

Campus Times

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Headlines Mel Weekend Amid Transphobia Controversy



BY JUSTIN O'CONNOR
MANAGING EDITOR

KEVINHU / PHOTO EDITOR

Lauded Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie headlined Meliora Weekend on Oct. 7 with a wide-ranging autobiographical talk — and, somewhat unexpectedly, there was no protest outside.

Adichie has published numerous award-winning novels, nonfiction books, and short story collections that often draw from her experiences growing up in Nsukka in Nigeria, immigrating to the United States, and navigating American academic, urban, and elite circles.

Her works touch on culture, race, feminism, religion, and politics, and reviewers have sung praises at her incisive commentary and complex storytelling. Her talk mirrored

her writing. It moved without stutters from humorous personal anecdotes to analysis of American culture and tribalism to statements on politics and literature alike, and her messages were delivered in the elegant, image-conjuring prose that marks her art.

'A demonstration was initially planned to counter the talk.'

But, despite her accolades, Adichie's Meliora Weekend invitation drew controversy. This was due to her past comments about transgender women, which a coalition of student organizations (spearheaded by UR's Students for a Democratic Society chapter) and many other groups and people worldwide have derid-

ed as transphobic.

A demonstration was initially planned to counter the talk — but, after an alleged student group schism, it gave way to a teach-in on the "harms of trans exclusion" hosted Oct. 4 by the University's Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (SBAI). The protest and teach-in were planned after statements on Adichie's comments and trans rights were exchanged between the University and the student group coalition. That discourse led to tangible gains for LGBTQ+ students — but not Adichie's disinvitation.

Read on for a full breakdown.

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College Feminists Speak Out on Sexual Violence

BY SUNAHRA TANVIR
OPINIONS EDITOR

On Oct. 12 in the Gowen Room, College Feminists hosted their annual Take Back the Night event. The program, which is part of a national movement against sexual assault on college campuses, is meant to provide a space for victims to speak out and feel heard and bring the rampant presence of sexual assault to light. In the last decade, it has become a staple fall semester event at the University.

Take Back the Night takes place within the Red Zone, the period between the beginning of the fall semester to Thanksgiving break, during which over 50% of campus sexual assaults occur.

"Every year, we see how important Take Back the Night is to every single person who attends," said College Feminists co-president Navya Soogoor. This year is her second time being involved in the planning of the event. She told the *Campus Times* that "hearing that having Take Back the Night on Campus has made even a single student feel safe" is what motivates her and the College Feminists to continue hosting this event.

According to Soogoor, Take Back the Night "[gives] survivors of sexual assault and rape a space to share their stories where they can feel supported and comforted by our club and the community." She has seen them

"take home that impact in a lasting way."

The two goals for 2023 specifically, according to Soogoor, were "empowerment and education."

For Soogoor, "hearing that having Take Back the Night on Campus has made even a single student feel safe" is motivation enough for her and the College Feminists to continue hosting this event.

Take Back the Night is split into three sections. The first section educates students about on-campus and off-campus resources and allows speakers from those resources to speak to attendees. This year, Willow and RESTORE were the two organizations highlighted.

Maddi Howard, the University's RESTORE advocate, explained how RESTORE works as a confidential resource that can provide sexual assault victims assistance through legal and medical processes.

"Take Back the Night and events like it have been a powerful way for survivors to share their stories and use their voice for decades," said Howard.

According to Howard, student activism is vital to shifting campus culture. "Students do have power in their community," she said, "and speaking out can help survivors feel like they aren't alone."

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SA IMPACT 2.0 Aims to Highlight Student Concerns on Campus

BY RACHEL CAREN
NEWS EDITOR

The official petitioning website of the Students' Association (SA), SA IMPACT relaunched earlier this month, and will continue to serve as a hub for tabling student concerns.

"Your words have consequences."

First launched in early 2015, IMPACT was taken offline last semester for a structural reworking. Three key changes have hit the platform, although the overarching idea

of IMPACT remains the same.

Students are able to create, sign, and comment on petitions after signing into the IMPACT site with their NetIDs. The tool is not anonymous — a student's NetID is permanently associated with any petitions or comments they make.

As a platform for advocacy, students are encouraged to bring their ideas to IMPACT — but, as the SA reminds, "your words have consequences." Petitions that fail to abide by the Code of Conduct or Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment will be removed from the platform.

IMPACT petitions are reviewed and responded to by SA once a signature threshold has been met. Currently, a petition must reach 300 signatures to mandate SA action, "keeping in line with the original vision of 5% of the student body," according to the SA.

'The tool is not anonymous.'

After the signature threshold has been met, the given petition will be added to the following Senate agenda for discussion, according to the SA website. Delegated



BRIANLY / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

members of the SA will then meet with the author of the petition to more closely examine their concerns, and work

to present a list of actionable items to the Senate regarding the concerns at hand.

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When asked about what actions the University could take to better support victims, Howard hopes that new federal Title IX regulations to strengthen protections for students experiencing sexual harassment — of which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, should have a final ruling this month, will make the Title IX process more trauma-informed and easier for survivors to participate in.”

Between 2020 and 2022,

there have been 105 reported cases of sexual assault on campus. While students are encouraged to speak up when they hear harmful language or jokes and resources remain available on campus for survivors and bystanders alike, events like Take Back the Night further promote the importance of pushing for accountability on campus.

The second portion of the night was the Survivor Speak Out, in which members of the audience were encouraged to share their experiences with sexual assault. Howard

felt that “bravery [within the room] was contagious” and that she “could feel it continue to grow in power as the night progressed.” She was “so proud of survivors for coming forward and sharing their stories.”

The third portion of the night was the march. Attendees used markers and posterboard provided by College Feminists to create a variety of signs denouncing rape culture on university campuses. Then, they marched out of Wilson Commons and into the Fraternity Quad. This was

them “taking back the night.”

One of the marchers, who did not want to be identified, informed the CT of how she had never been assaulted herself but this event worked to broaden her sense of empathy towards other victims. She wishes that resources to protect these victims were more highly publicized by the University.

A group of girls from Sigma Delta Tau also told the CT how impactful the night was. They found it “ridiculous” that the University has only a singular required training

about sexual assault for those involved in sororities or fraternities, “especially considering how big of a problem it is in Greek life.”

When asked about the purpose of Take Back the Night, one of the girls said, “It’s so important to expose that sexual assault happens on this campus. It isn’t just something that happens at party schools. It happens at the University. We need to know that.”

Tanvir is a member of the Class of 2025.

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Adichie’s comments

Adichie’s controversial comments on trans women stretch back about six years.

She was first asked to discuss the subject during a 2017 interview with Cathy Newman from Britain’s Channel 4 News. The two were discussing feminism when Newman questioned how trans women fit into the picture.

CATHY NEWMAN: Staying with this issue of feminism, femininity — does it matter how you’ve arrived at being a woman? I mean, for example, if you’re a trans woman who grew up identifying as a man, who grew up enjoying the privileges of being a man, does that take away from becoming a woman? Are you any less of a real woman?

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: So when people talk about, you know, are trans women women? My feeling is trans women are trans women. And I think if you’ve lived in the world as a man, with the privileges that the world accords to men, and then sort of change, switch gender, it’s difficult for me to accept that then we can equate your experience with the experience of a woman who has lived from the beginning in the world as a woman and who has not been accorded those privileges that men are. I don’t think it’s a good thing to conflate everything into one. I don’t think it’s a good thing to talk about women’s issues being exactly the same as the issues of trans women. What I’m saying is that gender is not biology. Gender is sociology.

Critics contended that Adichie’s statement dismissed the womanhood of trans women and the oppression that trans women face even before transition. The reception prompted Adichie to clarify her views on her Facebook page.

In that statement, Adichie said she supports trans rights and that peoples’ criticisms were valid, but she

reaffirmed her opposition to conflating “the gender experiences of trans women with that of women born female,” though she also said that acknowledging differences between the experiences of cis and trans women shouldn’t elevate one group’s experiences over the other’s.

“I think the impulse to say that trans women are women just like women born female are women comes from a need to make trans issues mainstream,” the statement reads. “Because by making them mainstream, we might reduce the many oppressions they experience. But it feels disingenuous to me. The intent is a good one but the strategy feels untrue. Diversity does not have to mean division.

“Because we can oppose violence against trans women while also acknowledging differences,” the statement continues. “Because we should be able to acknowledge differences while also being supportive. Because we do not have to insist, in the name of being supportive, that everything is the same. Because we run the risk of reducing gender to a single, essentialist thing.”

‘Critics contended that Adichie’s statement dismissed the womanhood of trans women.’

While the response to the statement was mixed, the majority of the reactions were negative, The Guardian reported in 2017.

Adichie was again criticized as transphobic in 2020 after she defended an essay by J.K. Rowling titled “J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues.” In that essay, Rowling criticized “the new trans activism” on a number of grounds, particularly for, in her words, “doing demonstrable harm in seeking to erode ‘woman’ as a political and biological class and offering cover to [sexual] predators like few [move-

ments] before it.”

Adichie called the essay “a perfectly reasonable piece” in an interview with The Guardian, sparking backlash — including from fellow Nigerian author Akwaeke Emezi, who graduated from Adichie’s writing workshop and whose work has been edited by Adichie.

Adichie, in turn, published yet another response in June 2021. This time it was an essay titled “It is Obscene: a True Reflection in Three Parts” in which she discussed her personal relationship with two unnamed graduates of her writing workshop, Emezi being one, who criticized her for her comments.

Adichie called them “opportunistic,” noting that they could have reached out to her personally rather than levying public criticism.

“I felt they knew what I stood for and that I fully supported the rights of trans people, and that I do not wish anybody dead,” Adichie wrote.

She finished the essay by blasting as “obscene” their and others’ use of social media to call people out, among other things.

Then, in Nov. 2022, Adichie caught flack for yet another interview with The Guardian — this time in an opinion article by Zoe Williams wholly centered on censorship, self-censorship, and public criticism.

“So somebody who looks like my brother — he says, ‘I’m a woman’, and walks into the women’s bathroom, and a woman goes, ‘You’re not supposed to be here’, and she’s transphobic?” The Guardian quoted Adichie as saying.

Williams, the interviewer, then suggested that Adichie’s brother would “look different if he were living as a woman.”

“No, of course not. And it would not reflect the experience of many people. I think that’s different from saying, ‘Women’s rights are threatened by trans rights.’”

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The SA will then provide an official response to any petitions that have met the signature threshold, as well as an overview of the work being done on the issue.

IMPACT is also now accessible to Eastman students — and petitions can be labeled as strictly for Eastman, River Campus, or else University-wide. The Eastman Students’ Association will take action as needed on any Eastman-exclusive petitions.

SA President Daniel Pyskaty stressed the importance of IMPACT as not only a way to voice the concerns of the student body, but as a data-gathering tool for student advocacy.

“It was absolutely seen as a priority to get SA IMPACT back up and running since the original site went offline early last semester,” he said. “It has throughout the years not only highlighted some of the most pressing concerns of campus to the Students’ Association, but provides invaluable quantifiable data to use in our advocacy efforts.”

Although the original IMPACT was hardly immune to less serious propositions, the

platform has hosted a number of hot-button petitions throughout the years.

One of the most-signed petitions in 2020 — with over 1,000 signatures — called for the University to take action to make an “impactful difference” in support of Black activism and cultural diversity — and called for a promise by the University to never arm Public Safety officers.

‘IMPACT is also now accessible to Eastman students.’

Other petitions regarding amendments to the University’s COVID-19 response, the continuation of the pass-fail policy, and a break in the academic calendar, made rounds throughout the student body.

As a whole, the launch of IMPACT 2.0 aims to continue the history of student advocacy and activism on campus.

“So as they said years ago, and we’ll say again, make your impact,” Pyskaty said. “Let us know what we need to see changed on campus and we’ll work with you to make that lasting impact on campus.”

Caren is a member of the Class of 2024.

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America Is Divided, but Judy Woodruff Remains Optimistic

BY JUSTIN O'CONNOR &
ALLIE TAY
MANAGING EDITORS

After a narrowly-avoided government shutdown and amid chaos in the House of Representatives and war in Europe and the Middle East — Judy Woodruff still has hope.

At her Oct. 7 keynote address headlining Meliora Weekend, Judy Woodruff, a PBS senior correspondent who has worked prominently in television news since 1976, spoke on the polarized state of the nation, diving into the good, the bad, the ugly — and the future — of American politics.

From stage right through a well-camouflaged door, after welcome remarks by University President Sarah C. Mangelsdorf, Woodruff stepped out to thunderous applause. After some ice-breaking quips, the news legend cut to the chase.

‘Woodruff spoke on the polarized state of the nation, diving into the good, the bad, the ugly - and the future - of American politics.’

“Washington is really messed up,” Woodruff said. “I live there, and I’m going to tell you it’s worse than it looks.”

Briefing on the 2024 election, the 40-plus-year D.C. insider said that the national picture doesn’t look too bright. According to polls, the majority of Americans don’t prefer President Biden or former President Trump.

“It’s going to be dark,” she said. “It’s going to be dirty. It’s time to fasten your seatbelts.”

Woodruff also touched on the collapse of local news, and how

that weighs into the national political crisis. When tens of thousands of reporters get laid off and local newspapers are stripped to the bare-bones, Woodruff said public attention turns to the national news — a constant broadcasting of what’s happening in Washington, a constant reminder of the negative.

“‘It’s going to be dark,’ she said. ‘It’s going to be dirty. It’s time to fasten your seatbelts.’”

Through her current journalistic project “America at a Crossroads,” Woodruff has been working to understand why Americans are so divided. Compared to the political climate of the ‘70s, something has changed, she said. The American people have internalized their partisan identities. Differing opinions on legislation, Supreme Court appointees, and all things on the Hill have moved beyond the realm of mere disagreement to the point where members of different parties aren’t able to sit down and talk as people.

“What has been a divide is now a gaping chasm,” Woodruff said.

Woodruff detailed efforts by groups working with ordinary Americans, one at a time, to find solutions to amend the nation’s divide. The goals are to enforce sit-down conversations between people of different parties or with opposing points of view and to encourage reconciliation by putting humanity first and beliefs second. Woodruff’s own project requires 15 months of reporting across the country as she hits small towns and big cities to

research and address the divide.

Near the end of her speech, Woodruff had some words of advice for the audience to initiate these conversations with people so different from them for themselves, to create change starting from the ground up.

“Giving people a chance, and get[ting] to know them before we judge them based on their political views, maybe we’re going to find out they’re someone we can talk to, maybe even be friends with,” Woodruff said. “That they’re not a monster.”

During a backstage interview, the Campus Times asked Woodruff about how our college-age generation might think about cutting through polarization and demonization in cases where politics does seem to encroach on personal identity — as is the case with many LGBTQ+, gender-related, and racial issues.

“We’re now working through other issues of identity in our country, and we have to have these conversations, and we can’t help but to feel personal about it,” she said. “As I said, I mean, I think it’s healthy to have these debates. It’s healthy to discuss it. And so I’m not saying you shouldn’t feel deeply about something — whether it’s LGBTQ, trans, whatever it is — but we also need to take a breath and recognize that the other side is not Satan, which is how some of these conversations turn out. But that calls for understanding on both sides.”

O’Connor is a member of the Class of 2024.

Tay is a member of the Class of 2025.

Project LTF Presents at Local High School, Expands to University

BY RITU PEDDINTI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Project Level the Field (LTF), a University-based volunteer initiative, hosted a college application workshop at Edison Career and Technology High School on Oct. 4; the event was the first in a series of four to come over the next few weeks.

Featuring a presentation about the CommonApp and available application resources as well as small-group discussion to help students build college lists, the workshop highlighted future academic and career opportunities for Rochester students, and encouraged them to reach out for help — free of cost.

Project LTF’s primary mission is provision of high-quality college application resources to all students, regardless of background or financial means. Supplementing school counselor workload and providing new avenues for college and career exploration, LTF fulfills a vast need in the Rochester community, and looks to expand to the university level.

“We help others just as we were helped,” says University junior and Vice President Michael Christof. “To lead the next generation, we must be willing to share our experiences and offer help to those in need.”

‘LTF’s primary mission is the provision of high-quality college application resources to all students, regardless of background or financial means.’

Among the services provided by Project LTF are one-on-one mentoring, a suggested application timeline and unique organizational resources, essay review, and interview preparation — all of which are free of cost. Mentor-mentee relationships are maintained throughout the application cycle, with the goal of fully seeing each student through their success.

“The current ranges for admissions counseling is \$150-200 an hour,” says University senior and co-founder and Director of Outreach Adarsh Mavathaveedu. “It’s really unfortunate that applicants aren’t judged for the quality of their application, but for the money they pour into it.”

In Oct. 2022, Mavathaveedu helped his younger brother throughout the college application process and realized the value of his experience and guidance in understanding college admissions and financial aid.

Recognizing that many students could use the same guidance, Mavathaveedu recruited co-founders — sophomores Hana Zhang and Keira Donnelly — to the cause, and Project LTF was born. While the program was being established, the trio

recruited mentors and advisors from various universities, including Princeton, NJIT, and North Carolina State.

Since its inception, Project LTF has expanded to 19 undergraduate mentors and peer advisors, and 46 involved high school students — the focus for now, though, remains on benefiting the local community.

Over the course of the next few weeks, LTF will host three more events with Edison Tech, guiding students to build their college lists, set up their CommonApp, write and give elevator pitches, and succeed in their career of choice.

“Rochester has an astonishingly low graduation rate, a low percentage of kids who go onto higher education, and a high poverty rate, and they often tie into each other,” said Zhang. “It’s important that we have our home base here and first give back to the community that gives so much to us as our home away from home.”

‘Services include one-on-one tutoring, essay review, organizational resources, and interview preparation - all of which are free of cost.’

The organization is actively working on building connections with local districts and charter schools, and is seeking funding to provide a university tour for prospective students. Beyond college admissions, mentors also seek to provide holistic review of vocational and career alternatives to college, as well as a general understanding of options after high school.

Up next on their radar is expansion of mentorship into higher education; LTF is slated to conduct their first annual Pre-Med Symposium in collaboration with fraternity Sigma Phi Epsilon.

Featuring insights from University research ambassadors, emergency department research associates, and tried-and-true senior pre-med students, the symposium aims to ease anxiety about the application process, answer questions regarding preparation, and provide advice to underclassmen about next steps.

“One of our main goals is to build the LTF community here at UR,” says Mavathaveedu. “Everyone here is pretty collaborative, and we want to help one another succeed.”

The symposium will take place on Nov. 3 from 4-6 p.m. in Wegmans 1400. For more information or resources from Project Level the Field, visit www.projectlevelthefield.com.

Peddinti is a member of the Class of 2024.



SARAHWOODAMS / PUBLISHER

Interested in helping cover interesting University events like Judy Woodruff’s Meliora Weekend talk?

Come to a Campus Times budget meeting!

Meetings are on Sunday evenings at 6 p.m. in Wilson Commons 104.

OPINIONS

The End of Affirmative Action

“We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today.”
—Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, concerning affirmative action in her majority opinion draft for *Bollinger v. Grutter*, 2003.

BY HELENA FENG
STAFF WRITER

On June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court overturned its previous ruling on affirmative action, eradicating over 40 years of precedent and marking the beginning of a renewed era of ambivalence in the future of college admissions. Despite having its share of proponents and critics alike, this contentious decision had one universal consensus — that affirmative action catalyzed a salient shift in the culture around accessibility to selective colleges during its standing duration, and that its revocation will have enormous consequences on the nation’s marginalized youth.

Affirmative action has long been treated with a sense of begrudging tolerance and there is no exception here. Former Justice O’Connor’s infamous statement has been interpreted widely as mandating an expiration date for affirmative action, fueling a brigade of recent adversaries calling for its overturning.

What’s more, the blatant transient undertones of the past upholding jurisdictions have long carried an air of impatience uncomfortably transparent in many of affirmative action’s biggest adversaries — many of who often use this point euphemistically to legitimize other, more sinister, anti-affirmative action sentiments.

The zero-sum nature of college admissions has certainly helped foster a chilling animosity against marginalized communities. In fact, common talking points of anti-affirmative action adversaries is that affirmative action unfairly disadvantages Asian American students by causing more qualified Asian applicants to be rejected in favor of far less qualified minority candidates, or that minorities that benefit from affirmative action do not “deserve” such benefits.

However, such obvious retaliatory sentiments are typically absent in arguments that make greater attempts at objectivity, which instead have a surface premise that appears quite reasonable. If the original devisers of affirmative action acknowledge that the policy is not intended to persist indefinitely, it would, in fact, seem correct to call for an end to affirmative action when it seems that not only has the inequality it was designed to combat has dissipated substantially, but also that the designated time frame for its termination is

fast approaching.

The magnanimous effects of affirmative action necessitate that it be handled responsibly, and certainly with more delicacy than the laissez-faire optimism of complete dissolution. It may seem as if many of the most egregious of systemic obstructions that barred marginalized communities from the same institutions as their white counterparts have been struck down, yet rarely, if ever, has law been accurately indicative of the deeply complex effects of centuries of generational suppression.

Despite what many may have anticipated, discriminatory policy and their respective cultural and socioeconomic consequences are neither coupled nor jointly dissolved — especially not when the discriminatory policies in question remain ubiquitous, albeit discreet and often unnoticed, in current policy.

To name one example of many, comparing the distribution of government funding, which is typically based on local taxes and thus higher for wealthier districts, in majority-white versus majority-Black districts reflects a staggering level of structural inequity that cannot reasonably be resolved without substantial legislative action. Funding disparities in lower-level education are also similarly reflected in respective higher education systems such as HBCUs (which typically have a total enrollment of approximately 75% Black students), culminating in unsurprising consequences reflected in census data measuring metrics of success.

As of 2021, the median wealth — a summative analysis of numerous factors such as home equity and income — disparity between white and Black households continues to exceed a ratio of 10:1. The proportion of Black Americans who have college degrees (22.6%) still falls significantly short of White Americans (50%). Such disparities appear to be intimately tied to education, as households where the highest level of education obtained was a bachelor’s or graduate degree had a median wealth of, respectively, nearly five and 10 times more than those with just a high school degree.

It is naive to pretend as if these disparities exist independently from the systemic inequalities that have plagued generations of oppressed Americans. To expect that the aftermath of generations

of legislatively imposed restricted access to education, employment, and housing is temporary and self-resolving is to condemn marginalized groups to a cycle of inequity that seems to only be reinforced by consistently passive and backwards lawmaking. It is, in essence, to deny that the national actions, successes, and failures of our country create legacies which require consistently proactive effort to correct.

The progress in diversifying university student populations that has occurred in the past decades is undeniable, but such progress is a direct result of programs such as affirmative action which not only lower the barriers to entry, but work to generate a counternarrative that recognizes students from historically oppressed communities as assets to creating the diverse perspectives that should characterize all institutions of higher learning.

A relevant question then arises: How far reaching, exactly, is this decision? To some, the outcry in response to the Supreme Court’s decision may seem unnecessary — indeed, universities where the use of affirmative action were most controversial were principally the most selective of private colleges, thus representing a minority of total college applicants.

Beyond misunderstanding the widespread secondary impacts on admissions culture and subsequent shifts in selectivity in currently less selective universities — a result we’ve seen already with the abolishment of affirmative action in the UC system — such

arguments reveal a dispassionate and negligent apathy towards this tragic loss of opportunity.

It is a cruel reality, indeed, but reality nonetheless, that students who attend more prestigious and selective universities not only have substantially more access to resources that ultimately help build an appealing profile for prospective careers, but also that prestige often creates the pipeline into the most desirable, powerful, and lucrative positions.

What’s more, recent polling done at major journalism organizations such as The New York Times and The Washington Post show a shocking homogeneity in the composition of their staff’s educational backgrounds, with a disproportionate number of writers and editors hailing from Ivy League or similarly prestigious schools.

Now, we must ask ourselves this: Is it in our best interest to propagate a society which prioritizes the voices of the cultural and economic elite? Where the most prominently read journalism on the happenings of this country continues to be spearheaded by writers who barely have a pulse on the labor issues, housing insecurity, or financial crises all-too-common for the average American? A ginger, sometimes even sanctimonious unfamiliarity characterized much of the reporting done on many of the working-class crises arising from the years of pandemic — exactly indicative of how journalism, and by proxy the diversity in perspective of all institutions, suffers

from an absence of class and racial diversity.

“It was, however, an instrumental step in the right direction — a direction that has now become seemingly abandoned by the very people tasked to uphold the constitutional promise of equality.”

Moving forward, it is imperative that we approach these issues with the understanding that progress is slow, unclear, and imperfect. Affirmative action, along with many other attempts at correcting the damage done by systematic injustice, was not, by any means, a perfect system. It was, however, an instrumental step in the right direction — a direction that has now become seemingly abandoned by the very people tasked to uphold the constitutional promise of equality. Indeed, the unfortunate nature of trying to remediate the cultural and systemic consequences of centuries of oppression is the inevitable creation of policies which do not have catch-all solutions to the intersectional complexities of racial injustice.

Lack of straightforwardness is not an excuse for complacency, however; above all, America must remain diligent in its fight for equality in opportunity for all.

Feng is a member of the Class of 2025.

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Editor’s note: In the last print edition story “New UHS Grant Funds Lyft Rides for Mental Health Services,” Wording has changed to reflect that UCC and UHS conduct both remote and in-person mental health services.

The Freshman Have Advice for YOU

BY ELENA BACHMANN
STAFF WRITER

When you check the Campus Times website, you are met with dozens of senior introspective pieces, but not a single one about freshmen! So I, as a freshman, thought it would be cool to share the opinions and voices of our class for a change. After all, we know best.

I went around and surveyed over 50 freshmen to see what they thought of the University so far. I asked what forms of culture shock students experienced, what they've learned over the course of the past couple months, and what they wish they knew from the get-go — which, since none of us knew that student articles on the UR Admissions Blog existed, was a lot.

'I asked what forms of culture shock students experienced...which, since none of us knew that student articles on the UR Admissions Blog existed, was a lot.'

We did not come into university expecting the dining halls to all be closed from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. We never knew the necessity of wearing shower shoes and how strange it is if you don't. (It's terrifying how a guy in my dorm doesn't wear them. Is he not afraid of roach poo or Sue B. fungus?)

We never knew about the disgusting, muggy heat in the beginning of the semester or about Danforth being closed on the weekends or the maze that is Rush Rhees. We didn't know how much we'll miss home.

The responses I got from other first-years were diverse:

"Dude, I didn't come to campus before move-in... and I live two and a half hours away. I didn't know this was a STEM school... really a shot in the dark," Addie Jareo said.

"People just openly shotgun energy drinks in the middle of the library ... Everyone here has a caffeine addiction," Ava Memmelaar said.

But after over a month, some of us think we've got it all figured out! And you first-years (or upperclassmen, I'm not here to judge) who feel like they haven't quite gotten the hang of things yet, your peers have some advice for you!

For those worried about making friends, everyone's in the same boat. Those surveyed highlighted reaching

out to strangers, using your free time to hang out in a lounge and meet people, and joining clubs as good ways to get involved. Your first friend group is not the end-all be-all, and you don't have to be friends with everyone. Just put yourself out there."

Freshman who are worried about your classes — I've got you covered. When asked to share advice, at least 15 of us insisted on the importance of just attending. In particular, Alice Weaver's practical truth — "you tell yourself you'll watch the lecture later and you never will" — and Emily English's advocating to go to lecture "so your money doesn't go to waste" might just be the motivation you need to roll out of bed for your 9 a.m..

Everyone had something to say, but I think that the winner for the most niche piece of advice must go to Chloe Pernía, who tells me, "DON'T SLEEP WITH SOMEONE AFTER A WEEK EVEN IF THEY TELL YOU THEY WANT A RELATIONSHIP!" I don't know how applicable that one is to the general public, but I'm sure someone out there needs to hear it.

On a more serious note, we first-years have some wants and needs from administration and ideas to improve campus life. Maya Scotkin begs "please put doors on the showers!! It's very awkward to shower in a coed bathroom with only a thin curtain!" Zoe Matias notes that facilities "never took out the third bed (I'm in a double)."

"It's very awkward to shower in a coed bathroom with only a thin curtain!"

Addie Jareo is begging someone to "CLEAN THOSE NASTY CARPETS!"

Matthew Repetskyi suggests we switch to "chip cards instead of swipes."

And I couldn't even give you the number of people who asked for air conditioning in dorms other than Genesee Hall or better lighting, but I think that that would go under "wants."

However, Alice Weaver pointed out how "it seems like more of the issues are fundamental so there's not really a quick fix."

At the end of the day, we first-years still have a lot to learn, but I hope that you've found our perspective interesting. Also, please remember to clean your water bottle every now and again.

Bachmann is a member of the Class of 2027.

In Advocacy For Student Activism



KAITLYN WONG / STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

BY KEERTANA TERALA
STAFF WRITER

As a woman of color, it's not an uncommon experience for me to be constantly told that I don't know what I'm talking about or to always be spoken over when I use my voice.

I grew up in a household that encouraged ignorance when it came to the world. The environment of my youth made me naive in regards to the realities of the world around me. I never knew the potential I had to make a difference in such a world.

However, during my high school years, I delved into the world of public speaking and discovered a stage — a platform where my voice was not just heard but demanded to be listened to. Public speaking became my way of advocating for myself and for the issues that resonated deeply with me.

When I embarked on my college journey, I began to familiarize myself with many of the issues I had known very little about in high school. I learned so much more about the political, social, and economic state of the world. I had the privilege of meeting people who introduced me to these spheres, opening my eyes to the significance of becoming a student activist. I learned about the importance of diversifying my sources, meticulously fact-checking

my information, not letting mainstream media dictate my beliefs, and, above all, following my heart.

Through this I found myself realizing that there's more than just one way I as an individual can bring about more attention to certain issues, and founded an organization on campus, ROCTalks. It aims to gather people with common interests, along with diverse views, and present them a stage to share their ideas, beliefs, and experiences without judgment and with an opportunity to learn more.

'I learned about the importance of diversifying my sources, meticulously fact-checking my information, not letting mainstream media dictate my beliefs, and, above all, following my heart.'

I began speaking up for the issues that were important to me. I began raising awareness on social media. I engaged in thought-provoking discussions in my classes. I tried my best to let my voice be heard. Through this, I realized the profound importance of being brave enough to use the voices we possess. It is so easy for people to

dismiss the idea that a single voice can change the world or address the global challenges we face. Yet, a single voice can make those around us pause and reconsider our beliefs, particularly if they hold differing views. Even a single voice matters.

In my personal journey, I've engaged in numerous debates with family members who were not well-informed about various issues. While there were instances where I was humbled and learned more about a situation than I expected, there were also moments when my voice compelled someone to reevaluate their stance. As Martin Luther King Jr. profoundly stated, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

There is always something worth speaking about, whether it pertains to issues within our own nation or those across the globe. Our world is far from perfect, and it never will be. Being afraid to let your voice be heard is equivalent to accepting the notion that you don't believe in the importance of that idea. So, let your voice be a beacon of change, because, as history has shown, even a single voice can inspire a chorus of transformation.

Terala is a member of the Class of 2025.

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Notes by Nadia: I Love Being a Woman

BY NADIA PENTOLINO
COLUMNIST

I love being a woman — there's something so empowering about it. We women have each others' backs, we support each other, and we hype each other up. Womanhood is so special.

I love being able to get dolled up when I feel like it. I love wearing makeup, skirts, heels, or anything that makes me feel feminine. I love all the feminine colors — the pinks, the purples, the pastels.

Women are strong. We menstruate and we give birth. We experience life's greatest pains but we persevere and make it through them even stronger than before.

I love the sense of community that comes with being a woman. I know I can talk about any personal issues with other women and always receive the support I need. We can laugh together and we can cry together. Women are never afraid to be vulnerable with each other.

Society has tried time and time again to bring women down but we never let that

happen. We come together to fight for our rights — be it abortion, equal pay, or just the basic need to be seen as human beings.

Women are stunning. We come in all shapes, sizes, and races. And no matter what, we are always beautiful. We don't have to listen to the stereotypes society has laid out for us, because we're gorgeous just the way we are.

'Women are strong. We menstruate and give birth. We experience life's greatest pains but we persevere and make it through them even stronger than before.'

Women are smart — we are more likely to attend college and graduate with a four year degree than men. This is despite numerous historic educational barriers. We are now doing something that would've been unheard of so many years ago. But then again, women are always

breaking boundaries.

I love the sense of trust that we women have among ourselves. I always feel safer when I'm with a woman and I know other women feel the same way. There's something about being in each others' presence that brings us comfort and peace.

I love our mannerisms — our "girl dinners," how we "slay," and when we "mother." I love the nicknames that we give each other, like "girl boss" and "queen." And I especially enjoy the sense of sisterhood that we all share. We may fight and bicker, but ultimately, we love each other endlessly. We'll always be there for each other in the end.

I'm so proud to be part of such an amazing community. I feel powerful being a woman. The world may be against us, but as long as we have each other, we will always come out victorious. Because women are strong, beautiful, and amazing human beings.

Pentolino is a member of the Class of 2025.

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The Culture of "Rotting"

BY MERCEDES STINER
STAFF WRITER

When I think of TikTok, the first thought I have is that it is incredibly unreliable. Of course, there are some truthful videos that do help people or give out good advice, but the majority of the content should only be taken with a grain of salt. Me personally? I would never take what TikTok says to heart.

TikTok has this new phrase of "bed rot" — a phrase describing the phenomenon of laying in bed and doing nothing. I don't really understand why laying in bed is considered rotting I guess if you're doing, "nothing" you are decaying?

Society has this unrealistic belief that if someone does nothing for even a moment, they are "rotting." Therefore, taking a moment to relax in your home becomes "bed rot."

However, sometimes you just need a break. Life is hard and shitty and some days are good and some are bad. Sometimes, someone has a long string of bad days and it really affects them. They need time off.

'Taking a moment to relax in your home becomes 'bed rot.'

Laying in bed and doing nothing can be good for your mental health. It can be the break you need to keep going. We should not shame

people for this. If that is what you need to keep going and to push through, then there is no "rotting." It would actually be rotting if you kept going when your mental and physical health is dwindling and you were breaking your body down without taking a break.

'Laying in bed and doing nothing can be good for your mental health.'

I lay in bed all the time. Sometimes I listen to music while staring at a wall. Sometimes, I'm just reading a book. I like laying in bed doing nothing productive. I'm not doing homework or studying or cleaning my dorm or looking at grad schools. I am doing nothing but taking a break and doing what makes me happy for a few hours. There's nothing wrong with that.

This mentality of being productive 24 hours a day is what will kill us and make us the most unhappy. I believe that as long as you can pay your bills and are healthy physically and mentally, then you can do whatever makes you happy in your personal time (as long as it's safe and consensual). It doesn't matter if it's taking a three hour hike, playing games or just laying in bed. As long as you are happy and healthy it doesn't matter what some "picture perfect" person on TikTok thinks.

Stiner is a member of the Class of 2025.

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CULTURE

CT Views: Todd Theatre's Orlando

BY ELENA BACHMANN, BRYAN BURKE, RACHEL CAREN, KYLE CHANG, EMILY ENGLISH, AND ALYSSA KOH
CT STAFF

Midterm season, and Meliora Weekend basically flattened the staff of the CT on Oct. 7, rendering our production schedule — from noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays in Wilson Commons 103, for those interested — semi-useless.

Thus, instead of hanging out in the office all day, some of our staff decided to touch grass that afternoon and enjoy the performing arts.

Our backgrounds with the University's International Theater Program (colloquially referred to as 'Todd shows') are varied — one of us has been a frequent reviewer of campus productions, a couple of us have seen one or two shows, and for two of us (the first-years) this was the first of Todd's performances to grace their retinas.

Even so, we all found ourselves in the Sloan Performing Arts Center (SPAC), underneath the trellises of white clothing, unaware of the tomfoolery that was about to unfold. And boy, was there tomfoolery. And shenanigans. And a surprising amount of choreography.

"Orlando," written by Virginia Woolf, adapted by Sarah Ruhl, and produced by the International Theatre Program, is — according to director Will Pomerantz — a "sharply observed comedy of manners, spotlighting the absurdities that female-identifying individuals endured for centuries (and continue to endure in our own time)."

The novel has been highlighted as a big part of queer literature, with Orlando's shifting perception of personal gender being a focal point of the piece. Ruhl's stage adaptation, which she says "[presses] hard on the musculature of the original, and without leaving a bruise," stays faithful to Woolf's writing.

Pomerantz takes the faithfulness of the dialogue and throws it into a modernized fever dream of staging, with cuts of songs including Billie Eilish's recent "Barbie" hit "What Was I Made For," They Might Be Giants' "Istanbul (Not Constantinople)," and The Monkees' "I'm a Believer" (hilariously referred to by one of our writers in the CT office as "that Shrek song").

In addition, "Orlando" boasts multiple dance breaks, plenty of gorgeous costume changes, and enough balloons, packing peanuts, and random one-off props to make any theater tech nerd more anxiously giddy than normal.

As a result of all this — and more — "Orlando" may be the second most campy thing to hit campus — falling just short of Sigma Delta Tau's annual Mr. UofR pageant.

'Pomerantz takes the faithfulness of the dialogue and throws it into a modernized fever dream of staging.'

Todd Theatre is often known for its dramas — its "Crucibles," its "King Richards," and its shows titled after stupid, expletive-ridden birds. As a result, the new comedic territory that "Orlando" skates into feels fresh and unexplored, especially for all the familiar faces.

At least half the cast have been staples of Todd Theatre for at least the past few semesters, and seeing them get to flex their humor muscles after multiple productions of desperate shouting was a nice relief from the norm.

Sophomore Stella Carleton (who played Elizabeth Proctor in last year's "The Crucible") leads "Orlando's" merry band as the show's titular protagonist, and compellingly chameleons in and out of the childlike wonder of a precocious boy and the growing sadness of a lost soul while wearing what amounts to a gussied-up morph suit.

That's not to say that any of the chorus fell flat in comparison. "Orlando's" script hinges on group storytelling — and everyone commits to the bits hard.

Some Examples (of the many we could choose from):

- Props to junior Gabe Pierce for swaggering around in a pair of heels tall enough to scare an America's Next Top Model contestant (and for — when we went — playing off a very real fall for very relieved laughs).
- Sophomore Ember Johnson pulls off being legitimately scary amidst a hilariously poofy ball gown, and may have done some of the most accurate accent work any of us have ever seen in a Todd show (which tracks, given their stint in TOOP's *Pride and Prejudice* last fall).
- Senior Britt Broadus pulls off both a sustained Russian accent and a stiff upper lip — props to voice coaching from senior lecturer Sara Bickweat Penner — while also, like senior Chris Riveros, playing off Carleton sweetly for the softer, more intimate beats of the show.

On a technical level, SPAC's black box, Smith Theater, was covered in barren plywood — potentially an homage to the stripping down of Orlando and their identity over the course of the show.

Three large wooden tables on industrial castors served as the main set pieces for



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most scenes, standing in for everything from a Russian ambassador's ship to a London theater.

'As a result, the new comedic territory that "Orlando" skates into feels fresh and unexplored, especially for all the familiar faces.'

To continue with the wood motif, gender, for Orlando, is like an oak tree — something that looks sturdy. But trees sway, and even fall — and by the second act, Orlando discovers her connection with womanhood after having lived as a man for decades.

The poem that Orlando works on throughout the show, "The Oak Tree," is something they are unable to put the words to for centuries — until the revelation of her womanhood sinks in. This recurring theme is almost always played for laughs — something Pomerantz seems to have narrowed in on.

"Orlando" offsets thought provoking questions about gender, sexuality, depression, and life with hilarious wigs and stunts. In some ways, that offsetting is delightfully entertaining; in others, it feels as if it sometimes passes over the chance to address more interesting

questions about gender identity in Orlando's world.

In a similar way, while the cast does a great job handling all the hats they have to wear, the lack of gender fluidity in the casting of ensemble roles does not facilitate the questioning of how we perceive gender in society (which the show reinforces as having basis in dress and performance).

'"Orlando" offsets thought provoking questions about gender, sexuality, depression, and life with hilarious wigs and stunts.'

Why not have one of Orlando's courtly loves be played by a cis man in the cast, tutu and all? Why not have the performance of "Othello" cast two men as Othello and Desdemona (as was common for Elizabethan era Shakespeare)?

Beyond the questions of gender, sexuality, and comedic timing, "Orlando" is no stranger to the darker times of life. Centuries pass, and characters are lost — only to reappear, hundreds of years later, as nothing more than memory.

Gender in "Orlando" is vital — but so is the certainty of death.

"Orlando" actively engages with the concept of gender and sexuality. While the humor may shy away from the most revelatory kind of wit, the text's snappy timing does strike at some hidden depth.

Beyond the love and the laughter, Orlando's plight is a struggle with loss. We're born, we fight, we die — the pattern is age-old, and the outcome is certain. Unless, of course, you're Orlando: living and loving, perhaps forever, waiting for an end that does not come.

For "Orlando" the

production, however, an end does come.

Despite centuries ruled by loneliness and melancholy, Orlando never ceases to engage with her vibrant and colorful life. She's haunted, yes, but she makes sure to live — and comes to understand, though all things die, we have to live in the moment.

We're bracketed by the past and the future — sometimes, almost crushingly so. But the present keeps us anchored, and the present — emotional and real — is often what defines us. For better or worse — the days roll on. The next day will come.

This "Orlando" ends on a light note: Orlando, steeped in the memory of her past loves, finally comes to terms with the seemingly inevitable.

'We're bracketed by the past and the future — sometimes, almost crushingly so. But the present keeps us anchored.'

"The white arch of a thousand deaths" stands, impossible and inevitable, before her — and as all the white shirts, the white trousers, and the white dresses are slowly brought down from their racks around the stage, Orlando un-closets herself to face whatever comes next.

Bachmann is a member of the Class of 2027.

Burke is a member of the Class of 2025.

Caren is a member of the Class of 2024.

Chang is a member of the Class of 2025.

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“An Evening with Renée Elise Goldsberry”: A Shining Mel Weekend Performance

BY KAYLIN HAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Before we start, let me make a disclaimer: I am not a musical person.

I have taken up three different instruments in my life and yet currently know how to play none of them. I have no musical expertise besides the remnants of the music theory my piano teacher taught me ages ago and what I got from watching the movie “Tár.” I’m the type of person whose entire music taste consists of songs I’ve listened to and responded with “Hm. Sounds good.”

Despite that, once upon a time, I was a Broadway fan. It’s not an era I tend to look back fondly on, but it makes me nostalgic nonetheless.

So, this past August, when I saw the Eastman Instagram account announce that Renée Elise Goldsberry, who originated the role of Angelica Schuyler in the Broadway musical “Hamilton,” was going to perform as a headliner for Meliora Weekend, I couldn’t help but get excited.

The performance, “An Evening with Renée Elise Goldsberry,” took place on Friday, Oct. 6, in Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre. Eastman’s own Empire Film and Media Ensemble (EFAME) opened the show with an overture dedicated to “our favorite neighboring suburb, New York City,” conducted by Mark Watters.

‘I was blown away by the harmony and talent of the orchestra playing before me.’

The current director of the Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media, Watters is a six-time Emmy Award-winning composer and

conductor best known for his work composing for various projects, including film, television, and two Olympics. However, the composition of the medley itself was done by the students of EFAME, who supposedly put the whole thing together in one hour. With my closest experience hearing a live orchestra being my brother’s high school band, I was blown away by the harmony and talent of the orchestra playing before me.

After the overture — and an introduction by Watters — Goldsberry took the stage, greeted by thunderous applause. Her following performance was nothing short of extraordinary.

Although I wasn’t familiar with most of the songs she decided to sing that evening, I was hooked by both her amazing voice and her compelling stage presence. She not only sang, she performed. She told stories. She danced along. She hyped up her band, her background vocalists, and the orchestra.

‘She not only sang, she performed.’

Goldsberry was a fluid, active presence; serving both as the star of the show and the key component that brought all the different parts of the stage together. Her voice blended with the orchestra to create a sound that was an out-of-this-world experience to my ears.

It was her stories and anecdotes that she told in between some of her songs that brought her down to Earth and made the performance more engaging. Some of them were funny, like when Aretha Franklin left Lin-Manuel Miranda a voicemail asking for Hamilton tickets, then never responded when



COURTESY OF KAYLIN HAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

they called her back, much to Goldsberry’s dismay. Yet some of them were more personal, more vulnerable.

She told us about her emotional audition for “The Lion King” on Broadway, which was her first major audition after years of trying to hit it big. It happened not long after 9/11, and she recounted her deeply emotional experience when she was asked to sing the ballad “Shadowland” from the soundtrack.

“I never imagined that singing a song like [Shadowland] would land me here, in Kodak Hall,” she said, as if she was the one who was privileged to get to perform for us.

While much of her setlist was upbeat, I genuinely got chills during her performances of songs like “Shadowland” and “Satisfied” from “Hamilton.” As Goldsberry did not have a whole ensemble of performers supporting her as she did during her time on “Hamilton,” it was especially unreal when members of the audience

took the ensemble’s place during “Satisfied,” singing the parts of “To the groom!” and “To the bride!” in between the appropriate lines, like in the original song. (They were probably Eastman students. They were all on the left side of the balcony. I swear they even harmonized.)

After her last song, a “Rent” medley as a tribute to her time portraying Mimi Marquez in the closing cast of the acclaimed musical, Goldsberry closed the evening with an encore, in which she sang an original song that she wrote for her daughter. This song will be a part of her debut solo album releasing in 2024. As she sang this slower song, it felt as if she was singing to each of us.

‘As she sang this slower song, it felt as if she was singing to each of us.’

“This show is a blatant attempt to manipulate you into falling in love... with love,” she mentioned at one point in the middle of

her show. To each member of the audience, this message could be interpreted in a different way. To me, with my memories as a former “Hamilton” fan arising during the show, her words reminded me to not be so harsh to my younger self. If anything, my younger self has gotten me to where I am today, and surely that’s no small feat, even if it involved a Broadway phase along the way.

‘Her words reminded me to not be so harsh to my younger self.’

Does that mean I should thank my younger self for my ability to still recall the lyrics to some “Hamilton” songs five years later? I’m not so sure. But at the same time, I should thank her — as well as Goldsberry — for reminding me that it’s okay to love music solely for the purpose of loving music, no matter the genre.

Han is a member of the
Class of 2027.

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HUMOR

Fish Pledge: the WCSA Story

BY LILLI TAMM
SENIOR STAFF

Splish, splash. Inside the office of WCSA’s coolest, most Gen Z Assistant Director of Student Activities, Caroline ‘Cat’ Crawford, sparkling in the dim office light, Freddy D. floats happily — or I suppose he could be emo, but it’s not our place to tell.

Frederick Douglass (fish) (affectionate) has graced Crawford’s side table since June 2023. He’s all long, flowing orangey-blueish fins and sudden, futile efforts against the current, and people describe him as a beta but that sounds mean and I don’t know fish, so like, whatever. Every day, students peering through the open door in Genesee Hall can enjoy the sight of a floundering friend on their way through the cold October wind, but to my great surprise, in September, she told me that the student response to Freddy had been less than ideal.

‘Frederick Douglass (fish) (affectionate) has graced Crawford’s side table since June 2023.’

“They’re always telling me I’m ‘despicable and inhumane’ and that he needs a bigger tank,” she reported in dismay, “that this is the equivalent of him being on life support and he wants me to pull the plug.”

Looking at the tank, Freddy seemed to be living it up, in my humble non-fish opinion. He’s got marble beads aplenty, which I’d take any day over dormitory linoleum; nonetheless, I suppose it could be the marine fauna equivalent of walking on LEGOs.

“Is the marble sub-optimal?” I inquired. She responded that no, that this staple of fish floors everywhere did not make the



COURTESY OF BRYAN BURKE, HUMOR EDITOR

list of abuse allegations, although Freddy D. did almost die trying to eat a bead once. “He’s so stupid,” she said wistfully.

Privately, I wondered what intelligence tests for fish look like (“solve for x: if food appears in increments of $5x^2 - 3x$, where x is the amount of shits given about fish...”) and elected to remain silent, given that Crawford controls approval over all of my club’s activities.

After several visits to Freddy D., who proves a calming presence after exams, I happened upon the story of his existence on campus. To my great surprise, Freddy D.’s presence in Crawford’s life was not optional. A restitution:

Lilli Tamm: Imma be so real with you, I fully thought this was like, your fish that you chose to have.

Cat Crawford: (hysterical laughter) Nooooo!!!

Lilli Tamm: This makes you talking about hating him make so much more sense.

Cat Crawford: I did not

ask! For this fish!

Crawford describes showing up to her office one Monday and having a colleague follow her in and leave a mason jar on her desk, with Freddy floating inside. Amid much confusion on why he was there, he stayed and survived in that little jar for four days, so we can maybe calm down on the tank thing. He’s tough.

Freddy D. was a staff initiative by “an unknown amount of people within WCSA,” who somehow decided there should be an office pet. Why they designated Crawford the fish-caretaker is unclear: from her name alone, you’d think she’d be exempted.

‘I don’t know fish, so like, whatever.’

She has theorized that it’s because she’s the lone Pisces on staff, which seems as logical a reason as any other step in this saga. It also remains unclear why real, salaried adults chose to deliver the fish as a sur-

prise, without making any arrangements for its care and well-being, or why they didn’t ask the person they were foisting responsibility onto ahead of time. Crawford did not want to have the fish, so why make her do it? Couldn’t anyone else take it? Why have the office fish so far from the main offices in Wilco anyway?

More troubling, she is one of the newer staff members: could this be a form of hazing? “If he dies, that’s on me,” she confides. “I refuse to be branded as the fish-killer of WCSA.” This would be pretty rich considering how hard WCSA comes down on any suggestion of student groups singling out new members.

For those too young to remember (which is actually all of us, considering the Class of 2024 graduates this spring), the main reason the fraternity Sigma Alpha Mu got kicked off campus in 2019 was for excessive hazing — apparently, through the grapevine, for making pledges eat live

fish. FISH! Could it be that WCSA is gearing up to follow in their footsteps? Just keep swimming!

WCSA apparently realized that they couldn’t use their funding to care for the fish, so a cohort of six sponsors had to be assembled from the staff to pay, out of their own pocket, for “the betterment of his life.”

Freddy D., I love you dearly, but if someone put a taser to my head and asked for you or 20 dollars towards a tank upgrade, I’m not sure which side up you’d be floating. Crawford naturally has no choice but to contribute to the FDCC (Freddy D. Care Committee), which has finally been able to get a bigger tank for our only campus-owned, crowd-funded, aquatic friend. For Freddy D. they will provide. You know the way people talk about unplanned children that they end up loving best of all? That’s the vibe I’m getting from this fish. And Freddy is thriving in his new tank: it even has mood lighting!

‘Privately, I wondered what intelligence tests for fish look like.’

Freddy D is happy in his new home, but as long as he lives (which I do hope will be for a while, I do not wish harm upon this fish), his expenses will keep growing. If you want to support him, and the rest of WCSA employees that were coerced into fish-keeping, Venmo a couple bucks to @freddyd_wcsafish. All donations will actually — for real — go to Freddy D., and keep him swimming for years to come. Maybe months? I don’t know things. Bite me.

Tamm is a member of the Class of 2025.

Freddy D

@freddyd_wcsafish

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venmo

COURTESY OF LILLI TAMM, SENIOR STAFF

Go To Sleep, UR!

BY BRIAN LY
STAFF WRITER

BREAKING NEWS:

After recent reports of a “Hat Man” appearing at 3 a.m. in Gleason Library, Rush Rhees is closing off Gleason from 2:59 a.m. to 3:01 a.m. until further notice.

Students are advised not to approach the library during this time as we, the Anomaly Containment Unit (ACU), try to contain the threat.

According to the students who reported seeing the “Hat Man,” he was described to have “appeared within the intersection of reality and imagination, in the world between sleepiness and wakefulness.”

In our professional experience, we believe that the appearance of the Hat Man was caused by the recent upsurge in tired students pulling all-nighters in Gleason. If the appearance of the Hat Man is not properly dealt with, it will have grave consequences upon the student population.



COURTESY OF BRIAN LY, STAFF WRITER

If the appearance of the Hat Man is not properly dealt with, it will have grave consequences upon the

Be aware that the consequences will range in severity on a scale proportional to the amount of students that have not had at least 8 hours of sleep, for the Hat

Man gains power in proportion to the amount of tired students.

In order to contain this anomaly, we have decided to implement Project Sleep.

The Project consists of multiple steps, each one to convince people to 1) Get at least 8 hours of sleep, and 2) Stay away from Gleason during the time period of

2:59 a.m. to 3:01 a.m. (very important step).

In order to do that, we will implement a wide variety of plans:

We will play lullabies across campus.

We will project densely informational yet numbingly monotonous recordings of lectures.

We will bargain with “The Weather Man” for

more rain to encourage students to stay inside and rest more.

We will ensure that your pillows are ever so soft, that your blankets are satisfyingly heavy, and that your bed is so comfortable such that you may get the best sleep possible.

Once we get the funding, the day may even come when we can give everyone their own plushie to accompany them to sleep.

‘For now, we need your help in stopping the Hat Man.’

For now, we need your help in stopping the Hat Man. When you see a student that clearly isn’t getting enough sleep, please send them back to their dorm and tell them to rest up.

It is important that we stop the Hat Man before he gains enough power to terrify us all.

Ly is a member of the Class of 2027.

Knowledge is Power



COURTESY OF RACHEL KAMATA, SENIOR STAFF

BY GAVIN LI
STAFF WRITER

I know, I know. It’s a common saying that’s been talked to death, but today I want to share two unrelated but equally obscure ways of acquiring knowledge so you can stay ahead of the curve during your stay at UR..

First things first, social media. Though not widely accepted as a form of studying, there are so many good memes for any subject you’re having trouble with. Take me for example; I have a Russian vocabulary quiz tomorrow, and what do you know, I ran into a few vocabulary words I needed to know when I was scrolling through Instagram reels.

Take this phrase for example; Как одним видео оскорбить сразу три страны? I know like five of these words, I know that a few will be on the quiz

tomorrow, and I know that one of them is in the prepositional case that I will be tested on tomorrow. (Editor’s note: None of these were in fact on the quiz.)

I’ve also found many quirky, relatable memes regarding working in an ochem lab. Maybe I’ll learn a thing or two and not teach the students I’m TAing something I can’t fully comprehend myself, that was written two generations before I was fucking born. Not to mention, some of the material also took professors days to figure out.

Maybe I should send this meme to my students so they can watch it before class; I’ll call it an attempt at a “flipped classroom” for my CASC project. Shout out to Professor Stanford for actually updating the curriculum after realizing that most TAs can’t even decipher some

of the shit the old stuff is saying.

And don’t get me started on the bio memes. They are funny, I’ll give you that, but for moral reasons I refuse to talk about bio.

‘I am simply studying through multimedia stimuli through a self paced model.’

I ain’t fucking around on my phone for multiple hours while the existential dread of never being good enough creeps in. I’m definitely not feeling like I’m drowning in work and just treading water here but the longer I tread the more tired I get the less I can tread so I have to use overstimulation via social media to stop my brain from thinking. No. I am simply studying through multimedia stimuli through a self paced model.

[Hard cut to The Don (from “The Godfather”) putting Gooby (from “Gooby”) in a iron maiden]

Don: Do you ever gaze at the ducks floating in a pond, Gooby? Gently, gracefully, they float; like leaves or flower pedals, carried effortlessly by the water... you never see it, how hard they pedal.

Gooby (voice quivering): why are you doing this?

Don: PADDLING AND PADDLING THEY ARE PADDLING FOR THEIR LIVES GOOBY. AND YOU NEVER SEE IT. IT’S POETIC ISN’T IT? YOU NEVER KNOW HOW HARD THEY ARE PADDLING UNDER THE SURFACE. AND WE ARE ALL PADDLING GOOBY. WE ARE ALL JUST PADDLING FOR OUR LIVES GOOBY, PADDLING FOR OUR LIVES.

[The Don slams the iron maiden shut, Gooby screams, scene fade to black.]

Another good source of information is radio. No seriously. Have you ever wondered what Public Safety is doing at any given moment? Are you a Statistics or Political Science major, or a premed? Well, utilizing the radio is a great way to practice your skills.

Here’s the play: Create a heat map of PubSafe-related incidents on and around campus via the radio. Find if they have any sort of correlation and run linear regressions to test your hypothesis. Propose some policies to the school based on this data, or simply make

some predictive models to see how many more cars will be jacked this semester. (This will utilize skills from PSCI 205 and STAT 212, and probably some other fancy smancy shit from the polisci ppl.) Idk, the unforeseen consequences of hypothetical policy proposals you make up in your head, is definitely some ECON 108-type shit.

‘We live in the information age so we gotta start to capitalize on it.’

Premed kids, I didn’t forget y’all. Did you know that the Rochester EMS net is still analog? So you can listen in with simply a Baofang for 25 bucks from Amazon. Listen in and get a taste of perhaps what you will be dealing with 10 years down the line. (Most of them are old people being unresponsive or having chest pain, but you do get the occasional gunshot wound or knife wound.) Maybe learn the Rochester area code or something. Most of y’all are Biology majors anyway, so I refuse to elaborate.

Idk, the sky is the limit here. We live in the information age so we gotta start to capitalize on it. Use what you learn.

And my gf has decided it makes no difference if she twists my balls off or not. It is what it is.

Li is a member of the Class of 2025.

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WARBY PARKER

ADICHIE FROM PAGE 2

The following is how The Guardian quoted and paraphrased her response:

"But that's the thing," she says. "You can look however you want now and say you're a woman." And, she adds, anyone who might take issue with this is "outdated" and needs "to have the young people educate [them]". I [Zoe Williams] suspect she's taking an argument – that trans people don't want to be policed for how they dress and what stage of transition they're at – and reducing it to the absurd. So I tack another way: "Imagine your brother did want to live as a woman. You would support his endeavour with love, right? You'd probably think treating him with dignity and respect was more important than where he went to the toilet?"

"But why is that?" she asks. "Why can't they be equal parts of the conversation?"

"Maybe because dignity is more important?"

"Not if you consider women's views to be valid. This is what baffles me. Are there no such things as objective truth and facts?"

I'm not having that. "You couldn't objectively say, 'All women are threatened by trans women.' I'm also a woman. That doesn't reflect my experience."

"No, of course not. And it would not reflect the experience of many people. I think that's different from saying, 'Women's rights are threatened by trans rights.'"

Invitation and backlash

UR announced Adichie's Meliora Weekend invitation in June, and UR's SDS chapter published a statement Jun. 15 highlighting Adichie's past remarks, rebuking them as transphobic, and demanding UR revoke the invitation.

SDS then worked to assemble a student group coalition to back the push. On June 30, that coalition — composed of 23 student groups from the River Campus and Eastman — published a joint statement that they then sent to the University administration.

"The lives and humanity of transgender people are not academic fodder to be debated," the statement reads. "Allowing a trans exclusionist to speak on campus not only spreads dangerous rhetoric, but it also denigrates the academic discourse of this supposedly progressive institution."

The letter prompted a response on July 14 from University President Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost David Figlio, and Senior Vice President for University Advancement Thomas Farrell '88, '90W. They announced that a dialogue was being opened with the coalition.

This kicked off a series of meetings between coalition members and administrators to discuss measures to support trans people in the University community, all culminating in a Sept. 13 statement issued by Mangelsdorf, Figlio, and Chief Diversity Officer Adrienne Morgan listing a number of these existing and upcoming initiatives. They include the creation of an assistant position to aid the campus' director of LGBTQ+ life and an increase in the number of all-gender bathrooms on campus, among other things.

Protest gives way to teach-in

Despite the discourse, Adichie's invitation was not rescinded, prompting SDS to post flyers around campus advertising a protest during the talk's scheduled time. But, in a sudden reversal of course, SDS directed students towards an Oct. 4 teach-in in lieu of the demonstration slated for Oct. 7.

The teach-in was a seminar titled "Avoiding the Harms of Trans Exclusion: A Necessary Conversation" that was hosted in the Humanities Center by the Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African American Studies (FDI) and the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (SBAI).

The event drew a crowd of about 30 people, including undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members, and staff from both UR and the Rochester Institute of Technology. The conversation was split pretty evenly between discussion of Adichie and her comments, support for trans students on campus, and general issues faced by trans folks in society at large.

Dr. Jeffrey McCune, associate professor of English and Black Studies and chair of faculty programs and departmental initiatives in the Black Studies department, was one attendee. He said that he saw the administration and University community's struggles to navigate complicated intersectional conversations — particularly ones involving intersections between feminism and the trans and Black rights movements — as downstream from the University's lack of support for Black Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's studies.

"I was conflicted because I had context for the moment that most people are talking about where I feel like even Chimamanda was being asked to be an expert in an area that she has no expertise, which is what we keep doing as academics," he said after pointing out the University's small number of trans faculty and how resources to FDI and SBAI have hardly increased in his 18 years at the University. "We keep saying, 'hey, can you take on this? Can you teach Black feminism?' Like, that's not your area. Why are we doing this, right?"

The group also discussed how faculty can best support LGBTQ+ students in the classroom, and many attendees offered personal accounts of their experiences feeling unsupported as LGBTQ+ students on campus on a variety of fronts — particularly as it pertains to all-gender bathrooms, normalizing pronoun-sharing, and intersectional student organizing.

At one point, an attendee asked how many people present would be attending Adichie's talks. Only two raised their hands.

It was unclear for some time

after the teach-in whether a protest during Adichie's talk was still being held. SDS clarified a few hours before the speech on their Instagram story that the protest was canceled.

"The coalition received feedback that an outright protest would send a different message than the one we wanted to," an SDS spokesperson told the *Campus Times*. "Some members received comments saying that an outright [protest] would be seen as an attack on Adichie herself rather than a criticism of her comments. From the beginning, the coalition's goal was to reassure the safety and acceptance of trans students on this campus, and we decided that a teach-in would be a better method of achieving that goal."

SDS' initial story post cancellation, which was later deleted and reworded, hinted at a rift between their group and others over the demonstration.

"Remember: Adichie is an out and about transphobe and certain groups on this campus chose to defend her rather than self reflect," read the initial story post. "Our cause is just and history will absolve us."

The amended statement, posted almost immediately after the other post was published and quickly deleted, read as follows: "Adichie is an out and about transphobe who's rhetoric is in no way defensible. There is no defense for transphobia, hateful rhetoric can come from anywhere and must be excised from our culture."

An anonymous undergraduate student familiar with the coalition's organizing gave some insight into what the initial post was referring to. The student said that, back in July, Queer Students of Color and the Pan-African Students Association had concerns about the coalition's June statement.

"They criticized the lack of nuance that the issue was presented with, and the lack of African students involved in the coalition," the student told the *Campus Times*. "QSOC had also been mistakenly listed as one of the endorsers on the statement, because a non-E Board member had spoken for their entire group."

The student said the criticism was followed by a joint Zoom meeting between the groups where miscommunications were worsened, leading some of the groups to fall out of talks with the coalition.

"In my opinion, the coalition's fatal flaw was that its members did not change or even reflect on their methods after receiving the criticism from African and African American students," the student said. "Additionally, organizing progress was stunted by mockery and bad-faith interpretations from other student orgs."

Adichie's talk

After an effusive introduction by Provost Figlio, Adichie

took the Strong Auditorium stage and overlooked a fully-packed, multicolored sea of attendees. She began digging for the roots of her perspectives and her passion for writing by recounting her childhood — much of which was spent living on the University of Nigeria's campus, where her father worked, in a house formerly occupied by fellow Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe.

"It was a happy childhood, but I'm not sure that I knew at the time that it was a happy childhood," she said. "It seems to me that happiness is something we often recognize only in retrospect. Now, as an adult, I have come to realize that much of the confidence I had in pursuing my desire to write came from the joy and the love that was so abundant in my childhood."

She recounted gobbling up books — particularly romance and crime novels — and growing up with her father's Igbo storytelling that artfully wove together anecdotes, proverbs, wit, and humor. She also detailed how Nigeria's colonial history haunted aspects of her youth, from local religious divides to language itself. She grew up speaking both Igbo and English in her house, but she saw Igbo get discouraged in "professional" contexts.

"I look back now at the absurdity of it and also the great sadness of it, how colonialism's most insidious legacy is its ability to make you denigrate that which is yours," she said.

Despite this, Adichie retained a great pride for her culture, but she also began early to question elements of her culture that "dismissed the humanity of women." These tensions were most apparent during her trips back to her father's ancestral hometown. It is her attachment to that hometown, she said, that serves as a springboard for her writing.

Her talk then shifted to her experiences moving to America.

"In my first days, I watched and read and learned," she said. "I was struck by the excess of everything, by the newness of everything, by the flagrant contradictions. But mostly, I was struck by how much identity as an idea shaped so much of American life."

"America is indeed unlike every other country in the world," she continued. "Not in the kind of triumphalist manner of those who speak of 'exceptionalism,' but because — while it was created from violence like many other modern nations — it also claimed plurality, which is an unusual notion in founding a nation."

In Nigeria, divides existed along the lines of class, religion, and ethnicity, but it was in America where Adichie said she came to see herself as "Black" and developed an admiration for Black American history. America is also where

she published her first novel, "Purple Hibiscus," and where people received her writing as "sociopolitical" work more than fiction, which was not her intention.

She hypothesized that this reception — why some works are seen as "political" and others are not — is tied mainly to the personal history of the writers and the way that African fiction, given external audiences' lack of exposure, is sometimes received more like cultural anthropology than stories. She contended, rather, that all fiction is political and shaped by sociopolitics.

Choked up, Adichie finished the talk by noting that she is still struggling to process the recent deaths of her father and mother.

The event then shifted to a Q&A hosted by Trustee Lance Drummond '85S.

The first topic of discussion was ongoing political efforts to restrict the teaching of Black American history, which Adichie saw as an opposition to honest storytelling, but the conversation quickly shifted to discussion of "cancel culture" or "wokeism," as Drummond put it.

Adichie dismissed the terms as "loaded" in the way that they induce an automatic recoiling among some people, though she also said that they describe a real thing. She pointed to book banning on the right and a related phenomenon on the left that she called "an authoritarianism that doesn't want to call itself authoritarian."

She hypothesized that these trends are rooted in the growth of social media, which, she said, has changed us more than even the printing press. She recounted with concern conversations she has had with young people who read and reread their tweets out of fear of being called out by their friends.

"I know people who say things like, 'well, if you said something terrible, then you deserve it,'" she said. "Nobody deserves the kind of horror that can come from that being turned on sort of using the tool of social media. There are people who have been driven to suicide."

She suggested that social media should be treated like a public utility because of its "outsized influence."

The conversation also touched on freedom of speech. Adichie said she doesn't believe in the concept, but that restrictions on speech should be limited.

"I think that every reasonable person knows that there's no such thing as absolute freedom of speech," she said. "It's very childish, right? There just shouldn't be, it doesn't make sense, it's childish, it's not rooted in how we live, how lives work. I think maybe the question then is, we know that lines should be drawn, but where?"

O'Connor is a member of the Class of 2024.