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CT Interviews: Giancarlo Esposito



MICAH BETTENHAUSEN / SENIOR STAFF

Giancarlo Esposito, best known for his appearances on "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul," talked to the *CT* about his experiences breaking the casting mold as a Black actor on Friday, Feb. 7, 2025 in Lower Strong.

BY NATALIE OPDAHL
NEWS EDITOR

This weekend, the University welcomed award-winning actor Giancarlo Esposito to Strong Auditorium as the speaker for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Address. As part of the introduction, Rochester Mayor Malik Evans presented a proclamation declaring

Feb. 7 as Giancarlo Esposito Day.

Esposito, most well-known for his role as Gus Fring in television shows "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul," graciously partook in an interview with the *Campus Times* in collaboration with students from ENGL 131: Reporting and Writing the News.

Why did you want to

give this speech and what do you want to get out of it?

I get a lot out of interacting with people who perceive my work and don't know who I am. So in part and parcel it's a way to get to know you, and for you to get to know me. 'Cause I think highly of education. I went to a two year school, I struggled to get the education I wanted to get. I

would have gone further. So I think education, for some, is a privilege; for others it's a struggle and a challenge to be able to make it there. I value it highly, and so that's why I've come.

What do you hope students take away from your message tonight? What will be the central focus of your message?

My message is that of empowerment, of personal empowerment. [...] You grow faster if you're faced with a challenge, and if you have desire, and if you commit yourself to what you believe you should be doing. [...] It's probably hard, as I would imagine being in your family of origin, and being steered by your parents to do what they think you should do. So it's sometimes difficult to find out what you should do. And so my major message is do what you love to do.

Can you talk about the challenges you've faced in your career?

The challenges in the show business are directly connected to talent, age, geography, ethnicity, and so I've faced all of those challenges in what I do, because I came to this country at 5 years old, basically as the product of a Black mother and Italian father. And so for the early part of my

career I posed as whatever I needed to pose as to get a job. And I furthered that more when people assumed from my name [...] that I was Spanish, and that clued me in to allowing myself to learn how to be Spanish at a time when there weren't a lot of roles for African American young people. And so it allowed me to develop a craft in another ethnicity that I wasn't.

So I learned to speak some Spanish and to use a Spanish accent and to have the idiom of someone who's Spanish. [...] For years it was a conventional casting system. So there was a role on paper for someone Caucasian between the ages of 20 and 40, that's who they looked to cast. I was one of the people that started to break that mold by screaming loud at 'em to say, "I deserve a shot at that role," because really that role is colorless. [...] I had many experiences that were painful, walking into a room of completely white actors.

In this one case, they assumed I was white from my name. That's because they assumed I was Italian, and that means someone who's olive skinned like my father, not white American. And they had to come up and say to

SEE **ESPOSITO** PAGE 2

Title IX Office Unveils Mini Grants for Student Programming

BY MARIAH LANSING
STAFF WRITER

The Title IX Office's Mini Grant Program, rolled out this semester, aims to help fund student-led events centering on the prevention of and response to incidents of sex- or gender-based misconduct. The program will provide financial awards of \$200 designated to fund programming related to sex and gender-based misconduct, boundary-setting, and healthy communication on campus.

The Mini Grants are the idea of Mace McDonald, a sexual misconduct prevention education specialist with the Title IX Office who was inspired by the mini grants sponsored by the Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center for intercultural programming on campus. "The work that I do is really important to me, but our

office isn't well positioned to like, reach out to students," McDonald said in a Zoom meeting with *Campus Times*. "Unless a student has a particular interest, there's no real reason for them to come and speak with us."

The Title IX Office is tucked away deep within the Engineering Quad in Taylor Hall. McDonald hopes that the Mini Grant program will encourage students to engage with Title IX and the resources available through their staff.

'McDonald hopes that the Mini Grant program will encourage students to engage with Title IX.'

Applicants to the Mini Grant program would preferably have previous training expe-

rience with the Title IX Office through a program such as new member orientation or co-sponsorships with Medallion and other organizations, such as the BADASS Bystander program, McDonald said. However, it is not required.

What is required for applications is that the proposed programming should promote the aims of the Title IX Office, which McDonald describes as relating to sexual misconduct with sex and gender equity.

The number of grants awarded each application cycle will depend on how much funding is available and the number of applicants. Funding for the Title IX Office comes from New York State and federal governments, as per Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The goal of the new

Mini Grants is to put this funding into students' hands to determine what programming is needed on campus.

Current campus events such as Take Back the Night, Morado, and tarot self-care nights could all be considered for funding, but the Title IX Office is open to other student proposals.

McDonald has their own ideas of events which could be eligible for funding under the Mini Grants.

"I ordered a bunch of glow-in-the-dark frisbees as swag for the Title IX Office."

"I ordered a bunch of glow-in-the-dark frisbees as swag for the Title IX Office, and I'm kind of hoping somebody will want to

plan a consent and Ultimate Frisbee event," they said.

Anyone who is interested in proposing Title IX-related programming and discussing the Mini Grants further can contact McDonald through the Title IX Office in Taylor Hall room 20, or by setting up an appointment via Zoom. The Title IX Office will also be present at the LGBTQ+ Well-Being Fair Thursday, Feb. 13.

This semester's application deadlines are March 4 and April 1. Beginning in Fall 2025, there will be three application deadlines per semester. The application can be found on the Title IX Office's CCC page.

Lansing is a member of the Class of 2025.

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me, “you know, we’re sorry, but we didn’t expect you...” I finished their sentence, “to be Black.”

So I faced all of those challenges, and then realized that all of those challenges were really the challenge of me surmounting how I thought about where I belonged in the business. [...] You can let the world push you around and mold you, or you can mold yourself and then find a way to reinvent yourself within the world. And that’s a larger challenge of your own. [...] You have to believe in yourself and be a self-starter to be able to have an idea that doesn’t relate to anything that you are ethnically. Like that doesn’t matter.

[...]

‘I was told many times, “You’re not gonna make it.”’

I was told many times, “you’re not gonna make it.” I was an actor off-Broadway, doing musical comedy [...] I can still sing and dance, but that’s not what I wanted to do because I wanted to appeal to a larger audience. What is that larger audience? That larger audience is film and television. So I seek that out at a time where I wasn’t seeing many images of people who were reflected with dark skin or mulatto skin who were intelligent and smart. [...]

Many roles that I took early in my career, I dumbed myself down, because that’s what I had to do. I played killers, and thugs, because that was the expectation, and that was the way for me to develop that skill to be able to play that. I was told by a manager who I really endorse, I won’t say any more, she said to me, ‘when you go in, don’t talk.’ Like just take the side and the

scene, but don’t say anything. Like don’t introduce myself, don’t say hello, don’t be proper, don’t be a gentleman, don’t say anything. Because that’s your giveaway, you’re too smart, you’re too intelligent, and they don’t want someone as smart as you. So that was years of my life until then I decided that I would take a different route.

[...]

You’ve been open about your struggles with mental health. What advice would you give to someone who may be struggling with their mental health?

I’d probably first say get help. Slow down and get help. [...] Mental health is really getting in touch with [...] taking your own temperature, every single day. Like I’m a little depressed today, I don’t feel quite good, I’m gonna be funky, I’m gonna have an attitude. Let me try to fix that before I have any interaction with anybody. But that takes a lot of self awareness. So what I would suggest for mental health stuff is to get professional help, to help you to navigate and figure out what’s going on with you. [...] Until you figure out what’s going on with you you can’t figure out what you wanna do with the rest of the world, right? Because that voice that’s speaking to you becomes the devil.

‘Simple mantra: I am, I will, I can.’

There are things you can do for that, I can tell you what I’ve done – I’m a meditator. That voice is always gonna be there until you shut it off. Your brain is like a computer, it’s never gonna turn off unless you shut it off. How do you shut it off? That’s the practice you need to learn. [...] You go, whatever is gon-

na happen, it’s gonna be great. Simple mantra: I am, I will, I can. But because we’re human, we feel like we have all of the control. And we don’t. There’s circumstance, there’s life, there’s other people. We’re not alone in a little bubble. Shit is gonna happen.

What has been your favorite or most meaningful role or project that you’ve done in your career?

I just came here from shooting “The Boys” in Toronto, I feel blessed. [...] I love the role I’m playing now. My favorite role is this role. Because this role has some kind of grounding in reality. [...] I believe that people are in service. I believe we think we’re here to do it for ourselves, and become rich and be famous and all this other jazz. But really underneath it all it doesn’t matter. None of it matters. The only fulfilling thing in life that really matters is being in service to each other.

‘It’s Rochester! Look how beautiful it is! Why wouldn’t I come here?’

[...] ‘What are you coming to Rochester for, to share what?’ I hear that all over the country, and I always wanna go, ‘well, why wouldn’t I come to Rochester? What’s wrong with Rochester?’ [...] You know what I’m saying? We put a spin on things that we bring to each other, and that makes you feel like you’re less than enough. Rochester is like Washington D.C.! It’s like New York! It’s like Toronto! It’s Rochester! Look how beautiful it is! Why wouldn’t I come here?

Opdahl is a member of the Class of 2026.

New UR Chatbot Released With More Features Expected in Coming Weeks

BY TEDDY ALMOND

PHOTO EDITOR

Despite the University’s initial seemingly skittish response to the use of AI, UR has now started embracing this advancing technology through the release of its own chatbot.

‘UR has now started embracing this advancing technology through the release of its own chatbot.’

Last month, the University released chat.rochester.edu, a variation of the ubiquitous ChatGPT licensed from OpenAI, an American company known for developing the GPT family of AI tools, through a partnership with Microsoft. This chatbot is the University’s first main internal effort to provide GPT-4o to its faculty, staff, and students.

This new chatbot is an independent system from the larger, commercially available ChatGPT. This means that OpenAI’s neural network cannot access or train on data gathered from the University. This emphasis on privacy was one of the main driving factors behind the University’s initiative to offer the service.

The service comes with some other privacy considerations for affiliates. When asked whether the University had access to students’ queries when using the chatbot, Associate Vice President & Chief Technology Officer Dr. Robert Evangelista told *Campus Times* that University access would be limited without legal permission. “If we were given permission [from] our legal counsel or legal consul of outside entities, [...] there’s ways that it’s probably like one or two people that could actually get into the nitty-gritty of the system and see questions,” he said.

The chatbot is part of the school’s greater “2030 Strategic Plan,” which the University describes as being “focused on research excellence, quality education, and a forward-thinking vision.”

“[This] was our first whack at it,” Evangelista explained. “We know it needs to be more robust and have all sorts of other features and functionalities. The next thing is [to] pull in files and

analyze [them].”

Currently, the features included in the chatbot are equivalent to the features available in the free version of ChatGPT. However, Evangelista said that students can expect more features, such as file uploading in the next few weeks.

In the near future, the University hopes to also include image creation from text-based prompts according to Evangelista.

“[With] these features we will be implementing, it will be very similar to the OpenAI ChatGPT,” he said.

‘Currently, the features included in the chatbot are equivalent to the features available in the free version of ChatGPT.’

The current program uses information from University websites sourced from fall of 2024 – meaning that it cannot actively search the web. This leads to some additional problems and constraints, most notably ‘AI hallucinations’ – when an AI program invents information, according to Evangelista. “Once in a while, since it’s an older LLM [Large Language Model], [it can suffer from] hallucinating – you know, it’s just bad data.”

To fix this problem, the University plans to update the language model with a new and more updated version.

With the introduction of this new technology, there are still many unknowns. When asked what the University is doing to help educate students on AI use, Evangelista explained that, currently, the University has two subcommittees that are, “working on training in the education and what AI can do, and how to understand the risks.”

By the time 2030 arrives, Evangelista hopes that the chatbot will continue to improve.

“When it comes to AI in general,” Evangelista said, “I hope that the tools are there helping the researchers really come up with things that are making the world better.”

Almond is a member of the Class of 2028.



MICAH BETTENHAUSEN / SENIOR STAFF

Giancarlo Esposito, seen here telling a joke and laughing during the *CT*'s interview.

On the Need for a Creative Expo



DAVID XIE / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

The group organizing the expo sits around a table in Rettner Hall, looking up at the camera above them.

BY NARM NATHAN
SENIOR STAFF

Kalil Sykes and Joshua Jung are creatives – musicians, to be exact. A vocal artist specializing in rap, Sykes’ focus is songwriting, whereas Jung has been producing alternative R&B-styled tracks for over six years.

The two met on campus as first-year hallmates, and both felt their creativity was stifled by an environment that prioritized academics.

‘Both felt their creativity was stifled by an environment that prioritized academics.’

“There was just an air of dread over the campus for the sentiment towards creativity,” Sykes explained. “It was like, ‘you do school, you do business, STEM, dope. You paint? Do that on the side, the big boys are talking.’ I always felt mad offended by that.”

As they grew acclimated to campus life, their desire for community grew — a community that shaped and cultivated their passions. In the fall of 2022, those efforts culminated in the creation of Rochester Producers & Musicians (RPM), a group designed as a space for creatives to network, showcase, and embody the creativity integral to their identity.

The club originally only offered music feedback sessions before adding student-run performances and large-scale events. While originally operating as an affiliate of the Audio and Music Engineering Society (AMES), RPM officially

became its own organization towards the end of spring 2024 semester.

‘Those efforts culminated in the creation of Rochester Producers & Musicians (RPM).’

“It seemed like we were meeting a need in the community for an underserved population of students that created original art, specifically music and performance-based art,” Sykes said. “It was such a surprise in the fall when we realized [the success we had], but there were questions over how sustainable it would be.”

While RPM fulfilled that initial need for community, the two realized how their desire was universal. As they developed relationships with other creative clubs, RPM began to understand the potential for more collaboration. Whether you were a musician, a photographer, or a member of a performing arts group, there was a sense of creative passion that resonated. It was that embodiment of passion that Sykes and Jung sought to cultivate amongst the centers of creativity that already existed on campus.

“There’s all these different creative pockets and individual communities, [and] they’re like islands,” Sykes explained. “They’re really nice islands [...] but nobody knows about them, and along with nobody knowing about them, all the people who would want to know about them don’t have a big Hollywood sign of knowing about the existing

creative community on the University of Rochester campus.”

That sentiment led to efforts that culminated in the Creative Expo: a networking event designed to showcase the various creative clubs on campus, designed to foster and empower the passion that exists through Rochester’s students.

“It’s really great seeing other people with the same mindset that we have going into things that we’re passionate about,” Jung explained. “[The expo is] going to be a really potent opportunity for creatives to flourish, because there’s no common space for that yet. And we’re really hopeful that we can make a change and really inspire people to innovate going forward outside of traditional academic spaces.”

‘While RPM fulfilled that initial need for community, the two realized how their desire was universal.’

In establishing the expo, Sykes and Jung sought to co-host the event with frequent RPM collaborators, like No Jackets Required (NJR), and the AMES. By assigning individuals with unique talents and skill sets to roles that would best showcase their respective strengths, the expo developed as a collaboration of diverse talents and expertise. The event’s main challenge was presenting a united front while simultaneously creating a showcase that would echo the honor and importance that members each gave their own work.

or gather a team together for an idea that they thought wouldn’t be possible,” Sykes said.

For RPM, community is what holds purpose — and by establishing the Expo with community-building at its core, their hopes reflect their greater desire to embody the creative culture they’ve grown over their own college careers.

‘For RPM, community is what holds purpose.’

“Everyone craves community. Everyone wants people to be around,” Jung explained. “A lot of people don’t have friend groups. A lot of people do have friend groups, but they still seek community, people who resonate with them deeply of their passions. To create a space for people to find community, cross-organizational community, that’s gonna be really important [...] if you have the same passions as somebody in one club and you’re in another club, you can come together through an event like this.”

‘“To create a space for people to find community, cross-organizational community, that’s gonna be really important.”’

The Creative Expo will be held Feb. 20, from 6 to 9 p.m. in Feldman Ballroom. Those interested can visit their Instagram, @urc.expo, for more information.

Nathan is a member of the Class of 2025.

“One of the problems that we ran into [at first] was [defining] what constituted a creative club,” Jung explained. “Because what we’re doing in being the main organizers of [the Creative Expo] was saying that we’re okay with bearing the weight of being representatives of the [collective] creative community for a short period of time.”

‘The idea, for Sykes and Jung, is to help direct students toward organizations that would foster their interests.’

The event, co-hosted by NJR, UR’s Photo Club, Logos, URTV, and Rochester Design Hub, serves to inform the greater community of how students create on campus, with organizations, resources, and information meant for facilitating creation. During the expo, students will not only hear from local alumni in creative fields, but also from professor and filmmaker Pirooz Kalayeh, who will be in attendance as a guest speaker. The session is intended for those who are looking for collaborators in the arts.

The idea, for Sykes and Jung, is to direct students toward organizations that would foster their interests.

“If this succeeds, then hopefully we’ll be seeing a lot more creatives on campus actually being encouraged to have the confidence to chase that project that they didn’t think they could do; or talk to that person who they thought had really cool portfolio work that they wanted to collaborate with,

New Pre-Trial Date Set for Expelled Students Charged for the 'Wanted' Posters



The Monroe County Courthouse where the pre-trials were held Tuesday, Feb. 4, as seen facing Northbound on Exchange Boulevard.

BY ALYSSA KOH
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

BY TEDDY ALMOND
PHOTO EDITOR

The four students arrested for second degree felony criminal mischief had a brief pre-trial hearing at the Monroe County Courthouse downtown Feb. 4.

Back in November, the University filed the complaints against Jonathan Bermudez, Naomi Gutierrez, Samantha Escobar, and Jefferson Turcios, who were associated with plastering 'Wanted' posters around campus accusing University-affiliated staff and faculty of anti-Palestinian actions.

At the hearing, the prosecution asked for an extension until the next pre-trial date, which was granted. The next date is set for April 1 — eight weeks from this most recent hearing.

These eight weeks will be used to continue to gather information from the University.

"We are in the discovery process, where the district attorney's office provides us any and all evidence that has been created as a result of these allegations," explained attorney Safa Robinson, who is representing Escobar.

According to New York state law, all evidence found by the prosecution must be turned over to the defense counsel. Examples of possible evidence include police reports, public statements, and, notably, security footage.

'All evidence found by the prosecution must be turned over to the defense counsel.'

The students are accused of second degree criminal mischief — a Class D felony. This follows requirements of New York state statutes which require college campuses to have written rules that prohibit "any action

or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers mental or physical health" of those on campus, according to a statement released on Nov. 19, 2024 by Chief Public Safety Officer Quchee Collins on behalf of his department.

'The students are accused of second degree criminal mischief — a Class D felony.'

"While it's sad when individuals engage in criminal conduct that is intimidating to others in classrooms and other facilities that they need to use while seeking an education or going to work, enforcement of the law is done for the protection of the community and in compliance with legal obligations of the institution," Collins wrote.

"Enforcement of the law is done for the protection of the community and in compliance with legal obligations of the institution."

In New York state, to be indicted with a felony, a grand jury, which decides if the accused will officially be charged with a crime, must convene.

"When somebody's charged with a felony but there has not been an indictment, they are just considered charged by a felony complaint or instrument or refusatory instrument," Robinson said. "For now, our clients are currently charged with felonies, they have not been indicted, so they are not prosecuting this as a felony at the moment."

A Jan. 17 post on the UR Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) Instagram claimed that the students have been expelled from the University through the

University's Code of Conduct violation procedures. Disciplinary expulsion permanently prevents each student from applying for readmission anywhere within the University.

Currently, the felony complaints are the only pending charges the students are facing.

This request was likely made by the students' attorneys due to a 2020 revision to New York State Criminal Procedure Law Article 245 (Discovery). The Discovery laws established accelerated deadlines for sharing evidence within the discovery process. For the students, this would require the prosecution to turn over all discoverable materials within 35 days after arraignment. The changes to the Discovery laws have had unintended consequences, including incentivizing the delay of challenges in the Discovery process to have cases thrown out on technicalities.

Governor Kathy Hochul proposed a series of improvements to the discovery process Jan. 31. For this case, one of the crucial details in the governor's proposition clarifies that prosecutors can certify compliance by disclosing all evidence within their possession, limiting the need to wait on information that requires a subpoena.

According to Robinson, the extra time to gather information will be utilized. "The DA's [district attorney's] office has been great about getting us what we need and what we're entitled to," she said. "I think the hold up is with the University."

Koh is a member of the Class of 2025 (T5).

Almond is a member of the Class of 2028.

Sumud Debke Connects Students Through the Shared Culture of Dance

BY MARIA VARDANYAN
STAFF WRITER

One of the most unforgettable parts of the Dinner for Peace 2024 hosted by the Student Association for the Development of Arab Cultural Awareness (SADACA) was the long-awaited entrance of the newly formed Debke team. They made their first appearance at the event, spreading their rhythmic beats across the stage and into the audience. Since then, the group has developed into an on-campus Debke team that any student can join.

The Sumud Debke team is the daughter organization of SADACA. The word 'sumud' in Arabic means resilience, and Debke is a folk dance from the Levantine region. The Debke team was first dreamed up by SADACA president, junior Sarah Aljitawi, who learned the basics of Debke when she visited Jordan last summer.

The team's choreographers are Aljitawi and Maryam Zalzala, former University student and SADACA business manager for the '23-'24 school year. Zalzala told the CT that the two usually choreograph the dances together but Aljitawi usually leads the routine. "She's better at teaching people," Zalzala said.

The Sumud Debke team does mostly Palestinian Debke — most of the moves that the choreographers have seen are Palestinian, though they try their best to get a good representation of other regional styles of Debke as well. Part of the team's mission is representing Arab culture appropriately and "reclaiming things that have been stolen from us in the past," Zalzala said.

The Debke Team has weekly practices, usually on Sundays from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. The practices usually happen in the Spurrier dance studio, but the location changes depending on the availability of spaces.

One of the team members, senior Jaydee Ortez, shared that the practice feels a lot like a friendly get-together, "where your friends teach you something new about their culture." Ortez appreciates that she gets to meet and

spend time with people she wouldn't have met otherwise.

The team also performs at different events, both on and off campus. Beyond Dinner for Peace 2024, the team has performed at many events including the University of Buffalo Organization of Arab Students' Dinner last spring, "Crossroads of Culture," "Sounds of Solidarity" last fall, and "Fundraiser for the 4 and Gaza" in late January.

For the team, performing is a great way to represent Arab culture through dance. Since "Sounds of Solidarity" was a fundraising event for the Lebanese Red Cross, the Debke team's performance for the event used Lebanese music and traditional Lebanese moves to represent the culture. Zalzala mentioned that many people also dance Debke at pro-Palestinian protests since it is one of the most representative aspects of Palestinian culture and resistance.

The Debke team is made up of a variety of students of different ethnicities and backgrounds. According to Ortez, coming from a Hispanic background that does a lot of dancing, she sees many parallels between Debke and many of the dances she is used to, especially with the significant amount of footwork. She also gets to share her own culture during routines, even finding linguistic connections through the music played at practice.

Zalzala emphasized that everything that SADACA does is for everyone, including the Sumud Debke team. There is no audition process to join the Debke team, no dance experience is required and you don't necessarily have to perform if you join. According to Zalzala, all of the members had no Debke experience prior to joining the team, so all of the members are learning together.

The team is also planning to host Debke-teaching workshops for students on campus. Anyone interested in joining the team can fill out the form in SADACA's Linktree.

Vardanyan is a member of the Class of 2027.



Debke group performs in front of an audience.

MARYAM ZALZALA / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Sex & the CT: Bridging the Orgasm Gap with Professor Estrada



BRIDGETOKIWA / SENIOR STAFF

BY MARIAH LANSING
STAFF WRITER

Anonymous 18-year-old straight male: “I’d like a story regarding the orgasm gap in het relationships.”

This one is just for you, straight 18-year-old male. Solely because you asked, this last Thursday I sat down with Associate Professor Marie-Joëlle Estrada, who has several years of research under her belt along with 15 years of teaching at UR in the Department of Psychology. Estrada’s research mainly focuses on romance and hookup culture.

Notably, she is also one of my predecessors: a former writer for the Sex & The CT column and founder of “Ask Estrada,” a sub-column responding to requests for advice from anonymous students on campus.

For those who aren’t aware, the orgasm gap is the rate of difference between the frequency of women’s orgasms compared to that of men’s orgasms during a sexual encounter, typically associated with heteronormative relationships. More often than not, it’s common to hear about the orgasm gap in relation to the lack of orgasms a woman is receiving during sexual encounters.

One key component to

bridging this gap is understanding the nature of the orgasm itself. Professor Estrada explains an orgasm to be “an involuntary contraction of your genital muscles and your pubococcygeus muscles.” For such a reason, the sensation of an orgasm has been described as involuntary, similar to a sneeze.

So how do you know if you’ve had an orgasm?

“You know, if you have a sneeze, there are reverberations afterwards. There’s a different feeling afterwards,” Estrada said. “I would argue it’s very much like that. If you don’t know if you’ve had an orgasm, then you haven’t had an orgasm.” If you haven’t had an orgasm, it’s best to start on your own. Estrada recommends practicing masturbation and reading books on the topic, and I would recommend tutorials from ethical pornography sites (the type that are typically behind a paywall and geared towards women, such as Bellesa).

‘There are almost endless ways of having an orgasm, primarily because everybody is different.’

There are almost endless ways of having an orgasm, primarily because everybody is different. But for

women especially, Estrada says foreplay is vital in reaching orgasm with a partner.

By foreplay, she doesn’t just mean kissing for two seconds before insertion, like we so often see in media representations of sex. Mainstream pornography skips past foreplay, and as Estrada says, portrays women in “a permanent state of almost-orgasm” beginning at the first moment of penile-vaginal insertion.

“Studies show that three quarters of men are finished with sex within a few minutes of starting, but most women take 15 minutes or more to become sufficiently aroused for an orgasm,” Estrada says.

After foreplay, it is essential to remember that there is no “right” or “wrong” orgasm to have, and that most women do not orgasm from vaginal penetration alone. Whether or not a woman can orgasm from penetration is dependent upon her specific set of genitals, which are as unique as a fingerprint.

“It’s typically what they call the ‘rule of thumb,’ [... Only if] there’s less than a thumb’s-width between the clitoris and the vaginal canal, [...then] you are actually getting clitoral stimulation when there’s only penetration,” Estrada explained. Which makes sense if you’ve learned

anything from internet memes in the past decade: the clitoris is essential in most female orgasms. If you don’t know where it is ... Google is free. There are many diagrams.

As Estrada explained it, this is because the clitoris is the only part of the female body that exists solely for pleasure. It also means that Freud sucked: he spread the narrative that orgasm from penetration was “right” and clitoral stimulation was “wrong” — one that still persists in some social circles today.

“I’d argue most people agree that an orgasm is an orgasm,” Estrada said.

Your orgasm is right as long as it is pleasurable and consensual, it doesn’t matter if it comes from a penis, finger, vibrator, oral sex, a little tickle at the back door, or even some nipple stimulation. As long as your rocks are getting off, it’s all good.

For our Yellowjacket couples that are reading and may face an orgasm gap in their relationship, or even their casual hookups, have no fear. You can bridge that gap and bring yourself, or your partners, more pleasure.

For women, who are often on the lower-orgasm side, it is important to learn what is pleasurable to you, and to be able to direct your partner towards this goal. Toxic masculinity narratives have led to the assumption that men take control during sex and know what is best, leaving the women to be deferential and passive, said Professor Estrada. But this is a disservice to male partners who are not mind readers.

“Once you kind of put it in those terms, like ‘you can’t read my mind, the only way we’re going to have a good time is if I tell you,’” Estrada said before continuing that, if you don’t know what that takes, “it’s like driving a new place without a map, right? You don’t know where you are, you don’t know what you’re doing — you’re probably

heading the wrong way!”

For the men, Estrada suggests being open to feedback from your partner and checking in on her often. Even if you *think* you know how someone’s body works, the same person’s body can change from month to month. Not only that, try to prioritize your partner’s pleasure. The lack of focus on the female orgasm likely stems from the belief that it does not serve an “evolutionary purpose.” Estrada says otherwise: “There’s an evolutionary hypothesis that suggests the female orgasm was designed to help filter out partners, like a positive reinforcement.” This means that if a male partner gave the female partner an orgasm, it would tell the female to return to said male for more.

Guys, that means if you make her cum, she’ll come back for more. You’re welcome.

All in all, the bridge to close the orgasm gap is built from communicating and understanding your own pleasure. Communication is a two-way street, and it is crucial for both participants in a sexual encounter to speak up for their own pleasure and check in with each other.

‘The bridge to close the orgasm gap is built from communicating and understanding your own pleasure.’

There are a lot of social factors that have made this harder for us, like unrealistic representations of sex in the media and the implicit assumption that men hold innate sexual prowess, but Estrada and I left our meeting agreeing with one key thing: Talking about these issues is the only way to solve the misconceptions surrounding the orgasm gap.

Lansing is a member of the Class of 2025.

Sex & the CT

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OPINIONS

Now is the Time to Stand for our Students: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

EDITORIAL BOARD

In response to a recent barrage of executive actions taken by the new presidential administration, the UR President's Office – in a Jan. 29 statement titled “Guidance on Executive Orders” – told its readers that the University is closely monitoring changing federal statutes, and outlined their responses to the current “fluid nature” of the political landscape.

Contrary to its title, the statement provides little guidance on navigating executive measures, on either an institutional or community level. One paragraph stood out for its underwhelming message and exceptional incompleteness – the one addressing inclusion and equity.

‘The University has an obligation to serve the needs of the full range of its students.’

The University has an obligation to serve the needs of the full range of its students. In the wake of recent discourse on the role of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in education and the workplace, it becomes increasingly imperative to understand what exactly DEI is and aims to do.

Federal DEI initiatives, notably Executive Order 13985: “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” works to institutionally promote equity for people of color, religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and those facing lack of representation from poverty or rural residence in the Department of the Interior. Beyond support at a national level, the impact of these programs trickles down to support and provide advocacy for minority individuals on academic, social, and community levels.

But why do we need DEI on an institutional level? To understand why these measures are in place, we have to understand that bias and discrimination, both explicit and implicit, is far from a bygone problem – it permeates our communities in often unseen ways, manifesting in inequality that is both hard to identify and hard to address.

The concept of DEI is often distorted and misconstrued in the public sphere – much criticism hinges on a fundamental

misunderstanding of what it aims to achieve. DEI is an attempt to systematically address these shortcomings; perhaps an imperfect solution, but far from the blatant favoritism for minorities that critics make it out to be. As students, DEI policies serve to ensure that each of our identities – ranging from race, ethnicity, and gender, along with social and political ideology – are protected against discrimination and bias. It facilitates student advocacy and preserves a sense of safety in environments where covert prejudice often arises, especially for students who come from minority and systemically marginalized communities.

Having these policies in place communicates to students not just that they are supported and wanted, but that they have a unique perspective to offer the broader university community.

Although the University statement includes sections on both “Inclusion and Equity” and “International Student Services,” it fails to explicitly mention and support minority students affected most by recent federal executive orders. The simple exclusion of the word diversity, particularly in a statement discussing DEI program dissolution, is discouraging. Notably, the President's statement includes endorsements from other departments, but not from the Office of Equity and Inclusion, a central department concerning overarching DEI policies.

‘The simple exclusion of the word diversity, particularly in a statement discussing DEI program dissolution, is discouraging.’

At a time like this, when DEI is under attack, actively uplifting the principle of diversity and furthermore acknowledging the diversity of UR's student body is necessary to signify the recognition and protection of these students under federal pressures.

When President Donald Trump returned to office, he immediately signed a series of executive orders, one of which intended to eliminate DEI programs in the United States. The statement released by University

officials reacted to many of the executive orders, but in the section specifically addressing Executive Order 13985, wrote that “we are committed to maintaining an open-minded, respectful community” and that “in accordance with our obligations under federal law, we will continue to maintain that standard for our community.”

‘In other words, in line with federal law, the University has no obligation to maintain standards of diversity, equity, and inclusion.’

This is immediately problematic: According to federal law, DEI programs now represent “illegal and immoral discrimination.” In other words, in line with federal law, the University has no obligation to maintain standards of diversity, equity, and inclusion. While we understand that the University receives federal funding and has to follow federal regulations, the University has an immutable

obligation to their diverse body of students to ensure their safety on campus. Simply put, the statement they released isn't enough.

Of course, the statement's negligible impact goes beyond its words – or lack thereof. Along with the removal and deemed illegality of DEI programs, the Trump administration has restructured Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) guidelines to allow agents on school grounds and removed “TQ+” from federal LGBTQ+ travel resources, further creating an unsafe environment for students targeted or profiled by this change.

The later-released Federal Policy Changes FAQ addresses ICE-related policies and the office's original message directs students to the International Services Office (ISO) main page for services with visa updates, travel advisories, and more. However, this leaves a major gap for students, particularly POC and LGBTQ+ individuals, who need both reassurance of their safety and provided support from the university

they attend.

The University's Office of Equity and Inclusion website contains “A Commitment to ‘Ever Better,’” a short statement on how the Office of Equity and Inclusion is dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Rochester community. This University statement also fails to outline their plans to uphold diversity, equity, and inclusion moving forward.

‘This University statement also fails to outline their plans to uphold diversity, equity, and inclusion moving forward.’

Despite the continued lack of a statement on behalf of the University as a whole, internal DEI committees within departments, such as Mechanical Engineering, Brain and Cognitive Science, the Writing Speaking and Argument Program, and other University-affiliated organizations such as

SEE ED BOARD PAGE 8

Campus Times

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Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come Again

BY JAY KINDE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Leslie Feinberg's 1992 publication "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come" explored how transgender history can be used to inform activism. The pamphlet traced transgender history across the globe, from ancient Rome to the present day. Feinberg provided this history in tandem with a call for a transgender rights movement, encouraging solidarity amongst people from all movements against oppression. Yet, 33 years later, this message is more important than ever.

In his first weeks back in power, Donald Trump rapidly ordered attacks on the transgender community. On Inauguration Day, Jan. 20 of this year, Trump signed an executive order declaring government recognition of only two sexes in order to "[defend] women from gender ideology" and "[restore] biological truth." Among other effects, this has already ended the ability of Americans to change their gender markers on official documents. This order also bars imprisoned trans women from incarceration in female prisons, as well as moving to end access to medical gender transition for prisoners.

That same day, Trump revoked dozens of orders from the previous administration. A week later, Jan. 27, Trump signed an order attacking transgender people within the military. Then, Jan. 28, he signed another order restricting gender-affirming care for individuals under the age of 19. Most recently, Feb. 6, he signed an order barring transgender women from women's sports.

In addition to the executive orders, dozens of pages relating to the LGBTQ+ community were removed from governmental websites, including memorial pages dedicated to Nex Benedict and Matthew Sheppard, two individuals who were killed by anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes. On Jan. 29, a memorandum titled, "Steps to end federal funding of gender ideology," ordered public-facing government websites to remove mentions of "gender ideology" by Jan. 31. Most noticeably, "Transgender" and "Queer" were removed from the U.S. State Department Travel Informational page, which now only provides resources for "LGB" individuals.

These are only a portion

of the national measures attempting to restrict and police transgender existence in the last few weeks. These executive orders have already resulted in restriction, panic, and uncertainty. Hospitals have preemptively barred transgender youth from accessing care, gender marker changes on passports have been halted, their recipients' legal documents held in limbo, and a transgender woman in a Texas prison was even instructed to change into "male clothing." The orders overwhelmingly target trans women, who are already at higher risk of violence.

'These executive orders have already resulted in restriction, panic, and uncertainty.'

On a brighter note, many people are working to fight these orders. A federal judge blocked the transfer of trans women into men's prison facilities, the New York State Attorney General declared that stopping trans health care would be in violation of state anti-discrimination laws, and numerous other legal officials have stood up to anti-trans legislation across the nation. The new administration needs to know that these actions are intolerable.

'The new administration needs to know that these actions are intolerable.'

It is important to document these measures and the actions taken to combat them. As a student working with historical archives, I feel compelled to turn to transgender history for a path forward. It is somewhat simple to trace legal and medical policies, even as governments try to censor them. However, it is more difficult to ascertain how these policies tangibly impact individuals. This is where history comes in.

Over winter break, I presented my thesis research at the American Historical Association conference. For most students, it would be an obvious choice to widely celebrate this prestigious opportunity. However, as with many factors in my life, I have to consider simple things with greater intentionality. Why? My poster, "Vice Versa: Female to Male Transsexuals Before Transgender Liberation," leaves no question of the topic. Publicly sharing my work is in itself a political

action. I was asked if I was comfortable, in the current situation, to be posted visibly on social media in association with my research about transgender histories.

I am not upset that the question was asked, I am enraged that it has been made necessary. I should spend my final semester worrying about job applications and saying goodbye to my friends. I have to worry about everything my peers have to worry about, all the while burdened by anxiety about my future. I wake up questioning how to maintain access to meds. I ride the bus and debate pursuing surgeries while they remain legal. I scribble my assignments, mentally crossing off life paths. I worry about all of this, and I am one of the lucky ones.

'For every transgender person like me, there are countless others with far less safety and security.'

For every transgender person like me, there are countless others with far less safety and security. Visibility is a revolutionary act; it is dangerous, taxing, and complicated. Many people cannot choose whether or not to be visibly transgender. I have levels of privilege and anonymity afforded to me by my whiteness and my ability to "pass" as a man. That's exactly why I refuse to stand down. I would rather have a target on my chest than sit quietly while my friends and I are erased from society. So, to share or not to share my research? For me, there is only one possible

answer. I refuse to bow out now. I cannot and do not wish to hide that I am transgender. As a student of history, I cannot erase my own.

I will continue to uncover a portion of the long line of trans people who have lived before us. If we can envision ourselves in the past it will become easier to act in the present and forge a better future. In this way, transgender history is vital to transgender survival. The webpage erasure of Nex Benedict and Matthew Sheppard reflects what is lost if we forget our histories. Not only do we lose LGBTQ+ pasts, but we forget the admittance and condemnation of homophobia and transphobia. We lose national moments of solidarity where the world came together in mourning and outrage. Forgetting the past means forgetting the hope so often born from disaster.

There are many things that the transgender community needs to survive right now. We need that hope. We need medical care, legal aid, friends, and vigilance. Above all, we need each other. Whether it's through protests, support groups, or history books, connection and community are essential.

Transgender identity was not new: perhaps it began 33 years ago when Feinberg named the liberation movement, or 61 years ago when the first U.S. gender clinics opened, or in 1919 when Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Institute of Sexology. People have medically transitioned for over a century, and they've identified outside the gender binary for millennia longer than we've labeled

JACOB WEINGARD / CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATOR

them transgender.

Trans history is woven with strings of beauty and joy, pain, and violence, but most importantly, tenacity and perseverance. Everyone has a role to play in the fight for transgender liberation, and now is the time to step up. This is not a moment for despair; it's a call to action.

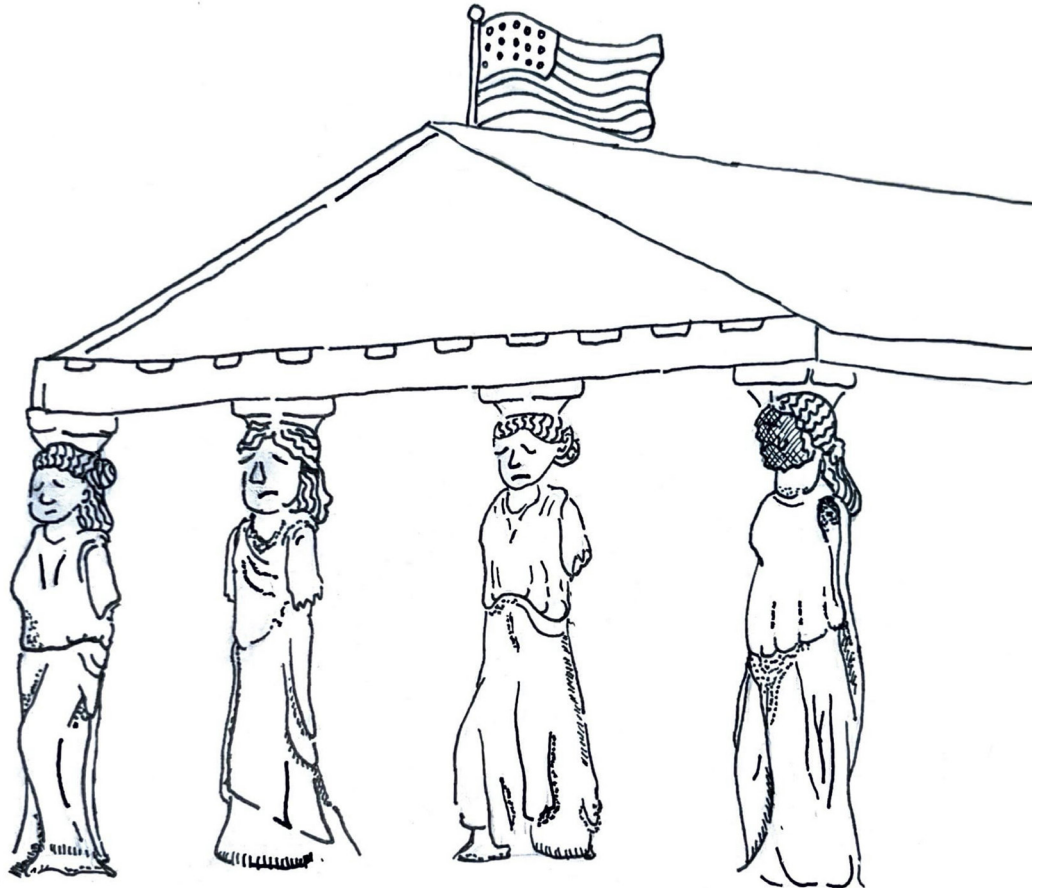
'Trans history is woven with strings of beauty and joy, pain, and violence, but most importantly, tenacity and perseverance.'

For anyone who feels isolated, alone, and unprecedented, here are some places to start:

- *Transgender Warriors*, Leslie Feinberg
- *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker
- *We Both Laughed in Pleasure*, Lou Sullivan
- *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, C. Riley Snorton
- *How Sex Changed*, Joanne Meyerowitz
- *A Short History of Transmisogyny*, Jules Gill-Peterson

Editor's Note: The digital version of this article (on campustimes.org) includes hyperlinked sources.

Kinde is a member of the Class of 2025.



ED BOARD FROM PAGE 6
University Health Services (UHS) have published resources and statements in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Individual department websites also provide commitments and specifics of how they each uphold values associated with aspects of DEI.

The University released another statement, “Federal Policy Changes: Updates and guidance for the University community,” Feb. 7 outlining topics and frequently asked questions for updates on immigration, research, and data

privacy and legal protections. The released statement asserts, “While awaiting further guidance from federal agencies, the University will continue to comply with all state and federal laws governing our programs.” Although it claimed to answer frequently asked questions, the statement did not provide any real context for the University’s plans to preserve DEI.

Student comfort and safety is crucial to fully promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion — so when the University has resources, why don’t they promote them?

With the introduction of

recent executive orders regarding DEI, these changes at the federal level will inevitably impact a variety of groups on campus. A sense of community and acceptance is crucial at times like these; students can visit centers around campus to reach out for peer and general support.

One resource is the Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center (BIC) located on the third floor of Douglass Commons, which strives to promote cultural awareness and bring a sense of inclusion and equity to the University campus. They host a variety of events and workshops surrounding

issues of identity, diversity, and culture, ultimately working towards a goal of an inclusive campus. The BIC offers an opportunity to submit a bias incident report and provides a space on campus for collaboration and conversations surrounding cultural and diverse identity intersections.

Another resource center, with a particular focus on first generation, low-income, and minority students, is the David T. Kearns Center. In addition to providing more educational and academic resources and opportunities, they offer events that

enrich the understanding and knowledge of minority backgrounds and provide an inclusive and welcoming environment on the fourth floor of Dewey.

It is important to note that these are not the only resources available on campus to support students; rather, there are a multitude of departments to explore, including UHS and ISO. As federal law continues to change in the upcoming months, don’t hesitate to contact resources on campus or join or build a support network amongst peers to get through these changing times.

The Editorial Board is an Opinions article representing the view of the *Campus Times*, co-written by Editor-in-Chief Emmely Eli Texcucano; Publisher Sherene Yang; Managing Editors Alex Holly, Maya Brosnick, and Helena Feng; Opinions Editors Eva Naik and Addison Baker; and Editor-at-Large Natalie Opdahl.

Congestion Pricing: Not As Good As It Seems

BY TEDDY ALMOND
PHOTO EDITOR

Congestion pricing has been implemented in many cities around the world. Newest to the club, as of early January, is New York City.

Manhattan has always been a hotspot of commercial activity. Millions of people enter and leave the city each work day. Many of them now face yet another tax.

‘Millions of people enter and leave the city each work day. Many of them now face yet another tax.’

The basic idea of any congestion pricing scheme is to toll drivers for entering a specific, predefined area, in order to simultaneously reduce congestion and air pollution as well as raise funds for public transportation. The Congestion Pricing Zone in New York affects those entering lower Manhattan at or below 60th Street, although excludes those using the highways around Manhattan’s coast. Currently, anyone entering this zone between “peak hours” — 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends — with few exceptions, is subject to a \$9 toll on their E-ZPass, the company for issuing toll-readable transponders for motorists.

However, this is not the only toll faced by commuters entering the city. Motorists entering from New Jersey already pay a toll of about \$16 to enter Manhattan. If you take the George Washington Bridge, you will be charged an extra \$9 should you enter Lower Manhattan, resulting in a total of \$26. In order to shave \$3 off your commute, you can take either the Lincoln or Holland tunnel. There is no additional toll during Congestion Pricing Hours other than the base of \$9 applied to motorists using the Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg, or 59th Street bridges.

Prior to the toll’s rollout, the

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the organization responsible for the city’s public transportation, said that the proceeds from the toll — estimated by The New York Times, more than \$500 million yearly — would go to the city’s public transit.

I lived in Manhattan for the first 10 years of my life, before I moved to New Jersey. I understand both sides of this aisle: When living in Manhattan, like nearly all New Yorkers, we never used a car to get around the city and thus would never have paid the congestion toll. However, now, living in a place where having a car is a necessity, I begin to see a different perspective.

‘Living in a place where having a car is a necessity, I begin to see a different perspective.’

I commuted from my hometown to Hoboken (directly across the river from Manhattan) on New Jersey Transit (NJT) trains for high school. The NJT system shuttles millions of commuters to and from New York each and every day, along the same routes I took to Hoboken.

Those familiar with NJT know that their service is ridiculously below standard: There were countless times that I was late to school because of lengthy delays, train breakdowns, cancellations (leaving me stranded temporarily in Newark), missed connections — often because of the aforementioned delays — rude conductors, and any other inconvenience you could think of.

‘There were countless times that I was late to school because of lengthy delays.’

It is no shock that NJT is underfunded, and while the MTA pledges to make their transit more reliable, there has not been an

accepted funding offer for New Jerseyans.

There is another issue: NJT doesn’t go everywhere. Many towns don’t have train stations and lack even indirect service to midtown Manhattan. There are countless people who rely on their cars to get to work. While it works for some to drive to the nearest town’s train station, for others, it makes no sense. Take Bernardsville for example: They don’t have working train service on the weekends due to maintenance and when they do, the trains come infrequently. If the town’s residents wanted to get into the city, they would have to sit in traffic on a bus or drive nearly 30 minutes to a nearby town only then to get on a train that would take another hour. For some, there is no reasonable alternative to driving.

‘For some, there is no reasonable alternative to driving.’

It’s not that congestion pricing doesn’t work — it has worked, just not for New Jersey. In 2003, London became one of the first cities to implement a congestion pricing zone. This decision was so impactful that it would go on to inspire the MTA’s model for New York congestion pricing more than 20 years later.

However, the key difference has been its implementation: Prior to starting the congestion price zone in London, Transport for London (TfL) invested heavily in its transit. Specifically, it reinforced its bussing capacity. Before tolling drivers, TfL added more than 350 buses to its circulation as well as a 23% increase in service. By 2000, TfL reduced car travel into London and increased bus ridership by 25%, all before the congestion charge was even introduced, according to an article by Transit Center.

The MTA, on the other hand, has only made vague promises such as adding “hundreds of new electric buses” or “accessibility improvements at over 20 stations” — none of which had

been done before pricing went into effect.

Because Upper Manhattan above 60th Street does not have a congestion charge, many drivers are parking in residential neighborhoods in the Upper West Side near subway stations and then taking public transportation for the final leg of their commute, according to a report by ABC’s Eyewitness News.

“People in those neighborhoods say commuters are taking up all the spots and creating even more traffic,” said Waddit Cruz, a doorman on the Upper West Side.

Some New Yorkers have even seen things get heated, as Richard Coleman, a NY elevator mechanic, explained to ABC: “While I’m parking, walking away from my car, I see the people arguing and bickering over spots.”

In spite of these issues with the program, at the end of the day there is still one issue with Manhattan traffic: too many cars. In just the first month of its implementation, the program seems to be successfully curbing that issue.

According to CBS News, “the MTA says travel times have improved in the Congestion Relief Zone by as much as 59% during peak afternoon hours. Officials say traffic patterns indicate more drivers are shifting to off-peak hours, as the plan intended.”

While there are benefits to the congestion pricing plan, I feel that it unfairly penalizes out-of-state commuters for

simply going to their jobs, especially those who are already paying high tolls to use the Hudson River’s bridges and tunnels. At the same time, I feel that the MTA forgets about New Jerseyans’ needs. Steps, like those in London, should have been taken before introducing the toll.

‘The MTA needs to get a grip on the crime on its subways.’

I also believe that the MTA needs to get a grip on the crime on its subways: When rolling out a program that incentivize users to take advantage of public transportation, having three stabbings, someone shoved under an oncoming train, and a fire set on a sleeping woman all in one month is not a good look. For the CEO of the MTA to suggest that fears of taking the subways were “all in people’s heads,” is a slap in the face of the people who have experienced the very real consequences of the MTA’s public safety failures.

Congestion pricing is a promising idea, and I have no problems with it in and of itself, but the MTA should have expanded its service and responded to its underlying safety issues before pushing people into its system.

Almond is a member of the Class of 2028.



NY traffic heading Eastbound across the George Washington Bridge.

TEDDY ALMOND / PHOTO EDITOR

Congestion Pricing is Clearly the Way to Go

EDITORIAL OBSERVER

BY MAYA BROSNICK
MANAGING EDITOR

Jan. 5, 2025: a day that will live in infamy. Well, not quite, but you wouldn't know it from the explosion of social media and press critics prophesying the end times for small businesses and low-income commuters in response to the start of congestion pricing in Manhattan. A little over a month later, the data has proved the exact opposite: Congestion pricing is good for commuters and residents alike.

Congestion pricing is a toll applied to those entering a predefined area of a city. While New York is the first American city to implement a congestion pricing plan, many European and Asian cities, such as London and Singapore have already done so to great success.

The initiative works by scanning vehicles entering Manhattan at or below 60th Street, and applying a charge based on the type of vehicle and time of day. Per the MTA, cars are to pay a once-daily toll of \$9 between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekends. In off-peak hours, the charge will be \$2.25. Charges for other vehicles range from \$4.50 to \$21.60.

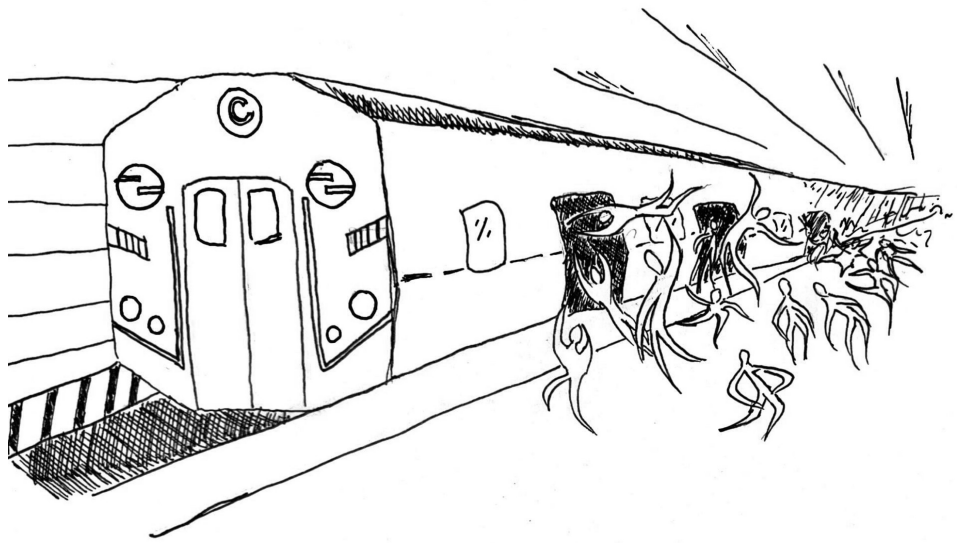
Though the concept of congestion pricing in NYC dates back to 1959, the most recent iteration of the tolling procedure was first proposed in 2017, when then-Governor Andrew Cuomo needed a plan to improve the subways.

The plan was, and is, that the money collected from congestion pricing will go to the MTA, which will use the money to improve public transportation across the metro. The toll is projected to bring in \$15 billion, all of which will go toward improving NYC's subway, commuter rail, and bus systems.

The projections showed that congestion pricing would work; now, so does the data. In the first 12 days of congestion pricing, there has been a 55% drop in crashes and a 51% drop in injuries as compared to the same period in 2024. While this only reflects a small sample size and the data does not account for variables such as weather, the drop is undeniably an early sign that congestion pricing is keeping the city's streets safer.

'Only two percent of the city's outer borough residents in poverty would be asked to pay a congestion fee in their daily commute.'

More than just safety, congestion pricing is also keeping the air cleaner. Before implementation, the consequences of the current congestion pricing plan were extensively studied, culminating in a more than 900-page report detailing environmental impacts of the toll. The report found that congestion pricing would decrease air pollutants such as carbon monoxide,



MARY JERRED / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

nitrogen dioxide, benzene, and particulate matter, which have all been linked to severe health problems such as heart disease and certain cancers. While the predicted reductions in chemicals are greatest inside the congestion pricing zones, other areas of New York and New Jersey are expected to see reductions in air pollution as well.

A common argument against the implementation of congestion pricing is that it will disproportionately impact low-income New Yorkers, but that isn't true. According to a study out of the Community Service Society, only two percent of the city's outer borough residents in poverty would be asked to pay a congestion fee in their daily commute. Meanwhile, the other 98% would benefit directly from increased funding for public transportation. All 100% will enjoy longer, healthier lives, with faster commutes and less risk of losing loved ones to traffic accidents.

The city also offers low-income residents a 50% discount after their first ten peak period trips in a calendar month, and drivers coming from New Jersey will receive a \$3 credit if they enter through the Holland or Lincoln tunnels using an E-ZPass during peak hours, reducing the toll to \$6.

Another popular argument is that congestion pricing will negatively impact small businesses, as the toll discourages people from driving into the city. In reality, congestion pricing eases the immense traffic burden that costs New Yorkers \$9.2 billion dollars annually in delays, according to a study conducted by HDR for the Partnership for New York City. More than that, most of the people patronizing Manhattan's small businesses are either commuters, who still have to come to work, and residents, who aren't going to leave the borough just to buy a sandwich.

While there's no way to

know if the early positives from congestion pricing will continue, what we've seen throughout the first month is a strong argument in favor of the initiative. I'm from Manhattan, and I know I'm sick of delayed buses and trains. Beyond the data, the same social media channels that prophesied our congestion pricing doom a month ago are now full of people posting recordings of their commutes made faster, smoother, and more pleasant by the toll. Most of the cities that have implemented congestion pricing have followed the same pattern: backlash before it starts, followed by support once the effects begin.

New York is on its way to safer streets, cleaner air, and higher quality public transportation. Congestion pricing works, and I, for one, hope we're allowed to keep it.

Brosnick is a member of the Class of 2027.

The Steep Price of Health and Wellness

CHARLOTTE HENNESSEY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When scrolling through media platforms like Instagram or Pinterest, you're likely to land in a collage of lush salads, exorbitantly-priced smoothies, and attractive individuals sporting the latest and greatest workout attire. Weekly Pilates classes and juice cleanses have become the norm: "Integrate these recipes into your daily diet, or purchase this sports bra, and you, too, can lead a healthy lifestyle." This classically white, upper-middle-class depiction seems to be what our society deems to be the ultimate beacon of health and wellness.

Most who perpetuate such idealistic living will preach their lifestyle as one they've adhered to with sheer determination. While striving to care for their physical and psychological health may be admirable, media consumers would be remiss if we failed to recognize the socioeconomic privilege that has

allowed influencers to practice their healthy habits.

When behind-the-scenes managers and on-the-scenes content creators choose to market a healthy lifestyle as one everyone can and should strive to attain, they neglect to acknowledge the reality many Americans face. As of 2024, 30% of American households reported living paycheck-to-paycheck. When funds are limited, the focus shifts towards daily survival. In these instances, preferences are ignored: The primary concern is acquiring satiable meals — not ones most free of preservatives and trans fats.

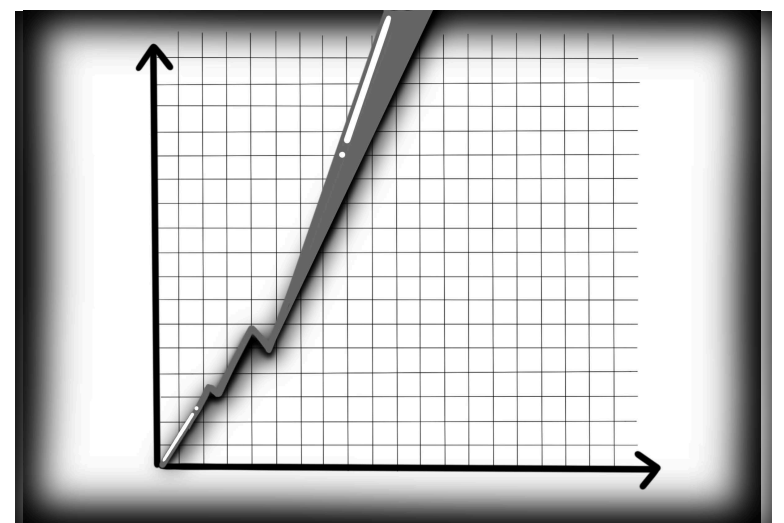
'These issues are cyclical and systemic in nature.'

When we glance into poverty-stricken communities, those struggling with obesity, diabetes, asthma, and mental health conditions, we ought to understand that these issues are cyclical and systemic in nature. They are not personal choices, and

they certainly are not an individual's fault.

"Food deserts" are urban neighborhoods which lack feasible options for nutritious foods; with nearly 20% of its population living below the poverty line, Rochester is a perfect example. Taking a ride along the University's Orange or Blue shuttle lines reveals streets flanked by corner bodegas and fast food restaurant chains — not exactly Whole Foods or Trader Joe's. These options provide low-income families with an affordable, quick, and filling meal, often within walking distance of one's home. It makes sense, then, that residents would return to those establishments — despite them being known for highly processed meals — time after time.

At UR, many of us strive to pursue futures in public service, whether through medicine, technology, or policy. As a future part of America's public health efforts, the responsibility to meaningfully help break these cycles falls on us. We can only forge



JOYLU / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

change if we accept and appreciate the bigger picture — one in which not every person is dealt the same deck of cards. Instead of shaming others for not epitomizing stereotypical health and wellness, we must meet every individual where they are at. Doing so will allow us, the future public servants of America, to provide care to patients or advocate for new policies that help a variety of individuals, not just those from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds.

As we march confidently

to graduation and beyond, we must recall: Contrary to what mainstream media may convey, being "healthy" isn't just a commitment to bettering one's well-being — it's a luxury that comes with a price tag not many can afford.

Hennessey is a member of the Class of 2025.

An End to the Madness



MARY JERRED / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

BY JAKE SCINTA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In September 2023, anti-Black vandalism was found at Schlegel Hall at the Simon Business School. You probably haven't heard about it, because no arrests were made, and the University hasn't put out anything regarding the incident since October 2023. National and international media were dead silent.

'National and international media were dead silent.'

Meanwhile, four students currently face expulsion purely because they forced the administration of the University of Rochester to face accountability for their own action — a grave crime indeed. This was the harshest possible response available after their cynical bid to pull the FBI in on hate crime charges failed. From the fall semester to now, the administration's actions prove that the University will stop at nothing to ruin these students' lives. At the very least, the punishment far exceeds the crime. At most, there is no crime worthy of criminal prosecution. Either way, the administration continues to stamp out student voices pleading with the University to sever its ties with the Israeli apartheid regime.

'Either way, the administration continues to stamp out student voices.'

The discrepancy in official responses to these incidents has nothing to do with hypocrisy in how the University handles discrimination and hateful messaging. They do not care about discrimination or hateful messaging at all; instead, the apparent contradiction only demonstrates the University's true priority: snuffing out all who challenge them. Anti-Black racism does nothing to bruise the administration's ego, but the 'wanted' posters do. The posters dare them to be better, to uphold the mission they claim to hold so dear.

'Anti-Black racism does nothing to bruise the administration's ego, but the "wanted" posters do.'

Antisemitism — a real and serious problem in numerous spaces — holds no significance to this administration beyond its utility in slandering and suppressing student dissent. For yet more evidence of their dedication to suppressing student voices over actually protecting Jews, you need only read the absurd and insulting protest policy implemented at the start of the year.

'You need only read the absurd and insulting protest policy.'

My admissions essay to the University wasn't fantastic, much like most of my writing at age 17, but there's still value to be found in it. In my acceptance letter, the University quoted my writing back to me. It was about the necessity to push the frontiers of social progress. I got into this university on the message that human history is a story of gradual emancipation and constant progress, and the warning that we all suffer if that progress is reversed. Such a message fits well with the professed objectives of MELIORA, which includes equity, integrity, openness, respect, and — perhaps most relevant to today — accountability. Every day of its relentless campaign against pro-Palestinian student voices, the University signals it is far happier to take my tuition than my message, and its own message as well. With the Musk and Trump regime now officially in power, it is ever more necessary that institutions like the University of Rochester stand firm in opposition rather than fall into compliance with their impending crackdowns on the rule of law, Constitutional rights, and this country's remaining democratic institutions through the use of executive orders. If we do not push this University to be "Ever Better," they will fall in line, just as they have done so far with regards to pro-Palestinian student activists. The administration hopes to plug its ears until all the noise goes away. Don't let them.

Scinta is a member of
the Class of 2025.

The Issue With Renaming the 'Gulf of Mexico' to 'Gulf of America'

BY VICTORIA IGHODARO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On President Trump's first day in office, he signed a number of executive orders, but the most laughable was the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America." The goal of this move, according to his administration, was to honor American greatness. Still, the political implications of this move raise serious questions about its intent and impact.

First, it's worth noting that the name "Gulf of Mexico" has been in use long before the United States was founded. To arbitrarily rename it as the "Gulf of America" is not only odd but downright insulting to many people — especially in Latin America. The renaming of such a historic body of water can thus be seen mainly as a political power play, a way to reinforce U.S. dominance in the Americas.

"America" is a complicated term. I can describe both North and South America together (the "Americas"), but often is used to refer specifically to the United States. And this seems to be the intention of our current President — therefore, renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America" appears to be an attempt to minimize the shared identity of the entire continent by reinforcing the idea that the U.S. is the center of the Western Hemisphere.

This has long been a point of contention for many Latin Americans, who already feel uneasy with the U.S. tendency to claim "America" as a shorthand for just the United States. To them, it's a slap in the face to every country that shares the continent, especially when "America" is meant to represent a collective identity, not a single nation.

From a logistical standpoint, renaming the Gulf of Mexico is no small task. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, which is responsible for approving official geographic names, will need to update the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to reflect the new name. This means that government maps, federal documents, contracts, and any other relevant materials will have to be revised to remove any references to the Gulf of Mexico and replace them with the new designation. It's a major undertaking that requires significant time and resources to implement, not to mention the potential confusion it will create for anyone who has spent their life using the term "Gulf of Mexico."

Interestingly, many institutions wasted no time in starting to implement this change. Google, for instance, announced that Google Maps would be updated to show "Gulf of America" for U.S. users as soon as the change is reflected in official government sources, in accordance with long-standing company practices. Similarly, the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center quickly began using the term "Gulf of America" in its forecasts.

Despite the speed in which these updates have been made within the U.S., there's a big limitation to what this executive order can actually accomplish. Namely, President Trump can't formally rename the Gulf of Mexico on an international scale. For the new name to be recognized globally, Mexico and the United States would need to come to an agreement. Mexico, as a neighboring country that shares the Gulf, has a strong opinion on the matter. In response to President Trump's proposal, President

Sheinbaum of Mexico sarcastically suggested that North America be renamed "Mexican America," demonstrating her stance on this matter.

As it stands, the renaming will only apply within the United States and in federal documents. It will not have any formal recognition in international law or geography unless both countries agree to it, which seems unlikely given the tension this change has already sparked.

The renaming of the Gulf of Mexico may seem like a trivial issue to some, but it's a decision that reflects broader political dynamics and ongoing challenges the U.S. faces in its relations with Latin American countries. This move is likely to further stoke resentment toward the U.S. in the region, especially among those who already feel that the U.S. places itself above the rest of American nations. It reinforces the idea of American exceptionalism, and furthers the increasingly accurate worldwide perception that the U.S. has no regard for its neighbors and allies. While the order's official intent may have been to honor American greatness, it has collateral risks of deepening the divide between the U.S. and its neighbors.

In the end, while the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico may seem like a small, symbolic gesture, its political ramifications will likely be anything but minor. It adds fuel to the fire of anti-U.S. discontent many Latin American countries already feel, and it serves as a reminder that symbolic acts of power, no matter how seemingly insignificant, can carry a heavy weight in international relations.

Ighodaro is a member of
the Class of 2027.



JOYLU / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

CULTURE

Eastman First-Year Experiences the Grammy Awards Up Close and Personal

BY COLIN JONES
CULTURE EDITOR

Regardless of how you feel about the Grammy Awards, you might have tuned in for at least a portion of the day's festivities. There's something electric about seeing some of the biggest artists in the world coming together to celebrate music itself, not to mention the stunning performances. It's already exciting to view at home, despite the commercial breaks, but it's even more incredible if you get to be one of the lucky few who attend the ceremonies in person. Eastman Vocal Jazz first-year Harrison Candelario is one such person.

Candelario seemed like he was still riding the high from the ceremony when he sat down to talk to me, the day after he returned. For an aspiring vocalist like Candelario, experiences like the Grammy Awards are not only captivating as an onlooker, but a taste of what may be to come in his career. "It's a difficult industry to break into," Candelario said. "It's great to [...] go to Eastman and have a school

that is so accredited, especially because I want to teach in the future."

'For an aspiring vocalist like Candelario, experiences like the Grammy Awards are not only captivating as an onlooker, but a taste of what may be to come in his career.'

The prestige that comes with an Eastman education has helped Candelario snag a spot in Grammy U, a nationwide networking organization affiliated with the Recording Academy (the company that runs the Grammys). "It's like, this is not my life right now," he said. "I felt like I committed to a school [...] and went to the Grammys less than a year later."

According to Candelario, who attended the Grammys with his mother, one of the biggest takeaways was how surreal it was to be up close and personal with major celebrities. When his mother

dropped her phone, Kirstin Maldonado of famous a cappella group Pentatonix picked it up. He saw musical influences of his from various music genres perform live — all under one roof. "[I] never thought I would ever see Stevie Wonder perform live or Herbie Hancock [...]" It was incredible," he said. Performances that stood out to Candelario included a mournful Quincy Jones tribute, which also included a performance from Cynthia Erivo, who recently starred in last year's "Wicked," as well as British R&B star Raye and Eastman alum and American soprano Renée Fleming (MM '83).

Candelario mentioned several times that the existence of the ceremony at all this year was tenuous due to the recent Los Angeles wildfires causing devastation to the region. "A lot of people this year were scared of going because of the fires and it was very much up in the air until probably like a week and a half ago," he said, his tone shifting from excited to serious. "[Because of the fires] this year was very much

guesswork on their end."

Luckily for Candelario, the Recording Academy was still able to cover much of his fees with various stipends due to his status as a Grammy U participant. On a more positive note, he mentioned how the fires were a big focus of the ceremony, and that, while it did add a more subdued and reflective tone to the normally joyous and exciting event, that the emphasis on awareness was important.

"It wasn't as focused on [...] big show-stopping numbers, [although those] were there. But then it was like, we're also going to make the show-stopping number intimate and make it feel as though it's part of something greater and that you should donate because of that. So they were really successful in doing that."

Candelario also gave praise to his Eastman professor Sara Gazarek, who is a trustee and voter for the Recording Academy for jazz. Additionally, Gazarek's vocal quartet, säje, won a Grammy Award this season for Best Arrangement, Instrumental, and Vocals.

"She knows so much about [...] technical principles and is such a good person and cares about all of her students in a personal way, but also from an academic standpoint and a career standpoint," he said. "It's good to have a connection with a mentor that means so much."

Aside from networking and study work he's doing in the music realm, Candelario is actually working on his own EP, which he plans to release updates about through his Instagram or on his personal website.

Going forward, Candelario is eager to move further into the music industry, pursue a career as a musician and educator, and — ideally — head back to the Grammys one day. When asked if this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for him, he grinned. "Maybe not. Let's hope it's not. I pray it's not."

Jones is a member of the Class of 2026.

Border Countries

BY CALEB OSHINSKY
STAFF PUZZLER

ACROSS

- 1 *Santiago's Country
- 6 "___ questions?"
- 8 Indecent
- 11 Slangy denial
- 12 ___-I-Am, of Green Eggs and Ham
- 13 Finished up, as homework
- 15 Roadside assistance org., or a small battery
- 16 *Cairo's Country

DOWN

- 2 #
- 3 "Monsters, ___"
- 4 Cleaning product made in "Fight Club"
- 5 *Neighbor of Fiji
- 7 *Neighbor of Oman
- 9 Chinese steamed bun
- 10 Mum's mum
- 14 "___ in, ___ out"

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	16					

Michael Che's Winterfest Set Welcomes Lackluster Comedy and Announces His Exit From SNL

BY BRIAN LY
HUMOR EDITOR

Michael Che, an American stand-up comedian, was invited by the University to do a late-night stand-up comedy routine at Kodak Hall in Eastman Campus Feb. 1. He is best known for his sketches on SNL, especially for a Weekend Update segment known as “joke swap,” in which he wrote jokes for his white co-host, Colin Jost, to tell — and vice versa. Often, these jokes push the envelope due to the nature of making the other person uncomfortable. Che's reliance on race-centric jokes extended into his performance at Winterfest.

His performance was a part of the UR Winterfest Weekend performances, which usually feature a big-ticket performer invited by Wilson Commons Student Activities (WCSA) and the Student Activities Board (SAB). As the featured performer for this year, there was an air of uncertainty about Che's potential for stand-up comedy, since many attendees had only seen him on SNL. Still, as it was the big-ticket performer, the first floor was nearly filled with people.

The event was slated to start at around 8 p.m. in Kodak Hall, but Che set foot on stage about 10 minutes after the start time, beginning by talking about how he wasn't used to doing stand-up performances, before starting by making jokes about Rochester, referring to Frederick Douglass and his ancestry. He seemed — at first — to be well-received by the audience.

‘Around the middle of the set, his jokes seemed to lose direction.’

As I experienced his work live, I thought the performance was relatively stereotypical in terms of subject matter: topics surrounding the local environment, jabs at racism, hammed-up personal experiences, cultural references, sex jokes, and more. He seemed to have prepared a few jokes, but around the middle of the set, his jokes seemed to lose direction. Che seemed to fill the crowd's silence with awkward laughs and rambled as a replacement for unwritten jokes.

The SAB later posted a comment about Che's performance, saying that they “were not given a script, draft, or any mention of his

jokes before the show” and that they “do not condone or tolerate ableism, homophobia, or any form of discrimination.”

At the beginning of the night, Che mentioned that he was sober, but by the end of the night, he reminded me of a rambling drunk, mumbling under his breath and laughing to himself.

‘By the end of the night, he reminded me of a rambling drunk.’

Notably, Che mentioned that he may be leaving SNL. He had been considering leaving for several seasons, but only publically (and definitively) brought it up during this performance. As a mainstay on the show since 2014, serving as the co-anchor of “Weekend Updates” and co-head writer until 2022, Che's upcoming absence may come as a surprise.

Although he has a history of threatening to leave the show, Che mentioned that he might even have to re-audition if he wanted to go back. “This is my last season. I'm not coming back, don't worry. I'm done, it's over for me. It's been so much fun. It's a little emotional, it's bittersweet,” he mentioned during his performance. Che did not talk about what he planned to do afterward, citing a lack of job experience outside of the show, and instead just continued his set.

The late night itself was supposed to end at 9 p.m., but Che extended his stay for about another 25 minutes, talking to the audience and going off on small tangents. Instead of being captivating, Che's performance held the concert hall captive. As Kodak Hall emptied out, I overheard chatter of how the end felt like Che was just running out the clock. While the set wasn't the worst comedy I had ever seen (I had even thought that the middle part was rather well done in terms of joke delivery), in retrospect it lacked uniqueness and dragged at the end unnecessarily.

Perhaps the most notable takeaway from this is Michael Che's statement that he may be leaving SNL. What he intends to do afterward is unknown, but I'd urge him to reconsider if he's looking to pivot back to stand-up.

Ly is a member of the Class of 2027.

Lo Que le Pasó a Palestina



BY SAAFA TAHBOUB
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The empowering lyrics of Bad Bunny's new album, “DeBÍ TIRAR MÁS FOTOS;” or “I SHOULD'VE TAKEN MORE PHOTOS;” have touched the roots of resistance movements everywhere. For Palestinians, the embodiment of the Puerto Rican resilience portrayed in the album's songs has given new life to what it means to embody cultural history proudly as a form of protest.

Across liberation movements, music has consistently shown the power of art in resistance. For an artist like Bad Bunny who's deeply immersed in media and celebrity culture, to break the boundaries of modern music creates a powerful reflection of the existence of our people's fight and brings awareness to our grief. Through his work, we see how music transcends borders and becomes a language for collective healing and resistance.

‘Through his work, we see how music transcends borders.’

The longing to return to a home where the ground is unstable is a pain that is hard to capture. Despite this difficulty, Bad Bunny conveys a feeling of missing a home and the chance to appreciate its beauty through the song “DtMF” (an abbreviation of the album's title). The chorus of the song, which says, “Debí tirar más fotos de cuando te tuve,” or “I should have taken more photos of when I had you” depicts a sentiment of yearning for something lost. This resonates deeply with Palestinians, who have experienced the loss of not only their land but also the identity and history that persist in their collective memory. For Palestinians, this lyric evokes the pain of losing their homeland, and the inability to capture and preserve their connection to their land due to years of occupation and displacement.

Similarly, Puerto Ricans who have fought for independence also carry the sorrow of a homeland that has

been stripped of much of its autonomy. In the case of Puerto Rico, the fight for independence has always been intertwined with a cultural renewal, a reclaiming of what was once erased. In this way, the personal loss expressed in the song also reflects a collective struggle for both land and identity. By intertwining personal pain with political struggle, Bad Bunny's lyrics transcend the boundaries of a personal relationship and become a broader metaphor for the collective pain of oppressed peoples everywhere. Whether it's the struggle of Puerto Ricans fighting for autonomy or Palestinians battling against occupation, the song serves as a call for solidarity.

Bad Bunny speaks to the emotional weight of resistance in the song “TURISTA,” or “TOURIST.” The line “Escondiéndome los sentimientos / Tengo miedo que me haga más daño,” or “Concealing my feelings / I'm afraid that it will hurt me more” resonates with those who have lived under the weight of systemic oppression, where personal pain is often concealed behind public resilience. In both Puerto Rico and Palestine, the resistance is not only physical but also emotional and psychological. The people continue to resist, not only to reclaim their land but to heal from years of emotional and cultural trauma.

‘The song serves as a call for solidarity.’

Here, Bad Bunny acknowledges that the fight for justice is not solely about reclaiming what has been taken from us, but also about the long journey of healing from the wounds of oppression. At the same time, his music captures the meaning of living fully despite all this pain. It's an understanding that only those who have lived it can fully comprehend, yet we demonstrate it through our genuine ability to share ourselves and our rich culture with the world.

Similarly, the song “LO QUE LE PASÓ A HAWAII,” or “WHAT HAPPENED TO

HAWAII,” reminds us of the importance of holding onto one's roots in the face of historical erasure. The lyric, “Ni olvidé el Lelo Lai,” or “Nor did I forget the Lelo Lai” calls on Puerto Ricans to never forget their roots, their struggle for independence, and the rich history of their ancestors who fought against colonialism and for the preservation of their culture. The sentiment of losing something deeply tied to identity — land, culture, and heritage — mirrors the hardship of both Puerto Ricans and Palestinians who are threatened by the erasing of their connection to the land.

‘As we think of Palestine, we also think of Puerto Rico.’

In the same way, the lyric, “Quieren quitarme el río / y también la playa,” or “They want to take away my river / and also the beach,” shows how intertwined the impacts of settler colonization and tourism are. This lyric emphasizes how culture and land are intrinsically linked to identity and the fight for autonomy. In both cases, how the land, identity, and cultural survival remain central to the movement for justice. As Gaza is not for sale, the land in which everything grows will continue to remain in the hearts of Palestinians. From the veins of olive trees to the flowing waters of Puerto Rico's rivers, the essence of the soil will always belong to its indigenous people.

As we think of Palestine, we also think of Puerto Rico and everything that its people stand for. If we cannot recognize the power and strength of our words, we cannot truly honor our history. To resist is not just to fight, but to remember our culture and live through it boldly in a world that denies its existence.

Del río al mar.

This article can be found in Spanish online at campustimes.org

Tahboub is a member of the Class of 2027.

Take a Look at the ASIS Gallery's Current Exhibit, Lines of Inquiry

BY KATE STOUT
STAFF WRITER

If you've ever walked into the Sage Art Center, you've seen the ASIS gallery. It's a space that displays almost exclusively student work, with the present exhibit, *Lines of Inquiry*, showcasing the products of four students' fall semester independent studies. According to Art New York and Studio Art Program Manager, Megan Mett , the mission of the gallery is, "geared toward the students, to provide space for the students." Each display is up for around two to four weeks at a time.

'The mission of the gallery is "geared toward the students, to provide a space for the students.''

When you enter the space, you'll first encounter works from Alex Garlock, a senior majoring in Studio Art and Psychology. Three of the pieces are inspired by drawings of children, which are also hanging in the gallery. She also has a puppet on display, "Alex."

What you'll probably notice immediately about her work is that some of it moves. "Mouse" is sat on a turntable with paint

brushes spinning around it and is made, in part, of aluminum cans. Another piece, entitled "Elephant," features "unnaturally blue water," said Garlock, flowing from the titular animal's trunk primarily made of paper mache. Both pieces are mixed media.

Garlock's favorite piece is "Dream," her interpretation of a child's rendition of an underwater seascape made with melted candy, including Jolly Ranchers. It's her favorite in part due to the time commitment to complete the piece, but when she was finished, "I'm like, holy cow, this is – it was worth the work." It was also the hardest to make. Garlock said they hadn't realized, "how much chemistry was in candy."

Finding materials isn't a straightforward process for Garlock, who described their art as "very intuitive." Regarding figuring out what to use, they said, "I tried my best to just kind of be a yes man, you know, say yes to everything ... nothing was too dumb, nothing was too big or too outlandish, and if it didn't work, I'd try a different turn."

To the far left of the exhibit is the work of junior Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Studio Arts major Eva Naik. Naik's

work is also mixed media, using wood, acrylic, ink, watercolor, and more. As per her work's label, she's exploring her cultural identity as a first-generation American and South-Asian heritage through her pieces.

'She's exploring her cultural identity as a first-generation American and South-Asian heritage through her pieces.'

On the label, she wrote that she was examining "how geometric shapes along with repetition can be used to reflect my own internal balancing act of culture and heritage" for these pieces. Repetition can be seen in their titles as well, which are called "First Generation American I," "First Generation II: Repetition," "First Generation American III," and "First Generation American IV."

On the opposite side of the exhibit is "Tainted," the work of senior Studio Art and Physics major Catho Fan. The work connects to Fan's experiences of being harassed at locations in Rochester and is meant to capture the anxiety of returning to those places.

They used black and white photos to symbolize memories, placing red and white thread atop the photos. Fan said these features "are supposed to be reflective of my internal, like thought processes while I'm going through these locations."

Fan plays with space very deliberately in "Tainted." Downcast lighting emphasizes the otherwise difficult-to-see white thread, Fan explained, and draws out the shadows from the piece. Eyes of thread were created with push pins pressed into the wall. A six-foot tall cardboard cut-out is placed away from the photos at a distance which Fan called "uncomfortable" to give the impression of the figure "kind of creeping up."

The fourth artist, senior Studio Art and Brain and Cognitive Sciences major Alicia Lawson has her piece called "Diary of a Naturalist" on a pedestal for visitors to flip through. It's a book handbound by Lawson, containing drawings and watercolors of natural subjects like squirrels or birds. Also in the book are quotes selected by Lawson from songs, poems, and more.

Through this work, Lawson combines her

scientific background with art and writing. This comes through in her use of scientific references in her work – which came from a combination of specimens from the Ward Collection, reference images, and subjects in her own life.

'Lawson combines her scientific background with art and writing.'

Lawson explained, "I wanted to make a hybrid of a naturalist's notebook and a diary because I like the concept of combining two passions of mine, science and art, and just showing the way that like the more objective presentation of like a scientific naturalist's notebook plays into the more subjective experiences of like poetry and song lyrics and the other writings I included."

There will be a reception for "Lines of Inquiry" Feb. 13 from 4 to 6 p.m.

Stout is a member of the Class of 2028.

Reinventing Fairytales with Eastman's 'H & G'

BY NATALIE OPDAHL
NEWS EDITOR

I've always loved fairy tales, so when I learned that the Eastman School of Music was putting on a retelling of Hansel and Gretel as part of their Opera Theatre Winter Voice Festival, I knew I had to go. "H & G, A Great and Terrible Story" is an hour-long musical production based on Anna Maria Hong's novella of the same name. The show employs a fusion of jazz and opera to examine the classic tale in a new and refreshing light.

The original Hansel and Gretel follows the two namesake characters through the woods after being abandoned by their parents. They wander into the clutches of a cannibalistic witch who intends to eat them, but the witch's nefarious plan is foiled when Gretel kills her by shoving her into a hot oven. In comparison, in Hong's narrative, the cubist-style performance invites its audience to decide what is important about the art, posing numerous questions about the

boundaries between reality and dreams.

'The cubist-style performance invites its audience to decide what is important about the art.'

I've seen many modern adaptations of the Brothers Grimm's tale, but "H & G, A Great and Terrible Story" is by far the most postmodern, ethereal depiction that I've seen. Instead of simply retelling the story, Hong and the team of composers and librettists, who compose the music and write the lyrics, weave themes from the original story into an exploration of growth, maturity, and trauma. It is not a "narrative" in the typical sense, but rather a visual and auditory collage of dreamlike fragments that piece together a nonlinear reflection on life. There are no scenes in H & G. Instead, everything flows fluidly into the next sequence, blending time and space into a conglomeration of ideas and thoughts that never fully resolve.

Demonic spirits chase two innocent children. A

witch who cannot see is determined to be known as the fairest of all. A woman who was once a young girl enslaved in a candy house becomes a seductress who uses candy apples to lure children into that very same place. A starry-eyed, opulent mistress sings an

aria about a game of chess. A husband mourns the loss of his wife.

What does it mean to "grow up"? Are villains really villains? Is it possible to escape traumatic cycles? In "H & G," everything matters, yet nothing is important. Everything influences

everything else, yet everything is independent. Time is always moving, yet moving through time we are stuck, frozen in place.

Opdahl is a member of the Class of 2026.



(From left to right) Carolina Sullivan, Anna Bjerken, Christine Sheng, Eleni Nicholas, Elijah Gebers, Jason Garcia-Kakuk, Michael Sabatino, and Izabella Gozzo perform in front of the audience in the Eastman Winter Voice Festival, Jan. 17, 2025.

NICMINETOR / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

‘Wicked’ Soars Above Movie-Musical Expectations

BY ALEX HOLLY
MANAGING EDITOR

From its first teasers, “Wicked” proclaimed itself as a production with big ruby-red slippers to fill. The film, which debuted in November 2024, boasted a star-studded cast featuring Ariana Grande-Butera, Cynthia Erivo, and Jonathan Bailey. Its budget? Upwards of 150 million dollars — dedicated only to the first installment of the movie. Its second act? Scheduled to release exactly one year later, with a slightly bigger price tag and just as long a run time.

“Wicked” has long been a theatrical staple and the name on everybody’s lips. The production opened its doors on Broadway in 2003 and hasn’t closed since (with a brief 18-month exception for the COVID pandemic), and has been performed at the Gershwin Theatre for more than 20 years — the fourth longest-running Broadway show of all time.

‘A pop culture phenomenon reaching far beyond the walls of musical theater bars and collected playbill portfolios.’

Based on the lesser-known off-shoot of Frank L. Baum’s beloved story “The Wizard of Oz,” “Wicked” is adapted from Gregory Maguire’s 1995 novel of the same name and spins the backstory of the Wicked Witch of the West, Elphaba, and her friendship with the witch soon-to-be-known-as Glinda the Good.

The production’s legacy has cemented it as a classic, a pop culture phenomenon reaching far beyond the walls of musical theater bars and collected playbill portfolios. In its 20-year run, the show has been produced in over 100 cities and seen by 65



MARY JERRED / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

million patrons, owing this fame in part to its masterfully composed score, gripping story, and precisely, yet not shyly, implemented theatrics.

This is all to say that, going into “Wicked,” director Jon M. Chu had a reputation to uphold. Additionally, directing Hollywood’s hopeful next box office hit was going to be an uphill climb.

To put it lightly, recent movie-musical adaptations have been wishy-washy at best. 2024’s “Mean Girls” rendition was just as plastic as its starring clique, a lackluster cash grab that seemed almost terrified to market itself as what it was: a musical. The already washed-up Y2K soundtrack was further pop-ified, the direction was tacky, and the lead just couldn’t sing. While 2022 and 2023 sported “Matilda the Musical” and “The Color Purple” film adaptations, their box office splash was more of a ripple.

As a performing medium, theatre has often struggled with accessibility, both to fanbases and wider audiences. As the majority of shows are

locked beyond the theatre doors and guarded with a major paywall or distance gap, wading knee-deep in Broadway is an almost impossible task. If you’re in over your head, you’ll find other ways to get your fix (notably through the treasure trove of “slime tutorials” on YouTube), but even taking the first tapshoed step into show tunes can be daunting.

Similarly, marketing a musical has proved to be no easy feat. While pro-shots and movie renditions throw bricks at the paywall as they attempt to bring Broadway to a broader audience, the public reception isn’t as grand, or acknowledged, as intended. Thus, theatre continues to linger as a supporting star to music, film, and television.

Since Hamilton’s premiere in 2015 and the following American obsession (a time in which middle schoolers were somehow Broadway’s greatest marketing), we hadn’t seen another show make the transition to pop culture’s centerfolds. Then, sporting a supposed 150 million dollar press tour

and enough brand partnerships to turn the world pink and green before the film even hit theatres, “Wicked” became, well... Popular. And that’s exactly the hype they wanted.

Co-stars Cynthia Erivo (Elphaba) and Ariana Grande-Butera (Glinda) above all garnered attention. In part to both stan culture reception and a connection both perceived as mutual loathing or the “Gelphe” connection (a phenomenon of almost unnatural bonding between actresses playing Elphaba and Glinda), the pair successfully created rumors, gossip, and social media stir. Ethan Slater’s casting as Boq connected a few lines in the red-string-corkboard of Grande-Butera’s rumored homewrecker allegations, Erivo clapped back at well-intentioned fan edits and questionable AI renditions of the iconic “Wicked” poster, and the pair most notably held space — and fingers — for the lyrics of “Defying Gravity.” All of this was months before the film even dropped.

To no surprise of its big price tag and even

bigger marketing strategy, the work paid off, solidifying “Wicked” as a box office smash and the highest-grossing film adaptation of a Broadway musical.

Although fans were quick to snip at the movie’s color grading, framing, and lengthy run-time, “Wicked” is a musical adaptation that truly used its resources “For Good.” Unlike many predecessors, it’s unafraid to present itself musically and indulges in the Ozian theatrics that have kept the show running for upwards of 20 years.

‘It’s unafraid to present itself musically and indulges in the Ozian theatrics that have kept the show running.’

The movie is rich, flush with well-executed dance numbers, exuberant CGI, and a score that brings magic from Nessa’s slippers to the silver screen. Although doubts were heavy, the performances are stellar; Grande-Butera makes her love for Glinda and trained operatic range evidently clear, Erivo soars through live vocals as effortlessly as Elphie implements her powers, and the supporting cast weaves together the fabric of Shiz University and the Emerald City as if made anew. Admittedly, I cried. A lot.

In the renaissance of “Wicked,” perhaps no one mourns. Rather, we celebrate, indulge, and tap our heels three times as we wait patiently for the end of its year-long intermission.

Author’s Note: If Gregory Maguire can write an adaptation novel 100 years following its source material, the CT can publish a “Wicked” review 2 months late.

Holly is a member of the Class of 2026.

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HUMOR

How to Celebrate the Super Bowl Like a Pro



JOYLU / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

BY MANGO NOREBERG
STAFF WRITER

It's Feb. 9, the day we've had marked on our calendars for months. Everyone's running home from the grocery store with bags overflowing with snacks, drinks, and barbecue equipment. Tensions arise as fans cheer for either Kansas City or Philadelphia — while a different type of fan keeps their eyes peeled for a certain Kansas City tight end's mega-star significant other.

Guess what, folks? We've been celebrating the Super Bowl all wrong. Be sure to hold onto your snacks (especially those served in bowls), because here is the literal truth on how to celebrate the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl was actually a 24-hour-long celebration of foods served in humanity's greatest invention known as the bowl. To celebrate, everyone should wake up eating their favorite cereals — and bring on the sugary kind while you're at it, no matter what your endocrinologist might say.

The greatest highlight of the day is holding massive bowl-themed celebrations.

Attendants are required to wear bowler hats and bowl-o ties and eat all kinds of food served in bowls. It's customary to eat dishes beyond the regular bowl of soup, chilli or ice cream in a bowl to honor its legacy. It's about time we take advantage of this annual celebration. Serve everything in a bowl from tacos and sushi to smoothies and even sandwiches! Anything goes! If you can eat (or drink) it with pleasure, then put it in a bowl!

Make sure to truly know the meaning of the Super Bowl from this day forth and stock up on all kinds of bowl-friendly foods and eat to your stomach's desire. If not, go ahead and watch people playing around with a football or whatever — even though your distraction might compromise the efficiency of you feasting on your favorite dishes in the world's greatest dish.

Norenberg is a member of the Class of 2028.

Baby Presses Charges Against Mother for Being Born

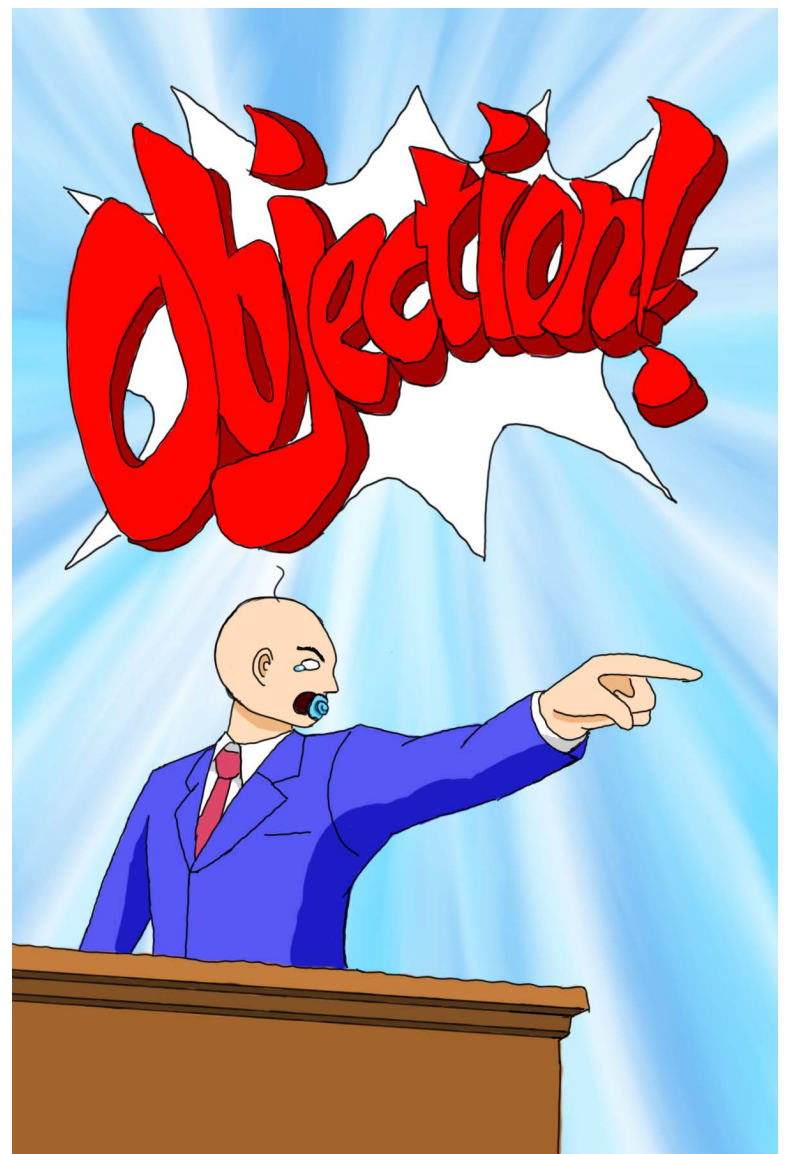
BY GABRIEL JIANG
HUMOR EDITOR

A peculiar court case has recently captured the public's attention: the baby of a mother pressed charges against their mother for giving birth to them. Apparently, the birth was so unsatisfactory that the plaintiff received auditory and visual trauma from the disgust and harassment from the doctors, as well as sustained neglect from the mother subsequent to their birth.

"They were just screaming and yelling at me while forcibly evicting me from my home!" the baby told CT in an exclusive interview outside the courthouse. "I was still sleeping during that time too! They woke me up from my much needed beauty sleep. So, of course now I'm suing for emotional distress too."

'The shouting and lights purportedly hurt the baby's ears and eyes, resulting in the need for hearing aids, glasses, and an Instagram addiction.'

The shouting and lights purportedly hurt the baby's ears and eyes, resulting in the need for hearing aids, glasses, and an Instagram addiction. The baby also explicitly articulated to their mother and doctors that they neither wanted to take on the responsibilities of life nor face the harshness of reality. Clearly, they already foresaw those



GABRIEL JIANG / HUMOR EDITOR

4 a.m. late nights writing essays while crying and not sleeping, school food that is barely edible, and taxes. Yet, to the dismay of the baby, no one understood. According to their filed complaint, their guardians "only wrapped them up in a blanket that restricted them from trying to use their body language to further express their qualms."

As of writing, the baby has received a degree from law school and is acting as their own lawyer for the

case. If found guilty, their mother is expected to compensate the baby by paying for the necessary medical bills involved with the incident and providing housing of an equal or greater quality than the baby's previous accommodations.

Jiang is a member of the Class of 2028.

A Letter to My Guitar

BY FREYA MAI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Dear Purple Squier Sonic Stratocaster,

I am most grateful for you this Valentine's Day. Ever since I bought you with my hard-earned money, you've brought me nothing but joy. Unlike couples who argue and fight, I can always enjoy your company. Together, we disrupt my hallmates' sleep with nightly practice sessions of moody music (that, admittedly, should not be used as a coping mechanism).

You're a part of me — the purple guitar to my purple hair. Anyone who says this relationship is unhealthy is a hater. They simply don't understand how our bond has

blossomed in the past months. Even my mother doubted us, thinking I wouldn't be able to balance my guitar and my academics. But we proved them wrong — our bond is stronger than ever!

On a happier note, you've helped bring me and my friends closer through karaoke sessions and a shared love for music. For that, I'm most grateful. The friends that stay close to me are the ones that truly deserve our love this Valentine's Day. Friends like you, Purple Squier Sonic Stratocaster.

XOXO,
Freya

Mai is a member of the Class of 2028.

Papercuts: Corner

BY JOSHUA SCHIAVI
STAFF WRITER



SPORTS

Men's Basketball Defeats Case Western Reserve In Cleveland

BY AENEAS WOLF
SPORTS EDITOR

The UR Men's Basketball team defeated Case Western Reserve's (CWR) by a score of 89 to 87 on Friday, in Cleveland.

'The UR Men's Basketball team defeated Case Western Reserve's (CWR) by a score of 89 to 87.'

UR junior Tomiwa Adetosoye (#8) scored the first points of the game 25 seconds into the first half with a clean layup.

UR jumped out to a 7-6 lead before CWR retook the lead on a two-point jump shot from graduate student Andy Barba (#99). Neither team gained significant momentum until CWR senior Umar Rashid (#11) knocked down a three-pointer to make it a 16-11 game.

A minute later, UR responded with a three of their own, courtesy of graduate student Bennet Kwiecinski (#11). Next, Kwiecinski grabbed a defensive rebound, which developed into a made jump shot by senior Ethan McEachern (#3) to tie the game at 16.

CWR converted another three, this time from sophomore Drey Fox (#8). UR would go on to take a one-point lead when Kwiecinski made two free throws after being fouled on the fast break.

Neither team made significant headway for five minutes, resulting in a 33-33 tie with five minutes to go. The teams traded three-point makes, with UR adding a jumpshot and CWR two free throws to tie it again at 38. UR made a push in the final two minutes by scoring eight points in the paint and at the free throw line. However, CWR reduced the lead to five at the half when senior Sam Trunley (#10) made a three at the buzzer.

Four minutes into the second half, CWR equalized the score at 50 when Rashid made another jumpshot and was fouled. He then made the free throw to take the lead.

The lead changed four times in the next three

minutes, with CWR ending the exchange on top when Trunley made two free throws to make the score 58-57.

'The lead changed four times in the next three minutes.'

UR came roaring back, however, going on a 15-6 run over the next five minutes. UR built on this momentum, with their lead reaching 10 with four minutes to go.

Despite appearances, CWR was not yet out of the game. They scored 16 points over four minutes, culminating with two made free throws by Barba to take the lead 87-86 with 37 seconds left.

On the next possession, UR graduate student Nate Sock (#22) missed a jump shot, but Kwiecinski grabbed the rebound and was fouled on the follow-up. He made both free throws to take the lead back with six seconds left.

Adetosoye thwarted CWR's last chance with a crucial steal and was fouled shooting on the fast break with two seconds left. He made one free throw and time expired as CWR corralled the miss.

'With the win, the Yellowjackets improved to 7-12 and will continue their road trip in Pittsburgh.'

With the win, the Yellowjackets improved to 7-12 and will continue their road trip in Pittsburgh on Tuesday against Carnegie Mellon University.

Wolf is a member of the Class of 2027.

UR Squash Dominates St. Lawrence en Route to Sixth Straight Squash Title

BY AENEAS WOLF
SPORTS EDITOR

The UR squash team dominated St. Lawrence University's (SLU) team to the tune of an 8-1 victory in St. Lawrence's Robie Squash Center this Sunday.

UR senior Nic Gil (8) started the contest off well with a three game sweep of St. Lawrence junior Athrva Yadav, with game scores of 11-8, 11-2, and 11-7.

Senior Omar Zakaria (2) won the second match in four games against junior Patrick Walford. The scores were 11-7, 11-8, 9-11, and 11-3.

Senior Jake Koepfel (6) made it three in a row for UR with his own sweep, this time over first-year Miguel Posada

Villa.

Sophomore Van Inman-Benavente (7) dropped the first game 9-11 before winning the next three against senior Harry Robson by scores of 11-6, 11-6, and 11-4.

UR won the next match too on the back of sophomore Dhirren Rajarathinam (3). Rajarathinam swept his opponent, SLU senior Oliver Bikhazi-Green, in three games with the scores of 11-7, 11-3, and 11-6.

Senior Arnav Mandhana (5) defeated his SLU senior counterpart, Hassan Madkour after losing the first game 8-11. He went on to win the next three games by scores of 11-8, 11-8, and 11-5.

First year Preston Wu (9)

beat senior Dean Brooker in three games with the scores of 11-7, 11-4, and 11-5.

Senior Yash Fadte (1) was forced to concede his match against first year Gregory Malsang down two games to one, giving UR its only loss of the day.

Finally, senior Tom Whiteley (4) defeated junior Harrison Callaway in three sets, scoring 11-9, 11-7, and 11-3.

With this victory, UR won their sixth consecutive Liberty League squash title and their 12th overall.

Wolf is a member of the Class of 2027.

Puppy Bowl XXI Was a Tail-Biter

BY KATIE JARVIS
COPY CHIEF

Around campus, around the city, and around the country, people can't stop talking about the biggest American sporting event of the year. Continuing a fierce rivalry, on Sunday night, two teams faced off head to head – or should I say snout to snout. That's right. It's time to talk about the Puppy Bowl.

'That's right. It's time to talk about the Puppy Bowl.'

The two teams playing in Puppy Bowl XXI were Team Ruff and Team Fluff. Last year saw Team Ruff secure the coveted "Lombarky" Trophy, so Fluff went into the game hoping to take back the title of Puppy Bowl champions.

The stadium field was littered with toys, all of which count as balls in play at all times. Should a pup kick or drop one into either end zone, they score a three-point field goal. If they carry it past the 0-yard line, that's a touchdown and seven points.

The game began with a recording of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Notably, many players opted to sit, stay, and even lie down during the playing of the national anthem, but these players faced no repercussions.

Within the first minute of the game, Ruff's Enrique grabs the ball. After fumbling at the 30-yard mark, Enrique recovered only to be blocked by his sister, Rita, of team Fluff. Frustrated, Enrique took to the coolers, only to be

called out by the ref for illegal doggy-paddling in the water bowl.

The first TD of the game was scored by Foxtrot, a collie from team Ruff. Foxtrot was almost intercepted by Fluff's Mary, but proceeded to reset, then weave down the field to secure a 7-0 lead.

Enrique, never one to quit, seemed to score Ruff's first field goal, sending a ball into the end zone. However, later footage revealed that it was actually Rita who touched the ball last, scoring three points for Fluff.

At the top of the second quarter, Ruff led Fluff 14-6, but the second quarter saw Fluff pulling forward, almost matching Ruff for a 21-20 lead with a minute left on the clock. Suddenly, Trio, a three-legged French bulldog on team Ruff, scored a clutch touchdown extending Ruff into a 28-20 lead. The second quarter also showed much unsportsmanlike conduct, with Ruff's Jason watering the grass of his own end zone and Fluff's Bonnie briefly stealing the ref's flag. With seconds on the clock, a historic play was made by Fluff's Charlotte, who managed to pull off a combo Field-Goal-TD, the first player to do so in Puppy Bowl history. At the close of the second quarter, Charlotte's pupset had pulled Fluff into a two-point lead.

'The second quarter also showed much unsportsmanlike conduct.'

The halftime show left much

to be desired. The four-kitten big band was good, but not the "Mardis Claw" extravaganza that game organizers promised. Due to a partnership with Wisdom Panel, a DNA test aimed at our furry friends, each player was then introduced with an on-screen graphic of their entire breed background – something that should only be implemented if the players are dogs.

The second half of the game progressed with both teams collar-to-collar. Unable to take the heat, Ruff linebarker Mr. Pickles began a tug-of-war with his own teammate. Ever the opportunist, Fluff's Kiki took advantage of the commotion to score a TD.

Scores going into the fourth quarter were 61-56 with Fluff in the lead. Halfway through the final quarter, Ruff secured a five-point lead through a series of masterful plays. But, in the last 10 seconds, through a 50-yard play, Team Fluff's Paws Allen, scored one final TD for team Fluff, earning them the Lombarky Trophy, and the admiration of the American public.

More importantly, the Puppy Bowl serves as a massive adoption initiative, with every one of its 142 players available to take home. Paws Allen may have earned his team the trophy, but his greatest triumph tonight was finding his fur-ever home.

Jarvis is a member of the Class of 2026 (T5).