

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Surviving a Pandemic, Six Months Out

AUDREY GOLDFARB

“How are you?” is more of a formality than a genuine question. Any response other than a variation of “Good! How’re you?” is unexpected. I personally find maintaining a façade of blue skies to be emotionally draining, so I tend to answer the “how are you?” question honestly when I’m actually not okay. However, for the last several months, can any of us claim to have been okay at baseline? And if the answer is no, are we admitting it?

I anonymously polled Rockefeller community members to gauge our well-being more accurately, as well as to give people an opportunity to outwardly acknowledge that they are indeed struggling. The responses were mixed, some reading as guarded and stoic, others raw and vulnerable. Individual experiences are also variable. I hope that sharing some of these experiences reinforces a sense of community around our mutual tumult and reminds us all that it’s okay to not be okay. “There are days of dread and fear, and others of hope,” one Rockefeller employee said.

Productivity and mental health have a complicated relationship, but often they suffer together. Our work life was severely disrupted during quarantine, and even though campus has reopened, it is a far cry from how it looked and felt in February. Shift work also puts limits on the time we can spend in the lab.

“Working from home is not efficient and productive for me,” one student said. “It’s harder for me to be focused on working at home because home really doesn’t give me the environment of working. And of course, I cannot go to the lab to do experiments so very little progress on research. Honestly speaking, I feel frustrated spending months at home getting limited things done.”

Zoom makes lectures accessible from anywhere but staring at a screen all day



*The seating area outside Bass remains largely deserted as students and employees refrain from gathering for meals and socialization.*

takes a toll. Many of us struggle to achieve the same level of engagement they have during in-person lectures. “I can’t focus during Zoom classes or meetings, most of what was said in them has been erased from my memory,” a student said.

“I am much less productive, and much less able to focus,” another student said.

“It’s hard trying to work at home especially since before this I’ve always tried really hard to separate work and home spaces,” another student said. “I’ve just resigned myself to not being at the ‘height of productivity.’ Right now, I’m rethinking my approach to lab work and trying to put my personal well-being much more ahead of lab productivity.”

With no end in sight, the many concerns we obsess over remain unresolved.

“The uncertainty of when everything will go back to normal, when will we go back to lab, when can we travel to see our families, when can people who are stuck somewhere in the world will be able to go out, when can we all feel safe again so I don’t have fear if a family member gets sick.”

“So far it seems like we are all learning about this virus day-by-day, with no clear end in sight.”

“Personally, I just keep reminding myself that this won’t last forever. It won’t go away tomorrow, but it’s not going to be like this for the next decade.”

Social distancing made it impossible to fully lean on friends and family for support. Our social lives were hit hard. “I’ve

AUDREY GOLDFARB | NATURAL SELECTIONS

CONTINUED TO P. 2

forgotten how to interact with people,” one student said. “I particularly noticed that I’m having difficulty looking at other people’s faces and maintaining eye contact in person, and that I’ve forgotten how to end conversations.”

We have been deprived of many of our coping mechanisms, socialization in particular, but also other escapes and entertainment around the city. Without space away from our internal and external conflicts, they become even more exhausting and tormenting. “It is my anxiety about racial conflicts on top of the usual pandemic issues that really keeps me up at night,” one international student said.

“Everyone has their special circumstances that have made dealing with this pandemic difficult,” a student, whose family member started chemotherapy in February, said. “For me it was concern about

immunocompromised family members and social isolation leading to an almost agoraphobia due to lack of access to the outside... The existential dread was really able to set in!”

“I think in general we also need to talk more about how hard this has been without trying to one-up each other about who’s had it the hardest,” another student said.

The gradual reopening of campus and resumption of lab work comes with an expectation of personal productivity and functionality. Some might interpret this to mean that we should be adjusting to and coping with this “new normal,” refocusing on our work, and getting back on track. However, as reflected in the statements above, not everyone’s timeline is in sync.

A member of the Tri-Institutional community put it simply. “No one is okay,” he said. “We’re living through a global pandemic. Anyone who tells you they are okay is lying to themselves.” ■

# Natural Selections

Editorial Board

**Megan Elizabeth Kelley**

*Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor, Webmaster, Communication, Designer*

**Emma Garst**

*Associate Editor*

**Anna Amelianchik**

*Associate Editor*

**Nicole Infarinato**

*Editorial Assistant, Copy Editor, Distribution*

**Evan Davis**

*Copy Editor, Photographer-in-Residence*

**Melissa Jarmel**

*Copy Editor, Website Traffic*

**Pooja Viswanathan**

*Copy Editor, Website Design*

**Audrey Goldfarb**

**Jennifer Einstein**

*Copy Editors*

**Jim Keller**

*Editor-at-Large*

**Nan Pang**

*Designer*

[selections.rockefeller.edu](http://selections.rockefeller.edu)  
[nseditors@rockefeller.edu](mailto:nseditors@rockefeller.edu)

## New York Rhymes QUITE QUIET

KONSTANTINA THEOFANOPOULOU

### QUITE QUIET

I guess I’ve started this poem a thousand times.  
It’s about feminism but I don’t want it to sound like it quite.

But the alternative is quietness, quieter  
and quieter still.

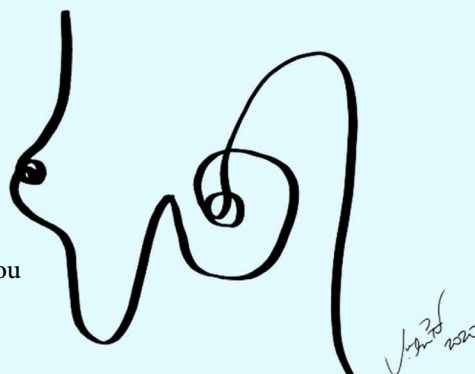
It’s not about shoulds and musts or needs to,

It’s just that I’m wondering

Why do we still need to cover them with hair  
when they are visible?

Our nipples

*By* Konstantina



Poetry: Dr. Konstantina Theofanopoulou

(instagram: @newyork\_rhymes)

One line art: Mikaella Theofanopoulou

(instagram: @m\_theta\_art)

## Natural Expressions

### Digital

Bernie Langs of The Rockefeller University Development Office is celebrating the digital release of “The Show Must Go On (and other songs by Queen).” Langs performs a medley of themes and sections from Queen songs, centered around Queen’s release, “The Show Must Go On” off their 1991 album *Innuendo*. Langs’ work can be heard online on his SoundCloud page [here](#).

Email Megan E. Kelley at [mkelley@rockefeller.edu](mailto:mkelley@rockefeller.edu) to submit your art/music/performance/sporting/other event for next month’s “Natural Expressions” and follow [@NatSelections](#) on Twitter for more events. Digital and online events/releases are welcome!

# Who is Anthony Fauci?

AILEEN MARSHALL



Courtesy of NIAID

*"Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., was appointed Director of NIAID in 1984. He oversees an extensive research portfolio of basic and applied research to prevent, diagnose, and treat established infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, tuberculosis and malaria as well as emerging diseases such as Ebola and Zika."*

We have all seen Dr. Anthony Fauci, currently the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), on television providing facts about the COVID-19 pandemic in recent months. It was a long road to this critical position, but Fauci's path may be somewhat familiar to many people here in the Tri-Institutional community.

Dr. Fauci is a native New Yorker. He was born in December of 1940, and grew up in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. His father was a pharmacist with his own store on 13th Avenue near 83rd Street. As a boy, Fauci worked in the pharmacy, ringing up customers and delivering prescriptions, and lived upstairs with his parents and two sisters. As a teenager, Fauci attended Regis High School on East 84th Street in Manhattan. Athletic from an early age, Fauci was captain of the basketball team, even though he was not particularly tall. He later attended College of the Holy Cross in Worcester and earned a degree in Classics with a pre-med concentration. Fauci went on to Cornell University Medical College, where

he graduated first in his class. He completed his internship and residency right here at New York Hospital-Cornell.

In 1968, Fauci joined the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Laboratory of Clinical Investigation, where he became a specialist in infectious diseases. Fauci mostly treated patients with autoimmune disorders and observed that many cancer drugs lowered a patient's autoimmune response. He devised a protocol to give autoimmune patients very low doses of the cancer drugs, which lowered their autoimmune response to a point that prevented them from getting symptoms. This protocol is now a standard treatment for a category of diseases called vasculitis, which cause inflammation of blood vessels.

Fauci also performed basic research in the NIH Laboratory of Immunoregulation. In 1980 he became head of that lab and examined how immunosuppressive drugs change the human immune response. He also studied how HIV infects the body, particularly how the virus suppresses the immune system. In 1984, Fauci accepted the position of Director of the NIAID, under the condition that he be allowed to keep his research lab. He has served in both positions ever since. From 1983 to 1986, Deborah Birs, the United States Global AIDS Coordinator and Fauci's recent counterpart in COVID-19 press conferences, completed two fellowships in clinical immunology in the areas of allergies and diagnostics in Fauci's lab.

Fauci has published over 1,300 papers, is the 41st most cited researcher on Google Scholar, and ranks 4th in immunology on [Web of Science](#). He has received many awards, including the Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research, the Mary Woodward Lasker Award for Public Service, the National Medal of Science, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

During the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, Fauci came under much [criticism from AIDS activists](#) who claimed he was withholding experimental treatments from patients. Fauci invited his most vocal critic, Larry Kramer, to his office to learn what the AIDS community needed and to build a relationship with them. He wound up becoming a leading activist himself, creating protocols for patients to receive drugs still in trials and pushing Congress for funding for AIDS research. In the end, Fauci received public praise from Kramer. Under George W. Bush, Fauci helped develop the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS (PEPFAR), which facilitated alleviating the AIDS pandemic in Africa.

After the September 11th attacks, Fauci

established an NIH lab to study potential biological agents terrorists might use. He was the government lead, working with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), during the anthrax scares, the West Nile, Zika, and Ebola virus outbreaks, the 2002 SARS epidemic, and the swine flu pandemic. In January of 2020, he recognized that COVID-19 would be a global threat and started an NIH research team to develop a vaccine.

On January 29, 2020, a White House Coronavirus Task Force was formed, with Fauci being among the initial members. He appeared regularly during the frequent press briefings that were held during the first couple of months of the pandemic. He quickly gained a reputation for speaking to the public calmly but factually, and often delivered updates on new scientific understandings of the disease. He is often heard asking for compliance with regulations and recommendations to slow the spread of the virus, including to stay home whenever possible, to social distance and wear masks, and to wash your hands frequently. On July 31, he testified before Congress saying he was "cautiously optimistic" a COVID-19 vaccine would be ready by the end of the year.

Fauci often tactfully fact-checks statements from politicians about the virus. Some have accused him of changing his mind about the virus and of destroying the economy. It's been noted that Fauci did not appear at the later task force press conferences and reported that he is not invited to task force meetings. At one point the current president [seemed to offer support for his firing](#). The head of NIH, Francis Collins, has said firing Fauci "would be unimaginable." Fauci has received death threats against him and his family, and had to get a Secret Service detail. Asked if he would resign due to the politics he said "No. I think the problem is too important for me to get into those kinds of thoughts and discussions. I just want to do my job."

Even though he is known for having sixteen hour work days, Fauci stays athletic, running seven miles during his lunch hour for almost his entire career. Recently, due to his extra responsibilities during the pandemic, he has cut the run down to three and a half miles. An avid Washington Nationals fan, he threw out the ceremonial first pitch at their home opener on July 23. Now he often appears wearing a face mask with the team's logo.

Fauci has had a long and distinguished career in the areas of basic research, medicine, and developing government healthcare policies. Although he will turn eighty this December, he shows no signs of slowing down. ■



## The Vigil at Carl Schurz Park

AUDREY GOLDFARB

Every night at 7 p.m., Upper East Side community members gather at Carl Schurz park for a socially distant vigil to honor those killed by police. The discussion is led by various volunteers from the community, with time allotted at the end for anybody in attendance to speak. These short speeches might be political news updates, calls to action, personal experiences, or history lessons. One action remains the same each night: we raise our fists in silence for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, the time it took George Floyd to die under the knee of Derek Chauvin.

The memorial pictured has been rebuilt by the organizers several times after being vandalized. Whitney, one of the organizers, recalls finding the memorial covered in dog feces one day. Another morning, parks department employees had thrown it all away. Fortunately, each time the memorial has been destroyed, community members have replaced the posters and artwork in time for the vigil at 7 p.m.

Rebuilding the memorial is one manifestation of how this community has come together to contribute to the Black Lives Matter movement. This support is also apparent in donations of hand sanitizer, masks, and provisions for people marching afterwards. Some people bring candles and signs to distribute throughout the crowd.

The vigil is a supportive environment for community members to voice their experiences and share information. However, there are moments of tension and sometimes hostility. On one occasion, a Blue Lives Matter gathering was held in the street, blocked



off by gates fifty feet from the vigil. Police officers mingled with men, women, and children, the majority of whom were not wearing masks. Confrontations between the two groups across the gates permeated the moment of silence and speeches that followed.

Another night, one of the speakers misjudged the crowd's tolerance of more moderate political views. He began by voicing his fondness of Joe Biden and went on to say that the killing of George Floyd was wrong, however, Floyd "did not have the best track record with the law." This speaker was aggressively booed, and the organizers directed him to return to his seat. He was replaced by a Black woman who delivered an impassioned speech in which she compared the treatment of George Floyd to that of Dylann Roof, who after slaughtering nine people in a historic Black church in South Carolina, [was given a burger](#) by the officers who arrested him.

Despite moments of intensity and passion, the vigil has been notably non-violent and respectful. Even the man who mentioned George Floyd's track record re-



mained in the crowd afterwards and was not harassed.

The organizers of the vigil can be contacted at [ues4blm@gmail.com](mailto:ues4blm@gmail.com). All are welcome at 7 p.m. on 86th Street and East End Avenue every night to stand in solidarity for Black lives. ■

## Culture Corner

### *Giants of Classic Films: The Exceptional Mind Trapped in a World of Their Own Creation*

BERNIE LANGS

The misunderstood great mind standing firm and alone with their vision, genius, or obsession has long been a theme in film history. Many of the genre's greatest masterpieces center around such figures and feature actors of legendary stature performing under the guidance of directors of equally singular talent.

In director John Huston's 1956 take on Herman Melville's nineteenth century classic novel, *Moby Dick*, the one-legged Captain Ahab, played by Gregory Peck, doesn't appear to his crew until many days after the whaling boat has set out to sea. He can be heard late at night as the men sleep below deck, pacing and pounding the boards with the carved peg of a whale bone that substitutes for the leg severed by the white whale, Moby Dick. When Ahab finally appears in daylight, gazing out at them from above on the bridge, the sailors freeze into a state of motionless, silent awe. Ahab's subsequent speech morphs into an initiation of these starstruck men on the obsessive quest for their captain's revenge for the loss of his limb and the tearing of his soul—a mission to slay the whale and right the wrong brought upon Ahab, a man of mesmerizing power.

It's challenging to fully understand the absolute grip Ahab holds over his crew. They possess an unquestioned loyalty so terrific that they follow his mad pursuit to their deaths, "save ye one," the lone narrator, Ishmael (Richard Basehart). It is in Ahab's seemingly more rational conversation that we are brought deeper into the unique mind behind the stark madness, as he makes clear his motivating, defeatist theology while conversing with his pious first first mate, Starbuck (Leo Genn):

*Starbuck:* To be enraged with a dumb brute that acted out of blind instinct is blasphemous.

*Captain Ahab:* Speak not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. Look ye, Starbuck, all visible objects are but as pasteboard masks. Some inscrutable yet reasoning thing puts forth the molding of their features. The white whale tasks me; he heaps me. Yet he is but a mask. 'Tis the thing behind the mask I



Photo Courtesy of REALITYISSCARY.COM

*Leo Genn as Starbuck chooses against his better judgement not to shoot Captain Ahab in Moby Dick (1956)*

chiefly hate; the malignant thing that has plagued mankind since time began; the thing that maws and mutilates our race, not killing us outright but letting us live on, with half a heart and half a lung.

Later in the film, when the business of whaling is being ignored by Ahab, evident in his willingness to abandon harpooning to follow up on leads of where Moby Dick may be heading in the vast sea, the captain and his first mate are at it again:

*Ahab:* What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making

me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself; but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I. By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike. And all the time, lo! that smiling sky, and this unsounded sea! ...

*Starbuck:* ...I say calmly back to thee, sir, I am against thee. But thee needn't fear Starbuck. Let

CONTINUED TO P.6 ❧

Ahab beware Ahab. Beware thyself, my captain.

In the final moments of the movie, Ahab is drowned, pinned to the white whale by harpoon ropes, and as Moby Dick crests, the dead captain's arm rolls back and forth across his body, beckoning the crew of the Pequod to complete what he couldn't accomplish, the death of the beast. As one crew officer orders the boats to return to the ship, crying out, "no more, no more of this!" ironically it is Starbuck who loudly demands they kill Moby Dick, not for revenge, but because they are whalers and their trade is whaling. In the end, it is the God-fearing Starbuck who leads the crew and the ship itself to the bottom of the ocean.

Orson Welles appears as a fear-invoking preacher of spell-binding ability in *Moby Dick* in one of the few introductory scenes that take place on land in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Welles's 1941 masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*, might be considered the first American film about a singular powerful man who stands above all not just because of wealth, but because of the strength of his dynamic personality. Charles Foster Kane makes his millions not as other robber barons of the early twentieth century did through sales of commodities or by building railways. Kane instead takes his monetary inheritance and increases it more than a thousand-fold through the spread of the printed word, by owning a thriving chain of newspapers and magazines. His exploitation of international turmoil is made as an educated and intellectually calculated choice. Headlines matter, the truth of the situation doesn't, and knowing that, he holds the key to an expanding empire. Perhaps Kane may be "Trumpian" by grabbing success at the cost of truth and ethics, but he is also self-aware and engages personally with his editors and journalists, but only if he receives the required respect, which they willingly give.

Kane can take in the ugly truths about the world and himself on all subjects and ideas "save ye one"—he has a deaf ear to what prevents him from giving and taking love from others, even when his best friend (Joseph Cotton as Jedediah Leland) and his wife (Dorothy Comingore as Su-



Orson Welles as Charles Foster Kane speaking at Madison Square Garden while running for governor in *Citizen Kane* (1941) (Photo by RKO Radio Pictures, still photographer Alexander Kahle - International Photographer, Volume XII, Number 12, January 1941 (front cover).



Charles Foster Kane utters "Rosebud" and retreats in silence and defeat after impulsively destroying his wife's bedroom on hearing that she is leaving him for good.

san Alexander Kane), tell him forcefully to his face. He literally cannot hear and accept his greatest character flaw, perhaps because he knows it as something that he can't change.

The famous keyword in *Citizen Kane*, "Rosebud," is rarely uttered by the man, but when he does say it to himself, as recounted in the tales of his life told in flashbacks, the expression Welles brings to this man of money and influence melts to one of bitter loneliness and tired emotional reckoning. The source of his failure as a person is revealed in the final shot of the film, traced back to his unexpected childhood loss of innocence. "Rosebud"—even the richest man in the world with unquestioned power cannot escape the random cruelty of fate that spares not a soul.

There are dozens of movies based on the lives of real or fictional criminals leading mob gangs or organized crime syndicates. These men at the top gain and demand an "alternative" brand of respect that follows an unspoken "code" of honored admiration. In 2007's *American Gangster*, Denzel Washington takes the lead on a story loosely based on Harlem's Frank Lucas and his meteoric rise as a heroin kingpin in the late 1960s and 1970s. Washington's Lucas is often merciless, yet unlike characters such as Kane and Ahab, he strives to be both gregarious and is naturally quick and witty. He transforms his drug business into a large family-run enterprise and buys a mansion for his poor mother, brothers, cousins, and other family to live in and enjoy. This is quite different from Kane's massive and fear-invoking castle, Xanadu, which was less of a home than a medieval-like display of a Lord's rights as master of his surrounding domain. Lucas is deferred to as the unquestioned leader through power of personality and his savvy business sense and serves as the cash cow for not only his relations, but for the neighborhood of Harlem itself at a time of social turmoil. The villainous dichotomy of Lucas loving his home city yet allowing a flood of heroin to destroy many of its most vulnerable inhabitants is never considered or understood by him as murderously wicked and morally duplicitous.

Lucas treks to Vietnam during the war to convince the jungle-based producers of the poppies for the drug to sell to him directly. This hidden source of the smuggled powder allows him to cut out



Denzel Washington as Frank Lucas walking the streets of Harlem in *American Gangster* (2007).

the middlemen of the drug trade and is the key to his immense success and profits. As an African American, Lucas later concedes to doing business with a rich Italian mob boss only because he understands that they must be cut in or he'll find his monopoly violently destroyed. Lucas is not impressed when that boss invites him to speak business at his huge house and property, never wavering in confidence or adjusting his tone in deference to this seasoned and extraordinarily wealthy gangster.

Many of us like to watch a movie by going into it recognizing the leading stars and then adapting to them in the role. Washington is so superlatively and always "Denzel," yet he carries the unique ability of allowing his fans to quickly stop seeing him as such and only see his character Lucas, who is oddly very "Denzel"-like. Washington's portrayal of Lucas is detailed and brilliant. In the end, as he faces conviction and personal defeat, we watch him slowly realize respect for another person for the first time since the death of his Harlem mentor, Bumpy Johnson in 1968, prior to his own rise in power. Lucas admires the quiet, messy, co-lead of the film, Newark, New Jersey detective Richie Rob-

erts (Russell Crowe). Roberts never gives up throughout the movie as an honest cop trying his hardest each day to rid the poor streets of New Jersey of the plague of heroin by hunting down the suppliers. Roberts persists even when threatened by cops on the take who grab what they can when making a bust or demanding extortion payoffs. When Lucas is alone with Roberts to cut a deal to reduce the time he will be forced to serve in prison, he is awed by Roberts' willingness to go after not only the drug criminals but also the criminals within the ranks of the police at all levels. The smile that crosses his face, that million-dollar grin that only Washington can give, is the moment that Lucas knows he has finally met a person worthy of respect, and it is the man who is going to be putting him behind bars.

Of Frank Lucas, Captain Ahab, and Charles Foster Kane, only Lucas is comfortable as a seemingly kind family man and a man of the streets and benefactor to his neighborhood. Yet, as Elizabeth Bennett says in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* of the lying, duplicitous George Wickham, that despite all of his many charms of personality, "...yet, he is *such* a man." ■

## Pets of Tri-I

POOJA VISWANATHAN

For this issue, I interview **Maggi**, the cat who lives with **Priyanka Lakhiani** (Graduate Student, The Rockefeller University) and her roommates. I caught sight of Maggi during a virtual meeting as she bathed herself gloriously while carefully listening to the ongoing discussion. She paused every once in a while as if she were about to contribute a thought, but decided otherwise. Naturally, I wanted to be friends with Maggi instantly.

**Pooja Viswanathan: How old are you? In human years?**

**Maggi:** Not totally sure. My last owners abandoned me and the vet who saw me after I was rescued said I was probably about 2 or 3 years old, or older with impeccable dental hygiene! I like to think I'm older.

**PV: Is there a story behind your name?**

**M:** The previous name on my microchip was Mamacita, which my mom thought was a ridiculous name for a cat, so she named me after her favorite brand of Indian instant noodles, which is definitely not as ridiculous.

**PV: I have to agree with that. How did you first meet your mom?**

**M:** We met in the bathroom of my foster home in Brooklyn. My foster parents were very nice but their cat kind of hated me so I'm glad to live in my own home now.

**PV: What is your first memory?**

**M:** Not a clue, but I like to think I wasn't truly alive until I ate some salami.

**PV: Where do you live?**

**M:** I live in Faculty House with my mom, our human roommates, and their plants (that I nibble on occasionally...)

**PV: What are your favorite smells of NYC?**

**M:** I haven't been outside very much since I was rescued, but I can smell salami from across my apartment!

**PV: What are your favorite neighborhoods in NYC?**

**M:** I've lived in three boroughs so far, but I like the Upper East Side most because all my toys are here.



All Photo Courtesy of PRIYANKA LAKHIANI

CONTINUED TO P. 9





**PV: If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would you live?**

**M:** Sometimes I Skype my human grandma in Mumbai. She seems like a very nice lady who would give me lots of treats so maybe I would move there.

**PV: What are your favorite foods?**

**M:** Unlike most cats, I'm actually an omnivore! I might even eat more cat grass than my mom eats vegetables.

**PV: What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC?**

**M:** I like screaming at birds outside the window. I hope they're terrified of me! I also like practicing tricks with my mom. High-fiving is so easy, and I get so many treats!

**PV: Besides your mom, who is your favorite human in the Tri-I community?**

**M:** Charlie, one of the maintenance staff in Faculty House, always gives me pets when he stops by! I don't like leaks, but I love hanging out with him!

**PV: Do you have a funny story to share with us?**

**M:** A few months ago, my mom tried training me to wear a harness so we could go on walks. We would go on short trips outside the apartment. I hated it so much that I gave myself a urinary disease and my mom had to take me to the vet. I hate the vet, but I never had to wear the harness again!

**PV: Is there some way we can see more pictures of you on the interwebs?**

**M:** Apparently I'm too young for social media but you can find lots of (consensual) pictures of me on my mom's Instagram!

**PV: If you could have any human ability, what would it be?**

**M:** I wish I could open the fridge door to steal salami.

**PV: What do you miss the most about pre-COVID times?**

**M:** Nothing!! All my human roommates have so much more time to spoil me now.

**PV: How have you helped your mom get through these times?**

**M:** I've been sleeping on my mom's neck to keep her company. I think she feels very comforted, and not suffocated at all!! ■

## Life on a Roll

### *Inside Iran: the Columns of Persepolis*

NAN PANG

Persepolis, or “the city of the Persians,” is located northeast of Shiraz—just about one hour by car. As the history of the site stretches back almost 2,500 years, Persepolis had embodied the magnificent wealth and prosperity of the Achaemenid Empire and is considered one of the most significant archeological sites of the Achaemenid Empire as well as pre-Islamic Persia until its destruction by Alexander the Great. If you want to see what it was like back then, renting a pair of Virtual Reality 3D reconstruction glasses at the en-

trance is highly recommended. Although the stones decay and colors fade, the columns of Persepolis still stand high and proud today—as if they have been witnessing the turbulent history of Iran for over the last two and half millennia. ■

