

# The Gonzaga Bulletin

A student publication of Gonzaga University

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

www.gonzagabulletin.com

VOL. 135 ISSUE 13

## Ethnic studies' future in jeopardy

Students hold town hall discussing fate of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies minor

By KAELYN NEW

On Monday, students within the Critical Race & Ethnic Studies department hosted a town hall in the Humanities Building at 7 p.m. The event centered dialogue surrounding the lack of faculty within the CRES department and the necessity for safe spaces for students from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The event was led by GU senior Lucy Kramer, who is concluding a minor in CRES and works as an employee in the department. The event also featured three other student speakers that are employed within the department: Angela Gill,

Josalyn McClew and Rafaela Lindnau Noronha.

The dialogue began with a land acknowledgment delivered by Kramer, which was followed by a brief history of CRES from McClew and Lindnau Noronha. This was followed by a discussion about GU's current standing with the CRES department.

Kramer discussed the loss of two CRES professors last spring — Cassandra Dame-Griff and Giselle Cunanán. Kramer said that after one of the professors left suddenly, CRES students sent an email to Provost Sacha Kopp requesting a meeting

with him regarding faculty of color retention.

At the meeting, Kramer said that they provided Kopp with student testimonies arguing for CRES as a necessity at GU. They also discussed hiring and retaining faculty of color, potentially expanding the CRES department and adding CRES as a requirement within the CORE curriculum.

"The two other students and I offered our backs to help him grow our department to which we never received a response," Kramer said. "Offices in our department have been vacated and we're left with one faculty member to bear the

work of an entire department."

Kramer said further action was not taken by Kopp after this meeting that she was aware of.

"The people at the top of this institution continuously hide behind campus-wide emails by stating their personal commitment to supporting us as students of color and the people that pay their salaries," Kramer said.

Kramer said that they often feel trapped at GU, as it is a predominantly white institution, and often feel scared to

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ISABELLA STOUT IG: @isabellacarlin.photography

GU students gather in the Cataldo Globe Room to learn foundational swing dance moves.

## Dance club swings into action

By CLARINNE KIRK

Before leading line dances to a large crowd of Gonzaga University students, the executives of the GU Country Swing Dance Club were just four friends playing "Just Dance" and learning swing dance together.

Club President Autymn Raap grew up dancing with her family and was inspired by her sister who started a swing dance club at Washington State University, where the club quickly became one of the most popular on-campus, amassing over 500 members.

"I know stuff through my siblings, and my family has always loved to dance," Raap said. "And so, I set out to create a club where we can create that same atmosphere."

At GU, Raap began sharing her love of swing dance by teaching her roommate, Leisl Fernandes, who went from a novice at swing dance to the club's vice president. The lessons expanded to include Treasurer Meianna Neumeyer, whom Fernandes had met during orientation. After hearing that Neumeyer was from Idaho and had some experience line dancing, Fernandes connected her to Raap. The group was also joined by Marketing Chair Matthew Hein, who shared a class with Fernandes.

"We got a group of friends together, and we got together every Thursday, and [Autymn] would show us moves," Neumeyer said.

While Raap had experience with country swing dance from her family, the other club executives began with little to no swing dance experience. Part of the club's mission, according to Raap, is to make swing dance accessible to students of all experience levels.

"Every single meeting we're going to have a beginner group and intermediate, so people who actually know what they're doing can do intermediate," Raap said.

The club meetings begin with an hour of instruction, where the club executives teach a line dance and then split into groups to teach different swing dance moves. The structured instruction is then followed with open dance, which allows students to dance according to their

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## 'Black Lens' returns



Spokane newspaper to release first issue after founder's passing

By MARISSA CONTER

The word "lens" is usually associated with cameras or the human eye, acting as a mechanism to concentrate or disperse light, which impacts an individual's perspective of a visual. "The Black Lens" intends to offer an alternative media perspective to the Spokane community.

"The Black Lens," an independent publication that focuses its coverage on the Black community, will launch its first edition since its hiatus on Feb. 1. The relaunch will be celebrated at the third annual Black Voices Symposium at The Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center. In response to the theme, "Black Joy – An Aspirational Mindset," local students will present their work.

Sandy Williams founded the paper in 2015, usually publishing an edition on the first of each month. Williams was a longtime civil rights activist involved in anti-oppression work for almost 40 years, serving as the Eastern Washington representative on the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs from 2013-2018, among many other projects. After her untimely death in 2022, the paper was on hiatus.

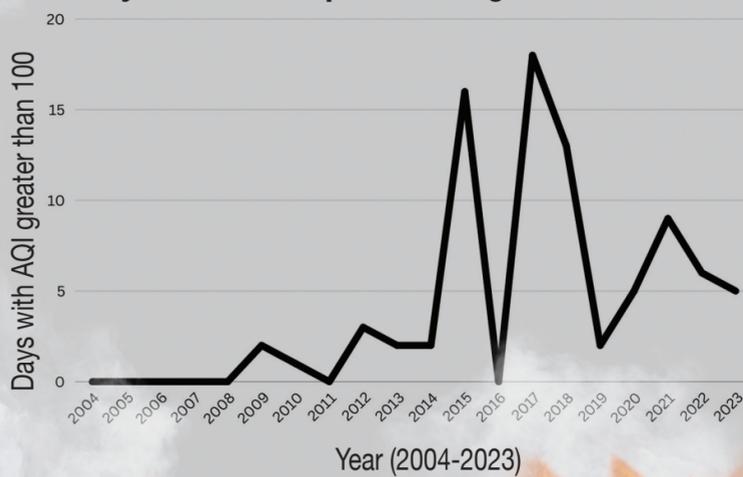
"She was one of the first Black people in Spokane to make me feel like I had a place here because she was very welcoming," said April Eberhardt, a contributor for "The Black Lens." "It was less than a year that I was here as a transplant where I met Miss Sandy, and it didn't feel awkward. She didn't receive me like 'who are you, what do you want?' She just was like, 'let's go.' She was very, very receptive and encouraging. And that's what I really, really, really remember and honor about her."

Eberhardt is a college and career counselor for Spokane Public Schools, who has also worked as an English teacher in the past due to her passion for writing. She moved to Spokane in 2017 due to her husband's job in the Air Force and began writing for "The Black Lens" shortly after her move in 2018. Her pieces have been a mixture of opinion

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## Smoke Ready Spokane EPA grant awarded to GU

Air Quality Data from Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency



By NOAH APPRILL-SOKOL and AMELIA TRONCONE

Gonzaga University's Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment was awarded a \$1.1 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency for the institute's work on addressing wildfire smoke in Spokane.

The grant is the largest that the Climate Institute has received and will go to supporting its upcoming project,

Smoke Ready Spokane, an initiative meant to address indoor exposure to wildfire smoke and create climate resiliency centers throughout the city.

The project grant is overseen by Climate Resilience Program Coordinator Dante Jester, who will help lead GU's partnership with the City of Spokane, Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency and the University of

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# More than math

## Tomás Guardia makes his mark in the classroom

By SOFIA BELTRAN

Awkwardly passing professors in hallways with a wave is not the reality for Tomás Guardia because for him the best greeting is a hug and a smile.

In his eighth year of teaching at Gonzaga University, Guardia is a professor of mathematics with experience teaching in both the United States and Venezuela.

Guardia's initial interest in mathematics started early in his high school career where he discovered his talent and passion for the field of study. His commitment to self-direction during his education led him to pushing boundaries within mathematics.

"For me, math has always been an art, it's at the midpoint between science and art," Guardia said. "For me it's like a music composition, you need to have a sensitivity for abstraction."

Guardia pursued his later education at the Central University of Venezuela where he became a student-teacher. In his junior year of college, he became the youngest teaching assistant in the mathematics department and stayed in the position for almost four years.

At university, his experiences with his students guided him towards pursuing teaching as a profession. He said the relationships he has formed with his students are very important to him.

"From my experiences, my students are like my sons and daughters," Guardia said.

Guardia's time at college brought forth challenges that have led him to understanding the range of realities within education.

"Sometimes I didn't have light in my classroom, it was sometimes a violent and unsafe environment," Guardia said. "Even though our doors were locked, people would enter and steal. This is unthinkable on an American campus. Here you can be in places like Hemmingston with things like laptops and phones out and have no concern."

Guardia said the circumstances in Venezuela and GU are so different they are incomparable, but there is still much to be learned from those differences.

"Students here must value the privilege they have to be here and be a part of this community," Guardia said. "They must understand that other students simply do not have the same access to the same resources. Value what you have, you are privileged to be American citizens and study on a safe campus."

Guardia's experiences have shaped his teaching practices here at GU and throughout his career.

Guardia said that his role as a faculty member allows him to share his own personal values as well as display care for his students.

Recent graduate and current master's student at Eastern Washington University, Alex McCurdy, has known Guardia since their first semester at GU.

"I was in his calculus class, and I remember when taking exams, he couldn't help hiding his excitement when I figured out certain problems that were challenging me," McCurdy said. "He's helped me whether or not I was in his class. He has cared about me more than anyone I have ever met."

Guardia's focuses other than teaching center in his research on Rithmomachia, a mathematical board game that is essentially a battle of numbers. The board game has geometric pieces with numbers on them and appears very similar to a chessboard.

His initial learning of the game during his undergraduate studies led to him founding the only Rithmomachia club in the world and leading a research team here at GU.

Guardia said that he a research paper on Rithmomachia with McCurdy, which has been accepted for publication. This publication will be in a special issue of the Recreational Mathematics Magazine in March.

Guardia also said his practice of mathematics is present in many aspects of his life.

"I try to use the logic of mathematics in any aspect of my life from family solving conflicts to student-teacher interactions, or driving my car, or my finances, or going to Costco for groceries," Guardia said. "First, organize the information, use logic and prioritize."



**For me, math has always been an art; it's at the midpoint between science and art.**

*Tomás Guardia, mathematics professor*



BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

Tomás Guardia, professor of mathematics at GU, has taught in both the U.S. and Venezuela.

Guardia said that mathematics is everywhere and that the concepts are in nature, but at the same time, we continue to discover them. He believes that people who have had difficult experiences with mathematics do not have to feel at fault for their struggle because of how it is presented during early levels of education.

Guardia's former student, Olivia Rasmussen, said his teaching practices present mathematical concepts in a new and effective way.

"It was very clear in class that he was passionate about what he was doing," Rasmussen said. "He was very good at incorporating his expertise while inviting his students into the discussion. His level of care and attention to us as individual people and students was a refreshing way to experience a math class."

Guardia loves to engage in meaningful

conversations with his students, friends and family.

"I just want to get close to my students, and the people I love, that's it," Guardia said. "I really care about my people, and by my people I mean my family, my friends and my students. So, whenever I can help my people, I am happy to do it."

Guardia said the insight and meaning that comes from these conversations he uses in many avenues of his daily life.

"I am the outcome of more than 20 years of teaching," Guardia said. "Uncountable hours of conversation with my Venezuelan students and Gonzaga students have gotten me to where I am. I would not be the teacher I am without the feedback of my students."

Sofia Beltran is the opinion editor.

### Keep an eye out for these graphics in The Gonzaga Bulletin throughout February to keep up with our coverage of Black History Month



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Zag Dining

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# GU updates Zagcard hotline number

By EMILY NIEMANN

After two and a half years with an incorrect suicide hotline on the back of the Zagcard, students have incited an important change.

Olive Paulson, a junior in the Comprehensive Leadership Program, noticed that the 10-digit number on the back of the Zagcard was outdated while completing a group project for CLP. Paulson and her group were working on the Intercultural Collaboration Project, which assigned them to find a way to better their community.

With her mother working in suicide prevention at the University of Washington and involved with Forefront, a program designed to teach the correct way for people to go about suicide prevention to students at UW and at Washington state high schools, Paulson has an extensive history with the subject. As she and her group were trying to come up with something to do, they realized that the Zagcard was incorrect, thus being a good candidate for their project.

"We felt like the way we could have the most individual impact was to change the Zagcard," Paulson said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-24, with this age group accounting for 15% of all suicides. Recognizing this statistic, Paulson noted that this is part of the reason why she felt this issue was so important for college students.

After finding the incorrect number, Paulson emailed Suzie Mize, the associate vice president for Auxiliary Enterprises, as a part of the administration at GU. Paulson said that Mize was very responsive to her group and arranged to set up a meeting with Paulson right away. By Dec. 1 the change had been made in the software, and all new Zagcards would feature 988, the current suicide hotline, on the back. Mize also said that all pre-printed stock with the incorrect number would be discarded.

Will Haberman from Zagcard Services said that this was an issue that just seemed to slip through the cracks.

"We had to change it for employees, students and affiliates, vendors ... Basically since we've made the change, since then every Zagcard has had the new hotline on it," Haberman said.

Paulson said that the positive response she got from Zagcard Services made this change possible and exactly what her and her groupmates hoped.

The hotline changed to 988 in the summer of 2022. According to Paulson, this was a necessary and important change, as a shorter hotline is much more accessible to people who are in crisis.

"When people are overwhelmed and in crisis, that their cognitive ability is overwhelmed, that's been proven, and so a shorter number would make it easier to recall," Paulson said.

The suicide hotline gets over 2 million calls per year, according to 988 Lifeline, and Paulson said that, while the hotline is not a cure for people who are feeling suicidal, it does act as a gateway to other resources and tools they



DYLAN SMITH IG: @d.smithphotos

All Zagcards printed after December 2023 now feature the correct suicide hotline number, 988, to either call or text.

need to get help.

"Calling that hotline, even texting that hotline, which is something not a lot of people know, can get you connected to the resources that you need," Paulson said.

Even though Paulson's project was a success, she has not stopped advocating for mental health awareness and suicide prevention. Paulson has been working with Forefront for a few years, helping to create the curriculum that is shown at UW and around Washington state.

"Ever since then, I have felt a strong call and passion towards suicide prevention and mental health," Paulson said.

Paulson said that during the brainstorming process for her group project, they tossed around the idea of doing an instructional video to teach college students about suicide prevention. Yet due to limited time and resources, they never got to make that instructional video. Instead, Paulson is now making the video in her free time this semester, connecting with the Center for Community Engagement and actors from the drama program at GU to act in it.

"I'm passionate about this project, because Forefront, the UW program, has never had a college-aged video before," Paulson said, "They gave us permission to use their script under the circumstances that they'd get to own

it, so if they like the video I make enough, it could become a curriculum that's shown all over Washington state."

Paulson said that she wants Forefront to become something that is not only at UW but is also incorporated at GU.

"I feel like as a school, that really champions the importance of Cura Personalis, I feel like we really lack a program that address suicide awareness and prevention," Paulson said. "My hope is that one day Forefront reaches Gonzaga."

Paulson said she hopes that suicide can become a more normalized discussion in the future, and that people would soon feel more comfortable to ask the people in their lives how they are doing and make mental health checks more common.

"Don't feel afraid to ask your friend," Paulson said. "My mom always says an angry friend is better than a dead friend. Opening up these conversations makes this whole subject more normal."

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, call or text 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Hotline or visit 988lifeline.org.

Emily Niemann is a staff writer.

## CRES

Continued from Page 1

speaking their mind in classes.

"(CRES) is the only department where I feel the curriculum and goals are devoted to me as a student of color," Kramer said. "I feel like a statistic to [President Thayne] McCulloh but a human to the CRES department."

Kramer said that McCulloh displayed his performative allyship in December at the CRES five-year anniversary gathering. A request was sent to the president's office for McCulloh to attend and speak at the event. However, Professor and Department Chair Bernadette Calafell said the president's office did not respond to this request.

"He was on the program, and we expected his presence," Kramer said. "President Thayne McCulloh did not show up."

Kramer said she is disheartened to see administration dismiss the efforts of students, staff and faculty so easily.

McCulloh, who was contacted by The Bulletin about not attending the CRES anniversary event, said in an email he was unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts.

"From the beginning of the program's development, I have been an active and consistent supporter of CRES," McCulloh said in an email.

After Kramer spoke, Gill said that the CRES department is suffering after the loss of two faculty members. She said that the program escalated from having three trained faculty and multiple classes to only one trained faculty member, Calafell, and two potential CRES classes on the schedule for a given semester.

"I am ... standing here today to urge you to help us protect, support and fund the Critical Race & Ethnic Studies department here at GU," Gill said.

Gill said that CRES has fought downsizing, refusals of tenure-track positions and colonial practices both currently and historically.

"Departments such as CRES are struggling," Gill said. "I left for a year, and we are down to one professor. We don't even have an Intro to Critical Race & Ethnic Studies class. How can you minor if you don't teach (that class)?"

Gill said that this issue will impact her legacy and those that come after her if CRES is done away with. She additionally said that CRES, the Unity Multicultural Education Center and other cultural groups and organizations do the labor for GU to claim diversity as an institutional value.

"[Admin] denies our requests for change — for hired tenure-track positions in this faculty which is what we are looking for — implemented so the department doesn't die, so we don't just fade into nothingness," Gill said.

As a result of GU's administration not fully committing to supporting CRES and diversity on campus, Gill said that an undue burden is being placed onto people with historically marginalized identities.

"The very limited faculty of color really suffer the consequences," Gill said.

The panel of student leaders then opened the discussion to the attendees. Several participants discussed ways in which the

administration, faculty and community can do better.

GU senior Jack Stehr said that he was disappointed with his PHIL 301 class that included readings with harmful ideologies, such as discrimination against those who identify as LGBTQ+.

"This (philosopher) isn't the only one who had these thoughts," Stehr said. "We can read that in source material that isn't extremely bigoted. The fact that that really wasn't even questioned in the classroom is ridiculous."

Stehr additionally said that the CRES program has been invaluable to his education.

"CRES is very important," Stehr said. "It's changed my life, really, being a CRES student. I would hate to see this department killed by the administration."

McCulloh said in an email he has requested a meeting with the townhall student organizers to address their concerns about his support for the department.

GU senior Alexander Prevost said that they are frustrated with the way that The Gonzaga Bulletin hasn't fulfilled its commitment to amplifying issues of importance. They said that they share these sentiments with members of cultural clubs on campus and former employees of The Bulletin.

"Why is it that we're not talking about specifically the fact that we are hemorrhaging faculty of color at a rate that is insane on this campus?" Prevost said. "Why is it that that is not pitched in those meetings, and why is it that we are not asking those questions?"

McClew provided a testament to CRES's impact on her education at GU.

"I have found so much solidarity within this department," McClew said.

Students additionally brainstormed ways in which CRES can be further integrated into the CORE curriculum or made more accessible for students that are registering.

"A lot of us became CRES minors or learned about it through just taking the 101 class which is Intro to CRES," said Lindnau Noronha. "I think making CRES a greater part of the CORE curriculum and offering CRES classes that fill those requirements could be a really good idea."

At the conclusion of the meeting, Kramer thanked attendees for joining and participating in crosscultural dialogue and coalition building.

"I'm really excited that a lot of people have come and spoken up," Kramer said. "I think that this is the first step."

Gill, a junior at GU, said that she wants people to know that it is a department that deserves to exist at GU. Yet, she said the future for CRES at GU is grim, as the program risks being shut down.

"I don't expect to graduate with (the CRES minor), and that's why we met tonight, for me at least," Gill said.

Angela Gill and Alexander Prevost were both previously employed by the Gonzaga Bulletin but are not currently.

Kaelyn New is a copy editor. Follow her on X: @kaelyn\_new.

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## It's really important that we lift up the voices in our Black community.

Natasha Hill, Interim editor for "The Black Lens"

## LENS

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and poetry.

This week's edition will be the first with Natasha Hill serving as interim editor for "The Black Lens." Born and raised in Spokane, Hill comes from a law background, practicing since 2007. She works alongside a board of community members, which consists of some of Williams' family members.

"I don't have a tech background or an editor background, but they ultimately decided they wanted somebody who had good connections with community, that had a good skill set and could be a strong voice and really protect the independence of 'The Black Lens,'" Hill said. "We know that we need this to exist for the community, it's not my paper. We want to keep it living, we want to keep that legacy moving forward."

To make the newspaper more accessible to the public, Hill said subscribers can receive each edition in their email inbox. The website will also be more active, intending to post more frequent updates such as breaking news or upcoming events. In addition to its own independent distribution, "The Black Lens" will also be included as an insert in "The Spokesman-Review" on the first Sunday of each month.

This first edition back will feature 12 pages of content. Each edition ranges from 8-12 pages depending on content, according to Hill. On Feb. 8, "The Black Lens" will host a training session in their newsroom for freelancers, which will cover topics including conducting interviews and journalism ethics. Hill said these sessions will be hosted each month, and there will be opportunities for community members to submit their work.

For this edition, Eberhardt submitted an opinion piece called "Black joy matters," which is accompanied by a piece of art she created. She wrote this piece in line with the Black Voices Symposium's theme, which she was also involved in selecting.

"I had to travel back to Pennsylvania over the holidays. My grandmother passed away," Eberhardt said. "And when I came home, there was just a lot of feelings that I had, because it was not an easy visit home. And through the adversity that I experienced going home, I was given a space where I needed to create. I want to be able to share the narrative that we have overcome. We have resilience, but Black joy is a trait that's carried us. And

in between the struggle, we often hear 'struggle, struggle, struggle,' there is Black joy, in our lived experiences as Black people, which is a little different, based on our cultural experiences."

Eberhardt also wrote a piece on Kerra Bower, who currently owns Little Scholars Early Learning Center and will soon be launching Raze, a nonprofit child development center which will focus on Black identity as a foundation.

Hill also said "The Black Lens" is looking to foster stronger connections with GU in order to build a newsroom on-campus. Hill said this will help create opportunities for not only GU students, but also high school students in the area.

In terms of this publication's mission, Eberhardt said "The Black Lens" is an opportunity for Black community members to empower their voices and get to tell their stories.

"Sometimes, what we see in the media is not our voice, the way we would give our story," Eberhardt said. "It gives us power to share stuff that a nation might not want to cover. It also unites the Black community and provides information to the Black community about what's going on locally, and nationally. 'The Black Lens' gives power to a community that historically has not been in a community like Spokane. It's a window through which others can view the Black community because we don't always occupy spaces that are widespread."

Hill reiterated the importance of the publication as an opportunity to be different and not to assimilate. She said in order to show support, Zags can respect and spread the word about the publication.

"It's really important that we lift up the voices in our Black community," Hill said. "All too often, when we try to do something for the Black community, it ultimately gets turned into a multicultural event that's for everybody in the community, and it makes it feel like people are uncomfortable with Blackness. I am going to always emphasize how this is a Black perspective, and it needs to be written by Black folks to have a Black perspective. This is for everyone, but it can still be centered on Blackness."

If interested in subscribing, Zags can contact info@blacknews.com or visit the website for more information.

Marissa Conter is the editor-in-chief. Follow her on X: @marissaconter.



JANNA PRICE IG: @jannapricephotography

Campus environment, access to public transit and sustainability events all contributed to the ranking.

## GU ranks high in green poll

School ranked at No. 8 in Princeton Review's Green College List

By ESTELLE HAN

A year after ranking No. 32 on the Princeton Review's Green College list, Gonzaga University ranked No. 8 on the 2024 edition of the list.

Princeton Review states that the schools that are listed are pursuing "superb sustainability practices, a strong foundation in sustainability education and a healthy quality of life for students."

GU was selected based on a variety of methodologies that took "school-reported data and student opinions" into consideration.

"When I think of sustainability, I think of four words: enough for all, forever," said Jim Simon, the director of the Office of Sustainability.

Simon said that sustainability is the practice of ensuring there are enough resources for the greatest number of people for the longest period of time. By creating an abundance of resources, Simon said people can live their best lives surrounded by the beauty of the natural world.

According to Simon, GU's success in sustainability could be due to a variety of factors.

"I think we did well with waste reduction and education," Simon said. "We have done more workshops for our community. We have had more interventions with departments and offices to create their own practices around waste reduction."

Waste Reduction Educator Tristy Osbon said in her section that she feels that the regular events and campaigns that occurred on campus

had contributed to GU's success in sustainability.

During these events, she said that they have been working to promote more composting and better recycling practices. Especially within her position, she is actively educating Student Affairs, which comprises Housing & Residence Life and the Unity Multicultural Education Center, among others, who have a lot of interactions with students.

"Hopefully, during this event, it empowers the participants to see that you don't have to change everything in your life or feel completely hopeless and powerless," Osbon said. "There are very simple changes or things that you can integrate in your life to make a difference for everyone."

With these events, while there is an increase in waste due to the number of events and students attending, there has been an 11% increase in composting and the overall waste diversion rate, a measure of waste that did not go to landfill, is now around 40%, according to Osbon.

Osbon adds that composting done by Sodexo has also played a big role in the waste stream. Since the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, the kitchens in the dining halls have been repurposing leftover food to make meals for families and communities across Spokane. Sodexo also takes scraps and places them in compost compactors around campus.

Simon mentioned that the City Line could have also played a significant role in the ranking.

"We've seen tremendous and exciting growth in ridership of buses

and the City Line," Simon said.

City Line enabled people to commute together without contributing to pollution or fossil fuel consumption, according to Simon.

The Office of Sustainability is planning on creating an app to use instead of Zagcards for the City Line buses.

In the spring, the Campus Race to Zero Waste is going to start. This event is an eight-week national competition for universities all across the U.S. to compete for waste reduction, in hopes of increasing efforts of waste minimization on campuses and increasing literacy in compost recycling.

Simon also said that the Office of Sustainability is working on creating a new Climate Action Plan for the year 2024.

The updated Climate Action Plan is inspired by Laudato si', a letter that was sent out by Pope Francis in 2015. The letter addressed major climate concerns that people should be aware of and seven goals ranging from environmental economics to ecological education.

Simon said that with the consistent work that the office made, he is excited about the changes that the office is ready to display.

"Instead of buddying up against the [world] and trying to extract things, [sustainability] is a culture where we live our lives in a gentler approach," Simon said. "The gentler we are, the people and the things around us will be happier."

Estelle Han is a staff writer.

### Editor's Note:

In the Jan. 18 print edition, the GU Bulletin published the story: "Addressing the Budget Blues." An incorrect claim was made about admission rates; it is enrollment rates that have declined.

## GRANT

Continued from Page 1

Washington, all of who are participating on the project.

Jester said it is important for GU to be a part of these efforts to help the Spokane community adapt to the effects of climate change, specifically decreasing air quality and smoke.

"Just ensuring that everyone has the ability to continue living their best life, regardless of how the climate is changing," Jester said.

According to Jester, the grant funds will be going to revamp community spaces, including renovation of the HVAC systems in the Northeast Community Center, and the supplying of DIY air filtration kits for community members living the Northwest neighborhoods.

The grant also awarded \$220,000 to support the work of the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, which has been doing some smoke readiness work with the Spokane Regional Health district.

Jester also said the funds will support a community-led project of developing a smoke readiness action plan for Spokane, which will start with a stakeholder meeting in June followed by a community survey that will be analyzed by the University of Washington.

These community-centered efforts will bring in the already current work of organizations in Spokane that focus on addressing smoke-related issues and should lead to the creation of comprehensive procedures which should be set up by the end of 2025 when the grant is set to end.

"There's so many great things happening in the Spokane community, and sometimes it feels like people are doing things kind of on their own or in silos," Jester said. "This is an opportunity to connect the work that we're doing with the work that everyone else is doing and building this network of people in Spokane that all care about this work and are taking action on it."

Logan Kinnard, a GU student and climate program assistant for the institute, said they are excited for the project because there are not many places in the United States that have one. Kinnard said they are hopeful the Smoke Resilient Spokane project will make Spokane an example for how other cities should properly respond to wildfire events.

"I did a lot of research into smoke plans that exist in other places, and there's not a lot of them," Kinnard said. "I think I found like maybe eight or nine other existing smoke plans."

The project of creating smoke readiness builds on the work of the Climate Institute on heat mapping Spokane during the summer of 2022, in which a GU-sponsored report noted that certain areas with disadvantaged populations had higher temperatures in the summer. The report highlighted the need for community hubs that city members could use to find relief from the heat.

Jester said the grant is part of a larger goal of creating climate resiliency centers throughout Spokane that can address the climate change effects. They said the smoke readiness project has a similar framework to the heat mapping efforts, in which it determines which communities may be more at risk from smoke and establish the best locations in Spokane to set up community centers.

Olivia Hinds, a GU student and program assistant for the institute, said that these resiliency hubs will hopefully offer a safe space for all people.

"The thought that we're going to be able to get information out of, like, here's a place that you can go to if you are experiencing, like a heat or smoke issue is really a good feeling," Hinds said. "I'm excited to be able to possibly benefit people."

The \$1.1 million is the second one from the EPA that the Climate Institute has received in the past four years, with the last one going to support the center for its work on climate education and its literacy fellowship in the summer of 2022.

The Climate Institute, which was previously called the Center for Climate, Society and the Environment, was voted on by GU's Board of Trustees to expand and integrate its work into the updated strategic plan that was approved this past summer.

"The Climate Institute really is striving to be a regional leader in climate change work," Jester said. "We have these Catholic Jesuit values coming from Gonzaga and part of them are to serve at-risk populations like what we're doing with this grant. It just feels really important to go beyond just Gonzaga and look at the bigger picture of this community in which we exist."

Noah Apprill-Sokol and Amelia Troncone are news editors.

## Coalition festival shows Palestine voices in film

By NOAH APPRILL-SOKOL

Kicking off with its first film this past Sunday, the activist group Inland Northwest Coalition for the Liberation of Palestine will be hosting a film festival for the next four weeks, highlighting educational movies on the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The coalition will be hosting a viewing of films at the Unitarian Universalist Church every Sunday at 4 p.m. and will include movies, such as "1948," "5 Broken Cameras," "Al Helm: MLK in Palestine," "Imprisoning a Generation" and "Israelism," in a hope to present different perspectives on the conflict that have not been widely broadcasted.

"There's just a lot of confusion out there because the general media that people usually get their information from are not really portraying the situation correctly and not articulating the history," said Kate Burke, a member of the coalition. "Of course, then there's politics and money. So, it's just there's so much re-educating our population that has to happen."

The coalition was started in the fall of last year in response to the Israeli government's bombardment on the Gaza region, and the coalition has grown significantly as the group has mobilized around the issue of a liberated Palestine region, according to Burke.

The coalition has helped organize a series of events around the issue, including marches and gatherings, with the goal of educating the Spokane community about the conflict. Burke said the coalition is set to host both a music fundraiser and a drag show in the upcoming months.

The film festival, according to Burke, is another of the coalition's main projects of educating the Spokane community about the issue.

"We're really focused on just educating the community on what's going on — the history, the current experiences that are happening — and we're doing that through events, movies, films, dialogues, art events, things like that,"

“

**We're just trying to really touch all different communities to get people interested to understand what's going on."**

*Barb Stuebing, coalition member*

Burke said. "We're just trying to really touch all different communities to get people interested to understand what's going on."

The idea for the film festival came from coalition member Barb Stuebing, who has a background of helping organize film viewings in the Spokane area. Stuebing said since early December she has been working on putting on the film festival, which included procuring the rights of the film.

Stuebing believes in the power of films to challenge perspectives and lead to deep conversations, while also being accessible for a broad audience to learn about the issue. She said she hopes that the film festival will lead to more people starting the journey about learning about the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

"I really enjoy watching films together because I might

pick up on something and somebody else might pick up something else," Stuebing said. "We've just watched the exact same film, but we've come away with different points of view. Being able to have some community conversation afterwards, to put it all together in a different context, I think really is helpful."

Stuebing specifically described the films, which she said depicted the human realities of the conflict, and she said the movies would take people into the confusion of the conflict. She believes the films could make people reflect on the human toll of the conflict.

"I wish that those people could open up their hearts a little bit, look at people as humans and see how maybe they could accidentally be in that situation like the people that live in Palestine now," Stuebing said.

Film festival connects to the broader work of the coalition, said Burke, who said that the challenge to mobilization has been the lack of awareness to this issue, which is rooted in colonization. She, similar to Stuebing, hopes that the film festival and the rest of the work of the coalition will help people be more aware of the hidden violence.

"I think what we're really seeing unfold before our eyes is the fact that we have been lied to as people who live in the United States, and all other colonizing countries have been lied to about this," Burke said. "People are starting to realize. Maybe at first there were way more people who were like, 'Oh, this shouldn't be happening. I agree Israel should be able to bomb them.' But as time has gone by, I think we've seen more people who start to become sympathetic towards Palestinian people."

The next film will be "5 Broken Cameras," which will be screened this Sunday at 4 p.m.

Noah Apprill-Sokol is a news editor. Follow him on X: @noah\_sokol03.

# 2024 election brews democratic chaos

After a landslide victory in the Iowa caucus, former president Donald Trump has jitted ahead of his fellow Republican opponents, placing him closer to a Trump vs. Biden rematch. While a Trump vs. Biden ticket may seem like déjà vu, the circumstances of this year's election are anything but unprecedented.

Yet, before Trump can seek victory over the current president, he must first vanquish his Republican opponent, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, who remains the only challenger to Trump after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis dropped out of the race on Jan. 21.

The first mile of the marathon primary season, the Iowa caucus, represents an early victory for Trump, who won 51% of the votes, placing him far ahead of then challengers Desantis (21%) and Haley (19%). But, with only a one-point majority, Trump could face some challenges now that he is facing a single opponent, leaving Haley a window of opportunity to snatch the nomination. However, Haley remains an underdog as DeSantis endorsed Trump after pulling out of the race, making it likely that many former DeSantis supporters may now flock to Trump.

While Haley looks to diminish Trump's lead in the upcoming primary in South Carolina, it is not in poor taste to imagine Trump as the Republican nominee and final opponent to Biden's hopes of reelection.

Going into a 2020 rematch, both candidates carry more baggage than in the previous election.

With a staggering 91 charges across



By CLARINNE KIRK

four indictments, Trump's baggage is beyond oversized.

Trump's four indictments range across state and federal courts, but spreading false information and trying to undermine the 2020 election results remain common themes across the four trials. On a federal level, Trump faces indictments over his involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and illegally hoarding classified documents. Trump also has indictments in Georgia over his attempts to overturn election results in the state and in New York for falsifying business records.

These indictments are necessary to hold Trump accountable and establish the strength of the judicial branch. A judicial branch that cannot hold a president accountable for criminal actions illustrates a weak and crumbling democracy. Yet, these indictments are not the political boost for Biden that Democrats might have hoped they would be.

Instead of turning Republicans against him, Trump's criminal charges

have only acted as a political catalyst, fanning the flames of Trump's rage and strengthening his image as a Republican martyr heroically standing up against the left set on targeting him.

Trump has painted a narrative that Biden is corruptly using the judicial branch to retain the presidency, forcing Biden to distance himself from Trump's legal issues in his campaign messaging. While this is important to underscore the independence of the judicial branch, it means that Biden is stuck on defense and cannot actively capitalize on the challenges facing Trump nor weaponize them against him in a campaign setting for risk of increasing the rage among Trump supporters which the former president converts to unrelenting support.

The increase in Trump's supporters rage comes at a time when anger among Democrats is decreasing. During the lead up of the 2020 election, the recent overturn of Roe V. Wade, mishandling of COVID-19 under Trump's presidency and continuous lies by Trump himself created a wave of anger easily mobilized to send voters to the polls in support for Biden in the highest turnout of the 21st century, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

With the uproar over abortion fading into the past and life returning to that of the pre-COVID-19 era, Biden must rely more on his appeal as a candidate than on the general dismay of the moment. And for many across all political affiliations, Biden is a far from ideal president.

Turning 82 in 2024, Biden's age makes him a vulnerable candidate.

According to an AP-NORC poll, 77% of U.S. adults say Biden is too old to effectively serve a four-year term. Biden's age puts a target on his back, making common human slip-ups, such as tripping or losing one's train of thought, into mainstream news stories and evidence of Biden's incompetence.

While Biden faces accusations of dementia, he also struggles with the lack of public acknowledgement of his accomplishments. Despite an improved economy, an increase in jobs by more than 14 million and a decrease in COVID-19 spread, public disapproval of Biden is the highest of his term.

Biden's biggest strength of 2020 may be his biggest weakness in 2024: forgettability. After four years of mayhem and a constant flood of Trump in the news, Biden offered a respite to the chaos. Yet, stability can quickly turn into boredom, leaving Biden reeling to improve his public opinion and highlight his accomplishments.

Despite predictions, polls and trends, the runup to the election remains a marathon, with many unknowns yet to be uncovered. However, no matter the uncertainty, no matter the final candidates on the ballot, one fact remains certain: the 2024 election will define the strength and prosperity of our government.

This vote is more than choosing a candidate; it is a question of saving our democracy.

Clarinne Kirk is a news editor.

## Stop streaming and start spinning, a love letter to vinyl

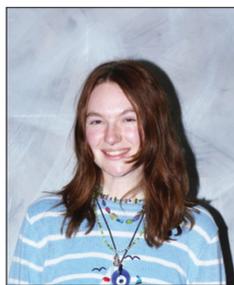
The best gift I got for Christmas at 13 years old was a record player.

It's an Audio-Technica whose product specifications have since been covered by stickers dating back to my early water polo days. It was my big ask for that year, and with it I received Beastie Boys' "Licensed to Ill," a Red Hot Chili Peppers greatest hits collection, Rihanna's "Good Girl Gone Bad: Reloaded," Prince's "Purple Rain" and a Selena Gomez record I can't quite remember the name of.

My dad thought it was a waste of money with everything on streaming nowadays and to an extent, I agree with him. I've spent more than I'd like to admit building my collection, but for vinyl lovers, the plastic disc transcends its material form to take on a deeper meaning.

Would it have been cheaper to just use my Spotify? Definitely. I bet my Spotify Wrapped would be way more accurate, too.

Still, I lugged my turntable and accompanying records across state lines, its needle taped down and my fingers crossed it'd make it to Spokane in one piece (it did). I spent hours reorganizing my collection again and again, selling off what I didn't listen to anymore and rotating my display of current favorites. I've found myself shelling out more than I thought I would just for a disc with two unreleased songs on it (and yes, it was worth it).



By SYDNEY FLUKER

Collecting vinyl gave me new connections to other music lovers who appreciate the physical nature of it. A couple years ago, my friends and I scoured Spokane's vinyl stores almost on a weekly basis. We'd dig through the crates at Resurrection Records before heading back to one of our houses to spin what we found.

Sometimes, I walk away empty-handed. Sometimes, I find a \$3 record from the used bin with worn, white edges that pops and crackles the first time it's played. Other times it's vinyl that rerecorded some of its songs to make them special for that edition, making the listening experience different from what one would find online. Sometimes it's a Black Flag demo record

from 1982 with a crazy cover and some of your favorite songs on it stripped down to their original versions and even though it doesn't sound as great as the versions on Spotify, it still earns a spot in your rotation.

A day spent browsing record stores with friends, whether for CDs, cassettes or vinyl, is always a day well spent — even if you leave with nothing.

I've even grown attached to the sound that comes after the album closes out and those few seconds of silence pass, that gentle whirring letting you know the machine is still going. Then, the needle is lifted, spinning its own beautiful mix of a scratch and a light pop that signals me to flip it over.

Those final few seconds have become important to me in my almost decade of collecting and listening to vinyls. It requires me to physically respond to the ending of an album, to give it the attention and care it deserves by dusting the surface before swapping sides. Even if I decide to let silence fill the room, I have to wipe down and store away the vinyl before the process is complete.

Listening to vinyl takes work and can be a tough choice to make when Spotify's playlists never end, but not everything needs to be easy. The connection and excitement I've found collecting vinyl has made it all worth it.

Sydney Fluker is a copy editor. Follow them on X: @sydneymlfluker.

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All written correspondence will be considered fit for printing unless otherwise requested. Email letters to bulletin@zagmail.gonzaga.edu with "OPINION" in the subject header. The deadline for letter submission is 4 p.m., Tuesday.

The Gonzaga Bulletin is a weekly student publication serving the Gonzaga community. Weekly circulation is 3,000. Opinions expressed in the pages of The Gonzaga Bulletin represent the views of their respective authors and not necessarily those of the faculty, student body or administration of Gonzaga University. Please direct all queries to bulletin@zagmail.gonzaga.edu or 509-313-6826.

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## Become the next Iron Zag at the RFC

Other than The Kennel on gameday, the Rudolf Fitness Center may be the hottest spot on Gonzaga University's campus.

From gym bros to Lululemon-clad girls repping their Stanley cups, students gather here for myriad reasons. Some are chasing Olympic dreams while others are just beginning their fitness journey. Others go in hopes of finally mustering up the courage to ask their "gym crush" out on a date. Still, one constant remains.

The RFC provides every Zag the opportunity to find their greatness.

When students arrive at GU, they are promised many things such as a premier basketball team, an exemplary learning environment and a Jesuit education. While these things bolster GU's resume and compel many gullible parents, the RFC is where students truly come into their own.

The epitome of greatness can be found every afternoon on the floors of the RFC basketball courts. Harnessing the power of Drew Timme, students from all skill levels shed blood, sweat and tears in hopes that Mark Few might just walk by and offer them a spot on the team. Individuals dominate the courts and relive their glory days of being high school sensations.

The pickup basketball offered at the RFC is unparalleled.

The quest for finding greatness at the RFC extends beyond the courts.

Take a trip to the RFC's second level and witness treadmill mayhem. Here you will find a plethora of individuals fighting over these precious cardio machines. During the winter months, securing a free treadmill is similar to finding a



By WILLOW COLLINS

diamond in the rough — a pursuit not for the faint of heart. Be prepared to battle all kinds of Zags for treadmill access, including the entire cross-country team.

For the unrelenting cardio junkies out there, the RFC offers many other ways to get a good cardio-based workout: ellipticals, spin bikes, Stairmasters and even an indoor track.

Hate cardio and basketball? Do not fret.

For those looking to become the next Arnold Schwarzenegger, the RFC offers nearly ten full squat racks, dumbbells galore, cable machines and a variety of other lifting equipment.

Lads and lasses fill the weight room and lift serious weight in hopes of becoming the next Iron Zag. If you are itching for a humorous spectacle, take a peek at the northwest corner of the weight room which is lined with mirrors. Here, "gym bros" congregate to check out their enormous muscles and flex them for the world to see.

While the RFC helps students cultivate greatness, it is far from perfect, and its flaws should be addressed.

Unfortunately, weekend

warriors are left high and dry since the RFC does not open until 9 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The nocturnal fitness junkies are also limited by the gym's modest hours and balk for 24/7 gym access to maximize their gains.

Don't get me started on the music. The gravest mistake any gym-goer could make is forgetting their headphones. The random assortment of music that is played throughout the day does not provide any source of motivation, only utter frustration.

The gym is also missing something that many hold dear to them — a steam room and sauna. During Spokane's freezing winter months, steam rooms and saunas offer many health benefits and a way to stay warm. While it might seem like an entitled request, even the local YMCA offers sauna access to its members.

Remember that indoor track mentioned earlier? While it is a good substitute for a treadmill, it takes a grueling 11 laps to reach one mile. Makes you feel dizzy just thinking about it.

Despite these shortcomings, the RFC still aids students in their fitness journeys, helps people find community, and even allows some to relive their glory days of being sensational youth athletes. It is the mecca of student life at GU. More importantly, the RFC is a place outside the classroom where Zags find and achieve greatness.

What are you waiting for? Kickstart your fitness journey this year and pay a visit to the RFC.

Willow Collins is a staff writer.

# ★ ★ NOW SHOWING ★ ★



Rogue Heart Media Founder Megan Kennedy said she wants her work to be "purpose driven and fulfilling."

MYERS GORRELL IG: @myersgphoto

## ROGUE HEART MEDIA PRODUCTION FIRM GIVES BACK TO COMMUNITY

By SOPHIA MCKINSTRY

**P**urpose and intent: these are two of the qualities that Megan Kennedy — founder, filmmaker and creative director at Rogue Heart Media — carries with her when it comes to any project she works on.

A woman-owned and operated media company based out of Spokane that focuses on amplifying community stories through photography and video, the business is coming up on its 13th anniversary.

Kennedy founded Rogue Heart Media at the age of 25, after graduating from Washington State University's communications program. She settled down in Spokane soon after and has been living in the area ever since.

The idea behind the business stemmed from her love of nonfiction, which has been one of Kennedy's interests since she was young.

"Inspiration-wise, it was like gosh, if you're going to show up for work every day you want it to be purpose driven and fulfilling," Kennedy said. "I've found that it's been exciting over the years to connect with creatives who are driven by those similar values and who show up with the intent to invest in their skills and creative energy towards that goal."

Kennedy said that at Rogue Heart, they don't do what may be considered traditional marketing or advertising.

Rather, she said the main focus is on storytelling.

"[We are] committed to authenticity and uplifting stories that are powered for the greater good," Kennedy said.

Kennedy has always found storytelling to be important, regardless of what medium it comes in. She wrote for her school's newspaper in college and said journalistic

ethics and truth have always been things she takes seriously when it comes to not distorting a story or manipulating what should be the intent.

She said at Rogue Heart, she wants the stories being told to be as authentic as possible.

"There's just such a strong sense of the values that drive us at Rogue Heart, that for whatever time somebody is with us, that cohesion is really rewarding and that kind of shared sense of what we're all about," Kennedy said.

Rogue Heart works largely with nonprofits in the area, as well as some government projects. In recent years, it has become almost 100% referral-based. When it comes to projects involving government agency, it submits a proposal.

When working with a client, the Rogue Heart team wants each relationship to be intentional. They focus on understanding the mission of the business they're working with and are collaborative throughout the process, from sitting down for the initial brainstorm of ideas to being out in the field filming content. Kennedy said businesses act as a liaison to access and are directly involved with on-site research and interviews that take place.

"Always for us, it's about coming in and working to more truly and deeply understand what our clients are about," Kennedy said. "I love helping our client partners ... distill the most impactful, heartfelt parts of their story so that they can connect better with their community."

Kennedy said the company's emphasis on complexity has become one of her favorite values and something she applies to the projects she works on.

"It's so easy for storytellers to just go to what's quick, what's the hook and making

the content as short and memorable as possible, which is a great tactic for short-term but we lose so much when we don't go deeper," Kennedy said.

The timeline of a project can vary between four to five weeks, to over two years. Themes range from houselessness, to salmon conservation and other social issues.

"At times, we're dealing with pretty heavy stuff, but there is still a sense of kind of ... lightness in what we do, because there's always hope involved," Kennedy said. "Hope is such a large theme in most of our work."

Janessa Lawson is the office impact manager and has been working for Rogue Heart since 2021. She manages the social media accounts, does video editing and a number of other tasks in her role.

Lawson said her position at Rogue Heart has allowed her to grow creatively and step out of her comfort zone, and she feels like she has been able to mesh her personal passions with her work.

"It was just like a really good fit for me, both like flexibility-wise but also just like interest-wise," Lawson said. "I've always been kind of involved in the community."

Giving back to the community is especially important to the work that Rogue Heart does; it hosts fundraisers, does screenings of films where ticket sales go to its partner clients and provides discounts on services.

"When we are looking to give back, we are often giving back to those community partners, those clients first," Kennedy said.

Rogue Heart is also a B Corp certified business.

It received the certification in November 2022, after a process which Lawson said was long and rigorous.

Businesses who choose to apply for B Corp certification have to provide answers with documentation on its business practices and the business as a whole to prove that it is qualified for the certification.

In the future, Lawson said she wants to be involved in service projects, continue connecting with other local businesses and potentially start a local B chapter.

Rogue Heart also has a work anniversary milestone, meaning when employees reach their work anniversary they are able to donate \$100 to a nonprofit beneficiary of their choice.

At the moment, the team is largely made up of women and has fewer than 10 employees. While this hasn't always been the case, Kennedy said the environment is very collaborative because of this.

"We're a small team, so we all wear a lot of hats," Kennedy said.

In terms of goals for this year, Kennedy said she wants to continue being a sustainable business, in all aspects of the word. She hopes to continue supporting and maintaining clients, and she also wants to uplift projects that place an emphasis on environmental issues, similar to ones Rogue Heart has been involved with in the past.

"In both the business and just personally and professionally, I would just like to see growth," Lawson said.

*Sophia McKinstry is a diversity editor. Follow her on X: @sophymckinstry.*



# SPOKANE POET STEPHEN PITTERS SHARES HIS 'LIVED EXPERIENCE'

By NATALIE KELLER

In honor of Black History Month and to help people write about their “lived experiences,” local poet and author Stephen Pitters will lead a poetry workshop on Tuesday. Hosted by Spokane nonprofit organization Spark Central, Pitters will speak about his experiences as a Black man attending college in the 1960s and guide attendees through a poetry-writing exercise.

“I’ve gotten to see Stephen run a workshop at Spark before,” said Leah Dawdy, a program and volunteer manager at Spark Central. “It’s a really simplified way of writing poetry without any barriers.”

Pitters said he will encourage workshop attendees to write their poems from a perspective with which they are familiar.

“Write what you know, and what you know most about is you,” Pitters said. “You can be so creative because you’re free to express that which you know.”

Pitters said his own perspective has been shaped by his life experiences.

Growing up in New York City, Pitters said his childhood friends and classmates came from a diverse range of backgrounds.

“There were Black students, Spanish students, Asian students — all the groups, we hung out together on the block,” Pitters said. “We were always in a multicultural dynamic.”

This changed when Pitters began attending college in Louisiana in 1967. Pitters said he was the only Black student living on-campus at the time, which he said was not always easy.

“I lived what I call ‘the craziness’ and the behaviors of people towards other people,” Pitters said. “I’ve lived it. I survived it.”

The 1960s as a whole, he said, was an era of both tumult and progress.

“When it comes to change, it was the greatest time of social change in this country,” Pitters said.

His parents and upbringing, Pitters said, was what prepared him to face the challenges he encountered at college.

“I’d have to say ‘thank you’ to my parents because they allowed us a lot of

freedom to move about and to make our own decisions,” Pitters said. “So when you go into a situation like the one I ended up going into, you didn’t fall apart because you were comfortable with who you were.”

Today, Pitters lives in Spokane and writes poetry, reads poetry on the radio and leads workshops like the upcoming event at Spark Central.

“When Stephen came in and asked if he could do this, it was an instant ‘yes,’” Dawdy said. “We want to elevate community voices like Stephen’s and want to get fresh perspectives and historical perspectives.”

Dawdy said Spark Central hosts numerous free creative programs for people of all ages with a mission in mind.

“We ignite creativity, innovation and imagination so people can forge their path to their best future,” she said. “Our real, down-to-earth goal is to make sure that people have access, without any kind of barriers, to the sorts of expression and innovation that they’re the most interested in.”

Pitters said he hopes Spark Central’s mission will come to fruition at his poetry workshop.

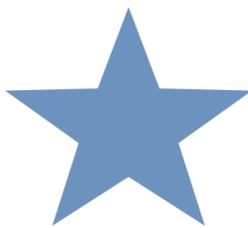
“I hope that people who come, regardless of age, will find a way to express themselves in a real way,” he said. “It’s like telling a story — tell a story about who you are, what you are, where you are.”

The poet also said that creativity can be a powerful thing.

“You let your creativity blossom,” Pitters said. “The mind takes you all over the place.”

Stephen Pitters’ “The Lived Experience: A Poetry Workshop” will be held Tuesday from 5-7 p.m. at the Spark Central building at 1214 W. Summit Parkway. The program is free and open to people of all ages.

*Natalie Keller is an arts & entertainment editor.*



# PIVOTING THROUGH FIRSTS: SAFE SPACES FOR STORYTELLING

By RUBY GROSS

On Jan. 25, Pivot audience members filled curving rows of chairs and stood against the exposed brick walls of the Washington Cracker Co. building to watch six storytellers take the stage in sequence. Pivot is Spokane’s local, live storytelling event open to the public and hosted once a quarter.

“This will be a standing-room only show,” said host Bean Johnston.

Around 250 supporters packed in on Jan. 26 to see “Firsts.”

Each Pivot session has an open-ended theme, like “Firsts,” to which community members link personal tales — from comedic and animated to inspiring and emotional.

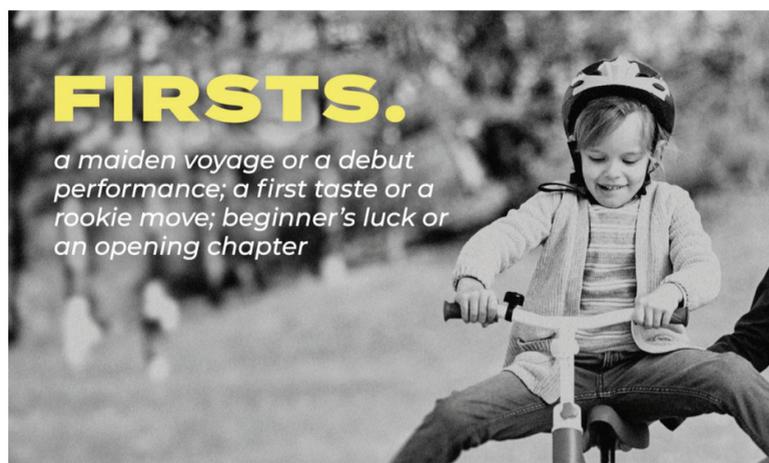
“Firsts” featured returning D.J. Norman Robbins behind the table. He spins interludes to match the mood of stories or give nods to their content afterward.

“I want to say over a year ago was my first time DJing this event, and it’s one of my favorite things to be a part of,” Robbins said.

Pivot Spokane has grown into a nonprofit organization since the project began several years ago, and the stage of the Washington Cracker Co. building has been the choice for Pivot events because of its downtown setting.

“When we first started Pivot it was really important to us that we had it in the heart of downtown Spokane; it’s an area to which we want to drive traffic,” Gonzaga University Adjunct Professor of integrated media and Pivot board member Morgan Marum said.

One of Pivot’s goals is to support local business, so guests at “Firsts” were encouraged to grab a drink or snack



COURTESY OF PIVOT SPOKANE'S WEBSITE.

Pivot storytelling is hosted in the Cracker Co. building located at 304 W Pacific Ave.

from the night’s sponsors who share the property.

GU’s similar student-led event, “Story Slam,” began about 10 years ago, inspired by “The Moth” storytelling. Marum hosted GU Story Slam in its early days and has helped the idea expand to Pivot since.

“That feeling that we had in Wolff Auditorium on-campus is the exact feeling that we aim to create here in downtown Spokane for anyone and everyone,” Marum said.

Yet, a safe space to share a story can’t be relocated at the push of a button; Marum and Pivot are conscious of building up culture as they have grown.

“We’re really intentional about the space we set up, and the messaging we use to encourage people to join us,” Marum said. “There’s an understanding

and a mutual respect for the listener and the storyteller at both events.”

The culture of support within Pivot extends beyond listener and speaker. Storytellers are offered coaching resources to make their narrative come to life.

“They help you work through the presentation of your story and give you tips and guidance to really help you feel confident when you get up onstage,” said Nicole Mischke, a former storyteller.

While performers are asked not to use notes or aides, Mischke said the other Pivot guests create a safe place to be imperfect.

“The audience is always very forgiving and encouraging,” Marum said. “There are moments where people can forget something or pause for a second and that’s OK. I think it’s a very safe place to

come and share a story.”

For some, the chance to share something personal to a crowd of strangers is a major appeal of Pivot.

“I shared a story that I had never told anyone before,” Mischke said. “Oftentimes for things that we have to keep secret, it’s easier to share with strangers than it is to look someone in the eye that you know, and love, and tell them something you’ve been hiding.”

Marum said it was incredible to see her peers be vulnerable and share stories that are difficult to say out loud.

On a Pivot stage off-campus, the event is recorded in partnership with Spokane Public Radio. Storytellers agree to share their story with a larger audience, and past shows can be found on Spokane Public Radio’s website, under “A-Z Shows,” and on YouTube and Spotify.

If interested in sharing a story at Pivot, Zags can visit its website. The organization can also be reached via email at pivotspokane@gmail.com. Follow @pivotspokane on Facebook and Instagram to stay updated about events and projects.

*Ruby Gross is a staff writer.*

# What's in a recipe: Homey French onion and cannellini bean soup

COMMENTARY  
By MADDIE REED

There is something so dreary and bleak about the month of January. Classes are back in session, the sun still sets at 5 p.m. and the snow and ice seem to keep everyone in a perpetual cold agony.

It is this month — more than all the others — that makes me yearn for a home-cooked meal, especially after being reminded of the comforts of home over the holidays. With a college-sized budget, however, these cravings are hard to curb.

Last winter, while trying to fill this void, I began experimenting with one ingredient that became my saving grace in these long Spokane winters: beans. I know it seems silly to idolize such a simple food, but I came to realize how much of an incredible gift they are to us students — fully functional with appetizing health benefits, tastes and prices.

This recipe puts a hearty twist on the timeless french onion soup. Surprisingly cheap and nutrient-dense, this simple dish will leave you comforted on even the coldest days.

French Onion & Cannellini Bean Soup (est. 1 hour cooking time)

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons of butter or olive oil
- 2 white onions
- 1 quart of vegetable or beef stock
- 2 cans of cannellini beans
- 2/3 cup of your favorite cheese for garnish
- Sourdough bread
- 2 garlic cloves minced, or 1 tablespoon pre-minced garlic

Oregano, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper to taste (add whatever you want or have)

### Step 1

Slice your onions roughly. In a large pot melt butter and add in the onions, on medium-low heat. After about five minutes, you can add an optional teaspoon of sugar to the pot to aid this process. Stir occasionally until onions are fully browned and reduced, between 15-25 minutes.

### Step 2

Once the onions are fully caramelized, add the garlic, red pepper flakes, oregano and



COURTESY OF MADELEINE REED

This timeless french onion soup with a twist is budget friendly and will keep you warm all winter long.

salt and pepper to taste. Stir around until the garlic becomes fragrant. Then, add in the beans and stock and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat, and allow to simmer until the broth has thickened slightly.

After about 20 minutes, your soup will be done. As an additional fancy step, place soup

into a ramekin with one slice of sourdough bread and some cheese (gruyere works great for this method) and broil until the cheese is slightly melted.

Or, if you are in a rush (or are afraid of the broiler on your college oven), simply garnish your bowl with some cheese on top and toast your bread on the

side. And voila! A simple, hearty meal that will warm you from the inside out.

Enjoy with some friends or prepare for dinners on a busy week.

Madeleine Reed is a digital editor.



ISABELLA STOUT IG: @isabellacarlin.photography

GU Country Swing Dance club is open to both beginner and experienced dancers with a goal of building community.

## SWING

Continued from Page 1

skill level and gives the opportunity for more advanced dancers to show off their skills.

While the moves will build on each other, Raap said that the moves do not necessarily increase in difficulty from week to week.

"[The moves] have different difficulty levels, but a lot of them are pretty similar and the difficulty is more just knowing them," Raap said. "And so, typically, if you know what you're doing, then you can work through that difficulty level; it doesn't rank up."

According to Raap, her love of dance and desire to share it with others comes, in part, from her experience dancing with

her family.

"There was always a positive culture around it because my experiences dancing with my family are some of the happiest memories of my past," Raap said.

Away from home, Raap had also experienced this positive culture and the community of swing dance while in Spokane. Part of the reason she wanted to create a swing dance club was to extend this community to GU.

"[Spokane Valley's] culture is amazing," Raap said. "People just want to learn, and they're so nice to each other. I wanted to create a place for that."

Community building and connection are also part of what Fernandes said she loves most about swing dancing. According to Fernandes, swing dancing is what helped strengthen her bond with Raap when the two were roommates.

"We came into this barely knowing each other, and then now, partially because of line and swing dancing, we're closer than ever," Fernandes said.

Finding community and becoming more involved with campus events was one of the reasons sophomore Isabel Granados attended the club's first meeting. While Granados said she was a little nervous at first, the club meeting exceeded her expectations.

"It's been super fun and really fast paced," Granados said. "It's been so fun to meet new people while doing partner dances."

Swing dance also helped Neumeyer create friendships, which she said was especially helpful as a first-year student.

"[Swing dance] promotes a lot of really good community," Neumeyer said. "You can go out and meet a bunch of nice people

who just want to all help each other grow within our community."

In addition to creating community within GU, engaging within the greater Spokane community is another mission of the club. One hope of the club is to host events, teaching swing dance to individuals in the Logan neighborhood and greater Spokane communities.

The club also plans on holding an event on Valentine's Day, where they will be teaching special moves and a popular line dance.

GU Country Swing Club meets on Wednesday from 7-9 p.m. in the Cataldo Globe Room. To connect with the club or learn more about upcoming events, visit its Instagram or TikTok pages, @gu\_countryswingclub.

Clarime Kirk is a news editor.

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'Mean Girls' (2024) is an adaptation of 'Mean Girls' on Broadway rather than the cult classic 'Mean Girls' (2004).

# New 'Mean Girls' is so 'not fetch'

## Musical adaptation offered a lackluster performance compared to its predecessors

COMMENTARY  
By KAELYN NEW

As Regina George would say: Stop trying to make "Mean Girls" (2024) happen. It's not going to happen.

There are few things better than watching the cult classic "Mean Girls" (2004) as an adolescent. I can almost confidently say that there was no other movie as fundamental to my development.

So, I was hesitant when it was announced that there would be a film adaptation of the Broadway version. I believe some things are better left untouched, and "Mean Girls" (2024) only further solidified this notion.

For obvious reasons, I did some resetting of my expectations before entering the theater. Since "Mean Girls" (2024) is an adaptation of Broadway's "Mean Girls," I knew that the movie wasn't going to be exactly like the 2004 film.

However, by the film's finale I concluded that it was nothing more than a lackluster, half-hearted and overly sanitized performance filled to the brim with product placement and entirely devoid of spirit — one that was so poorly created that half of the audience in the theater where I was watching it walked

out after the very first song.

I think that most of my critique rests in the dreadful scripting. It is obvious that the writers and creative team wanted to appeal to what they believed Gen Z would find appealing. However, therein lies a fundamental problem: The screenplay writers are middle-aged at best. They simply cannot pander to a younger audience's humor.

Something about the original "Mean Girls" that made it so appealing was its timelessness, and the new film does away with any semblance of replication by including culturally relevant meme-able phrases and Shein-esque styling. In an effort to keep up with the cycle of modern trends, many of the nods to modern terminology and social media have obviously since become outdated since the movie was filmed.

My largest gripe with the movie is that it completely lacks any of the bite, so to speak, of the original film. Many of the best lines or moments from the 2004 film were cut or replaced in this version which, in my opinion, reflects the screenplay writers' and directors' efforts to toe the line between the raunchiness of the original and the vicious modern cycle of cancel culture.

As a result, the movie ends up boasting half-baked women's

empowerment and political correctness which makes the "mean girls" in the movie, namely Regina George, Gretchen Wieners and Karen Smith, barely even mean.

It was almost as if the characters were continuously performing their own introspection to their actions, undercutting the purpose of the original film's satire. These characters weren't originally meant to be likable nor were they meant to be entirely relatable. The 2004 film satirizes the cliquey, shallow nature of high schoolers while providing an important conclusion wherein main character Cadie Heron realizes that there is more to life than popularity.

In the 2024 film's refusal to critique any of the characters, this rendition felt entirely aimless as it meandered through pop-ified versions of Broadway songs toward a cheap conclusion. None of the characters were relatable, few of them were funny and I felt bored by the same plotline that I once loved from the 2004 version.

While I would argue that the best part of the film was when it ended, I can give some credit where it's due.

René Rapp's interpretation of Regina George was arguably the closest to the original Rachel McAdams' performance compared to the other actors' renditions

of the original characters. I think that she did a phenomenal job with the poor scripting that was given, and it would be improper to not acknowledge her vocal prowess. Formerly cast as Regina George in the Broadway musical, I argue that Rapp did the best with what she was given.

Jacquel Spivey's take on Damian Hubbard was also commendable. He was able to add some comedic relief to the two-hour montage of uninspired singing and dialogue. I also think he recreated elements of the character's persona that were, only in this one case, refreshing.

While I must admit that I was checking the time throughout the film anticipating its conclusion, there was one joke which did make me audibly laugh near the film's conclusion. For that, I cannot say that the experience was entirely a waste of time.

That said, I will say that I don't think I can willingly subject myself to this experience again. In the words of Gretchen Wieners, that was so not fetch.

Rating: 2/10

Kaelyn New is a copy editor. Follow her on X: @kaelyn\_new.

# SUDOKU

THE SAMURAI OF PUZZLES By The Mephram Group

Level 1 2 3 4

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Solution to Last Week's puzzle

2/18/24

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

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

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## Los Angeles Times Sunday Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17						
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### FREE BOOZE

By Ed Sessa

- 1 God often depicted in a helmet
- 5 "Gracias a la vida" singer Mercedes
- 9 Fire sign
- 14 Marble piece
- 18 Lopsided win
- 19 K-12 appropriate
- 20 Dust-up
- 21 Fuel
- 22 Air freshener in the monkey house?
- 25 Artist Matisse
- 26 Secondhand music purchase
- 27 Buxtehude
- 28 "\_\_\_ you see that?"
- 29 "Game of Thrones" beast
- 30 D or C, in D.C.
- 31 Ready to take reservations?
- 34 LIBOL equivalent
- 36 Jiffy
- 37 Before now
- 38 Pink shade
- 42 Strange
- 45 Doohickey
- 48 College focus
- 53 Container for firecracker flowers?
- 56 Fun time
- 57 Jiffy \_\_\_
- 58 Pest in a cloud
- 59 The Mel-Tones lead singer
- 60 Rooked
- 61 Add yeast to
- 63 Broken mirror, for some
- 65 Better than expected, except on the links
- 68 Storm center
- 69 Jump-start?
- 73 Tina Fey's former show, for short
- 75 Hunter-gatherer period
- 76 Low bar?
- 79 Takes as one's own
- 81 White Claw container
- 82 \_\_\_ seas
- 85 Pelvic bones
- 86 With the bow, in music
- 87 One hanging around a cave
- 88 Apparel for linksbabies?
- 90 Used the oven
- 92 Mushroom in miso soup
- 94 \_\_\_ Jima
- 95 Edition
- 96 Actress Thurman
- 98 O'er and o'er again
- 99 "All seats taken" sign
- 100 Brynner of "The King and I"
- 102 (Soup or salad) and (chicken or fish), e.g.
- 103 Studio sign
- 104 "Yes and no"
- 105 Doc with a tongue depressor
- 106 Tuna cut
- 107 Co. interested in net neutrality
- 108 Potassium-rich fruit
- 109 Person
- 110 Patti who won a Tony
- 111 Psychodelic fungus, as Evita
- 112 French royal
- 113 Train conductor's leather
- 114 "That's the end of the ride for you!"
- 115 Morse clicks
- 116 Fetch player
- 117 Took some courses
- 118 Swanky do
- 119 Luggage
- 120 "Power Book III: Access, as a network"
- 121 Raising Kanan actor
- 122 Omar
- 123 Big barrel
- 124 Husky's load
- 125 \_\_\_ longlegs
- 126 TiVo, for one
- 127 Power generator
- 128 "\_\_\_ it my all"
- 129 Four-time presidential candidate Ralph
- 130 \_\_\_ mode
- 131 Reason for a detour
- 132 Follow directions
- 133 "The False Mirror" painter
- 134 Magritte
- 135 Arms treaty subjects, briefly
- 136 One who avoids all animal products except fish
- 137 Judds
- 138 Actress Wray
- 139 Audit pro
- 60 Words spoken with crossed fingers
- 61 "\_\_\_ USA": NPR program hosted by Maria Hinojosa
- 62 Environmentalist Brockovich
- 63 Cranberry field
- 64 Lion's share
- 65 Bobbed hairstyle
- 66 Like some Peruvian ruins
- 67 "Terrific"
- 68 Glosses over
- 69 Wound cover
- 70 Filmmaker Ephron
- 71 In \_\_\_ of
- 72 Cut with a beam
- 73 "The Last Jedi" pilot Dameron
- 74 New Haven Ivy Leaguer
- 75 Armed forces org.
- 76 Burrito morsel
- 77 Some image files
- 78 Soothing massage option
- 79 Crossed swords
- 80 Water feature with ornamental fish
- 81 Some humanities degs.
- 82 Spat
- 83 Battering ninth
- 84 Medieval poets
- 85 "The Rookie" actress Melissa
- 86 Ewe-like
- 87 Like loose-leaf paper
- 88 Outlast model
- 89 Spanish pronoun
- 90 City in southern France
- 91 Country in two continents
- 92 Apple players
- 93 Julianne of "Still Alice"
- 94 Follow
- 95 Judges
- 96 Actress Wray
- 97 Audit pro

# Men's basketball prepares to host 'physical' Saint Mary's squad

By CAM MCCANN

Gonzaga University men's basketball (16-5, 7-1 WCC) will host conference rival Saint Mary's (16-6, 7-0 WCC) in a clash between the undefeated in conference play Gaels and a GU team that finds itself unable to dominate in West Coast Conference play like it used to.

The last time these teams met in March, the Bulldogs came out on top 77-51. The Zags have only ever lost to the Gaels three times at home.

Saint Mary's struggled early on in the season, losing five of six games during an early nonconference stretch. However, it seems to have recovered in miraculous fashion, losing just one of the next 14 games.

The Gaels have shut down other top teams in the WCC, namely Santa Clara and San Francisco, winning by a margin of 24 and 17 points respectively. This dominance could spell trouble for a GU team that hasn't been able to string together wins and has found itself in tight contests with the likes of these two teams, even falling by a single point to Santa Clara on the road.

"After the loss against Santa Clara, we started really trying to buckle down on the mishaps that we had on the defensive end," said GU guard Nolan Hickman.

The defense has been a crucial factor for both teams this season. The Gaels have the second-best scoring defense in the nation, as teams are averaging 57.5 points per game against them. The team also boasts the best rebounding margin in the nation with a margin of 12 rebounds, while GU sits at 14th.

The Zags are looking forward to playing in front of a home crowd. In the last five seasons, the team has only had two losses in the Kennel, one being earlier this season against San Diego State.

"We love playing in the Kennel," said graduate forward Anton Watson. "I think the fans bring us so much energy."

While this home-court advantage will be a key factor, the Gaels have yet to lose on their opponent's turf, holding a road record of 5-0.

Sophomore Aidan Mahaney has been a big part of this success, dropping 22 points in the Gaels' road contest against USF while shooting a phenomenal 50% from beyond the arc.

Mahaney is projected to win a WCC Player of the Year Award as he is averaging 14.3 points per game while shooting 35.1% from three-point range. He has only given up five turnovers in conference play thus far.

Senior Mitchell Saxen plays a defensive role on the team, averaging a block and a half per game, elevating to almost two per game in conference play. Four Gaels are averaging double-digits in points per game.

"This will be a huge challenge," said GU head coach



DYLAN SMITH IG: @d.smithphotos

Gonzaga men's basketball holds a 42-13 record against the Gaels, defeating them 77-51 in their last meeting.

Mark Few about the Gaels. "We've got to play connected, we've got to play hard, we've got to be physical."

While there are familiar players to this matchup like Watson, the Gaels will see multiple new Zags, namely Graham Ike and Ryan Nembhard, who have both stepped up during conference play.

Ike's presence in the post has been utilized, as seen in GU's matchup against when GU played USF with four straight post feeds to start the second half. His free throw percentage of 74.7% is the best on the team during WCC play.

"We'll have a hard practice and I'll come back 30 minutes later and Graham [Ike] is still out there shooting and still working out," Watson said on Ike's work ethic. "That's just the type of guy he is. He has a bad game or bad practice, he's going to be back on that court and make sure everything's right."

Six Bulldogs have been averaging double-digit points during conference play, including forwards Ben Gregg and Braden Huff. Both have played key roles off the bench

this season.

Gregg hung 22 points on San Diego and has since moved to be a regular starter for the Zags, where he is averaging just over 11 points and eight and a half rebounds in his four starts.

As for Huff, he put up 26 points against San Diego and has been a spark plug off the bench this season as a redshirt freshman.

"He's been showing growth," Hickman said on Huff's growth since redshirting. "He's been knocking down the three ball. He's putting up numbers against anybody, so I feel like it's so dope to see him get the recognition he deserves and to get the minutes he deserves."

It will be a fun new chapter in the Gonzaga-Saint Mary's rivalry. As the undefeated road team comes to the legendary Kennel, fans can only speculate on the implications of a big win for either program.

Cam McCann is a staff writer.

## Oregon State and Washington State set to shake up West Coast Conference standings

COMMENTARY

By CAM MCCANN

The Oregon State Beavers and Washington State Cougars have temporarily joined the West Coast Conference for athletic competition starting in the 2024-25 season.

The two storied programs are set to join the WCC on an initial two-year contract.

The move encompasses all sports, with the exception of both schools' football and baseball programs. The Beavers and Cougars will play their conference football games in the Mountain West Conference.

Thayne McCulloh, Gonzaga University president and chair of the WCC president's council, released a statement on the new conference members.

"We are pleased with the opportunity to support Oregon State and Washington State with affiliate membership," McCulloh said. "Their addition to the WCC augments the national competitive excellence and fortifies the strength of the conference across these 12 sports. We look forward to partnering with these institutions as we continue to support our student-athletes, coaches and programs across the full range of our sponsored sports."

WSU and OSU's move comes as a result of the dissolution of the Pac-12 conference. While this may not be a lasting move, it can potentially provide conference parity in multiple different athletic programs in the immediate future.

"As we explore long-term solutions for the Pac-12 Conference and Washington State University, we appreciate commissioner Stu Jackson and the West Coast Conference for their partnership in providing 10 of our programs affiliate membership," said Washington State Director of Athletics Pat Chun.

The WCC may not be a Power Five conference, but it is a strong conference



DYLAN SMITH IG: @d.smithphotos

OSU and WSU to join the West Coast Conference starting in the 2024-25 season.

that competes for championships in many different sports and has several storied programs.

Basketball is at the heart of the WCC, with the conference currently boasting powerhouses such as GU and historically dominant teams including San Francisco.

A host of highly touted NBA and WNBA prospects have represented the WCC in professional basketball and numerous tournament appearances have come out of the conference in recent years.

WSU and OSU's women's basketball teams are currently both top programs, ranked in the top 25 of the most recent NCAA women's basketball NET rankings (No. 21 and 22, respectively).

While OSU and WSU's men's basketball programs teams lack consistent success, both have shown they are not

programs to be dismissed.

The Cougars took down highly ranked Arizona in a recent match and the Beavers have one of the more impressive recent tournament runs, making it to the Elite Eight as a 12-seed in 2021.

Outside of basketball, OSU's men's soccer team made the semifinals in the NCAA Tournament before falling to No. 2 seed Notre Dame. This was its deepest postseason run in program history.

WSU is also a formidable conference rival for GU in sports outside of basketball. Its women's tennis team left its mark at the most recent Gonzaga Invitational, capturing singles and doubles titles.

Baseball is a noticeable omission from the WCC's acquisition of OSU and WSU. The conference boasts several strong teams and missing out on OSU's

prestigious baseball program will be a marked loss for the conference.

OSU Athletic Director Scott Barnes has made it clear that playing a 56-game schedule labeled as an independent is a clear option for the program.

"Final decisions have not been made, but we're leaning into [being an independent baseball program]," Barnes said in an interview with The Oregonian. "Our program is best served as playing under the Pac-12 banner with an independent schedule. Build[ing] a schedule that is representative of what we're used to keeps the program at the highest level."

As for WSU's baseball program, their options include a small window to sign with the WCC, becoming an independent program or reaching agreement to join the Big 12 for baseball.

No decision on the baseball programs have been determined yet by either school.

The teams' move to the WCC is a great choice on an economically level, as both OSU and WSU are in close proximity to multiple WCC schools. This newfound ease of travel is an advantage that will not be held by former conference mates UCLA and USC when they make their jump to the Big 10.

Though OSU and WSU's contract with the WCC is only temporary, it will be an exciting two years for the conference, which will see a change in its usual standings across multiple sports.

Cam McCann is a staff writer.

## Graham Ike, Yvonne Ejim ensure Zag frontcourt sweeps WCC weekly awards

By ZACH WHITE

Gonzaga University's basketball program was well represented in the latest West Coast Conference weekly awards, with Graham Ike and Yvonne Ejim both named Player of the Week.

Ike earned his recognition behind dominant performances against San Francisco and Pacific. The junior forward scored 42 points in his matchups last week, with 37 of them coming in the second half.

Against the Dons, Ike scored 22 points and grabbed seven rebounds in a tense home matchup against a leading WCC contender. Ike scored 20 points on the road

to propel GU over a resilient Pacific team.

Ike won WCC Player of the Week for the first time this season, while becoming the third Zag to win the award this season.

On the women's side, Ejim received the award on the back of two double-double performances last week against San Francisco and Santa Clara.

The senior forward averaged 20 points across both games, while also dominating the glass by grabbing 13 rebounds in each contest.

Ejim's performances helped women's basketball maintain its 7-0 conference record and extend its current winning streak to 14 games. She has now been awarded

WCC Player of the Week for a fifth time in her GU career.

Ejim and women's basketball will return to action with a road matchup against San Diego on Thursday.

Ike and men's basketball are set to welcome Saint Mary's to the McCarthey Athletic Center on Saturday for its next contest.

Zach White is a sports editor.

# Women's tennis looks to show 'grit' in upcoming spring season

By KAYA CRAWFORD

The Gonzaga University women's tennis team is ready to make memories and have fun as the squad looks to make it to the conference tournament this season.

"I just want them to go out and have fun together," said head coach Natalie Pluskota-Hamberg. "This team will be together this year, and that's it. After that, people move on, so I really want them to enjoy their time together."

Last season, the Zags went 13-11 with a 4-5 record in conference play. They finished sixth in the West Coast Conference.

For seniors Tiegan Aitken and Kianna Oda, this season will be their last playing at the Stevens Center. Both athletes have played their entire collegiate career at GU and are stepping into a leadership position for the team this season.

"We like to see ourselves as leaders and we want to help get the most out of the underclassmen," Aitken said. "Kind of like lead by example and set a good culture and good standards for them to follow after we leave this year."

Aitken hails from Canterbury, England, and concluded last season with a 13-13 singles record and 13-11 overall doubles record. She moved into second for the most court five singles victories in a career with 15 wins and eighth for most conference singles victories in a career with 11 victories.

Aitken's six conference wins pushed her to have the third-most conference singles victories in a single season.

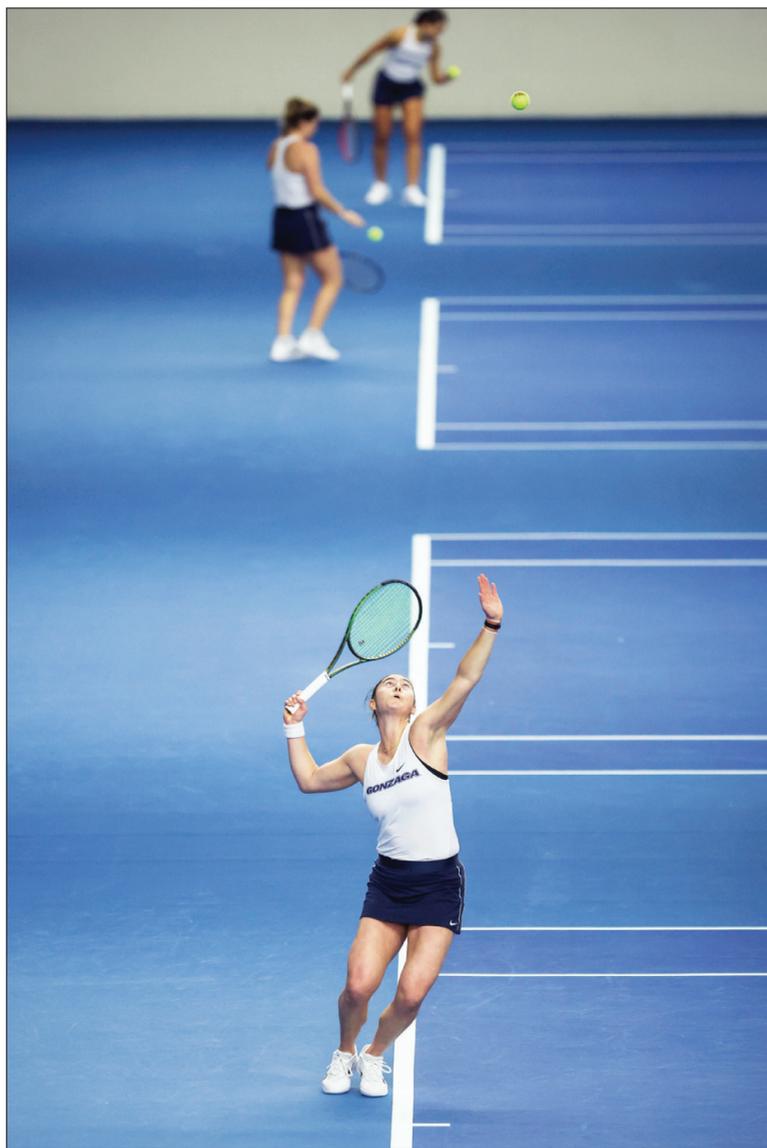
Oda, from Hilo, Hawai'i, finished last season with a 16-16 overall singles record and 15-13 doubles record. She tied for the fourth-most singles victories on court three in program history with nine wins.

Oda, when paired with Caroline Wernli, ended with a 4-0 record, a perfect winning percentage for the pair.

"They've got great temperament and they're fun to be around," said Pluskota-Hamberg of Aitken and Oda. "They're exciting to watch and play, so we're lucky to have those guys in leadership positions."

The rest of the team is mostly underclassmen with some freshmen playing key roles on the team.

Freshman Emily Robertson of Redondo Beach, California, is already playing a large role on the team, competing in the No. 1 spot. She has already clinched singles victories against



Senior Tiegan Aitken is set for a leader role in her fourth year with women's tennis.

Georgetown and Montana in three-set battles and a quick victory against Cal Poly.

Robertson and Oda are paired in the No. 1 spot for doubles this season.

"She's got a pretty big role in this team coming in as a freshman and playing line

one for us," Aitken said. "I think she has a great work ethic and if she keeps working hard and putting in the time that she is, I think she'll be a big part of the team and really help us go far."

Ella Nielson of Port Moody, British Columbia, is another freshman who has

had a strong start to the semester after securing wins against Montana and Georgetown. She has been paired with Aitken for doubles this season.

"Ella had a great win against Montana. She also had a great win down at Georgetown and clinched a pretty big match for us," Pluskota-Hamberg said.

The team is rounded out by freshman Savannah Johnson, redshirt freshman Brooke Bittner, sophomores Lia Espinal and Rose Hayes and junior Caroline Wernli.

Wernli maintained a singles winning percentage of 60% and a doubles percentage of 57.1% last season. Hayes, in her first season with the Zags, led in singles winning percentage at 66.7% and in court three doubles victories with seven wins.

Pluskota-Hamberg is going into her third year as head coach for the Zags. She was an assistant coach at GU for four years before moving into the head coach role. Caitlyn Williams is entering her second season as an assistant coach for the women's tennis team.

"They're both very supportive and encouraging to all of us," Aitken said. "They really help us enjoy ourselves when on the court and also encourage us to think for ourselves and put game plans into play against our opponents. I feel like the coaches do a good job of catering to each player individually to help get them to perform at their best."

GU is 2-2 this season, securing wins over Georgetown (5-2) and Montana (5-2) before suffering defeats to Cal Poly (6-1) and Washington (7-0). This season, the team is looking to make it to the WCC Tournament and develop as individuals and a team as they tackle tough competition.

Pluskota-Hamberg also emphasized the importance of the team making memories together and building relationships this season.

"This group has a lot of grit. They're fun to watch compete," Pluskota-Hamberg said. "They work really hard day in and day out, but they just don't give up, which is something that's fun for Caitlyn and I to be a part of. It's definitely rewarding for us, so I'm just excited to see the rest of the year."

Kaya Crawford is a sports editor.

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# Gonzaga in uphill battle to reach March Madness

COMMENTARY  
By CAROLINE SLACK

For the first time in recent memory, the Gonzaga University men's basketball team is out of the Associated Press Top 25 Poll.

While the Zags are no stranger to being unranked, this is the first time in 143 weeks that the team has fallen out of the rankings. The team held the streak since March 2016 and spent 39 of those 143 weeks in the No. 1 spot in the rankings.

That's right — the last time the Zags weren't ranked, they had yet to make a Final Four or National Championship appearance. Braden Huff was in the sixth grade, Tommy Lloyd was still an assistant coach and their highest-rated recruit at the time, Zach Collins, had yet to graduate from high school.

Simply put, if you are an undergrad, this is the first time the team has been unranked since you were a college student and, in many cases, a high school student.

If you are a fan of GU men's basketball, then you know that this season has been a roller coaster. If you are anything like me, you hardly have any fingernails left to bite, and your heart rate and blood pressure spike to the point that you are scared you might end up in the hospital with a heart attack watching some of these games.

But how did we get to this point, where even some of the top basketball analysts in the nation are doubting GU making it to the NCAA Tournament?

The Zags suffered some significant losses in their nonconference play. After starting the season 2-0, a 10-point loss in November to second-ranked Purdue at the Maui Invitational marked the first loss of the season.

After a nail-biter against UCLA two days later with the Bulldogs coming out on top 69-65, it seemed like things were back in the Zags' favor.

That is, until they took a trip to Seattle to play in-state rival, University of Washington. What seemed like it should've been an easy win resulted in a five point loss that snapped the Bulldogs' 16 game win streak against Pac-12 opponents that dated back to the 2014-15 season.

The following week's game against No. 5 UConn at Climate Pledge Arena didn't help either as it resulted in a 76-63 loss. Currently, UConn is ranked first in



JOSHUA GARCIA IG: flamedflicks

**GU is 0-4 in Quad 1 games, with a chance for a Quad 1 win against St. Mary's on Saturday.**

the AP Poll. Is Seattle just bad luck for the Zags?

The New Year's spirit also might've put a bad taste in the Zags' mouth — a home loss to San Diego State University on Dec. 28 landed the team at an 8-4 record heading into conference play.

The first two weeks of conference play didn't start well. After starting conference play 2-0, the Zags were upset on the road at Santa Clara 77-76.

Part of the Bulldogs' issues come from losing a key player before the season even started. Junior Steele Venters tore his ACL in practice in November after just one preseason game.

The transfer from Eastern Washington has sat out ever since, with his spot in the starting lineup shared by freshman guard Dusty Stromer and redshirt junior forward Ben Gregg.

This year's squad is particularly young. Only one starter, Anton Watson, has had more than three years of experience, with Ryan Nembhard, Graham Ike and Nolan Hickman, all third years, along with Stromer rounding out the roster.

That said, the fact that the team

remained ranked for as long as they did seemed respectful on the part of the ranking committee. For the final two weeks that the Zags were ranked, they took up two of the last three remaining spots: No. 24 and 23.

Was it just a common courtesy that GU remained ranked in second to last place for what may be their final ranking of the season? Perhaps.

The Bulldogs are missing some players who were key to the team's success in the past, which may be a part of their struggles.

Another notable absence from this year's team is its all-time scoring leader, Drew Timme, who declared for the NBA Draft after playing his senior season. While the fan favorite did not get drafted, he did sign a contract with the Milwaukee Bucks and has been playing with their G-League Affiliate, the Wisconsin Herd.

Also notable absence is Julian Strawther. The Las Vegas native declared for the NBA Draft, forgoing his final year of college eligibility. Strawther was drafted 29th overall by the Indiana Pacers and traded to the Denver Nuggets.

GU  
SPORTS

**Thursday, Feb. 1**

- ➔ Women's basketball at San Diego, San Diego, California, 7 p.m.
- ➔ Track and Field at Riverfront Invite & Multis, Spokane, Washington, All Day

**Saturday, Feb. 3**

- ➔ Women's basketball vs. Pacific, 2 p.m.
- ➔ Men's basketball vs. Saint Mary's, 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, Feb. 6**

- ➔ Men's basketball vs. Portland, 5 p.m.

\*Home games in bold\*

GU also lost both Efton Reid III and Hunter Sallis to Wake Forest and Dominick Harris to Loyola Marymount. Abe Eagle and Kaden Perry also left the team.

The Bulldogs haven't had the best season so far, whether that's due to a younger starting lineup, tougher competition than seasons past or the loss of some key players. At this point, all that's left to do is hope and pray that the Zags survive the rest of conference play without another loss and somehow make it to March Madness.

*Caroline Slack is a staff writer.*



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