LESSONS IN DEMOCRACY

- A HISTORIC THEATER'S SECOND ACT
- NYU ALUMNI CHANGEMAKERS
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SOUND, RHYTHM, MEANING
These disquieting times call for a little poetry, and no one is better suited to provide it than Ada Limón (GSAS ’01, pictured at left). “Again and again, I have been witness to poetry’s immense power to reconnect us to the world, to allow us to heal, to love, to grieve, to remind us of the full spectrum of human emotion,” she said in response to the Library of Congress naming her the 24th poet laureate of the United States. Limón, the first Latina to hold the post, was complimenting the work of those she admires, but her words also describe her own verses. Since earning an MFA in the Creative Writing Program at the Graduate School of Arts and Science, her work has taken the world by storm. The Carrying (2018) won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry; Bright Dead Things (2015) was nominated for the National Book Award; she won a Guggenheim Fellowship for her body of work (2020); and her most recent book, The Hurting Kind (2022), garnered praise upon its release. Then there’s her poetry podcast, The Slowdown—something Limón most likely won’t get to do much during her tenure in the prestigious role.

ON THE COVER Graphic designer Pablo Delcan, with the help of his go-to CGI artist Justin Metz, created for us this virtual democracy-evoking marble Ionic column to illustrate that treating democracy as a party game (the goal of which is total destruction) results in a pillar unable to support anything—not to mention a mess.
A&S Arts and Science, formerly Faculty of Arts and Science
ARTS University College of Arts and Science; used from 1833 to 1974
CAS College of Arts and Science (“the College”); refers to the undergraduate school in arts and science from 1994 on
CIMS Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences
DEN College of Dentistry
GAL Gallatin School of Individualized Study, formerly Gallatin Division
GPH School of Global Public Health, formerly Global Institute of Public Health
GSAS Graduate School of Arts and Science
GSM Grossman School of Medicine
HON Honorary Degree
IFA Institute of Fine Arts

CODES FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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ALUMNI CONTACTS
A GREAT RUN

Phil Edwards (STERN 1930) was born in 1907 in Georgetown, British Guiana (now Guyana), where he practiced sprinting by racing what he described to a newspaper as “an angry cow.” A track and field star at NYU, he represented Canada in the 1928, 1932, and 1936 Olympics, winning five bronze medals. Edwards also was the first recipient of what is now called the Northern Star Award, recognizing Canada’s top athlete. He became a physician specializing in tropical diseases with a distinguished medical career briefly interrupted by his military service as a captain in the Canadian Army during World War II. He was inducted into the NYU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1971, the same year he died shortly before his 64th birthday.
THANK YOU, LYNNE

If there’s one person whose name should be boldfaced when recounting this magazine’s origins, it’s Lynne P. Brown (seen at left at her retirement fête in October 2022). After earning a BA from Smith College and a PhD from Johns Hopkins University, she worked for Congressmen John Brademas and Thomas S. Foley during their tenures as majority whip in the US House of Representatives. A born-and-bred New Yorker, she brought her political savvy, diplomatic skills, wit, and wisdom to this institution in 1982, where she remained for 40 years, eventually becoming senior vice president for University Relations and Public Affairs. In 2003, Brown cofounded this publication; since then, her imprimatur has graced every page. May her next chapter be full of adventure (and may she remain a loyal reader!).

DOUBLE THE CONGRATS Scoring a Pulitzer Prize is a huge deal, but lightning struck the Arts and Science History Department twice. Nicole Eustace, professor of history, won for her book *Covered with Night: A Story of Murder and Indigenous Justice in Early America,* while Ada Ferrer, professor of history and Latin American and Caribbean history, was honored for her title *Cuba: An American History.*
WELCOME, DEANS! Meet the new leaders who have taken the helm at five schools over the past year. Clockwise from top left:

MICHAEL A. LINDSEY, Silver School of Social Work, focuses on poverty, inequality, and child and adolescent mental health.

VICTORIA ROSNER, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, is an expert in perspectives on literary modernism.

TROY McKenzie (LAW ’00), School of Law, is a former deputy assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice.

WENDY SUZUKI, Arts and Science, is a neuroscientist specializing in brain plasticity memory.

C. DEBRA M. FURR-HOLDEN, School of Global Public Health, is an epidemiologist with expertise in health disparities.

—ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN MORTIMER

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FEATURE

ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLÁS ORTEGA
According to a January 2021 Quinnipiac University national poll conducted in the aftermath of the attack on the Capitol, 74 percent of registered voters viewed democracy in the United States as under threat. Perhaps that figure was temporarily spiked by the emotions evoked from the horrific scenes broadcast from the Capitol? Not so, according to an October 2022 *New York Times*–Siena College poll, which reported the number at 71 percent more than two years later. Americans, it seems clear, are worried about their system of governance.

NYU is focused on the issue as well, exploring, analyzing, and interrogating the concept of government by the people. This creates a learning environment where students are taught to leverage their critical thinking skills to find meaningful solutions to real-world challenges. Otherwise, isn’t a diploma just another piece of paper? As civil rights activist Marian Wright Edelman said, “Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”

A course search using this institution’s Albert system yields literally dozens of offerings from 11 schools with the word “democracy,” “democracies,” or “democratic” in the title. On the following pages, we highlight a few recent, current, or future classes that have been pulled—and abridged—from the course catalog. At what many consider a critical juncture for our country and the future of our democratic practices, we asked some of the professors who teach these courses to tell us what drew them to the subject and their ideas on how democracy can best be preserved.
Capitalism & Democracy  
SOC-UA 388 / Arts and Science

How do markets interact with democracy? It has long been a pillar of modern political thought that there is a deep mutuality between capitalism and liberal democracy. Equally, critics have pointed to myriad ways in which market institutions and their effects are corrosive to both the culture and the practice of democratic politics. We will assess the arguments for and against the positive view [and] examine the historical record of the capitalism-democracy relationship, as well as its current dynamics, with a special focus on the United States.

Comparative Politics of Industrialized Democracies  
POLSC-UH 2426 / NYU Abu Dhabi

This course is designed to help students develop an appreciation of what it takes to generate high-quality research and writing in a particular area of comparative politics: the politics of representative government in advanced industrialized democracies. To facilitate this, we will read and discuss published work in four categories, beginning with voters and their preferences, then moving to electoral systems and their effects, legislatures and how they function, and factors influencing governance.

Constitutional Adjudication and Democracy Seminar  
LAW-LW.10518.001 / School of Law

Constitutional democracy is the dominant form of representative government in the world. Characteristically, [it] includes judicial organs exercising power through constitutional adjudication, alongside the political institutions of a representative democracy. Giving judges the power to cancel or modify legislation or other governmental actions poses questions both at the level of political theory and practicality. The institution that we will spend the most time studying is the Constitutional Court, invented in Austria following World War I and revised after World War II in Germany and Italy; it has been copied widely in the ex-Soviet states, Latin America, and Asia. There are also older traditions of constitutional adjudication which locate the power to conduct constitutional review in a supreme court as is done in the United States and Canada. We will also examine the experience of some countries that have tried to restrict the power of constitutional judges to cancel laws in various ways in the attempt to preserve some kind of parliamentary “sovereignty.”

Creative Democracy: The Pragmatist Tradition  
IDSEM-UG 1381 / Gallatin School of Individualized Study  
Taught by William Caspary

“My inspiration for the course, and for my entire career in political science, is the participatory democratic movement of the 1960s in which I actively participated. ‘Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us’ is the title of a 1939 essay by [American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer] John Dewey, written when he was 80 years old. It was his response to the rising threat of fascism, but also an expression of the democratic philosophy he had been working out throughout his life. In it he wrote: ‘Democracy is a way of personal life controlled . . . by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished . . . [conditions] of [free inquiry] of consultation, of conference, of persuasion, of discussion, in formation of public opinion, which in the long run is self-corrective.’ The essay sounds the Emersonian theme of creativity as openness to learning and change. For Dewey, this requires political dialogue among citizens, founded on mutual respect. Therefore, Dewey emphasizes a democratic ‘way of life,’ not just democratic institutions. Democracy is creative also in the sense of innovation, invention, experimentation, imagination, and discovery—which Dewey sees as implications of the pragmatist understanding of the natural sciences, and of the requirements of a changing world—and also as essential to democracy.

“Following this theme of experimentation, the latter part of the course explores such ‘social inventions/experiments’ as conflict resolution, civic journalism, progressive education, participatory budgeting, and workers’ cooperatives—worker-owned and democratically managed businesses.”

ILLUSTRATION BY JING WEI
Crisis in Democracy Seminar  
LAW-LW.12742.001 / School of Law

There is a great deal of journalistic and scholarly writing about the democratic “crisis” around the world. More recently, both the United States and the United Kingdom have become of concern, not because of new parties, but because older parties have been taken over by populist or illiberal elements. This seminar aims to assess this extensive literature starting from a variety of normative and positive theories of popular government.

Democracy and Design: Imagining New Public Realms  
IDSEM-UG 1994 / Gallatin School of Individualized Study

What does it mean to design democratically? This course explores some of the many ways of answering this question by crossing boundaries between architecture and urbanism, social science research, public realm process, and technology. We begin by considering the network of public spaces—from the streets to power supplies—in New York City as a system of functional and aesthetic interactions and a social reality. We turn, then, to the possibilities of design to intervene in this network. What does it mean for an urban space to reflect “democraticness”? How should we, as democratically minded designers, think about the sometimes conflicting demands of civility and the pressures of a well-functioning city?

Democracy and Science in the Year of the Pandemic  
FYSEM-UA 814 / Arts and Science

This seminar explores the complex interactions between science, politics, and our quality of life. Many examinations of these interactions highlight the positive and skip the political by looking at examples where a new scientific insight seems to improve the quality of life, but without any intervention by policymakers or the voters they represent. The events we lived through during 2020 give us a unique opportunity to step back and ask the hard but essential question: How can a society take advantage of scientific expertise without ceding the control that voters have to exert, through the politicians they elect, over the course that the nation will follow?

Democracy and the City  
CUSP-GX 8009 / Tandon School of Engineering

We live in a world beset with increasingly complex urban and global challenges where learning how to combine big data and collective intelligence is a must to create public value. Only by learning how to properly mix data analytics and the use of collaborative and participatory strategies will we be able to secure citizens’ rights, expand the provision of public services, and improve their quality. This course reviews big ideas, key debates, policies, and innovative/disruptive tools around the combination of these two sources of knowledge that, properly blended, have the capacity to transform how we govern the city and the world. Students will also learn how we can promote big data democratization, adding a bottom-up approach in its creation, capture, curation, analysis, visualization, and data ethics.

Democratic Theory Seminar  
LAW-LW.10534 / School of Law

Cotaught by Jeremy Waldron

“Democracy and the themes associated with it are crucial in all the work I do in legal and political philosophy, so the course is an opportunity to communicate to students the centrality of democratic institutions in our study of the theory of politics and the rule of law. It is also a wonderful opportunity to work with and learn from my much-admired colleague, John Ferejohn [with whom Waldron teaches the course].

“I hope students will come to understand: 1. how complex democracy is and the way it opens up a whole array of other issues such as accountability, constitutionalism, judicial power, majoritarianism, and representation; and 2. the historical roots of democracy in ancient Athenian practice as well as early modern discussions, like England’s Putney Debates in 1647, and Enlightenment issues a century later than that.”
Democratic Transitions
GLOB1-GC 2060 / School of Professional Studies
Taught by Barbara Borst

“What inspired me to develop the course in 2010 was the rapid expansion of democratic ideals in countries under authoritarian rule. The excitement about these movements was often unrealistic about the ease of establishing democratic systems where none had flourished before. My earlier career in international journalism had given me a close look at the challenges each country must address. I wanted students to understand those challenges. By 2018, it included the rise of populism, nationalism, and other movements that threatened democracy both in newly democratic states and established democracies.”

Free Speech and Democracy
IDSEM-UG 1144 / Gallatin School of Individualized Study

The tension between free expression and social control has shadowed the “Great American Conversation” since the birth of this country. The constitutional ideal that our government “shall make no law” abridging free speech has given way, in fact, to laws that limit discussion, ostensibly for the public good. Likewise, new media technologies advance our ability to access and exchange ideas and information but raise new questions as to the limits of such dialogue. This course addresses the delicate balance between free speech and democracy.

Laboratories for Democracy: Making American Cities Better
FYSEM-UA 456 / Arts and Science

This course examines the intersection of ideas, politics, and action. We study best practices from around the country (and the world), evaluate their effectiveness, and determine whether and how successful programs can be replicated.

Mathematics and Democracy
POL-GA 2175 / Graduate School of Arts and Science
Taught by Steven Brams

“I have long been interested in democracy—and using mathematics to elucidate it. Because my book Mathematics and Democracy (2008, Princeton University Press) had the same title as the course, I thought the topics would be of research interest and also be provocative to teach when democracy is so much under siege today. The two parts of both my book and the course, ‘Voting Procedures’ and ‘Fair-Division Procedures’ (each part of the book contains seven chapters), capture, in my opinion, the two essential features of democracy.

“My hope is that the students will gain an appreciation of how mathematical models—using game theory, social choice theory, and algorithms for fair division—not only illuminate the two aforementioned features of democracy, but also show how reforms, such as of voting systems and methods of redistricting after a decennial census to obviate gerrymandering, can ameliorate current problems in elections and the allocation of public goods.

“The fact that one of the voting systems studied, approval voting [a single-winner voting method that allows voters to approve of any number of candidates, with the candidate most often approved of becoming the winner], has been adopted in two US cities, numerous academic societies, and college and university departments—including the Economics and Politics departments at NYU—is testimony to its practical significance above and beyond its intellectual justification.”

Media Activism and Democracy
ITAL-UA 9513 / Arts and Science & NYU Florence
MCC-UE 9452 / Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development & NYU Florence

The course aims at providing students with a closer understanding of the civil society activism-media-politics conundrums at the national and global levels. First, it introduces the complex and fascinating topic of civil society activism; second, it illustrates the linkages between activism and media; third, it shows the impact of civil society’s advocacy on contemporary political systems.
Multiethnic Democracy
CCOL-UH 1042 / NYU Abu Dhabi

Most democracies in the world are multiethnic, but the jury is still out on the question of what ethnic diversity means for democratic stability and governance. This course combines materials from across many disciplines, including political science, political philosophy, economics, mathematics, anthropology, history, and the humanities to address questions including: Does ethnic diversity—based on race, color, nationality, language, tribe, caste, religion, sect, and region—constitute an obstacle or an asset for successful democracy? What are the goals of individuals who mobilize politically on the basis of one or more of these identities? What are the principles that democratic systems should employ in responding to identity-based claims? And how should we evaluate public policies designed to respond to such claims, including affirmative action, federalism, cultural rights, educational policies, and electoral systems? The aim is to train students to think critically and comparatively about the global and local challenges faced by multiethnic democracies.

Nativism, Walls, and Democracy
HSED-UE 175 / Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
POL51-UC 6663 / School of Professional Studies

This course explores the metamorphosis of the United States into a country of immigrants and of intense nativism, suspicion, and hostility to outsiders of certain stripes. We highlight how stakeholders in the American political project have used means both democratic and suprademocratic to impact the question of who can and cannot enter the country, pushing on one end to erect sturdier barriers to entry and on the other, to welcome migrants with more open arms.

Photojournalism and Democracy
IDSEM-UG 2189 / Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Taught by Lauren Walsh

“"We live in a moment where journalism and its practitioners are too often attacked or discredited; a moment when ongoing wars involve the state control of media and scripting of narratives; a moment when political divisiveness feels more characteristic of the United States than not.

“My specialty is photojournalism, but I believe broadly in journalism and its role to serve the governed, not the governing; as many writers and thinkers have said before me, it’s fundamental to a functioning democracy.

“I hope students gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the vital role that a free press serves in society. In particular, I hope they develop greater visual literacy and knowledge around the role that images play in shaping our understanding of the world.”

Religion, Conflict Transformation, and the Future of Democracy
UPADM-GP.249 / Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
Cotaught by Melissa Carter (STEINHARDT ’24)

“I’m excited to launch this new Wagner class as a part of the Center for Global Spiritual Life’s minor in Multifaith and Spiritual Leadership. Our society is in desperate need of change, discourse, and healing, and this class presents a powerful opportunity. Our student body is yearning to have difficult discussions and acquire the tools to work across lines of disagreement. My desire is for students to leave this class with a practice of cultivated curiosity about themselves and others. I want them empowered to respond with curiosity in moments of political, religious, social, interpersonal, and inner conflict, modeling the restorative practices that inclusive democracy requires.”

Cotaught by Chelsea Garbell (STEINHARDT ’13, WAG ’19)

“I have a deep, abiding interest in the role religion plays in national myth-making and public policy, and in the stories we tell ourselves about the roots of conflict. I’m thrilled to build these conversations into the Multifaith and Spiritual Leadership minor, of which this course is an exciting new part.”
Technology, Media, and Democracy: Addressing the Threats to an Informed Electorate

With the rise of misinformation and fake news, with rampant online abuse and harassment, and with the decline of news media, the quality of online information has been rapidly deteriorating. This course seeks to understand the impact of our information ecosystem on democracy and our society, and create technologies that address the balance between tech, media, and democracy. It brings together journalism, design, media studies, and technical disciplines to understand the threats posed by the information ecosystem to our democracy and attempts to address these challenges using technical and computational methods and techniques.

Technology vs. Democracy: Can the American Experiment Survive American Innovation?

From the founders to the Facebook generation, Americans have regarded technological progress as an existential threat to American democracy. In this seminar, we explore a range of texts—written by scientists, novelists, and religious and civic leaders—questioning whether the American experiment can survive American innovation and whether its institutions can, or even should, evolve with its technologies.

The Law of Democracy

Students need to appreciate how complex the laws and institutional byways of democratic government prove to be. They generally enter the course with deep intuitions about politically salient controversies but do not know the extent they reflect the way in which our system is set up, how the rules constrain and inform the choices voters have, and how difficult efforts at reform are in light of the many interlocking pieces of our government structure.”

Cotaught by Rick Pildes

“I recognized in law school that issues about democracy were always in the background of many courses involving public law, such as constitutional law, but there was never any specific focus on these issues. That struck me as a huge gap in legal education, and I was lucky enough to find two extremely talented colleagues at other universities who thought the same way; we then [collaborated to create] this as a field of study in the law schools.

“The goal is for students] to understand how the design of institutions and the legal framework for elections shape the kind of democracy we experience. To recognize the historical development of our political institutions and processes, and the way that history shape the present. To understand democracy in a grounded, concrete way that relies on empirical knowledge, rather than abstract debate, about how various laws and policies actually play out. To become sophisticated about the likely consequences of various proposed reforms. And to develop an intellectually deep and honest understanding of the competing perspectives and debates over these issues today.”

The Theory and Practice of Radical Democracy

This course explores scholarly debates about communities and justice. Course material covers longstanding themes such as state-society relations, democracy and political participation, emergence of political identities, grassroots and netroots, community organizing and urban governance, as well as social movements. Students will acquire critical literacy in social studies, including the bodies of literature that draw on anthropology, political theory, geography, and sociology.
CATCH US ON YOUR GO-TO PLATFORM

New York University
DINEE SIMPSON (GSM ’06)
MD
FACILITATING EQUAL ACCESS TO ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

It was as a surgical trainee in Boston that Dinee Simpson, newly graduated from the Grossman School of Medicine, first became aware of the racial inequities in the organ transplant evaluation process. Poor healthcare in Black communities put residents at higher risk for diseases requiring transplants, but they were far less likely than White patients to receive treatment.

Simpson decided she would do something about this issue in her own backyard of Chicago. “As a Black woman, I thought I could build trust in a system that has historically mistreated Black patients,” Simpson says. She established the African American Transplant Access Program (AATAP), an initiative that engages with communities to improve awareness of disease prevention and treatment options.

In AATAP’s first year, the number of Black individuals evaluated at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine’s Comprehensive Transplant Center, where Simpson is an assistant professor of surgery, increased by 55 percent. (Simpson is also Illinois’s first Black female transplant surgeon.) AATAP is being hailed as a model with national potential to redress medical injustices, with providers’ ideas about who “deserves” transplants eroding. —DAVID HOLLANDER • PORTRAIT BY CARLOS DIAZ ORTIZ

Our subjects are NYU Alumni Changemakers of the Year. See the other honorees on page 32, and read more about all of them at alumni.nyu.edu/changemakers.
One figure in particular served to fuel the ambition of Shawna Baker. Her formative years coincided with Wilma Mankiller’s decade-long leadership as principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Seeing a woman at the head of tribal government suggested to the young Baker that leadership potential was based on merit.

For an out lesbian in conservative Oklahoma, such a career path requires fortitude. A graduate of the School of Law, Baker was first nominated to the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court in 2018 but fell short. “Some questioned my qualifications,” she says. “I was encouraged to serve in another role.” She accepted an appointment to the Cherokee Nation Gaming Commission, where her work dissolved any lingering doubts. Baker was again nominated to be a Cherokee Nation jurist, this time easily winning confirmation in 2020. She’s now the first 2SLGBTQ+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) person ever confirmed to the Cherokee Nation’s highest court.

Baker joined the court at a pivotal moment in her nation’s history. Her first written opinion granted full rights of citizenship to Cherokee Freedmen (descendants of enslaved African Americans). It also included language recognizing gender as nonbinary—a first for the court. It was a landmark moment for equality, one that Baker hopes to build on later this year when she becomes both the first 2SLGBTQ+ and first woman chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Cherokee Nation. “My visibility is important,” she says. “It creates space for the people behind me.”

—D.H. • Portrait by Adam Murray
TARIKA BARRETT (STEINHARDT ’10)  
PhD in Teaching and Learning

ENABLING GIRLS TO GET WITH THE PROGRAMMING

“Knowledge is power” isn’t just a feel-good phrase to Tarika Barrett. Her Jamaican grandmother, who was forced to leave school in the sixth grade, taught her kids that education transforms lives. Upon graduating from the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, Barrett landed at the NYC Department of Education. She worked tenaciously to place STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) coursework within reach of low-income students of color.

“I want to change the way STEM education looks,” Barrett says, which explains her historic appointment as the first Black woman CEO of Girls Who Code—a nonprofit striving to shrink the gender gap in tech. Barrett took the reins in 2021, when the pandemic was exposing stark inequities for underserved students. She quickly reimagined the organization’s structure: she introduced hybrid classes, recruited new student populations, and spearheaded efforts to connect learners and employers in virtual spaces.

The results have been extraordinary. Girls Who Code’s Summer Immersion Program saw a 50 percent increase, and the organization has now served approximately 500,000 students. Hybrid class models have expanded geographic diversity, and hiring summits have led to thousands of internships and jobs—many for girls from historically underrepresented groups. And Barrett, who was named one of Crain’s 50 Most Powerful Women in New York, says the organization she oversees is just getting started. “The real objective,” she says, “is to disrupt the status quo.”

—D.H. • PORTRAIT BY ROBERT NETHERY
WOLE COAXUM (STERN ’96)
MBA in Finance

BANKING ON PEOPLE OF COLOR

Although he comes from a long line of activists, Wole Coaxum’s career in finance didn’t intersect with the work of upending inequity. But in 2014, when unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown was shot fatally by police in Ferguson, Missouri, “I knew I had to do something,” he says.

A graduate of the Stern School of Business, Coaxum was thriving professionally working on Wall Street. “I wanted to reimagine change through my unique perspective,” he says. He realized that the deep social justice roots of the Black community lacked an economic component. He decided he wanted to build a scaffolding for communities of color to participate in a system that rewards the already-wealthy.

In 2015, he risked his career to found Mobility Capital Finance (MoCaFi), a financial technology company whose mobile platform provides access to banking services, credit-building tools, and aid programs for tens of millions of Americans locked out of traditional banking institutions.

Launching MoCaFi was anything but easy. “Investors tend to pattern match,” Coaxum says, “and there was no pre-existing model here.” But his gambit—aided by the networks he began developing at NYU—has paid major dividends. MoCaFi has attracted more than 70,000 users and has been pivotal in distributing more than $50 million in emergency pandemic relief to underserved communities. MoCaFi and its CEO founder have been showcased in such major outlets as Barron’s, Bloomberg.com, CNBC, Forbes, Fortune, Inc., and the New York Times. “The goal,” Coaxum says, “is to build something that will outlast me.”

—D. H. • PORTRAIT BY R. N.
CHANDANA BANERJEE (WAG ’03)
MPA in Health Policy and Management
IMPROVING END-OF-LIFE LIVING

Working with vulnerable populations was always Chandana Banerjee’s dream; it’s what inspired her to take a position at a managed care company following her graduation from the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. But her father’s unexpected death following a simple hernia surgery turned her world upside down. “What bothered me most,” she says, “was how he died—confused and disoriented and probably uncomfortable.” Banerjee realized that people near life’s end had no allies in the medical world. “The prevailing attitude,” she says, “is that once a prognosis of death is given, medical care is over.”

Driven to fill this void, Banerjee dropped everything in order to pursue a medical degree, focusing on the often neglected area of palliative care. With clinical degree and residency experience in hand, Banerjee joined the staff of City of Hope in Duarte, California, just outside Los Angeles. She’s now dean of graduate medical education at the world-renowned cancer institute.

Banerjee set to work empowering doctors and patients to make informed, compassionate decisions during life’s final stage. She created a palliative medicine fellowship and guided policy that supports patient control over end-of-life decisions, including the choice to die. She also established an End of Life Symposium that has already trained more than 15,000 physicians. Banerjee has been widely recognized as an advocate and thought leader in end-of-life care, but she’s eyeing bigger goals. “We need permanent, structural change in medical training,” she says, “and a focus on the entire circle of life and death.”

—D.H. • PORTRAIT BY SIMONS FINNERTY
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PAST IS PROLOGUE

In 1821, this country’s first Black theater outgrew its original home in the backyard of 38 Thompson Street in Lower Manhattan. Its founder, William Alexander Brown, relocated the action to a 300-seat venue on Mercer and Bleecker streets in Greenwich Village. Patrons paid a quarter (twice that for the better seats) to watch the African Grove Theatre’s productions of William Shakespeare’s classics as well as operas (above, right), musicals, farces, pantomimes, ballets, and more, including original works by Brown. The company’s principal player, James Hewlett, inhabited a multitude of parts, including the titular role in Richard III (illustrated above), and in so doing became the first renowned Black American Shakespearean actor. Yet another member, Ira Aldridge, later went on to enjoy a thriving career abroad as a celebrated thespian of the Bard’s repertoire.

Sadly, offstage drama overshadowed the glorious art that was happening onstage. Hostility from curious White spectators—and resentment from a nearby White-owned theater—resulted in repeated police raids and ugly harassment. The curtain tragically came down seemingly permanently on the African Grove Theatre in 1823.

But who doesn’t love a second act? Two centuries on, the groundbreaking theater is set to experience a long-overdue revival. A performance space of the same name and built on the original’s footprint will open this year at NYU’s new John A. Paulson Center, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor (to read about other recent gifts to the university, see page 31). Students enrolled in the Grad Acting and Design for Stage and Film programs at the Tisch School of the Arts will perform there, with more usage and programming to be determined. The African Grove Theatre redux will serve multiple functions, but undoubtedly its starring role will be to serve as a living memorial to a transformational achievement in the nation’s Black history. —DULCY ISRAEL
1940s

MARTIN NASS (GSAS ’49, ’54) is on the teaching faculty of Arts and Science, is professor emeritus at Brooklyn College, and is a faculty, training, and supervisory analyst of the Contemporary Freudian Society.

1950s

HARRY EZRATTY (WSC ’54) wrote the novel Searching for Solomon Henquines and teaches Jewish history at the Community College of Baltimore County. MARTIN C. TAYLOR (WSC ’54) was nominated to the Honorary Board of Trustees of the Gabriela Mistral Foundation of New York. THOMAS J. RUSSO (TANDON ’57) represented NYU—at Andrew Hamilton’s request—at the inauguration of John N. McKeegan as president of Mount Aloysius College.

1960s

JANET KAPLAN LOOK (ARTS ’64) was named a Distinguished Psychologist by the Washington State Psychological Association. BARNEY POPKIN (WSC ’64) wrote the article “Liberian Geology and Water Resources” for the Professional Geologist. IRVING M. ADLER (WSC ’65) wrote the memoir Then and Now. STEVEN ALLAN RIESS (ARTS ’68) retired from the history department of Northeastern Illinois University and was awarded the Guy Lewis Award by the North American Society for Sport History. VIRAHT SAHNI (TANDON ’68, ’72) wrote the book Schrödinger Theory of Electrons. FREDERICK GOLDER (LAW ’69) wrote the book Reaching Common Ground. BERTRAM SPECTOR (ARTS ’69, GSAS ’72, ’76) wrote the books The Dynamics of International Negotiation and Curbing Corruption.

1970s

PATRICK GALLO (GSAS ’71) wrote the book The Nazis, the Vatican, and the Jews of Rome. THADDEUS BARNAS (TANDON ’72, ’75) was awarded a Doctorate of Science in civil security leadership, management, and policy from New Jersey City University College of Professional Studies. STEPHANIE AZZARONE (WSUC ’74) wrote the book Heaven on the Hudson. BEN GEIZHALS (LAW ’74) was recognized by Best Lawyers in America. NANCY KRASA (GSAS ’76) and COLLEEN (USCIANOWSKI) MAAS (CAS ’06) wrote the book How Children Learn Math. MARC LEEDS (GSAS ’78) was recognized as one of the founders of the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library in Indianapolis and wrote the book The Vonnegut Encyclopedia. TOM NOLAN JR. (STEINHARDT ’79) was promoted to full professor of physical therapy at Stockton University. NOEMÍ FIGUEROA SOULET (STEINHARDT ’79) wrote the book The Borinqueneers, a follow-up to her PBS documentary of the same name.

1980s

ELLIN YASSKY (STEINHARDT ’81, ’86) wrote the book 50 of Tel Aviv’s Most Intriguing Streets. TOM DUNKEL (GSAS ’82) wrote the book White Knights in the Black Orchestra. CATHY LESSER MANSFIELD (WSUC ’82) wrote the opera The Sparks Fly Upward, performed at the Maltz Performing Arts Center in Cleveland. IRIS DORBIAN (WSUC ’83) was a featured speaker at the Business of Cannabis New York summit hosted by the New York Academy of Medicine, and she writes for Buyouts magazine.

JUDITH A. FERRY (GSM ’83) wrote the novel Parallel Lives. TONI ANN JOHNSON (TSOA ’83) won the Flannery O’Connor Award for her short story collection Light Skin Gone to Waste and performed the play The Way We Fell Out of Touch at the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts. MADELEINE HSU FORTE (STEINHARDT ’84) produced the piano music CDs Hungarian Program Live and Historic Live Performance 1980. JEFFREY COUSINS (STERN ’85) wrote the novel The Right Thing to Do. JIM WILLARD (TANDON ’85) oversees the information technology infrastructure of NTT Data’s National Life Group. MATT FRIEDMAN (STEINHARDT ’86) wrote the book Where Were You? ALBERTO MOREIRA (TANDON ’87) directed the film Heavy Vibes, a documentary about composer Vince Montana, screened at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival. ERIC DEVER (STEINHARDT ’88) had his paintings exhibited at the Berry Campbell Gallery in the show Eric Dever: To Look at Things in Bloom. JANE DUBIN (STERN ’88) was honored by Houses on the Moon Theater Company at their Amplify gala for her Tony Award–winning career. ADAM BRECHT (WSUC ’89) won a Gay City News Impact Award. BILL PACKER (WSUC ’89) is the COO of Longbridge Financial. PAOLO SCATTARREGGIA (STERN ’89) wrote the book Il Grido di Battaglia.

1990s

TIFFANI BELL (SPS ’90, WSUC ’92) joined the Board of Directors for Leadership Sandy Springs. CHRISTINE M. ALEXANDER-GREENE (WSUC ’91) completed the Doctor of Science degree in occupational science at Towson University. SETH FLAUM (STERN ’91) joined Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati as a partner in the firm’s New York office. MATTHEW FASCIANO (WSUC ’92, SSSW ’96) was named president and CEO of the national nonprofit Delivering Good. SARA I. JAMES (GSAS ’92) wrote the book Radical Reporting. ANTHONY ROMANO (STEINHARDT ’92) was named CEO of Laughlin Constable. MARCIA ZORRILLA (STEINHARDT ’92) is the director of Positive Youth Development at the Stanford University School of Medicine and the project director of the Speak-Up Research Study. KAREN-CHERIE COGANE (STEINHARDT ’93) was inducted into Marquis Who’s Who for career achievements in the arts. PAUL VISKANTA (GSAS ’93) received a Doctor of Education from the University of Denver. JOSEPH DI SALVO (WSUC ’94) directed the documentary Bronx Socrates celebrating the work of retired NYU philosophy professor Bob Gurland. ALEX KARVOUNIS (TANDON ’94) was recognized by the Community College Public Relations Organization for his creative work on behalf of MiraCosta College. ZEV KAUFMAN (DEN ’94, ’97, ’99) coauthored an article in the Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry. TIM CUMMINGS (TSOA ’95) wrote the novel Alice the Cat and teaches writing for UCLA Extension. SCOTT STEIN (GSAS ’95) wrote the novel The Great American Betrayal, named one of the year’s best comedy books by Vulture.com. GENE BOXER (STERN ’96) was appointed general counsel and corporate secretary of CoStar Group. LORN DAVIS (STERN ’96) is now chair of the Board of Directors of the homeless services organization Pine Street Inn. DAVID HANNA (STEINHARDT ’96) wrote the book Broken Icarus and teaches social studies at Stuyvesant High School. CAROL CABEZAS (STERN ’97) was named president of the cruise line Azamara. KATHLEEN AULDWORTH (SCHUCK) FOSTER (CAS ’97) wrote the novel Doneraile Court. SONAL LOOMBA PATNEY (CAS ’97) consulted for BG Media Lab and is a member of several international finance professional organizations. RISA (YANAGISAWA) WILLIAMS (TANDON ’97, ’98) wrote the book The Ultimate Time Management Toolkit. ALYSSA BRANTLEY (CAS ’98) wrote the cookbook The “I Don’t Want to Cook” Book. MARISA SANTORO (CIMS ’98) wrote the book Own Your Authority. CHRISTOPHER FIKRY (CAS ’99) was named CEO of Clario. DINA HAMERMAN (CAS ’99) was named to Best Lawyers in America.
2000s

VICTORIA HERNANDEZ (WAG ’00) is the chief development officer at the Urban Resource Institute. KEVIN RYAN (LAW ’00) announced his impending retirement in 2023 from Covenant House, where he’s been president and CEO since 2009. BRIAN (CAS ’01) AND KATIE CLARK (CAS ’00) met at the College of Arts and Science and recently celebrated 20 years of marriage! They also share three sons. LISA FEATHERSON (CAS ’02) is now chief people and development officer at Norton Rose Fulbright. JENNIFER RAVALLI (STEINHARDT ’02) is now chief marketing officer for Harri. JESSICA KANTOR (GAL ’03) produced the documentary Be Water, My Friend: The Teachings of Bruce Lee, dedicated to Lee’s philosophy. It opened at the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle in partnership with the Bruce Lee Foundation. JEN MOULTON (SPS ’03, STEINHARDT ’05) won the Harriet Copher Haynes Award from the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors. JAKE FRIEDMAN (TSAO ’04) wrote the book The Disney Revolt. KIRAN NASIR GORE (SPS ’04, GAL ’06) cowrote and coedited the book The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties in Investor-State Disputes. EMILY MARKER (CAS ’04) wrote the book Black France, White Europe. TRACY UDELL ZEMBA (LAW ’04) is now chief equal employment opportunity officer at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. ARIELLA LAUREN COHEN (TSAO ’05) wrote the poetry chapbook It Whispers. HARISH DAVE (STERN ’06) cofounded AUM Biosciences and announced a definitive business combination agreement with Mountain Crest Acquisition Corp. V. WILL ROBALINO (STERN ’06) is now chief financial and administrative officer of Little Kids Rock. LAUREN HILGER (CAS ’07) was selected for the Possession Sound Reading Series from Poetry NW Editions for her collection of poems Morality Play. DANIEL MENELY (GSAS ’07, STEINHARDT ’18) is a writing professor at the Tisch School of the Arts, is a psychotherapist in private practice, and runs an admissions essay editing business. CHAIM THEIL (LAW ’07) was elected partner at Sidley Austin LLP. SYLVIA LOUIE (STERN ’09) was selected for the Clean Energy Education & Empowerment C3E Government Award.

2010s

DYLAN LAMB (TSAO ’10) was promoted to president and creative director of Bullseye Media. ALAKE PILGRIM (GSAS ’10) wrote the children’s book Zo and the Forest of Secrets. ROSS IOSEFSON (STEINHARDT ’11) was appointed program specialist with the Library of Congress’s Integrated Support Services Directorate. SHAHIDA ARABI (CAS ’12) published a research study on narcissistic and psychopathic personality traits in the journal Personality and Individual Differences and sold the foreign rights to her book The Highly Sensitive Person’s Guide to Dealing with Toxic People. JEAN PAUL BETANCOURT (TSAO ’12) founded Studio Betancourt. ROCHELLE JACKSON-SMARR (STEINHARDT ’12) was the recipient of the LEAD California Richard E. Cone Award for Emerging Leaders in Community Engagement. ALEXA WHITESIDE (TSAO ’12) was recognized for her work as an entertainment attorney in Variety’s Legal Impact Report. CHARLES FRELIGH (GSAS ’13) wrote the book The Will to Do Nothing. SHOMIK GHOSH (CAS ’13) is now partner at Spiro Harrison. DAVID SCHIFF (LAW ’13) is now partner at Davis Polk. JENNY XIE (GSAS ’13) wrote the book of poetry The Rupture Tense, which was longlisted for the National Book Award. JESSICA HONG (IFA ’14) is the curator of modern and contemporary art at the Toledo Museum of Art and was named one of the city’s 20 Under 40 citizens. RINA MADHANI (LS ’14) is the cofounder and executive director of Start Lighthouse, a nonprofit dedicated to narrowing the nation’s literacy gap by building equitable and inclusive literacy experiences for children and their families. For this work, she was named to L’Oréal Paris’s Women of Worth list. CHRISTOPHER NAINR-KIM (LAW ’14) is now partner at Davis Polk. MARIAMA BAH (STEINHARDT ’15, GPH ’21) wrote the book Free and Whole. SUMIT DAHAL (NYUAD ’15) is an experimental astrophysicist and postdoctoral fellow at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD, and was named to Forbes’ 30 Under 30 Asia Healthcare and Science list. BLAKE PRUITT (TSAO ’15) was the apprentice editor on the Searchlight Pictures feature film Fire Island, edited by BRIAN KATES (TSAO ’94) and starring fellow alumni BOWEN YANG (TSAO ’12) and MATT ROGERS (TSAO ’12). COURTNEY RIZZO (STERN ’15) is a political appointee in the Biden–Harris administration and is now senior advisor for operations at the United States Office of Personnel Management. KAITLIN VANDERHOFF (SSSW ’15) is a private practice therapist working with youth and adults dealing with mental health issues. ELIZABETH WILKERSON (LAW ’15) is now a trial attorney at Reynolds Frizzell LLP. AILIN TOMIO (GSAS ’16) is a behavioral scientist at the Mind, Behavior, and Development Unit of the World Bank. TARA (MUOIO) HOLZER (STEINHARDT ’17) and STEVEN HOLZER (STEINHARDT ’18) were married by fellow alumnus JACK BANDARENKO (STEINHARDT ’17) at the Queens Botanical Garden. JOANNA MARGARET (GSAS ’19) wrote the novel The Bequest.

2020s

SCOTT GREENBERG (GAL ’21) created the scripted limited series podcast The Seriously Funny Music Podcast. JAKE SCHICK (TSAO ’21) performed at the New York Comedy Festival and told a story at an event at the Bell House in Brooklyn hosted by the Moth. STANISLAV E. SHMELEV (STERN ’21) was named one of the most promising young economists in the world by the Institute for New Economic Thinking and the Handelsblatt newspaper. JESSICA CHEW (SPS ’22) created the nonprofit the Helen and Joe Chew Foundation, which promotes higher education for students in Red Bluff, CA.
### IN MEMORIAM

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Carrying the Torch

VISIONARY DONORS EMPOWERING NYU TO FULFILL ITS GOAL OF TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

THE BENEFACITOR

Norma Tarrow

THE RECIPIENT

Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

THE GIFT

Back in 1969, Norma Tarrow (STEINHARDT ’69) missed her hooding ceremony—a doctoral student rite of passage that denotes scholarly and academic achievement.

Now retired, Tarrow’s stellar career included two Fulbright scholarships and visiting professorships at universities in England, Spain, Israel, and Mexico. And in May 2019—50 years after her missed graduation—she commemorated the degree that changed her life by walking through Washington Square Park to the Skirball Center with 102 other Steinhardt doctoral graduates to be hooded.

“NYU unlocked my potential and changed my life. By changing my life, NYU changed three generations of my family, all of us university-educated.”

In honor of her 90th birthday, Tarrow funded an eponymous scholarship for other students of comparative and international education. Her advice to graduates: “Hopefully the foundation you have received at NYU will allow and encourage you to impact and enhance the lives of children in your community, your state, your country—and in the far distant corners of the world.”

THE BENEFACTORS

Paul and Joan Gluck

THE RECIPIENT

Grossman School of Medicine

THE GIFT

Joan (GSM ’72) and I met in 1968 when we were both first-year students at what is now the Grossman School of Medicine (GSM). We recently celebrated our 51st anniversary. Before retiring, I was an ob-gyn and Joan was an allergist and immunologist.

When we were students, not many medical schools were as progressive when it came to admitting women. One Ivy League school told Joan that they had already met their quota of women students for that class (five!). We might never have met if NYU’s medical school wasn’t an inclusive place.

We’re both proud that our school has strengthened its commitment to providing a world-class medical education to underrepresented groups with initiatives like full-tuition scholarships for all students. When it came time to think about our estate planning, we decided to work with the GSM’s planned giving experts in order to arrange a gift that made sense for us. We learned that a charitable remainder unitrust could benefit us today, while establishing a legacy that upholds our values and will contribute to the future excellence of NYU. —Paul Gluck (GSM ’72)

THE BENEFACCTOR

DeepMind Technologies

THE RECIPIENT

Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences

THE GIFT

Support from DeepMind helped to create the Pathways to AI initiative at Courant, a six-week summer program that provides students with the skills needed to get involved in artificial intelligence research. Pathways to AI aims to find the next generation of researchers by expanding the field to include those historically underrepresented in the sciences. As a result of the gift, in summer 2022, 10 undergraduates learned about AI from leading minds in this innovative field. “The Courant Institute is tremendously grateful to DeepMind for their generous support, both financial and scientific, of the Pathways to AI program,” says Russel Caflisch, director of the Courant Institute. “This support is enabling us to bring a cohort of talented and diverse students to Courant to work on exciting research projects in AI.”
True to its name, this program recognizes graduates who offer hope of a better future to vulnerable, disenfranchised, and underserved communities through their work. You and the Alumni Association Board of Directors select the nominees. Our Profiles section (pages 21 to 25) showcases five of these impressive individuals, and here we shine a spotlight on the others in this heroic cohort. To learn more about their remarkable endeavors, please visit alumni.nyu.edu/changemakers.

**WEMIMO ABBEY** (WAG ’15) and **SAMIR GOEL** (STERN ’16)

are the cofounders of Esusu, a financial equity platform that leverages technology to report automatically residents’ on-time rent payments to the three major credit bureaus. Tenants build and improve their credit score, which in turn enables them to qualify for lower interest rates on mortgages and a host of loans.

**JOAN FUREY** (MEYERS ’76)

is a retired US Army nurse who established the Center for Women Veterans. She also won the Veterans Affairs Distinguished Career Award.

**ERIC GOLDSTEIN** (LAW ’80)

is a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council and spearheaded the nationwide public campaign to eliminate lead from gasoline.


was an engineer and pioneering Silicon Valley venture capitalist whose firm helped get more than 300 tech companies funded.

**MELISSA KUSHNER** (WAG ’06)

founded Yamba Malawi, which helps Malawian communities break the cycle of poverty through childhood well-being and financial management education.

**HINDA MILLER** (TSOA ’76) and **POLLY SMITH** (TSOA ’75)

used the skills they honed as stage design students to invent the first sports bra—arguably changing the future of women’s athletics. Jogbra became a global, multibillion-dollar enterprise and an icon: the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History acquired portions of the company’s sports bra–related archival materials.

**MAURA O’MALLEY** (WAG ’82)

cofounded Lifetime Arts, which helps older adults build communities, fight isolation, and—perhaps most importantly—express themselves through art.
Established by students, run by students, benefiting students. That's how the organization named in honor of this university's year of founding works. Donations—including an option to give exactly $18.31—fund scholarships for incoming freshmen and transfer students, regardless of country of origin and/or documentation status, with all the money raised going directly to financial aid. A former member of the 1831 Fund committee, alumnus Quemuel "Q" Arroyo (CAS '12, WAG '20) is now the New York City Department of Transportation's first-ever chief accessibility officer. He's celebrating the 1831 Fund's 10-year anniversary with a gift because, as he says, "I give back because I got so much during my time on campus." To make a donation, visit giving.nyu.edu/1831-fund.

—PORTRAIT BY JOEL GRIFFITH
SUMMER SCHOOL

Tisch School of the Arts professor Spike Lee (TSOA ’82, HON ’98; shown here, middle) screened his hit 1999 movie *Summer of Sam* with star John Leguizamo (TSOA, right) and cowriter Michael Imperioli (left) for his graduate film students. Set in 1977, the movie captured the chaos and tension as serial killer David Berkowitz terrorized New York City. “One Of My Favorite Joints And It Still STANDS UP 23 Years After Its Release Into Movie Theaters,” Lee posted on his Instagram @officialspikelee, followed by fire emojis. Couldn’t agree more.