



Acknowledgement of Country

Honi Soit is produced, published and distributed on the stolen land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Sovereignty was never ceded. For over 235 years, First Nations peoples in so-called 'Australia' have continued to suffer under the destructive effects of invasion, genocide, and colonisation. As editors of this paper, we acknowledge that we are each living, writing, and working on stolen Gadigal, Wangal and Bidjigal land, and are beneficiaries of ongoing colonial dispossession.

We acknowledge that the University of Sydney is an inherently colonial institution which is not only physically built on stolen land, but also ideologically upholds a devaluing of Indigenous systems of knowledge and systematically excludes First Nations peoples. We recognise our complicity in such systems. We strive to remain conscious of, and actively resist and unlearn, colonial ideologies and biases, both our own and those perpetuated by the University and other institutions like it.

As a student newspaper, we pledge to stand in solidarity with both First Nations movements and all Indigenous struggles toward decolonisation worldwide, endeavouring to platform Indigenous voices. *Honi* is committed to countering the exclusion, censoring, and silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in mainstream media.

Always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

Contents

Anti-Zionist protest just dropped	4
Encampment moment	4
Wage theft alert!	4
Youth allowance flop	5
Parliament House exposed	5
HECS indexed? Not quite!	5
USU cage fight, but no blood SNORE	6
Your youth group is a cult	7
There is no God	8
It's like no one wants to volunteer anymore	9
The female orgasm doesn't exist!!!!!!!!!!	10-1
Time to lock up curfews	12
Revisiting the Bruce Lehrmann judgement	12
I kissed a girl (and I liked it)	13
She took the Murray's Bus going to Canberra	13
Life after HRT	14
Lord, our Father	15
Pelican squawck!	16
New Yorker Time (NYT)	16
Honi chats to Sara M Saleh	17
She civil on my war till I review	18
The encampment from day to night	19
OB reports!	20
Case work!	21
I'm puzzled	22
Laugh motherfuckers	23

Editors

Valerie Chidiac, Aidan Elwig Pollock, Victoria Gillespie, Ariana Haghighi, Sandra Kallarakkal, Zeina Khochaiche, Simone Maddison, Angus McGregor, Amelia Raines

Contributors

Emilie Garcia-Dolnik, Emily Bentancort, Evelyn Redfern, Holly Gerrard, Imogen Sabey, Lotte Weber, Martha Barlow, Purny Ahmed, Ravkaran Grewal

Artists/Photographers

Bipasha Chakraborty, Ella Thompson, Evelyn Redfern, Ishbel Dunsmore, Lauren Maccoll, Yasodara Puhule

Cover

Ishbel Dunsmore & Simone Maddison

Editorial

Simone Maddison

The photograph on this week's front cover features St. Joan of Arc Church in Haberfield. It was taken just past sunset, at a small 6pm Mass when the tower bells began to ring and the priest was starting his sermon. Beyond a dim yellow glow emanating from inside the nave, only the crucifix at the centre of the image kept Dalhousie Street alight.

My family has attended this church since my great-grandparents migrated from Italy in the 1950s. My mother was baptised here. It is also where we held her father's funeral. When I refused to undertake my communion in Year 4 — my scripture teacher could not justify why a woman would never be the Pope, so I no longer saw the point in going to church — St. Joan of Arc became somewhere I could no longer go.

Life, death, and purgatory: these are the themes you will find in my edition's focus on Antichrist.

Lotte Weber first reckons with the meaning of volunteering in "faithless nations" like Australia, and queries if we would still be selfless if not for our religion. On page 8, Ravkaran Grewal critically reflects on Bhagat Singh's seminal essay *Why I Am An Atheist* amidst contemporary anti-colonial struggles. Later, we hear from Purny Ahmed on the interconnectedness between Islam, family, hardship and defiance.

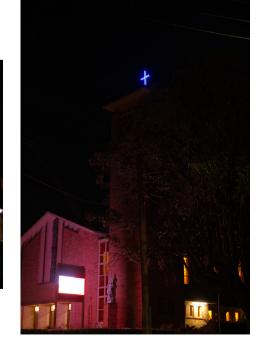
Of course, no reckoning with Antichrist would be complete without a little bit of sin and blasphemy. In this week's feature article, I explored how politics manifests in the bedroom for self-proclaimed 'left-wing' or 'progressive' couples of all sexualities. A far cry from the visions of ecstasy and reciprocity we hope to find in these spaces, intimacy remains coloured by the quintessential Christian values of shame, guilt and gendered power.

Although I no longer believe in what it represents, I still pass that neon blue cross every morning and night. When it was first installed, all I could do was stop and stare. I hope that you have the same feeling — a mixture of blind awe, fury and grace — as you explore the brilliant work of each writer and artist who has contributed to this edition.

Yours without faith, Simone.

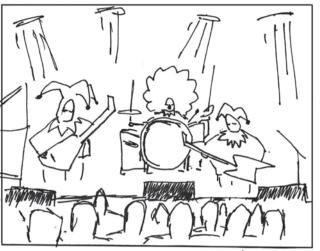


Photography: Ishbel Dunsmore



ISSN: 2207-5593. This edition was published on Tuesday 7 May 2024. Disclaimer: Honi Soit is published by the Students' Representative Council, University of Sydney, Level 1 Wentworth Building, City Road, University of Sydney NSW 2006. The SRC's operation costs, space and administrative support are financed by the University of Sydney. Honi Soit is printed under the auspices of the SRC's Directors of Student Publications (DSP): Dustin Dao, Jasmine Donnelly, Lia Perkins, Tiger Perkins, Victor Zhang, Lucinda Zheng. All expressions are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as the opinions of the SRC unless specifically stated. The Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any of the opinions or information contained within this newspaper, nor does it endorse any of the advertisements and insertions.

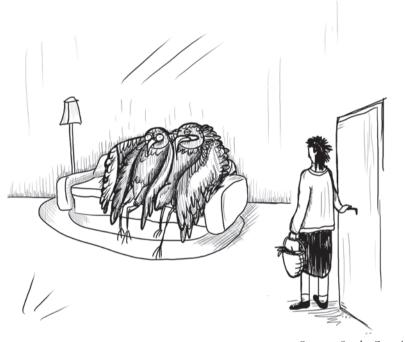
Cartoon Caption Contest



Cartoon: Huw Bradsha

Week

Submit your best caption for the above to editors@honisoit. com for a chance to WIN and be published in the next edition! Winners receive a personalised limerick from Angus McGregor.



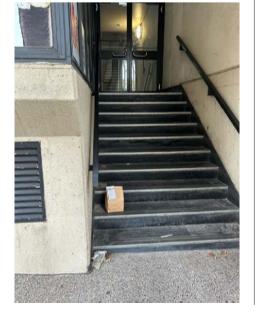
Cartoon: Sascha Zenari

Winner:
"Bird wheel."
— Kamyar Murphy

Winner's reward:
Two birds with beaks long on a couch,
Sat chatting, not leaving a slouch.
They chirped and they chattered,
Their beaks never clattered,
Just gossiping, preening, and crouch.

Spotted on campus!

Simone ordered Uber Eats this weekend and the driver left it on the stairs behind the Wentworth Building. The paper bag looked both lonely and esoteric. The egg fried rice from Thai-La-Ong was still warm, though!



Honi's Activism Guide

While it is daunting to attend a protest — with others or alone — if you follow the social media of organisers, activists and community members you will feel more familiar with that particular solidarity movement beforehand. Plan your trip ahead by looking at public transport timetables and don't feel lesser than for having not attended before. If you attend one protest, you are guaranteed to want to attend again to listen to speakers, join in chants and march with others for a common cause.

If worried about your rights as a protestor, visit Legal Observers NSW social media or website for more information.

Monday 06/05 May

Teach-in: Boycott & Divestment with Dr Claire Parfitt, 12pm @ Gaza Solidarity Encampment, Camperdown

Teach-in: Anti-apartheid Solidarity Movement in Australia featuring Robert Austin, 3pm @ Gaza Solidarity Encampment, Camperdown

Tuesday 07/05 May

Students for Palestine Rally, 1pm @ Gaza Solidarity Encampment, Camperdown

Wednesday 08/05 May

Students Against War protest tour of USyd buildings with ties to Israel, 2pm @ Gaza Solidarity Encampment, Camperdown

Thursday 09/05 May

Sydney Student Strike 4 Palestine, 2pm @ Town Hall

Saturday 11/05 May

Rally to end the privatisation of school and government cleaning, 12pm @ Parramatta Square

Sunday 12/05 May

Palestine Action Group Rally, 1pm @ Hyde Park North

Wednesday 15/05 May

Protest 76 Years of Nakba: stop the genocide! Free Palestine! Protest, 5:30pm @ Town Hall

Letters



Dear Editors,

I am delighted to report that our benevolent co-SRC Vice President has intervened on behalf of Amplify Angus (Fisher) to salvage his moonwalk and inform us of NLS' disabilities platform. In Jasmine Donnelly's own words, she sought to alert us of Fisher's plans for a "streamlined academic plan" so students do not need to renew every semester and emails between IDS and students should be "individualised" rather than a mass email.

First, our VP and the still absent Fisher commit the rookie mistake of maintaining a blank page as to their vision for DIAP. Must we remind Fisher & co of their run for the University of Sydney Union and that their policies on USU staff – disabled or otherwise – remain a question mark?

Second, though I agree that a better Academic Plan portal is indeed useful, how the USU has remits over IDS' email communications is a puzzling one and that's before we question the usefulness of a personalised email policy. Will it make any substantive difference other than a cosmetic change? I'm fairly certain that curated, individualised emails from Labor NSW did not deter me from scrapping my membership.

One might even point out that NLS' compatriot-in-unity James Dwyer took the effort to compile a response rather than the lack of one by Fisher. As for whether we deserve more than a proverbial pair of dead fish eyes to scrutinise Union policies, I'll ask you, Honi readers, to decide for yourself.

Yours.

Khanh (SRC Disabilities Officer).

Government

indexation

Angus McGregor

on inflation.

announces major

changes to HECS

The Federal government has announced

major changes to HECS indexation

as part of the budget on May 14. Debt

will now be indexed to wage growth as

opposed to the Consumer Price Index

(CPI) applied retroactively to last year.

the government is balancing delivering a

second budget surplus with more relief,

without putting more upwards pressure

in the University Accord Report, and

will save the average borrower \$1,200

on their debt this year. A student with

\$15,000 of debt will save \$670, while

someone with \$50,000 of debt will save

The changes were a recommendation

In the context of a cost of living crisis,

Encampment support rally outnumbers **Zionist** counterprotest

Valerie Chidiac, Ariana Haghighi and Victoria Gillespie

After social media posts called for the wider community to defend the USyd Gaza solidarity encampment against a Zionist counterprotest coined the "March for a Safe Campus", the Friday May 3 rally drew a large crowd. Standing across the Quad lawns, hundreds of people were in attendance with anti-Zionist Jewish organisations such as Jews Against the Occupation and the Tzedek Collective. The protest also drew media coverage by Reuters, SBS, ABC and Channel 10, as well as Sky News. The Zionist counterprotest began at the City Rd end of Eastern Avenue, and worked their way towards the camp. Yasmine Johnson, one of the encampment's organisers, began the speakout with a series of chants. She then emphasised that this is a "peaceful protest, we don't want to engage with the Zionists if they come here looking for trouble."

Next, Nick Riemer, President of the USyd branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) spoke about the union's solidarity: "we will be with you for as long as it takes". Reimer said that Zionists who tout "safety on campus" contradict their support for a "genocide of unimaginable proportions", where Palestinians are unsafe. Riemer commented on the both-sideism exhibited by university management, specifying how Mark Scott imputed dogwhistles about misconduct on part of the campers with "unsubstantiated claims". "We welcome the public comment that Mark Scott, the Vice Chancellor, has given to allowing this encampment to stay. Make no mistake: we will hold him to it. It is the absolute, bare minimum that he should be doing. But he has clearly only made this commitment because he's been forced to, and he's clearly trying to play both sides". Riemer criticised the Zionist movement as "morally bankrupt, with no real intellectual fiber, and no real principle other than apartheid and genocide".

Vivienne Porzsolt from Jews Against Occupation characterised Zionism as "a fortress of fear" and that "it is time to abandon the false security of Zionism." Porzsolt concluded by encouraging Zionist counter-protestors to "join us in solidarity", as this movement will liberate everyone. Maggie from the anti- it is important to remain disciplined Zionist Tzedek Collective, said they are and peaceful in the face of Zionists, but "happy there are so many Jews involved, because Zionists pretend to represent them". Maggie stated that Zionists "have to be unsafe because the alternative is that they are wrong".

Harrison Brennan, President of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and member of the encampment since the first night, proclaimed "if we keep this up, we can win and show the world the importance of student activism in fighting for Palestine...and fighting for

Visions from the Gaza Solidarity encampment

Simone Maddison

These photographs were taken across the first week of the encampment. They capture solidarity — with Palestinians in Gaza, with student protestors in the US, and between communities at the University of Sydney. From the river to the sea, Palestine



Ahmed Abadla, a Palestinian activist, said that "Zionists should be ashamed of themselves, and at some point Zionism should become a curse word," before reminding attendees to show up at the May 15 rally for the 76th anniversary of

Associate Professor at UNSW and anti-Zionist Jewish academic Peter Slezak spoke next, saying that "there should be many more Jews who say we stand against the Zionist project which is a racist enterprise."

President and Vice President of the UTS Palestinian Youth society, Salma and Omar, asked for a moment of silence to remember the Palestinian martyrs who had been "murdered by the dirty Israeli occupation".

Before the final speaker, Johnson made the announcement that the Palestinian rally attendees total "more than twice the size" of the Zionist counterprotest.

Josh Lees of the Palestine Action Group (PAG) reminded protestors that to also "show our power and that the students won't be messed with". As mild voices of Zionist protestors were heard, Lees told the crowd to "not give them attention," and said that "their rally is over, see you later, this is our campus." Lees spoke to the Rafah invasion, long peddled by the Israeli state, and that there is "no guarantee Israel will stop there", pointing to the history of attacks and ongoing threats of starting a war in Lebanon. He concluded by reminding

attendees of the longevity of the PAG Sunday rallies, now entering their 30th consecutive week, and that the Palestinian movement for liberation will be continued not just in the "coming months" but "possibly years"."

It was later confirmed that most of the counter-protestors had dispersed, and small groups were heading towards the encampment. Across the lawn, closer to Fisher library, Zionists faced the encampment, carrying posters which read "Hamas is a terrorist organisation" and "Attention LGBT+ for Palestine, booking a charter to Gaza, contact for free tickets." They were protected by an extensive row of USyd security guards. The encampment was protected by a human chain stood at the front of the crowd. Besides a few attempts by Zionist supporters to verbally intimidate, there was no escalation. The encampment non-stop until Zionist protestors voluntarily left university grounds soon after. Before wrapping up the proceedings, Johnson took to the microphone to say that "they're going to leave, we are going to stay". She then reminded attendees of uncoming protests including the student strike on May 9, and urged people to keep coming to the encampment, even after the success of today.

On the morning of the rally, Vice Chancellor Mark Scott spoke to Patricia Karvelas on ABC Radio about the encampment. Scott acknowledged USyd's history of protests and that the USvd encampment was the first of its kind in Australia. He also maintained the right and "responsibility to exercise free speech." Scott repeatedly emphasised that those represented at the encampment "aren't only our students", "If you assumed they were all of our students, they represent less than 0.1% of our student population".

He acknowledged the "discomfort" and "upset" experienced by Jewish students and staff, however followed that up by saying "but I don't think that it is an unsafe space", calling it a "heightened environment." Upon the question of antisemitism, Scott spoke to investigations of complaints but did not specify if it was relating to antisemitism or the misconduct alleged in a previous email to the student body. He continued that, overall the encampment has been "peaceful", citing the campers' respect during the ANZAC Day Dawn Service and at graduations.

As for slogans like "from the river to the sea", he suggested that if Palestinian supporters feel that "their use of that phrase is being misinterpreted, that it doesn't mean what our Jewish community is interpreting it to mean, they should use another phrase. Why use a phrase that is open to misinterpretation and that is so hurtful? Say what you mean, mean what you say."

When asked about the calls for a global intifada, Scott referenced the time when management cancelled a rally on university premises which called for a global intifada. He continued that we have to "look at it in context." Scott then asked protestors to be clear when they "use language like that", and "look for language that others will not find confronting or upsetting".

Swinburne University admits to \$2.85 million in wage theft: NTEU renews calls for action

Ella McGrath

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has demanded "major changes to university governance" after the Swinburne University of Technology conceded to \$2.85 million in wage theft between 2017 and December 2023, impacting around 1,800 staff.

The figure reported to the Fair Work Ombudsman by Swinburne University management encompasses the \$2.6 million owed to current and former Swinburne University staff, and \$2,500 owed to employees of the part-privately owned Swinburne College.

The Swinburne branch of NTEU's campaign against alleged underpayments and wage theft began in 2020, after complaints by academics employed on a casual basis as tutors, who were paid at the 'other' rate instead of the expected 'teaching delivery' rate. This resulted in an underpayment of several thousand dollars and affected their applications for future roles.

In an email addressed to Swinburne staff and made public by the University, Vice-Chancellor Pascale

Anglicare's annual national report into

rental affordability has found that all

rental properties are unaffordable on the

charitable organisation surveyed 45,115

rental properties across Australia. Only

three – all sharehouses – were affordable

on JobSeeker, 31 of which were on the

Disability Support Pension, 89 on the

Age Pension and 289 on minimum

wage. Each of these numbers accounted

for less than one percent of surveyed

Director Kasy Chambers declared the

housing crisis worse than ever, labelling

for people on the minimum wage, with

affordability halving for a single person

in the last two years. Even couples

with both partners working full-time

are locked out of nearly 90 percent of

rentals," Chambers said in a press release.

are being pushed out of housing

altogether... For a person out of work,

[housing affordability is] 0 percent – and

that includes the highest rate of rent

survey were in line with or worse than

the national average. According to SOM

Research, the average rental property in

Sydney costs \$851 per week as of April,

with a unit costing an average of \$709.

Youth Allowance rates vary from \$395.30

per fortnight for a single minor living

with parents to \$691.80 for recipients in

and other universities are faced with the

often insurmountable cost of housing in

Students at the University of Sydney

a relationship with children.

The New South Wales results in the

"People on Centrelink payments

it "Australia's new normal."

Anglicare Australia Executive

"We've never seen such bad results

The Anglican Church-associated

Will Thorpe

Youth Allowance.

properties.

assistance."

Quester apologised and acknowledged the "frustration many of you will feel at hearing this news," and that underpayments were "unintentional but should not have occurred."

Swinburne NTEU Branch President Dr Julie Kimber stated: "the NTEU raised several issues over Swinburne's payroll practices with the Wage Inspectorate in 2022."

"We urge the Fair Work Ombudsman to investigate why the University has only just notified this issue despite being aware of the problems for over two years."

"Given this wilful inaction, those responsible must be held to account." Kimber said. In reference to the University's self-directed inquiry through the financial services firm KPMG, and the fact that the University brought allegations of wage theft directly to Fair Work, Kimber stated: "a voluntary selfreport should not be a get-out-of-jail free

Kimber also noted that the Vice-Chancellor recently "got a \$250,000 private ensuite built for her," whilst "responsible for multi-million dollar

New report: no Australian rentals are affordable on Youth Allowance

Sydney's inner suburbs. SRC President

Harrison Brennan lamented the report's

findings, telling Honi Soit that they

reflect "what students' have known all

along, that housing in this country is an

unaffordable commodity, accessible only

said "it entails intervention. We need a

rent freeze, we need rent caps, and we

need the Labor government to start

building affordable public housing en-

for the Youth Allowance. Lola is a former

University of Sydney student who had to

discontinue her studies, being unable to

balance the cost of education with rent

Allowance due to her parent's tax bracket.

Below the age of 22, Youth Allowance

eligibility is determined by parental

income, though exemptions exist, such

Centrelink and eligibility for government

funding, I struggle to make my rent by

myself. I have also had to forgo any hopes

of studying if I want to live out of home,

simply because I can't afford to work less

"Due to the closed nature of

as if one is in a registered relationship.

Lola is not eligible for the Youth

Not all young Australians are eligible

Speaking to the solution, Harrison

to the most affluent."

masse to fix this crisis."

and other expenses.

wage theft."

Demanding immediate action, the NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes stated: "It's infuriating and unacceptable that university staff keep suffering wage theft despite our union highlighting more than \$170 million in underpayments across Australia."

XXX

"Federal and state governments must pull unaccountable vice-chancellors into line for this shocking behaviour that is leaving workers millions of dollars out of

"The explosion of insecure work and broken governance system is fuelling the systemic wage theft plaguing public universities."

Vice Chancellor Pascale Quester has assured affected staff they will receive "full remediation, together with interest and superannuation... as soon as possible," that they are "working constructively" with the Fair Work Commission and other regulators, including the NTEU. The University has announced its commitment to "ongoing full pay compliance".

\$2,245. Last year, indexation reached a record 7.1% meaning some students had their debt go up even after substantial repayments. The rate has been retrospectively lowered to 3.2% and students will have the difference credited to their account.

"This will wipe out around \$3 billion in student debt from more than three million Australians," said Education Minister Jason Clare in a statement.

"We are doing this and going further. We will backdate this reform to last year. This will wipe out what happened last year and make sure it never happens again," Clare said.

The Greens have been pressuring Labor for months to scrap indexation in the budget to provide more immediate relief to younger people. Teal Independent MP Monique Ryan and other members of the crossbench have also been pressuring the government to do more for younger voters.

"It's unacceptable for young people Ryan's petition, started months ago, calling on the government to modernise HECS has gained over 270,000 signatures. She has been calling on the government to do more to help younger generations whose HECS debt has prevented them from breaking them

The cost of housing was cited by Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neill in December when unveiling reforms to the international student intake. Like Leong, Chambers emphasised the need for government investment, noting that the report found the Government to spend eight times more on supporting investors than on building housing

currently to be an independently living student working part time in Sydney if you are not on Centrelink." Jenny Leong, Greens MP for

than I do. It is not feasible or possible

Newtown, told this masthead that "[w]e must radically rethink the way we provide housing and implement solutions that would provide immediate relief to those struggling: capping and controlling rents, massively investing in new public housing, and tightening regulations to ensure 'affordable housing' is genuinely affordable forever."

to be facing a lifetime of excessive rents and long-term insecurity because the politicians who make the laws for renters are more interested in handing out gifts to big investors and developers through tax incentives and other concessions."

This is the first stage of reforms the government is planning to implement in response to the Accord Report.

them off," she said.

into the job and housing market.

"Yet over the past year they have

paid off only \$1,200. In other words,

hundreds of thousands of Australians

with a HECS debt are either treading

water or seeing their HECS debts

increase despite working hard to pay

Rally against men's violence at **Parliament House**

Iris Brown

On Sunday April 28, thousands gathered to march to Parliament House at Commonwealth Park, the last of the seventeen rallies in Australia over the weekend to demand action on male

violence against women.

Prime Minister Albanese was given the microphone after the crowd shouted for him to speak. The PM claimed that his office had asked to speak but was denied. Sarah Williams and the What Were You Wearing (WWYW) team denied this at the time and have addressed it publicly since, revealing that the PM's office actually stated Albanese was more than happy not to speak and just be in attendance. This caused Williams to

cry, which he noticed but continued to

Albanese has since received a mass criticism for his behaviour at the rally. Williams released a statement late on Sunday night, describing the PM's actions as an abuse of power and display of entitlement.

Statistically speaking, two more women will be killed in Australia by the end of this week.

Entering the (soap)boxing ring: 2024 USU Soapbox recap

Sandra Kallarakkal and Angus McGregor throw some punches.

USU Board took to the stage at Manning by a panel of moderators. Bar to convince students they deserved

aligned candidate Harshita Bhandari of campaigners and USU staff, each Naz Sharifi, PULP editor Huw Bradshaw, the unique issues facing international hours before the Soapbox took place, the candidate gave a two minute opening and our own Honi Soit editor Sandra students, how to make the union more remaining nine candidates contesting the statement before being asked questions Kallarakkal asking questions.

USU Director of Debates Will Price union could best assist students during a be improved.

After the drop out of former NLS- their vote. In front of a crowd made up chaired the debate with USU President cost of living crisis, the best ways to assist

inclusive, and how the governance of the Key issues discussed included how the board as well as clubs and societies could

In their opening remarks, all side and evaluate all their and the over reliance on student existing venues and events, Ethan cut and Dwyer suggested a full of the candidates argued that existing partnerships to ensure volunteers. She also suggested Floyd (Switchroots) and Zhang financial audit. However, external expanding the USU's role as a they were getting the best deal. FoodHub could expand its suggested allowing marginalised audits already take place, and service provider was essential He argued his experience as a offerings to include other groups on campus to access USU the rhetoric of some candidates to help students tackle the cost chartered accountant made him essentials such as toiletries. Phan rewards for free and providing assumed there was a pile of of living crisis. While lowering well placed to take on this role. Vu (Independent) also suggested equity tickets for USU events money not currently being used. the cost of food on campus He did not, however, point to improvements noting the long respectively. and expanding subsidies are any specific changes he would queues to use the service. universally supported ideas, make to suppliers or the current Angus Fisher (NLS) argued explaining how they would fund cost the union money, Floyd themselves with more specific

needed to focus on the supply lack of fresh fruit and vegetables

that key to solving the issues with these policies. James Dwyer disputed that it was an overall Georgia Zhang (Switchroots), FoodHub was expanding the (Unity) and Floyd pointed out loss, pointing out that investing knowledge of the USU's existing drawing on her experience as a hours it was open and suggested that the USU could fight for in First Nations businesses and FoodHub volunteer, was able to the USU further subsidise GP more constable SSAF grants. community organisations would Homsany point to very specific issues with and Pharmacy services in the Floyd argued that the new CEO pay off in the long term. (Independent) argued the USU the current program including a USU run Wentworth Building.

Michael Bromley, who was in In terms of accessing the audience, should take a pay

Candidates spent less time surrounding divestment would

Four of the candidates in multiple countries taught them expressed public support for the communication initiatives. These be paired with an older Viegas (Independent), Daniel diversity and inclusion, very the USU was and what they when similar efforts had failed in from a reliance on student Park (Independent), and Shirley few candidates provided a did. She suggested translating the past and her other policy of volunteers. Further, the crowd (Zixuan) Zhang (Independent) specific vision for how to engage USU messages into languages creating cultural exchanges was audibly sighed at the suggestion argued that it was important international students and the other than English and creating to have international student specific problems they face. USU accounts on social media

contesting the election are how to reach out to students not Fair Fares campaign. international students which traditionally involved in campus Zhang argued that the key questioned under pressure she with their transition to university.

four also argued their experience candidates have at some point and WeChat would address international students would a fair go."

issue was a lack of communication was unable to explain how this While not an inherently bad idea, Besides broad calls for and understanding of what policy would be implemented the policy suffers, like others, representation on the Board. All Commendably, almost all of the platforms like Whatsapp a 'Buddy Program' where Homsany summarised as "having

are promising ideas but when international student to help Homsany is proposing taught 'Australian' values which

The candidates had a wide the average student on campus a person[...]who brings changes." principles. When asked how range of views of how political was apolitical and not attached to Fisher, Zhang and Floyd she would engage students not these ideas were empty promises or factional the union should any faction. However, when asked on the other hand, talked up familiar with student politics due to the corporate nature of be and to what extent it should by Honi whether her executive their left wing credentials as in her revamped environment the board, Floyd argued that advocate for and take public position as International Student key to their policy platform and consent week programs left wing candidates had a duty positions on political issues. Officer in the Sydney University vision. Fisher pushed for the she proposed an expanded to make their case within the Traditionally, the USU has been Law Society (SULS) would cause largely accepted pipe dream of advertising campaign, more USU USU and he was accountable a distinctly corporate body in a conflict of interest if Vu were mandatory student unionism staff, and expanded collaboration to students as opposed to

comparison to the more activist elected — considering SULS and when pressed if policies with the SRC. argued their independence and President, Secretary, Treasurer Fisher responded by affirming experience as a First Nations argued for reviewing investments separation from campus politics and Equity Officer from running that putting students first was activist and SRC councillor, to make sure they reflected the was a benefit. When asked a for Board — she did not provide political, defending his record as he argued the University had values of the whole student body question from an anonymous a clear answer. Vu pointed to her an SRC counsellor. independent-running candidates platform to her SULS position, SRC SASH Officers this year, anti-racist platform includes a investments while also refusing to being managed or supported by though she has received support proposed an environment mutual aid campaign, renaming give a straight answer on whether politically aligned individuals, from fellow SULS executives, and and sustainability review and buildings like Wentworth, and a he supported BDS principles Homsany said that his "politics" stated that if elected the other committed to implementing broad divestment policy which when pressed by Bradshaw.

recently proposed a change to like his graffiti tunnel rave

Floyd had the most radical Homsany and Vu both their constitution which bar the matched his activist vision, vision. Drawing on his lived between the two camps. He to come to terms with itself but did not give any specific regarding running for Board on a separate Zhang, who is one of the as a colonial institution. His examples of unacceptable were his policies." Vu argued that directors would "work with me as BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanction) also adheres to BDS principles.

encouraging staff members to mention of staff volunteers, Park

Increasing accessibility and Plan (DIAP) that is set to be commitment to working together willing [to engage] if the cause BetterHelp". Responding to a key policy platform for the within this year. majority of candidates, with Viegas, when questioned by Park was pressed by both volunteer. On matters of training, stated that many tutors who he **d** to *Disabled Honi* outlining their injured on the job, responded further overreliance on student "training workshops" and referral rapport with students and a

inclusion on campus was a developed and consulted on with disabled people and being is positive" and also spoke to follow-up question regarding his

"one with them."

several focusing specifically on Honi on her failure in her DIAP PULP and Honi on his flagship safety and liability — especially had spoken to said they "had no disability access and services. All vision statement to consider policy initiative — a student-run in the handling of more serious platform to engage personally candidates, with the exception disabled USU staff and labour USU counselling service. When mental health concerns — with students". The link between of Fisher, submitted statements rights for staff who may be asked about the initiative causing Park stated he would employ academics wanting to have more vision for the upcoming USU with broad puff statements about volunteers, Park responded by systems, and would "engage with counselling service is tenuous." Disabilities Inclusion Action disability inclusion, affirming her saying "a lot of students are existing support networks like

Considering the limited speaking time Soapbox audience are candidates' own of these nine hopefuls will gain the six and amount of questions that can be campaigners and not prospective voters, it coveted Board Director seats. Head on out Voting will take place online from Monday asked, it is difficult to discern candidate is hard to gauge their popularity.

policy platforms as a whole. Additionally, With two candidates already having them out and make up your own mind. also considering that the majority of the dropped out, it is now left to be seen which

to Eastern Avenue in the next week to hear May 6 to Friday May 10.

All USU members are eligible to vote.

|||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = ||| = || = || = ANALYSIS

Adolescent allegiance: Unravelling the mysteries of baby cults

Emily Bentancort considers her childhood.

When you think of a cult, you straight away think of extremists like Charles Manson or members of The Children of God Cult. We never seem to question if youth groups are just 'baby' cults in

One thing that stuck with me while watching a documentary, How to Become a Cult Leader (2023), is that cult leaders often impact those who are most vulnerable within society. Specifically, young adults and adolescents who struggle with identity, self-esteem and free will. Charles Manson wholeheartedly used this method by targeting teenage runaways and other 'lost' souls. Similarly, youth groups use welcoming gestures and tactics for members to feel as if they 'belong' to this group and must follow 'all' practised faith-based ideologies. It comes to the question of why we don't call the local youth group a 'baby cult' or a place for 'coming-of-age culties.'

Growing up, I also went to a youth group organised by the Catholic Church. But surely my group was not like that? We didn't brainwash people and call it 'enlightenment', nor did we force our opinions on others — at least, that's what I thought until I looked over at my poor friend's reaction when I was invited to this group as we sang "Shine, Jesus Shine" to her. Fuck.

And just like that, those red-tinted glasses were thrown off. The iconic youth group cheese pizza was no longer iconic anymore, and the religious chants no longer sounded like I was in a community.

Sometimes you need to see things from another perspective in order to realise how warmed that reality is. To explore these issues, I made

a survey regarding youth group experiences where participants anonymously provided their experiences of both "enlightenment" and being "brainwashed". While it is important to acknowledge that some have had a welcoming and great experience, I am here to address the tainted childhoods that were induced by toxic, harmful and self-loathing narratives.

One anonymous participant, who went to a Pentecostal youth group, reflects on their experience of brainwashing having "Worship Nights" and a youth leader who would "dim the lights and sing a repetitive Jesus chorus with the same four lines over and over again. Another youth pastor would come around and put his hands on me and scream at me in tongues".

Another iteration of cultish behaviour is the use of fear to manipulate members into doing certain acts. When these survey members were asked about any experiences with religious youth organisations using harmful tactics, many answered with "the 'devil' as the means of scaring us into doing the right thing". Such "right things" meant to practise intense faith-based ideologies and to have others join the "path to

Normalisation of tactics why was it never questioned?

In retrospect, the purpose and cult-tactics of youth groups were never questioned as they are often associated with religious organisations. Although Australia declares itself a secular country, religious institutions have played a large role in our society since the beginning of colonisation. Over time, cult tactics behaviours have been used consistently and thus became the normalisation of cult behaviours within certain groups. And with that association, there is a normalisation for young kids to go to the Church's hall with much older 'youth leaders' and speak in tongues.

It has become apparent that this normalisation has become an issue; it has turned into an epidemic where previous youth members who have now turned into adults are coming forth to discuss their unsettling experiences and/or religious traumas. This implies that religious organisations should only provide 'community' groups for adults, as many kids are too young to declare their devotion to these religious beliefs.

In all honesty — I think we were all too young to be a part of some organisation that promoted oppressive, homophobic, and terrifying dogmatic beliefs, as well as sex prejudice.

To this day, I still remember one childhood friend who converted to Mormonism (also recognised as Latterday Saints) just so they could join the Morman youth group and talk to "the hot Mormon guys" — her words, not mine. In that scenario, do we think it is a good idea for young girls to be a part of religious institutions and to be doctrine with certain dogmas in the name of interacting with "hot religious guys"? The answer should be no.

'Thank God' these youth groups aren't encouraging the murder of celebrities — because then these committed youth groups would be killing it. And 'thank God' we do not see the extremes of the youth surrendering their identity as an individual to be a part of the whole. However, the idea that youth groups do use cult tactics to both lure young individuals and provide a zero-exit strategy should be recognised.

Cult tactic 1 Troian Horse

One common cult tactic that is used is 'The Trojan Horse', where youth groups have used innocuous events as a platform to introduce ideological or religious concepts. Similar to cults, true intentions are never given to its members. Often newcomers are told that the youth group is hosting a 'movie night', 'pizza night' or even a 'party', but are shocked when it comes to reality. I have never recovered from the time I had invited my friend to one of those 'movie nights': we were told that we would watch Finding Nemo (2003) but it was miraculously missing and we watched God's Not Dead (2014) instead.

Cult tactic 2 **Transactions**

Within this cult tactic of the Trojan horse comes another — the conditioned belief of transactions. These groups have often lured young people with free food in return for God's full salvation. I believe this is ethically questionable. In our context of cult behaviours, cults have incorporated transactional concepts into their practices such as quidpro-quo relationships and emotional

Another survey participant disclosed this transaction behaviour in their first time going to a youth group: "It was a very strange experience — I was only really there for the company and free food". As a previous member of a youth group, the discourse was always focused on "God loves you, here's some free food, now help our community".

Youth groups have conditioned members from a young age to believe that life itself is a transaction. But the transaction of chanting intense dogmatic beliefs to receive free food in return has been overplayed.

Isolation and zero-exit strategy

Have you ever heard anyone refer to their "second family" or "community" as their youth group?

If not, you might be surprised to find that it's a common sentiment, due in part to many youth groups employing social and emotional manipulation tactics to impart to their members a sense of "us versus them". These "zeroexit" and inferred isolation strategies are expressed within snarky comments and are disparaging towards those who are outside this group. It leaves

members who have been brought up by these religious groups to feel a sense of urgency and dependency on their group

Some may argue that these youth groups are virtuous, building a sense of community and close-knit friendships, but my question to you is this: what happens to those friendships if a person leaves or is cast out of a youth group?

In most cases, these 'withdrawers are merely categorised as 'others' and amicably parted from. In the worst cases, they are completely ostracised from a community that once promised to be a safe space for self-expression and

Knowing this, and being completely dependent on your youth group, it becomes very hard to leave these communities. One survey participant who grew up attending a youth group shared their last encounter: "the last time was painful, more so because I no longer enjoyed it, but also because I was struggling to let go because it's all I have known my entire life".

The ending

I do not want to say that youth groups are cults. However, most youth groups do fall into the category of 'cultlike behaviour' by using the Trojan Horse and the actions emphasising 'outsiders vs youth members' — as such, it does become alarming.

Maybe we were too young to be introduced to such religious organisations that pressured us to be their future and spread alarming dogmas about sex, the queer community and "allegations" about anyone in their appointed church. It's time that we become our own individuals.



Art: Lauren Maccoll

HONI SOIT 2024 WEEK 11, SEMESTER 1

Why I am an atheist

Ravkaran Grewal reconnects without his faith.

"Is it due to vanity that I do not believe in the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God?"

The notion of atheism today invokes shallow teenage rebellion and dogmatic atheism à la Christopher Hitchens or Richard Dawkins: in essence, smug individuals with an inflated sense of self. In highschool, I too fell into the trap of replacing a belief in God with faith in my own ego. It was not until I, while researching for my History Extension project, came across Bhagat Singh's seminal essay *Why I Am An Atheist* that I started to develop a deeper understanding of what atheism could mean.

Inside of South Asia, Bhagat Singh is one of the most popular anticolonial agitators and thinkers — rivalling even Gandhi's stardom. In December 1928, Singh assassinated a British police officer and, a few months later, threw smoke-bombs in the Delhi Legislative Assembly before awaiting arrest. While in jail, Singh staged hunger strikes, debated Gandhi and wrote extensively. At just age 23, Bhagat Singh was hanged by the British, being remembered today as a martyr for the anticolonial struggle and the progenitor for a revolutionary movement that challenged Gandhi's liberalism.

Written during his time in jail, Why I Am An Atheist serves as a response to criticism from his fellow anticolonial comrades who had suggested that Singh had become an atheist because of fame and arrogance. In it, Singh charts his philosophical development towards atheism and ends with a critique of religion. Singh's essay has remained one of the most popular of his works, serving as an alternative to Anglo-American dogmatic atheism and inspiring a lineage of South Asian atheistic thought. More recently, the essay counters the cooption of Singh's image by the Hindu nationalist right.

"Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith."

Growing up it was difficult to reconcile my family's Sikh beliefs, attending a Christian highschool while also not believing in God. Many non-white non-believers are familiar with the intrinsic link between religion and culture; with self-identifiers such as 'cultural Sikh' and 'cultural Muslim' serving as an expression of irreligiosity in conjunction with cultural pride. The Anglo notion of atheism is largely a Protestant concept that presents a clean separation between religion and other realms such as culture and society.

According to historian J.D. Elam, Singh's context — coming from a Sikh family and active in the Indian Independence movement, witnessing the horrors of the Great War and the hope of the Bolshevik revolution — helped cultivate a "form of pessimistic utopianism". As such, "'atheism' was the name given to colonial doubt and anticolonial unknowingness — practices that resuscitated the secular human in the absence of metaphysical assuredness." While not always explicit, Singh's main point is that the anticolonial agitator must revoke belief in both transcendent truth and self-knowledge — to reject all forms of "metaphysical assuredness".

It was not for vanity that Singh became an atheist, but through critique: "study to enable yourself to face the arguments advanced by the opposition.

"You go and oppose the prevailing faith, you go and criticise a hero, a great man, who is generally believed to be above criticism because he is thought to be infallible... Because Mahatamaji is great, therefore none should criticise him. Because he has risen above, therefore everything he says — it may be in the field of Politics or Religion, Economics or Ethics — is right."

While Singh does not provide said criticism in this text, it is possible to infer it through his atheism. Gandhi's notion of satyagraha, translated as soulforce, aligns the notions of 'truth' and 'soul' with political action. As the two offered competing political programs for independence, one can understand Singh's atheism, which rejects self-

nebollon against the lung is always a sin awarding to every religion rebollion against the leing is strong a sin awarding to every religion rebollion against the leing is always a religion or rebollion against the leing is aways a sin awarding the leing is way a sin awarding the leing is always considered to every religion rebollion against to every religion to every religion to every religion as in awarding the leing is always a sin awarding the leing is always a sin awarding the leing is always a rebollion gradiation or rebollion gradiation or rebollion gradiation gradiation

Study to arm yourself with arguments in favour of your cult ... No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult." Singh's study included the revolutionary thought of Bakunin, Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and so on. While they were all atheists, their critique extended beyond religion to all forms of mysticism. Indeed, the disbelief in God represents the rejection of ultimate authority which — in the colonial context — is intrinsically linked to the colonial authority: "British rule is here not because God wills it but because they possess power and we do not dare to oppose them". Singh disavows the transcendent truth of not only religion and colonial rule but also to anticolonial

knowledge and the metaphysical 'soul', as a challenge to Gandhi's satyagraha. The challenge is not that truth does not exist (in a postmodern sense) but rather that there is no universal truth. This is one of the fundamental epistemological insights of dialectical materialism: theories of reality, through their application, will be critiqued and replaced ad infinitum — nothing is eternal or unchanging. Far from the dogmatic nature of Western atheism, Singh's anticolonial philosophy embraces critique while rejecting infallibility:

"Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item, he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith.... His reasoning can be mistaken, wrong, misled and sometimes fallacious. But he is liable to correction because reason is the guiding star of his life. But mere faith and blind faith is dangerous: it dulls the brain and makes a person reactionary."

"A short life of struggle, with no such magnificent end, shall in itself be the reward if I have the courage to take it in that light.

That is all."

without metaphysics, without first principles, is essential in a revolutionary programme that seeks to make the world anew. Like all revolutionaries, Singh struggled to realise an ideal — sacrificing himself for an imagined future of independence Notions of sacrifice, martyrdom and fantasy, while familiar within the Sikh tradition, do not sit comfortably with the standard notion of atheism. Instead, Singh recognises the dialectical unity of the ideal and reality: "the most important thing was the clear conception of the ideal for which we were to fight". It is only through facing reality in all its hardship, without the cushion of belief, that one can set out to change it. Absolute devotion to the cause is the only principle needed by a revolutionary, everything else is to be constantly thought out anew. His atheism, while tested at times, underscored his commitment to the struggle for independence: "I know, the moment the rope is

fitted round my neck and rafters removed from under my feet, that will be the final moment. That will be the last moment. I, or to be more precise, my soul, as interpreted in metaphysical terminology, shall be finished there... A short life of struggle, with no such magnificent end, shall in itself be the reward if I have the courage to take it in that light. That is all. With no selfish motive, or desire to be awarded here or hereafter, (in fact) quite disinterestedly have I devoted my life to the cause of independence, because I could not do otherwise. The day we find a great number of men and women with this psychology who cannot devote themselves to anything else than the service of mankind and emancipation of the suffering humanity that day shall inaugurate the era of

Inquilab Zindabad ("long live revolution") — the chant that Bhagat Singh popularised during his arrest — should, if we are to stand for progress, reverberate eternally not only in society but in our minds and thinking as well. Singh's atheism — the rejection of ultimate authority and transcendent truth — is necessary in any revolutionary thought.

Why we do good things: Volunteering in a faithless nation

Lotte Weber soul searches.

When was the last time you hiked up your sleeves and ladled out soup at your local community centre? Can you recall when you phoned your ageing family member? Perhaps the last time you rescued a cat from a tree?

Volunteering is a dying act in Australian society. Despite a federal government investment of \$10 million into the volunteering sector in August last year, a mass volunteer shortage continues. In an age where young people have never been more aware and engaged with social and political issues, reports from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal volunteering rates to be on a disheartening downwards trajectory. At the same time secularism is on the rise. Could the two be connected? Religion is often presented as a key motivator for mission-

associated community work. Why do we perform selfless deeds if not for our religion? it merely to plump resumes sleep easier? Where ethics inherited if not from scripture?

latest national census, while Christianity remained Australia's favourite faith group at 43.9%, its numbers decreased by over one million individuals. Australia is

Australia is also becoming more religiously diverse, and a staggering ten million Australians reported having "no religion", not including atheist and agnostic parties. The sharpest drop in religious affiliation was young people aged between 18 and 25. Increasingly, headlines refer to this group as the "nones", distinct from atheism due to their neutral, rather removed, stance.

"We've been given the tools to be more free-thinking and decide what 'right' and 'wrong' is for ourselves."

According to Dr Renae Barker, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Western Australia Law School, the relationship between public, state and religion has social, legal, and political implications. State-religion relationships "exist on a spectrum from theocracy where religion and state are fused, through to abolitionist regimes where the state actively seeks to destroy religious belief." Popularly conceived as a secular state, but with longstanding Christian roots, Australia remains nestled in the middle. I interviewed a number of students at the University of Sydney about their personal experiences grappling with moral ideals in a secular nation. One agnostic, second-generation student explained, "I inherited my values from my parents, and them from their

parents." Another student, an activist

stationed at the University of Sydney

Gaza Solidarity encampment, shared

the sentiment that "a lot of religions

operate on a basis of fear, and that's

not something our generation buys into

as much." They said that, as a younger

generation, "we've been given the tools

to be more free-thinking and decide

what 'right' and 'wrong' is for ourselves."

volunteering? Since the COVID-19

pandemic, volunteering organisations

and charities across Australia have

experienced an irreversible drop in

community engagement. While around

one third of people aged between 40

and 54 engage in volunteering, just one

in five below the age of 24 participate.

According to the Australian Institute

for Health and Wellness (AIHW), these

figures dropped over the past decade,

from over 34% of adults actively

volunteering in 2006 to less than 25%

What does this mean for

participation in recent years. One study showed that while religious "nones" are less active in their community than religious individuals, atheists and agnostics contribute at similar levels. Indeed, indifferent and apolitical groups seem to volunteer the least.

"Speaking out

"Speaking out against injustice is my faith".

At the University of Sydney, attitudes largely reflect these statistics. Non-religious students who I spoke to report not having the time to volunteer, stating that while volunteering is something

respected humanitarian aid provider, religious neutrality is a contentious issue. Heralding the catch-cry: "we don't walk away when the cameras stop running", the Red Cross oversaw some 18,450 volunteers per their 2023 annual review. Hosting a Youth Advisory Committee of "diverse young people" as well as First Nations members, the organisation prides itself on diversity. Despite taking these steps, we are yet to witness any tangible change toward the broader culture and upper management of the volunteering sector. They have also received international acclaim for their neutrality, a facet which has been constantly challenged since their formation in 1863. However, while the Australian Red Cross outwardly maintains a claim of being

independent of government and with no political, religious or cultural affiliations", it operates in many nations offering tax exemptions for religious organisations including the United States, Turkey and several members of the European Union. In the United States specifically, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, meaning religious neutrality may not be as fully realised as the organisation would like to advertise. An unclear history leaves some questions of past ICRC religious affiliation unanswered.



they've always been interested in, they simply "don't have the time during Semester". In correlation with a decrease in volunteering and faith, the AIHW also reports Australians having less time to devote to "recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction". Yet for politically active students, a broader problem was the struggle to find organisations and charities they could

Community service has long been associated with missionary work and somewhat problematic narratives surrounding the assertion of white saviourism and religious assimilation. 'Altruist' has become synonymous with 'do-gooder' and in-need communities are taking a hit due to volunteer shortages. Students looking to find authentic, uncompromised organisations to volunteer with are repeatedly met with challenges finding secular charities. At the Australian Red Cross, a well-

Additionally, whilst receiving religious tax-exemptions, 2023 saw the acquisition of \$95 million in "donations and philanthropic gifts".

On campus, several collectives exist to attempt to reclaim a platform for secular, youth volunteering such as Effective Altruism, Random Acts of Kindness, and the Food Co-Op among others. More excitingly, student activism offers a safe space for active, grassroots changemaking to function without the shackles of a traditional charity bureaucracy. In fact, if there's anything inferable from the waves of pro-Palestinian protest taking over the University's campus, it is that young people's engagement with social justice is alive and well, even if not motivated by missions of faith. Another student protestor told me, "it makes you feel like you're doing something good and just puts things into perspective. Speaking out against injustice is my faith".

Art: Bipasha Chakraborty

Who's fucking who?

Simone Maddison is on her knees.

Content warning: this article includes graphic descriptions of sex. It also includes discussions of challenging topics including the ways gendered hierarchies, power, violence, misogyny and discrimination manifest through sex.

Make no mistake — this article does not pass the Bechdel Test. Its earliest inception is marred by original sin, born from a conversation between women about men. "I used to fake my orgasms all the time", confided one of my friends after one too many white wines in the dim candlelight of a Newtown bar. "But I've stopped doing that now. It's just not worth it." Across the table, my lesbianfriend plugged her ears and shook her head.

While I agree with my friend's sentiment wholeheartedly, I cannot help but remember the times I had let male fantasies overwhelm and undermine my own preferences; for example, when I let a man take my pair of black underwear home with him after sex, despite the fact they were my favourite and I had to catch the train home. Why, as a leftist and educated young woman, did I let this happen? And if I had, how many people like me

However naive or embarrassing, these thoughts represent important issues related to sex amongst leftwing Australian young people: we're having it, we prioritise enjoyment, but we remain tied up by asymmetrically gendered power dynamics and undeniably heterosexual standards. When we cannot fulfil what is expected of us, we revert to traditionally religious feelings of guilt, shame and failure. Alternatively, we buy into supposedly liberatory discourses prioritising sexual empowerment. To be sure, we have come a long way. But pleasure is rarely ever just that — increasingly, it is being disguised as a world of pain.

The altars at which we worship

Recent studies have shown that young Australians are sexually active and regularly discuss intimacy with their partners. Just under half of those completing secondary school also reported ever having sexual intercourse in the National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health, with 77% talking about using a condom and 36% talking about avoiding STIs during sex. The 2018 Household, their relationships. Furthermore, 22% one's partner orgasm, levels Income and Labour Dynamics Survey agreed that there is "no harm" in men of reciprocity around sexual (HILDA) found that young people aged making sexist jokes about women in needs, the impacts of gendered between 15 and 24 were "very satisfied" with their intimate relationships, returning an average satisfaction score of 8.5 out of 10. Oral sex remains the most commonly reported sexual experience, followed by penetrative define 'left-wing' ideology according vaginal sex.

It is significant, then, that many Australian young people are reportedly moving towards the political left and that this mobility is occurring

across gendered lines. During the 2022 Federal Election, the Australian Election Study found that only one in four voters under the age of forty voted for the Coalition. In particular, 67% of those born after 1996 voted for either the Greens or Labor — almost twice as many women voted for the Greens men. Not only does this represent a historic low in the Coalition's level of support amongst young voters, but it also marks a shift away from trends in the 1990s which saw women more inclined to vote for the Coalition, and men for the Labor Party. While young men remain more conservative than their female counterparts, they are generally more progressive than men of previous generations at the same stage of life. Men are also still more likely to prioritise stereotypically 'masculine' issues like economic management and taxation while voting, while women tend to focus on climate change, education and health.

"A lot of the time heterosexual cisgender men feel entitled to the female body. They are enabled by the patriarchy to be selfcentred and in control, so this carries over into sexual behaviour."

So, how do these 'left-wing' politics manifest amongst Australian young people? Despite greater emphasis rhetoric around 'equality' and 'empowerment' in intimate relationships, the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) found that these gendered differences persist. Very few respondents aged between 16 and 24 supported rigid gender roles and stereotypes; only 5% agreed that a woman earning more than her male partner is "not good for the relationship". However, almost one third of young people believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of front of their male friends.

Sex on-campus

Of course, these statistics only provide very narrow insights: they to mainstream electoral politics, they focus exclusively on heterosexual relationships, and do not interrogate the broader myths, cultures and intricacies affecting sexual politics.

While we can recognise the same kinds of gendered power in our own relationships, the details, feelings and repercussions of the behaviours they produce are continuously dismissed and underrepresented.

respondents noted that heterosexual

cisgender men feel "entitled to the

female body", and are therefore more

likely to be "self-centred" and seek

"control." Another wrote that sex

is often spoken about through the

"prism of weaponisation", either in

"highly romanticised terms which

become gossip fodder" or in "highly

suppressed terms" which leave people

who choose to abstain from sex "out

of the conversation". Overall, it seems

that we are letting other people do the

radical history and contemporary culture in activist spaces in the House of Representatives than at the University of Sydney represents a unique space to critique and correct these deficiencies. Members of the Students Representative Council (SRC) — and, by extension, the contributors to *Honi Soit* — have long been engaged in more nuanced left-wing political debates around anti-colonial, feminist, sexual, socialist and queer liberation. In the 1970s, it was leftist students who won the introduction of a "Women

> and Philosophy" course at the University and stopped the publication of sexist car advertisements in the paper; today, activists in the same spaces lead the fight for a free Palestine on equal terms.

Of course, the University as a whole is continuously marked by high levels of misogyny; according to the 2018 Red Zone Report, female students living in the residential colleges are 66% more likely to experience rape on-campus when compared to the national average. Furthermore, leftwing spaces are notoriously marred by systemic issues of weaponised incompetence, casual sexism, harassment and the reinforcement of gendered labour divisions.

The inequality of ecstacy

Consequently, survey addressing the insidious forms of gendered power, discrimination and exploitation we experience in our private lives to this year's editors and reporters for Honi Soit. Composed of seven questions, this survey explored the ways sexual politics manifest in the bedroom (and other intimate settings) for self-proclaimed 'left-wing' or 'progressive' couples of all sexualities. In particular, it targeted feelings of obligation around making conditioning in relationships and broader tropes used to talk about pleasure inside and outside of relationships.

"Women often aren't used to their pleasure being prioritised."

The results show that gendered power remains one of the largest "completely guided by a partner", or determinants of a sexual relationship. letting cultural expectations dictate It is often heteronormative, held by a male partner, and overrides the These asymmetries set the scene material needs of those involved. Many

for more specific behaviours during sex. For women, the consumption of pornography that is "exploitative of women" and "catered mainly towards men" within a relationship means that a male partner's understanding of female pleasure is "distorted and misinformed". For queer men, associations between 'femininity and bottoming' and 'masculinity and topping' mean that partners "are usually not very openminded to trying a role that they don't feel like they fit into". While some respondents felt that their sexual needs

talking — whether that means being were "met" and "reciprocated in most cases" despite these dynamics, others felt their partners were "selfish" and cared more about their own needs. Some were able to work through these issues via "communication and habit-building during sex", but most attempts at reciprocation still did not feel like "the pleasure was personalised

> "Most times there were attempts to meet my needs but only in a box ticking kind of way. Fortunately they've all tried to

reciprocate it just never feels like the pleasure was personalised to me."

To cum or not to cum?

Orgasm was the largest point of contention in relationships raised by this survey. When asked if they feel obligated to make their sexual partner(s) orgasm, all respondents answered "yes". When they are unable to achieve this, they feel "sad", "disappointed" or "frustrated". heterosexual women, this also resulted in feeling "like a failure or that there is something wrong with me", or like "I am not pleasurable/ sexual enough". The same group also revealed that they have faked orgasms in the past, either "out of guilt", to "hurry it along", or to "get the other person closer to orgasm". the university students interviewed appear to have moved past an apprehension towards sexual indulgence associated with maintaining faith, they are nonetheless bound by familiar forms of nominally 'Christian' guilt and shame in the bedroom.

Misconceptions around orgasm also continue to permeate sex in young people's public and private lives. During sex, respondents explained that the myth "women never orgasm" is so widely accepted that it is never actually discussed in relationships let alone challenged. Instead, male partners will opt to

pleasure women first in what one heterosexual woman described as a tactic akin to "getting it out of the way", so that "penal pleasure would always always always last longer." Outside the bedroom, respondents confirmed that men regularly brag about being able to "orgasm in a woman without a condom", and for "making a woman orgasm from penetrative sex alone."

However, these issues were noticeably absent from the responses discussing queer experiences. One queer man noted that he has never faked an orgasm because "this is very hard to do, especially in a gay sex setting where it is something that people often look out for directly." Another lesbian revealed that she found it easier to rationalise her feelings about being unable to make a partner orgasm, stating that "you can blame yourself at first, but there are factors out of your control." While respondents also noted that the expectation for both women to orgasm in lesbian relationships "can create pressure", they also noted that there are far more heterosexual tropes that they have "100% had talks about with straight friends" but "never experienced first-hand."

Yet there is a significant body of academic literature explaining how and why orgasms are treated in this way within relationships. As scholars Sara B. Chadwick and Sari M. van Anders argue, women's orgasms have never been more visible in popular culture and medical discourses as "symbols of sexual liberation and satisfaction." However, a focus on how to give women orgasms, receive them, and make them more "frequent and mind-blowing" instead only serves men's sexuality. When a man tells his friend about the ways he can make his girlfriend cum, he is exercising ownership over her body in the most intimate way possible. When his friend responds with a similar story, he flexes his sexual prowess, boosts his ego and treats orgasm as a "masculinity achievement." The situation is not too dissimilar within queer relationships: according to psychologist Katherine L. Goldey, both heterosexual and lesbian women are more likely to view orgasms as a "nice bonus" and use their partner's pleasure as a proxy for their own.

Socialising sex

According to the young people I surveyed, this new iteration of male chauvinism is borne from more entrenched forms of binary gender conditioning in heterosexual relationships. Many female respondents had been taught that men supposedly "orgasm easily" through vaginal sex. This creates two issues. One heterosexual male respondent noted that this myth "has made people expect certain things of me", adding that it can be "difficult" to orgasm and that "lots of foreplay" is particularly enjoyable. However, some women regularly adopt a sense of "hyperfemininity and performance"

or accept male dominance over their sexuality as a "means of being more desirable." Others felt sex is "ultimately centred around male pleasure", and that "women aren't used to their pleasure being prioritised." This can be especially difficult for women who identify as asexual or do not want to have sex, as withholding intercourse is often "perceived as a bargaining chip which can be talked about by others, either in front of her behind her back."

A moment of reckoning

These results show that Australian young people are aware of the challenges they face in their sex lives. They can articulate and reconcile their feelings, but perhaps only within the confines of an anonymous online survey or amongst their closest friends. The problem, then, is that we are not communicating these seemingly universal issues with our sexual partners. We might choose to blame broad overarching sociocultural structures, rather than the hypocrisies of our own habits. We can ignore complicating factors, such as the existence of queer identities within heterosexual relationships, to avoid difficult conversations. We often forgive hurtful behaviour from our partners, like 'bragging to the boys', to keep the peace. But instead of making life easier, these decisions compromise our 'left-wing' values and further entrench gendered imbalances. Similar interrogation is also pertinent in transgender and gender diverse experiences, a limitation of this article due to identity and demographics of its respondents.

"Very few sexual partners have been able to meet my needs for sexual pleasure. **Majority of my** partners have been heterosexual cisgender men and I find them to be the most selfish in the bedroom and they mainly care about their pleasure and not yours."

In many ways, sex is our antichrist: it is powerful, euphoric, and at times antagonistic. I don't expect it, or anyone, to save us. But I do anticipate a serious reckoning before the Second

Art: Ella Thompson

HONI SOIT 2024 WEEK 11, SEMESTER 1

Punitive impact of police presence does not fix community insecurity

Imogen Sabey locks down on curfews.

On Tuesday March 26, young people in Alice Springs rioted following the death of an 18-year-old man, Kumanjayi Petrick, in a car crash on March 8. A youth curfew followed, but the prevalence of youth crime and social insecurity in Alice Springs is not new and cannot be resolved through the action taken by state authorities. Long-term action must involve community leaders cooperating with police on intervention programs to improve community perception of state authorities and establish sustainable and respectful methods of crime prevention. However, there remains a great deal of obscurity around the patterns and prevalence of youth violence — worsened by convoluted and reductive media narratives so the complex situation cannot be addressed without understanding the existing conditions.

In what media outlets have labelled a "kneejerk reaction", the government's response to the crisis with a curfew has raised questions over the legality and efficacy of temporary measures of control. The significant increase in the presence of armed police officers creates an intimidating and oppressing environment in the community. In an interview with The Guardian in 2023, Warlpiri elders from the Yuendumu community stated that the presence of officers in remote communities was a

"direct threat" to the community. Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves, a senior elder, said to the Guardian that "More funding for police means more police violence against our people."

Other news outlets including *The*

Sydney Morning Herald and The Guardian have been brushing over this crisis without considering the implications of a blanket curfew, with The National Indigenous Times citing "punitive measures such as curfews and increased police numbers often fail to address root causes of crime and instead funnel more people into the criminal justice system." Despite many outlets covering the riot and curfew, they have done so in little detail and without analysing the underlying issues facing the community which have contributed to this crisis including youth incarceration and a lack of resources allocated to communities. The Australian, for instance, reported on April 28 "Prime minister Anthony Albanese to return to crime-ridden Alice Springs," an article which placed emphasis on a list of crimes in the community without explaining why such crimes are so prevalent, dismissing Alice Springs as "crime-ridden." The Northern Territory government Youth Detention Census reported that the number of youths in detention during the second quarter of 2023-24 included 66 people on remand and 52 sentenced. The curfew briefly stopped youth crime, but it did

not involve community consultation Nick Espie from the Human Rights Law Centre said to SBS that "for many Aboriginal people, there's an inherent fear and apprehension when it comes to police... And this is what happens if we continue to only utilise police as the face of any response to the community safety issues. We can't just arrest our way out of

any sort of social crisis." The high number of youths in detention is due in part to the low age of criminal responsibility, which is currently 12 years old. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2022-2023 there were 754 youth offenders in the Northern Territory aged ten to 17. A campaign called #RaiseTheAge formed in 2020 enlisted thousands of supporters to petition the government, which culminated in a 2023 legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility from ten to 12. The campaign stated on their website that "locking away young children and removing them from their communities and families only does more damage.'

The Australian Institute of Criminology produced a Northern Territory Safe Streets Audit which investigated crime and safety concerns in urban communities. The report found that effective interventions to youth crime involved early schemes aimed at parents and young children, diversionary programs for at-risk youths,

and programs that involved Indigenous elders who were sensitive to Indigenous traditions and value systems, and specific to the needs of the youths participating in the programs. It also highlighted the importance of community involvement in early intervention programs and cooperation of police and communities when responding to crime and violence.

The curfew was put in place from March 27 to April 10, so that everyone under 18 was not permitted to be out without valid reason between 6pm-6am in the "high risk area" in the CBD and surrounding precinct. 58 additional police officers from throughout the NT were deployed in the CBD area, to enforce the curfew and to be "highly visible... to make this behaviour stop, or avoid it happening," according to NT Police Commissioner Michael Murphy.

The curfew reinforces a system of continuous punishment: rather than co-operating with community leaders to improve rehabilitation programs, it restricts freedom of movement for young people and deepens the already fractured relationship between young people and the justice system. It doesn't provide long-term solutions to crime or violence, and does not prioritise protecting children. Such measures cannot sustain communities or resolve the underlying causes of community

Unpacking the Lehrmann judgment for his "trauma-informed approach."

Martha Barlow and Ariana Haghighi note it up.

Alongside the media furore surrounding Bruce Lehrmann's defamation trial, many stereotypes about victim-survivors have reared their ugly head. Although Justice Lee's judgment has been iconised, this approach sweeps continuing issues under the rug and does not protect victim-survivors from the maelstrom of very public cases.

In the wake of a failed criminal trial, Lehrmann's defamation proceedings seemed to represent a final source of hope for achieving something resembling justice. Yet, a great barrier to justice lies in the fact that in civil trials the standard of proof is lower. In criminal trials, the judge and jury must be convinced of the truth "beyond a reasonable doubt," whereas in a civil trial, the standard is "on the balance of probabilities." Although the lower standard of proof appears positive for victim-survivors, this often is used as a reason to discredit victimsurvivors and suggest that the judgment cannot convey criminal guilt

However, this is not necessarily the case. Media law expert Peter Bartlett notes that defamation trials are notoriously pro-plaintiff as they proceed on the basis that the defamatory statements are false, which then places the burden on the defendant to prove the truth of the statements. This ultimately means that once the plaintiff has done the work satisfying the simpler elements (that it was published by a third party, it identified them, and it was defamatory), the far more difficult task of proving

the truth of what was said falls to the defendant, albeit to a lower standard than would be expected in a criminal

Dr Sarah Ailwood, a professor of law at the University of Wollongong, argues that this imbalanced burden exposes the inherently unequal nature of defamation. She describes the threat of being sued for defamation as a "perennial spoken and unspoken threat that hangs over women seeking to publicise their experiences of violence," calling for a reformation of defamation law that levels the playing field for women, media outlets, and journalists calling attention to sexual

The nature of the truth defence also means that any person or event at the centre of defamation proceedings must have their entire body of evidence, and every traumatic detail, relitigated and scrutinised afresh before a new court. Despite Brittany Higgins not being a party to these proceedings, it was her actions, her credibility, and her reputation that were once again on the line as she was dragged back onto the witness stand and forced once again to recount the details of her sexual assault.

Turning to the judgment itself, Justice Lee did an effective job of balancing the overwhelming media interest with his pursuit of the truth. In her statement in response to the judgment, Brittany Higgins shared that she did not agree with all of Justice Lee's findings, but thanked the judge

Exemplifying this was the agreed set of facts set out by Justice Lee, which recognised, amongst other things, "trauma has a severe impact on memory by splintering and fragmenting memories" and "inconsistency is often observed in reliable reports of sexual assault and is not ipso facto a measure of deception." The acknowledgment of how trauma impacts memory was crucial in a case where untruths and inconsistencies by the various parties were a hot-button issue. Justice Lee was also careful to distinguish Lehrmann's chaotic and inconsistent lies from Higgins', acknowledging not only that Higgins' memory was impacted by the events, but that any misrepresentations she did make were usually to make herself look better in the eyes of the police.

This could be construed as "victimblaming" if not read carefully. For example, Justice Lee characterises her as an "unsatisfactory witness" based on her inconsistent recollection. Other pieces of rhetoric, such as initially painting the pair as "two relatively young and immature staffers" need to be read with a keen eye to escape misconstruction.

Yet, whilst the judgment cannot be ignored as a sign of progress that potentially signals a new era for how survivors of sexual assault are treated by the courts, the words of a particular iudge do not constitute the kind of institutional change necessary to make it easier for survivors to come forward. Whilst somewhat vindicated in the courts, Brittany Higgins will likely never

escape the often cruel and relentless media storm that has followed her for the past five years. Some are still calling for her to be referred to ICAC over the compensation payment she received from the Commonwealth in 2022, meanwhile, Bruce Lehrmann is currently in the process of appealing the recent judgment which only continues the media barrage.

The judge's phrasing was also so significantly lauded by the media, to the extent that a woman's assault and consequential trauma were lost and trivialised. The popularised quote "Having escaped the lion's den, Mr Lehrmann made the mistake of going back for his hat", cleverly summarises the trope of powerful, guilty men pursuing defamation cases — but the media incorrectly sensationalises it as an indictment of Lehrmann as a rapist. Some media headlines reduce the judgment to a comedy set, with one Daily Telegraph article summarising the trial as, "Top zingers from Lehrmann defamation judge".

The levity with which the media responded to Justice Lee's rhetoric sometimes escaped serious condemnation and discussion. With complications in using Justice Lee's reasoning in criminal trials to protect other victim-survivors, and the media storm itself distorting the judgment, it is clear justice has not yet been created in the courtroom.

(Don't) love thy enemy

Holly Gerrard lies on the kitchen floor.

"I swear, I'm actually done with them this time."

These are the words I utter to my housemates while lying on our dusty kitchen floor, not feeling completely out of place amongst small pieces of red onion peel and rogue buckwheat pasta spirals. They recognise me, and I imagine them giving me a small wave solidarity in our domestic discardment. I've been here before.

I've known I am queer for a long time, though I have struggled with understanding which label I felt most comfortable with. I have felt most secure with the ambiguous label 'queer'. It's accompanied me as I've grown older, throughout the shifts in my gender and sexual identity. My relationships with men have been tumultuous and disappointing for just as long, often ending with a kitchen floor and an unsettling feeling in my stomach: why does this not work for me?

The kitchen floor offers me a sense of comfort, one which I can't ignore the irony of. It's almost purgatorial in nature: I don't belong in traditional, cishet domestic spaces, but I don't know how to get out of them.

So, if I have been in this linoleum limbo before, why did I go back? Why did I need to prove I was worthy of a man's attention? Nothing more than desperation to prove that I could be their perfect girl

But, as far as queer discourse goes, compulsory heterosexuality has been examined time and time again. I won't bore you with an explanation of it, though if your only exposure has been the Lesbian Masterdoc (which any queer person, online in 2020 will be familiar with), I highly recommend reading Adrienne Rich's 1980 essay Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence, which posited the queer/feminist theory and wasn't written by a 19-year-old on

So, if we can acknowledge compulsory heterosexuality as the problem, what's the solution? For some feminist and queer theorists, it's political

Political lesbianism grew as a political ideology and queer/feminist theory in the 1970s and 1980s, with one 1981 publication entitled Love Your Enemy? written by radical feminists asserting that giving up sex with men is "taking your politics seriously". Political lesbianism began as a subversion of the homophobic idea that 'sexuality is a choice', encouraging queer and

heterosexual women alike to reject men as a direct opposition to the patriarchal state. However, early political lesbianism presents a cis-gendered perception of lesbian relationship, asserting that penetrative sex is inherently heterosexual and therefore inherently patriarchal. This transphobic discourse cannot be ignored, and neither can the bi-phobic and pan-phobic binary that political lesbianism emerged under, not to mention a disregard for any AFAB non-binary people like myself.

In her Honi Soit article "No men, no meat, no machines": The Forgotten History of Australian Radical Lesbian Separatism", Mariika Mehigan speaks to the "unsympathetic" treatment of queer women in relationships with men by political lesbians.

While I have dated men in the past, I've realised that my relationships with them stemmed from a need for validation — a need to feel like I belonged to the cis-heteronormative society in which we live. But once this validation faded so did any 'attraction'. I was not attracted to the men, I was attracted to the idea of being wanted by one. So, in my first act of political lesbianism I committed myself to unlearning these tendencies. This is not to say that queer women are

just lesbians suffering from compulsory heterosexuality. In fact, that notion is incredibly damaging for fostering a sense of community amongst queer AFABs of all labels. For me, despite its original binary treatment of lesbiar sexuality, political lesbianism has helped me realise that what I first thought was a political choice — to be "done" with men — was actually a manifestation of the person I have always been and the experiences I've had.

Unlike the political lesbians of the 70s and 80s, I don't think that all queer and heterosexual AFAB people need to become lesbians in order to move away from the patriarchy, as the rise of so-called 'celibacy eras' among wom*n who are attracted to men proves. My sexual and gender identity journey has been turbulent, but I'm open to that turbulence continuing. For now though, I feel a sense of peace for the first time in my life.

And so, I will sweep the food scraps off my kitchen floor and properly discard them. They will tumble down the cheap bin liner and land on top of my old sense of self, one that reeks of Lynx Africa and a misplaced desperation to belong.

All aboard the Murrays Bus

Emilie Garcia-Dolnik journeys to Canberra.

I have caught the Murrays bus from Sydney to Canberra, and vice versa, more times than I can count on two hands. Like a ritual, I plan my journey: I bring a book (or two), I bring unfinished classwork, or a series of menial life-admin tasks I must urgently complete. Every time, without fail, I am drawn into the world of the Murrays Bus, head pushed back into my seat, askew and lost. This is something I say with my chest: I wish I could live in this suspended state of time, trapped on the route from Sydney to Canberra forever.

The first bus leaves at 6am. If you are lucky enough to have the seat next to you unoccupied (though this is unlikely in the early morning because of the commuters), you can take this as a good omen. Without fail, the driver will play a short introductory recording, though by this time you'll already have your earphones in, savouring the last few minutes of dawn before daylight comes once again. If you boarded the bus at Central—the first stop— you'll drive through Redfern, through the airport, before the cityscapes turn to highway. and then to bushland. This is the best part of the journey. If you take this bus two, three, four times, you will find that what was once an indiscriminate landscape becomes accustomed and recognisable. Trees tangled together, their bodies like frozen lightning. By this time, you will have truly abandoned your quest to do any sort of work, and given in to the landscape entirely. You'll pull into

the Jolimont Centre in Canberra City

right on time, as if the bus ride didn't happen at all. It's a return to real life that feels like a betrayal.

Though my trips to Canberra are now less frequent, catching the Murrays bus is still a religious experience. It's tiredness, then calm, and then anticipation and restlessness as you approach the city. You'll know when this is the case as the air gets colder, temperature begins to drop, you may find you need your jacket — this means you've made it to the city. Though it is colder here, the air is fresh and icy and clean. It doesn't feel as though the city and the bush are fighting a battle here, as it can feel like in Sydney. Instead, you'll have your time to explore the mountains, the parks, the lake, the scenery that is an inextricable part of the town. I don't buy into the Canberra

hate, myself. Always, always: the drive back into Sydney is too short (it seems to be far shorter than the drive into Canberra). You may even consider extending your stay in Canberra, as I have contemplated a few times. You could change your ticket and board the bus to Narooma or Wollongong instead, as the signs at the Jolimont Centre advertise. This time, book your ticket in the afternoon to make the most of your final day in the capital city. It is far more likely you will have the seat to yourself on this leg, though I am still not too sure why. Plus, the morning buses can get hectic, and it can be a frenzy trying to navigate the rush of people. This way, you'll catch the soft hues of the sunset across the darkness which conducive to peace and rest. Though by this time you'll miss Canberra, entering Sydney again in the evening is returning to the glitz and glamour of the big city, though you know it's all much less exciting than it seems. But, you're only human and there is something mesmerising about the lights of the city in the evening as you approach its grounds like a guest to a kingdom,

Alighting the bus is undeniably sad, though you know there are far more exciting things here. For students at Sydney

looking to stay the

Uni, the drive down Elizabeth Street and through Redfern may even feel somewhat sentimental. For enthusiasts of the Sydney to Canberra route, you'll be pleased to note you can join Murrays Loyalty Club. I personally wear the Frequent Traveller mark like a badge of

Australian bush, and half the bus ride will be in complete

> honour. The good news is that Canberra is not too far in distance (though it can seem like worlds away) and good old Murrays will always be ready to take you

towards God, because it's easier to blame

an omniscient deity than the man who

once whispered bedtime stories to you. I

hold anger in one hand, and kindness in

relationship with my father still reflects

my relationship with God. Mistrust and

caution still exists: I tread around the

house like a ghost, I step onto the jai-

namaz with a heavy heart. But my voice

to my father like a repetition of prayers:

And, in a way, it seems that my

Year One and then what? Life after beginning HRT

Evelyn Redfern reflects on life after transition.

As a young trans guy, one of the only things that tends to inspire you is musing upon what the future holds. Particularly the ways in which testosterone will change your life or improve your general existence. For me, it was the only thing keeping me going, as — though contrary to conservative talking points — being trans is a struggle and I needed an emblem of hope.

My life became this myriad of imaginative writings and checklists for when I'll be considered "man enough." All started and seemingly ended with testosterone, affectionately named 'T' by many trans masculine people like me. Yet, as I sit and write now, coming up to 12 months on T I begin to panic: why am I not a man yet?

You always tend to see the famous voice update videos — which of course I too have participated in — and you see how masculine these men look after transitioning for just one year. What you don't see is everyone else: the men like me. I am currently 11 months on T and do not pass. I do not even fractionally pass in a university setting where everyone knows and doesn't pretend to hide that they do. I find that I pass more to the older generations than to the younger. When I'm in my hometown I tend to be referred to with 'he' rather than 'they' as I do in places like Newtown.

Medical transition is an experience I did alone. I turned 18

"I craved to be normal so much, so intensely, I think I lost a part of who I was before."

and very briskly attained my own Medicare card. And with that card with my mother's name located at the tippy top in bold letters, the name that has caused me some of the most grief to do with my trans identity, I handed it to a receptionist as a plea for acceptance, to the road of being taken seriously. As that's what Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is: the quest to be taken seriously in the binary you are mischaracterised by day in, day out. What a fucking silly notion, the only way to be taken seriously as a trans individual is by 'passing' as a cisgendered person.

What I have come to realise about transitioning is that I needed it just as much as I thought I did. Another thing I realised is that my life continues to transpire irregardless of the next shot of T I take.

I craved to be normal so much, so intensely, I think I lost a part of who I

was before. Part of my love and pride of being queer. I grew up as an intensely outgoing individual. I didn't care how I looked nor how I came off; I was just me. And in this pursuit to fit into manhood I've forgotten that most cisgender men don't fit that description either. Part of who I was before has become lost in the complicated existence of transhood and I fear I've lost him for good. Many may take that as an opportunity to blame

that on transgender ideology, but rather

I blame the strict gender I was projected

into being from birth. If I wasn't forced

to be a girl who knows who I would be,

who knows how much freer I could've

sacrificed my relationship with two of

the most important people in my life for

"If I wasn't forced to

be a girl who knows

who I would be, who

I could've been."

knows how much freer

Another aspect of trans existence

this, my parents. Throughout my life I have relied on my parents for not only

"My body doesn't owe me quicker changes, more masculine changes, just because I've sacrificed love."

teaching me what to think but how to

think, especially about myself and who

I am. And because of this, I wanted T to

a normal man, a normal child, again. But

the notion of give and take I have your body doesn't owe you anything My

prove to my parents that I can be normal,

body doesn't owe me quicker changes,

more masculine changes, just because

I've sacrificed love. Unfortunately,

retribution and justice aren't concepts

that mean anything to the chemicals

that make up your physiology. My body,

though incredibly hard to believe due

to my upbringing as a woman, has very

being socialised as a man and only now

can begin to understand a massive facet

I am only now just entering into

little politics to it. It just is.

of what being gendered male means. Gender is undeniably an identity that everyone has the right to prescribe themselves as and I don't mean to discredit that. Yet the experience of a binary trans person is that of many self and societally inflicted pains. You begin to develop this hyper awareness of trans people because you are so insecure of your own presence, you begin to lose a sense of creative expression due to the binary you find yourself identifying within, or, like me, you begin to develop a disdain for non-passing and non-gender conforming individuals because you hate yourself so severely.

> clean cut and polite about queer history, nor queerness currently. If I believe myself to be free of prejudice I've missed the point of progression."

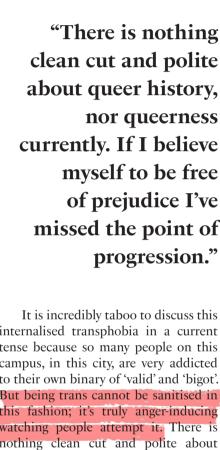
It is incredibly taboo to discuss this internalised transphobia in a current tense because so many people on this campus, in this city, are very addicted to their own binary of 'valid' and 'bigot'. But being trans cannot be sanitised in this fashion; it's truly anger-inducing watching people attempt it. There is nothing clean cut and polite about queer history, nor queerness currently. If I believe myself to be free of prejudice I've missed the point of progression.

of self fulfilment. And it's just not.

Testosterone saved my life, but it also humbled my expectations. I will never be a man if I base my identity

To any trans people reading: you

pain is not isolated, please continue to surround yourself with your chosen family, or blood if you're so lucky. Just know you aren't a half baked nor work in progress human, who you are right now is who you'll continue to be into the future. HRT or not, binary or not, out or not, you are loved, and you are real.



So, to answer my own question of why I'm not a man yet here is what I've come to. I will never be a man if I continue to label myself as a work in progress person. If I continue at this rate two, then five, then fifteen years on T will begin to feel like a fruitless quest

off of a hormone I get injected by every three months. I will never be a man if I have such a strict, inherently transphobic definition of what a man is.

Art: Evelyn Redfern

There is nothing to do but pray.

Purny Ahmed speaks to God.

Bismillah.

I lost faith in my religion around the same time I lost faith in my father.

My relationship with my father always mirrored my relationship with God. Tenderness and hope, pleading and mercy, and a whole lot of disappointment. It's as Nicole Yoon articulated, "Growing up and seeing your parents' flaws is like losing your religion. I don't believe in God anymore. I don't believe in my father

I discovered my father's flaws at an early age, watched as they unravelled onto the kitchen tiles like shattering rose-tinted glass. I tried to pick up the pieces with the same palms I used for supplication, but they cut and bled — I wondered what it was I was praying for. Thus, I was ten and emancipating myself from God, deciding that if my 'test' for this duniya was to love a man who did not deserve it, to show him mercy and forgiveness, then I would simply not sit the test. It was shortly after that I decided that I no longer loved my father.

Now, when I am asked the unavoidable question, "So, are you religious?" I remember my scraped knees on a soft, maroon jai-namaz, begging for mercy, and being met with silence. "No," I tell them, with the aching distant memory of my father ever-present. "No, I'm not religious," I say, because no one ever thinks to ask you if you still love your father.

In Islam, the religion is passed down from the father to his children. It is the first thing we inherit, before our eyes or noses or anger. Funnily enough, my father has never been considerably religious. He held onto his faith simply because he knew that he should. It was the way he was raised; to not question, to not defy. I forget that my religion is inherited from him due to his nonchalant, 'could-dowithout' attitude.

> "My relationship with my father always mirrored my relationship with God."

When I did pray, it was always for my mother. She held onto her faith simply because it is everything to her. It was the way she was raised, to not question, to not defy — but it is also the way she has survived, believing in a merciful God that may, one day, prove to her that all this hardship was worth something.

It was on the way to fourth grade one day, the beautiful, sunny morning the day after a horrible domestic fight the previous night, that my mother told me that if I asked God for something intently enough, and if I were good. He would listen to my prayers. She had this distant look as she told me, as if she had been asking for the same thing for too

many years now. Perhaps she thought that a child might have more sway over Even though I am not religious

anymore, I remember the prayers that I made as a kid. I have inscribed them into the palms of my cupped hands, memorised them like holy verses, and I still whisper them to myself so as not to forget. Happiness. Safety. My mother's laughter. A home to invite my friends to. A family, whole and at peace. (And, if He had the time for one last prayer - if I wasn't already asking too much of Him - for that one boy to like me back, pretty please). I'm not religious, because I remember the prayers I made as a kid. I still whisper them to myself so as not to forget that sometimes you call out to God and beg, and he doesn't hear you. "I talk to God, but the sky is empty", or so says Sylvia

Yet, while I have inherited my father's complete disregard, I seem to have also inherited my mother's hope. I have found myself calling out to God, once again, just as I have begun to feel myself losing my father, once again. The sky is still empty, but I find myself talking to

The anger I have held onto for the last years now feels redundant since my father's diagnosis of dementia.

Vi Khi Nao said "if [God] wants forgiveness, he shouldn't have given us memory." It is easy for me to hold onto my anger, and direct my blame towards an omniscient God, because I remember why I am angry. But as my father begins to lose his memory, I find myself grasping at any trace of forgiveness I can find in me, both for him and for God. I see no other path — dementia cannot be stopped, it is an inevitable slow death. I consider it a final act of mercy, a parting offering — I am trying to make it a painless death for the both of us.

The earliest memories go last. My father has only begun to forget where he has been in the last 24 hours, when he visited Bangladesh last, what year I graduated high school — the insignificant details of everyday life. There will come a day, however, where he won't remember why I am angry with him. He will be left with the sweet, rosetinted memories of childhood – building pillow forts and watching Pingu and the ramen he would make for me after school — and I will be his little girl, again. I will be left to carry this one-sided hate on my own. Then, shortly after, he will forget me all together. Muscle memory remains but loving your daughters is not muscle memory. Neither is loving your father.

Dua is ingrained in me. It's ingrained in a lot of us, who have forsaken their God but still find their sentences littered with Bismillahs and Inshallahs. When I want something, I return to the sky and pray that this time He will answer.

On the periphery of loss, you begin to wonder if you should have loved your father more while you had the chance. You wonder if you should have prayed

more. Would that have changed your story? It's a confusing balance which often leaves you feeling betrayed by yourself — you forgive him, you betray your past, you don't forgive him, you betray your future. It's okay to still hold anger in one hand, and kindness in

It's an oversimplification to say I no longer hold onto my faith because God did not 'protect' me. Now I know that at ten years old I did not entirely understand my religion, blinded by a

"Muscle memory remains — but loving your daughters is not muscle memory. Neither is loving your father."

desperation so fervent that I believed it

would be enough to get a God to hear

my pleas. Blinded, then, by an anger

towards my father very much redirected

softens when speaking to my father the same way it softens for dua. My patience precedes me in a way that I had not experienced before. I find myself repeating and reexplaining memories

please remember.

Please remember — don't forget us just yet. I am not done being angry with you. I have not even begun being loved by you.

Besides. The professionals tell us there's nothing to do but pray.

Art: Sandra Kallarakkal

Boomes Öcccci Scccci dooooo 0000000 0000000 Socooci 0000000 öneene

Student Media Spotlight: Pelican

Sandra Kallarakkal and Zeina Khochaiche fly away.

When Honi Soit was deciding where to venture next for our Student Media Spotlight we noticed an imbalance. Of the five Australian student publications we spoke to, four of them were from the East coast. So we reached out to *Pelican*, hailing from the University of Western Australia

When you search up Pelican newspaper on Google, one of the top search results is "Pelican Magazine bringing you the scoop since 1929." We wondered why On Dit, Honi Soit and *Pelican* all lay claim to being the second oldest newspaper in Australia. Whilst a full deep dive into the interconnected history of student media is still to come, there were questions we still had for

Dialling in from the Honi office we were ready to get to know one of the oldest student papers in Australia and their 2024 editors, Abbey Wheeler and Jack Cross. Interestingly, Wheeler and Cross applied for editor positions separately with Cross initially in a joint editorship with another candidate however were eventually paired together. Both editors were consistent contributors to *Pelican* in the year prior with Wheeler studying Communications and Cross studying Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, which has informed both of their editorial ambitions.

Pelican started as a regularly printed student newspaper, but as Cross would elaborate, "by who we do not know." Cross also clarified that even though "Wikipedia [and] Google say the paper started in 1929" if you go to the archives, "the first issue was printed in 1930."

Pelican is funded by the UWA Student Guild, the official representative body and union for students. Union engagement at UWA is impressively high, with Cross and Wheeler telling Honi that around 97% of UWA students are members. While this is an impressive feat in and of itself, the *Pelican* editors shared that it is somewhat common for students and editors to be employed by the Guild for its services. Cross revealed that alongside editing Pelican he bartends, and is now an approved manager, at the UWA Tavern — the equivalent of Courtyard here at USyd.

Interestingly, Pelican is named after the second most iconic bird in WA after the black swan. When questioned on why they weren't named Black Swan in lieu of the bird's place on the state's coat of arms, Cross revealed that another magazine called Black Swan had started before *Pelican* and "got to it first." Once an annual speciality arts magazine, Black Swan ceased publication in 1949, but thw names were already cemented in student media history

Pelican functions with two main editors, approximately 25 sub-editors and three design leads who work to produce six editions per year. Unlike other publications, the editors rarely contribute to the paper and instead

focus on curating, organising the twelve sections and workshopping thematic direction. These sections include Campus Affairs, Voice, Politics, Environment, Pop Culture, Film and Production, Economics, Literature, and Music. Cross revealed that historically, Campus Affairs was the cornerstone for engagement: "over onethird of older papers were of campus issues". However, the editors noted that editor interests do tend to filter into subsection popularity, with Wheeler noting *Pelican* has published much more environmental and political content

this year — sections Wheeler and Cross

subedited in 2023 respectively.

Interestingly, Cross that "unless we see a really radical recalibration of the student community, I don't think student journalism is going to reclaim the position it historically had." The editors affirmed that campus affairs once drew readers and contributors in, but recently they have "had no campus affairs submissions, letters or noteworthy student affairs to cover" despite also acknowledging funding drawbacks: "If we have the sort of funding that you guys do then admittedly we would be doing

One reason, the editors say, is due to the digitisation of media and a lack of physical presence on campus. Cross said that *Pelican* combats this by not publishing many articles on their website, to incentivise students to pick

up hard copies to justify print spending.

Over the years the paper moved from a weekly paper to a periodical publication format — a common shift amongst student media. We probed the editors why, Cross mused that the death of campus culture is contributing to the decline of student journalism. Cross elaborated that "people don't have as much passion for campus culture and Pelican is suffering because of that."

Overall, Honi's conversation with Pelican was an interesting change of pace to previous Spotlights. While sharing a desire to engage with their student community in a meaningful way, Pelican were hesitant to place their shortcomings on external factors. Instead, they confessed a mission to cultivate a student community as crucial to ever have a chance at combating the turbulence of student media.



Across and down with a word wrangler: In conversation with Paolo Pasco

Ariana Haghighi puzzles with Paolo Pasco.

For some, a crossword is just a blackand-white squared grid; for others, it is a gymnasium, a treasure hunt, a refuge. Travelling across country lines, I called Paolo Pasco to discuss winning a recent puzzle tournament to get down to the nitty-gritty and examine the crossword lifestyle.

A cruciverbalist 'grand-master', Pasco took the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament (ACPT) crown in April this year, after years of nearmisses and "heart-breakingly close calls". Describing the tournament as "punishing", he warns, "you go insane, completing six crosswords on Saturday, needing to be both fast and perfect for each one". Regardless, he loves the sport and the community behind it, which "brings him back each year".

Freshly teenaged Pasco completed his first crossword on a sleepy road trip, and was quickly hooked on the game. He grew up on a strict puzzle diet, solving sudokus in crayon at knee height, but steered clear of the crossword as a child. "Crosswords have a reputation of being targeted to older demographics as it is trivia-based", he says; but exposure to the grid quickly revealed the illusion of this stereotype. Pasco shifted from clueless to clued in, publishing his first crossword in the New York Times before starting tenth grade. His gridlocked love affair stems

from his people-focused and intimate view of crosswords: "you are seeing into someone's mind; you get to know the other person and their view of contemporary culture", he shares.

If you're looking for a cheat's way to solve crosswords quickly, Pasco has embittering news. "I apologise when I say that all I did to improve was solve a lot of puzzles", he says: "you just have to do a sick number of reps". To challenge himself, sometimes he attempts solving a crossword with just the down clues; "you have to work at guessing answers based on clues alone, and better at recognising letter patterns", he advises.

As any regular gym-goer would know, there are opportunities for 'crosstraining', to refine the cruciverbalist mind somewhere other than the grid. When he is not solving crosswords, Pasco focuses on "getting better at trivia, such as watching Jeopardy".

Understanding crossword-writing techniques is also critical for any solving fanatic. What surprises me is that difficulty-tuning is not executed in the answers, but the clues. The ACPT has three difficulty streams: A, B, and C, where the clues differ but the answers are shared. C-stream clues are often straightforward synonyms, but more sophisticated crossword solvers must reckon with webs of wordplay,

misdirection, and general crossword chicanery. For example, the answer "needle" bifurcates itself into the simple B-stream clue: "stylus", or the A-stream con: "one with an eye for good tailoring".

After years of navigating linguistic deceit, Pasco has developed a certain form of paranoia — a forgotten side-effect of frequent crossword doses. "I assume I'm being tricked in every instance", such that "I have an adversarial relationship with the creator", he admits.

However, when on the other side as a crossword constructor, antagonism turns into goodwill. He explains, "the game exists to give people time to relax", and depicts the crosswordcrafting community as welcoming and open to mentorship.

The recipe for good crossword construction is an analogue to swift crossword-solving: "solving and making lots", Pasco says. Pasco encourages any aspiring crossword constructors to "just ask people in the community for help with testing, or to co-construct. My early collaborations were with people who outclassed me, but this helped me improve".

Ultimately, he testifies to the welcoming nature of the community. promising fresh faces that support

Discussion on any art form cannot escape the hot-button issue — does Artificial Intelligence threaten to raze crossword communities down to their barest bones, slurping the marrow from black-and-white squares? Pasco is hopeful: "AI is pretty good, but not great at solving crosswords — if it competed at the ACPT, it would be middling". Crossword constructors also realise they have nothing to fear: anyone who has tinkered around with ChatGPT knows it is a wordplay amateur.

Meanwhile, the last five years have seen many interesting developments the land of human-made in crosswords. "Many young people have been enacting changes, making crossword clues more accessible for younger people and more diverse demographics", Pasco says.

As the oracle says, or @zohsie on X, "every hot girl has a brief but meaningful era of 1-3 weeks where she goes absolutely insane for the NYTimes crossword"; speaking to Pasco has revitalised my addiction, even if I'm addled by autocheck. Though I am far from attending the ACPT, as I may always fret at a NYTimes' Friday crossword's difficulty, it's heart-warming to feel a part of a community with every answer charted across and down.

Meet your 2024 'Existing' fiction competition judge: Sara M. Saleh

Valerie Chidiac speaks with writer, human rights lawyer, and activist Sara M. Saleh.

Valerie Chidiac: Your parents are from Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon. Are you asked if one identity is more prevalent over the other, or if you prefer one place over the other? Sara Saleh: I do get asked if I prefer

one over the other in terms of my Arab identities and often it's from family and friends being cheeky. There is that feeling of wanting to make sure, especially regarding the marginalised identities that have been oppressed and erased. I always respond and resist these sorts of binary ways of thinking around identity. For me, identity is very fluid and works as a flux, they ebb and flow together, they're not fractures, they're layers. Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, they interact with each other and that's what comes out in me. I always make an effort, even though it's a mouthful, to acknowledge that my paternal lineage is Egyptian and maternal Lebanese Palestinian, even though Lebanon doesn't pass on citizenship through the mother. We grew up undocumented in Lebanon, but that discrimination doesn't mean that we don't love the people. That's not even touching on the hyphenated, complex question around Australia and on who gets to decide 'East' and 'West'. I am fully from there and fully from here, but at the same time, fully both. I am a daughter of parents who have been dispossessed multiple times. Here, I am complicit in dispossession on this land, which informs my positionality and where I stand in my solidarity.

VC: You have previously said that when you were three, you would stay at the University of Sydney's kindergarten while your father was doing his PhD. Firstly, what is this kindergarten, because I have never heard about it. And what are your memories at USyd?

SS: That article was a feature for the website, and it is bizarre and surreal to have graduated from USyd knowing that it was my first ever nursery or childcare. 15 to 18 years ago, when I was at USyd, I found that there wasn't a lot of diversity as I expected and so that was really challenging to navigate, and for learning politics and policy. When studying politics of the areas that I was interested in, they were mainly taught by white people through that white lens. This isn't to say that there weren't positive experiences or that there weren't good scholars and material to study but I really struggled until a friend of mine suggested going to the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department. That department was filling the gaps that others like Government and International Relations were not at the time. The student body is always going to reflect the diversity of this country but these are structural issues and academic institutions are good at paying lip service to diversity and representation in a tokenistic way. USyd cannot be complicit with research, weapons, academics and Israeli universities who are on the boycott list and then say that it is a place that values rigour and freedom, as well as cultural awareness.

What can genuine representation look like on an institution that is on stolen land and being complicit in other oppressive activity and colonial projects elsewhere? There's much more to say, but there are some amazing academics and staff at USyd who are trying to change this and push back. VC: When pitching your novel

Songs For the Dead and Living (2023) to publishers, did you have to contextualise the subject matter regarding the Arab immigrant life? And during the writing process were you cautious about some readers projecting stereotypes about Arab men and women? SS: We are at a point where we're

mature as a community, as a writing community. We can write diverse narratives that do not just limit us to place, and can write complex characters that are dealing with multiple issues and tensions like with racism, Islamophobia patriarchy, misogyny, state violence and border violence. I think it's really also important to understand that we still write, from the position where our community is marginalised. We need to be really cognisant of the ethics and responsibilities of writing our communities and honouring the subject matter, without pandering to the white gaze. There's a growing number of books about these experiences because for too long we've either been silenced or not given that space. This naturally reflects the fact that our experiences aren't homogenous, there is not one way to be Palestinian or Arab. Our literature is moving forward and the rest of the world has to catch up.

Regarding technical issues or contextualising with my publishers, other people might have different experiences, but I have been lucky. When I spoke to my publisher, and when I pitched this book, I was very clear about what I wanted and how I wanted to do this. We needed to balance the editing process, the fact-checking and the feedback to make sure that we're telling the story in the best way possible. My publisher knows I'm outspoken on Palestine, and I asked, "how are you going to be and didn't know that in 30 years time, that it was going to be abolished because the alternative was doing nothing and that's not an alternative. VC: What are some Palestinian writers that you would recommend to students?

Slavery was abolished with people who

showed up and fought it every single day,

SS: Susan Abulhawa, Etaf Rum, Hala Alyan, George Abraham who's got an incredible writing collection called Birthright (2020), Fady Joudah, Sahar Mustafah, and Adania Shibli of Minor Detail who copped censorship from German festivals. One of my favourites is Isabella Hammad. I love Enter Ghost (2023), the follow up to her debut, The Persian (2019). Given what's happening in Sudan, I want to shout out Safia Elhillo and Yassmin AbdelMagied. In Australia, you have Randa Abdel Fattah, prominent writer of fiction, nonfiction, YA, you name it. You also have Samah Sabawi, a poet and playwright whose novel is coming out in September, Hasib Hourani and their collection out in September, Jumaana Abdu whose novel is also coming out in September – so we need to show up for all three! As well as Micaela Sahhar, whose narrative nonfiction work is coming out next year. It's Pal Lit excellence!

VC: Your latest collaborative project, Muslim Poetry Project, is underway. What can you tell us about this and any other projects on the

SS: Poets of any Muslim background or self identify as Muslims, will be published in what is pretty much the first anthology of its kind here. It's untitled as of yet but we are open for submissions right now so please send your poems through! I've been working on it with poet, theatre producer and friend Zainab Syed and Manal Younus, an Eritrean-Australian poet. This year I'll also spend time on tour sharing my novel and the poetry collection. I'm always writing, but after that I would like to focus on finalising my new book for 2025 or 2026. While I'm focusing on all these projects, my ultimate priority at the moment is Palestine.

VC: As the fiction judge for the Honi Soit Writing Competition, the those on the front lines right now are should writers tremble in fear or do they have nothing to worry about?

SS: That is hilarious. I think that they should freaking enjoy the process. Competitions are so fraught and loaded. I have contradictory feelings when it comes to competitions and prizes and winning because it's subjective and not a reflection of people's talent or worth. Do it because you want to be great at it for yourself, because you love and want to agonise over every single word, full stop, scene and character. Do it because vou can't not write. There's no fear here. just a lot of joy and talent and craft and love of, and playing by the rules, but also experimenting. Go wild, be a hot mess, I'm looking forward to that.

Read the full interview online.

Sara M. Saleh will be part of four

as a community organiser without

compromising the story nor the way

I show up for my community. I don't

want to give too much away, but one

of the characters experiences family

violence, and of course I didn't want

to feed into those harmful stereotypes

that have long existed and will continue

to exist. If people are coming to my

work already carrying that sort of

problematic, Islamophobic perspective,

I'm not writing to convince them of our

humanity. My book isn't going to be the

thing that changes their view or tries to

appease them, that's not its function.

The world expects us to be perfect even

though we, like everybody else, have

issues, flaws and make mistakes. The

best I can do is write about my subjective

experience in a considered manner and

the genocide first began, and which

is a continuation of the Nakba that

never ended. I don't know if there is

anything left to say or ask. So please discuss anything you think people

SS: It's a really challenging time at

the moment. We're all traumatised and I

can't imagine how the people who are in

feeling. The only thing that is keeping

me going is the fact that we are seeing

a tremendous shift in the discourse,

and people from all walks of life self-

organising. I've never seen this amount

of organising for Palestine before from

mums, teachers, unionists to nurses

and healthcare workers. I feel fortified

by that and know that we need to keep

going, even on the days where we are low

on hope and optimism. This moment

will define who we are and how we move

forward in the world we want to build.

There's no turning back, we owe those

who are alive to keep them alive. Looking

to similar movements in history whether

it's First Nations people, comrades

in Vietnam or Algeria, we know that

empires and colonial projects have fallen

before. We cannot stop until Zionism

ends. We don't need any guarantees.

VC: It's been six months since

have fun with the writing.

should hear right now.

panels during the Sydney Writers Festival.

Civil War (2024) isn't a film about the second American Civil War; it's a film about Americans at war

Angus McGregor, Aidan Elwig Pollock, and Valerie Chidiac retake the Capitol.



In 1936, Sinclair Lewis, witnessing the rise of Fascism in Europe, wrote It Can't Happen Here. The dystopian novel follows the rise of a Hitler-like figure in the United States, warning the isolationist new world they were not immune to totalitarianism.

Decades later Civil War (2024), directed by Alex Garland, again challenges the exceptionalist narrative that Americans are safe from war and institutional decay. Following experienced correspondent Joel (Wagner Moura) and photojournalist Lee Smith (Kirsten Dunst) and their protegeé Jessie Cullen (Cailee Spaeny), we track rebel armies led by California and Texas under the banner of the 'Western Forces' as their edge closer to Washington DC and America's President. While impossible to avoid projecting contemporary polarisation and the upcoming election, the film's greatest strength is the hyperrealistic depiction of America at war and the nature of modern total war itself.

Garland explicitly did not want the civil war to be viewed from a modern political lens. By uniting states on the polar opposite of the political spectrum and giving almost no details about how the war began, he attempts to take the audience where "nobody is immune." Questions subsequently arise about factors such as the formation of the Western forces, the sentiment of the general public and more importantly, what would be the international community's response to a civil war unfolding across the United States? Besides vague references to the dismantling of the FBI, firing on sense of inevitability the rebellion will succeed but the journalists never take a side — and neither can the audience.

Many reviews criticised the lack of context. The New York Post argued the film would not endure "because it does not explicitly address this moment. We as a people cannot fix a problem we cannot name." This fails to distinguish between a film about Americans at war and the specific conflict some predict is on the way. In The New York Times Manohla Dargis noted that the best quality of the film was its exposing "a nation's soul-sickness," and that division is exposed by examining how Americans act toward each other. Garland is wrong in that his film could be set anywhere.

Modern cinema is full of Americans at war in other countries. From Vietnam, to Iraq and Afghanistan, the imagery of soldiers shooting M16s backed by tanks and helicopters is ubiquitous. However, depicting American civilians living in a war zone is not a familiar sight within

Seeing Joel and Lee glaze over efugee camps run by the "World Relief Fund" in Pennsylvania and mass graves filled with white suburbia as they pass through country towns is chilling. Lee takes photos of American 'refugees' moving along cracked highways while Joel weaves through abandoned SUVs. The only time Americans suffer this much on screen there is an unimaginable force like a zombie apocalypse or alien invasion. By depicting death as caused by men donning stars and stripes on their fellow citizens, the filmmakers flip the script on Western audiences who rarely have to consider the structures of their society shattering.

> "Depicting American civilians living in a war zone is not a familiar sight within the genre."

American citizens, and other abuses Beyond the destruction, Garland's of power, the President himself is also representation of how the population never examined as a villain. There is a redefines itself in an attempt to rationalise the war strikes at the heart of America's national character. Lee and Joel drive through a town where life continues as normal, a clothes store employee dismissing the war happening just miles away. Many characters start defining themselves by their state and local militias patrol gas stations. Turning inwards with apathy and a reemergence of localism, Garland argues, is a consequence of war outside of the battles.

Other aspects of American culture such as the 'pan-am' or overly joyful smile, start to look absurd. When staying in a fancy hotel, Lee is told by a crisp receptionist that the elevator was broken because of a "power outage." "Sorry ma'am, "he says, putting on the classic sales voice before directing her to the

The varied responses to war also reflect a nuanced desire to represent the irony of conflict. Modern war films tend to abuse their large budgets, creating excessive combat sequences in an attempt to shock or excite audiences. The admission that some people can continue normal lives with fighting on their doorstep is a reminder that war is never fair and it's terror, never consistent.

The film succeeds by mirroring the tactics of modern warfare, and not exaggerating battle sequences. Ammunition is used copiously, but hardly anyone is hit. Sound design is also carefully considered - many war movies opt for cartoonish battle sound effects; Civil War opts for almost deafening gunshots. The first active combat depicted in the film is a chaotic, smallscale encounter between rebel forces donning Hawaiian shirts and government troops. Soldiers communicate with each other; rather than the "cool" chaos of a typical Hollywood war film, these characters are allowed to be terrified as they try to stay alive.

The battle of Washington DC

continues this theme on a far larger scale. A handful of soldiers hold up an army at a choke-point outside the White House. We don't see massive troop movements, or hundreds of tanks rolling across open plains; instead, we see small moments in a broader tapestry. A handful of soldiers move methodically through a landscape of flying lead — there are no heroic charges or doomed last stands. Instead, the Western Forces move slowly and carefully, communicating professionally — while the last Government diehards crumple silently in the corridors of the White House. When heroics are attempted — like a Secret Service man attempting to slide across a desk, they are instantly dismissed. It is the muted nature of this combat that gives the film its realistic edge.

That hyperrealism has been rightly criticised for at points disproportionately displaying the on-screen victims of war as people of colour. During one of Lee's 'foreign' war flashbacks, a black man is shown being burned alive but when the white characters die, the camera lingers less and we are not forced to confront the sights of their bodies. Even what is arguably the best and most tense scene in the film — enter Jesse Plemons as a bloodthirsty soldier — results in people of colour being killed, while the white characters narrowly escape. Plemon's performance was brilliant and the racialized murders could very well be intentional on part of the filmmakers, however, it is fair to argue the film did not handle these deaths with tact.

"The film's structure serves as an allegory for the obtuse dehumanisation journalism professes to thrust upon its adherents."

It's hard to miss what some have called a 'Hollywood love letter to journalism'. Positioning the readers to conflate journalism with neutrality or objectivity is not necessarily incorrect, but was thinly explained. Garland ignores that journalists — and their editors — choose what to include in coverage and what to omit. We see that briefly when Lee deletes photographs off her camera, but it seemed more so she could avoid seeing that violent imagery again. Additionally, besides wanting to interview the President we don't know what they want to achieve with the interview.

Capturing great photos is not a crime, but that is only one element to a profession which requires so much chasing up, research, writing, editorialising, editing and discussion. The reality that anyone can take a photograph remains unaddressed, especially as we are seemingly placed under the impression that journalists must remain detached from the subjects of these images. Even if they disagree with a situation they are witnessing, they recognise their duty as truthtellers, as seen during the gas station sequence where Lee takes a photograph of two victims hanging after having been tortured alongside the perpetrator.

The film's structure serves as an allegory for the obtuse dehumanisation journalism professes to thrust upon its adherents. The plot moves from sequence to sequence — neither the protagonists nor the audience can afford to dwell on any one moment. In this way, perhaps Garland is asking us to question the detachment present in journalism as a discipline. In the climactic moments of the film, the journalists are forced to use agency - both in the vehicular murder employed in the mass grave scene, and Kirsten Dunst's final sacrifice in the White House. In these moments we are shown that journalists must address their positionality and responsibility in the events they are a part of, even if iust as witnesses — and that we all have some level of agency in terms of how we

Tom Wolfe quipped that "the dark night of fascism is always descending in the United States and yet lands only in Europe." Despite never pinpointing the cause of decline, Garland implicitly questions that view by focusing on making the conflict feel so real. Whether it becomes an omen or just a warning, remains to be seen.

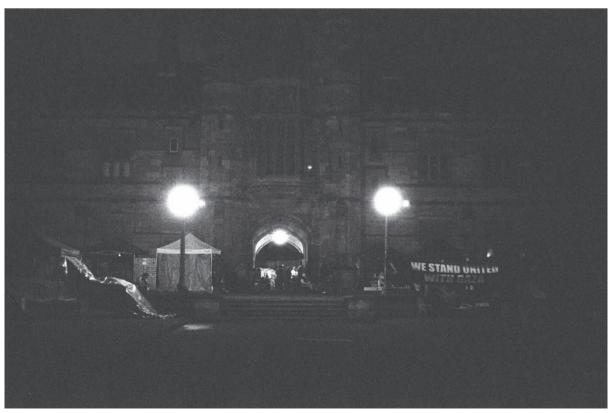
A walk through the Gaza Solidarity Encampment

Anatasia Dale photographs.



24 April





4 May

HONI SOIT 2024 WEEK 11, SEMESTER 1



SRC Reports



President's Report

Harrison Brennan

I've spent my week at the USyd Gaza Solidarity Encampment. I encourage all students and the wider community to join us in demanding that the University of Sydney cut all ties with Israeli institutions and weapons manufactures.

General Secretaries' Report

Rose Donnelly & Daniel O'Shea

The General Secretaries did not submit a report this week.

Vice Presidents' Report

Jasmine Donnelly & Deaglan Godwin

The Vice Presidents did not submit a report this week.

Disabilities Officers' Report

Khanh Tran & Victor Zhang

On the 19th of April the Disabilities Community Room officially launched after a 8 year long process! The Disabilities Community Room is located on the first floor of Manning House open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students with a disability.

Disabled Honi launched last week! A massive thank you to our editorial team and all our contributors for putting together a wonderful edition of Honi Soit.

On the 3rd of May we held a webinar on Disabilities justice and Palestinian liberation featuring Dr Lina Koleilat and Dr Ryan Al-Natour. Many many thanks to our two panelists and Auslan interpreters Bek Cramp and Tanya Miller! We'd also like to shoutout the ANU Gaza Solidarity Encampment for tuning in via Zoom. It is ever important to platform Palestinian voices and educate disabilities activists on the intersection between disabilities iustice and Palestine.

We have also been in attendance at the Gaza Solidarity Encampment outside of the Quad. We stand in solidarity with students across the world facing police repression for standing up for their beliefs. We join the call for our universities to disclose and divest, ceasing any agreements and/or contracts with weapons manufacturers and other organisations aiding and arming the genocide in Gaza. Join us at the encampment!

Refugee Rights Officers' Report

Daniel Holland, Annabel Pettit, Reeyaa Agrawal & Lucas Pierce

Israel's war on Gaza and the Palestinian people rages on. The discovery of mass graves outside the Gazan hospitals the IDF withdrew from a couple weeks ago has once again shown the world the cruelty and inhumanity of the on going occupation. Despite these blatant war crimes being committed in front of our eyes, the Australian government has furthered its commitment to boosting Israel's military capabilities, signing a new almost 1 billion dollar weapons contract with Israeli weapons company Elbit systems.

Fortunately, there is resistance. A student movement has swept the US, setting up encampments and demanding an end to the complicity of universities in propping up and legitimising the apartheid state of Israel.

In solidarity with the students in the US, and in order to challenge our own university's ties with companies currently supplying Israel, a Palestine solidarity encampment has been set up on the Quadrangle Lawns at Sydney Uni!

The Refugee Rights Office ardently supports the encampment and urges all students who are horrified by the massacre occurring in Gaza to take part in it.

The struggle of the Palestinians reflects in the most stark manner the struggle of all those oppressed under the structures of colonialism and imperialism. The same governments which aid and abet this genocide are also those, like the Australian government, who vilify and detain refugees.

Remember to get out to these rallies in the next few weeks!

The Student Strike for Palestine on Thursday 9th May 2pm at Sydney Town Hall

The Tamil Genocide Day Rally on Sunday May 19th 2pm at Sydney Town hall

The Nakba 76th Anniversary Rally on Wednesday 15 May 5:30pm

Sexual Assault & Sexual Harrassment (SASH) Officers' Report

Ellie Robertson, Martha Barlow, Georgia Zhang & Olivia Lee

A few weeks ago we attended the Day of the Unborn Child counterprotest outside St Mary's Cathedral. This was a great event and an incredibly important opportunity for us to loudly and visibly stand up for reproductive justice and fight against religious influence in medical legislation.

Olivia attended the National Rally against Gendered Violence last Saturday. The rally took place as a result of a 28% increase in women being murdered by an intimate partner in Australia compared to last year. Despite Albanese's attempt during the Canberra rally to make the event about himself, it was because of our collective successful national activism we saw an emergency national cabinet with outcomes such as more financial support for women leaving violent relationships, work on strengthening accountability and consequences for perpetrators and outcomes related to online conduct. The National cabinet overall committed nearly \$1 billion to our fight, yet there is so much more to be done. Most importantly there must be a commitment to following up on the recommendations made on the two decades worth of reports on how to support the safety of women, particularly First Nations Women.

The Abolish the Colleges campaign is still chugging along! Head to Abolishthecolleges.org to pledge your support for the campaign and ensure your voice is heard.

Finally, we want to shout out the USyd Gaza Solidarity encampment. We admire the courage shown by students in the past weeks and affirm our commitment to showing up and putting pressure on the university until it divests from weapons manufacturers and universities currently perpetrating the genocide in Gaza.

Martha, Olivia, Ellie and Georgia



What is contract cheating?

The University defines contract cheating as getting someone to complete part or all of your assessment (hand in or exam). This includes:

- buying an assignment from a tutoring company;
- having a friend complete some of your assessment;
- having someone coach you through an assessment;
- using a model answer from a tutoring website or social media (e.g., facebook or wechat);
- uploading or downloading lecture notes, assignments or exams to an information sharing site, e.g., CourseHero, Github, CHEGG;
- getting someone to do your exam;
- submitting an assessment which has been generated in whole or part by artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT.

Is it serious?

The University considers contract cheating very seriously. It puts your integrity and the integrity of your course at risk. It also leaves you vulnerable to blackmail in the future, where we have seen some students being threatened with being exposed to the University, family, or future employers, if they did not pay an ongoing "fee". The likely penalty for contract cheating is a suspension from the Uni for a semester or two.

How can you get help for your assessments?

If you need help with your assessments the best place to start is with your tutor. Ask them to clarify information you do not fully understand. If you are not satisfied with the help you are getting from your tutor, talk to your lecturer or subject coordinator about getting extra help. Tell them the websites or tutoring supports that you would like to use and ask them if it is ok. If you are in any facebook or wechat groups for your subjects, do not use any answers to assessment questions that are published, nor should you share any answers or course notes. Be aware that most of those groups have members who are contract cheaters who are there to try to make money. It is extremely likely that anytime you use sites like CHEGG, Github or CourseHero that you will be accused of contract cheating, so it is best to completely avoid these sites. If you are working with another student on an assignment only talk generally about the concepts, rather than specifically discussing the structure or content of your assignment. Do not make notes while you talk. Do not give them a copy of your assignment or take a copy of theirs.

If you have any doubts at all, explain your situation to your tutor to check if they think you are legitimately cooperating or if you would be considered academically dishonest.

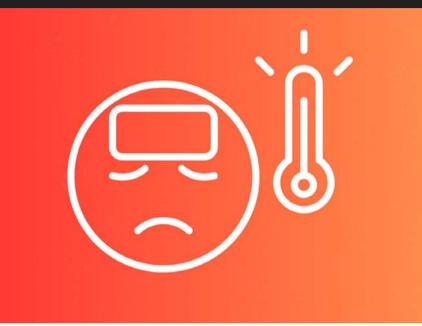
What if you are accused of academic dishonesty?

SRC Caseworkers can help you to respond to allegations of academic dishonesty or student misconduct. Start by reading our leaflet to get a better understanding of your situation, then contact an SRC caseworker (and send them the relevant documents) to get advice specific to your situation. The SRC is independent of the University and caseworkers will give you free, confidential advice.

More information: srcusyd.net.au/src-help/caseworker-help/academic-issues/academic-honesty

Special Consideration during Exams or Assessments

SRI CASEWORKERS



Too Sick for Exams?

If you are too sick to complete a take home assessment or exam, you can apply for Special Consideration, even if it is a replacement exam.

The SRC has a leaflet and some short videos that explains everything you need to know to apply. See the link below

For more information, links and videos on Special Consideration: srcusyd.net.au/src-help/academic-issues/special-consideration



Ask Abe

SRC Caseworker Help Q&A

Academic Honesty & Integrity



Dear Abe,

I've been told that I'm in trouble for plagiarism, but I don't think I did anything wrong. The Turnitin report has highlighted a lot of my essay, but I did put references in. What should I have done?

Not Sure.

Dear Not Sure,

Plagiarism is where you present someone else's ideas and words as your own. The Turnitin report highlights the parts of your assessment that appear exactly in someone else's work, whether it is published work, an essay from another student, or one of your old assessments. Where you use someone else's ideas, you need to give them

credit in your references. When you use someone else's words, you need to paraphrase what they have written, and give them credit in your references. If you do not paraphrase you must use quotation marks and give them credit in your references. Each faculty uses a different style of referencing, so check your subject outline. The library's Peer Learning Advisors can help you with this skill, or re-do the Academic Honesty Education Module on Canvas.

SRC Caseworkers are able to help prepare a response to the accusation of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Contact a saseworker via the QR code link below. Include a copy of the Turnitin report.

Abe



To find out more: srcusyd.net.au/src-help/caseworker-help/academic-issues/academic-honesty

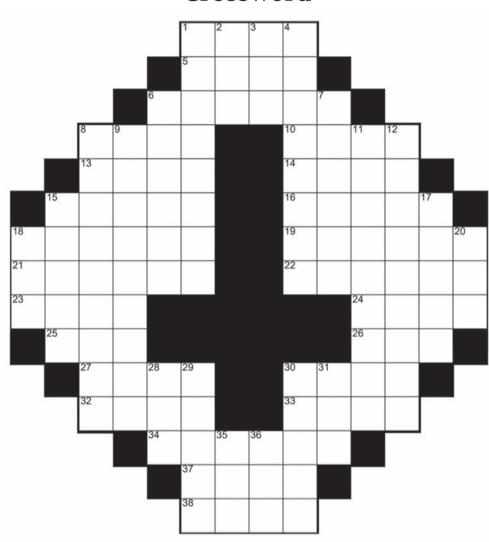
WEEK 11, SEMESTER 1

Weekly quiz

- 1. What is the dominant form of Christianity in Austria?
- 2. Which Mexica (Aztec) god takes the form of a feathered serpent?
- 3. Which Australian actor played Ra in Gods of Egypt (2016)? 4. The "Westphalian System" of International Relations emerged from which conflict?
- 5. Justin Bieber, Chris Pratt, and Austin Butler have all reportedly attended which Australian megachurch?
- 6. Which real-world modern building is associated with the Olympian Gods in the Percy Jackson series?
- 7. Which possibly-historical king of the ancient Sumerian city of Uruk was deified by Mesopotamian mythology?
- 8. On what continent can you find the Crucifix Frog?
- 9. What is the world's second largest religion by number of
- 10. When was the historical Jesus born, according to ancient historians?

Empire State Building 7.Gilgamesh 8.Australia 9. Islam 10. Between 6 and 4 BC 1. Catholicism 2. Quetzalcoatl 3. Geoffrey Rush 4. The Thirty Years War 5. Hillsong 6. The

Crossword



24. Tiny bits

brief

25. Classic rap group inducted into

26. Food intolerance condition, in

34. Artist Stevens known for melan-

37. Musk currently in a legal battle

with Australia's online safety regu-

27. Eczema symptom

30. Show age, as a sticker

32. Scream star Campbell

choly indie-folk music

38. *Succession* family

33. Shake off, as a pursuer

the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2016

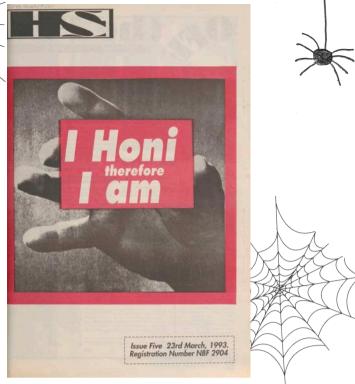
9					1			
3			7	2				
								6
4		8				6		
				6		4	9	
		6			4		2	7
						1		2
2				7		9	4	
	4							8

Crossword: Michael Smith

ACROSS

- 5. ___ Records, label whose acts include Brian Eno, Danny Brown and 8-down
- 6. Lead actor Dafoe in the 2009 film Anti-
- 8. Forever
- 10. Off the ___ (improvised)
- 13. Total fool
- 14. Mythological warrior in the Iliad
- 15. Covert garment colour
- 16. Epitome of thinness
- 18. Australian TV channel before a 2018 rebrand as '10 Peach'
- 19. Swedish producer behind 2010's hits like
- 'Levels' and 'Wake Me Up'
- 21. Getting down and dirty, put sillily
- 22. Pines
- 23. Major Sydney city street

Dusting off the cobwebs



'I Honi therefore I am.' Honi Soit, Issue Five. 23rd March, 1993.

Sudoku

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

- 2. Kubrick antagonist
- 3. Bit of blue text
- 4. Left after a hit-and-run, say 6. Wane
- ever air temperature was record-
- 8. Alias of electronic music pioneer Richard D. James
- 9. Feel attraction
- 12. The pits

- 18. Spain, on a scoreboard
- currently in space, in brief

- 30. Devises
- 31. Biblical span of time
- 36. Pixar character voiced by Amy Poehler

1. Mischaracterising

- 7. Desert where earth's hottest

- 11. "Family" connections
- 15. Calvin ___
- 17. Melon leftovers

- 20. Home to 7 of the 10 people
- 28. Application documents 29. Name on some Swiss luxury

- 35. ___ Rida, rapper whose name is a pun on a US state

Always Balanced Coverage

HEDONISM | SIMS 2 | SCANDAL | DRUGS | NOAM CHOMSK

BREAKING: 'WE R WHO WE R' — KE\$HA **TOPS MARK SCOTT'S ON REPEAT PLAYLIST**



IN THIS ISSUE...

NEAR-SIGHTED ZIONIST HECKLES NORTH SHORE MUM IN HOUNDSTOOTH SCARF



SALTY, SALACIOUS SENSATIONALISM

MALALA AND HILLARY'S BROADWAY PLAY IS COMING TO SEYMOUR CENTRE FOR LIMITED SESSIONS, WITH BIPOC **ONLY TICKETS**

JUST IN...

INVESTIGATION: THERE WAS A MARATHON ON SUNDAY AND YOU ARE LAZY AND INFERIOR TO **EVERYONE WHO WAS THERE**

EXCLUSIVE: MICHAEL CAINE WITHDRAWS NOMINATION FOR THE USU BOARD: "I'M BACK ON **MY NOLAN SHITE"**



HONI TEAM GOES TO SEE 'CHALLENGERS' **IN THREES**



'THIS BEEF IS CRAZY FOR THE CULTURE' **SAYS 32 YEAR OLD GRAPHIC DESIGNER** FROM BRIGHTON-LE-SANDS

EXCLUSIVE: After scaring off the younger interns with his loud and unabridged rendition of 'Backseat Freestyle,' Jayden, 32, was last seen loitering by the watercooler attempting to show Sheryll, 54, from reception, the latest nine minute clapback from Kendrick Lamar. "Nah, because its crazy that Dot did him like that. Like Drizzy has to clapback now."

"Did you want me to grab you anything for lunch, love?" She asks.

This offer went ignored while he tasked himself with decoding the flurry of instagram stories flooding the groupchat. More to come.

PROTEST 76 YEARS OF NAKBA



STOP THE GENOCIDE. FREE PALESTINE.

5.30PM WED, 15 MAY AT TOWN HALL

ORGANISED BY PALESTINE ACTION GROUP