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CONTRIBUTORS



NICOLE CACCAVO KEAR's memoir, *Now I See You*, debuted June '14 by St. Martin's Press, and she contributes regularly to *Parents* and *American Baby*, as well as *Salon* and *Babble* in between her dispatches at the *Reader*. You can keep up with her misadventures in Mommydom on her blog, *A Mom Amok* (amomamok.com). A native of Brooklyn, she lives in the Slope with her three firecracker kids, one very patient husband, and an apparently immortal hermit crab.

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The WINTER of our DISCONTENT

BY NICOLE CACCAVO KEAR ART BY LIGANG LUO

ike most two-year-olds, my daughter cannot abide winter gear. I can't know for sure why hats and mittens are so anathema to her, though I can speculate. From her reaction's epic proportions, I surmise the stakes are pretty high, so maybe it's an object permanence issue and she believes that when she puts the mittens on, her hands cease to exist. Or it could be that the mittens prevent her from cramming Goldfish into her mouth like it's closing time at the cheddar cracker bar. Whatever the reason, my daughter, affectionately known in these parts as Terza, will not keep hats and mittens on. Not if I sing like Elmo, not if I ply her with cookies. Not for any reason.

For a while I made the rookie mistake of believing that I could solve the problem by buying the right stuff. I tried hats that velcro under the chin and hats with long yarn braids on the sides that you can tie in Houdini-proof knots and hats with bear ears and bunny ears and cat ears. I even tried a rainbow-colored, fleece jester hat that virtually screams, "THIS IS FUN! THE OPPOSITE OF TORTURE!" You can guess what my success rate was, based on the number of capital letters I just used.

Fail. Total fail.

I think her record time for keeping a hat on was about thirty seconds. Ditto with the mittens. She can't manage to insert a spoonful of yogurt directly into her mouth half the time but man, can she get around knots.

So, we tried collaborative problem-solving. I ended up doing most of the heavy lifting, outlining the problem, proposing possible reasons why this problem existed (maybe the hat is too tight and constricting?), summing up her needs (to feel comfortable) and mine (to protect her from frostbite) and possible solutions (use a hood in lieu of a hat!), Her contribution? The word "No" and it's many variations, including, "No I WON'T!" and "I no LIKE IT!" and even "No way Jose!"

Now, an aversion to winter gear is all very well and good when it's forty degrees or thirty degrees, or hell, even twenty degrees. But when the temperatures get into the single digits, it's a different story. When it gets so cold that scientists coin special phrases to describe the weather-phrases that involve the noun "vortex"—I can't tolerate Terza's intolerance of winter gear. Not when she and I have a daily drop-off walk that takes twenty minutes. We do more trekking than the Greely expedition, and if I learned anything from watching that harrowing documentary, it's: if you don't come prepared to the Arctic, you'll all end up eating each other. "Just wait until she gets cold enough," everyone likes to say, "She'll put those hat and gloves on then."

It is sound reasoning, to be sure. Logical. It is however, utter horse-crap, at least in my daughter's case. I know because I tested the theory. The temperature dropped lower and lower, until it was hovering at five degrees, just above zero, and I told myself, "Now, we will hit her breaking point, She'll be so cold, she'll immediately beg for hat and mittens." We walked outside, and even though I was wearing leather gloves and a wool hat with a down hood pulled up over my head, my hands and ears went numb within a minute.

Not only would Terza not wear her mittens, she baited me into shedding my gloves every two blocks so that I could attempt to yank hers back on again. As soon as I'd put my gloves back on and secure the wind cover onto the stroller, I'd see she'd already pulled off her mittens again—the allegedly "toddler-proof" mittens which zip up the sides and velcro closed at the wrist. After a few rounds of this Sisyphesean game, I decided to just give up on the mittens, and attempted to persuade her—all while standing on the street corner, fighting the gale-force winds—to please, PLEASE, tuck her hands into the cozy, criminally-fluffy stroller sleeping bag I'd zipped her lower half into. What I got was her default response: "NEVER!" And screaming, of course. Endless screaming, which wasn't surprising considering her fingers were probably shooting with pain from the unbearable cold.

That is when I realized that the people who told me she'd wear the gloves when she got cold enough do not know toddlers. Toddlers don't have a terrific grasp on cause and effect. The logic of "If you don't wear your mittens, your fingers will be cold" is very persuasive to a five- or seven- or ten-year-old, but totally meaningless to most two-year-olds.

Terza was obviously thinking "It is freezing!" and "I deplore mittens" but could not understand that these two things were correlated in any way. So, she wailed and wailed and looked at me like, "For God's sake, woman, I'm freezing to death out here. Do something! And while you're at it, get those hideous mittens out of my face!"

It's enough to make a girl dream of living in Tampa.

"So let her get frostbite!" you might say. But think for a second about what an imposition a case of frostbite would be on my already hectic schedule.

Look, I get it. There are some things-many thingsbeyond our control as parents. Some behaviors that can not be



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modified despite bribes, punishments, distraction techniques, and the force of reason. One of the hardest things I've learned to do as a parent is accept this and just let it go, let the natural consequences unfold.

And then, other times, I don't let go. Other times, I resort to duct tape.

In a moment of inspiration, I strolled screaming, kicking, totally indignant Terza into the nearest hardware store, bought a roll of duct tape and duct-taped those mittens right onto the sleeve of her jacket. Then, when she was helpless to stop me, I yanked the red, fleece-lined, bear-eared hat on her head. Cruel, awful, overbearing me. She was warm, did not require medical attention, and retained the use of all her digits.

Sometimes the only choice you have as a parent is between crappy and slightly less crappy. Between screaming with frostbite and screaming without frostbite. So you choose the lesser of two crappys. And you wait for spring. •

Nicole C. Kear is the author of the memoir *Now I See You* (St. Martin's, June '14) and the mom behind the blog, A Mom Amok. You can find more info about her and her work at nicolekear.com.

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THE FIRST RULE OF BOOK CLUB BY MELANIE HOOPES

ART BY CHRISTIAN DELLAVEDOVA



Dear Hypocrite,

I have been in a book club for eight years. Together, we've weathered two divorces, three births, two bouts with cancer, and the death of a member's husband in an automobile accident four years ago. Although we rarely see each other outside of book club, we enjoy one another's company. There is one exception, however. "Laura" drives us all crazy. Laura is about six-feet tall with long dyed blond hair. She has so many regular facial treatments that her face is incapable of expression. Her contributions to the discussion of the books are inane. Last month we read a novel that took place in China. "Why would anyone chose to read about China?" she said. When we read The Goldfinch she found the book "dumb" because it was "barely even about the painting." She loves to gossip and make fun of people who've been in book club over the years but for some reason or other didn't last. "Remember that girl who lived

> in Prospect Heights? She didn't have a single glass that matched. I had to drink out of a JAR!" I've shared my feelings regarding her with the others and when she's not there, we'll often laugh over the ridiculous things she's said. When she is there, we'll sneak eye-rolls during her comments. Because she was a founding member, (six out of eleven of us are) we haven't thought was right to kick her out. She's our problem child.

> Last Sunday, Marci, the de facto chairwoman of book club, sent an email around to the group (minus Laura) asking about the possibility of having our next meeting at Laura's new house in the Hamptons. Laura recently married a man (her fourth husband) with a massive fortune. He was going to be out of the country on Laura's birthday weekend so she invited us all to join her there to talk about Brideshead Revisited. The setting couldn't be more perfect with its indoor pool and SEVEN bedrooms. The group was thrilled at the idea. Menu ideas and drink themes for the weekend were debated, even period dress was floated for the book discussion itself. Someone proposed taking a cake up for Laura's birthday. I responded with "But with that face, how will we know if she is really surprised?"

> You guessed it, at some point Laura had been added to the chain. The way my phone displays emails I sometimes miss one if they come fast and furiously. This is no excuse for my carelessness, it's just to let you know I'm not a total idiot. If there were any more emails about the weekend, I didn't get them. I felt awful. While I don't consider Laura a friend, I would never intentionally hurt her. I quickly wrote her a private apology begging for forgiveness.

> The next morning I received an email from Laura telling me I was no longer welcome at book club. The group was CCed. She felt betrayed that I had used a public forum to make fun of her and that she would feel uncomfortable remaining in the group if I was still present. I immediately wrote a group email apologizing for my remarks calling them rude and callous. I was deeply sorry for the hurt I'd caused her and the damage I'd done to the group's sense of trust. I asked to be





forgiven and to be allowed to stay in book club. "Book club means my roommates w the world to me," I wrote, "I can't imagine my life without it." This how little I drank

time Laura wrote a single sentence back to me alone. "You should of thought of that before you shot your mouth off."

I'm really upset. I know what I did was completely wrong and hurtful but I don't think I deserve to be kicked out. The other members say their hands are tied. They've spoken to Laura on my behalf but she is not budging. She wants me out. I know this is going to sound ridiculous but I have a MFA in creative writing. I suspect Laura doesn't even read the books. This expulsion seems totally unfair. What can I do?

Wrongly Banished from Book Club

Dear Banished,

Whoa. You did a really stupid thing. I would've thought everyone had learned by now that email is not the place for gossip, insulting people, or sarcasm. The only humor that completely translates is of the "knock, knock" variety. And you slammed someone in a 'reply all?' Girl, were you born yesterday?

We all gossip and talk shit about each other. We can only hope that our friends and family talk about our own shortcomings with love. Your slip up is not uncommon and neither is your reaction. We don't want to hurt people's feelings and we certainly don't want to deal with any consequences. Laura served you a heaping plate of repercussions that you are now refusing to accept. She holds all the power in this situation as she's the only one that can let you back in the group. Isn't it nice when things are so clear?

When I was in my twenties, I walked into the kitchen where

my roommates were talking about me. They were discussing how little I drank or smoked or lost control around them. In short, they said (in not the nicest language) that I was uptight and a drag and needed to relax. To give you a little context, one of my roommates had spent some time living in a car with her family growing up and had a steady stream of irate answering machine messages from people whom she had stood up on dates or meetings. Her common excuse was "I wasn't in the mood." The other roommate had disowned her parents (I sensed it was mutual although she never admitted this) and regularly spoke in tongues. I was the goody-goody of the group but was losing my sense of self and reality quickly. It took me overhearing them cruelly talk about me to realize that they were not my people, not my tribe. We had completely different values. I'm not saying we all can't get along. We can. But when there is disdain between tribes, it's best to limit contact. There's no doubt Laura is aware that you don't respect her. All this time you've been bothered by her comments and attitude, she's felt your disdain. Granted, she doesn't sound undeserving of your criticism (I do so enjoy a good book about China) but you can't blame her if she's relieved to be rid of you. Here's the sad news for you: There's absolutely no incentive for her to let you back in.

As I see it, you have two choices. You can start another book club. I'm sure you can put together a new crew of readers who are more capable of meeting your desired level of engagement with the material. Starting a group means you can hand pick members from different areas of your life and have a say over how meetings are organized. To me, I see this as a great opportunity. Imagine the fun of picking of people based on their diversity and intellect.





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I'm getting excited just thinking about it. If I didn't have such horrible experiences with book clubs in the past I might think of asking to join yours. There's no denying you'll miss the history and the connections of your old book group. You can still stay in touch with the people you enjoyed the most. Maybe you can even find out what they're reading and read it in your new group.

If the idea of starting a new group leaves you exhausted or sad, your only other option is to continue to grovel at the feet of the six-foot tall blonde. Construct a very heartfelt and personal apology detailing how wrong you were and why you think you did what you did. Tell her you're available to talk and would like to do it over a fancy lunch on your dime. It's her prerogative to say no and hold onto this slight forever. She could surprise you and forgive but I don't have high hopes. You insulted her appearance. Publicly. From the sound of it, her looks are very, very important to her. You went right for her jugular. Big time.

Banished, cut your losses. That's my advice. Start your own group and create new history with them. I'll be oh-so-happily surprised if you write to tell me Laura's let you back in and you're all reading Snow Flower and The Secret Fan. I don't think it'll happen though. You learned a lesson. No talk bad about people in email. If Confucius were alive today, he'd tell you the same thing.

See you next time. •



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THE READER INTERVIEW



BRAD LANDER Progressive Leadership in District 39

INTERVIEW BY ANNE MCDERMOTT PHOTOS BY CAITLIN PELUFFO

The *Park Slope Reader* had the great opportunity to speak with New York City Council Member Brad Lander who represents the 39th District in Brooklyn that includes Park Slope, Columbia Waterfront, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Windsor Terrace, Kensington, Gowanus, and Borough Park. Prior to joining the City Council he was the Director of the Pratt Center for Community Development where he led campaigns to expand affordable housing and create NYC's "inclusionary zoning" program. Before that he spent ten years leading the Fifth Avenue Committee, an organization responsible for redeveloping neighborhood buildings facing abandonment in the early 1990s, creating and preserving affordable housing, and launching job training and economic development programs. He lives in Park Slope with his wife and two children.

We spoke just after elected officials and community leaders, including him, announced the release of the draft communityplanning framework, "Bridging Gowanus," that details shared values and planning recommendations for the future of the Gowanus Canal area. Priorities of the plan include investments in sustainable infrastructure, strengthening manufacturing, maintaining the mix of uses, and preserving and creating affordable housing.

PS READER: Congratulations on the release of "Bridging Gowanus!"

CM Lander: Thank you, it's been a lot of work and a long time coming; we're excited for the next steps. I come from working on community planning and community organizing and love the idea of getting people as involved as they can and helping inform the decisions that affect the neighborhood. Obviously, I'm lucky to represent neighborhoods that people really care about, and want to spend time thinking about a planning force.

In 2009, together with Melissa Mark-Viverito, now Council Speaker, you founded the City Council's first ever Progressive Caucus, "with the goal of advancing policies to build a more just and equal New York City." Can you describe some of what the group has been able to accomplish in these years?

We have to think about last term and this term, because they're fairly different. Last term we were able to do some meaningful things. The biggest ones being passage of the Community Safety Act, which created the first ever NYPD Inspector General and adopting a prohibition on bias racial and other bias based profiling by the NYPD in a way that required us to override Mayor Bloomberg's veto and make progress in the wake of the growth of "Stop and Frisk."

Obviously those issues of policing are still with us, but the CSA was a really good step forward and came out of organizing with communities all over the city in very powerful, encouraging ways.

We passed a big expansion of paid sick days, and while I was very encouraged by the additional expansion in the beginning of this term, the bill that we passed last term took four years to pass, we also had to override mayoral veto, and at the time a speaker who didn't even want to bring it to the floor, that was also a great campaign, something we were proud to do.

The NYC Living Wage Law was passed. It expanded the requirement for a business, corporation, or developer who gets a subsidy to pay a living wage to their workers.

Those are our three big legislative wins.

This term the accomplishment of growing the ranks of Progressives in the Council in the 2013 election and then working together to help Melissa Mark-Viverito become the speaker, the first person of color, the first Latina, the first Puerto Rican to hold citywide office, the first person of color, first Latina to lead the council, was obviously a very exciting accomplishment.

In 2011, New York City history was made when you and three other Council members joined the Participatory Budgeting Program. The program allows residents to vote directly on the allocation of part of the discretionary capital dollars in their district. Since then almost all of the City Council Members have joined the process. Can you talk about some of the District 39 projects that have benefitted from Participatory Budgeting?

The nice thing about Participatory Budgeting is it brings out great enthusiasm and energy and activity and, in my opinion, the projects are better as a result. We've made a number of intersections substantially safer. The intersection at Ocean Parkway and Church Avenue was one of the highest vote-getting projects. We've made some big investments in public libraries. The Kensington Public Library now has a community room that was made into a much bigger space for performances, and rehearsals, technology, and a dance floor. We have new technology both at the Carroll Gardens and the Windsor Terrace branches that people are using very actively.

There's the new community composting system at Salt Lot on the Gowanus Canal, the Gowanus Conservancy, and some great changes in Prospect Park such as fixing flooding along some of the pedestrian paths.

The highest vote-getting projects in the first two years were to fix some horrible school bathrooms. The first year people looked at the terrible bathrooms in PS 124 and said, "We have to do something about that." But because they were working and weren't dysfunctional, the SCA wasn't responsible. Participatory Budgeting is what got them fixed. The next year something similar at PS 58 happened and people said, "The School Construction Authority should really do more to fix bathrooms." And the Council, last year, allocated an extra \$50 million to fix school bathrooms as a normal course of business. So that's a nice example of Participatory Budgeting helping to make a broader change in the budget.

I think the vast majority of people in Park Slope and Brooklyn want diverse communities, but it's so hard to get without subsidy and regulations.

You've long been an advocate for affordable housing, the *New York Times* referred to you as an "expert." What do you see as some of the challenges facing District 39th in this arena? Please boast of your accomplishments here as well.

Affordable Housing, as everybody knows, is one of the hardest problems to solve in city as a whole and is very hard to solve in and around Park Slope. It's a great neighborhood, and people want to live there. We work on it a few ways.

This year, one of the biggest things is that the rent regulations, the rent laws, are up for renewal in Albany in the spring. And those are the laws that cover the rent stabilized and rent controlled apartments, making sure that people can remain in their homes. Because they will have a modest increase from year to year, it is essential that we maintain that strength.

The Mayor's new housing plan is also an exciting opportunity to create and preserve existing affordable units. In the neighborhood, back when I was with the Fifth Avenue Committee we were able to build and preserve several hundred units of affordable housing for families in the neighborhood. And those units, together with the public housing, the Wyckoff Houses and rent stabilized housing are what there is for low and moderate income people in and around Park Slope. I think the vast majority of people in Park Slope and, Brooklyn in general want diverse communities, but it's so hard to get without subsidy and regulations.

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You were the main sponsor for a recently introduced package of legislation addressing segregation in the schools. Can you talk a little bit about what this legislation hopes to accomplish?

District 15 is a really good example here. The student body in District 15, which includes not only Park Slope but Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, Sunset Park, and Kensington, is a pretty good match to the student population of New York City. While the district as a whole is diverse, just like the city, the individual schools—especially the elementary schools—are highly segregated for the most part. The legislation would, within the relatively limited powers of the Council, serve to shine a spotlight on the goals of less segregated, more diverse schools and give the DOE some tools for moving forward. There would be an annual report—which doesn't exist now—that would track and measure progress toward school diversity.

The new PS 133 has a pro-diversity admissions process. It's not a zoned school; it takes kids from District 15 and District 13 so it already has a broader poll of students. And then it reserves the first third of the seats for kids who are either English language learners or eligible for free and reduced lunch. So even though it's in the heart of Park Slope, it's maintaining its diversity and we believe that will continue over time.

Your public safety record is equally impressive having been a lead sponsor in the Community Safety Act, which required the appointment of an Inspector General to oversee the NYPD. Can you talk about some of the positive changes that have come about as a result of this appointment? Let me start by saying that I'm honored to work with our local precincts, and the commanding officers, and cops who are on the beat. It is obviously important that every family in every neighborhood have a productive relationship with the police and have safe communities. We have a relatively new inspector, Captain Frank Di Giacomo, who is great. The prior commanding officer, Inspector Mike Ameri, really helped lead the way for the whole city on Vision Zero policing and policing for street safety. Recently, the 76th Precinct took some guns off the street. Traffic violence and traffic crashes remain a priority. There is a lot to do and I'm honored to work with the NYPD to do it.

My work with fellow Council Member Jumaane Williams and Communities United for Police Reform to advance a package of legislation to ensure community safety and that people's civil rights are being protected led to the four-bill package of legislation known as the Community Safety Act.

You were an active proponent for Living Wage NYC that was set to ensure salaries of at least \$10 an hour get paid to employees of projects that receive more than \$1 million in city subsidies. It caused some contention with the last administration. Mayor de Blasio recently signed an Executive Order to Increase Living Wage and extended it to thousands more workers. How do you see this victory affecting the residents of District 39?

The Living Wage Bill specifically focuses on economic development projects where there's a public subsidy or public contract, so it's really about making sure that we spend public money in a way that people don't get paid poverty wages. The



Brooklyn Navy Yard is a good example of a project that gets economic development subsidies. Over time it will make a difference in creating more jobs and making sure that when we do use public dollars that we're getting the best bang for the buck. And that will matter in areas around the Gowanus Canal where we're hoping to grow more businesses and provide good jobs. We'll make sure that we not only get more jobs, but that we get quality jobs.

Promoting Vibrant and Livable Neighborhoods has long been a priority of yours. What is your vision of the future for District 39?

We're lucky to live in a neighborhood that is my opinion is one of the best on the planet, in terms of being vibrant and livable and walk-able. It's not just me, the American Planning Association named Park Slope one of the top ten best neighborhoods to live in. We've got Prospect Park, such a diversity of small businesses, and a community that really cares.

One of things we've been working on for the last year is "Bridging Gowanus." In the wake of the superfund designation—the chance to really get a clean canal, what we saw after Sandy, and given how much redevelopment pressure there is—we have a really important opportunity to plan and make sure that the community's goals for the area around the Gowanus Canal guide the future there.

Editor's note: This past October CM Lander weighed in on the relocation of Brooklyn Parole Headquarters from Downtown Brooklyn to Second Avenue in Gowanus by saying that "the lack of transparency and community engagement in the planning for a facility of this scale has been deeply distressing. I have long been a supporter of ex-offender reentry and community-based justice programs (I started one when I ran the Fifth Avenue Committee), and I know the importance of meeting the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals returning to the community. However, the planning process for this facility has fallen far short of what any community deserves from their government. Despite multiple requests and several promises, not one single written word about the facility has been provided by DOCCS to the community."

It's been speculated that you might be the next Marty Markowitz, what can your constituents expect from you in the future?

For now, I feel very happy with what I'm able to do in the Council. My current term runs three more years and I have the opportunity to run for one additional term, which at this point I plan to do. So I've got a while more on the Council and there's a lot more to do.

After attending graduate school in the 1990s at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute, you have made Brooklyn your home. What is it about Brooklyn, and specifically District 39, that energizes and motivates you?

What we've got in Brooklyn is something quite extraordinary. The diversity, the public and community spirit of a neighborhood





Brad Lander continued



where people really believe in solving problems together, in taking care of our public goods together are all things I love about Brooklyn.

When you are able to squeeze in some free time, what would a typical Sunday look like for the Lander family in Park Slope?

They're always busy! I'm lucky to have two wonderful kids and a wonderful spouse to whom I've been married coming up on twenty years. My son's a very active athlete in the 78th Precinct and other youth sports leagues, so there's almost always a baseball, or basketball, football, or flag football game to go to.

My daughter working together with a group of friends, my wife Meg, and some other moms organized this dynamite event called "Girls Read for Girls." It's a read-a-thon inspired by Malala Yousafzai in which they get mostly girls, some boys, together at the library to read for a couple of hours and raise money for girls' education around the world in places where it is challenged or in short supply. They had over 100 kids at the central branch of Brooklyn Public Library and together they raised, I think now it's over \$12,000.

My diner is definitely Daisy's Diner, which is right over on Fifth Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets, right downstairs from my district office. That's usually where we can be found for our morning coffee or breakfast. We went for a staff lunch last week to Table 87, which is a relatively new coal oven pizza place at Third Avenue and Tenth Street. So if people haven't checked that one out yet I would urge them to, he's even starting to manufacture frozen New York slices! Obviously there are so many, the list of favorite local places is long one!

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THE NEW WAVE



White the fall leaves from their branches in Prospect Park, and we're breaking out our long coats and stroller shades. Hey, look on the bright side—at least you can save a few bucks on iced coffee, right?

As you sip your hot cup of joe and stroll the avenues this winter, take stock of the familiar storefronts that define our community. But also get to know some of the new faces that are part of its evolution. From a Nutella-centric chocolate bar to a state of the art archery facility, there are plenty of places where you can go to maintain a reasonable body temperature this year, and with a refreshing array of products to offer. Here's a quick recap of some of the new places that have opened over the course of the past year, as well as a few soon-to-be neighbors who we're excited to welcome!

Spirited 638 Bergen St. 718.783.5700 | spiritedbrooklyn.com

Think Brooklyn has reached the heights of cocktail culture? With the addition of Spirited to the neighborhood we're one step closer to Hooch Heaven. Kimberly Wetherell, entertainment industry veteran and master booze baker, has opened Spirited-a self-styled "dessert speakeasy," and a great spot at which to seek refuge from the cold this winter. The plush leather couches will invite you inside, where you can leisurely enjoy Spirited's eclectic cocktail selection (\$12), alcohol-infused cookies (\$3-4.50) and sweet specialties (\$10-\$12). With its Prohibition feel, you'll likely find yourself compelled to order a 1920s gimlet or an oldfashioned at this watering hole. Instead, stretch your taste buds and try the Tilden Toddy, which is spiked with Laird's Applejack and Sorel hibiscus, or a seasonal elixir like the Breukelen Zoo, made with Spring 44 honey vodka and Pernod absinthe. Don't forget to try something off of the impressive menu of boozeinfused baked goods and sweet nibbles (craft-brewed churros or liquor lollypops, anyone?)

Gotham Archery 80 Baltic St. 718.858.5060 | got-archery.com

Calling all amateur hunters and Robin Hood fans: Brooklyn's own temple of target practice has opened and is already zipping with activity. Follow Baltic Street down to the mouth of the Gowanus Canal and you'll arrive at Gotham Archery, a full-service archery facility with bow and arrow instruction and practice for all skill levels. Gotham Archery is a great destination for birthday parties, or really for anyone else who has ever wanted to let rip a bow and arrow. Archery can also be excellent for hand-eye coordination training and is a great way of flexing spatial intelligence. There are twenty lines available, and the bullseyes are beckoning, so step on up and test your marksmanship!

Bar Chuko 565 Vanderbilt Ave. 347.425.9570 | barchuko.com

Prospect Heights newcomer Bar Chuko is an *izakaya*—a traditional Japanese "after-work" drinks & tapas bar—offering yakitori skewers, Japanese whiskeys, and small-plate delicacies. Opened by the same Morimoto-expat owners as Chuko Ramen, Chuko's bar counterpart is delightfully reminiscent of the boisterous Japanese food and drink establishments in Flushing or Saint Mark's Place, yet has a more streamlined, modernist look. Take in the nonstop flow of humming culinary energy emanating from the open kitchen which works in tandem with the rhythms of nineties hip hop. Come with a group and order a bunch of meat, vegetable, or seafood skewers, like wagyu shortrib or pork jowl, eggplant, squash, chicken cartilage or prawn (\$3-\$6), followed by a heftier plate of chili/garlic wings (\$8), jerk quail (\$14), or soft and sticky rice cakes with kimchee, pork and mozzarella (\$12).

Mrs. Dorsey's Kitchen 794 Washington Ave. 347.715.2507 | mrsdorseyskitchen.com

Quit fiddling with your weathered George Foreman grill and that plastic bag of shredded pepperjack in your fridge, and head right down to Mrs.Dorsey's Kitchen. Serving up both grilled cheese classics and those with a contemporary spin, Ms. Dorsey's Kitchen churns out many satisfying varieties. There's the Eggplant Parm sandwich (\$8)—a classic combination of cherry tomatoes and smoky eggplant draped with molten mozzarella on bread from Brooklyn's Caputo Bakery. Or indulge in the Jam Goat sandwich, which marries goat cheese with strawberry preserve and fresh mint. Ms. Dorsey's Kitchen also carries a line of spicy onion jam and features bread pudding for dessert. It'll be sure satisfy all your nagging toasted-cheese cravings!

Two Boots 284 5th Ave. 718.499.0008 | twoboots.com

Like many in the community, I was nearly brought to tears when I learned that the longtime family favorite Two Boots closed its doors. No longer would the kids of Park Slope



GOTHAM ARCHERY

be able to watch the pizzaiolos in action or mold pizza dough with their hands while waiting for pies and shirley temples. However, with the closing of Terroir (a loss for the neighborhood in its own right), owner Phil Hartman resurrected Two Boots in the old Terroir Space on Fifthe Avenue. To this day, Two Boots is still the only neighborhood place where you can get a bowl of Jambalaya for an appetizer and a plate of Ravioli Veronese for dinner without having to hop from one restaurant to another. Be brave: try the crawfish pizza. It's a triumph of Creole and Napolitano flavors!

Choucroute 162 5th Ave. (coming soon)

The word on the street: Longtime neighborhood seafood joint Mary's Fish Camp is being replaced by Choucroute, a new "Vietnamese gastropub." To be run by Lien and Edward Lin (according to Eater.com), ex-employees of San Francisco's James Beard award-winning restaurant Slanted Door, Choucroute will bring fresh, vibrant flavors of modern California-Vietnamese cuisine, as well as masterfully blended craft cocktails, to Park Slope. Although we already have a couple of solid Vietnamese sandwich shops (Hanco's and Bahnmigos), Choucroute is sure to be a great new sit-down Vietnamese spot. We haven't seen their menu yet, but considering the Slanted Door's reputation, we're excited about the newcomer.



Nuteria 82 5th Ave. 347.370.4444 | nutelleriany.com

Kids and adults alike crave the wonder that is Nutella, so we're confident that Nuteria will quickly become a popular afterdinner spot. We're also confident that it will become a popular pre-dinner spot for those who simply can't help themselves. This chocolate and hazelnut wonderland offers crepes, toasts, and waffles lusciously slathered with Nutella. You couldn't possibly go wrong with Nutella hot chocolate or a straight shot of the spread either. Eataly has their own version of a Nutella bar in Manhattan, which has also been getting plenty of attention, but now that Nuteria is open for business locally, you won't have to hop on the subway. You can just stroll down to Fifth Avenue in your sweatpants and spread love the Brooklyn way—with a generous schmear of Nutella!

Buttermilk Bakeshop 339 7th Ave. 347.689.4376 | buttermilkbakeshop.com

Buttermilk Bakeshop is the quaintest, sweetest bakeshop around town. Its pink, sugary set-up may even persuade you to host a cupcake party for your five-year-old niece. Owner Kate Rosenhaus has a slew of impressive titles and awards: she was formerly the head pastry chef at David Burke Restaurant Group, she took home the gold on Food Network's "Sweet Genius," and her recipes have appeared in seemingly every food-centric publication on the stands. Buttermilk has a plethora of baked goods available, everything from freshly-baked breakfast croissants to Nutella Lovebits (cookies topped with a spoonful of Nutella and flecked with sea salt), and from home-made granola to seasonal pies. The open kitchen lets you peer into the inner-workings of the baking process where Rosehaus and co. are hard at work on the shop's set menu of sugary treats, as well as customized options. We'll bet you fifty-bucks that someone has asked for sriracha-frosting cupcakes.

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Brooklyn Flea at PS32 180 7th Ave. Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. brooklynflea.com/markets/park-slope-p-s-321

Eric Demby's Brooklyn-branded empire has expanded to The Slope. Set on the backdrop of an elementary school playground, the PS 321 Flea seems to encapsulate some serious Park Slope stereotypes. Think: slides, heirloom nicknacks for your brownstone, and twee locavore eats. In addition to numerous vendors that sell vintage clothing, furniture, and photographs of random families from 1910, the flea hosts "Smorg Junior," which is "a sort of minor league for startup vendors to test and tweak their menus before graduating to a larger menu." Those Vietnamese hotdogs had to start somewhere, right?

BYKlyn Cycle 258 Flatbush Ave. 347.987.4771| byklyn.com

After eating at all of the places above, you'll probably be looking for a way to burn off all those carbs and booze-infused desserts. It may be too chilly to run around Prospect Park; bike lanes are potentially icy; and taking the DIY approach with a YouTube workout series is not really a sustainable strategy. So, grab your gym bag and earbuds, and head down to the new BKLyn Cycle location on Flatbush, where you can spin your heart out in an energetic yet comfortable (and dog-friendly!) environment. Having recently moved to Park Slope from Bed-Stuy, fitness enthusiast Amy Glosser's new studio BKLlyn Cycle offers a local value alternative to the popular SoulCycle. It is also a muchneeded replacement for the recently closed Cycle Bar on Fifth Avenue, which was a favorite workout locale for many a Slopian stationary-biker. So: whether you decide to use it for your regular workout routine or even as a training facility for the Montauk Century, BKLyn Cycle is a great place to let off some steam and get fit. +

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EAT LOCAL



The good, the earthy, and the funky: How natural wine is making a splash in Park Slope's wine culture.

> ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY NANCY LIPPINCOTT

o you know how when you get out of the shower, little drops of water cling to the hair on your arms? Well the hairs are trapping oxygen. That's why the winemaker lined his vats in cow's hide." Phillipe Essome, or "Fifi" as he goes by, was explaining what, to me, was the very surprising process that went into the bottle of pais he had pulled off the shelf in his boutique on Vanderbilt Avenue, Passage de la Fleur.

Passage de la Fleur is one of the newer wine shops in the neighborhood, and it happens to exclusively sell natural wine. It's part of a growing trend—not just in retail—but with many local restaurants. Peruse the wine lists of local, notable establishments and you'll probably notice footnotes demarcating things like biodynamic, organic, and sustainable. While these terms may appeal to locavores and socially conscious gourmands, they are also indicators that you might find yourself with a glass of something unique and special. Anthony Mastropolo, General Manager of The Pines in Gowanus explains, "We actually are one of the only places in NYC that has a 100 percent natural wine list. We always have and plan on keeping it that way. I think our general opinion of natural wine is that it goes really well with food. Some of the super earthy, funky wines are a fantastic pair for our dry aged duck breast or ribeye steaks."



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But what exactly *is* natural wine? Depends on who you ask. "Natural wine" isn't a standardized term and it casts a wide net.

On one end of the spectrum, it can be like my bottle of pais purchased at Passage de la Fleur. The producer, Luis-Antoine Luyt, is a native Burgundian now living and making wine in the Maule Valley of Chile, and he's one of the seminal figures heading up terroir-driven, minimal intervention winemaking methods in a region historically dominated by more industrial models. Luyt's methods are as close as you're likely to get to leaving the process to mother nature. The grapes are sourced either from local farmers, or grown on rented, unirrigated vines on land worked only by horsepower. This particular wine was fermented in open-air tanks lined with a cow's hide to introduce oxygen (which aids in the development of the yeasts and fosters the maturation of the wine.) Instead of introducing yeast into the juice, Luyt let mother nature take over-a process often referred to as spontaneous or wild fermentation. Whatever strain of native yeast was blowing around in the air of the Maule Valley was the strain that came in contact with the juice, did the dance of fermentation, and eventually resulted in what ended up in my glass.

These wines in particular are likely to deliver some surprising and off-the-wall tasting notes. They tend to have a funkiness to them—different animals altogether from the bigger, popular labels you may be used to. Yeasty, earthy, and barnyardy are going to be terms that come to mind when quaffing this stuff. You might even get a little hit of effervescence with that first glass often a result of some secondary fermentation.

On the other hand, wines being produced just hours away from Park Slope in New York's own wine regions such as the Finger Lakes and Long Island tend to be a little less unorthodox in their winemaking methods, but are still making waves among natural wine lovers, nonetheless. For winemakers in these regions, there is a strong emphasis on preserving the local ecosystem and being kinder to the environment. The Long Island Sustainable Winegrowers (LISW) encourage local wineries to "make an attempt" at employing natural methods, such as using less herbicides and pesticides whenever possible: "[LISW] believe that vineyards should work in harmony with our natural world leaving the land we steward in better condition than when we found it, building a community between vineyards, workers, and the land."

Natural wines from these regions maybe not be quite as esoteric or funky as those fermented in vats of cowhide, but these more hands-off methods have allowed grapes grown in New York's own soil to express their own terroir. New World wines, particularly those from the east coast of the United States, have garnered a bad rap over the years as being overly manipulated, high-alcohol, "fruit bombs." Lately though, New York wines especially are starting to move past that reputation, much in thanks to a more hands-off, Old World approach being employed in more and more local wineries.

By and large, natural winemaking is actually more about what you're not doing to the wine. Pesticides are only the beginning when it comes to human intervention in the winemaking process. Every decision the vigneron makes will have an impact on how the grape ends up expressing itself in the glass. There are actually a couple hundred additives that can be introduced throughout the process—including anything from sugar, yeast,



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And really, that is maybe what makes natural wine so intriguing and special. John Tucker, owner of Rose Water in Park Slope, is a big champion of natural winemakers, and over the course of the past eight years has transitioned the restaurant's wine list to feature natural wines almost exclusively. "I opened a natural, sustainable restaurant and [Rose Water's wine list] is just an extension of that." He goes on to note that the transparency of the winemaker's methods makes these selections more preferable. Though there is a fashionable element to supporting the organic and sustainable agriculture movement, he also points out that this transparency translates into the glass. "It tastes like honest wine."

And as Tucker points out, that is why there is such a growing interest by local somms, retailers, and consumers. "When push comes to shove, and you're burying your nose deep in a glass of wine—at least for the connoisseurs—it doesn't necessarily matter how these wines are produced. It matters how they are drank." Matthew Stucky, General Manager of James in Prospect Heights, adds that these wines tend to make it on to their list because they're just good. "We have quite a few sustainable wines on our list, but I'll be honest with you, we never seek them out. More often than not we land on producers who are making wines that are organic, sustainable, or biodynamic. That being said, I am a fan of anything organic and sustainable and feel happy to be able to offer such great wines to our guests."









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The natural wine movement isn't necessarily breaking new ground, though, as it is taking many steps back. Natural winemaking has been practiced for centuries in Old World regions long before the terms "organic" and "sustainable" were in vogue. While someone like Luyt may be seen as a renegade in highly industrialized New World regions like Chile, his methods draw upon knowledge and experience cultivated over many generations in his native Burgundy. Brian Mitchell of Brookvin in South Slope observes, "I think what we're seeing here is that people are trying to get back to how wines were made years ago." Having recognized the growing appeal in natural wines, Mitchell has included a couple selections produced in this more traditional style, like the airén, a Spanish orange wine made from a varietal primarily used in brandy production.

It's worth mentioning that natural isn't always a guarantor of quality. There are many factors and processes that go into producing a great bottle of wine, and the very definition of what natural wine means is hotly debated among oenophiles. Furthermore, you're not necessarily going to see natural wines obviously labeled as such. The real joy, though, in exploring this area of the wine world is in engaging with local sommeliers, shop owners, and restaurateurs. Not only can they help you identify what you're looking for, but chances are they will enthusiastically share the unique stories behind each bottle on their shelves and wine lists. •

Here's a list of where to begin your own exploration of natural wine:

Big Nose, Full Body 382 7th Avenue bignosefullybody.com

Brookvin 381 7th Avenue brookvin.com

Fermented Grapes 651 Vanderbilt Avenue fermentedgrapes.net

James 605 Carlton Avenue jamesrestaurantny.com

Passage de la Fleur 573 Vanderbilt Avenue passagedelafleur.com The Pines 284 3rd Avenue thepinesbrooklyn.com

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Redefining the Core

BY JOAN ARNOLD ILLUSTRATION BY AIMEE SICURO

A student came to me for an Alexander Technique lesson, referred by a yoga colleague, hoping to relieve her agonizing neck and shoulder pain. I began by explaining Alexander's central concept: Release your neck to free the spine and relieve the shoulders. Then I stepped back to consider her overall stance. Though she had what might be considered "good" posture, I noticed a strange contraction in the front of her torso.

"What are you doing with your abdominals?" I asked.

"Holding them," she replied.

"Well," I suggested, "let them go."

She did. Her torso did not collapse without that alleged "support." After her first and, as it turned out, only lesson, her acute shoulder pain disappeared. What does this show? 1) That a symptom may be far from its cause and, 2) A flawed concept of abdominal support can be damaging.

Such a quick resolution is rare. Usually, in a private Alexander session or yoga class, we are on a quest to change neuromuscular habits bit by bit, week by week, in an ongoing process of refining awareness, unraveling tension and marshaling the body's true postural support. Many students pat themselves just above the navel and say, "I've got to strengthen my core." There are legions in the fields of physical conditioning and performance who will tell you that maintaining a conscious contraction in the superficial abdominals—those we can see and feel—will resolve back pain, foster better balance and improve posture. But misusing abdominal muscles can actually compress the spine and increase back pain, send you off balance, restrict your breath, and compress your posture.

Let's correct some prevalent misconceptions and expand our idea of what core support really is.

Don't Hold Anything

You wouldn't strengthen your biceps by holding them in contraction all the time, so why do that with your abs? No muscle group should be held.

Muscles work reciprocally, and abdominal muscles work in relation to the head, neck, back and legs. As you walk, your abdominals, which connect from the pelvis up to the skull, work automatically. You don't have to think about it. It may take some enlightened instruction to get there, but when you let your abdominals release and allow ease and length in your spine, they operate as they should.



The body is a marvelously complex creation—easy to move, hard to understand. Trust me: you can't wrap your brain around it. Our body's real function is a dazzling interplay of forces. As we try to sort out how it works, we over-simplify. People try to stabilize one area rather than coordinate the entire body in motion. But a little anatomical understanding and some guiding principles can help you access your torso's genuine support and truly enliven your core.

Abdominal Muscles

There are four layers of abdominals:

Rectus abdominis are straight up and down, easily felt on the front surface of the torso. The goal of crunches is to develop these into "washboard abs." Washboards—not much in use these days— are made of metal, a hard substance unlike human tissue. I'm all for strong abdominals, but they can be strong without being hard.

Oblique abdominals are slanted and come in two layers internal and external. They work when you do a yoga twist, when you breathe and as you walk. They wrap around your torso and go almost all the way back to the spine.

Transversus abdomin is is the deepest of the four layers. Roughly horizontal, transversus helps contain the internal organs and participate in upright posture.

Core is So Much More

Let's keep going, to the under layers you can't consciously feel or directly engage, deeper within the body.

Diaphragm – This mushroom-shaped structure at the bottom of the rib cage is the primary muscle of respiration. It coordinates with other torso muscles to expel CO2—the waste product of breath —and inhale O2, the oxygen we need for survival. You can't get more "core" than this. The entire rib cage expands as we inhale and contracts as we exhale. Allowing your breath to



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work fully and easily supports upright posture, calms the mind and conditions torso muscles—subtly and without effort.

Psoas – You'll hear this word thrown around a lot in yoga classes and nailed as a problem area. The full name is iliopsoas. At the top, it connects to the diaphragm, relates to each breath we take and helps support upright posture. The "ilio" part coats the inside of the pelvis. The "psoas" part loops under the thigh bone and, when it contracts, bends the hip joint. Sometimes called "the muscle of the soul," it is so central, so deep, that it reflects our internal emotional state and level of stress.

Multifidus – Some back muscles—the ones you use when you arch your back in yoga—are more superficial and extend the whole length of the spine. Beneath those big surface muscle are these little ones: multifidus, linking one vertebrae to another. They support us to stand, sit well and initiate larger movements. Studies have shown that, to protect the spine from injury, the multifidus muscles activate before any motion.

The Body Works as a Whole

When you bend your elbow, your biceps work, and your triceps release. When you straighten it, your triceps engage. If both are working, your shoulder and elbow joints will compress. For muscular work to be efficient, one muscle group needs to be active, and the opposing group should release. That release is a neuromuscular function called inhibition. We can make that function conscious by pausing before we do a yoga posture, envision the posture as a whole, and move into it with ease.

When you learn how to throw a ball or swing a racket, you don't analyze a sequence of muscles engaging. You look where you wanted the ball to go and imitate your teacher, an athlete, or an adept older kid. You get a whole picture. Your eyes deliver that picture to your brain and nervous system in a flash, and you do your best to fulfill your image. Over time, you practice and get better at it, not from analysis, but from keeping your eye on the ball and repeating a whole body experience. When we see the objective of an action in the mind's eye, we are better able to engage the body's complex, integrated response.

Many people think that surface muscles—the back and superficial abdominals—support upright posture. But here's the big news: If the outside shell of muscle is tense, the inner muscles fail to engage. Rather than working, the core muscles actually inhibit, making the spine less spacious and more vulnerable. Before we do something, the spine can enliven and lengthen to prepare for our next move. When you understand this, it can bring more ease and balance to your daily tasks and to the practice of yoga.

We're not like an ice cream sandwich, with a slab of muscle on the front facing another slab on the back. We are round and multi-layered, with large muscles on the outside and the smallest deep within. Isolating and overworking one surface muscle group is misguided. It's not how movement and function work. In fact, one part of engaging the core is breathing fully and easily. And you can think of your core as beginning from the long arch in your feet and ending at the top of your head.

Ways to Build the Core

Here are some ways in everyday movement to build a truly strong core:

Standing – Whether waiting for the subway or standing in tadasana, Mountain Pose, notice whether your weight is more



toward the front of your feet or the heel. If you're not centered, envision the top of your head guiding you right over your feet. If it feels totally weird, you'll know that you habitually stand back on your heels. Once you're in balance, upright poise can become effortless.

Sitting – To sit well, envision space and ease where the spine joins the head—a point between the ears. Balance your weight on your sitbones, breathe easily, and envision those little muscles along the spine supporting you from within. If in yoga class you find it a strain to sit with legs crossed, sit on a folded blanket or bolster to make upright posture easier. Let your rib cage be buoyant with breath.

Breathing – Believe it or not, a full easy breath is one of the most accessible ways to improve your posture. Your lungs go from your shoulders to near the bottom of the rib cage. Allow your breath to fill the whole torso, including the back where you have more lung tissue.

Many yoga poses demand and can inspire core support. Here are just a few:

Seated Spinal Twist – Allow your breath to support the easy movement of your rib cage and shoulders as you wring out the waist.

Plank – When you do this pose in yoga class or at the gym, allow your head to rotate slightly at the top of your spine. That will allow the spine to lengthen and give this strong pose a foundation of ease.

Side Plank – In vasistasana, allow that slight rotation as you send the crown of the head away from the heels of your flexed feet. Practicing plank as you hold a block between your legs can spark deep, genuine core support. ◆



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PARK SLOPE LIFE

FEAR NOT THE SHOT BY ERIN A. BAUER ART BY CHRISTIAN DELLAVEDOVA



lu season is upon us once again. At the high school where I teach, my principal has been spraying the doorknobs with Lysol and reminding all of us to cough and sneeze into our elbows and frequently wash our hands. But my students and colleagues are still missing days, and all across the city New Yorkers are falling ill.

Communicable diseases have received a lot of attention this year because of the Ebola outbreak. With it, we experienced what our not-too-distant relatives and community members did when diseases like Haemophilus influenza, measles, polio, rubella, and pertussis (whooping cough) killed thousands of infants, children, and adults every year. But that was before vaccines against them were developed and widely administered. And unlike Ebola, the aforementioned diseases spread easily in the U.S., many through indirect contact.

Relatively few of us witnessed infants and children suffering the effects of, or dying from, polio, measles, and other now rarely spoken of diseases. And even fewer, if any, witnessed the devastation of the 1918-1919 Spanish Influenza pandemic that killed as many as fifty million people globally (hence "pandemic"). We now think of many of these as diseases of the past, as if we have destroyed the diseases themselves. In fact, they are alive and well, some are reemerging, and new ones are appearing. What has kept most of these diseases at bay is the success of our country's vaccination campaigns. But that is, and has been, changing. Influenza- though thought of as an uncomfortable inconvenience by many-is the third leading cause of death in New York City because of our low vaccination rates against it, according to a January 2014 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) Epi Data Brief.

As a healthy thrity-five-year-old woman, I am at little risk of dying from the flu, but on Election Day last month I performed another civic duty in addition to voting: I got a flu shot. I did it to protect my friends' infants and my students who may not have gotten the shot and cannot afford to miss school (and, honestly, because I'd rather not miss too many days of work).

A vaccine protects each individual who receives it, reducing or eliminating that person's risk of contracting a disease; it can also protect those around them who have not received vaccines. An unvaccinated individual receives herd protection when a large enough percentage of individuals around her have been vaccinated because she is less likely to come into contact with an infected person. Vaccinating ourselves and our children not only protects us, it protect the newborns, elderly, immunocompromised people, and others who are at greatest risk for suffering or death from infections and have not been able to get vaccines themselves. As Dr. Jay Varma, Deputy Commissioner, Disease Control, at the NYCDOHMH recently explained at an EcoHealth Alliance panel discussion, "the decisions you make about infectious diseases actually impact those around you."

So why are so many people choosing not to vaccinate themselves and their children? According to Jeffrey P. Baker, MD, PhD in a report in the *American Journal of Public Health*, "fading memory of vaccine-preventable diseases, adverse media coverage, misinformation on the Internet, and litigation" have all contributed to parents' fears that childhood vaccines may harm their children. This all leaves us with an abundance of confusing, and often inaccurate, information about vaccines and has led to the outbreak of many diseases we haven't had to treat in the U.S. in many years.

VACCINES AND THE AUTISM MYTH

One of the most popular pieces of misinformation being disseminated in the media and on the Internet is that of the connection between autism and childhood vaccinations. One of our most dangerous fallacies is believing that they do.

Autism was first labled as such by a psychoanalyst, Leo Kanner, in 1948. Early on, people believed that poor parenting caused autism. By the 1960s, a psychologist and father of a child with autism, Bernard Rimland, proposed that instead, it was biological. By the 1970s, investigators expanded the criteria for the diagnosis of autism and began to view it as a spectrum of disorders. In 1991 there was a significant increase in the diagnoses and early treatment of autism disorders because it was added to the "list of covered disabilities in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," so researchers expected a rise, but not because there was a dramatic increase in cases. (This is one of the reasons people falsely believed that there was an autism epidemic in the 1990s.)

Then, in 1998, a British gastroenterologist, Andrew Wakefield, hypothesized that gastrointestinal issues were associated with autism and these were all caused by the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. Despite the fact that his hypothesis was based on a small number of patients, and despite the fact that no largescale scientific study ever confirmed it, his "study" created the perfect storm for a wind of hysteria that would later have serious public health implications. By 2010 Britain's General Medical Council determined that Wakefield had acted unethically in his study: He had carefully selected the twelve children, had performed invasive tests on them, and some of his research had been funded by lawyers who were acting on behalf of parents of children with autism who were suing vaccine manufacturers at that time. Despite this finding and a plethora of valid, reliable scientific studies that find no correlation between the MMR vaccine and autism, personal injury lawyers, concerned and well-intentioned parents, celebrities, et al. found "answers" they desperately wanted and helped popularize this dangerous myth.

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HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV) VACCINE

A different kind of fear has prevented many parents from vaccinating their tweens and teens when it comes to the Human Papilloma Virus, or HPV. There are more than forty types of HPV that are sexually transmitted, and two are high-risk types that are associated with 70 percent of cervical cancers. As of 2010, researchers concluded that up to 45 percent of women in their early twenties had already been infected with HPV. It's so common, in fact, that by early adulthood many women and men have already been infected.

Due to its high prevalence and the risk HPV poses, particularly for females, the CDC has recommended that girls ages nine to twenty-six, particularly eleven to twelve-year-olds, receive an HPV vaccine. And in some states, it is one of the vaccines required for entry into public school. Many studies show that parents are in general very interested in vaccinating their daughters against HPV; however, vaccination rates have been relatively low in the U.S. So why the hesitation?

A concern expressed by some parents is a familiar one that arises regarding abstinence-only versus comprehensive sexual education in schools: the effects on their children's behavior. Will our kids seek out sex because they are being confronted with issues regarding their sexuality, or will they behave recklessly because they falsely believe they are altogether protected? This is absolutely something we can address both at home and in schools.

In New York City, we require our public middle and high schools to offer students specific sexual health education lessons during health courses. Having worked with teenagers for more than ten years, I understand the concern that a vaccine protecting against an STI may give young adults a false sense of security. But I also know that as impulsive and reckless teens sometimes are, they are also concerned about themselves, their peers, their reputations, and their physical and emotional well-being. Over the years I have had many students come to me in crisis after finding out they had contracted HPV. It's understandably devastating for a teenager to find out she has an STI, but as STIs go, this one is so rampant it feels almost as common as a cold. The problem, of course, is that HPV can cause cervical cancer in addition to cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus, and in the back of the throat.

According to the *American Journal of Law and Medicine*, we could "significantly reduce the enormous financial and human costs associated with cervical and other cancers" if the HPV vaccine were more "broadly accepted." And once again, allaying our fears and turning to the facts could help achieve this.

FLU VACCINE MISCONCEPTIONS

Over the past few years my highly educated, well-read, media savvy (and weary) friends in numerous professions (including education and health care) have given me various reasons that they didn't get the flu shot: "I'm scared of the flu shot;" "I don't want to get the flu, and I heard the vaccine can cause it;" "I'm afraid I'll have a really bad reaction;" "Why would I get the flu shot? I can still get the flu even after getting the shot!" "I'm healthy, so I don't need it."

There are anecdotes and rumors...and then there is science. The flu shot does not, in fact it cannot, cause the flu. Flu vaccines administered via needle are made with either an inactivated virus—meaning virus particles that have been killed and are non-infectious—or without flu viruses at all (in the case of the recombinant flu vaccines that were approved for the U.S. market in 2013). The nasal spray flu vaccine cannot cause the flu either. The nasal spray contains weakened flu viruses that are not able to infect warm areas of the body (like the lungs).

Why do some people still get the flu even after they've received the vaccine? People often self-diagnose with the flu, so they get it wrong. Rhinoviruses and other respiratory viruses are often going around during the flu season, and people believe they have the flu when they actually have something else. Alternatively, if you are exposed to influenza viruses right before you get vaccinated or within a couple weeks after, you are still vulnerable (it takes two weeks for your body to develop immune protection after receiving the vaccine). There are also many different flu viruses and you may be exposed to one that the vaccine does not protect against. In some situations, the flu vaccine does not always provide adequate protection; however, this is more the case for people who are sixty-five and older or have weakened immune systems. If you are unfortunate enough to get the flu after receiving the flu vaccine, you are likely to have a milder illness than if you hadn't been vaccinated.

Side effects from the flu shot and nasal spray vaccine are mild compared to the flu itself, and if you experience side effects they are likely to go away within a day or two.

Still, you're thinking, you're a healthy adult in a low-risk group, so why vaccinate? Remember, the decisions you make affect the people around you. Besides keeping yourself off the couch and burning through sick days, get the flu shot to protect pregnant women, infants, elderly, and people with chronic diseases and weakened immune systems from serious illness, hospitalizations, and death. And vaccinate your children who are six months old and older to keep them in school and out of the hospital. As many as 3,000 New Yorkers will die from the flu this year. And as few as 47 percent of adults in NYC will have received the flu vaccine. The flu is not something we need to resign ourselves to suffering from each year, and we certainly don't want anyone literally dying from it.

For now, the greatest risks we face may be from the pandemics of panic and misinformation. Instead of being afraid that a vaccine will cause a disease or determine our children's behavior, we should be embracing the fact that we have the vaccines available to protect us from what is actually threatening our health and well-being. We all play a part in preventing the reemergence and spread of communicable diseases. We can propagate fear and increase our risks for disease or we can side with science, which clearly shows us that vaccinating is the way to go. •





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Over the past decade, I've spent a fair amount of time roaming the streets of Brooklyn wearing headphones. I feel connected to the neighborhoods and the music provides a soundtrack, like I'm in my own little movie. With the winter months upon us, it's simply too cold to explore the streets outside; so what better excuse to curl up with a warm drink and a movie. A number of filmmakers have already done the legwork. Their stories and sounds they hear are much different from my own, which makes them

Goodfellas (1990)

Martin Scorcese put a lot of care into the songs that made the soundtrack of Goodfellas. Looking at the main characters and the times, he only chose tracks that fit the mood and were consistent with the era during which the story takes place. In this way, the soundtrack is intrinsic to the story of Henry Hill's life. The results are quite amazing. Starting in the 1960s with Tony Bennett's "Rags to Riches" during the

opening credits, we follow Henry (played by Ray Liotta) through the twists and turns as the music sweeps along taking us year by year, decade by decade. In a cinematically iconic sequence, Henry takes Karen (Lorraine Bracco) on their first date to the Copacabana. The Crystals' "Then He Kissed Me" plays as we follow them from a back entrance, through the kitchen and to their table. Alternatively, later in the film when the mistresses are taken to the club, "Pretend You Don't See Her" by Jerry Vale can be heard in the background. The innocence of doo-wop and girl groups slowly gives way to the Rolling Stones after Henry emerges from prison. The soundtrack becomes more frantic and emotional as Henry's life spins out of control.

Saturday Night Fever (1977)

I was a kid when this movie came out, and I remember how it consumed the country: the posters, the white suit, the dancing, the Bee Gees, and the subsequent "disco sucks" backlash. To be honest, I wrote it off until recently, when I caught it on cable one night. Don't make the same mistake I did. This is a great movie, generation defining. There is a reason why it was a monster hit. From the beginning scene with Tony Manero (John Travolta) strutting along the sidewalk to the Beeg Gee's "Stayin' Alive," we understand our main character is a player. The backdrop is Brooklyn in the 1970s, and it is a moment captured in time. Tony and his friends cruise across the Verrazano Bridge, stop at White Castle and frolic/loiter/live in a still-recognizable Bay Ridge. Gone now are the night clubs that play a pivotal roll the characters' social life. The dance scenes in this movie are nothing short of amazing-not only the carefully choreographed ones between Tony and Stephanie (Karen Lynn Gorney). Maybe it's the light-up disco floor, but "The Hustle" has never looked so cool. That iconic soundtrack has somehow managed to pass the test of time. Put it on, in the background during your next party and see how your guests react. There is sure to be dancing.

Requiem for a Dream (2000)

Focusing on a different side of Brookyn, geographically and socially, Requiem for a Dream is an intense film with an equally intense soundtrack. Set in Brighton Beach and Coney Island during the 1980s, Darren Aronofsky's adaptation of the Hubert Selby, Jr novel is both thrilling and tragic. Sara Goldfarb (Ellen Burstyn) and her son, Harry (Jared Leto), strive for their own twisted versions of the American Dream. They each find potentially fatal ways to escape from reality. Composed by Clint Mansell and performed by the Kronos Quartet, the soundtrack tells a story on its own. It creates moods and waves of tension and release and is in itself a harrowing and beautiful album. Paired with the story and imagery, it created a gut-wrenching effect as the music helps the characters and viewers transition between reality and the dream-like, drug state. Tyrone (Damon Wayans) dances with elation to a heavy beat in celebration of a score. Later, strings sweep us across the emptiness and isolation of the Brighton Beach boardwalk in winter. Throughout the movie, silence is broken by strings that play softly with the dialogue, building in intensity and finally breaking into rage.

Do the Right Thing (1989)

In one of the most memorable opening sequences to a movie, Rosie Perez dances to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power"—the entire song. She heralds the coming of the Fly Girls; and she

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is awesome. As Chuck D announces, it's "1989 the number, another summer," and we're in Bed-Stuy. On this sweltering summer day, nearly every character is introduced through his connection to music. Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn) carries his boom box (which almost becomes a character on its own), Mister Senor Love Daddy (Samuel L. Jackson) broadcasts over the radio while watching the streets. As tensions escalate, so does the music. Steel Pulse's "Can't Stand It" plays as events for the day are set in place, and the music shifts in tone, with the help of Jazz musician (and Spike's father) Bill Lee's score. As the confrontation builds at Sal's Famous, "Fight the Power" proves to the theme of the movie.

Notorious (2009)

This biopic about the late Christopher Wallace (aka Notorious B.I.G.) captures an era in which music from Bed-Stuy Brooklyn became culturally important. Young Wallace, played by Jamal Woolard, grows up on the streets of Brooklyn, hustling and selling drugs until he finds himself in prison. Once out, he embarks on his music career. From there, the pieces and people fall into place; Sean "Puffy" Combes, Li'l Kim, Tupac Shakur, and Faith Evans, all as Biggie experiences an almost meteoric rise. Notorious is full of performances, showcasing Biggie's enormous talent. The movie itself is flawed and a bit clumsy at times, but it is worth checking out for the man and the times it documents. As it recreates early performances and videos, it's easy to get caught up in the nostalgia.

Dave Chappelle's Block Party (2005)

Dave Chappelle loves Brooklyn and knows how to have a good time. Everybody's invited when he throws a party. Set in Clinton Hill, the day unfolds as he interviews locals, provides history about the landmark Broken Angel House, and his block party gets underway. He manages to capture the spirit of the streets of Brooklyn during the summer, and create something that feels like an actual block party—despite the celebrity and cameras. The film itself is informative, irreverent, and filled with music as you would expect from Chappelle. Performers include Mos Def, Erykah Badu, the Roots, and Big Daddy Kane, along with others taking the stage together and on their own. The highlight of the day has to be watching a slightly miffed Kanye West lead the Central State University Marching Band along Downing Street. All in all, it's just plain fun.

Mistaken for Strangers (2013)

The Brooklyn band The National is made up of two sets of brothers, and singer Matt Berninger. So it only seemed fitting that Berninger would enlist his brother Tom as a roadie while Tom makes his documentary about the band touring for their album, *High Violet*. This does not go as well as planned. Reminiscent of Ray Gange in The Clash's film, *Rude Boy*, Tom gets caught up in the rock-n-roll lifestyle and proves to be inept on the road. Through this, the film audience not only gets a front row seat for the band's performances, but also a backstage look at the complexities of creating a large-scale tour. But Mistaken for Strangers is more than a tour film. It delves into the delicate relationship of brothers. When the tour ends and the band returns to Brooklyn to record their next album and complete the film, it turns out to be quite different from its original scope, and more touching than the film they set out to make. •

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