

VCU WELCOMES LARGEST CLASS TO DATE

SARAH HAGEN
Contributing Writer

VCU welcomes more than 4,500 first-year students during the New Student Convocation, possibly the largest class in university history, according to VCU Exposure.

The New Student Convocation and Spirit Walk took place on Aug. 21 as part of the university’s Weeks of Welcome activities.

“VCU offers the Weeks of Welcome programs and events to help students develop a sense of belonging at VCU, to provide opportunities for students to get involved on campus and in the community, and to connect students to resources across campus that will help them succeed,” stated Interim Director for Communications and Marketing Josh Skillman in an email.

There are 141 events and 11 signature events planned for the Weeks of Welcome according to Skillman. Events are about more specific programs and opportunities, whereas signature events are large-scale programs for a broader audience according to Skillman. Everything will take place between Aug. 18 and Sept. 10.

Freshmen gathered in Monroe Park for convocation to hear music from the university’s pep band, shout chants with the cheer squad and listen to speeches from VCU administration, including President Michael Rao and new men’s basketball coach Ryan Odom.

“It’s really important for you to be connected to who you really are,” Rao said. “A lot of people are gonna try to tell you what to think, what to feel. Only you know how you feel.”

Rao said that he is excited for every new student and told them to be true to who they are.

Students were led around Monroe Park and parts of campus by the pep band and the cheer squad. Greek life organizations lined the street yelling their chants and cheering for the freshmen.

Psychology major freshman Allison David said she chose VCU because of the city environment and the number of students. David said she’s excited to make friends and take psychology courses.



Photography By Arrick Wilson

NEWS

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SARAH HAGEN
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Stories of the week

NATIONAL: California is hit by a tropical storm and earthquake
INTERNATIONAL: Saudi border guards have been accused of killing hundreds of Ethiopians in an investigation by Human Rights Watch, The Guardian reports

VCU WELCOMES LARGEST CLASS TO DATE (cont.)



“I like helping people, especially through therapy, and that’s what I want to do,” David said.

David said she plans to look into literary and LGBT+ clubs.

VCU has nearly 500 clubs which can be found on RamsConnect. The Student Organization and Volunteer Fair will take place this Friday from 3 p.m to 6 p.m in Monroe Park, where students will have the chance to connect with clubs and organizations.

Freshman graphic design student Shawn Francis is from Chesapeake, Virginia. He chose VCU because of the VCUArts program and the city campus. Francis said he is looking forward to exploring Richmond and its art scene.

“I’m super excited,” Francis said. “The city looks cool enough as it is.”

The Silent Headphone Party was the first signature event of Weeks of Welcome. The theme for the party was “out of this world” according to Student Commons staff Bria Taylor.

Silver streamers and disco balls were hung on the walls and ceiling, and blue and purple lights flashed all over the ballroom venue to give off an outer space effect. Taylor said galaxies and the 2000s party scene were their inspirations for the decorations.

Two different DJs played at the party, one with international music and another with pop, hip hop and R&B. Taylor said the goal was to have a little bit of everything for everyone.

Freshman bioinformatics student Niyati Kottury moved in earlier in the day, but she said she decided to check out the party because she didn’t just want to sit around in her dorm.

Kottury said she loves meeting new people and is excited to do the same in the new semester. She said this event was a chance to get used to the new environment.

Freshman bioinformatics student Rhea Chatterjee is looking forward to making friends, getting organized for the school year and her classes.

“I’m excited to take phage; I’ve always wanted to take a lab,” Chatterjee said. Phage is an exploratory lab for bioinformatics students where they work with and learn about phage viruses according to the VCU Bulletin.

WHAT’S NEW AT VCU

1.

Campus restaurant Raising Cane’s closed at the end of the 2023 spring semester according to a previous article by The Commonwealth Times.

2.

VCU replaced Raising Cane’s with their own restaurant, Ram’s Coop, after hosting a blind taste test for students.

3.

VCU is in the pre-planning phase to build a new Honors College dorm at 700-716 W. Grace St. according to VCU’s Master Plan website. The website states that the building is “estimated to be completed by Fall 2026.

4.

VCU opened a new College of Humanities and Science building on April 26 at 817 W. Franklin St. The six-floor, 168,000-square-foot building will have classroom space for over 10,000 students and up to 70 courses according to VCU News.

5.

The website stated more than 700 beds are anticipated with traditional and semi-suite style units, as well as office, academic and event space.



VCU cancels upcoming racial literacy course requirement

ANDREW KERLEY,
Audience Editor

VCU announced the installation of a racial literacy general education requirement starting in the fall 2023 semester would be indefinitely delayed in a letter from the Provost at the end of July.

The racial literacy general education requirement was first proposed by Mignonne Guy, Chair of the Department of African American Studies, at a panel in 2019. Demand for the requirement increased after the events of summer 2020 and George Floyd’s murder, according to sociology professor Susan Bodnar-Deren.

Bodnar-Deren is a member of VCU’s Committee on Racial Equity, or CORE, a group that began developing course material for the requirement alongside scholars in the Student Advisory Group, or SAG, in 2020, according to Bodnar-Deren.

“We were working through, not just the pandemic, but this critical space we were at with the murder of George Floyd and the public gaze at structural, racist practices,” Bodnar-Deren said. “Dr. Guy was running a regular listening group with students who were just like, ‘we need to do something.’”

Faculty were prepared to begin teaching an early iteration of “CSIJ 200: Introduction to Race and Racism in the United States,” in the fall of 2021, according to Bodnar-Deren. However, progression was halted in a faculty meeting after VCU appointed Fotis Sotiropoulos Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at the beginning of August 2021.

“Our task force presented the findings that we were ready to go, and then they [university leadership] were like, ‘well, before this goes further, we need these assessments,’” Bodnar-Deren said. “We were like, ‘we’ve got the assessments.’ It was always vague. Nobody from university leadership was giving us guidance of what those assessments looked like.”

Bodnar-Deren said the Provost drove a discussion amongst VCU Shared Governance about adding courses that could fulfill the racial literacy requirement. This led to the creation of “AMST 216: Reading Race,” which is now being offered for the first time in the fall 2023 semester.

“We’re talking about almost three years of adherence to the principles and philosophy of shared faculty governance,” Bodnar-Deren said. “This was something that students initiated with faculty that then went out into the broader space with really robust discussion. It went through all the stages from Faculty Council at the College of Humanities and Sciences, to Faculty Senate, to University Council, to the Board of Visitors.”

“CSIJ 200” was offered to students for the first time in the fall 2022 semester.

The rollout of the racial literacy requirement was ultimately decided to

begin in the fall 2023 semester, according to Bodnar-Deren.

The Provost’s letter cited a need for “more courses and more course sections” as a reason why the requirement could not yet be fully implemented.

“If those reasons were true, then we had two years to come up with solutions for those particular problems,” said Amy Rector, co-chair of CORE. “The fact that those didn’t seem to come across the Provost Office as real concerns until three weeks before the start of the semester is an indication that they’re not real barriers”

VCU expects to take in over 4,500 freshmen this year, which would make it the largest incoming class in the university’s history, according to a report by the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

“We never intended for every incoming freshman to take the class in their first year,” Rector said. “Right now, we have 1,600 seats available. Even if the freshman class is the largest we’ve had in a long time, the idea is that we would ramp up each year and have more and more seats available.”

“

On a daily basis, as a Black woman, I think about race every day, when I’m in a meeting where I’m the only Black person in the room there are things that I have to think about that other individuals don’t think about. So, consider what the student thought process is on a daily basis.”

Winn Bryan
assistant professor in the Department of African American Studies

CORE made a plan that would allow any professors who wanted to teach the course to be trained on the course material beforehand, according to SAG member Marie Vergamini.

A survey conducted by CORE SAG revealed that around 60 to 70 professors said they would like to teach the courses, according to Bodnar-Deren.

“It’s not like this course was just added to the books one day,” Vergamini said. “There were a lot of discussions, a lot of planning. We did everything that they told us to do, and it felt like they just took everything

away in a snap.”

Vergamini said she was burned out by constant meetings with different faculty, administrators and student organizations, but by the end of course development, felt validated to see students were opting to take the class, and continue to take it to this day.

The Provost’s letter revealed 700 students are enrolled in either “CSIJ 200” or “AMST 216” for the fall 2023 semester.

Lisa Winn Bryan, an assistant professor in the Department of African American Studies, said she was part of the group that taught “CSIJ 200” for the first time in the fall 2022 semester.

“I’ve had very positive experiences with the students,” Winn Bryan said. “They’re anxious to talk about it [race relations], students of all different orientations and colors, from different states and backgrounds. It’s an opportunity for students to have the conversations that they’ve been wanting to have.”

Winn Bryan said the class is a safe space for students that may feel uncomfortable having conversations about race and that everyone is respected, regardless of their differing opinions.

“Something is happening in the media every day that speaks to the issues that students are interested in talking about,” Winn Bryan said. “Sometimes the class would go longer, students were really enjoying it.”

Discussions in the class ranged from the origins of the concept of race and the historical impact of racism to “why everyone was upset over the new Little Mermaid being black,” Winn Bryan said.

“I was teaching the day the Queen of England passed away,” Winn Bryan said. “It sparked a conversation immediately about how we felt about the Queen. I had students in my class who were from the Caribbean, who would understand [the implications] immediately.”

Winn Bryan said that she believes teaching “CSIJ 200” is something that we have to do, that is going to make race relations in this country better for students that are getting degrees and going out into

the workforce as leaders.

“On a daily basis, as a black woman, I think about race every day,” Winn Bryan said. “When I’m in a meeting where I’m the only black person in the room there are things that I have to think about that other individuals don’t think about. So, consider what the student thought process is on a daily basis.”

Winn Bryan said she had a white, male student in his 70’s that she is good friends with to this day.

“We meet every few months to continue the conversation,” Winn Bryan said. “He said he wants to influence his grandchildren. People ask, ‘How do we start breaking down these barriers?’ I said, ‘Have you been to the Caribbean festival? The Folk Festival? An African restaurant?’ All these things are right here in town. Have you tried worshipping at a black mosque or a black church? We live in a more diverse community than we think.”

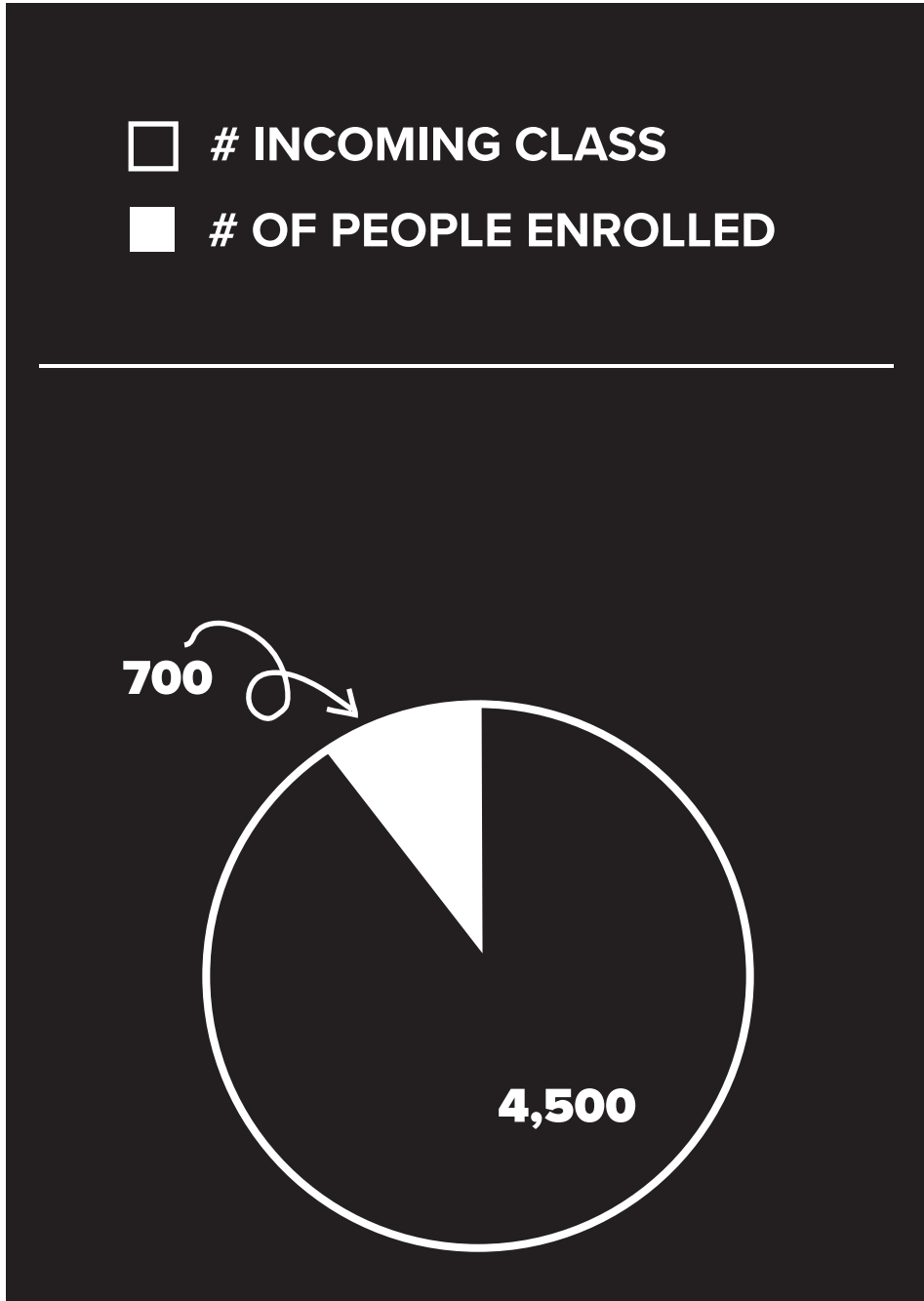
Clyde Ledbetter, a visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of African Studies, taught “CSIJ 200” in the spring 2023 semester.

“Any class that goes into the discussions of our time is incredibly important because we live in a time period where information is readily available, but not always analyzed,” Ledbetter said. “Classes like these need to be at every university. This is the space where we train people to debate using empirical evidence, to test theories. We’re not just pumping people out to get jobs.”

Ledbetter said he isn’t convinced that the postponement of the racial literacy course requirement will be indefinite.

“My faith lies in the students and the community of VCU,” Ledbetter said. “We’re used to these types of struggles. African American Studies, as a discipline, was pushed into the university by students and faculty. At every single college institution around the country, when the students want something, they get it. I believe that our students are up for the challenge and they’re not afraid of ideas.”

Infographic by Solimar Santoyo





FOCUSED INQUIRY DEPARTMENT CUTS 14 PROFESSORS

JACK GLAGOLA
Contributing Writer

The university has laid off 14 faculty in the Focused Inquiry department, according to a petition lodged by United Campus Workers of Virginia.

The union represents college and university workers at three schools in Virginia, according to its website.

Emily Williams, an assistant professor in the Focused Inquiry department, said the layoffs have already affected morale in the department.

“Everybody is feeling really fragile and tenuous. Obviously, faculty do their jobs best when they feel supported by the university to do it,” Williams said.

Focused Inquiry courses are offered to first and second year students as part of the general education program. The classes have averaged 19 students per instructor for several years, but will be increasing to 23 or 25, according to Williams.

“That also means a slightly smaller percentage of professors’ time per student, and a greater amount of work for faculty in terms of giving students feedback on their writing, their research and working with them on those projects,” Williams said.

The number of students may not be the only change this semester, Williams said.

“I don’t think anyone in our department wants to cut down on our courses. That will be something that faculty are ultimately forced to do despite not wanting to or not really believing it’s in the best interest of students, but just not having the manpower otherwise,” Williams said.

Williams said the layoffs are part of a larger problem in higher education as a whole.

“They tend to pin some of those [budgetary concerns] on the question of a looming enrollment cliff — the fact that there are just going to be fewer students of college age in a few years,” Williams said.

She said that there are budgetary choices being made that do not put students first. For example, the university conducts searches to find new executive administrators, and pay existing ones high salaries, she said.

“It becomes more of a top-heavy corporate model of education,” she said.

Emalie Snowdall, a fourth-year painting and printmaking student, said that faculty cuts in the university compromise education.

“I’ve been hearing about layoffs for a bunch of other departments, especially for the art departments. A lot of classes have been canceled as a result — not just the UNIV classes — and those are classes that people actually need,” Snowdall said.

Isabel Debruler, a fourth year computer science major, said she liked being able to do something different in her Focused Inquiry classes.

“I did this project where I made this book, and that was kind of weird. I didn’t really understand the point of that — it was really strange, and I kind of liked it,” Debruler said.

Debruler said that despite there being more students than ever attending VCU — to the point that some are staying in a hotel — they are still making cuts.

“It’s kind of strange to see,” Debruler said.

Stewart Anderson, a fourth-year mass communications student, said that smaller-scale classes like Focused Inquiry require an emphasis on professor-student interaction.

“It’s just a little ridiculous that we’re going to pack fewer classes with more students and take away more opportunities from professors who aren’t tenured or anything,” Anderson said.

The VCU chapter of United Campus Workers had a rally in Monroe Park last Friday. Several members of the Focused Inquiry faculty, as well as other professors, graduate students and passers-by, were in attendance.

Kristin Reed, an assistant professor in the department, headed the rally with a speech highlighting the union’s aims and goals for students and faculty alike.

“Administration announced the intent to fire 14 people. That hurts students, that hurts our community, that hurts people who have lived in this city for years, that hurts people who got their degrees at VCU, that hurts people who have taught at this institution for decades,” Reed said.

Not far from the rally, on the streets lining Monroe Park, incoming students — accompanied by their parents — moved into their dorms.

Assistant professor Amber Pearson said this provided an opportunity to increase visibility.

“We want people outside VCU to know about this and it can be really hard to reach people like parents who also have a vested interest in what is going on in this community,” Pearson said.

Courtney Sviatko, an instructor in the department, said after the rally that the organizing faculty’s demand is for administration to put students and educators first.

“The two essential things you need for education are teachers and students and those are the things they seem to not be caring about right now,” Sviatko said.

Sviatko said that she wants VCU’s public-facing image to be more than just an image.

“We want all of that to be real, not just a couple of pretty metal signs. We want the things that happen inside the classrooms, inside the doors, inside the offices to actually reflect that message,” Sviatko said.



Signs displayed at the VCU chapter of United Campus Workers rally.
Photos by Andrew Kerley

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Stat of the week

VCU redshirt senior Anna Bagley and senior forward Milica Bulatovic both scored two goals in their 5-0 win against the University of North Carolina Wilmington on Aug. 20, according to VCU Athletics.

Top 5

VCU women’s soccer games to look forward to this upcoming season

BERSABEH KEMAW,
Contributing Writer

The women’s soccer team returns after ending the 2022 season with a record of eight wins, eight ties and three losses. They made it to the Atlantic 10 tournament, but their season came to an end after a loss against Saint Joseph’s University, according to VCU Athletics.

The black and gold return with junior forward Kanna Matsuhisa, redshirt senior midfielder Anna Bagley and sophomore midfielder Kendyl Sarver — all received an A-10 preseason all conference honors, according to BVM Sports.

Here are the top five matchups for VCU soccer fans to look forward to.

1. VCU vs. No. 11 Stanford University, Sept. 7 at 7 p.m.

A first timer in VCU school history, how will this go for the Rams, competing against a nationally ranked school?

The Rams will be hosting the Stanford University Cardinals, a team part of the non-conference schedule. The Cardinals are currently ranked at No. 4 in the country, according to Top Drawer Soccer.

They also won the Pacific-12 conference in 2022, with a total of 15 titles in program history, according to Go Stanford.

This will be a great opportunity for the black and gold to showcase their skills against a nationally ranked team.

2. Atlantic 10 Conference Opener — VCU vs. University of Richmond, Sept. 14 at 7 p.m.

Who will take the win in this cross-town rivalry?

This known rivalry amongst both schools will open up the A-10 conference play for the Rams.

VCU won the last matchup in 2022. They also have a three-game winning streak against the Spiders, according to VCU Athletics.

Fans of the black and gold should look forward to this crosstown rivalry game to open conference play.

3. Atlantic 10 — VCU vs.No.21 Saint Louis University Billikens, Oct. 1 at 1 p.m.

Will the black and gold be able to upset the A-10 champions?

The Billikens are the defending A-10 champions. They won their fifth straight A-10 championship last season. They have been voted as the preseason favorite to obtain this season’s championship as well,

according to Atlantic 10.

Saint Louis will make a return with senior forward Caroline Kelly, who was named A-10 offensive player of the year, as well as senior goalkeeper Emily Puricelli, senior defender Lyndsey Heckel and graduate student midfielder Abbie Miller. They have all been named in the 2023 Hermann trophy watch list, according to Atlantic 10.

Although the Rams were not able to come out with a win against the Billikens in their last match, they still have a chance this season.

4. Atlantic 10 — VCU vs. University of Dayton, Oct. 8 at 1 p.m.

Will the Flyers bring an end to the black and gold’s winning streak?

The Atlantic 10 voted the University of Dayton as the No. 2 most likely team to win the conference title, according to Atlantic 10.

Key players for the Flyers are fifth-year defensive duo Mackenzie Lutz, who was a 2022 first-team choice, and Alicia Donley, who will both be returning this season, according to Atlantic 10.

The black and gold defeated Dayton 2-1 last season, continuing their four-game winning streak.

5. VCU vs. University of Massachusetts, Sept. 21 at 3 p.m.

A streak cut short by a tie for the Rams, will they be able to reclaim it with a win?

The black and gold left the last matchup with a tie against Massachusetts, according to VCU Athletics.

The Rams have a slight advantage due to their record on the road against the Minutewomen is better than the record they have at home, according to VCU Athletics.

Prior to the tie, VCU had a three-game winning streak, which makes this a hopeful upset for the Rams.

The Rams have their sights set on winning a second championship this season. This team is a team to keep an eye out for as they fight to get back to the top of the A-10, according to VCU Athletics.

The Rams will play a home game against the Old Dominion University Monarchs on Aug. 24 at 6 p.m., at the Sports Backers Stadium.



VCU women’s soccer celebrates a goal to take the lead against William & Mary
Photography by Jay Stonefield

WNBA

Pick of the Week

Dallas Wings are on their way to secure another win against the Indiana Fever

ALEXIS WASHINGTON,
Contributing Writer

The No. 4 Dallas Wings and No. 12 Indiana Fever will meet again on Sept. 1 to possibly tie the season record.

This will be a good matchup, but with the confidence that Wings guard Arike Ogunbowale has, the Wings will come out victorious and advance their season record against the Fever to 2-0.

The last time these teams faced off was July 9 at the Gainbridge Fieldhouse.

The Wings took the win by one point with the score of 77-76 when the two teams met on the court in July.

Rookie forward Aliyah Boston was the leading scorer for the Fever with 18 points, but that still was not enough to pull out a win. Ogunbowale dominated Boston's ability to defend the basket by scoring 28 points.

Ogunbowale scored the last 10 points during the end of the game. Her absolute dominance really played a key role in their 1-0 record against the Fever.

Fever guard Kelsey Mitchell stated in

a postgame interview the team needed to perform better while on the court.

"We got to be there, and we weren't and we lost," Mitchell said.

The Fever must gain momentum early in the game rather than saving it for the second half, if they want to take the win over the Wings.

This upcoming game will prove if Mitchell and Boston can connect the missing pieces and work together to defeat Ogunbowale and Howard who both had 44 points, 12 rebounds and six assists combined in their last matchup.

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Illustration by Olivia McCabe

CT Sports' *DARK HORSE* Super Bowl Contenders

CT SPORTS STAFF

The NFL season is approaching as the preseason games come to a close. There are conversations already surfacing about how the Eagles, 49ers, Chiefs and Bengals are clear favorites in their conferences to make the Championship game, the Super Bowl.

However, there are some dark horse candidates, otherwise known as underdogs, that can take the spotlight and make a run to the big game.

**Alexis
Washington's
prediction**

Super Bowl LVIII, the Dallas Cowboys will take on the win as an underdog. I know what you're probably thinking, the Cowboys always lose the first round in the playoffs, with the help of new coaching staff and players, the Cowboys are one step closer to a ring.

The Cowboys added three new additions to the coaching staff during the off season: quarterback, running back and offensive line coach.

Veteran offensive line coach Mike Solari will coach the offensive line. Solari contributed 35 years of experience with his first start in 1987-88 with the Cowboys.

Six out of nine years Solari teams were top five in Adjusted Line Yards, According to USA Today.

Dallas quarterback Dak Prescott has met his match with a new weapon, Brandin Cooks.

This duo has already made great chemistry in mini camp along with sessions in the "Dark-Yard."

Dak already passed a deep touch-down to Cooks day two of camp, according to Sports Illustrated

"We are great, that is credit to him." Prescott stated.

All of the starters for defense are returning with help from the former Defensive Player of the Year cornerback, Stephon Gilmore according to CBS Sports.

The Cowboys defensive line has definitely improved and with Micah Parsons, Trevon Diggs and now Gilmore, this team will be unstoppable.

**Thailon
Wilson's
prediction**

The New York Jets are a good underdog to become Super Bowl LVIII Champions because of the bountiful offseason additions to the team.

The Jets already had a bright future after adding Offensive Rookie of the Year, wide receiver Garrett Wilson and Defensive Rookie of the Year Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner in the 2022 draft class, according to the NFL.

This offseason the team went into overdrive by trading multiple draft picks for future hall of famer Aaron Rodgers to lead the offense as the quarterback.

The four-time MVP is joining a Jets roster alongside his former Packers' wide receivers Allen Lazard and Randall Cobb.

The additions of Lazard, Cobb and former Chiefs receiver Mecole Hardman have completely changed the Jets receiver room culture from a room that had potential to one filled with star-power.

The receiving game has increased, but the rushing room just added a new force of nature in perennial pro-bowler running back Dalvin Cook, according to Bleacher Report.

Adding Cook, alongside running back Breece Hall, will create a dynamic duo with a mix of power, agility and speed to the rushing game.

With all these additions to the offense, alongside a defense that always hovers the top 15 defense range, the Jets are a team to look out for in the Wildcard.

They are in a tough division with the Bills, Dolphins and Patriots, but with how much talent the Jets have, they can sneak into the playoffs and go on a run to be an underdog contender in the Super Bowl.

**Andrew
McGhan's
prediction**

The Miami Dolphins are a dark horse contender to win Super Bowl LVIII. They have pro bowl caliber players on offense and defense.

The Dolphins have a high power offense coming into this season. They have arguably the best wide receiver duo in Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle. Both players combined for 3,066 receiving yards and 16 total touchdowns, according to Pro Football Reference.

The offense is run by head coach Mike McDaniel and quarterback Tua Tagovailoa.

Tagovailoa led the league in passer rating and tied Patrick Mahomes for leading the league in Passing Touchdown Percentage last year, according to Pro Football Reference.

The Dolphins traded for cornerback Jalen Ramsey in free agency, according to The NFL Website.

Ramsey is a six time pro bowler and a three time first team all pro, according to Pro Football Reference. He was also a key contributor for helping the Los Angeles Rams win Super Bowl LVI.

The Dolphins have the best chance to win their division, the AFC East. The New York Jets' offensive line is weak, the Bills did not improve this offseason and the New England Patriots are in a rebuilding phase this year.

The only concern I have for the Dolphins is the team's overall health because Tagovailoa suffered three concussions last year, and Ramsey will likely miss half of the season due to sustaining a meniscus injury during practice.

If the players on the Dolphins can stay healthy they have a chance to win the Super Bowl because of how much talent they have on the roster.

**Bersabeh
Kemaw's
prediction**

My dark horse pick to win the Super Bowl LVIII are the Baltimore Ravens. As much as it pains me to say, as a Steelers fan, I do believe that they have made drastic adjustments to their team, mainly offensively, that can advance them far this season.

Todd Monken, the previous coordinator for the University of Georgia's offense that led the bulldogs to two NCAA championships, is now the new coordinator for the Ravens offense, according to AP News.

They just signed wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. to a one-year deal. They were also able to draft wide receiver Zay Flowers from Boston College in the first round.

Making key changes like this to the wide receiver room will help quarterback Lamar Jackson tremendously, allowing him to move the ball more efficiently and effectively.

Not only will he have Beckham Jr. and Flowers as part of his offense, but he will also have running backs—and potential dynamic duo—J.K. Dobbins and Gus Edwards, who are both coming back off injuries, according to the Baltimore Ravens.

Being able to provide Jackson with weapons offensively will help him make better calls, run the ball and ultimately get the team further than the year before.

However, their offense isn't the only thing to keep an eye out for. The Ravens have been known to have great defense in the league, and that doesn't seem to be changing soon.

The few defenders left on the team like defensive end Brent Urban and cornerback Daryl Worley will be able to maintain the momentum defensively, despite the loss of a few defenders, such as defensive end Calais Campbell, according to Sports Illustrated.

With that being said, the Ravens are an underdog team that have a lot of potential, which is why they are my dark horse pick for this season.



On this day

On this day in 1963, The Beatles released “She Loves You” in the U.K., and since then it has become their best-selling single in the U.K.



Richmond citizens step into Jackson Ward’s history

MACKENZIE MELESKI

Contributing Writer

Colorful murals lining Jackson Ward’s streets highlight how the neighborhood has impacted Black culture and business throughout history.

Richmond citizens had the opportunity to explore and learn about the culturally significant neighborhood and how it is showcased through art. The Valentine Museum hosted the Murals of Jackson Ward Walking Tour on Aug. 19.

The museum is known for “collecting, preserving and interpreting Richmond Stories for over a century,” according to its website. Now, the museum is taking guests onto the streets to learn Richmond’s history firsthand.

The Valentine tours manager Jessica Delbridge hopes the tours educate citizens on the neighborhoods they live in and venture in everyday.

“It’s just so great to be able to connect with your neighborhood and learn something about where you’re living, whether you’re from here or recently moved,” Delbridge said. “I feel like all of the tours give a different angle on the history of the neighborhood.”

The Murals of Jackson Ward Walking Tour covered the evolution of Jackson Ward from an immigrant working-class neighborhood to the “Harlem of the South” and a modern community today. There was also a focus on the neighborhood’s community mural projects, according to Delbridge.

The murals in Jackson Ward started as community projects intended to revitalize the neighborhood and bring people together, according to Delbridge.

A notable community art project in Jackson Ward is the Unity Street Project, according to Delbridge. Richmond-based muralist Sir James Thornhill spearheaded the project with “a goal of paying tribute and honor to a communities historical legacy through mural arts,” according to the HandsOn Greater

Richmond website.

“There’s so many rich stories that so much art that actually came out of that community and really celebrate the changes and the people who made that community what it is today, for better, for worse and for the future,” Delbridge said.

The tour started on Second Street and went down Marshall and Broad Street.

Sandy Eberhard, an employee and tour guide for the museum, leads the Jackson Ward Mural Tour and other tour offerings. Eberhard is a lifelong fan of history and started doing tours in 2007 after her retirement.

“I think anyone can benefit from these tours and knowing the history of where they’re living or going to school,” Eberhard said.

The tour featured murals that recognized famous contributors to

Jackson Ward, including Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Maggie Walker and Emmett C. Burke.

Muralist Nils Westergard contributed a mural of Michael Millions, a Richmond-born rapper, to the neighborhood that was featured on the tour. The mural is located next to Mama J’s, a popular restaurant in Jackson Ward.

Westergard is based in Richmond and has contributed around 40 works of art to the city, he said. When creating a mural, he takes into account where the wall is, what that could potentially mean, what is interesting about the area and what he is interested in.

“Richmond is my city, so I feel I have a broader spectrum of expression that I can work with as opposed to being a visitor in a place that I am often uninformed about, meaning I need to tread more carefully to not stick my foot in my mouth,” Westergard said. “To boil it down

to a sentence though, it would be what interests me at the moment.”

The tour included a stop at the Richmond Dairy Company Building, where the GEAR metal performance band was formed. Muralist Colette Miller is a VCU graduate from the school of Fine Arts and former participant in the GEAR performance group. Today, she is famous for her mural series, the “Global Angel Wings Project.”

“

I think that it’s just so great to be able to connect with your neighborhood and learn something about where you’re living, whether you’re from here or recently moved, I feel like all of the tours give a different angle on the history of the neighborhood.”

Jessica Delbridge
The Valentine tours manager

Miller contributed an angel wings mural to Richmond, which is located in the outdoor seating area of Lift Cafe near Jackson Ward, according to Miller. Other murals in this series are located in the World Trade Center, Dubai, Los Angeles and Moscow.

Miller started the project in LA in 2012 when the idea of angel wings came to her after meditation, she said. (cont. page 9)



“I thought about the divine in humanity, or humanity’s higher nature and to remind us of our higher natures,” Miller said. “I say to remind humanity we are the angels of this earth.”

The Valentine Museum offers guided tours year round, with options ranging from Carytown, Hollywood Cemetery and Church Hill. The tours focus on these unique places’ histories, murals, local businesses and architecture.

The next Murals of Jackson Ward Walking Tour will be held on Sept. 1, according to the museum’s website.



Photos by by Bilan Osman

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Event bridges, highlights West African and African American Traditions

KERRI GENTIUS
Contributing Writer

The influence of West African culture settled over Abner Clay Park as people gathered together as far as the eye could see. The Elegba Folklore Society hosted its 32nd Annual Down Home Family Reunion on Aug. 19. The reunion is a showcase of West African influence on southern African American culture, according to the EFSINC’s website. The event, created

in 1990, is one of the EFSINC’s original programs. The EFSINC is a cultural arts and education nonprofit that focuses on building connections between Africans and African Americans through the arts, said Imani Bell, a production assistant and lead dancer with the Elegba Folklore Society’s dance company. “That is really what the Down Home Family Reunion was born from — cultural bridges,” Bell said.

The event boasted an array of varied interests and activities for attendees to enjoy, especially musical entertainment, which ranged from blues and reggae to Afro-Caribbean, Bell said. African dancing music and its “groove” was showcased at the event as well, according to Bell. Attendees danced to the rich dusky timbre of Lady E, Richmond’s Duchess of Blues, and the rocksteady music of the Tunji Band had revelers swaying and skanking in the crowd. One of the musical performers, Angelica Baylor, a recording artist and backing vocalist for Ginuwine, thrives on connection, she said. “I deemed myself actually a Neo-pop artist and that is where Neo-Soul meets pop,” Baylor said. “I like to put the two together because I am a singer. I like to sing and belt, but I like to dance.” Other musical acts included Zydeco royalty of the Carrier family, Dikki Du and the Zydeco Krewe, led by Troy Carrier, according to EFSINC’s website. Zydeco, a musical genre which originated in South Louisiana from the French Creole and African population, is rooted in West African, Caribbean and French culture and their influence can be found throughout the South, according to the upcoming documentary, Zydeco By Birth. Music and dance were not the only showcases of the Down Home Family Reunion — various food and merchandise vendors were integral parts of the event as well. Richmond’s own Taste of the Caribbean made an appearance with traditional Caribbean dishes like curry chicken, king fish and shrimp. Other food vendors served Italian ice and Southern homestyle comfort foods. West African art and clothing lined the perimeter of Abner Clay Park with vendors showcasing a spectrum of work to include

handmade jewelry, unique beaded handbags and print works. Awa’s African Art keeps the community in mind in everything that they do, according to Abdoulaye Fall, assistant and nephew of Awa Thiam, the owner of Awa’s African Art. They also hold sacred West African traditions through food, hair care and art, Thiam said. Awa’s African Art started selling art to support women and negotiate on their behalf, as selling their wares at the festival is a great way to foster women-led entrepreneurship, Fall said. Lateef Jawana, the visionary behind Art Light Designs, displayed unique Afro-Diasporic inspired light plates. BLK RVA’s table invited visitors to tour Richmond’s historic sites, and Beaded N Beauty by Aaliyah, showcased an eclectic collection of beaded handbags and headwear. The Down Home Family Reunion had much to offer anyone interested in getting involved with their local community and African heritage. This yearly event will continue to be a cultural bridge between members of the African Diaspora. “Our history is our power, knowing our roots, knowing the foundation is powerful because it gives you a sense of self and a stronger knowledge of self,” Bell said. “Therefore, you carry that energy wherever you go, and you can walk with your head a little bit higher.”

People enjoy Elegba Folklore Society’s event at Abner Clay Park.
Photos by Arrick Wilson



‘Wellness felt inaccessible’: Pop-up shop gives community access to the power of crystals

EMILY RICHARDSON
Staff Writer

For 10 days in the serene space belonging to The Well Collective, crystals lined the shelves, each one as unique as the individual that would possess them.

A pop-up shop featuring crystals and crystal-infused products occupied The Well Collective last week, part of an ongoing initiative by the wellness center to feature small businesses in its retail space.

The “Crystal Pop-Up with Vee Cowles” was an opportunity for the community to experience what crystals can be used for and learn about the properties different varieties of crystals hold, Cowles said.

The Well Collective is a public space in Shockoe Bottom offering wellness-related classes and appointments, such as yoga, meditation and tarot card readings, as well as a retail space for various health and wellness-related products, according to its website.

Vanessa “Vee” Cowles is The Well Collective’s retail lead as well as the owner of The Hummynbirds, an apothecary offering candles, body butters, scrubs and sprays, all with the goal of making crystal energy easy to use for people new to the practice, Cowles said.

Cowles got into wellness after she experienced a loss in her life, which led to the creation of The Hummynbirds, she said.

“I was asking questions and trying to go through my own grieving process,” Cowles said. “It’s really what landed me with the Hummynbirds. My own journey, and seeing how sometimes wellness felt inaccessible.”

Crystals can represent an intentional change or a direction you would like to go in your life, Cowles said. For example, a Carnelian gemstone is a popular choice for those who want to speak more courageously, she said.

“It reminds you, ‘I made a commitment to myself to speak up when I know that I want to speak up,’” Cowles said. “It’s like a physical reminder, and that’s how I explain it to skeptics before we get into all the energy work. Use it as a reminder of the commitment that you’re making to yourself.”

The Crystal Pop-Up was part of the Well Collective’s ongoing initiative, The Freedom

Market. The Freedom Market aims to highlight local businesses by offering space for their products to be sold while ensuring vendors get to keep as much of their profits as possible, according to Cowles.

“I thought, ‘what if there was a place where everyone could share their passions without any limits?’” said Kiran Bhagat, creator of The Freedom Market and yoga teacher The Well Collective.

The ultimate goal of The Freedom Market is to offer a platform for creatives to raise awareness for their products, causes and beliefs. The pop-up illustrates the type of unique experiences The Freedom Market aims to provide, Bhagat said.

“Creating The Freedom Market allowed me to let my creativity flow freely, while empowering others to do the same,” Bhagat said. “It’s all about embracing everyone’s uniqueness and creating a platform for self-expression.”

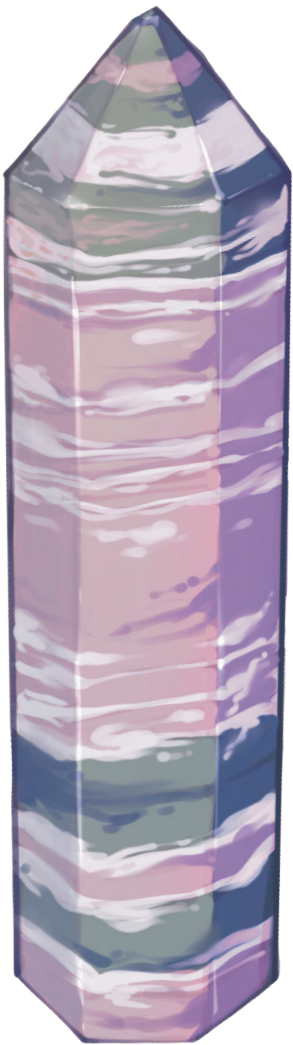
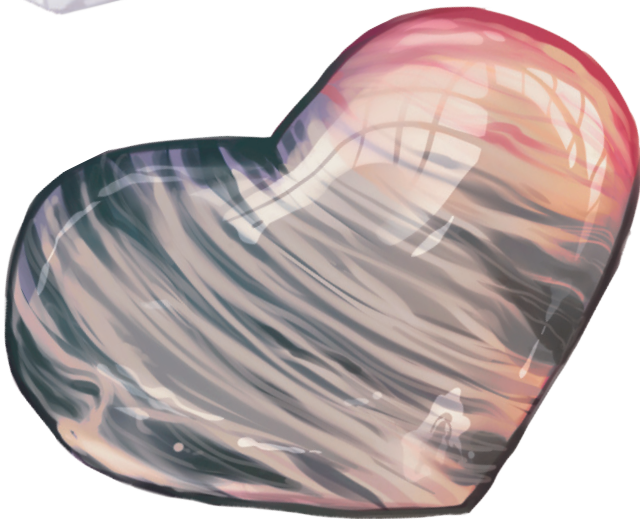
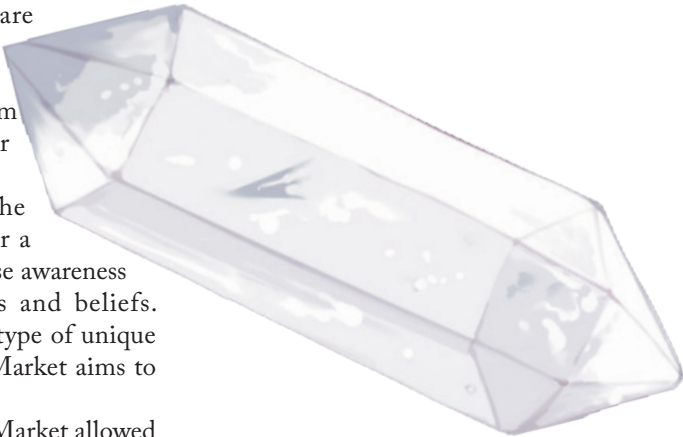
Crystals align with The Well Collective’s intention of being a space for people to explore various healing modalities, said Ashley Williams, CEO and founder of The Well Collective.

“Crystals are ancient tools used by indigenous people for healing purposes, ceremonial rituals and storytelling,” Williams said. “Creating space for others to learn about the history, healing benefits and present day ways to use individually and collectively is key to The Well Collective’s vision.”


The Freedom Market is a space for local entrepreneurs to sell their products and share their story in a city with a complicated history with freedom, Williams said.

“Historically, our city, and specifically the Shockoe Bottom area, is the epicenter of oppression and the birthplace of America’s economic development system,” Williams said. “It’s important to restore the freedom to create, own and share our gifts through removing barriers and creating access to space, community and education.”

Illustrations by Sydney Heck



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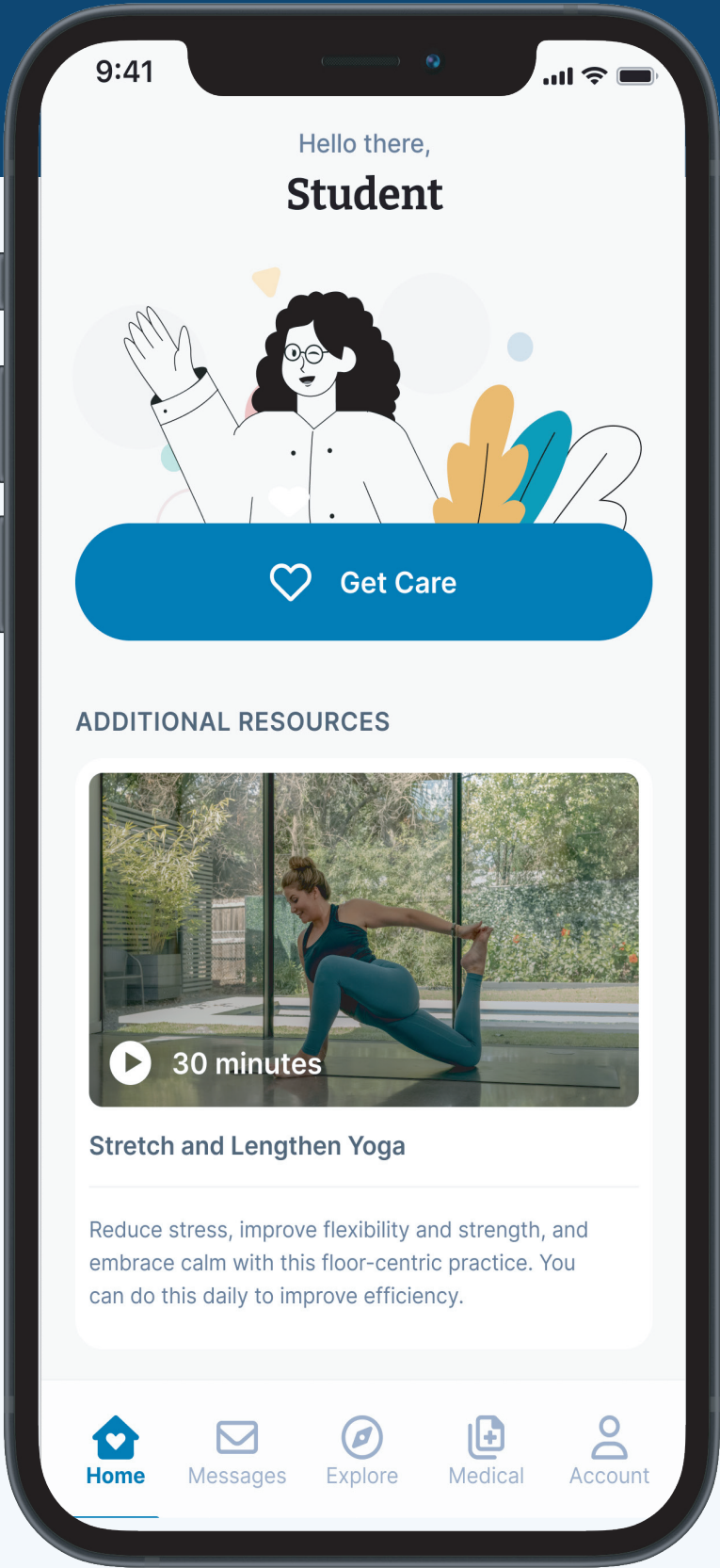
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CT Opinions

Quote of the week

“The humanities should constitute the core of any university worth the name.”

— TERRY EAGLETON

Navigating the end of academia

KOFI MFRAMA

Opinions Editor

I know it won't fully sink in until I no longer have my \$5 Spotify and Hulu student bundle, or until my Amazon Prime subscription goes from \$7 to whatever it normally is. I know I'll finally feel the full gravity of what I've lost when my friends are no longer a five minute walk away, when every plan to reconnect meanders, falls and withers away through busy work schedules and the city-wide distance that will soon separate us.

Then, I'll know for sure that the four most pivotal years I've ever experienced have come to a close.

As I enter my last year in college, I find myself struggling to navigate the end of my academic career. My mind seems stuck in hindsight as I interrogate every decision I've made in the last four years, wondering what would've been had I taken the roads forgone.

Academia acted as a trellis shielding me from the weight of my many insecurities. Now that this chapter of my life is ending,

it feels like a piece of my identity is ending along with it. I've tried to find ways to avoid this reality. I toyed with the idea of grad school, not because it's something recommended for my field of study, but because it's hard to fathom not being bound to a collection of letters. I can't imagine how I'll navigate my life without the structure and community that school provides.

Nevertheless, this is reality I'll soon face. As much as I am in my head, rewinding and reliving old moments from a time I'll never get back, the only useful thing I can do is press forward.

When I went to see “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse” this June — really great movie, read my Letterboxd review here — I was struck by its theme of determinism, the philosophy that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external

to the will. Miles Morales is the “original anomaly” because he is the only Spider-Man to be bitten by a spider from an alternate dimension — he was never meant to be a superhero, but he is.

Instead of spending time wondering why this came to be, he takes the life presented before him, duties and all, and moves forward with his future in his hands. Even though I'm not a superhero, nor is going to school equivalent to swinging between Manhattan skyscrapers and traveling through dimensions to fight bad guys, his outlook is still applicable to my situation.

It serves me no good to worry about the things I cannot change. Time only moves forward and so should I. Instead of looking back at my time in school with sadness and regret, I should instead look back with gratitude for the many things

I was able to experience.

I had similar anxieties when leaving high school, but when I opened the door to my dorm room on the 11th floor of Gladding Residence Center, I realized there's so much life ahead of me that I have yet to experience.

Although leaving college is a bit more final, there's no telling where life will take me. It's hard to find comfort in the ambiguity; I can't say I'm fully ready for life past academia but I know I'm getting there. It will be different, harder even, but in that difference lies more life than I can dream of.

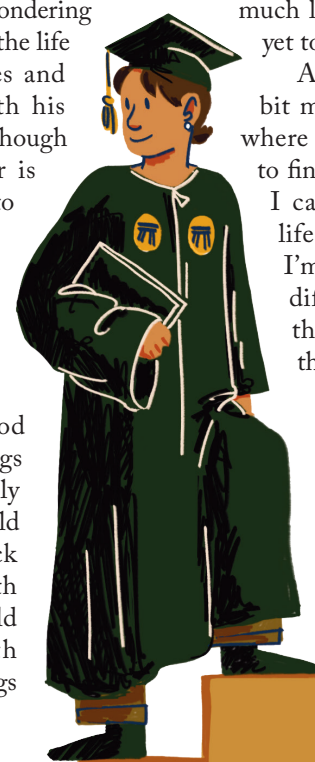


Illustration by Abigail Gleeson

Body hostility wins on the internet yet again

ARIELLE ANDREWS

Contributing Writer

This article is not about Lizzo. However, we can't start a discussion about body hostility without mentioning one of the most famous faces of the body positivity movement. Until fairly recently, global popstar and body positivity activist, Lizzo, was at the forefront of empowering messages of self-love and led a hearty attack against toxic diet culture.

Unfortunately, this opened her up to vicious online attacks and comments about her weight and health. This would only take a turn for the precarious when news broke that the singer was being sued by former dancers for creating and participating in a hostile work environment.

I'm not interested in Lizzo's lawsuit — as disturbing as the situation is. As I said, this article is not about Lizzo. How people used Lizzo's alleged misbehavior as a means to justify online fat shaming not just towards Lizzo, but to the body positivity movement as a whole is what interested me about this case.

While some can argue Lizzo's backlash

was vindicated, it's hard to make sense of the blatant hate and fatphobia that rampaged in the aftermath.

That is until you consider what we will call, “body hostility.”

It's a term I like to use to describe the malicious and persuasive social movement aimed to attack, demean and destroy non-aesthetic bodies.

With body hostility, not just fat bodies are shamed — it's also bodies “too thin,” disabled or unconventional. Any body deemed unholy to look at is up for ransom.

That “unholiness” is at the root of body hostility.

If body positivity encourages the love and acceptance of all bodies, body hostility encourages the opposite. If diet culture is the social expectations of how you should look, and body-shaming is the criticism you receive if you don't meet them, body hostility is the rampant and persistent ideology and movement urging people to hide and destroy bodies that don't meet desired aesthetics.

It's the devil in your ear telling online trolls to write mean comments on a

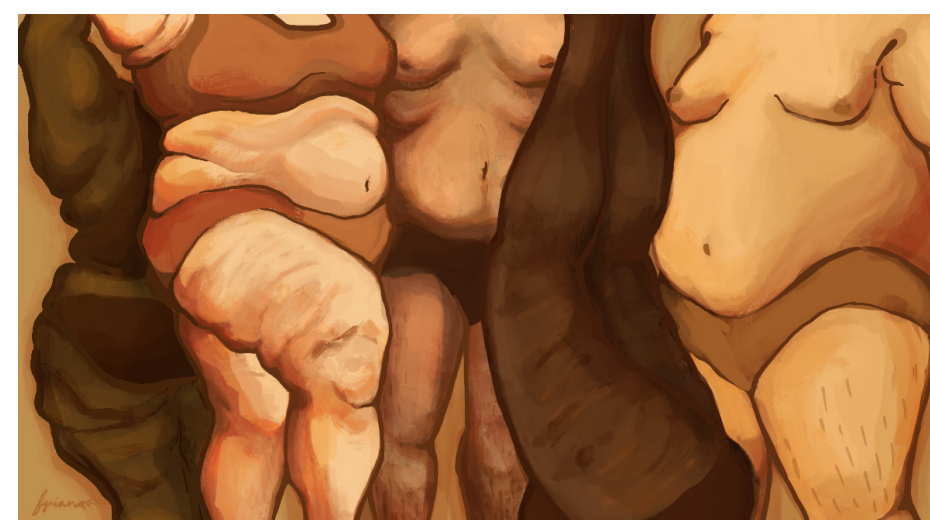


Illustration by Lily Robinetter

disabled person's posts or to wear the baggy sweatshirt to hide a few pounds.

Body hostility not only tells you that your body is wrong but that it must be destroyed in order to achieve social harmony. It's not just that, though — body hostility creates immorality with non-aesthetic bodies and demands that upright citizens eradicate them.

Lizzo can and should be held accountable for her actions if they are found to be true, but the effect body hostility has had on the downfall of her career is fascinating. In the body hostility phenomenon, not only will you be punished for breaking norms, you deserve to be punished. Your punishment will be painted as an act of grace.

Proponents of body hostility find righteousness in beauty and appealing to the designated beauty standards. If you dare to look different than what is deemed appropriate, then you are owed hostility and shame. Hence the term, “body hostility.”

Body hostility is not just external. It's the internal guilt and rage people feel against their own bodies for looking “abnormal.” It is what leads people to feel like sinners in

the mirror and to constantly apologize for their own existence.

Body hostility is so present and so persuasive in our culture that most people won't see anything wrong with it. Beauty is our magnum opus, it's what all humans should strive for. It makes sense, then, to the unrefined mind, to attack those who “evade” it.

In doing this, some people feel justified in their hate campaigns, feigning that they're just helping others out.

The internet was quick to remind Lizzo, and others like her, that she was far from beauty standards, and body hostility was swift to punish her.

I often wonder if we will ever move far enough away from the grip body hostility has on the modern consciousness, or will we always feel the need to justify our own bodies' right to simply exist?

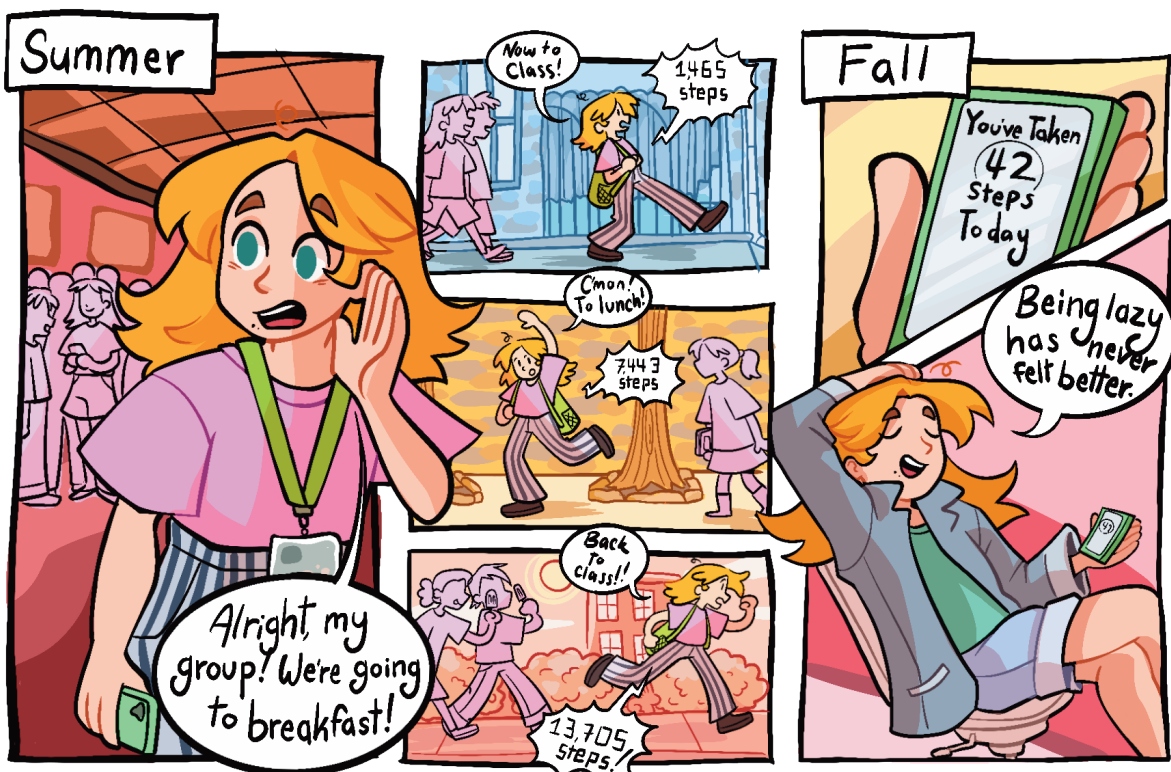
In this life, it's a sin to be ugly, apparently. Or, rather, it's a sin to have someone find you ugly. Body hostility looms ahead, reminding us insistently we all have the potential to be sinners.

CT Comics

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Camp Counselor Life by Killian Goodale Porter



Senioritis by Michele Hicks



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CT

Puzzles

Los Angeles Times

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

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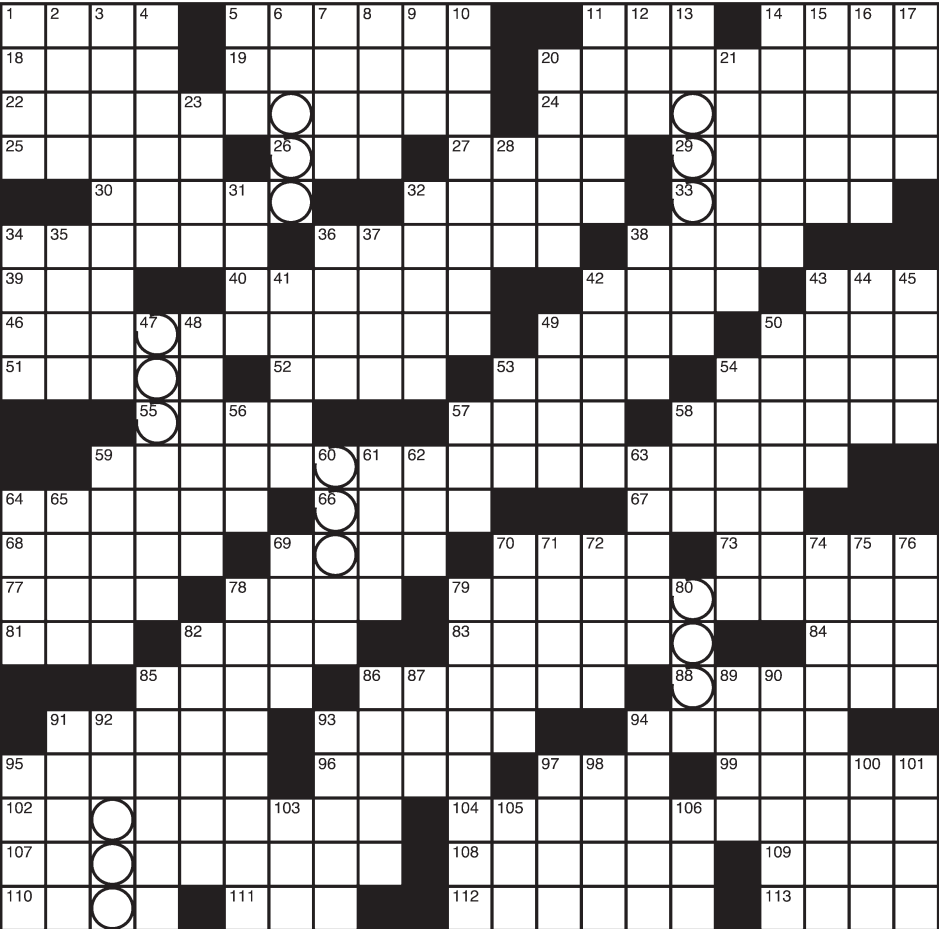
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I'm Out by Amie Walker



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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

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

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