Preacher Boy to become a vampire because of his music's ability to upend through time. Remmick longs for community, and Preacher Boy's ability would help deepen Remmick's connection to his own ancestors and loved ones. Remmick spends the film offering would-be vampires a chance at becoming part of his community, a community that gathers via song and dance and lives in eternity.

Remmick's motivations also aren't inherently evil, yearning to defeat evils such as the Ku Klux Klan. Despite the fact that after being turned, each individual vampire becomes part of a hive mind, whether they like it or not, each vampire displays unique personality traits that are true to the people they have turned into. We even see moments where they seemingly snap out of it, specifically with how Stack and Mary act when Annie dies. They show a glimpse of shock and grief, and it completely changes their actions, causing a quick retreat after seeing Smoke drive a stake through Annie's heart, freeing her from an eternity as a vampire.

We also see in the post-credit scene the exemplification of family and community. Stack and Mary visit an older Preacher Boy, now an accomplished blues musician. They sit and listen to him play a tune, but don't attack him. They offer to let him turn and live in perpetuity, but he declines. Stack offers up that that was the condition



Stack and Smoke, respectively, both portrayed by Michael B. Jordan. Photo via NPR

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Pope Francis Dead At 88 On Easter Sunday

BY NICANOR MAINA
STAFF WRITER

AT 9:45 am on Easter Monday, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, announced the death of Pope Francis from the Casa Santa Marta with these words: “Dearest brothers and sisters, with deep sorrow I must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis. At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the house of the Father...With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, we commend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite merciful love of the One and Triune God.”

Pope Francis had been ill for the previous months, as on February 14, 2025, the holy father was admitted to the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic Hospital due to his struggles with bronchitis. The Pope’s diagnosis would worsen days later, as he would be diagnosed with bilateral pneumonia.

Although Pope Francis’ death was surprising or unexpected, it had a heart-shattering effect on Catholic believers worldwide. People on the internet have speculated that a visit from Vice President JD Vance may have been the Pope’s final straw, as most commenting on this speculation are taking a jab at the Trump Administration, not necessarily conspiracizing.

After 38 days in Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic Hospital, Pope Francis would

head back to his residence in the Vatican, at the Casa Santa Marta, for recovery. In his earlier life, he underwent lung surgery, causing him to have part of his lung removed. This would lead to lifelong lung issues, such as lung inflammation and influenza. As the process of selecting a new pope isn’t new, it has some interesting political potential.

With the ideals being the main topic of conversation, whoever the conclave decides to pick for the next pope could sway the way the world views human rights topics. Pope Francis has already selected 80% of the Canadians, as well as this being the first time in history from a global board perspective. With fewer than half of the people casting a vote being European, and although the college may be dominated by his appointments, they were not exclusively “progressive” or “traditionalist,” making it even harder than ever to predict who will be elected the next pope. The cardinals elect an African or an Asian pope, or might they favour one of the old hands of the Vatican administration?

The candidates for the next pope are Pietro Parolin, a 70-year-old Italian, a soft-spoken and previously worked as the Vatican’s secretary of state under Pope Francis. Since 2013, he has served as Secretary of State of the Vatican, where he has been heavily involved in diplomatic



Photo via CNN

matters, including delicate talks with the governments of China and the Middle East.

Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, a 67-year-old Filipino, is considered to be a moderate and a solid front-runner for the first Asian pope. A dependable member of Francis’ inner circle, Tagle is an evangelist and inclusionist with extensive experience as the leader of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Given that Catholicism is spreading quickly throughout the continent, especially in the Philippines, Tagle’s Asian ancestry further makes him an appealing candidate.

Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, a 65-year-old Congolese, a culturally conservative, has been the Archbishop of Kinshasa for seven years and was appointed cardinal by Pope Francis. Despite being the most common faith in the DRC, Christians have been persecuted and killed by the extremist organization Islamic State and its affilia-

ted fighters. In light of this, Cardinal Ambongo is seen as a fervent supporter of the Church.

Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, a 76-year-old Ghanaian, if chosen he will have the distinction of being the first African pope for 1,500 years. He has also said he felt homosexuality should not be treated as an offence. In 2003, under Pope John Paul II, he became the first Ghanaian to be appointed a cardinal. When Francis was selected ten years later, Cardinal Turkson was also viewed as a possible pope, much like Cardinal Tagle. Before the vote, bookmakers named him the favorite.

Peter Erdo, a 72-year-old Hungarian, a cardinal since the age of 51, Peter Erdo is highly regarded in the Church in Europe, with some more conservative family views. Erdo participated in the conclaves that elected Pope Francis and his predecessor, Pope Benedict, and he was a

key player in both of Francis’s travels to Hungary in 2021 and 2023.

Angelo Scola, an 83-year-old Italian, only cardinals under 80 who can vote in the conclave, but Angelo Scola could still be elected. His book on old age, which he is launching this week, has brought his name back into the spotlight before the conclave. In an introduction to the book, Pope Francis states that “death is not the end of everything, but the beginning of something” just before he is admitted to the hospital.

Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old American, would be the only candidate backed by Donald Trump. There are a multitude of other candidates for the Pope’s position, but the ones that have been mentioned are the public’s front runners. Before becoming an archbishop in Peru, he served there for many years as a missionary. Despite being a reformer, he may be considered too young for the pope at the age of 69. His tenure as archbishop in Peru was also marred by accusations that he concealed instances of sexual abuse, which his diocese refused.

The movie “Conclave” and its reliability at the moment. Now the selection of the next pope is up in the air. More people saw the 2024 movie “Conclave” from home when Pope Francis passed away on April 21. The film is currently available for free

streaming on Amazon Prime Video and is accessible on several PVID platforms. The election of a new pope is the main focus of the drama film.

In Rome’s St. Mary Major Basilica, Pope Francis was buried next to a Madonna icon that he admired because it symbolized his modest and uncomplicated life. At the Vatican, hundreds of thousands of people came to pay their respects to the late pope, who was adored by many people worldwide for his work with the impoverished and dispossessed and his outspoken opposition to capitalism, war, and climate change.

The burial was attended by foreign representatives from 164 nations, including President Donald Trump, who met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine before the requiem Mass. French President Emmanuel Macron, Prince William of Britain, and Trump’s predecessor, Joe Biden, were all present. After his body was left in St. Peter’s Basilica for three days, Francis was given a funeral and buried. At least 250,000 people gathered to pay their respects, filing past his casket.

The decision for the next Pope will be up to the conclave and will have a major impact on the political climate of the world for the following years. The conclave is speculated to start no sooner than May 6th. Alongside with already grieving masses, this following month will be full of events for the catholic church.

National Security Concerns Rise After American Official War Plans Leaked In Group Chat

BY ISA RANGEL
Co-News Editor

ON the morning of March 24th, The Atlantic published a very jarring exposé detailing coordinates and real-time missile strikes being planned in a Signal group chat composed of U.S. military officials and cabinet members.

Now, one might ask how exactly does a news publication get so lucky in retrieving such information? Ask Jeffery Goldberg, The Atlantic’s editor-in-chief who just so happened to be the person inadvertently included in their group chat.

Upon this discovery, The Atlantic published a transcript of the text messages the following Wednesday, flaunting Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s detailed attack plans on Yemen. The leaked group chat has sparked a nationwide discussion, bashing national security protocols and raising questions about government communication practices.

In the article bluntly tit-

led, “Here Are the Attack Plans That Trump’s Advisers Shared on Signal,” Goldberg pulled texts in which Hegseth, along with Vice President JD Vance and other government officials, specified times and many of the aircrafts used to carry out recent air strikes against the Houthis militias in Yemen.

The group chat messages, published in an article coupled with screenshots, showed a blatant disregard for national security amongst American government officials. Not only did Goldberg manage to go unnoticed for hours before removing himself, but these discussions were held outside of government channels, which would have normally been used for highly sensitive war planning such as these airstrikes.

The contents of the texts themselves raise a whole other slew of questions amongst Americans. Texts relayed from Vice President JD Vance to the rest of the chat held an air of hesitation, with a small paragraph ex-



Andrew Harnick. Photo via Getty Images

pressing his concern about the message the air strikes are sending to other nations.

“But I think we are making a mistake... The strongest reason to do this is, as POTUS said, to send a message. But I am not sure the president is aware of how inconsistent this is with his message on Europe right now.”

This extraordinary debate with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Michael Waltz (amongst other members) is settled after Hegseth gives his reasoning on attac-

king now rather than later, to which Vance replies, “if you think we should do it let’s go. I just hate bailing Europe out again.”

This incident has since amplified concerns over how the Trump Administration manages sensitive information. It has offered an extraordinary look at the handling of U.S. official affairs, and has provoked criticism from many citizens and Democratic lawmakers, many who have called for the resignation of Pete Hegseth and National Security Advisor

Michael Waltz.

In immediate deflection of the many questions raised, President Trump kept his statement brief: “It wasn’t classified information.”

When pressed once more on Wednesday, his answer remained just as vague. When questioned again about how sensitive the topics covered in the groupchat were, he replied, “I don’t know. I’m not sure. You have to ask the various people involved. I really don’t know.”

Pete Hegseth Today
VP:

I understand your concerns — and fully support you raising w/ POTUS. Important considerations, most of which are tough to know how they play out (economy, Ukraine peace, Gaza, etc). I think messaging is going to be tough no matter what — nobody knows who the Houthis are — which is why we would need to stay focused on: 1) Biden failed & 2) Iran funded.

Waiting a few weeks or a month does not fundamentally change the calculus. 2 immediate risks on waiting: 1) this leaks, and we look indecisive; 2) Israel takes an action first — or Gaza cease fire falls apart — and we don’t get to start this on our own terms. We can manage both.

In testimonies given at a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing that Tuesday, intelligence officials both claimed that no classified information was shared in the groupchat. CIA Director John Ratcliffe stated his “communications in the Signal message group were entirely permissible and lawful and did not include classified information.”

There are likely many hearings and further testimonies in the future for these U.S. leaders, with increasing calls for accountability and the implementation of stricter communication protocols to prevent further damage. For the world of journalism, some have argued that by exposing these plans, The Atlantic has put national security at risk, while others defend the nation’s right to know of the lack of protection put in place for discussing such matters.

In the meantime, all sides will have to address the fundamental question behind such a controversial case: How does one handle sensitive government conversations in a world where information is so easily accessible?

Maryland Man Illegally Deported to El Salvadorian Prison

BY HALEY BROWN
STAFF WRITER

KILMAR Ábrego García, a 29-year-old Maryland resident, has become the focal point of a legal and political storm after he was mistakenly deported to El Salvador, despite a court order explicitly protecting him from such an outcome. His case has emerged as a key battleground in the ongoing clash between the judiciary and Donald Trump’s administration over the limits of executive authority in immigration enforcement.

Ábrego García’s deportation, and the administration’s refusal to bring him back, has raised alarm bells among legal scholars, human rights advocates, and even some elected officials. The episode is widely seen as a test case for how far the executive branch can go in ignoring judicial orders—especially as Trump doubles down on mass deportation initiatives during his current term. Originally from El Salvador, Ábrego García fled the country as a teenager in 2011, seeking refuge from violent threats posed by local gangs.

Like many others escaping instability in Central America, he entered the United States without legal

documentation. Over time, he built a life in Maryland, where he lived with his wife, a U.S. citizen, and their blended family, including their son and her two children from a previous relationship.

In 2019, he was briefly detained by police in Maryland while leaving a Home Depot with a group of men. He was questioned about a murder but was never charged, and he denied having any connection to gangs. Nonetheless, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) flagged him for removal proceedings, citing a confidential informant who alleged he was affiliated with MS-13 based on vague criteria, including his clothing and supposed ties to New York, a state where he has never lived.

Despite these claims, a U.S. immigration judge ruled in 2019 that Ábrego García could not be deported to El Salvador due to the risk of persecution. ICE did not appeal the ruling, and he was allowed to remain in the country with work authorization. On March 12, 2025, Ábrego García was abruptly detained again by ICE.

Just three days later, on March 15, he was placed on a deportation flight to El Salvador, one of several expedited removal flights targeting in-



Picture of Kilmar Ábrego García, Via The Guardian

dividuals the administration labeled gang-affiliated. This included Venezuelans, the government claimed were linked to organized crime.

The deportation took place despite the existing judicial ruling protecting him from being returned to El Salvador. U.S. authorities have since acknowledged the deportation was due to an “administrative error,” but they have made no attempt to reverse it. García is now imprisoned in the Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT), a highly controversial mega-prison in El Salvador known for its overcrowded and brutal conditions. The U.S. government currently pays the Salvadoran government \$6 million annually to detain individuals at CECOT as part of its international anti-gang efforts.

His wife, Jennifer Vásquez Sura, has not spoken to him since his deportation. On April 4, U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis ordered the administration to “facilitate and effectuate” Ábrego García’s return. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the core of this directive on April 10, emphasizing that the federal government must work to restore his legal status and make efforts to bring him back.

However, the high court flagged concerns about the use of the word “effectuate,” questioning whether it overstepped judicial authority in foreign affairs. Judge Xinis has since clarified the order but criticized the administration for failing to act. As of her latest ruling, she has given the Justice Department

two weeks to detail efforts to return Ábrego García to U.S. soil.

Despite these judicial interventions, the Trump administration has dug in its heels. It argues that since García is no longer on U.S. soil, he is outside the jurisdiction of American courts. Justice Department officials claim their responsibility extends only to providing transport if El Salvador agrees to release him.

The White House continues to label García an MS-13 gang member, despite no formal charges or convictions, and despite the previous immigration court ruling barring his deportation. Attorney General Pam Bondi has maintained that the administration’s only obligation is to provide a plane for his return if the Salvadoran government agrees to release him.

The administration’s claim that the situation falls under the domain of “foreign relations” has been heavily criticized, particularly in light of the fact that the U.S. is financially supporting the very prison Ábrego García is detained. His legal team argues there is zero credible evidence linking him to any gang activity, with the allegations hinging entirely on a confidential informant’s unverified claim from 2019.

His lawyers also stress that he had been living and working legally in Maryland and had no criminal record.

Support has also come from elected officials. Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland has attempted to visit Ábrego García in El Salvador, although the Salvadoran government has not granted him access. Van Hollen described the deportation as a “gross violation” of constitutional rights, stating, “This is a Maryland man who was unlawfully abducted from his home and thrown into a foreign prison by our own government.”

El Salvador’s President Nayib Bukele has shown little interest in cooperating with U.S. legal demands. During a visit to Washington, Bukele dismissed the idea of returning Ábrego García, calling it “preposterous” and likening it to smuggling a terrorist back into the U.S. He also refused to release him in El Salvador, saying, “I’m not very fond of releasing terrorists into the country.”

Bukele’s comments have sparked further outrage among critics who argue that Ábrego García is being treated as a political pawn in a broader immigration crack-down.

Trump Administration Disobeys Court Orders and Deports Hundreds of Immigrants

BY JAEQWON SUAREZ
MANAGING EDITOR

THE Trump Administration has ordered the deportation of hundreds of immigrants who were allegedly a part of the Venezuelan gang “Tren de Aragua”, disobeying a federal judge who hit pause on the deportation.

Unfortunately, it was too late as one plane began to land in El Salvador and two in Honduras. The temporary pause on the deportation, however, resulted in the chief judge of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., James Boasberg receiving backlash from lawmakers, other judges, and the White House for going against United States President Donald Trump.

Trump invoked an 18th-century wartime law that would allow non-citizens of the United States to be deported without going before an immigration or federal court judge. The Alien Enemies Act hasn’t been put into effect since World War II.

Judge Boasberg had tried to put a temporary pause on this proclamation last Saturday, March 15, before it was discovered that many planes had already taken off.

Though he ordered the planes to turn around and



(Photo via APNews)

fly back, neither of the three that were sent off came back with the immigrants, causing turmoil because it is unclear if the orders were simply defied by the Trump administration, or if the ruling was passed after the planes had already landed in El Salvador.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt denied that the White House defied the court order, stating it was after “terrorist [Tren De Aragua] aliens had already been removed from U.S. territory.”

On Sunday, March 16, El Salvador’s President Nayib Bukele released footage of the deportees being processed

into the prisons within the country, tweeting beforehand on X, “Oopsie ... Too late” and a laughing/crying emoji.”

This situation has brought up problems within the government, with NYU law professor Stephen Gillers exclaiming that “Now that Congress has shown itself subservient to the wishes of the White House, the judiciary is the last check against the exercise of autocratic power in the president.”

Gillersalso further states that it could lead to a constitutional crisis if the administration is allowed to defy

a court order with impunity.

Judge Boasberg issuing the court order came with many lawmakers and other judges calling for his impeachment from his position.

Leavitt commented on the situation in a statement, explaining that, “Moreover, as the Supreme Court has repeatedly made clear — federal courts generally have no jurisdiction over the President’s conduct of foreign affairs, his authorities under the Alien Enemies Act, and his core Article II powers to remove foreign alien terrorists from U.S. soil and repel

a declared invasion.”

While impeachment is a highly unlikely scenario to happen, (two-thirds of the senate would need to agree) simply for speaking against the orders of the president, Judge Boasberg spoke out against this action, stating that it’s not an appropriate response to the current situation.

“Chief Justice John Roberts actually took the rare step of speaking out to say impeachment is not an appropriate response when you disagree with a judge’s decision. That’s what the appeals process is for, he said.

Trump allies are nonetheless proposing impeachment of at least half a dozen other judges who’ve ruled against Trump or the DOGE team this year,” NPR justice correspondent Carrie Johnson stated in her conversation with host Mary Kelly.

The federal judge has given the government lawyers until March 25 to decide whether or not they would invoke the state secrets privilege, which would allow the executive branch the ability “to refuse to provide evidence in a court case if they say it could harm national security or foreign relations,” with the evidence in question being the flight details of landing and departing.

This entire situation opens up another problem within the government, and that is the fact that many judges are scared to speak out for fear that something may happen to their families or themselves.

However, Professor Gillers stated, “The question before the country is whether the judges will use their contempt and other powers to resist the elimination of checks and balances in order to protect the rule of law.”

A Complete Unknown: The Bob Dylan Biopic Without Bite

BY: ISABELA RANGEL
CO-NEWS EDITOR

AS with any traditional rock biopic, James Mangold's *A Complete Unknown* arrives equipped with all the quirks: the dimly lit streets of 1960s New York City, grainy shots of smoke-filled music venues, and, of course, a young, shaggy-haired, angsty musician, who this time happens to be none other than Bob Dylan. And again, as with many aspiring rock biopics, it had hoped to be an expository portrait of Dylan's early years, unraveling the man who rewrote the rules of rock and folk music and shedding light on his origins as a gritty midwestern kid trying to make it in his industry.

Did the film accomplish all of this? Sure. Did it accomplish this before I fell asleep in front of my TV? Not exactly.

While *A Complete Unknown* had hoped to be the flashy, breakout biopic of the season, it instead strolled onto the scene at its own lazy pace, meandering like a singer not quite in timing with the music—great vocals, all carefully arranged, but ultimately falling flat and out of tune.

This isn't to say the movie lacked talent. Timothée Chalamet, our leading man, confidently takes on the rugged role of Bob Dylan and does this commendably, stepping into his scuffed boots and donning the uniform of the young folk singer to deliver one of his best acting performances to date. Chalamet embodies a young artist's restlessness, sauntering through the movie with his guitar in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

He plays the character with a meticulous balance of imitation and personification, with the film itself focusing solely on the first few years of Dylan's career. This in itself arguably makes this a harder role to bring to life, as this approach focuses on a time when this up-and-coming artist was both unfocused and barely approachable.

If anything, *A Complete Unknown* confirms what we already know: Timothée Chalamet sure can act, and he rises to this challenge by fully embodying Bob Dylan, down to the grungy mannerisms and his mumbled and slightly incoherent lines. Chalamet was given a hard job, yes, and the audience was given an even harder job of trying to understand what he was saying.

Aside from the biopic's starring man, the film was also upheld by a supporting cast that was overall solid, but only when given the chance to stand out of Chalamet's shadow (which was rarely.) Elle Fanning plays Sylvie Russo, a characterized stand-in for Suze Rotolo, who was Bob Dylan's girlfriend.

She was also a musician, but since the movie did little to emphasize that and focused solely on the fact that she was a girlfriend to Bob Dylan, I won't elaborate. And as Bob Dylan's girlfriend, Fanning did well. She laughed, frowned, stared yearningly out of a window when it was appropriate to. Even Dylan's idols, Pete Seeger (Edward Norton) and Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) were reduced to a sort of wise and all-knowing counselors, two rockstars who were portrayed as mere stepping stones for Dylan.



Timothée Chalamet plays the guitar in "*A Complete Unknown*." Photo courtesy Searchlight Pictures.

Overall, the entire cast delivered a strong and notable performance, bringing as much depth to their roles as the script allowed for. But is a great performance enough to completely salvage a movie that plays out like walking through a museum exhibit?

With 141 minutes of run-time, the film dawdles along in no rush, testing the patience of both an eager young Bob Dylan and the actual audience. A two-and-a-half-hour duration wouldn't even typically be a notable complaint if the movie wasn't frustratingly sluggish. The film lethargically moves through each minute, dragging its feet like a teenage boy who was just told to do his chores. Minutes-long scenes of quiet singing and repeated pans of one's face begin to feel simply indulgent when it's what the film is entirely comprised of. Its pacing almost

mimics Bob Dylan's younger and untethered self, but there is a fine line between thoughtful moments and just plain motionless storytelling that does little to move a plot along.

Now, this does not mean that every scenic shot went completely unappreciated. Phedon Papamichael's work on the cinematography happens to simultaneously be one of the key stand-out factors of the movie that was worth noting. The camera work was essential in setting the tone of the film, capturing the essence and possibilities of 1960s New York City with shots of the scrappy, dream-filled streets of the West Village. The music, obviously, was another considerable aspect of the film, with Chalamet's impressive covers of Dylan's earlier work. It was a coin toss, really, as to whether or not each performance

scene would either excite the plot or keep viewers in the theater for an extra 20 minutes.

There are a few, fleeting moments where the movie threatens to give way to a more dynamic plot, such as when Dylan breaks through with Columbia Records. We are also graced with another brief thrill when he decides to switch out his acoustic repertoire for something a little more electric. But these moments are few and far between, and sadly smothered with the languid pacing that's consistent throughout the movie.

For all of its attention to detail—the unique mannerisms of the 60's, the tension behind a musical revolution, and the human relationships throughout it all—the film ultimately falls short of its expectations. Traditional rock biopics should be thrilling,

tense balancing acts of raw talent and competition, and we were just lucky enough to have Timothée Chalamet preserve that exhilarating time in Bob Dylan's career, script be damned.

At the end of it all, *A Complete Unknown* was neither groundbreaking nor disastrous...it was simply just there. It's a decently executed film, sonically and visually, with a cast that delivered the best they could with a script that lacked as much energy as this one. But when it comes to telling the story of an artist who led a musical revolution, you would at least expect the film to partially follow in his fast-paced, trailblazing footsteps. After all, if I had wished to be bored while learning about Bob Dylan's life, I would have just read his Wiki page.

Rating:
2.5 Stars

'Malcolm Todd' By Malcolm Todd

BY: ISABELA RANGEL
CO-NEWS EDITOR

WHO is Malcolm Todd? That TikTok guy who posts snippets of his half-finished songs? The random opener for a half-full venue with the scrappy band behind him? A Steve Lacy rip-off? On his debut album, *Malcolm Todd*, this indie newcomer confronts these labels and creates one of his own, giving us an album that's unpolished, heartfelt, and entirely, utterly his own.

Malcolm, most recently known for opening for Omar Apollo on the *God Said No* tour, finds his own footing with this project with a surprising confidence. His rise to stardom is a complete product of the 2020s: fed by a few TikTok endorsements and homegrown with a mere drum pad and keyboard in his bedroom. But this project

proves that he's more than just a lucky kid caught up in the algorithm. Across 14 tracks, *Malcolm Todd* plays like the soundtrack to a teen rom-com, fusing the bittersweet, the sarcastic, and the sentimental, all into an album full of love.

The album opens with the deceptively titled "Harry Styles," a tongue-in-cheek, quirky introduction that gives insight into Malcolm's inner spiral in a blunt, synth-like track. Some fans call Todd's sarcastic two-minute monologue an odd way to start a debut album, but that's exactly the thing that makes it compelling. Todd uses the popstar's name as a provocation, a theme that laces through his laments of not being a big enough artist to headline festivals just quite yet (namely, *Camp Flog Gnaw*).

By the time you reach the second track, "Make Me a

Better Man," Todd's sense of humor has quickly morphed into that of heartache. Malcolm croons on in a catchy, melancholic tune that details his distress: "I ain't ever cried but I'm getting closer than I'd like/You had my heart in your two hands and you let it go."

Standing as the only collaboration on the album, "Bleed" with Omar Apollo is one of the more groovier sounds on the album—and it works perfectly. Their vocals weave into the synth-laced track, a woozy production style that gives listeners that all too familiar lovesick feeling. The other leading single, "Chest Pain," feeds into these emotions with a repeated, desperate chorus of "I love—" that leaves listeners with the frustrated ache of not finishing the proper "I love you."

Riddled throughout this angsty track list are songs like

"Cheer me on" and "Concrete," which do well in adding texture to this heartbreak, with quirky guitar riffs and complicated lyrics that are as charming as it is romantically cliché. By the time the track "I'll Come Back For You" wraps up the album, it's clear that there's a certain element to his songwriting that makes his music so personal—almost as if hearing your diary entries set to a soundtrack.

Malcolm Todd is what it sounds like to hear an artist figure himself out in real time: messy, fresh, and familiar all at once. It is a beautiful combination that makes for wonderful art. In letting us listen in, Todd invites us into a downward spiral of young love, heartbreak, and self-discovery that will make listeners want to revisit it time and time again.

Rating:
8.5/10



(Photo Credit: Genius)

I AM MUSIC Album Review

BY VINCENT MENDOZA
CO-NEWS-EDITOR

1,541 – the number of days between Playboi Carti’s long-awaited studio album, “I AM MUSIC,” and “Whole Lotta Red”, released on Christmas Day 2020. Issued on March 14, this sprawling 30-track composition, clocking in at just over 76 minutes, is a testament to Carti’s artistic evolution and his unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of contemporary hip-hop.

From the moment the album begins, listeners are thrust into a psychedelic landscape that defies easy categorization. The production, navigated by a veritable who’s who of industry heavyweights including Ojivolta, Cardo, Filthy, Ye, and Metro Boomin, is nothing short of breathtaking. Each track pulsates with a unique energy, seamlessly blending trap’s thunderous bass lines with ethereal, almost otherworldly synths that create an atmosphere both familiar and alien.

The album’s introductory track, “POP OUT,” along with “CRANK”, which comes later on in the soundtrack, effectively set the tone for the overall aesthetic of the album. This intense, rage-filled anthem highlights Playboi Carti’s new vocal style, marking a significant departure from his iconic “baby voice” of earlier works.

Instead, he employs a deeper, raspier tone, which lends depth and seriousness to his frequently enigmatic lyrics. This transformation in Carti’s vocal approach is arguably the most notable feature of “I AM MUSIC,” showcasing his artistic growth and his readiness to defy listener expectations.

As the album progresses, it becomes clear that Carti is not content with resting on his glory. Tracks like “EVIL JORDAN” and “MOJO JOJO” further exemplify his vocal experimentation, with Carti adopting a more aggressive, punk-inspired delivery that perfectly complements the chaotic, distorted production. These moments of uncontrolled energy are adjacent to more introspective cuts, creating a dynamic listening experience that keeps the audience engaged throughout the album’s considerable runtime.

The guest appearances on “I AM MUSIC” showcase a distinguished lineup of some of the most popular and well-respected figures in music. Future’s appearance



Photo via Spotify

ances on “CHARGE DEM HOES A FEE”, “TRIM” and “DIS 1 GOT IT” inject a dose of Atlanta trap royalty into the mix, while collaborations with Travis Scott on “CRUSH”, “PHILLY”, and “WAKE UP FILTHY” provide memorable moments for enjoyers of both Carti and Scott. The Weeknd’s contribution on “RATHER LIE” adds a touch of R&B-infused mournfulness, showcasing Carti’s ability to navigate multiple genres with ease.

Perhaps the most surprising and impactful feature comes from Kendrick Lamar on “GOOD CREDIT”. The pairing of Carti’s cutting-edge approach with Kendrick’s lyrical proficiency results in a track that stands out as a highlight of this album. It’s a testament to Carti’s growth as an artist that he can hold his own alongside one of hip-hop’s most revered lyricists.

“OPM BABI” stands out as THE polarizing track on Playboi Carti’s album, primarily due to its unconventional and provocative elements. The song’s erratic production, punctuated by random gunshots, combined with Carti’s distinctive baby-like vocal delivery, has ignited a firestorm of discussions across social media platforms. This blend of chaotic sounds and

unorthodox style has divided listeners sharply.

On one hand, some fans appreciate the sheer audacity and unpredictability that “OPM BABI” offers, embracing its unbridled energy as a refreshing departure from traditional hip-hop norms. On the other hand, many critics find the track’s disjointedness and experimental nature off-putting, leading to heated debates about its artistic merit and appeal.

This lyrical inconsistency is perhaps the album’s most glaring weakness. While Carti’s vocal performances are undeniably impressive, with his ability to shift tone and delivery from track to track, the actual content of his verses often falls short of the production’s ambition. This disparity is most noticeable on the album’s longer tracks, where the lack of lyrical substance can make the songs feel overlong and indulgent.

Along with lyrical inconsistency, the album falters notably with the tracks “JUMPIN” and “TRIM TWIN,” featuring Lil Uzi Vert. Historically, collaborations between Playboi Carti and Uzi have resulted in celebrated hits such as “Lookin” and “wokeuplikethis” from Carti’s 2017 self-titled mixtape, as well as “Shoota” from “Die

Lit”.

These songs showcased the duo’s undeniable chemistry and captivated millions of fans. Unfortunately, the same magic is absent in their latest efforts on “I AM MUSIC”. Both tracks feel more like solo showcases for Uzi, with Carti offering minimal contributions, leaving listeners yearning for the dynamic synergy they once delivered.

The album’s sequencing is another point of contention. At 30 tracks, “I AM MUSIC” is a daunting listen, and there are moments where the pacing feels off. While individual songs may be strong, the album as a whole can feel bloated and overwhelming. This is particularly noticeable in the middle section, where a string of similarly structured tracks can blur together, making it difficult to distinguish one from another outside of beat selection.

Finally, many fans are questioning why other members of Carti’s collective OPIUM were left off the entire album, and rightfully so. For instance, Ken Carson, the second most popular member of the group who has recently risen to superstardom after releasing his third studio album “A Great Chaos” in October 2023, could have been a great addition on “I SEEEEEE

YOU BABY BOI” and “COCAINE NOSE”.

Despite Carti’s lyrical shortcomings, the production on “I AM MUSIC” is where the album truly shines. The beats are a masterclass in modern hip-hop production, blending elements of trap, rage, and even electronic dance music into a cohesive whole. “MUNYUN” and “FINE SHIT” showcase this perfectly, with the production team crafting a soundscape that is at once familiar and entirely new. The attention to detail is staggering, with each listen revealing new layers and nuances in the instrumentals.

Alongside pristine production, Swamp Izzo played a fascinating and significant role on this tape. As a collaborator and DJ, Swamp Izzo was instrumental in promoting the album, frequently mentioning it in interviews and public appearances. His involvement extended beyond promotion, as he was featured on the album itself, contributing to its sound and overall aesthetic, one that also pays homage to early 2000s mixtape culture from legends like Lil Wayne and Hot Boys.

We see this inspiration most prevalently within the “I AM MUSIC” title, a phrase Wayne acted on during

the peak of his music career. Wayne can be seen wearing a robe in a 2009 music video with the back of the robe displaying the phrase in the exact same font as the title of the album cover. Along with the album name, Carti acknowledges Wayne on his track “LIKE WEEZY”, one that glamorizes the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by Wayne and now Carti.

Another one of the album’s strengths is its ability to create a distinct atmosphere. From the moment “POP OUT” kicks things off, listeners are transported into Carti’s world - a place where conventional rules of hip-hop production and structure are gleefully discarded in favor of pure, unbridled creativity. This commitment to pushing boundaries is admirable, even if it occasionally results in moments that feel more like experiments than fully realized songs.

It is also important to note that 11 days after the release of this album, the 28 (or 29-year-old) dropped a “deluxe” titled “SORRY 4 DA WAIT”. This “deluxe” featured three songs that were already released on his YouTube page during his album rollout in the early months of 2024, similar to three of the tracks released on the original album, along with a fourth song that had leaked.

In many ways, “I AM MUSIC” feels like a statement of intent from Playboi Carti. It’s an album that refuses to be ignored, demanding attention and repeated listens to fully unpack its complexities. While it may not be a perfect album, it’s undeniably a bold and ambitious one, showcasing an artist who is unafraid to take risks and push the boundaries of his genre.

Ultimately, whether “I AM MUSIC” was worth the five-year wait will likely depend on the individual listener. For die-hard Carti fans, the album offers a wealth of new material to dissect and appreciate. For casual listeners, the album’s length and experimental nature may negatively impact their listening experience. However, there’s no denying the impact and ambition of this project.

As the dust settles on this long-awaited release, one thing is clear: love it or hate it, “I AM MUSIC” is an album that demands to be heard, a bold statement from an artist at the height of his powers. Whether it stands the test of time remains to be seen, but for now, it stands as a testament to Playboi Carti’s unique vision and his undeniable impact on the landscape of modern hip-hop.

Seawanhaka Suggests....

We polled our Seawanhaka staff, and these are some upcoming releases we are excited for across different mediums!

Music:
Briston Maroney - Jimmy
Release: May 2
Kali Uchis - Sincerely,
Release: May 9
Lana Del Ray - The Right

Person Will Stay
Release: May 21
Mt. Joy - Hope We Have Fun
Release: May 30
Lil Wayne - Tha Carter VI
Release: June 6

Movies:
Release: June 27
Thunderbolt
Release: May 2
Happy Gilmore 2
Release: July 25
Lilo & Stitch
Release: May 23

Juliet & Romeo
Release: May 9
Final Destination : Bloodlines
Release: May 16
Terrifier 4
Release: TBD, tentative date of Oct. 2026

Karate Kid: Legends
Release: May 30
28 Years Later
Release: June 20
F1
Release: June 27
M3GAN 2.0
Release: June 27

Sydney Sweeney and Glenn Powell? The Timeline Behind the “Relationship”

BY NICANOR MAINA
STAFF WRITER

EUPHORIA? Twisters? Anyone But You? If you have seen any of these films or shows, then you have seen Sydney Sweeney and Glenn Powell. These two stars would rise to fame slowly but surely, soon becoming some of the heartthrobs of the 2020s.

But, how exactly did these two movie stars’ love come to be? Isn’t Sweeney engaged? Well, I am here to create a timeline from when this relationship began.

In 2018, Sweeney started dating producer Jonathan Davino, they would soon get engaged in February of 2022. Then on January 11, 2023, Deadline would announce that Sweeney and Powell were set to co-star in an Australian-based movie, *Anyone But You*.

In April 2023, fans started to question the nature of the costars’ relationship during filming in Australia, as photos and BTS videos sparked “affair allegations” on X (formerly known as Twitter). Following on April 24, 2023, Page Six reports that Glen Powell’s girlfriend of three years, Gigi Paris, has unfollowed Sweeney on Instagram, sparking breakup rumors.

Meanwhile, Powell and Sweeney’s red carpet appearance at CinemaCon only fuels the fire. Two days later, Paris seems to confirm her

breakup from Powell with a cryptic Instagram post. One month later, on August 9, 2023, Sweeney discusses tabloid rumors in a cover interview with *Variety*.

“Sometimes I feel beat up by it,” she says. “It’s hard to sit back and watch and not be able to stand up for yourself.” However, she says it can be “fun” to play into the narrative surrounding *Anyone But You*.

“It’s a rom-com,” she says. “That’s what people want! Glen and I don’t really care. We have so much fun together, and we respect each other so much; he’s such a hard worker, and I’m a hard worker. We’re excited for the press tour, and I literally just left ADR with him. We talk all the time, like, “That’s really funny.”

In November, Sweeney and Powell whispered dirty pickup lines to each other in a TikTok video that has over 24 million views, and Powell does an interview with *Men’s Health* and says, “When all that stuff happened, you know, publicly, it felt disorienting and unfair,” he says.

“But what I’m realizing is that’s just a part of this gig now.” Closing of 2023, Powell says it’s “very easy to pretend to fall in love” with Sweeney. “I mean, immediately, it was like we’d known each other forever, and I think anybody that’s been on the set realizes I never get tired of talking to Sydney,”

Powell tells *Entertainment Tonight*.

“We make each other laugh. She’s awesome, obviously one of the most talented actresses we have. This movie has felt like a rom-com in itself because Sydney is very easy to pretend to fall in love with.” He continued, “The wild part about being in a rom-com, all the ideas of love are swirling through your head while these big romantic moments are happening. So sometimes [it’s] harder to differentiate between real life and fake life.”

One year later, in October 2024, Powell describes Sweeney as “a total renaissance woman” for her *Glamour* Woman of the Year profile.

“I’ve never met someone who has an aptitude for so much. But the thing that really makes her a movie star, or a *Glamour* Woman of the Year, is that she’s able to effortlessly move through this world and be convincing in all these different things but also maintain her humanity. I think people feel that onscreen. Everybody knows she’s talented and magnetic and beautiful, and all those things, but I think her heart’s going to be what takes her the distance.”

He continues, “As a friend, she’s so thoughtful. Sometimes, the perception of people when they’re incredibly ambitious or business-minded can be that they neglect other things



(Sydney Sweeney and Glenn Powell at Cinemacon 2023 Photo via Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

in their lives. She’s just the opposite. The people that are in her world, in her court, she’s known for taking care of them. She’s the type of person that remembers birthdays and remembers your favorite dessert and your mom’s favorite dessert.... She’s just a very thoughtful, very present human being.”

Five months later, on March 24, Sydney would delete a photo of her and her fiancé kissing on New Year’s. A Day later, she would post a

photo of a girls’ trip amid her breakup rumors and would caption it “Only up from here.”

Not even 24 hours later, *Us Weekly* would report that Sweeney and ex-fiance Davino hadn’t fully split up. Four days later, on March 30, 2025, *Deuxmoi* shares new photos of Sweeney and Powell on Instagram, alongside blind-item reports that the former costars are in Dallas for his sister’s wedding.

Not only was Sweeney

at the wedding, but she was wearing a similar color to Powell’s sister’s bridesmaids. The following day, *People* would report that they had officially split up. Reporting that Sweeney wasn’t ready to settle down and that her schedule for the year and upcoming years would be too busy to plan a wedding, at the moment she is filming season three of *Euphoria*, and five other films either in pre/pro/current production.

Clairo Brings Out Senator Bernie Sanders for Coachella Performance

BY FREDRICK ENO
STAFF WRITER

FESTIVAL season is fast approaching, tens of thousands flock to California each year to see their idols perform their greatest hits in elaborate fashion. This year was different, however, as it opened with more than just fireworks and tight choreography.

Headlining bedroom pop artist Clairo shared her stage with United States Senator Bernie Sanders in a historic first for the concert. He began his address with a heartfelt thanks to the youngest member of Congress, Maxwell Frost, whom he lauded as one of the brightest rising stars of the Democratic Party.

His speech was a rallying cry to the nation’s youth to encourage them not to give up in the fight against oligarchy and to recognize their own political power.

He took no issue with strongly criticizing the president for his policies and

conduct in regards to the assault on reproductive rights, as well as the inhumane treatment of migrants at the southern border.

Also included was a dismissal of his position of climate denialism, calling him “Dangerously Wrong”. He went on to name the fossil fuel industry as one of the greatest existential threats facing the future of our country.

Furthermore, he stated that the current construction of the economy disproportionately favors the top 1% of so-called earners while disenfranchising working families.

Healthcare was also a primary concern; a longstanding talking point for the senator has been that the system is long overdue for a complete overhaul.

Nearing the end of his speech, he commended Clairo for her commitment to using her platform to raise awareness for the ongoing war against the Palestinian

people and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In regards to the rest of the concert, things went on as scheduled with stellar performances from chart-topping artists like Charlie XCX and Travis Scott.

This is hardly the first instance of politics bleeding into the realm of popular media. Take, for instance, Sinead O’Connor, who famously tore a photo of Pope John Paul II on *SNL* in a symbol of protest against the Catholic Church on national television.

This speech was not a part of a campaign or a stop on a press tour to promote a new book. It was simply a plea to the heart of the nation to reject nihilism and unite around our common interest.

Trump’s return to office has prompted a revival of civil unrest not seen since the summer of 2020. The resurgence of large-scale protests and political demonstrations has raised alarm bells as

many on the right view it as a sign to redouble their efforts to crack down against student activists across the country.

The recent abduction of Mahmoud Khalil has emboldened thousands to join the movement, prompting authorities to fast-track laws prohibiting and restricting the movements of suspected agitators.

Those galvanized by the recent decisions coming out of the Whitehouse number in the tens of thousands, among them Senator Cory Booker, who delivered a 25-hour speech condemning the recent executive orders being issued by the presidency.

The question of political efficacy in the mainstream has often been viewed as one of conformity versus authenticity. After all, can an elected official speaking on the most financially lucrative stage in the world truly be considered revolutionary?

The fact is that it doesn’t have to be; it only needs to



(Photo credit: Emma McIntyre/Getty Images for Coachella)

inspire. The work that follows extends further than masses of people clamoring towards a stage. The revolution will be televised, and the ratings will determine the

course of history. If the dominant structure is causing this much turmoil, then the only rational course of action is to tear it down and start fresh.

The Genius Of Ryan Coogler’s *Sinners*, *Cont.*

he made with *Smoke*, to leave Preacher Boy unharmed. Preacher Boy tells the couple that before the sun set, it was the greatest day of his life, everyone felt free, and it was one big party. Stack agrees with the notion, also offering that it was the last time he saw the sun, and more heartbreakingly, the last time he saw his brother.

The idea of identity is also ever-present, especially in the case of *Smoke*. *Smoke* sees himself in so many different lenses that create the most sophisticated character in the entire film. When we are first introduced to *Smoke*, he sees himself as the responsible one of the two brothers, telling Preacher Boy to watch his brother and make sure his back is watched, as *Smoke* doesn’t believe Stack is particularly cognizant of the threats that surround him. The decision to be the one left alone when the twins split up, leaving Preacher Boy with Stack, also reflects *Smoke*’s confidence in himself, especially compared to his brother.

When *Smoke* goes into town, he portrays himself as a respectful but deadly badass and businessman. He teaches a young girl how to negotiate when hiring her to watch his truck while he makes orders for the grand opening of the Juke Joint. When two people attempt to rob his truck, he shoots one initially before dealing equal justice to the other, making sure that he

can’t leave with a tale of “almost” robbing the *Smoke*-*Stack* twins, without a wound to show for it, protecting his reputation.

Smoke also sees himself as a father, but also as a man who is irredeemable as a man because of his past sins, while also being unable to save his child, even if the situation was out of his hands. He feels a sense of shame about his past, about leaving *Annie*, and about his daughter dying. On the other hand, as a World War I veteran, he also views himself as a soldier, as a killer, as a man who will kill if given the order. Stack also sees himself in that regard, as the two served together in World War I.

Annie is depicted as being very spiritual, a hoodoo healer whose apparent supernatural powers are the first otherworldly glimpse we see in the film, long before the vampires arrive. *Smoke* doesn’t believe in much spiritually, yet he wears a *Mojo Bag* made for him by *Annie*, at the very least, ever since he’s left. *Annie* believes this has protected *Smoke* throughout his dangerous journey, and it protects him until the end when he decides to remove it to be reunited with *Annie* and their daughter. *Smoke*’s decision to wear the *Mojo Bag* seems like a direct conflict of his beliefs, but it illustrates a belief just as powerful as a spiritual or religious one: his belief in *Annie*. He believes that *Annie*, if no-



Photo via Warner Brothers

thing else, will keep him safe. As attached to Stack as *Smoke* is, *Annie* is arguably his north star. In the film’s finale, it’s *Annie* who is calling him to the afterlife, not Stack.

Preacher Boy sees himself as a blues musician. He shows a typical young adult tentativeness at first, especially in the face of his father, who encourages his son to take up the covenant. As the story progresses, we see Preacher Boy more and more claim the persona of a blues musician. He feels as though it is his calling. Despite *Smoke*’s insistence that Preacher Boy pursue a different path, Preacher Boy stands tall in his assertion that the blues is his future. Preacher Boy spends the movie believing his guitar was once owned by *Charley Patton*, as Stack had told him.

At the end of the film, *Smoke* reveals that it belonged to his and Stack’s father, who was depicted throughout the film as being an evil man. Preacher Boy was told by *Smoke* to bury the guitar after the events of the film, and Preacher Boy returned to his

father’s church, wielding a piece of the broken guitar, but instead held on to it. This is Preacher Boy’s true final confirmation that he at his core, is a blues musician, despite his father’s earlier warning that the blues are supernatural, and the events of the film. The blues have long been considered to be an embodiment of evil in folklore, but it’s also a beautiful art, and it clearly spoke to Preacher Boy.

In the end, the characters never got to experience the freedom they sought throughout. Some searched for it in religion, the twins fought for it in the war, they made lots of money in Chicago, and the Juke Joint was going to (hopefully) provide them financial stability and consistent income, even Stack and Mary were left to immortality, but they weren’t free. They have to constantly be on the move and avoid the sun whilst living by a specific set of rules to avoid a burning fate. Their souls are still trapped in those bodies, they haven’t been freed to enter the afterlife like *Annie* was.



20 year old Brooklyn native Miles Caton in his breakout role of Preacher Boy. Photo via NPR

Ranking Coachella Outfits

BY NICANOR MAINA
STAFF WRITER

COACHELLA is one of the biggest music & art festivals in the world, and it is always a star-studded event. It also serves as a place where celebrities and civilians alike can show off their best outfits. In an event headlined by Lady Gaga, Green Day and Post Malone, the show was just as much on the fashion as it was on the music. Here are the top five outfits of Coachella, as ranked by Seawanhaka’s Nicanor Maina.

1. Ha Sisters

(In order from left to right) Erica Ha, Emily Ha, and Eria Ha are wearing cohesive outfits, alongside a calmer, on-theme vibe.



(@erica.ha via Instagram)

2. Lisa

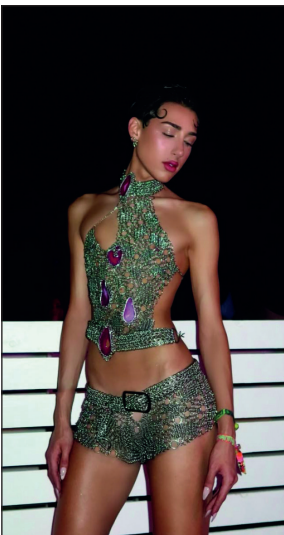
Lisa, even on stage, was dressed better than the audience, in this gorgeous red outfit.



(@lalalalisa_m via Instagram)

3. Daus

Daus had everyone’s jaw drop when he came out in this metallic chainlink outfit.



(@dausmendoza via Instagram)

4. Ricky Thompson

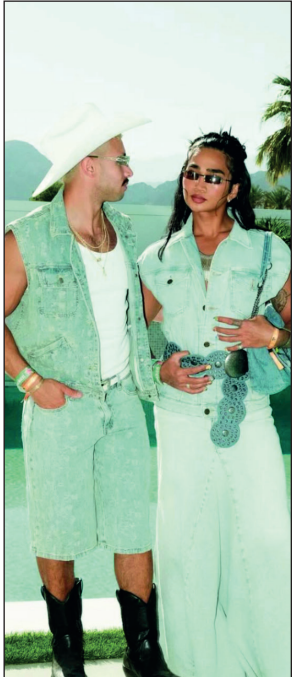
Once again, Rickey Thompson came and served, he truly understands how to be a fashion trailblazer



(@rickeythompson via Instagram)

5. Bretman Rock

Bretman understood the assignment, per usual. But this time, he turned it in with extra credit. Wearing a matching denim outfit with his boyfriend Justice, they channeled another famous couple, Britney and Justin.



(@bretmanrock via Instagram)

Which outfits were your favorite? Connect with us on Instagram, @LIUBKNews and let us know!

Epee Fencer Mohamed Elsayed Wins 2025 NCAA National Championship

BY DANIELA PEREZ LEAL
CHIEF A&E EDITOR

ON March 21, LIU junior Mohamed Elsayed won the 2025 NCAA National championship for men's epee in Division I college fencing. Mohamed is the second LIU fencer to win an NCAA title and the first man to do so since the program began in the fall of 2022.

The Olympian fencer remained in first place for all five rounds of individual combat. With 18 wins and only four losses, he advanced as the No. 1 seed to the semi-finals. There, he faced his brother Mahmoud Elsayed, who attends Wayne State University, winning the bout 15-14 and advancing to the finals.

Elsayed then faced off against Harvard's Henry Lawson, who advanced to the top four in second place

with 16 wins during the competition. In a final full of excitement and nerves, Elsayed's energy and fencing wizardry helped him triumph over Lawson, 12-11 and capture the national title.

Elsayed won the NCAA tournament in just his second time participating. He first competed during the 2023 NCAA championships, where he placed third and also received the 2023 First Team All-American award.

Likewise, the title means a lot to LIU head coach Dwight Smith, who took over the team during the 2024 spring semester. Elsayed is the first fencer to achieve this accomplishment during Smith's first full season as head coach of the team. Smith also coaches and accompanies Elsayed in collegiate and international competitions.

"I feel amazing!" Smith said.

"I want to say congrats to Mo for his amazing fencing for the past few days and all year." Smith then gave a shout out to both the administrative and social media teams for LIU fencing, expressing his gratitude for supporting the athletes throughout the season.

"I also want to say thank you to the admin who helped support us through all of this stuff, so special shout out to them and all the work they're doing behind the scenes," said Smith. "Also a last shout-out to all the team members who supported each other in different ways and did all the grunt work. So I feel great because I have so much support from everybody."

Originally from Cairo, Egypt, Elsayed was born into a family of fencers. He is a member of the Egyptian

national team alongside his two brothers and his father, Dr-Sayed Samy, who serves as the coach of the Egyptian men's epee national team.

At just 22 years old, Elsayed has accumulated many awards. He qualified for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo and went on to win a bronze medal at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024.

During the 2025 season, Elsayed placed second at the Temple Open and fifth at the NCAA Regionals held at Tuft University in Boston, Massachusetts on March 9.

Elsayed has been named LIU Athlete of the Year twice and he will graduate with a degree in Data Analytics in 2026. Elsayed's future is bright and his win reflects more success, not just for him but for the LIU fencing team under head coach Smith.



Epee Fencer Mohamed Elsayed wins 2025 NCAA National Championship (Photo via Jabreel Green)

The LIU Basketball Commits That Never Were



Hall of Famer Larry Doby (via Baseball Hall of Fame) and Milwaukee Bucks forward Taurean Prince (via Milwaukee Bucks)

BY JOSEPH SIMILE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LIU basketball has had a long and storied history, featuring championships, scandals, multiple venues, and a special supporter section that has recently taken social media by storm. The once-Blackbirds and now-Sharks have had a number of great players come through the program, as LIU Brooklyn is the alma-mater of 22 NBA players and a host of other professional basketball players. LIU alumni have accounted for over 16,000 NBA points.

LIU has also received commitments from many great players who never ended up suiting up for the school. The greatest athlete that fits into this group is one that many may not know committed to LIU - or even played basketball: Baseball Hall of Famer Larry Doby. Doby most notably broke the American League color barrier in 1947, becoming the second black player in Major League Baseball history when he pinch-hit for Bryan Stephens for the then-Cleveland Indians on July 5, just three months after Jackie Robinson took the field with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Doby became the first

player to go straight from the Negro Leagues to Major League Baseball, skipping over minor league ball unlike Robinson, who played all of 1946 with the Montreal Royals of the International League (AAA), despite hitting .349 and swiping 40 bags.

Doby was born in Camden, South Carolina to David Doby, a horse groomer, semi-professional baseball player and World War I veteran, and Etta Brooks. Doby moved to Paterson, New Jersey at the age of 14 to be reunited with his mother. At Paterson East-side High School, Doby was a multi-sport athlete, playing baseball, basketball, football and track.

During summer vacations, Doby played baseball with the Smart Sets, a black semi-pro team, where he played alongside future Hall of Famer Monte Irvin. Doby also played with the Harlem Renaissance, the first all-black, black owned professional basketball team in history.

Despite winning a state championship in football and being regarded as better at baseball than any other sport, Doby accepted a basketball scholarship from LIU Brooklyn, largely to remain

close to Patterson and to his high school sweetheart Helyn Curvy.

Doby attended classes in the fall at LIU, but before ever suiting up for the Blackbirds in a game, Doby accepted an offer from Hall of Famer Effa Manley to join the Newark Eagles of the Negro National League. Doby transferred to Virginia Union College to play basketball and participate in the school's ROTC program. Before the end of his freshman year, Doby was drafted and served in the Pacific theater with the Navy during World War II.

Upon his return from the Navy, Doby led the Eagles to a Negro League World Series title against a Satchel Paige-led Kansas City Monarchs squad.

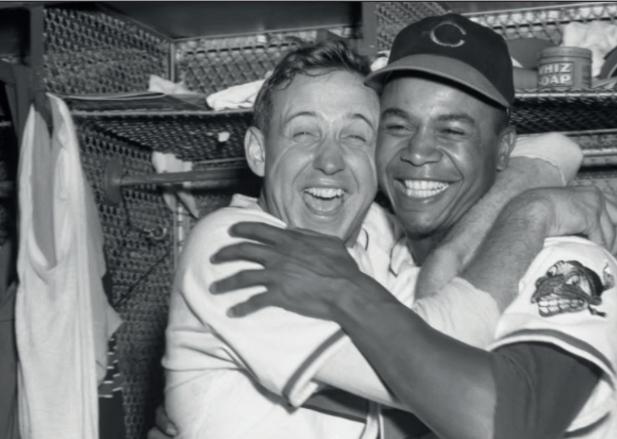
Doby played 13 years in Major League baseball, being named to eight All Star teams and winning the 1948 World Series title. Doby became the first black player to hit a home run in the World Series, providing Cleveland with the second run in a 2-1 victory, with Cleveland pitcher Steve Gromek out-dueling Boston Braves' ace Johnny Sain, who gave up just five hits in

the loss. In the clubhouse after the win, Gromek shared an embrace with Doby, which became the subject of a photograph that changed America. Few Americans had seen an embrace shared by a black and white man, especially in printed media. The photograph was donned on sports pages of newspapers nationwide, and became an iconic photograph in the history of baseball and American equality.

"It wasn't planned," Doby said. "It just happened spontaneously. For me, that photograph was more rewarding than the homer."

Doby had a Hall of Fame career in the big leagues, and retired as one of the greatest ball players Cleveland had ever seen. Doby's #14 was retired by Cleveland, and he has a statue outside of Progressive Field. Doby was inducted to the Hall of Fame in 1998 by the Veterans Committee. Doby passed away on June 18, 2003 at the age of 79.

More recently, LIU Brooklyn landed a top recruit, when Taurean Waller-Prince committed to play for the LIU Blackbirds in 2011 during the Blackbirds'



Steve Gromek embraces Larry Doby in a photograph that changed America (via The Washington Post)

back-to-back NCAA Tournament bids. Then-Blackbirds coach Jim Ferry recruited the Texas product after having great success with San Antonio standouts Jason Brickman and Julian Boyd.

Prince, who was under-recruited during much of his high school tenure, (largely in part to not playing basketball until his sophomore year of high school and sporting a thin 6'4" frame). By the time the Blackbirds' 2012 season had concluded, they had made their second straight NCAA Tournament, and while more people were taking notice of Prince, who had committed to LIU over a plate of Junior's cheesecake, just as many were taking notice of Ferry. Ferry would end up leaving LIU to coach Duquesne. Meanwhile, Prince had risen up the prospect rankings, earning top-five honors in Texas. Just two weeks after reopening his recruitment, Prince had committed to Baylor.

Prince spent four years at Baylor, earning All-Big 12 honors twice and winning the 2015 Big 12 6th Man of the Year award, capping off his season with an 18 point, 15 rebound performance in a 57-56 loss to Georgia State in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament.

Prince's final college game came in Baylor's opening round of the NCAA Tournament. In a devastating 79-75 loss to Yale, Prince had 28 points, four rebounds, three assists and a steal. It wouldn't be the end of Prince's basketball journey, however, as his play at Baylor was good enough to get him drafted with the No. 12 overall pick in the NBA Draft.

Prince is in his ninth NBA season, currently battling the

Indiana Pacers in the first round of the Eastern Conference Playoffs as a member of the Milwaukee Bucks. Prince has solidified himself as one of the NBA's premiere "3-and-D" players, with career averages of 9.9 points and 3.6 rebounds, with a career three-point percentage of 38.4 percent. Prince set a career-high mark in three-point percentage this season, knocking down 43.9 percent of his shots from beyond the arc. The Bucks are Prince's sixth NBA team, having previous stints with the Atlanta Hawks, Brooklyn Nets, Cleveland Cavaliers, Minnesota Timberwolves and Los Angeles Lakers.

In 2024, the Sharks got a commitment from Polk State College guard Dominick Nelson. Nelson averaged 19.5 points per game in his sophomore season at Polk. However, with the addition of Malachi Davis, who had one of the greatest Shark seasons in recent memory, Nelson de-committed, pivoting to Utah Valley.

The Sharks just concluded the best season of the Rod Strickland era, posting a 17-16 record and going 12-4 in NEC play. The Sharks roster looks to be very different from this past season, with seven players leaving via graduation or the transfer portal, and returning just three players who played last season. Fans will be heavily anticipating the sophomore season of freshman standout Shadrak Lasu, who led the NEC with 7.3 rebounds per game and anchored the conference's best defense. The Sharks' coaching staff has been hard at work trying to recruit players to fill out the roster around Lasu, who will be in contention for NEC All-Defense honors next season.

Read more on liubknews.com

John Cena, Randy Orton Set For Final Match At Backlash

BY COOPER ALBERS
CHIEF SPORTS EDITOR

THE greatest rivals in WWE history are set for one last ride – this time, with a refreshing new twist. John Cena cemented his legacy as the greatest superstar in wrestling history on Sunday, April 20, defeating WWE champion Cody Rhodes in the main event of WrestleMania 41 in Las Vegas. With the victory, he surpassed Ric Flair for the most world title victories in the history of professional wrestling with 17. The newly crowned champ took a victory lap at Monday Night Raw on Netflix the following night, where he received a surprise visit from a familiar foe. As Cena addressed the raucous crowd, the Viper, Randy Orton, slithered out from under the ring and snuck up behind the champ. Stalking his prey, Orton waited for Cena to turn around

before delivering a signature RKO out of nowhere. “Hello, old friend,” Orton posted on X later that night. The rivals came face-to-face once more the following Friday on Smackdown in Fort Worth, Texas. There, Cena officially challenged Orton to a championship clash at Backlash on May 10 in the Viper’s backyard of St. Louis, Missouri. After some verbal back-and-forth, Orton once again stood tall over his adversary by landing another vicious RKO. The feud between the future Hall of Famers isn’t just a rivalry — it’s “the rivalry,” as Cena, himself, once described. The two go way back; Orton mentioned during their Friday night promo that it had been nearly 25 years to the day that the pair first shook hands. For a quarter century, Cena and Orton – a 14-time world champion in his own right – have produced fireworks any time they step

into the squared circle. As the defining faces of the Ruthless Aggression era and beyond, they’ve competed for championship gold on the grandest stages and endured nearly every punishing stipulation the industry has to offer – From TLC to “I Quit” to Hell in a Cell, the bitter rivals have seen it all. Across 21 encounters, Cena has a 13-7-1 edge over Orton and remains undefeated in their last four matchups. Backlash will mark their first singles bout since 2017, when Cena powered past Orton on an episode of Smackdown. For Cena and Orton, the last time is now. The former announced last year that 2025 will serve as his retirement tour, and that he’ll hang up the ballcap and jorts by the end of the calendar year. Not your typical wrestling retirement, Cena slammed the door shut on the prospect of returning down the line for “one more match.” “There is no amount of



John Cena and Randy Orton (via WWE)

money and not a check,” he said on the Pat McAfee Show before WrestleMania 41. “This is a shot across the bow to any casino owner, any territory owner, any promotion owner, you can’t write me a check to bring me back... December, I’m gone.” While Cena will return to the company in an ambassador role, he once made a promise to himself that he’d stop competing once he felt like he couldn’t do so at the highest level. Now at 48 years old, he’s admitted that he’s a step slow. Meanwhile, the other guys in the locker room – namely Orton – have only gotten bigger, faster, and stronger. “I feel small around these guys,” Cena joked to McAfee. “Randy and Batista switched bodies, somehow. Randy is also a foot taller. I

talk to Randy’s belly button. I don’t know how he did it. He’s a foot taller and three hundred pounds heavier. I don’t know what’s going on.” But the most intriguing twist? Their roles have completely reversed for the first time in 25 years. Since the beginning of his career, Cena has acted as an unwaveringly good, almost Superman-like figure, fueled by the crowd and defined by his refusal to give up. In contrast, Orton has long been a relentless thorn in his side, serving as one of the most sinister villains in the history of pro-wrestling. But a couple of months ago, Cena threw hustle, loyalty, and respect out the window. After winning the Elimination Chamber in March to secure his spot in the

main event of WrestleMania against Rhodes, Cena turned heel for the first time in his career, attacking the American Nightmare and aligning himself with The Rock and Travis Scott. With the rapper’s help, Cena cheated at the Showcase of the Immortals to capture the WWE championship. Cena, who has painted himself as the victim of an “abusive relationship” with the WWE universe, is motivated to “ruin wrestling” by riding off into the sunset in December and taking the belt home with him. Orton, a member of one of wrestling’s royal families and one of the most beloved baby-faces (good guys) in the industry, told Cena on Friday that “You’re not going to ruin professional wrestling, not over my dead body!”



Backlash official poster (via WWE)

New York Mets Off To Amazin’ Start In 2025

BY DANIELA PEREZ LEAL
CHIEF A&E EDITOR

THE New York Mets are proof that anything is possible through teamwork. The Mets have picked up right where they left off from last season. Fresh off a trip to the National League Championship Series, New York wields the best record in baseball after becoming the first team in the majors to reach 20 wins. The team boasts an elite core of Juan Soto, Francisco Lindor and Pete Alonso. Their “big 3” is flanked by key contributors such as Mark Vientos, Jesse Winker, and Luis Torrens. Catcher Francisco Alvarez, who was sidelined to start the season after suffering a fractured hamate bone in his left hand, finally re-entered the lineup on April 25 and crushed a home run in his second game back with the club. But it’s more than just their roster that’s driving their success. Alongside the

highly talented lineup, the organization also comprises an exceptional coaching staff, a sharp baseball operations team, and a committed ownership group – all united by the collective goal of winning ball games, and that’s exactly what they’re doing. The Mets won seven games in a row at home from April 17-23, sweeping the Cardinals and the Phillies. The club started the season with a 12-1 record at Citi Field for the first time in franchise history. New York ran into some trouble down in Washington D.C., where they were walked off by the Nationals twice in four games. The latter loss was particularly deflating, as the Mets forfeited a six run lead and lost on an overthrow to first base. Righty reliever Ryne Stanek, who was on the mound for both heartbreaking defeats, didn’t hit the panic button. Instead, he told reporters that the goal remains the same: keep working hard

and try to be better the next time out. “You just go back to work,” Stanek said Sunday. “I mean, that’s the job. You go out there -- I mean, they get paid to play ball, too. So like, you go out there and you execute your game plan and, yeah, a couple balls fall or squeak through or whatever happens like that -- that’s out of your control. You go out there and you execute and you move on, go to the next day and execute the next day.” They did just that. On Monday, the club made a statement by thumping the Nationals 19-5 to split the four-game set. Jeff McNeil hit a solo-homer in the fifth inning and Vientos added the cherry on top with a three-run bomb in the ninth. But the MVP of the game was Brandon Nimmo, who went 4-for-6 with two home runs. The left-fielder drove in a whopping nine runs, setting a new career-high and tying the Mets’ franchise record for the most



Brandon Nimmo high-fives Pete Alonso as Mets thump Nationals, 19-5. April 28, 2025 (via AP)

RBIs in a single game. Former first-baseman Carlos Delgado previously set the mark on June 27, 2008, in a Subway Series matchup against the New York Yankees. Despite Nimmo getting off to a sluggish start to the season, there wasn’t a doubt in manager Carlos Mendoza’s mind that the slugger would figure it out. “He’ll get through it,” he said, adding “He’s

fighting through it now, and he’s a good hitter.” Mendoza was right and then some, as Nimmo accomplished something that wasn’t just historic for the franchise, but a rare feat across all of Major League Baseball. He became the first player to record nine RBIs in a game since last September, when Shohei Ohtani drove in ten on his way to starting the

50/50 club, and just the 31st in the last 100 years to accomplish the feat. “We started seeing the Nimmo that we all know,” Mendoza said. “Pretty good player, and it was good to see him go out there and have that type of performance.” The Mets are firing on all cylinders, and it doesn’t look like they’re letting up any time soon.

Shark Sports: Spring

BY JOSEPH SIMILE
Editor-In-Chief

Softball Dominates NEC; Claims Regular Season Title
The Sharks softball team clinched the outright Northeast Conference regular season championship with a 4-2 win over the Central Connecticut State University Blue Devils on April 27 with a 4-2 win. The win brought them to a 24-20 overall record, with a 16-5 conference mark. With the win, the Sharks claim the No. 1 seed in the NEC tournament as well as the right to host the conference tournament. The tournament will take place from May 8-10. Live coverage can be heard on 88.1 FM WCWP, WCWP.org and the WCWP app. The Sharks have four players currently boasting an OPS over 1.000, Alyssa Polemeni leads the way with a 1.247 mark, the second highest in the NEC. Lily Hinkle and Kaylee Clarkson flank Polemeni with 1.069 and 1.002 marks, respectively. Dallas Andrews also sports a 1.161 mark in limited playing time, having started just 20 games. The Sharks as a team have the highest batting average (.289), on base percentage (.398) and fielding percentage (.966) in the NEC. The Sharks lead the conference in home runs, RBIs, runs and walks. The Sharks pitchers have thrown the least amount of wild pitches in the NEC, the only team whose mark still sits in the single digits (and under 17 for that matter). The high-powered Sharks offense will host the CCSU Blue Devils in the first round of the double-elimination NEC tournament.



Photo via LIU Athletics



Baseball Jumps to 2nd Place in NEC
The Sharks had a bit of a rougher start to conference play than anticipated, dropping two of their three games against the CCSU Blue Devils. The Sharks have come into full form down the stretch, winning seven consecutive games after a devastating 18-16 midweek loss to Manhattan. The Sharks are as close to full strength as they've been all season, with Benjamin Fierenzi and Max Samson returning to the lineup during the winning streak after being sidelined with injuries. The Sharks are currently 18-3 in NEC play, just one game behind the 19-2 CCSU Blue Devils. The Sharks own the second-lowest team ERA in the NEC and have allowed just six passed balls on the season, the lowest mark in the conference. The Sharks are on pace to be the No. 2 seed in the NEC tournament, which will be played in Wappinger Falls at the home field of the Hudson Valley Renegades, the High A affiliate of the New York Yankees.

Photo via LIU Athletics

Women's Lacrosse Earns Share of NEC Title
The Sharks earned at least a share of the NEC regular season title for the second consecutive season after a 13-4 victory over Howard on April 26. Julia Trainor led the way in the win, tallying five points thanks to three goals and two assists. The Sharks will compete in the NEC Tournament for a chance to go to the NCAA Tournament on May 1. The Sharks moved to 8-1 in conference play with the win, tied with Stonehill and Wagner. Trainor has been the main catalyst for the Sharks' offense, having scored 44 points with 30 goals and 14 assists. Selia Lyons, Erin Harkins, and Lindsey Lucia have all contributed at least 36 points on the season as well.



Photo via LIU Athletics



Men's Lacrosse Secures Tournament Bid
The LIU Sharks clinched a spot in the NEC Tournament, securing the No. 3 seed in spite of an April 27 loss to VMI. Mark Regan has been the leader on offense for the Sharks, posting 44 points on 25 goals and 19 assists. Ben McIsaac, Cameron Connolly, Aidan Zuhoki and Owen Stefanko have all posted 30 point seasons.

Photo via LIU Athletics