

# the free press

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a binghamton media group publication



## *Studying abroad: the French connection*

By LORY MARTINEZ  
Free Press Contributor

Let's play a numbers game shall we?

Percentage of train passengers on the Paris Metro each day: 4.5 million daily.

Probability that someone you're eyeing in Paris will speak your language: 43%

Number of missed connection posts on Craigslist per month in major U.S. Cities: Thousands.

Number of anonymous posts to Bing-U Secrets since its beginning: A lot.

You see where I'm going with this? It's all about Carpe Diem. In France, and I suspect Europe in general, the stigma against talking to strangers DOES NOT EXIST. It is a cultural difference I noticed, and of course not all people are the same, but I think it's something well worth considering.

At least for me, back home the complete opposite is true: mostly, we say nothing and go home to our computers, damning ourselves for not acting on

our desire to connect. Sophie Blackall, an artist in New York, has become famous for her work on missed connections. Her telling anecdotes display strangers with distinctive traits that were noticed but disappeared as quickly as they appeared on the subway, sidewalk, etc. I love her work because it captures the ephemeral nature of the human heart. It's a poetic sentiment, but it accomplishes next to nothing for those people and their would-be friends/lovers/soulmates.

In 2010, the Paris Mayor's office accepted missed connection descriptions on its website. The best ones were posted publicly on Valentine's Day that year. Binghamton Crushes is the popular place to say things to people you're too afraid to talk to in person. It's sweet and it can make someone's day (shout-out to whoever wrote the one about me and my affinity for Jazzman's lattes), but it's still not the real deal. Readers of Binghamton Crushes and Bing-U Secrets

know how appealing it is to remain anonymous, to take those moments – where you catch a person's gaze for a little too long, and you get a feeling that maybe you should say something, anything, to keep the moment from leaving you both – and just let them slide by you because filling that grinning silence is too hard.

That is not the case here in Paris. When I ride the Metro and I catch someone's gaze, after a few seconds of shared silence, the person speaks to me! I instantly forget six years of French vocabulary and what follows is an awkward mumble. And yet it's still a wonderful thing, this carpe diem, this "don't let the chance pass you by" feeling that seems to pervade the day-to-day commute/promenade/what have you. So I've gathered few amusing stranger stories after talking to my friends here in France. All names are changed or omitted because they are, well, strangers.

*Continued from front cover*

## the free press

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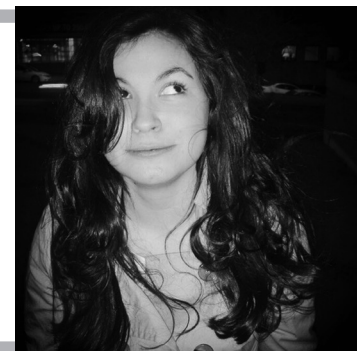
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### L'histoire du Chien

Three French youths are smoking outside of their apartment building. Youth 1 one sees a giant dog heading their way. He calls out, "Hey it's a wolf! In the middle of Paris!" The woman walking the dog approaches them, and laughingly replies, "No, it's just really big. Funny story though about this dog: My friend used to pass by a junkyard every day and would see this dog wandering about. One day he followed her home. She named him and kept him till the day she died. When she died, the dog hung around the cemetery. So I decided to take care of him, in her memory. I like him because he's big in a spooky kind of way." After talking for a while, Youth 1 asks if he can dog-sit sometime. What followed, in Youth 2's words, was, "A series of awesome adventures with said giant dog. All because he talked to a stranger."

**"In France, the stigma against talking to strangers DOES NOT EXIST."**



uncalled-for, over-dramatic poses – to see what the reactions would be. Most strangers didn't really get it although a few people on the Metro grimaced back, which was always fun, because we'd both end up

laughing and sharing a nice moment. One middle-aged woman in particular was so amused she came over to me and kissed me goodbye when she got off the Metro. She told me it made her day.

All in all, there are two things you should take away from this collection of stories:

1. Big dogs are spooky
2. Strangers are just friends you haven't met yet, so stop waiting, and GO MEET THEM.



## STUDENT FEATURE

# the girls of comedy

## A rise of new and funny student groups sees more females entering the male-dominated platform

By EMILY D'EMIC, MARCUS GARCIA & SYLVIA CHOU

Binghamton Stand Up Club President Mike Amory, a senior majoring in English and PPL, as well as freshmen comics Lyla Cerulli and Odeya Pinkus, discuss their opinions on the role of women in comedy as well as the future of stand up at Binghamton University. Cerulli, who intends to double major in Latin and Biology, and Pinkus, an aspiring English/Rhetoric and Film major, were kind enough to represent the female comedic voice of the Binghamton Stand Up Club – and had a lot to say at that.

### Free Press: How did BU Stand Up get started?

**Mike:** Well, there were basically three main guys [who] started the club. Me, Steven, and Kale. Steve and Kale met at a comedy show as separate comics; they decided to start a comedy club. I saw it on B-Line. We would meet in small rooms around the union. The whole goal was basically to wait for the fall because we knew if we had somewhat of an established club with a routine that by the time the fall came, we'd at least get a couple new people and then basically, it'd grow slowly. Now our meetings have regularly about twenty to thirty people.

**FP:** You guys are doing quite well for having started so modestly.

**Mike:** I think it was more that there was a need for it because I remember when I came to Binghamton, the only comedy there was Improv, the Pappy Parker Players - that was the only comedy group. I tried out, I didn't get in, but that was it, that's all there was - Improv. There were random open mics and stuff, you know, but there was no real stand up community on the campus. And I think now that this club has grown a bit and I've gotten to meet other people, it's really thriving because I think people at the campus like stand up.

**FP:** [To Lyla and Odeya] Did you guys try out for Improv at all?

**Odeya:** Yeah.

**Lyla:** I did. I almost got in.

**FP:** Almost?

**Lyla:** Yeah, I got a callback and I was really nervous and, I mean I'm nervous here too but, I talked to the person in charge and he's like "Oh yeah, we all really liked you but you were really nervous," and I'm like "Yeah, I am."

**FP:** How do you think the club's dynamic has changed now that you have female members?

**Mike:** I mean, from the beginning and probably for a while, it was just men. Not that we purposely did that, but that's just kind of how it kind of ended up. I think it speaks to the larger issue that there were just more male comedians than female comedians, which is, I think, changing slowly. For our club starting out, occasionally we'd have one or two female members who'd come by, and they didn't really stick around. The people who tend to come to watch just our meetings for whatever reason, the majority tend to be women, which I think helped us.

**FP:** How many [female comics] do you have now?

**Mike:** Well we have these two [points to Lyla and Odeya]. There's one who did a set here at the meeting, and then we have some who just kind of hang out and watch, said they might write some stuff and perform.

**Lyla:** Well, when I came here, I came from an all girls high school so it was like, "Wow, there's a lot of testosterone in this room right now," and it was definitely a boys' club, but I felt welcomed, probably because there wasn't an audition, like, being stared at. And when I first came here, I just came to watch and then after like fifteen minutes, I was like "Wait, I have a weird life that's probably funny to other people," and that's all I did. I went up and talked about what actually happened and I was just lucky that people found it funny.

**FP:** Life is funny usually. Nine times out of ten, people usually tell stories about how miserable their lives are and someone's gonna laugh. What about you, Odeya?

**Odeya:** In high school, I already knew that I really wanted to do Improv. I loved SNL, I wrote my college essay about it, I love it so much. I knew that there was the Pappy's and I really wanted to do something with comedy, so I tried out for that and even though I didn't get in, I said I would just try again next year. But Bing Stand Up is literally my favorite time of the week. There's that whole thing people say about we have to fight that comedy is a boy's club, but I never felt that way here.

**Mike:** Lot of dick jokes.

**Odeya:** I learned a lot more about sex-ed in stand up than I did in sex-ed, I can tell you that much. But I don't feel like anyone listens to my jokes differently because I'm a girl. Everyone here is so awesome, I don't feel like I'm treated any differently because everyone is super nice and welcoming no matter who you are.

**FP:** So what do you all think is the difference between male and female humor, if there is even a difference?

**Odeya:** It's not even so much sense of humor, just different backgrounds and different things you understand. If someone starts telling me something that's really specific to males, not even to me but to females in general, they might not get it just because they've never had that experience. But if someone starts making a joke about an awkward experience with tampons or something, guys might not connect. I saw Kate McKinnon perform at NYU last year, and she did an entire set on how she got her period and it was so embarrassing, and I looked around at the audience and everyone found it funny, guys and everyone were laughing, but you could see that girls just connected with it way more.

**Lyla:** Also, from the point of view of being a comic, I feel like being female comedian, there's a lot of shock value with it. Especially with me, because I look so innocent and I feel like society still has an image of women that they are supposed to be so clean and innocent, and then when a girl goes on stage so shamelessly and talks about really dirty, raunchy things like sex and masturbation, they get a bigger laugh than when a male comedian does it because so many dick jokes have been made.

**FP:** Right, like how many can we make?

**Odeya:** I actually think there's an endless supply of dick jokes.

**Lyla:** Yeah, the limit does not exist.

**Mike:** Truly, one of the founding goals of the club was how many dick jokes can we as a people make. Now that there are women here, it's more understanding different experiences of people. I think adding women to a comedy environment, what it's done is made me more aware of issues that women face that I never really considered. That's why I'd like to see not just more women join the club, but more people. There are so many different voices in comedy compared to other art forms that it's more interesting. That's why I'm happy to see the club get a little bit more diverse as it goes on.

**FP:** Earlier, we talked about there being an infinite number of dick jokes that people find funny, but what do you think is the female equivalent?

**Lyla:** I remember Darian Lusk, the vice-president said when I made a masturbation joke, since I'm a girl, it's funnier. And I use it to my advantage, but when you get critiqued after we share new material at meetings, people are also very aware of things like using a crutch like cursing or a dick joke.

**Mike:** I think the better path for women is to be themselves and show that, by being themselves, they have just as strong a comedic voice as men do, which I think they do.

**Odeya:** Thanks Mike! [Winks] That wasn't sarcastic, I know it sounded that way.

**FP:** Where do you see the future of the club going?

**Odeya:** This is pretty much one of my favorite things that I do here so I think more people are probably going to join, and people will graduate and leave, and it will be the circle of life and we become the grass, but also we eat the grass. Just kidding.

**Lyla:** I have a feeling it's just gonna get bigger, but I don't think it's gonna get so much bigger that it's not a tight knit community like it is now.

**Mike:** What I always envisioned for the club was that this is like a training ground, you come here and develop some kinds of comedic sensibilities, you get better as a comic, and then ideally you go somewhere else, like New York City. But in terms of what will happen with the actual club, I think it's definitely gonna get bigger. The foundation's there and I think it's very strong, and I think as time goes on it's gonna be steady, it's gonna get a more dominant position on campus in terms of people recognizing us. Bing-famous is what we call it – mockingly.

**Odeya:** I'm sure it will stay this way, and I hope it does obviously cause it's a tight knit, close group. I feel really comfortable here and I know I'm gonna stick with it for the next four years

In recent years, satirical newspapers have grown in popularity, as they provide an interesting and amusing commentary regarding today's current events. Such newspapers and websites, the most popular being The Onion can be both silly and insightful. A few students at Binghamton University have come together to form

# features

## Girls of comedy continued

their own version of The Onion called “The BUTT” - “Binghamton University Tells Things.” The BUTT’s editor-in-chief, Janine Furtado, is a senior majoring in environmental studies. Amongst its staff of writers is Meagan Schuster, a senior double majoring in English and Psychology.

**FP:** How did your publication get started? How do you like writing for it so far?

**Janine:** I came up with Bing Butt junior year and knew about PipeBomb, but my friends and I wanted to put out a satire publication. It’s great writing for Bing BUTT! It’s hard to find creative writers but it’s a collaborative process and it’s fun! **Meagan:** Janine (my housemate) approached a few of us via a message on Facebook. It was pretty much stagnant for a year after that, unfortunately, but we got started writing this year. We now have over 500 likes on Facebook and that’s growing every day, so I’m really excited to see where it goes. Writing for the BUTT is definitely different than any other writing experience I’ve had before, but I love what I’m getting out of it. We all work together to come up with ideas and different statuses, then work together to finalize it and make it funny - it really is a group effort, but the articles we all edit and come up with together are, by far, the best accepted.

**FP:** What other comedy-related activities are you involved in on campus?

**Meagan:** I don’t do any other comedy related activities on campus necessarily, but a lot of the groups I’m involved with are ones where you have to be comfortable talking to large groups, making light of situations, and cracking jokes, which the BUTT definitely helps with.

**FP:** When did you realize you were funny?

**Janine:** I just have a bunch of funny friends and we watch a lot of comedy shows like The Office and Modern Family, but my favorite is The Office because it’s just a classic.

**Meagan:** As far as a “comedy background” goes I wouldn’t really say I have one. All of my life I’ve been known by my family as the quick-witted, blunt, and sarcastic one, which has just turned into humor I guess.

**FP:** What’s your opinion about how female comedians are oftentimes viewed, especially next to their male colleagues?

**Meagan:** I don’t see it as much through the BUTT (because we are relatively anonymous), but I think females in comedy definitely do have a bad image next to their male colleagues. A lot of jokes that men can get away with are perceived as wrong or bad coming from a woman in the mind of society. By no means, though, does that mean that there aren’t funny women, they’re just rarer to come by within mainstream media.

**FP:** Do you plan to pursue comedy after college?

**Meagan:** I’ve never really considered actively doing anything with comedy so I wouldn’t say I’m going to pursue it after college, but the way I approach situations and the responses in conversations I have I don’t think will ever change; if anything, the more I learn and the more I incorporate into everyday conversations the funnier my “jokes” become.

**Janine:** My dream job is to work for SNL!

For a good laugh, visit thebingbutt.tumblr.com and attend Binghamton Stand Up meetings, advertised weekly on B-Line.

## YouTube Music Awards and why it sucked so much...damn

By MELISSA NEIRA  
Photo Editor

The first annual YouTube Music Awards were held on November 3, 2013, but who knows if this event will actually be an “annual” event – because it sucked.

I first heard of the YouTube Music Awards on a blog, and when I found out that one of my favorite bands, Arcade Fire, would be performing, I absolutely had to find a way to attend. Turns out, the only way to become a part of the audience was to be casted. Out of curiosity, I took a chance and sent an email to the casting agent asking to be included in the cast. A couple of weeks later I received a follow up email congratulating me for being casted along with a set of rules. Days leading up to the event were filled with excitement, especially when Jason Schwartzman and Reggie Watts were announced as the hosts. It was also announced that critically acclaimed director Spike Jonze was directing the event, which was supposed to be totally unscripted.

Finally on the day of the YTMA’s, I arrived at Manhattan’s Pier 36 at noon, dressed in my best clothes because the casted audience also had the privilege of being filmed as part of a live music video. After what seemed like an eternity of standing in the wind and cold, I was corralled into the “Arcade Fire” section of the venue for a dress rehearsal.

During the dress rehearsal, we were guided through different stages and sets for each performance and were told specifically where to stand and what to do. Things were a bit hectic but the crew was prepared. It was great to see artists and actors behind the scenes. The members of Arcade Fire were friendly and loveable.

Michael Cera was comfortably awkward. Tyler, the Creator, Earl Sweatshirt, and Taco (Odd Future) were fun and down to earth. Then I saw which artists were nominated for the different award categories. I had thought that YouTube would nominate YouTube-famous artists, but instead artists such as, Eminem, Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, and Taylor Swift were the nominees. Nominating mainstream artists who are already represented at appropriate musical award shows like the VMAs or the Grammys didn’t seem to make much sense. It’s a shame that the original, user generated content that made Youtube so iconic, was not represented at the Youtube Music Awards. The YTMA’s failed to recognize

others were shouting, and the two co-hosts looked very distressed on camera. The rest of the YTMA’s were a whirlwind of chaos and confusion. Mainstream artists won awards while the co-hosts tried their best not to look like fools. And overall the event seemed like a huge advertisement for the sponsor, Kia. Even members of the casted audience refused to abide by the rules and ran through the set, just like the two co-hosts who didn’t know what the hell they were doing.

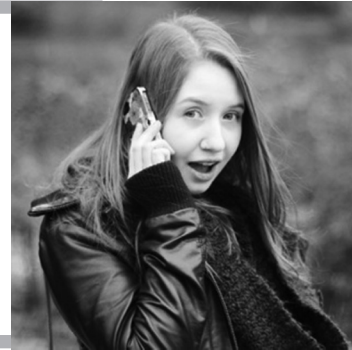
For an event that claimed to be unscripted and original, little originality could actually be observed. The same artists won the same awards that they’ve been winning for years.

The live music videos filmed throughout the night consisted of at least one of the many crewmembers ruining a shot at any given time. What was meant to look like organized chaos was actually just regular old chaos in the worst possible way. The YTMA’s were at best unwatchable, and at worst, utterly cringe worthy. I have never been

more happy that an award show ended forty-five minutes early.

On the bright side, maybe YouTube can learn from the mistakes that were made at this event. This night probably cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions. Maybe next year they’ll use that money to hire someone to script the event and cast members who will actually follow simple instructions. I don’t have high hopes for the YTMA’s, but there is a little part of me that hopes that YouTube can get its act together and give a performance truly worth the anticipation and recognition.

“What was meant to look like organized chaos was actually just regular old chaos in the worst possible way.”



its loyal users and instead took the same route as existing award shows.

After the dress rehearsal, the casted audience prepared for show time and got into position. But wait, what’s that? Random people entered the venue and scattered about it. I thought to myself that they must have been informed about the general movement of the show just like the casted audience, but I was wrong. After the first performance ended, instead of following the casted audience cues, the new attendees sprang out of their sitting positions and raced to the next performance. People were running everywhere, crewmembers with giant cameras were pushing people out of their way,

## The background music to your reckless driving A glance at video game soundtracks

By POLINA HOLUBOVSKA  
Free Press Contributor

Have you ever found yourself yelling at your television or computer screen as the fictional character you’re controlling is overwhelmed with zombies, arrested by the police, or slowly bleeds to death from gunshot wounds? These characters look very real due to the increasingly high-resolution graphics that implemented in video games nowadays. But it’s not just the graphics or flashy colors that get us addicted to this virtual reality; the music also plays an important part.

Video games have come a long way from simple synthesizer sounds. Back then, storing music would have had to occur on a cassette tape or a vinyl record, both of which are finicky, fragile systems that are difficult to control through a computer program. Instead, video game producers decided that simple synth sounds would be better for the sparing times they were used. These sounds were mostly heard while screens loaded-sometimes the music was just one singular loop played over and over.

Once video games grew out of their arcade cabinets and gained widespread popularity, better ways of storing the music started appearing, such as on the cartridge the game came with. You still had the same repeating, monotone synths played over

and over, but now they were blasted in your home instead of in an arcade.

As graphics got better and technology got better to match these graphics, there was room for more variation. As levels became increasingly difficult, the music became more fast-paced, urging the player onward. Music also congratulated a winner or belittled a loser with either happy, upbeat

“It’s not just the graphics or flashy colors that get us addicted to this virtual reality.”

Polina Holubovska

rhythms or depressing, slower sounds. Music immersed the player in the world of the game by providing background noise. Video game producers paired different levels and actions with different music, making gameplay a much more engrossing experience, and a break from monotony. Since gaming technology has advanced,

so have the soundtracks associated with video games. The variety of genres has also increased to now include indie, alternative, or classic rock, hip-hop, classical, and even the obscure Gregorian chant. It’s this variety that allows different video games to cater to larger audiences, letting the gamer choose which music to game to. In 2008, 2K Sports partnered with Pitchfork Media and has since released video games with soundtracks featuring music selected by the renowned internet-based, music reviews website. It’s a much more thrilling experience to do something while listening to your favorite music. It’s this driving force that gave video games a makeover in the twenty first century, letting the gamer tailor the music to his or her own likes.

Stemming from synth, today’s greatest hits also make an appearance in video games, further illustrating how video games aim to be as appealing as possible to the public. For example, the recently released Grand Theft Auto V features music from critically acclaimed and widely recognized artists such as A\$AP Rocky, Neon Indian, Twin Shadow, and Tyler, The Creator amongst others. The realism of newer video games is enhanced by their music and is what makes soundtracks so crucial to the gaming experience.

phoenix



Photograph by Kim Muller

# phoenix



## Collages 1, 2, and 3 COLLEEN STAPLETON



## Richard's Escape LUCY SCHNURBUSCH

It's the future. Glamorous women and glamorous men strut through New Boise in winged sandals, smiling at one another. The daily ritual of tooth brushing is accomplished by celebrity professionals in full-service salons. The people have lost their dental sovereignty, and no one seems to mind – why not trust it to the glittering elite?

Richard Samsdaughter is loved. Chief tooth polisher at Smile New Boise, he is impossibly famous, anyone in the city would kill for a chance to feel his caress on their perfect teeth.

Richard Samsdaughter is a fraud. It was seven years ago today that he conned his way into a job at Smile New Boise, one of the top four dental hygiene clubs in the city. It was only yesterday that the city first thought to audit him. For years they thought he was simply too radiant to deserve scrutiny. Now they know the truth.

Toothbrush held upside-down. Toothpaste applied to wrong side of brush. Overly vigorous brushing motion. All felonies.

He pulls the sand out of his hair and watches it fall through the grate of the gold paint fire escape into the glimmering street below.

Richard is nervous. He hasn't shaved for eight hours. His filthy pea coat and damp, hot Reeboks aren't exactly going to help him fit in with the swarms of regal, elegant beauties below.

"Why does New Boise have to be so damn nice?"

As he runs down the gilded fire escape he thinks about the terrible, selfish things he has gotten away with in his life as a man who walks the earth. He thinks about all the secrets he did not keep. He thinks about all the compliments he did not return. He thinks about all the people he guilted into having sex. Surely these things must be worse than simply not knowing how to brush teeth exactly right!

But now the authorities are hunting him over his lightest sin. Thanks to his smallest transgression he must now flee the city he has called home for seven years. As he jumps down the final flights of the solid gold fire escape he watches the perfect heads of the beauties strolling below.

"Every one of y'all knows just as little about teeth as I do. All I'm guilty of is sticking my neck out."

"You're guilty of pride," says Chief Inspector Thompson as he kicks Richard's ankles out. "You thought you could be better than them by picking up a toothbrush. You thought you deserved their wild admiration. You're nothing Richard. Even if you learned about teeth - that wouldn't change. We didn't come after you because you couldn't brush, Rich. We came after you because you're nothing."

Richard tears up.

Chief Inspector Thompson looks to the north, wetting his lapel with the side of his tongue. "I'm going to help you escape."

Together they run through the shining boulevards. They stand out.

Miraculously though, they are not noticed. Tonight, the shape of sobbing Richard matched with the stocky inspector, lapel dripping, forms an entity beautiful in itself. The beauty of the city and its people swallows this new, horrible beauty and weaves it into the beauty-fabric of the beauty whole.

Tonight just so happens to be the night of a launch. The rocket Sally is transporting groceries and mail to Boise 4. The sky is split into two as the powerful vessel lurches into space. The sweat coriander smell of twenty first century rocket fuel sits heavy in the air as Richard crouches in the foothills, weeping. Never again will he walk the streets of New Boise as a powerful man. But now he realizes that it was not his right to demand any more than a common life.

And now even a common life is forfeit for Richard.



## Abstractions 1, 2, and 3 RUCHI JAIN

## Senior column: good decisions/bad decisions

By SALT WHITMAN  
Free Press Contributor

### Good Decision: Never got a fake

I didn't go to the Rat my freshman year. In fact, I never went to the Rat. I'm 21 now and I never had any motivation to go to the Rat. Or Dillinger's. Or Tom & Marty's. Or JT's. I once went to Merlins during bar crawl and since I wasn't 21 yet, I got X'ed on, and had to witness a transgender performance sober. It wasn't the end of the world. If you do the math, \$100 for a fake ID plus however much I would've spent on drinks and cover chargers downtown every weekend would certainly have reduced how much spending money I'd have on other, more fun things such as, concert tickets, eating out, and fancy groceries. When I turned 21, I thought it was going to be the most liberating thing in the world, but instead nothing was different.

### Bad Decision: Got too high

So you're probably thinking I'm a boring girl without a taste for alcohol or having a good time. In my freshman and sophomore years, I didn't go downtown indeed, but I still enjoyed myself – all thanks to the smelly greens. Looking back at it now, it makes me feel very gross. By the end of sophomore year, after my final visit to the Nite Owl, I realized that all the original excitement of being high had died down with how many more people I knew that were doing it. So I quit while I was ahead and have never gone back ever since.

### Good: Joined the campus radio station

Joining WHRW wasn't only great because I made all my friends there, but also because it boosted my morale. Speaking directly to the Binghamton community via the airwaves forced me to reveal more of my personality, something I was always afraid to do before. It made me comfortable with putting on a broadcast program for people that don't have any preconception of me, which is good if you're trying to break into entertainment. But also, without the radio station I don't know if I would've grown out of the insecurities that carried over from high school.

### Bad: Never studied abroad

Being a Math major and CS minor leaves little to no options when it comes to studying abroad for either the fall or spring semesters, but still leaves a lot of room for the winter or summer sessions. And yet this is something I never bothered to look into due to financial reasons and overall laziness. Now that I'm a senior however, I truly regret not even trying to go to France for a summer or Australia for a winter. Spend three and a half years in Binghamton and you become very restless. I wish I had taken advantage of a study abroad program; it would have completely changed the monotonous rhythm of my life.

### Good: AP exams credits gave me a higher priority during registration

This doesn't really have anything to do with a decision I made while at BU, but when I was in high school, I studied really hard for my AP exams so I came into the university with an absurdly high number of credits. A high score on the AP Calculus AB test placed me out of Calc I, so I took Calc II my first semester here. Lucky me. As a freshman, I had a sophomore standing, which meant I registered for classes earlier than most other freshmen. I guess that was cool.

### Bad: Every 100-level course I ever took

**Good:** Didn't settle for mediocre summer internship opportunities. While they would've made great resume builders, I didn't bother getting any internships for the first two summers of college. I also didn't bother taking any summer classes either, even though it forced me to overload during some semesters. What am I doing?

### Bad: Summers of stupid

2011: What did I do in the summer of 2011? Gee, I don't know...I got my driver's license?  
2012: Uh...I learned to drive?  
2013: I worked at vegan froyo store!

### Good: Rejected an opportunity to transfer to NYU

Like a typical NYC kid, in my first couple of years at BU, I started feeling homesick and thought that going to NYU would be a good idea. I applied as a transfer student and actually got accepted. But Mommy and Daddy refused to pay for it and there was this whole big thing, so I ended up rejecting my acceptance. I don't regret that decision, because BU eventually grew on me and I felt hopeful about the future.

### Bad: Only applied to transfer to NYU

Come to think of it, if I wanted to move back to the city, only applying to one school probably wasn't the way to go. If I got accepted into other, more financially acceptable schools, chances are I probably would have transferred. At least I think I would have. There's no way to know that really anymore...I guess I'll never know. And I'll have to live not knowing for my whole life.

**Good:** I got into a serious relationship with my best friend.

**Bad:** It made me lose the cynicism that made me so witty before.

## New smoking ban solves little

By CAITLIN DIPIRRO  
Free Press Contributor

New York City recently passed the strictest anti-smoking law of any major city in America. The city council vote to raise the tobacco buying age from 18 to 21 passed 35 to 10, and is expected to be signed into effect by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in the near future. The bill includes a price floor for cigarettes, a ban on discounts of tobacco products, and penalties for retailers who attempt to evade tobacco taxes.

This most recent legislation does not come as a surprise, given Bloomberg's best efforts to make his city smoke-free. Some of his ventures have proven successful; since Bloomberg's start of term, the adult smoking rate in New York City has decreased from 28 to 15.5 percent between 2003 and 2010. But as a born and bred New Yorker, I can attest to the fact that this ban is not only unfair, but will do little to reduce the youth smoking rate in New York City. In fact, this ban may present a whole other slew of problems for the city that Bloomberg will have to scramble to solve with rigid legislature.

Following a similar logic to that of the drinking minimum being raised, the change to the tobacco purchasing age was supported by the idea that the 18-year-old mind is vulnerable to such a vice. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, people who begin smoking at an earlier age are more likely to develop a severe addiction to nicotine than those who start later. Raising the minimum age gives three extra years for a vulnerable mind to allegedly mature and make the decision to abstain from smoking an unhealthy amount of tobacco.

"This is literally legislation that will save lives," says Council speaker, Christine Quinn. I beg to differ. This legislation is a coercive, hypocritical measure that does not attack the true issue at hand and instead creates a slew of other problems that will undoubtedly be attacked in the future by yet another draconian law.

Here's my first issue with this reasoning; convention that readers first recognize. It seems silly that an individual who is deemed an adult is not allowed to make decisions as an adult. At 18, an American citizen is legally an adult and has the privilege of making life-changing decisions, one of them being the decision to enlist. If an individual over the age of 18 commits a crime, he or she is tried as an adult. Raising the age of consumption beyond that of legal adulthood is the wrong way to approach smoking restrictions in this city. If our legal system recognizes those 18 and over as adult members of this country, then the legal system must treat them accordingly.

My other issue with this, which is understood by those at the street level, is that the ban is not going to effectively stop those under the minimum

**"This ban attacks a public health issue at its most superficial facet, to the point that it misses the true issue."**

age from smoking. I attended a high school in New York City, and even when the tobacco purchasing age was at a measly 18, there were kids well below the minimum age smoking cigarettes across the street from the school (New York City schools are a drug-free zone). According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, 11.9 percent of high school students in New York City are smokers, compared to the 18.1 percent of adult smokers. Granted, the percentage has decreased since Bloomberg came into office, but this can also be attributed to other legislation, such as the cigarette tax.

The population of successful underage smokers proves that when there is a will, there is a way. As for those who have gotten their hands on cigarettes, according to the New York State Youth Tobacco Survey, in 2010 almost 60 percent of underage smokers in New York City obtained tobacco



from a social source. This means that those underage smokers obtained cigarettes through older acquaintances. There is no way to police this means of evasion, and it is even easier for the college students to obtain their vices using this method. And for those who take the bull by the horns and attempt to purchase underage, it was reported in the same survey that less than half of these individuals were asked for proof of age or refused sale

due to their age. Why has there been no initiative to bring down the numbers that already exist? The same purchasing behavior will occur, but now within a broader age group.

Raising the minimum tobacco purchasing age is not going to reduce the smoking population in New York City. Deeming one activity illicit only invites more illicit activities, like the use of fake IDs to obtain cigarettes (just like they're used to obtain alcohol under age). As retailers scramble to keep up with the sophisticated technology of fake identification, they can fail to recognize a minor. The retailers will face punitive measures, which include hefty fines before there is even a thought of suspending a retailer's liquor license.

This ban attacks a public health issue at its most superficial facet, to the point that it misses the true issue: those deemed too immature to make a decision are not educated about it, and prohibitory measures are not going to do anything to help the fact that such educational reforms have yet to be implemented. It is difficult to see the function of this legislation beyond that of a revenue generator, categorized among the various obscure parking rules that send New Yorkers' money straight to Bloomberg.

## Binghamton in Transition: What's in store for Mayor-Elect Rich David?

By NICHOLAS SCHAFFRAN  
Editor-in-Chief

Earlier this month, the City of Binghamton elected businessman Rich David to replace Matt Ryan as mayor. David, who beat out Democratic challenger Teri Renna by a margin of 472 votes, ran on a platform of public safety and economic development for the city, with an emphasis on cooperation with the University. Rich David's election finds him in the mayor's office at a time where Binghamton University is seemingly ever expanding in size and in student body, and much of the downtown renewal reflects that.

During his coming administration, Rich David will have to address some important issues in order to promote the growth he promises.

The Mayor-elect has been very vocal about his plans. At his victory speech at Terra Cotta Catering the night of his election, David said, "The residents of this city voted for change, and change is what they're going to get." These plans of change consist of a multi-faceted agenda, starting with economic growth and safety. On the front of economic growth, the most visible agenda is his declaration of continued support of the construction of the high-tech incubator downtown. The incubator, which was proposed by Binghamton University and local, county, and state representatives as part of the NYSUNY 2020 proposal, is a \$22 million project and provides the University with technology at its research disposal, and brings high paying jobs to the area. He has further pledged to revamp the Court

Street roundabout (and improve general infrastructure), allow media to record video in City Hall, open a farmer's market on the North Side, and, his focal issue, reduce crime rates.

On the issue of Public Safety, David proposed a 9-point plan in his campaign. This plan includes returning Binghamton to its pre-budget cut, 2005 level of officers, which was 148. Currently, this count is at 128. These officers will focus on high crime areas, coordinate with other levels of police force, and be assigned areas to patrol on

**"Throughout his campaign, David hit the public safety and police enforcement issue much harder than Renna."**



foot. In addition, David plans to reinvigorate a Neighborhood Watch and Community police force. Throughout his campaign, David hit the public safety and police enforcement issue much harder than Renna, who he accused of being reluctant to commit to the reinstatement of the full police force, as he has.

As an undergraduate at Binghamton finishing his senior year now, I have seen the changes in the city over the last few years. Living in Binghamton's Westside, walking distance to the downtown region of a post-industrial city has been a paradigm shift from the suburban streets I grew up on. As Greater Binghamton transitions from being

a city of industry – once home to IBM and the Endicott-Johnson shoe factory – to a place where the main economic growth center is a research university, some hiccups are bound to happen. Yet, in order to fully realize all of the goals of the city, the incoming mayor must minimize the opportunity for these 'hiccups'. Despite David's rhetoric, handling crime with increased police presence, and promoting economic development are not the only issues to address. Binghamton is still seriously

laden with poverty; crime doesn't only stem from a lack of police enforcement. Affordable housing for non-students in the area, more public transportation options, and cleaner, better infrastructure are good investments to consider as well. While opening up City Hall to reporters is a good plan, we should

have more direct involvement as well. I am encouraged by new developments downtown like Chenango Place, however more infrastructural developments for the non-student residents of the area also must follow.

Despite my reservations, I am hopeful that the coming years will see the disenfranchised citizens of Binghamton granted better economic opportunities, that the current renaissance in the area become a new era of prosperity for all. Despite this being my last year here, I keep the welfare of the area in my heart, and wish the best for Rich David and the City of Binghamton.