Santander Bank gives $90 K. to LaGuardia Community College

Santander Bank will give $90,000 to LaGuardia Community College over three years in sponsorship of the school's President's Society, according to an agreement between the bank and the college.

The society provides high-achieving students with "the strong foundation of practical skills and the networks of successful friends and mentors needed to get ahead in today's world," according to its website.

Members receive lessons in "interviewing, resume writing, networking with industry professionals, public speaking, etiquette and dress, and exposure to art, theatre, music and dance," as well as a $1,000 stipend. About 50 students participate in the program each year, according to the agreement, which was signed on June 23 and obtained by Capital through a Freedom of Information Law request.
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Under the agreement, the bank will be able to place two automated teller machines on campus for a term of five years and "charge users no more than $1.50 per withdrawal transaction."

MORE ON CAPITAL
- City Hall Pro: Stringer backs Uber position; Corrections union goes on attack
- Tantoco C.S.O. highlights

In April, Santander and the City College of New York signed a $315,000 agreement.

Read the agreement here: http://bit.ly/1HOZNmy
Apple Visual Graphics Hired to Print and Wrap Buses in High-Quality Graphics for CUNY Queens College

July 21, 2015 6:01 pm

New York City-area graphics and printing company completes major project for the City University of New York (CUNY) at Queens College, providing vehicle graphics for the college’s buses.

Long Island City, NY (PRWEB) July 21, 2015

Apple Visual Graphics (http://applevisualgraphics.com) recently completed work on a major vehicle-wrapping project for Queens College, CUNY, printing and installing high-quality graphics on the college’s buses.

Howard Sturm, CEO, says the company started this project on June 27th, with completion taking place the week of July 6. While this isn’t the first time Apple Visual Graphics has worked alongside an institution of higher education, Sturm says this project is unique because of its large scope and tight deadline.

"Apple Visual Graphics works with many institutions of higher learning and is always pleased to foster relationships with the local community," Sturm says. "Due to the scope of the project, we’ve had to bring on additional installers to wrap every bus with the quality graphics CUNY Queens College expects from us. There was a tight deadline, and it’s kept us very busy over the last few weeks -- but we are all very proud of the end result."

Because Apple Visual Graphics was able to complete this project on such a tight deadline without sacrificing the quality for which it’s known, Sturm says this project solidifies the company as one of the best choices for any ambitious project requiring top-notch graphics.

"This project showcases our ability to take on ambitious projects and do whatever it takes to meet the deadline without sacrificing quality," he says.

Wrapping vehicles in eye-catching graphics for advertisements is one of the best ways to establish a brand presence. Because the average vehicle wrap can be viewed anywhere from 30,000 to 70,000 times per day, these vinyl layers of graphics can increase business by 107%.

"This has been quite a challenge to tackle; fortunately, we have a lot of experience with similar challenges, and we were confident in our ability to complete the project within the client’s timeframe," Sturm explains. "CUNY Queens College now has a gorgeous, eye-catching fleet of buses to take its students wherever they need to go."

About Apple Visual Graphics

Apple Visual Graphics is a family owned and operated print shop based out of Long Island City, NY. With ties to the community, Apple Visual Graphics prides itself for being Forest Stewardship Council™ certified through the Rainforest Alliance™ Smartwood Program. Apple Visual Graphics now accepts “Made in NY” cards, offering a discount to Film, Theatre and Broadcasting companies who are registered with the NYC Mayor’s Office of Film. Specializing in wide format, digital and offset printing, Apple Visual Graphics can bring any print job to life.

For more information, please visit applevisualgraphics.com (http://applevisualgraphics.com)
New Yorker brings innovative violin to gooimusic
mygool names Yut Chia to music channel's advisory board

DES MOINES, Iowa (PRWEB) July 21, 2015

Yut Chia, who gooimusic's creative director Jared Freiburg says does things with a violin that have never been done before, has been named to the YouTube channel's advisory board, Freiburg said.

gooimusic is mygool's disruptive and creative YouTube channel presenting innovative music from around the world.

"Yut is one of the most talented and professional musicians I have ever worked with," said Freiburg. "His sense of musicality is unparalleled. He is a great addition to our advisory board because of his unique style of contemporary playing that goes beyond his considerable classical capabilities. He is becoming a notable source of entertainment and really encapsulates what gooimusic is trying to spread across the globe."

Freiburg said he was introduced to Yut by mygool's Viral Development Officer, Johnny Krohn, who heard the New Yorker playing in a subway.

"His talent was obviously great, so I was convinced I needed to play with him," Freiburg said. "We got together early one morning and jammed."

Chia, 22, plays as "Yut and the Hot Four."

"The Hot Four are the violin strings," he says. "When I do a performance it's different people, different set up, etc. We work hard to create amazing music, shows, etc. We love performing, and we plan on being one of the biggest instrumental groups in the world!" His Facebook page is http://www.facebook.com/YutandTheHotFour.

Chia says he seeks to make people interact with the music he plays: "When you go to a classical concert, you have to sit down, be quiet. When I play, I want people to dance, feel free in the middle of a piece, scream, basically feel the music and interact with it.

"The role of gooimusic is to spread amazing music like mine to all the people in the world and show them something amazing."

While Chia's music is strictly instrumental, he uses electronic back tracks and beats he creates: "I infuse Electronic Dance Music with the violin."

Chia began playing violin by taking private lessons. After his first year, he self-taught for a few years before attending Queens College (City University of New York) to perfect his technique.

About gooimusic:

gooimusic is a YouTube music channel dedicated to the disruptive and the new. Starting with a jazz sensibility, it brings together genres and introduces talented performers and composers from all over the world who are creating revolutionarily sounds.

About mygool

mygool is an energetic brand platform that is digital, creative, disruptive and global. Its portfolio of emerging products sizzles with IC/DC (Innovation and Creativity/Disruption and Community). mygool's utility and purpose are to bring people together with innovative digital products. Based in Des Moines, Iowa, and Chennai, India, mygool lives where the sun always shines and has as its mission to Go Where the Life Is.™


Mygool supports the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Check them out at http://www.cff.org.

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Yut and the Hot Four

"When I play, I want people to feel the music and interact with it."
Commuting apps, technology take on urban traffic

Technology could help solve traffic congestion in large cities

By Daniel Schwartz, CBC News  Posted: Jul 22, 2015 5:00 AM ET  Last Updated: Jul 22, 2015 6:40 AM ET

New apps and other technologies are improving the urban traffic experience. But there’s debate over what impact the existing ones, along with those that are just around the corner, will have on the future of traffic over the next decade or two.

Applications that may make the most difference come from networking data and people. At least that’s what Jennifer Keesmaat, Toronto’s chief planner, says.

Apps that tell commuters when the next bus passes by, or where there’s someone driving who can give you a lift or where there are bicycles to share may be relatively simple, but she says they offer the biggest opportunity.

Nevertheless, Keesmaat says that’s just tinkering at the margins of big city traffic problems.

Kenneth Irving, the former CEO of Irving Oil, left three decades in the oil industry to work on improving mobility in cities. He says he expects “profound change in the next 15 years.” He is looking for ways of “reducing urban congestion with digital infrastructure” rather than building new expressways, for example.

Through his company, Luum, he’s pushing tools like carpooling apps to increase the occupants per vehicle while lowering the total number of vehicles on the move.

Irving advocates an integrated platform that brings together automobiles, public transit, cycling and walking, with incentives to drive behaviour, so consumers can choose between all options.

Ford Motor Co. pushes a similar strategy with its Blueprint for Mobility, which foresees a transport network connecting vehicles, transport infrastructure and individual mobile devices.

That strategy takes advantage of new-generation cars as rolling collections of sensors, to reduce congestion and prevent accidents, although Ford acknowledges it will require unprecedented co-operation across a number of sectors.

A long-term solution to traffic woes

Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute think tank expects those and other technologies, like smart parking and parking sensors, "will have only modest impacts."

Cities, with Moscow one of the leaders, have been testing and implementing systems with apps that drivers can use to find out about available parking spots nearby and, in some cases, even reserve them, and sensors to speed up the parking once they get there. In congested downtowns, drivers looking for parking account for up to a third of the automobile traffic.

Commuters in hundreds of cities can use apps to get real-time arrival information for public transit stops, and data shows a modest increase in riders because of those apps. A City College of New York study of
the New York City system found a two per cent increase in bus ridership through 2013, with much of that increase on the most-travelled routes.

While Litman says these technologies will produce incremental improvements, "Every city I know of is doing something to improve their walking, cycling and public transit," which he says is the long-term solution to traffic congestion.

When it comes to decisions about roads and expressways, those cities have to consider a difficult-to-discern future.

Litman says traffic planners had simply extrapolated past growth over the decades and assumed rates would continue and automobile traffic would keep growing, predictions that now look like a joke.

One of the dramatic developments the planners did not foresee is that total vehicle miles travelled per capita in the U.S. actually began to fall in 2006, "the first year per-capita driving had declined since the oil crises of the 1970s," according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

That trend continued until at least 2013, the DOT says.

Nonetheless, the average American spends over 40 hours per year stuck in traffic, it found.

A study published this month in the Journal of the American Planning Association found that between 1995 and 2009, driving declined for all age groups, especially so for Americans born from 1980 to 1999.

Study author Noreen McDonald says the different attitude towards driving and the increase in virtual mobility, for example through social media and online shopping, are big parts of the explanation for this decline among the Millennial generation.

**A better way to predict**

Keesmaat, who has worked on plans for about 10 Canadian cities and for cities outside Canada, says, "We can predict better the way people will choose to move through a city by how we plan our land uses" than with any kind of traffic modelling.

If, for example, you put jobs within walking distance of homes, you'll see more people walking to work.

Toronto is directing growth to its main transit corridors. London does so as well. "We see that as a critical part of mitigating congestion because if we're directing our growth to places people don't have access to by public transit, we're simply adding more drivers to an already overloaded road system," Keesmaat says.

For her, public transit, not cars, is where technology could have a transformative role.

She notes that increasing vehicle occupancy helps. but, for example, with 69 per cent of the people coming into downtown Toronto taking public transit, "At the end of the day, the significant changes in urban mobility really have to do with the growing sophistication of public transit."

**New tech for public transit**
The Toronto Transit Commission will be rolling out automatic train control in 2017. Keesmaat says that could produce as much as a 20 per cent capacity increase by allowing trains to operate closely together, while eventually saving money on salaries through the driverless trains.

When he was recently in Istanbul to do a workshop for transit planners, Litman learned that city is buying a fleet of 400 new buses, all with onboard Wi-Fi, USB ports at every seat and bike racks. He says the incremental costs are tiny for new bus fleets but these features could attract 20 to 40 per cent of people who would otherwise drive.

From San Francisco, Jeff Wood monitors developments in urban transport technology at The Direct Transfer website.

While he says "transit agencies are pretty far behind the times when it comes to tech," he adds that interesting new things are happening all over the place, from driverless trolleys and subway trains in Copenhagen, Vancouver and elsewhere, to various systems for powering buses, including rapidly charging the batteries of electric buses at their route stops.

Wood says increasing the frequency of buses and trains is key, but "the network is the biggest thing:" public transit integrated with car-sharing, bike-sharing, Uber, Lyft, and similar services, and eventually autonomous vehicles.

- Could autonomous vehicles, or self-driving cars, be a real game-changer when it comes to traffic? We explore that issue in Part two: Self-driving cars confront urban traffic congestion
- Uber, Lyft 'misclassifying' workers as independent contractors, lawsuit claims
Jobs Elusive for Puerto Ricans Flocking to Central Florida

July 21, 2015 | :

by MARISOL MEDINA, Associated Press

MIAMI — Mayra Rios didn’t want to leave her native Puerto Rico, but the constant bullying that her autistic son faced at school and the lack of services available to him were the last blows. "Over there, it’s almost impossible to live," she said in Spanish at her modest two-bedroom Orlando apartment. "There’s a blow from every side."

She complained of the 11.5 percent sales tax rate officials recently imposed to alleviate some of the $70 billion debt burden.

As Puerto Rico struggles with an unpayable debt, an unemployment rate over 12 percent, rising violence and a stagnant economy that offers little opportunity to thrive, thousands of its residents are abandoning the island for central Florida, a longtime refuge for Puerto Ricans where low-skill jobs in tourism and related service industries were easy to find.

Now, times have changed, and Puerto Rican community leaders say newcomers like Rios often find settling here difficult.

"It’s a challenge because one has to adapt to everything, to laws, to the way of life, to the language," said Rios, who said she doesn’t speak English well enough to land a well-paying job.

Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens, have historically migrated to the mainland during harsh economic times. However, in contrast to those who moved to the Northeast during the “Great Migration” of the 1950s, more Puerto Ricans in recent decades are choosing central Florida, according to the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at City University of New York.

Edwin Melendez, the center’s director, said Puerto Rico’s economic crisis is causing “another Great Migration,” with Florida attracting the majority of immigrants because of its warm weather, proximity to Puerto Rico, job market and the already large Puerto Rican community.

With the most recent data from 2013, the center estimates almost 1 million Puerto Ricans live in Florida, with about 400,000 living in central Florida. The center also estimates Florida will soon rival New York as the state with the most Puerto Ricans. As of 2013, about 5 million Puerto Ricans live stateside, almost 2 million more than the 3.4 million Puerto Ricans living on the island.
STRUGGLE TO AFFORD HOUSING

As community leaders in central Florida see their numbers soar, reports of recent arrivals struggling to find affordable housing, becoming homeless or living in hotels have them worried.

“Our county is not prepared to have a massive migration of people that are going to be needing affordable housing,” said Nancy Sharifi, spokeswoman for the Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development.

Sharifi said most families that are moving are not affluent and many are not fully bilingual, which makes it difficult to work better paying jobs. She said a family needs an income of $40,000 or more to afford modest housing.

“Be prepared to work two-and-a-half jobs to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment,” she said. “You need to know the facts before you unload your suitcases and end up in your friend’s or cousin’s house.”

Rios and her two teenage boys moved to Orlando in February to join her husband, who had arrived a few months earlier. He worked as an air conditioning technician in Puerto Rico, but because he doesn’t speak English, he is now a landscaper. He works full-time and on weekends, making $1,600 a month. The family survives on his income and some money that Mayra’s ex-husband sends her children. After briefly working a cleaning job, without a car to herself, she is now unemployed.

Rios’ family pays $1,200 for their modest two-bedroom apartment.

“I’m depressed,” said Rios. “I’m alone, you get here, and you’re all alone.”

She said she will endure whatever hardships are necessary, for the sake of her two boys.

“They love it here,” she said. “I did it for them.”

Sharifi said there are success stories of people moving from Puerto Rico, but said those who struggle do so because they were uninformed about the costs and realities of central Florida. Community leaders have responded by offering “Talleres de Bienvenida,” or “Welcoming Workshops,” aimed at helping Hispanic immigrants cope with housing, employment and cultural issues.
Colleges start new degree programs

Submitted by Scott Jaschik on July 22, 2015 - 3:00am

- Borough of Manhattan Community College is starting an associate of arts in sociology.
- College of Saint Rose is starting an undergraduate major in public health.
- Johns Hopkins University is starting a master of arts in film and media.
- Mississippi College is starting an undergraduate program in electrical engineering.
- Rivier University is starting a bachelor's degree in biotechnology.
- Robert Morris University is starting an online master of science in higher education.
- Slippery Rock University is starting a bachelor of fine arts in dance.
- Stockton University is starting a doctoral degree in organizational leadership.
- University of Dallas is starting a graduate certificate in Roman Catholic education.
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville is starting a master of science program in forensic odontology.
A June 2015 art exhibit, "The Transformative Power of Art," at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, harnessed the universal language of art to convey an important message: "Our fragile Mother Earth faces the devastating consequences of climate change, a defining challenge of our time." The exhibit also included sixteen portraits of people from all over the world who have "contributed to the common good of humanity in one way or another and have transformed the way we think."

The exhibit recognized the power of the universal language of art to transmit messages in a way that words cannot. Potent images remain embedded in our memory and return when triggered by life events. Art speaks to everyone -- regardless of age, religion, culture, social status, or education.
Powerful art images can forever mediate the way we see the world. While some images inspire, convey truth, and expose injustice, others can brainwash us with destructive distortions and false ideologies. Some artworks can cleverly present positive inspirations and at the same time subtly propagandize destructive ideologies.

That is the case, I discovered, with Renaissance images of Jesus, his family and followers. In one respect a vast trove of Renaissance artworks inspire devotion and intensify faith in Christianity. On another level, though, they falsify biblical history and reinforce the divide between Christians and Jews, which has had lethal consequences for Jews over many centuries. The falsifications were all the more compelling because they were made subtly, by omission. What has been omitted is Jesus’ Jewish identity. You can walk through gallery after gallery in museums around the world, as I have, and you will rarely see any evidence that Jesus was a Jew or had any connection to Judaism or to the Middle East where he was born and where he preached. Indeed, he is typically pictured as Northern European in appearance, with fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes. And you will likely find him and his family and followers in regal attire, in palatial Renaissance settings, surrounded by symbols of a religion — Christianity — that didn't exist during his lifetime.

This imagery negates the undisputed fact that the Jesus of the Gospels lived and died a practicing Jew. Although his life and teachings inspired a new religion, which became an organized Church more than three hundred years after the crucifixion, one would expect that his connection to Judaism would at least be hinted at in these artworks.

Jesus’ dedication to Judaism was not portrayed in Renaissance artworks for several reasons related to the evolution of Christianity as it emerged and separated from Judaism. But that doesn’t explain why modern art historians, critics, and curators maintain the deceptions and falsification of biblical history. These art professionals analyze the most minute details of paintings, even using advanced technologies, but ignore the most glaring feature: the falsification of biblical history that can be seen with the naked eye.

Art professionals casually dismiss the distortions as artistic license in the service of the Renaissance style of contemporizing images. Furthermore, some art experts have told me, “everyone knew that Jesus was Jewish — it was in their bible in the Gospels.” If Christians had read the bible that would have helped correct the distortions but still not justifying the artwork falsifications.

The unfortunate truth is that despite loving their bible few Christians read it for well over a thousand years. For one thing, the Church discouraged Christians from reading the bible on their own. For another, relatively few bibles existed. Through the Middle Ages and early Renaissance copies of the bible were individually crafted by skilled scribes. Each copy was beyond the means of commoners (equivalent to as much as $100,000 today). Moreover, the bible was written in Latin, a language that virtually no one in the general population could read or speak. Well over ninety percent of Europeans were illiterate. Even many of the clergy couldn’t read the Latin bible and translating the bible into native languages was strictly forbidden. As late as the sixteenth century William Tyndale was burned at the stake for his English translation—and not because it was a bad translation. As much as 60 percent or more of today's King James version is Tyndale's translation.

So how did commoners and others learn about Jesus and Christianity?

Their information came largely from three sources, all of which were heavily tainted with distortions and propaganda. From priests, monks, and nuns the population heard stories that focused on miracles, devotional themes, the suffering of Jesus on the cross, and the resurrection. The Jewish-Gospel of the Jews was absent from these teachings. What was included, especially during Easter, was the charge that the Jews were enemies of Christianity and that they killed Jesus - a claim that conveniently ignored the fact that all of Jesus’ followers were Jews and that there would be no Christianity if not for these Jewish followers.

The two other major sources of information about Jesus and Christianity were art forms: stained glass windows and paintings. These artworks conveyed even more constricted information about the life of Jesus. Paintings by the great masters spanned hundreds of years and presented Jesus, his family, and followers as Renaissance-era Christians with no connection to their Jewish heritage and identities. Separating Jesus from Jews and Judaism provided a major encouragement for anti-Semitism, which was already embedded in European Christian society. This virulent prejudice was reinforced by the population's lack of access to more complete and accurate information about the Jewish Jesus of the Gospels.

It's not surprising that artworks mirrored propaganda, since the paintings were commissioned by the Church, the biggest patron, and the wealthy, who sought to impress the Church with their devotion to Jesus and the teachings of the Church. Jesus the Jew did not fit into this illusory world.

It's puzzling that art historians continue to ignore the anachronisms and propaganda that were built into Renaissance religious art. These factors were not harmless. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered during the Middle Ages and Renaissance based on false teachings to which the distortions in artworks contributed.

In response to these criticisms is art experts' dismissive notion that "nobody believes that stuff [about Jews] any more," a claim that flies in the face of the current worldwide rise in anti-Semitism. In fact, according to a 2013 Anti-Defamation League survey, 26 percent of Americans still believe that the Jews killed Jesus. And that number may well be higher, because many respondents were probably loathe to admit they held such a politically incorrect view. And those numbers are surely greater in other parts of the world.
Why are art historians so reluctant to admit that the art of the Renaissance was widespread in Renaissance literature and that the Great Fire of London fueled the spread of anti-Semitism? One reason may be the romanticized embrace of the Renaissance -- an almost orgasmic ecstasy over the resurgence of literature, art, and natural science resurrected from classical Greek and Roman times, while ignoring the bigger picture of life during the Renaissance. When I suggested this to one prominent art historian, he chastised me: "How can you criticize the Renaissance -- it restored humanity and beauty."

This infatuation fails to take into account how the vast majority of Europeans experienced that period. The Renaissance emerged slowly, Europeans didn't wake up one morning and rejoice: "The dark ages are over -- the lights are back on." What's more, the Renaissance, especially for the first few hundred years, benefited only a tiny portion of society. Today's gap between rich and poor -- the 99 percent vs. the 1 percent -- was even greater through the Middle Ages and Renaissance. But more defining of the difference between now and then was the difference in living conditions between rich and poor. The vast majority of the population lived under such dreadful conditions that a modern-day homeless shelter would seem like Shangri-La.

Historian William Manchester, in his book *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance*, gives a grim picture of peasant life in the 1500's. He quotes priest and social critic Desiderius Erasmus, who actually examined the huts of commoners, and reported: "Almost all the floors are of clay and rushes from the marshes, so carelessly renewed that the foundation sometimes remains for 30 years, harboring spittle and vomit...remnants of fishes and other filth unamiable." Manchester adds that the centerpiece of the room was "a gigantic bedstead, piled high with straw pallets, all seething with vermin." Everyone slept there, including animals. And this particular gruesome setting was "the abode of prosperous peasants." Their neighbors lived in worse circumstances. During the one-year of famine after the usual three years of harvests, hunger and extreme poverty were widespread. Peasants, Manchester reports, were forced to sell all their belongings, including their clothing, which often reduced them to nudity. In the most difficult times "they devoured bark, roots, grass, even white clay, and cannibalism was not unknown." Life expectancy for men was about age forty. For women even less. Manchester relates a popular Renaissance story that is emblematic of the commoners' living conditions. "A peasant in the city who, passing a lane of perfume shops, sawed off his arm with a knife under his nose."

Living under these appalling conditions was hardly conducive to appreciating the "humanism and beauty" of the Renaissance.

Adding to the misery of the masses, just as the Renaissance was gaining traction the black plague swept across Europe in 1347 wiping out a third of the population. The resulting poverty, decimation of families and communities, and the unimaginable grief generated by the plague reverberated for generations. While the plague did not discriminate between social classes it found more welcome hosts in the squalor of peasant communities. Many of the wealthy were able escape to the fresh air and cleaner environments of their country estates.

Author and Renaissance historian Alexander Lee warns that "it is so very easy to be seduced by the beauty and elegance of the art and literature of the Renaissance, the ugly side of the period is all too easily forgotten and overlooked." The title of his book expresses the other side of the Renaissance rebirth of culture: *The ugly Renaissance: sex, greed, violence and depravity in an age of beauty*.

Another reason art historians and others in the art world have glossed over the anachronisms in Renaissance artwork is that they are considering the distortions out of their proper context. Put them back in context and they would be jarring. I came to that realization after viewing the National Geographic documentary *Killing Jesus*, based on Bill O'Reilly's book of the same title. Unlike many other films about Jesus, this film presented realistic portraits of Rabbi Jesus (he's called Rabbi throughout the film) and his fellow Jews as Semites living in crude dwellings in a rural village. Now imagine if in one of those scenes (like the one below) you saw Jesus preaching to a "multitude" of fellow Jews or in a synagogue where he regularly worshiped and read from the Torah -- and all the Jews were holding crucifixes, the feared and loathed symbol of Roman persecution. It would look ridiculous -- and would surely invite criticism of the anachronism.
A 30-year-old tech entrepreneur who left her Hasidic community jumped to her death from a 20th-floor rooftop bar in Manhattan’s trendy Flatiron District.

Faigy Mayer, 30, plunged off the roof of 230 Fifth Rooftop Bar on West 27th Street Monday night in an apparent suicide, a New York police spokesman told Gothamist.

Mayer was the founder, CEO and iOS Developer of Appton, a startup specializing in mobile apps. She was a graduate student of Accounting at CUNY. According to her Twitter profile, she identifies as a “Former hasid who codes in iOS. Love coding, beacons, bacon, the appleWatch and life!”

Mayer was also a member of Footsteps, a group that provides “social and emotional support, educational and vocational guidance, workshops and social activities, and access to resources” to members of the ultra-Orthodox community that wish to leave.

Friends on her Facebook page said Mayer struggled with depression.

The New York Post spoke to witness Dale Martin, who said, “I was walking across the street and I saw she was
Another witness, Becky Whittemore was at the bar and told the Post, “There was a big corporate party up there and she kind of ran through them and jumped.”

Eliyahu Fink, a former rabbi at the Pacific Jewish Center, said he did not know Mayer personally. They shared several common friends and she followed him on Facebook. Tuesday morning, he wrote a long post about how the Orthodox community should do more for suicide prevention and acceptance. He never mentioned Mayer by name.

He told the Forward, “As a community, we must do a better job loving unconditionally. Too many people make their relationships dependent on religious observance. This compounds the trauma and loneliness for those who leave.”
More Details Emerge About Woman Who Jumped to Death From Rooftop Bar

By Jaime Fuller

On Monday night, an unknown person was found dead after leaping from the 230 Fifth Rooftop Bar on Fifth Avenue and 27th Street — 20 stories up. Nearly a day later, a fuller picture of her life has begun to emerge. Her name was Faigy Mayer, and she was a 30-year-old developer. She was the founder and CEO of Appton (http://appton.co/about-us/), "a mobile and web solutions startup." She developed apps (https://www.linkedin.com/in/faigym) like "NYCTips," a tip calculator, and "All About Hasidism."

On her Twitter profile, she described herself (https://twitter.com/FaigyM) as a "Former #hasid who codes in #iOS. Love #coding, #beacons, #bacon, the #appleWatch and life!" She was a member of Footsteps (http://footstepsorg.org), an organization that provides resources to members of the ultra-Orthodox community transitioning to secular life, and grew up in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods in Williamsburg and Boro Park. She appeared in a 2009 National Geographic documentary called Inside Hasidism (http://natgeo.tv/asia/inside-hasidism/about), according to the New York Post (http://nypost.com/2015/07/21/woman-who-leaped-to-her-death-from-rooftop-was-ex-hasidic-jew/). "It was actually at the age of 3 that I already showed no interest in Yiddish or Hebrew," Mayer said on the program "It was just like so challenging, like the whole transition." She first appears around the 16-minute mark in the video.

The New York Daily News (http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/woman-jumped-rooftop-bar-hasidic-jew-article-1.2299042) reported that she wrote about leaving the Hasidic community behind earlier this year on Facebook. "The next five years were incredibly hard but also incredibly rewarding. I've sort of lost all my family but I've made many amazing wonderful friends instead. I am so grateful for the life I have and the blessings therein! ... I hope to be an inspiration for others who leave."

Police identified Mayer by her purse and backpack, and believe her death was not an accident — although, many patrons of the rooftop bar told the Post that they could easily see how someone who had been drinking could accidentally fall.

It is unclear whether she went up to the roof to jump, or whether she had been attending a corporate party happening at the bar. Several pedestrians witnessed the incident, but patrons at
the bar had no idea what was going on until they checked Twitter later, according to Gothamist (http://gothamist.com/2015/07/21/230_fifth_suicide_ex_hasid.php). One witness told the Post (http://nypost.com/2015/07/21/woman-leaps-to-death-off-rooftop-bar-patrons-keep-drinking/) that the section of the roof that Mayer jumped from was cordoned off. "I think a lot of the people up there had zero clue what was going on."

There is still plenty of uncertainty about what led to her death; a few friends told reporters that she may have been depressed recently. If she had been depressed, she wouldn't have been alone. As Business Insider notes (http://www.businessinsider.com/startup-founder-jumps-to-her-death-from-rooftop-bar-in-manhattan-2015-7), a recent study of tech entrepreneurs had 30 percent of those surveyed suffering from depression.

Mayer was a graduate student at CUNY and had a bachelor's degree from Touro College and a master's degree from Brooklyn College, all in accounting. She also got a certificate in data science specialization from an online Johns Hopkins University program (http://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/coursera-specialization.html).
Ex-Hasid Who Jumped Off Roof Receives Traditional Orthodox Funeral From Family Who Shunned Her

by John Del Signore in News on Jul 22, 2015 10:08 am

A woman who left the insular ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Borough Park was given a traditional Orthodox funeral yesterday by family members who had distanced themselves from her when she left the faith. Faigy Mayer, 30, jumped to her death from the Flatiron rooftop bar 230 Fifth yesterday evening. One friend later told the Daily Mail she had been struggling "and that while other factors may have led to her suicide, her past and her family situation may have exacerbated it."

Mayer took the difficult step of leaving the community some five years ago, and was assisted by the outreach group Footsteps, which helps ultra-Orthodox Jews in NYC adjust to secular life. The transition can be difficult. In March, Mayer wrote on Facebook, "The next five years were incredibly hard but also incredibly rewarding. I've sort of lost all my family but I've made many amazing, wonderful friends instead. I am so grateful for the life I have and the blessings therein!"
Mayer was also featured in this short National Geographic documentary called "Inside: Hasidism." You can see her at the 16 minute mark:

"I hope to be an inspiration for others who leave," Mayer also wrote on Facebook in March. "It's been 5 years and I've made it!"

There was a corporate party on the roof of 230 Fifth on Monday night, but it's unclear if Mayer was a guest. The Post reports:

Her final words were to a bartender — whom she asked, "Where's the east deck?" a law-enforcement source said. The question was laden with symbolism. Jewish people pray in that direction, toward Jerusalem.

After the bartender pointed, Mayer walked over to a 4½-foot brick wall along the roof and put one leg over it, then the other, the source said. The bartender ran to her and grabbed her hand, but she pulled loose and jumped, the source said.

Mayer had founded an Internet startup called Apptron and created apps such as "NYC Tips," a tip calculator, and an app intended to help those who left the Hasidic community find their way in secular society. Daily Intel reports that she was a graduate student at CUNY, "and had a bachelor's degree from Touro College and a master's degree from Brooklyn College, all in accounting. She also got a certificate in data science specialization from an online Johns Hopkins University program."

"She was bold," friend Becky Alexander tells the Daily News. "She told you what she thought. That was her best quality. She was always really excited about whatever she was doing." Another friend said, "She was hospitalized three times for depression. She was having some trouble."

"I think her family was on her mind but I don't think it is fair to just blame her family," another friend tells the Daily Mail. "She had problems from the inside and she was in a lot of pain. I guess she did suffer from mental illness but it was exacerbated from her life before. It's not an easy journey (to leave the Hasidic Community) it takes a lot of courage and she had a lot of bravery."

At her funeral yesterday, one mourner told Pix 11 that Mayer "asked her family for pictures of when she was a baby, and they didn't want to give them to her." Another told the Post, "The family did not want the friends to show up to the funeral. It's disgusting."

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide: do not leave the person alone; remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt; and call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Contact the author of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips.
CONFLICT

Turkey PM Vows To Strengthen Border After Suruç Massacre

By Jack Moore 7/21/15 at 6:46 PM

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu pledged to reinforce security along the shared border with Syria on Tuesday, a day after a deadly suicide bomb attack, which killed at least 32 people in the southern town of Suruç.

On Monday, the bomb detonated outside a volunteer centre, killing a number of people who were travelling to help the Kurdish-Syrian city of Kobane, where Kurdish militiamen defending the city fought off a four-month ISIS offensive earlier this year.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. But Davutoğlu said Turkish authorities have identified a suspect and said there was a "high probability" that the Islamic State (ISIS) was behind the blast. If confirmed, it would represent the jihadist group's deadliest attack in Turkey.

"All the [suspect's] links internationally and domestically are being investigated," the prime minister said in a televised statement on Tuesday.

Davutoğlu, the head of Turkey's Justice and Development, known by its Turkish acronym, AKP, said that authorities will implement additional security measures along the country's 511 mile long border with Syria to defend against terrorists travelling to and from the civil war-torn country.

"Security on our borders will continue to be increased," Davutoğlu said on Monday, without revealing specific measures.

"What's necessary will be done against whomever is responsible," he added.
"This is an attack that targeted Turkey."

The government has called a cabinet meeting for Wednesday to discuss how it will boost security along the border, Davutoğlu confirmed. Davutoğlu is set to travel to the blast site on Tuesday.

Turkey, a member of NATO, has been criticised by its western allies for its porous borders. A number of members of the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition, including Washington, have said Turkish inaction has allowed thousands of foreign jihadists to cross into Syria to join radical Islamist groups, such as ISIS and the Al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front, and have urged Ankara to do more to secure the border.

In January, Davutoğlu said that it was an "impossible" task to protect the whole border and prevent such movement of jihadists. "We can close the border, but who will save the refugees, who will give them a safe haven?" he said at the time. "It's impossible to do. We can't put a soldier on every inch."

Since the Turkish general election last month, in which Davutoglu's Islamist AKP party lost its parliamentary majority, raids against suspected ISIS members have increased. As many as 21 alleged militants were arrested in one counter-terror operation earlier this month. Now, many in Turkey are questioning why it has taken the government over a year to begin acting against the terror group's networks, says Ilhan Tanir, Washington reporter for the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet and an expert on Turkish politics.

"The AKP only started this pressure on the ISIS networks after it lost its single majority rule, in a time that coalition talks are ongoing," says Tanir. "Now the AKP can turn to its base, say that it's not their fault as they are not in power anymore, and claim these raids are being made by the military. They are not taking the responsibility."

Following the deadly blast in Suruç on Monday, violent protests erupted in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul. The police dispersed the demonstrations using water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas. Growing insecurity, caused by the Syrian Civil War, and a lack of action from the Turkish elite means that public unrest is unlikely to subside in the short term, predicts Louis Fishman,
assistant professor of History at City University of New York and expert on Turkish affairs.

"Hopefully this won't take a turn towards violence but, for the last three years, any criticism of the government has been seen by the government as a force that they have to silence," says Fishman. "I think this [unrest] will not go away.

In the past month, the Turkish government has increasingly cracked down on ISIS militants inside the country. But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan still harbors concerns about Syrian-Kurdish intentions along the shared border, where Kurdish forces have been wrestling territory back from the radical Islamists in the Syrian provinces of Al-Hasakah and Raqqa.

Turkey considers the Syrian-Kurdish fighters to be aligned to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Turkish group designated as a terrorist organisation by the U.S. and the European Union which has killed over 40,000 people within the country in its decades-long insurgency against the Turkish government.
Mess in Montclair, Attacks Get Personal, and "Reformers" Place Kids Last

The battle over education in Montclair, New Jersey took a very nasty turn as self-proclaimed school "reform" advocates launched personal attacks on their opponents. The ad hominem attacks on their opponents, including Professor Michelle Fine of the City University of New York, are not part of any discussion of issues but are designed to embarrass and silence. Though their organization calls itself Montclair Kids First, their campaign places the education of children last.

According to Stan Karp, part of a group of Montclair residents who oppose the "reformers," the town is an "unlikely target for a crusade whose calling card has been a sky-is-falling narrative of failure." In an article in Rethinking Schools, Karp described Montclair as a "racially diverse community of 38,000" that is "about 60 percent white, 30 percent African American, 10 percent Latina/o and Asian." The town has a court-ordered magnet school program established in the 1970s to ensure diversity in its schools, full-day, free pre-K programs at each of its elementary schools, strong parental involvement, and a history of efforts to address gaps in opportunity. While Karp believes "Montclair High School has ongoing tracking and equity issues," its students are generally very successful and it "typically sends more than 90 percent of its graduates to college." According to Karp, "Warts and all—and there have always been many—Montclair schools reflected a democratic vision of what public education aspired to be."

Karp argues that the current battle in Montclair is rooted in three areas of contention, one particular to Montclair, and two that are part of the broader conflict over education in the United States. Part of a 1970s court school desegregation decision was the establishment of an appointed school board selected by the mayor, supposedly to separate education policy from local politics. The other two problems are financial stress in the district because state and federal funding has declined as percent of general revenue and the emergence of the school "reform" movement backed by locally-based, politically powerful, "high-profile corporate education reformers." They include former New Jersey Education Commissioner Chris Cerf, a Chris Christie ally who will be the next Superintendent of Education in Newark, Jonathan Alter, a longtime supporter of the KIPP charter school network, Jon Schnur, the architect of the federal Race to the Top program, and officials connected to Uncommon Schools, the Achievement First Network, Success Academies, and KIPP.

The battle in Montclair heated up in 2012 when Montclair's appointed school board hired Penny MacCormack as its new school superintendent. MacCormack had close ties to the Eli Broad Foundation and was recruited to come to New Jersey from Connecticut by Cerf when he was serving in the Christie administration.

MacCormack announced her agenda as school superintendent was the same as the so-called educational reformers. She was going to implement Common Core standards, high-stakes testing, and New Jersey's new teacher evaluation mandates. Instead of building alliances, MacCormack declared war on teachers and the teacher's union promising she would be "using the data to hold educators accountable and make sure we get results." She also reshuffled leadership in the district, quickly replacing experienced staff in the central office and moving or replacing half of the district's principals.

The most contentious part of the MacCormack reforms was a proposal to implement "districtwide Common Core-aligned quarterly assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science" from kindergarten through 12th grade." MacCormack's Common Core times four incited parental and teacher opposition and the formation of a group, Montclair Cares About Schools (MCAS). After two years of organizing, petitioning, meeting, speaking at school board meetings, and fighting, MCAS pressure finally forced MacCormack to resign. One result of this campaign was that Montclair had one of the highest opt-out rates on mandated assessments of any school district in New Jersey.
Montclair, attacks get personal, and Reformers show up. According to an April 2015 article in NorthJersey.com, Katz pledged to support the reformers' group, Montclair Kids First, both politically and financially. In a March email, Katz encouraged Montclair residents to join Montclair Kids First because "outside money and influence has come in to stop any progress to make the schools better, all of this to avoid ever holding a teacher accountable and protecting employment gains versus a good education for all kids." Katz defined progress as the high-stakes standardized testing of students to measure not student learning but teacher performance. He went on to accuse a Montclair Times columnist of being "a member of the small front organization trying to resist all positive change" and denounced "the utter absence of truth-telling by journalists" who had the audacity to disagree with the high-stakes testing regime.

After MacCormack resigned, Montclair Kids First turned its attention on discrediting CUNY Professor Michelle Fine, a Montclair resident, who was active in MCAS and Sean Spiller, a statewide NJEA officer and a local councilmember who serves on the Montclair Board of School Estimate. It hired one of New Jersey's more prominent legal firms and led by Shavar Jeffries, who was active politically in nearby Newark's pro-charter school reforms. As a result of Jeffries efforts, ethics charges were brought against Spiller and the City University of New York, responding to a New York State Freedom of Information Law request, made public thousands of Fine's emails sent or received using their server.

Michelle Fine, a Montclair resident and a Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center, is a longtime educational activist and a leader of the Montclair Cares About Schools anti-MacCormack campaign. Her released emails were posted online on the Montclair Kids First website and became the subject of an attack video. According to the Montclair Times, over 400 of the emails discussed the Montclair school campaign. There is also an online petition defending Fine.

I reviewed many of the emails and the video, which is no longer posted. During the heat of the campaign and in the excitement after MacCormack resigned, Fine was intemperate, a little conspiratorial, and used inappropriate language. I confess, during the course of my lifetime I have used some of those words also and so have most of you. The emails are personally embarrassing and I am sure Michelle Fine wishes she could take some of her comments back.

The real problem is that Montclair Kids First is using Fine's emails to discredit opposition to corporate school reform and high-stakes testing and to support their campaigns to weaken teacher unions and privatize public education. They are also using their well-financed legal efforts to frighten opponents into caution and silence. Email is so fast and convenient that most users have written something in haste we wish we could erase from cyberspace. Me too. But I am ready, so if the corporate education reformers want to come after me, bring it on!

MORE: Public Schools School Reform New Jersey