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## VCU students speak out against evangelical preachers on campus

Students surrounding the preacher with protest signs held up. Photo by Andrew Kerley

**ANDREW KERLEY**  
Audience Editor

**SARAH HAGEN**  
Contributing Writer

Groups of evangelists have been preaching to students around VCU's Monroe Park Campus for multiple years, according to Ky-Long Nguyen, a VCU senior and information systems student.

"Frankly, no students agree with their thoughts. What they have been doing has been a waste of time. I recommend they stand down and educate themselves on what we young people really believe in," Nguyen said.

Students formed a spontaneous protest in opposition to a group of evangelists preaching outside of the James Branch Cabell Library on Feb. 8.

The crowd was formed after Paul Adams and another man, both members of the local Grace Bible Church, stood outside of the library holding up a sign that read "Are you going to heaven? Free test."

“

Frankly, no students agree with their thoughts. What they have been doing has been a waste of time. I recommend they stand down and educate themselves on what we young people really believe in.”

**Ky-Long Nguyen, VCU senior and information systems student**

"When a friend of mine sent me a photo on social media to tell me that the preachers were back, I grabbed a notebook and sharpie, got in my car and drove to the library," Nguyen said. "I scribbled up a sign and held it in an attempt to drown out the religious evangelizing. A few other individuals with the same idea joined me."

Students gathered over the course of the afternoon to yell over the preachers, hold up signs, argue, drown them out with music, dance, show public displays of affection and hand out food to each other, according to Nguyen.

"They usually preach anything along the lines of misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism or anti-abortion rhetoric," Nguyen said. "However, they shroud their beliefs in religious texts, using them as an excuse for hate speech."

Many students have tried to have a conversation with the evangelists, according to Nguyen.

"Their minds cannot be persuaded," Nguyen said. "The idea of actively talking or arguing with them is futile. That's why I resort to making humorous signs with my notebook, because I'd rather do something that would draw attention and make others smile and laugh."

Oliver Harmon, a member of Triangle Club at VCU,

said evangelists are causing harm to students that are just trying to get to their classes.

Triangle Club is an organization that seeks to allow students and staff at VCU who are interested in fighting against health disparity, promoting social and political education and socializing within the queer community, according to its page.

"They are very persistent sometimes," Harmon said. "The first few times I was approached I had to physically walk out of the area be like, 'Hey, I don't want to talk to you.' I want to treat them with respect, and they should [treat me with respect] as well."

One group of evangelists regularly stands in VCU's Compass — the area between the James Branch Cabell Library and the Shafer Court Dining Center — shouting at students using a megaphone and holding up a sign listing groups of people that are "going to hell."



Student holding up pride flag at the Compass. Photo by Sarah Hagan.

"I have a hard time differentiating them," Harmon said. "I hear there's at least one evangelist that's more civil and polite. Apparently there's one guy that stands at a corner and tries to argue with science."

Some evangelists will follow students around VCU's Compass area and ask them about their beliefs, according to Harmon.

"It feels intimidating as I am both gay and transgender," Harmon said. "I used to be Christian, growing up inside the church before coming out. I have so much religious trauma. Being randomly approached in the first place is terrifying because you never know what people might say or do."

Some of Harmon's friends avoid VCU's Compass area entirely because of evangelists, according to Harmon.

"We are here to preach the gospel, that God forgives sinners, and that if they repent and put their faith in Christ, they can be saved," Adams said.

Grace Bible Church evangelists do not come to VCU and preach with the intention of bringing up homosexuality, Adams said.

"We've all sinned, I had to repent for premarital sex, for example," Adams said. "But the students always want to bring up homosexuality. Our purpose is just to preach the general gospel, but those issues [homosexuality] separate

people from God. We have to address it so as to not stay away from the truth."

Students have been told that homosexuality is OK, but the Bible states otherwise, according to Adams.

"The students are not complacent on the subject of God," Adams said. "I would say that this is a form of intolerance that's been bred into our society. It is coming from the universities, the media, politics, a lot of different levels in our society."

Grace Bible Church loves and cares about the students, Adams said.

"It would be easier for us to stay at home and not come here and not have these kinds of things happen [protests]," Adams said. "However, I would like to have a discussion with people, rather than just everyone shouting all the time. Jesus Christ told us to go out into the world and make disciples of every nation."

VCU has been friendly to Grace Bible Church and more accepting of having their evangelists on campus in recent years, according to Jack Dove, Grace Bible Church's coordinator of VCU's evangelistic outreach. The police are "kind, helpful and professional," according to Dove.

“

They are very persistent sometimes. The first few times I was approached I had to physically walk out of the area be like, 'Hey, I don't want to talk to you.' I want to treat them with respect, and they should [treat me with respect] as well."

**Oliver Harmon, a member of Triangle Club at VCU**

The preachers have a right to be on campus because of freedom of speech, but the VCU's Reservation and Use of Space policy is advertised on campus by Shafer Court Dining Center, and the Quick Response code leads to an FAQ by the Dean of Students office. The policy was approved in 2017 but the signs were put up recently.

"That sign was recently placed after we were able to determine how best to communicate the policy," stated VCU's Dean of Student Affairs Reuban Rodriguez.

The policy details what university property can be used for by VCU staff, students and outside parties. Most of the prohibitions relate to interruption of daily life and obstruction of university buildings and services. The policy also states that the university prohibits expression that is not protected by law, which includes defamation, obscenity and criminal or civil harassment.

Rodriguez said if a student feels unsafe for any reason on campus, they can call his office, the student commons or VCU PD's emergency number.



Stories of the week

**NATIONAL:** Students protest outside of the U.S. Supreme Court, as the justices lean toward killing student loan relief in oral argument.

**INTERNATIONAL:** Hong Kong lifts its mask mandate, being one of the last major international cities to do so.

Doctors discuss importance, benefits of diversity in health systems leadership

NATALIE BARR  
Staff Writer

Just under 6% of doctors in the U.S. are Black, according to data from the Association of American Medical Colleges — yet, 2020 census data states 12% of the U.S. population is Black.

The VCU Health webinar “Black in Excellence” hosted four panelists to highlight the importance of Black representation in healthcare leadership.

grandmother in the hospital and became curious about her care, he said. Elliott started his profession in the clinical setting prior to transitioning into the administrative side, but even before he began his career, his focus has always been on the patient, he said.

“I realized it’s not just the medical treatment, but it’s the treatment of the whole person and their families,” Elliott said. “That’s what really matters.”

A big priority for the university’s health system is to understand the community and solutions for how to provide long-lasting

said. Perry found the classes she used to perform well in were more challenging in college and became unsure if health care was right for her, she said.

“I kind of lost a passion for the subject,” Perry said. “I started to think a little bit differently about the profession and whether or not being a doctor was the only way to make an impact in the health care field.”

A new path became clear for Perry when her younger brother collapsed on a football field during a game, she said. Her family’s understanding of health care and ability to pay for her brother’s care were a privilege many families do not have, she said.

“It was sort of an incentive for me to think about ‘how can I have an impact in helping people get access to care and navigate the health care industry?’” Perry said. “I realized I could do that without necessarily being a physician.”

since high school he wanted to work in the health care field. Araia remembered, at times, being the only Black person in his pre-college, upper level math and science classes, he said. He wants to be a support for other Black individuals and classmates, according to Araia.

“

As we see more people like us, like myself, who want to pursue this goal, I feel like I want to let other Black individuals know they’re not alone in this.”

**Nat Araia, president of VCU student organization Black Men in Medicine**



Michael Elliott, the current chief operating officer at VCU Health, speaking at an event. Photo Courtesy of Michael Elliott.

K.C. Ogonna became the university’s first Black dean of pharmacy last year, according to a VCU News article.

Michael Elliott, chief operating officer, became the health system’s first COO last year, according to a VCU Health article.

The conversation focused on diversity at the leadership level. A broader conversation centered around the importance for future Black professionals to “take up space and feel important,” even if they are the only Black person in the room, panelist Richelle Webb Dixon, senior vice president and COO of Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee said.

“

It’s a really exciting opportunity to delve more into the subject and think about what was my role as a future health care professional, and making sure that my community was educated about how people can live dignified lives, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.”

**Chelsea Perry, first year MBA student at Wharton College**

Elliott, an alum from VCU’s pharmacy school, knew since childhood he wanted to pursue health care after he visited his

care, Elliott said. Social determinants of health, the economic and social conditions that affect individual care for the greater Richmond community, are looked at very closely to best serve patients, according to Elliott.

“We’re actually trying our best to make sure that people stay healthy,” Elliott said. “Not that you just come to VCU Health when you’re sick.”

Elliott remembered a time when diversity, equity and inclusion was not a topic discussed in health systems, he said. Communities are becoming more diverse, and health systems benefit when a variety of backgrounds and perspectives are at all levels of the hospital to determine the best patient care, according to Elliott.

“We need as much diversity as possible. We make better decisions when we have more perspectives,” Elliott said. “We do things better for our communities when we have those different perspectives.”

To close out Black History Month, the webinar focused on Black representation at the leadership level, but diversity does not solely mean race or stop with increasing Black representation; but all races, socioeconomic statuses, religions and sexual orientations, Elliott said.

“Once we bring those things together, then we can start really saying ‘hey we’re here for the entire community, we’re here to make sure that we’re providing the type of care that everyone wants,’” Elliott said. “That takes time and it takes effort. It takes pushing for diversity.”

Chelsea Perry, first year MBA student at Wharton College, was one of four speakers on the panel; Perry is an alumna of both the University of Maryland and VCU.

Perry excelled at chemistry and biology during middle and high school, and this led her to pursue pre-medicine in college, she

ber of disparities than white communities, according to Perry.

Across the U.S., Black, American Indian and Alaska Native communities live fewer years on average compared to white communities, according to findings from the 2021 Commonwealth Fund, Achieving Racial and Ethnic Equity in U.S. Health Care study.

Black communities are more likely to die from treatable conditions, have a higher risk for chronic health conditions, suffer higher pregnancy-related complications and have higher rates of death during or after pregnancy, the study found. COVID-19 worsened life expectancies for Black, Latinx and Hispanic communities compared to white communities, according to the study.

“It’s a really exciting opportunity to delve more into the subject and think about what was my role as a future health care professional, and making sure that my community was educated about how people can live dignified lives, regardless of their racial or ethnic background,” Perry said.

Perry recognized the role of technology to deliver more affordable and accessible health care for rural and urban communities, so she co-founded a company called Appcelerator in 2019, she said.

Appcelerator helps get more minority representation at all levels of the industry, Perry said. The company is still in its early stages, with partnerships with Deloitte and Accenture and the signing of the first health company, Fraser Hospital in Milwaukee, according to Perry.

“I think my immediate plan is to continue to be an intrapreneur at some of these larger organizations, and hopefully, found another company in the next 10 years,” Perry said.

Nat Araia, president of VCU student organization Black Men in Medicine, knew



Chelsea Perry, co-founder of Appcelerator and MBA candidate at Wharton College poses for a photo. Photo courtesy of Chelsea Perry.

Araia mentors students in middle schools, and when he asked the youth what they wanted to be when they grow up, most of them told him “an athlete or an entertainer,” as these industries are known to be dominated by Black individuals, according to Araia. He thinks if the younger Black generation sees people like themselves, it will inspire them to pursue jobs they may not think they can do, he said.

“I feel like as they see more people that look like them, they can feel they can do it as well,” Araia said. “I think that’s important.”



# New Common Book highlights mental health, loneliness

**KATIE FARTHING**  
Staff Writer

**VCU CHOSE “SEEK YOU: A JOURNEY THROUGH AMERICAN LONELINESS” BY KRISTEN RADTKE TO BE THE 2023-2024 COMMON BOOK.**

The Common Book program aims to explore different social issues and bring VCU students and staff together to discuss these issues, according to the Common Book website.

Previous Common Books focused on issues regarding climate change, voter suppression, poverty and racism. The most recent book focused on Bruce Tucker’s death and the role of the Medical College of Virginia, or MCV, according to a previous article from The Commonwealth Times.

There are multiple academic requirements that must be met for a book to be considered as the Common Book, according to Constance Relihan, dean of university college and the acting director of the Common Book Program.

“A book needs to address an issue that’s important and current,” Relihan said. “It needs to be a text that helps students look at things from a context they might not normally, so it helps people get outside of themselves a bit.”

The selection process involves the provost and a campus-wide committee, including faculty, graduate and undergraduate students and student-submitted ideas, according to Relihan.

“We want as much input as possible and we want to make sure that we choose a book that resonates with a large swath of the campus,” Relihan said.

The book focuses on the complex issue of loneliness and mental health, according to Relihan.

“My hope is that it will help students understand ways in which they can connect with each other,” Relihan said. “Maybe it will help them be able to identify warning signs of loneliness in themselves. It will help them be able to reach out to each other.”

It’s a graphic non-fiction novel and the committee thinks it will resonate with the arts in ways that previous books didn’t, according to Relihan.

“It’s really wide-ranging in the topics that it brings up and so we’re hoping that there’ll be a lot of ways for us to connect with each other,” Relihan said.

The University College department asked Katelyn Harlow, a senior English student and peer mentor for the Focused Inquiry Learning Lounge, to read the book and give a student perspective, according to Harlow.

“I mean, it’s exciting to think about so many different types of people reading the book together, especially writing about loneliness. We have to have a conversation around it, so it’s really great that that will be happening in a classroom.”

**Kristen Radtke**, author

**Photo: ‘Seek You: A Journey Through American Loneliness’ is the Common Book VCU chose for the upcoming school year.**  
Photo courtesy of Kristen Radtke

“I think that loneliness is something that’s been on our minds for a lot of reasons, but also loneliness has been becoming more and more of a problem even before the pandemic.”

**Kristen Radtke**, author

“It’s definitely super relevant to the digital age that we live in, as students,” Harlow said. “So much of our lives are online and where the intent is to feel more connected to people, it can almost feel like the opposite, like more isolating.”

The book acknowledges how vital a sense of belonging is to people, now more than ever, according to Harlow.

“I think people are really realizing the importance of community and feeling a sense of belonging to those communities,” Harlow said.

Gabino Iglesias, a book critic, described the book as having a “hybrid nature” and defying “categorization” in an NPR article.

“Perhaps the most important thing it accomplishes is telling everyone that they aren’t alone in their loneliness, and that could be the first step into ending the loneliness epidemic,” Iglesias stated.

Loneliness is a prevalent issue that deserves more of a discussion, according to Radtke, author of this year’s Common Book.

“I mean, it’s exciting to think about so many different types of people reading the book together, especially writing about loneliness,” Radtke said. “We have to have a conversation around it, so it’s really great that that will be happening in a classroom.”

Loneliness is something that most people experience but she never thought about it critically or artistically until it started showing up in her writing and she began researching, according to Radtke.

“I think that loneliness is something that’s been on our minds for a lot of reasons, but also loneliness has been becoming more and more of a problem even before the pandemic,” Radtke said.

College is the time for making connections as well as learning, according to Radtke.

“The relationships you have in college can be relationships you have forever and those friendships are how you figure out who you are and where you belong,” Radtke said. “I think that that’s really valuable, so, I hope that this is a reminder of that.”

Radtke will speak at an in-person keynote address on Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. in the Singleton Center for Performing Arts and there will be events leading up to the talk.



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## Stat of the week

VCU women's track repeated as Atlantic 10 Indoor Track & Field champions on Sunday, Feb. 27, according to VCU Athletics.



VCU fans in their student section light up the Stuart C. Siegel Center with phones in the pregame announcements before a game against the University of Richmond. Photo by Kaitlyn Fulmore

# 'We run Richmond':

## Men's basketball defeats University of Richmond, 73-58

**ARRICK WILSON**  
Sports Editor

The VCU men's basketball team defeated the University of Richmond Spiders in the Capital City Classic, 73-58 in the Friday afternoon game at the Stuart C. Siegel Center.

The Havoc sold-out crowd chanted "we own Richmond," as the time dwindled on the game clock. The VCU win made it a regular season sweep, making it the second consecutive year for the Rams, according to VCU Athletics.

VCU head coach Mike Rhoades said he was pleased with the team and the overall atmosphere at the Siegel Center.

"Great environment to be a part of college basketball tonight," Rhoades said. "Guys are playing the right way, and that's what you want to do at this time of year. I'm really proud of them."

VCU junior guard Adrian "Ace" Baldwin Jr. led the black and gold with 18 points, five rebounds and eight assists. Baldwin said he enjoyed defeating the crosstown rival, as he did all he could tonight.

"I was giving it all out tonight," Baldwin said. "It felt great. I love to beat them."

Three other Rams scored double digits, including sophomore forward Jalen DeLoach, sophomore forward Nick Kern and redshirt sophomore forward Jamir Watkins.

Richmond led VCU early in the game, 10-7, with 15:22 left in the half. Richmond senior Tyler Burton led the Spiders in points with seven, while

VCU shot 27% from the field, according to Statbroadcast.

After this early lead, VCU came storming back. The Rams eventually went on consecutive runs that led to VCU leading Richmond, 37-23 at halftime.

DeLoach said the beginning of the game was tough for the Rams, but they were persistent.

“

Just win today. Tomorrow we'll take care of more when we get there. You win the last one, the next one becomes even bigger. That's the fun of being at VCU."

**Mike Rhoades**  
VCU head coach

"I think we just kept playing through it," DeLoach said. "We started off hot, then we were cold for a minute. I tell 'Ace' and 'Mir' [Watkins] to keep shooting the ball and I trust them."

In the second half of the game, VCU shot 52% from the field and also 80% from the free throw line, according to Statbroadcast.

VCU's defense was also hitting on all fours, causing 11 turnovers on the night while out rebounding the Spiders 40-29, according to Statbroadcast.

DeLoach's confidence is up after defeating a conference foe, and he said VCU can beat some talented teams in Division I basketball.

"I think any team in the country, ranked or not ranked, we can beat any team in the country," DeLoach said.

The Rams did not lose the lead or momentum for the rest of the game. The rowdy crowd did not let up the entire night, as black and gold chants rung out throughout the Stu.

Richmond interim head coach Peter Thomas said VCU's defense was impressive.

"They're one of the best defensive teams in the country for a reason," Thomas said. "They keep coming at you. They have a lot of athletes. They play really hard, and they're really well coached."

One of the brightest lights for the Spiders was Richmond center Neal Quinn who had a game-high 21 points and six rebounds. His effort was not enough to get the Spiders the win.

The black and gold currently lead the all-time series, 59-32, according to VCU Athletics.

While gaining the win, VCU maintained first-

place status in the Atlantic 10 just weeks away from the A-10 tournament, according to VCU Athletics. Rhoades said he is trying to keep his mindset at one game at a time.

"Just win today. Tomorrow we'll take care of more when we get there," Rhoades said. "You win the last one, the next one becomes even bigger. That's the fun of being at VCU."

**VCU sophomore forward Jalen DeLoach meets up with Rodney the Ram before a game against the University of Richmond.**  
Photo by Kobi McCray





# Women’s basketball falls to crosstown rival University of Richmond, 53-37

THAILON WILSON  
Staff Writer

**V**CU women’s basketball lost to its biggest rival, the University of Richmond, 53-37 in the annual Capital City Classic.

VCU and Richmond have always been at odds with each other ever since the two colleges’ first-ever athletic competition in 1976, according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

“

We really emphasize defense and shutting down the three point line during practice. I think we executed the game plan well during the first quarter and did a good job as a team.”

**Mary-Anna Asar**  
VCU freshman guard

Fans of both teams travel across the 6.1 mile distance between the schools every time the teams face each other to root for their team to win.

VCU women’s basketball head coach Beth O’Boyle said it was great to see so many fans come to see the rivalry game.

“It was exciting to see so many fans from Ram Nation for this Richmond-VCU rivalry game,” O’Boyle said.

In this Capital City Classic rivalry matchup, the first two minutes remained scoreless for both teams due to high defensive intensity from both sides.

Senior forward Mykel Parham made a free throw to make the score 1-0 with six minutes to go in the first quarter, to break the stalemate.

VCU gained the rebound on the missed free throw and put it back to gain a 3-0 lead, but Richmond came right back and scored two back-to-back three-pointers to give themselves a 6-3 lead.

Both teams ramped the defense up again and neither team was able to score again. VCU freshman guard Mary-Anna Asare scored a layup to decrease the Richmond lead to 6-5 with one minute left in the first quarter.

The quarter ended with Richmond up 6-5 after a highly defensive battle between both teams which led to both teams shooting under 20% from the field, according to Statbroadcast.

Asare said the team really focused on defense during practice and followed the game plan well during the first quarter.

“We really emphasize defense and shutting down the three point line during practice,” Asare said. “I think we executed the game plan well during the first quarter and did a good job as a team.”

The second quarter started off in the same defensive fashion as the first quarter,

with neither team being able to score until VCU redshirt senior Janika Griffith-Wallace scored. This gave VCU the lead at 7-6, with eight minutes left in the second quarter.

The Rams and Spiders started scoring back and forth until Richmond went on a 10-2 run to make the score, 21-13, with one minute left in the half.

The black and gold wasn’t able to score for two minutes until Asare hit a buzzer beater three-pointer to shed Richmond’s lead making it 21-16.

The second half started with Richmond going on a 4-0 run to increase their lead to 25-16, with eight minutes left in the third quarter.

The Rams then went on a 10-0 run of their own with Griffith-Wallace scoring five of those points to give VCU a lead of 26-25, with six minutes to go in the third quarter.

Asare said that it’s great to have Griffith-Wallace on the team to look up to and learn from.

“I think it’s amazing having her as a role model in my life,” Asare said. “I’m trying to take my game to the next level and having her there as a mentor really helps me.”

Both teams struggled to score for the next four minutes, but the Spiders were able to score five unanswered to give themselves a 30-26 lead with two minutes left in the third quarter.

Griffith-Wallace went on a personal 5-0 run to give VCU the 31-30 lead, but Richmond answered straight back with two back-to-back threes to end the third quarter with a 36-31 lead.

Richmond started the fourth quarter on a 7-0 run to give them a 43-31 lead with six minutes to go in the game. From then on, the Spiders stayed in the driver’s seat to win the game.

After losing to VCU earlier this year, the Spiders claimed the Capital City Classic win 53-37 this year to make the season record tied.

**VCU graduate guard Janika Griffith-Wallace looks to score during a game against Loyola University Chicago.**  
Photo by Kaitlyn Fulmore



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VCU Technology Services



# VCU women’s lacrosse looks to *‘keep fighting’*

ANDREW MCGHAN  
Contributing Writer

**V**CU women’s lacrosse has played in five games so far this season with a 3-2 record, according to VCU Athletics.

With the program being in its sixth year, the team hopes to make a culture where they are competitive and trust one another, according to head coach Nicole Flores.

“

I think throughout the season, we just need to keep fighting. The easy wins need to be easy wins and then games that are competitive, we need to come out with a win in order to continue to be successful.”

Kelsey McDonnell  
junior midfielder

“We’re going to face plenty of opponents who are bigger than us and potentially stronger than us and you still got to play the game,” Flores said. “So we got to be able to compete, we got to trust our systems and have belief in one another.”

The team understands that some teams are more athletic than them, but they still have to compete and trust in their tactics to win games, according to Flores.

The defense has been causing frequent turnovers — through the first four games, the team has caused 61 turnovers, according to VCU Athletics.

There are many players that are going to stand out on the defensive end this season, according to Flores.

“On our defensive end, Claire Harris and

Meghna Dawar but I have already seen it, even Emma Barber just like causes turnovers left and right down,” Flores said. “So our D’s [defense] is definitely playing really well right now.”

The players that would be standout on the offensive end are senior attacker Juliana George and junior midfielder Kelsey McDonnell, according to Flores.

“Juliana George and Kelsey McDonnell are definitely our two top offensive threats, but we’re bouncing out a little bit better than we did last year, which is nice,” Flores said.

George led the team in goals with 31 goals accounted for last year and McDonnell was the second leading scorer for the team with 30 goals, according to VCU Athletics.

With the season just starting the coaching staff feels happy about the team’s competitiveness and energy on the field, according to Flores. They point to the win against Elon University as a turning point for the team to show that playhard for 60 minutes.

“I think the overtime win versus Elon was a big turning point for us, with just proving to ourselves that we can hang and finish what we start,” Flores said.

The team also has to make sure that a game considered as an easy win, they should win,

according to McDonnell. When they play in competitive games they need to find a way to come out with a win.



VCU senior midfielder Meghan McLaughlin looks to pass during a game against Virginia Tech. Photo by Alessandro Latour

## SPORTS’ PICK OF THE WEEK

ARRICK WILSON  
Sports Editor

**For this week’s pick, we’re heading to the NBA to cover a faceoff between the Memphis Grizzlies and Denver Nuggets at the Ball Arena in Denver, Colorado on March 3.**

This Western Conference matchup should be a battle as both teams’ records are top ten in the NBA standings, according to ESPN.

Rising superstar guard Ja Morant leads the Grizzlies while averaging 27 points, 8.1 assists and 5.9 rebounds, according to ESPN. Morant has led the Grizzlies to a great start to the season and has been outspoken in his belief of his team going far.

ESPN’s Malika Andrews asked what team around the league he is studying, and Morant said no one in the west.

“

In this game with two great teams, I am picking the Grizzlies. Yes, this may be an upset in sports fans’ eyes, but they will come out with the win.”

Arrick Wilson, Sports Editor

“I’m fine in the West,” Morant said in the interview.

The confidence the Grizzlies have is showing. The Grizzlies also have guard Desmond Bane, who is averaging 21.3

points; center Jaren Jackson Jr., who is averaging 16.7 points and 6.6 rebounds; and Dillon Brooks, who is averaging 14.6 points, according to Basketball-Reference.

The Nuggets are led by center Nikola Jokić who is having another MVP-caliber season, averaging 24.5 points, 11.6 rebounds and 10 assists, according to ESPN.

Nuggets guard Jamal Murray is another contributor to the team, averaging 19.9 points and 5.8 assists, according to Basketball-Reference.

In this game with two great teams, I am picking the Grizzlies. Yes, this may be an upset in sports fans’ eyes, but they will come out with the win. The offense for the Grizzlies will be too much, and not enough help from Jokić.

### GAME RESULTS

#### FEBRUARY 21

**MEN’S BASKETBALL - AT SAINT JOESPH’S**  
WON 88-63

#### FEBRUARY 22

**WOMEN’S LACROSSE - VS. RADFORD**  
WON 18-9

**WOMEN’S BASKETBALL - VS. RICHMOND**  
LOSS 53-37

#### FEBRUARY 23

**MEN’S TENNIS - VS. NO. 64 SOUTH FLORIDA**  
LOSS 7-0

#### FEBRUARY 24

**MEN’S BASKETBALL - VS. RICHMOND**  
WON 73-58

**MEN’S BASEBALL - VS. SACRED HEART**  
LOSS 7-6

#### FEBRUARY 25

**WOMEN’S TENNIS - AT WILLIAM & MARY**  
LOSS 4-3

**WOMEN’S LACROSSE - AT LIBERTY**  
LOSS 15-3

**MEN’S BASEBALL - VS. SACRED HEART**  
LOSS 11-5

**WOMEN’S BASKETBALL - VS. LA SALLE**  
LOSS 55-51

#### FEBRUARY 26

**WOMEN’S TRACK - AT ATLANTIC 10 INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
1ST OUT OF 15TH  
Kingston, Rhode Island

**MEN’S TRACK - AT ATLANTIC 10 INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
4TH OUT OF 11TH  
Kingston, Rhode Island

**MEN’S BASEBALL - VS. SACRED HEART**  
LOST 11-10

**MEN’S TENNIS - AT NO. 54 VIRGINIA TECH**  
WON 6-1





**On this day**  
Captain America, created by comic book artists Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, was published by Timely Comics in 1941.

# Comic panel highlights Black excellence in the field

**MACKENZIE MELESKI**  
Contributing Writer

**VCUARTS CELEBRATED THE “SUPERHEROES” BEHIND THE SCENES OF COMICS FOR A BLACK HISTORY MONTH PANEL.**

Four writers joined together to discuss their careers and the importance of representation in the comic industry.

VCUarts and the Office of Inclusion and Equity held the panel over Zoom on Feb. 24. Students studying communication arts and comic fans registered to attend. They were given the opportunity to ask their own questions during the panel.

Carmenita Higginbotham, the dean of VCUarts, introduced the panel. Holly Alford, the director of VCUarts Office of Inclusion and Equity, also spoke during the introduction of the panel.

“These are, dare I say, giants in the field, and they have revolutionized representation of heroes in the comic industry,” Higginbotham said during her opening remarks.



**RON SMITH**

Smith is a novelist, best known for writing three novels for Marvel about T’Challa, the Black Panther. In Smith’s novels, a young T’Challa is sent to school in Chicago, Illinois where he had to hide his identity as a superhero. Smith’s biggest challenge was bringing something new to a world that is “already fully realized,” he said.

“It’s all there, so what can I bring to it that’s going to help people get engaged? How will it be different?” Smith said during the panel.

Smith started as an advertising writer before transitioning to novels targeted for middle school grade children. He released his latest book, “Where the Black Flowers Bloom,” last year. It focuses on an alternate ancient African world, according to Smith.

His own passion for superheroes started during his childhood, Smith said.

“I’ve been fascinated by stories since I was a kid, and I never lost the passion for it,” Smith said. “Fortunately, it’s my job now to create stories that people will enjoy.”



**CHRISTOPHER PRIEST**

Priest is a renowned comic book writer with a career spanning over 40 years, according to the VCUarts website. He was the first African American to write for a major comic book publisher and become an editor for Marvel and DC Comics. His achievements include reimagining the character of Black Panther and heavily contributing to the fictional world of Wakanda and all of its characters.

Priest also has a love for comics that started in his childhood. He first began writing at 10 years-old when his mother bought him a typewriter, he said.

He recalled being a fan of Dennis O’Neil, a comic writer best known for his Batman and Green Lantern comics, according to Priest.

“I was such a fan of his [Dennis O’Neils] work that I would literally camp out in front of the candy store, and the comic books would be delivered to the candy store on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, and I knew exactly when the truck would show up,” Priest said. “And I would sit there on the sidewalk in front of the candy store waiting for the truck to come because that’s how much I like Denny’s work.”

One of the highlights of Priest’s career was eventually working and training with O’Neil at Marvel, he said during the panel.

“Skip ahead 15 years or 20 years or so, and then I’m working at Marvel and had the great privilege of working with Denny and having him train me,” Priest said.



**DAVID WALKER**

Walker is a comic writer, educator and filmmaker who is best known for his works with the Dynamite Comics character Shaft. He also has contributed to the stories of well-known Marvel characters such as Luke Cage and Iron Fist, he said.

Walker teaches African American cinema at Portland State University in addition to creating stories, according to Walker. Like his fellow panelists, Walker has contributed significantly to the development and legacy of Marvel’s Black Panther.

Will Eisner was Walker’s main influence during his early career.

“What most historians, comic historians would agree, is that he was one of the founding fathers of the sequential arts,” Walker said.

Walker hoped to take visual art classes in college but humorously said he was too much of a “terrible student.” Instead of creating art, he moved into the journalism field. Eventually he had the opportunity to interview Eisner, which reignited his love for creating comics.

“The beautiful thing about this medium is that if you play your cards right, you’ll get to meet a lot of those people along the way, and the vast majority of them are really great,” Walker said.



**DENYS COWAN**

Cowan is a comic writer, and illustrator who is best known for creating Milestone Media, according to VCUarts website. His most notable creation is Static, which later inspired a children’s cartoon series. The series, Static Shock, aired on Nickelodeon and earned an Emmy Award nomination, according to Cowan.

Among his inspirations and mentors were other Black comic writers, especially those who worked on Black Panther comics. He thinks about the type of stories he would want to read or that he thinks Black children would want to read when writing stories rather than trying to please the masses of comic fans, he said.

“What you can do is please yourself and do the kind of stories that you’d want to see and that you really want to tell, that’s what gets you excited,” Cowan said.







## 'Sprouting new limbs':



### Project Yoga Richmond founder works to reestablish its mission

**PEGGY STANSBERY**  
Staff Writer

Yoga is the vehicle that connects people to the source; it is the action that "allows us to realize who we are," said Jonathan Miles, founder of Project Yoga Richmond.

"I felt like yoga had done a lot for me and being in the yoga community felt really safe to me and really loving," Miles said. "I just thought, 'how can we take this togetherness and love that is in the yoga community and introduce it to the broader community?'"

Financial struggles from COVID-19 caused Project Yoga Richmond to shut down operations in September 2022, according to Miles. He currently works to reestablish Project Yoga Richmond as a community organization, rebuild partnerships and rebuild the brand — he felt it had become "too corporate" and "too big" for what they wanted to do.

There will be a name change as well to reflect a more "accurate" description of their mission, according to Miles.

Miles created Project Yoga Richmond in 2010 to teach people that yoga and its principles and philosophies are available to everyone, Miles said.

"It was really just to give back everything that yoga had given to me," Miles said. "Particularly at the beginning, I wanted people who look like me to have access to these practices."

While the operations have shut down, the entity is fully operational. It is in a place of stasis right now and they are healing, growing and sprouting new limbs, Miles said.

The next chapter of Project Yoga Richmond will include more than just yoga, along with a better representation of yoga and new programs and events that are more in alignment with what the community needs, Miles said.

"When I say the community, I do not mean the yoga community because there is enough yoga to go around for the yoga community, but some of the marginalized communities in town," Miles said. "I want them to have access to these practices to these philosophies to mindfulness."

Miles wants to cultivate a spiritual community and seeks to

achieve the original concept: creating a bond between the yoga community and the greater community, he said. He aims

to create a ripple effect of more mindfulness, positivity, cleanliness and care for the planet.

"When we start to incorporate more mindfulness and more mindful practices in our lives, that is going to affect everyone in a positive way," Miles said.

In pursuit of Project Yoga Richmond's reestablishment, Miles will collaborate with Duron Chavis's 12-week youth urban gardening class this spring by integrating mindfulness into the program, according to Miles.

"I feel like it's a great thing for Project Yoga Richmond to be in collaboration with an organization that is embedded in the youth," Chavis said.

Historically, Project Yoga Richmond taught adults the benefits of yoga, according to Chavis.

The 12-week program — geared toward 12 to 18 year olds — teaches community members how to run an urban farm and provides them with the resources to do so, according to Chavis.

Part of the program's work is reconnecting people back to the land and nature, and mindfulness is an "essential component" of doing this and it is "imperative" to get young people connected to those practices, Chavis said.

"I think that creating opportunities for young people to really do that inner work that is necessary to be a productive citizen in the world is something that we need," Chavis said. "It is great to see Project Yoga Richmond engaging in this

type of work, considering that there are not many programs for young people that deal with mindfulness explicitly."

Project Yoga Richmond volunteer Cristina Villega said she's excited to see how Project Yoga Richmond connects with the community in new ways through partnerships with other local nonprofits and service based organizations.

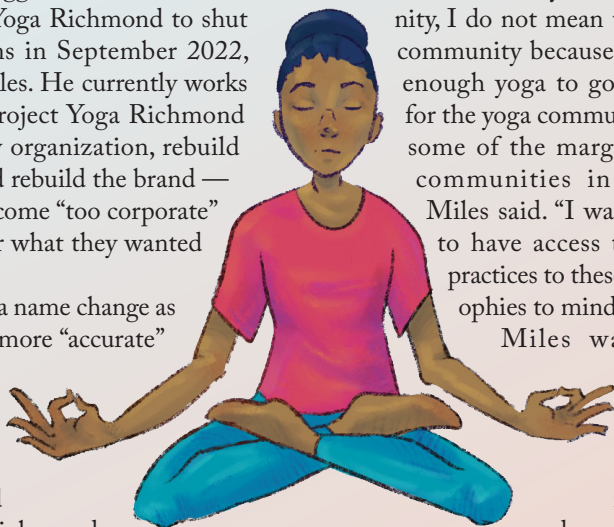
Villegas found that Project Yoga Richmond's accessibility provided a nourishing source of community due to its donation-based yoga classes, diverse instructors and modifications during yoga classes, she said.

"It was accessible to so many people," Villegas said. "It really opened the doors for everyone to practice yoga no matter their budget or their physical abilities because the classes were very accommodating."

When Villegas told her friend — who had volunteered at Project Yoga Richmond — about their rebranding, she got "really excited" and expressed she had found a lot of "connection" and "fulfillment" through it, she said.

"I just hear this story a lot from people I have volunteered with and worked with — that sense of connection and community — so I am really excited that it is coming back and it did not just disappear," Villegas said.

Illustrations by Vivian Trinh



## Mixed media exhibition centers lived experience of students with disabilities

**EMILY RICHARDSON**  
Staff Writer

"Desert Euphony," an exhibition centered on the lives of VCU student artists with disabilities, is on display at The Anderson Gallery until March 3.

The show features 15 artists across mediums "in an effort to encourage connection and make space for collective empowerment," according to the exhibition statement. Curator Shannon Harper Kane, a Craft and Material Studies student, said the show came out of a realization that a

lot of spaces and classes at VCU aren't accessible.

Craft and Material students were expected to return to school in the fall of 2020 which may have exacerbated the problem, alongside the "willingness of the world to push aside disabled people," according to Kane.

The show's name came out of Kane considering what "good art" means. "Euphony" defines something that's a good sound, they said.

"I was thinking a lot about how there isn't really one good sound to everyone," Kane said. "Just the experience of being a disabled student is pretty isolating. You have to choose what sound you make and choose for it to be something that you like."

Kane said while working on the show it became clear that a lot of art relies directly on your body.

"To neglect that [your body] is to neglect your art," Kane said. "To invite people in with their body is something that it's a very intimate thing to meet the artist object how they were meeting the art."

Artist Luci Milo said the show was a chance to express herself in the fine arts, an opportunity she doesn't often

have as a fashion design student.

"When I finally did put pen to paper, I took a fairly realistic approach in showing the agony and frustration behind having an invisible disability," Milo said. "I wanted to show how dark it is when you're being drowned by it."

Milo's mixed media work "Can I have that in Writing?" is dark and busy in the center but grows brighter and calmer as the work expands outward, because "you're not just enveloped in what is a disability," Milo said.

Milo said she hopes "Desert Euphony" helps to establish a deeper understanding of what the definition of a disability is, especially invisible disabilities. Milo, who is hard of hearing, said their disability was not accounted for at an event "simply because disabilities aren't often considered by abled people."

"Even today, I had a fashion event I had to go to. I had to sit there for three hours and I didn't hear a single thing," Milo said. "It can be very isolating, and I hope that accommodations become more diverse."

Another artist in the show, painting and printmaking student Jazmine Jackson, drew on how she visualizes herself with her disability for her mixed media work "Envisioned Worlds Triptych," she said.

"While I start off with the work in a narrative of myself, the goal of the work is to have this intimate and inclusive space and time with others who may share or empathize with the same type of story," Jackson said.

Jackson transferred to VCU from another university where getting accom-

modations for her disability was difficult. So far, her experience at VCU has been more positive in that aspect, she said.

The Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group, a sub-committee of the Staff Senate, is one group working in the interest of people with disabilities at VCU. Their mission is to "advance accessibility" at VCU by addressing barriers and collaborating with policy-makers, according to the Staff Senate's website.

Co-chair Katie Cappuccio said there's importance to talking about disability through the arts. In fact, the arts are something personal to her, she said. When her disabilities prevented her from continuing soccer in high school, another interest of hers, music, became a focal point of her life, she said.

"I think music is such a therapeutic way to be able to express yourself," Cappuccio said. "Arts in general, not just music. I think you don't have to break your body to be able to tell your story."

"Desert Euphony" is on display on the first floor of The Anderson Gallery until March 3. Admission is free.



The Anderson Gallery exhibits 'Desert Euphony.'  
Photos by Kaitlyn Fulmore





# CT Opinions

**KOFI MFRAMA**  
Opinions Editor

Nella Larson's "Passing" follows the reunion of childhood friends, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, two light-skinned Black women who "pass" as white — albeit in different ways. The book centers on "racial-passing" and the pleasures and tragedies that come with it.

This book and the Netflix adaptation really got me thinking about the term "white-passing" and how it fits into our modern interpretation of race. The term describes a person, usually but not always multiracial, whose physical traits allow them to "pass" as white, usually to evade discrimination.

What's curious to me is how this term works in the contemporary. I used to believe that "white-passing" people are actually just white — that their ability to navigate this world as a white person and reap the privileges therein makes them just as white those with exclusively European ancestors. This made sense for a while as my previous understanding of race was overwhelmingly phenotypical.

However, this line of thinking ignores that race, although based heavily on perception, is not entirely determined by one's outward appearance.

Race is complex and contradictory. As we continue to deconstruct this construct, we uncover that race and the things associated are not as simple as they seem.

To get a more contemporary understanding of what it means to be "white-passing," we must dissect our modern interpretation of race and how it has shifted throughout history.

Race, as a social construct, bends to the whims of social paradigms. The racial



Illustration by Killian Goodale-Porter

## Mirror, mirror on the wall: Who is the fairest of them all?

identities one can claim or be subjected to change along social and political lines. Throughout history, especially in times of massive immigration, the United States has been malleable when deciding who gets to be white.

The Irish, for example, worked low-paying jobs during their first wave of immigration. They were discriminated against and were described as the nonwhite "missing link" between the superior European and the savage African, according to a Boston Globe article.

It wasn't until Irish people started assimilating into America's racist, white infrastructure that they made the shift from oppressed to oppressor. They joined the fight against abolition and united in the suppression of Black people.

"Whiteness" is a sociopolitical living, breathing entity that only seeks to expand and consume — always looking for ways to augment itself and retain supremacy.

It's why Middle Eastern and Northern African people are now considered white by the U.S. federal government despite the ongoing systemic oppression they still face, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Since race has no biological basis, whiteness is allowed to ebb and flow like this.

What about those who identify as white by choice? Those who have intersecting racial identities but only openly identify with whiteness.

It's the obvious choice isn't it? If someone has the ability to physically "pass" as white regardless of their non-white identities why wouldn't they? It's an easier road that helps to avoid the discrimination that comes with being a minority.

Historically, this has been the road many have taken. Now, as we continue to unpack the rather empty meaning of race, we are beginning to understand that being "white-passing" is as complex as the idea of race itself.

Someone's ability to pass as white changes upon social situations as certain groups are better at noticing certain physical or social traits that point to someone's more complicated ethnic background.

Since everyone perceives whiteness differently, there is no strict standard we adhere to when judging someone's proximity to it.

This means that "white-passing" isn't necessarily an identity one can claim, rather, an action that some people choose to perform.

Now that some are drawing the curtain on this performance for a better understanding of their own ethnic heritage, I'm only left with more questions.

Many still claim that people capable of passing as white are just white, regardless of their ethnic background. However, this is just the mission of white supremacy and the way whiteness operates — erasing a whole person and reducing their identity to what they look like.

It's also certainly not lost on me that so much of the discourse surrounding biracial identity is consumed by and centered around those with white ancestry. If we are to say that biracial people with European backgrounds should only identify as white, where does that leave multiracial people who don't have European ancestry? Who gets to decide which racial identity supersedes the other?

I think the answer lies somewhere in the space between. It's important that those who do have proximity to whiteness acknowledge their privilege. What matters more is that we position ourselves against these oppressive institutions.

## MEDITATION: A Way To Be Present In Reality

**TEAIRRAH GREEN**  
Contributing Writer

Sometimes in class, the professor's words seem to be background noise to my internal thoughts. When this happens, I tend to zone in and out of conversations. I pay more attention to small details and my unconscious thoughts.

Daydreaming, zoning out or dissociation are all words to describe feeling disconnected from yourself and the world around you. When I fail to take time to re-adjust my mind to focus on myself and my surroundings, I am more likely to dissociate from my reality.

As our mind is overworked with processing thoughts, our body is overwhelmed with physical labor. This creates a disconnect between the mind and body.

Meditation and mindfulness are necessary to recalibrate the mind to focus on ourselves and the world around us. These practices allow us to be intentionally present in our bodies. We spend a lot of time unaware of how we feel emotionally and physically.



Illustration by Abigail Gleeson

It gives us the necessary time to check on ourselves and be aware of the world outside our bodies; we can go outside of singular thoughts and be more connected to reality.

I find the concept of reality intriguing. Reality is what we perceive to be occurring in the world. If I dissociate from myself, what I believe to be reality is transformed and altered. The altered reality consists of new perceptions of the world and unconscious thoughts.

Altered reality is an altercation of the way we would normally perceive the world.

Altered reality is not fake, but instead a

transformation of reality currently present.

For example, if I am very sleep deprived, the way I navigate and see the world transforms. In history class, I am normally listening to the professor and viewing the powerpoint slides. When I am sleep deprived, I zone in and out of the lecture and focus on unconscious thoughts.

Sometimes, I will be hyper aware of loud noises and movements. In both scenarios, I am completing the same task. However, due to my state of mind, my perception of the lecture is altered.

When a person is daydreaming in class,

they are physically present in the class. However, their mind wanders to a daydream, like making dinner — they are physically present, but mentally in the kitchen cooking hamburger patties. Their altered reality presented is a history lecture where they are thinking of hamburgers.

Meditation is about learning how to be present and intentional in actions. It creates a way for us to guide our mind back to our body.

Feeling connected to my body and mind is a surreal experience that constantly occurs in my daily life. Taking the time to redirect the way I perceive the world alters my outlook on reality.

Even if meditation does not work for you, I would suggest taking time to evaluate your body and mind in a quiet space.

Our mind can change how we live and perceive reality. Being mindful sharpens our attention while keeping us grounded. It can improve our mood, well being and increase positive emotions. Meditation grounds me to my current state of reality, so I am less likely to feel dissociated.

It encourages me to be present in the world.

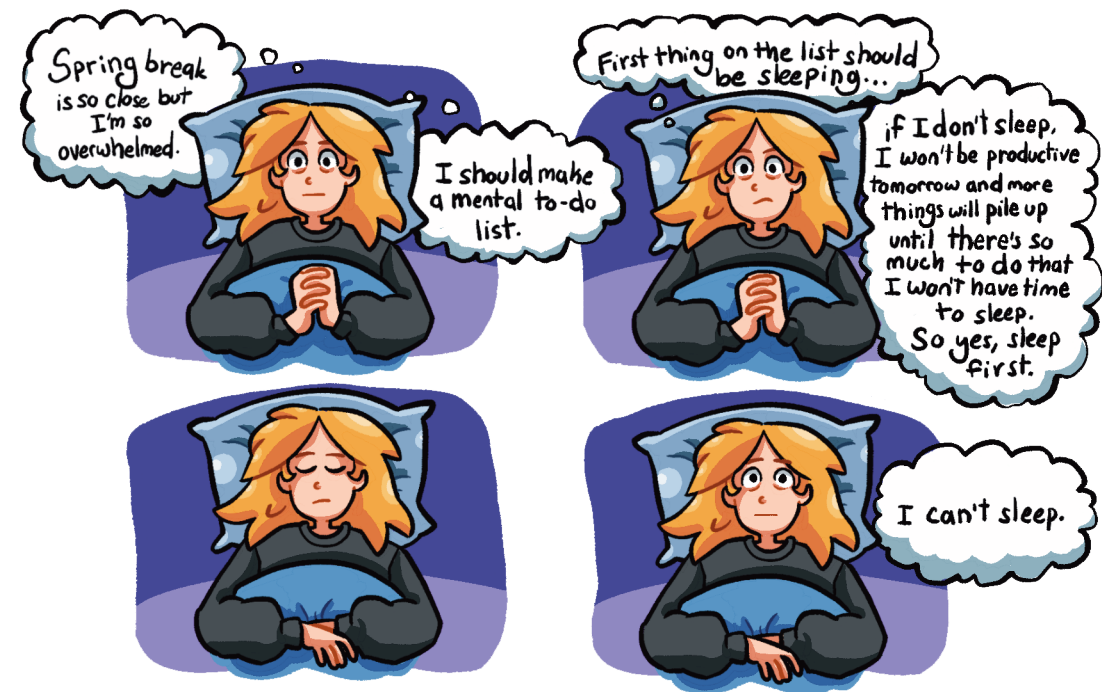


# CT Comics

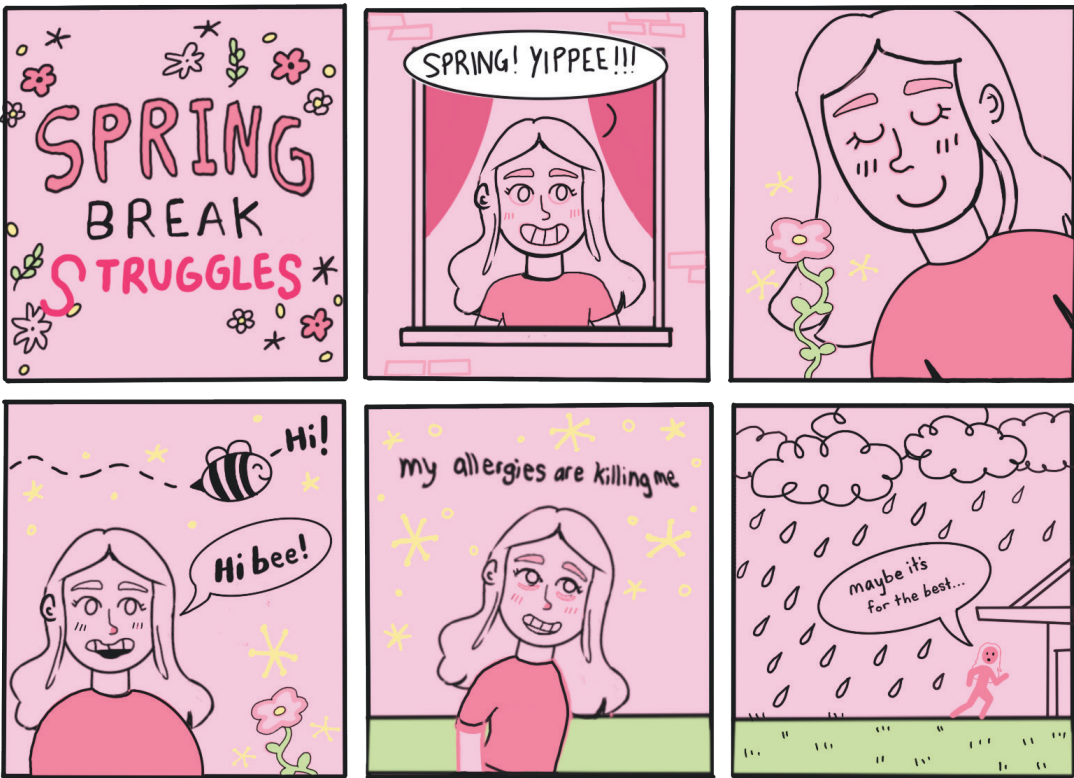
## Wrong name by Shannon Fritz



## The Week Before Spring Break by Killian Goodale-Porter



## Spring Break Struggles by Aly Cardozo



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Los Angeles Times

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol and Joyce Nichols Lewis

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Pi Kappa Phi has closed at Virginia Commonwealth University

Pi Kappa Phi National Fraternity has placed this ad to provide notice that the Pi Kappa chapter at Virginia Commonwealth has closed. Students who were members of the Fraternity no longer have the authority to operate as a Pi Kappa Phi chapter and may not organize any event, sponsor any activity or participate in any endeavor representing Pi Kappa Phi on the VCU campus or elsewhere in the Richmond community.

“Pi Kappa Phi” and other distinctive letters, marks and insignia of the Fraternity are federally protected trademarks owned and managed by Pi Kappa Phi National Fraternity. Any use of these marks without the express written permission of Pi Kappa Phi National Fraternity is strictly prohibited. No group of students at VCU is authorized to use the name “Pi Kappa Phi” or any of its service marks. Only chartered chapters and qualified members of Pi Kappa Phi are authorized to operate a chapter and use the distinctive marks of the Fraternity.

If you have reason to believe that students on campus continue to operate as though they make up a recognized chapter of Pi Kappa Phi, please alert Joseph Wheelless at vcugreeks@vcu.edu or contact Pi Kappa Phi National Fraternity.

2015 Ayrsley Town Boulevard, Ste 200  
Charlotte, NC 28273 | pikapp.org  
704.504.0888 | pikapphq@pikapp.org

Sudoku

By The Mephram Group

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Complete the grid so each row, column, and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit [sudoku.org.uk](https://sudoku.org.uk)

	9					8		
8		6			4			
	1		3		9			
5		1			2		4	8
								5
4	8		6			9		
			9		7		5	
			4			3		7
		7					9	

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THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENT AFFAIRS AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

# WOMEN'S *HerStory* MONTH 2023

*HerStory*

Women's History Month had its origins as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress passed Pub. L. 97-28 which authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as "Women's History Week." Throughout the next five years, Congress continued to pass joint resolutions designating a week in March as "Women's History Week."

In 1987 after being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress passed Pub. L. 100-9 which designated the month of March 1987 as "Women's History Month." Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the President to proclaim March of each year as Women's History Month. Since 1995, presidents have issued a series of annual proclamations designating the month of March as "Women's History Month." These proclamations celebrate the contributions women have made to the United States and recognize the specific achievements women have made over the course of American history in a variety of fields. Our Women's HerStory Month programming celebrates all women, femmes, and gender-expansive people. We also celebrate womxn's achievements around the world.



SCAN HERE  
FOR LINKS TO  
ALL WOMEN'S  
HERSTORY MONTH  
EVENTS

THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENT AFFAIRS AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY PRESENT OMSA'S SIGNATURE "WOMEN'S HERSTORY MONTH" IN COLLABORATION WITH  
CULTURE & THE ASSOCIATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES & OFFICE OF  
STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGED LEARNING DESIGN TEAM EB MUSIC BY OMSA EVENT COORDINATION OMSA TEAM

