



After a trip to the Big Apple, Rams find more success at home

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

After faltering to Duke University and the University of Wisconsin in the 2K Classic, VCU men's basketball rebounded with two home contest victories this week — defeating American University 72-44 on Nov. 25 and Old Dominion University 76-67 Nov. 28.

“I thought it was a good win,” said Head Coach Will Wade regarding the Rams’ win over rival ODU on Saturday. “We played probably the best we played at home this year.”

Benefited by a blackout crowd, the Stu presented a sweltering atmosphere for the visiting Monarchs in their quest to defeat VCU in consecutive season. Last year, VCU traveled down I-64 in a road contest against the Monarchs, ultimately succumbing by a lackluster performance, losing 73-67.

In that matchup, ODU guard Aaron Bacote put 31 points on the visiting Rams, propelling his team to victory single handedly.

In Saturday's matchup, Bacote got off to a similar start, as Bacote and the Monarchs marched out to a 9-3 lead to start the game. ODU presented a matchup Wade was forced to adjust during the game.

“That was me, you can put

—continued on page 6



JeQuan Lewis put up 16 points on Saturday at the Stu, making him the leading scorer for the Rams in the 76-67 win over Old Dominion University.

PHOTO BY AIDRY DUBON

Father of deceased student asks public for help, information

FADEL ALLASSAN
Staff Writer

The father of a VCU senior who passed away Halloween weekend is pleading for anyone with information of his son's death to inform authorities.

Paul Ducic, the father, said his son was dressed as a doctor for Halloween. He is asking the public to think back to the morning of his son's death and for anyone who remembers seeing a young man in a white lab coat walking in the area to contact Richmond Police.

According to Richmond Police, officers working on East Canal Street were flagged down in reference to a person, later identified as Christopher Ducic, down in the roadway shortly before 1:15 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 1.

Police said Ducic was unconscious and not breathing. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Following an autopsy, the medical examiner

determined Ducic's death to be accidental and stemming from a fall.

“This is the kind of thing that will pretty much shake you to your core.” Paul told NBC12, “I can't even begin to describe the horror we went through.”

Paul Ducic told NBC12 that 21-year-old Chris attended a party on the night of Halloween at his Triangle fraternity before attending two birthday parties with his fraternity brothers.

Afterward, Chris' father said his son headed to Off-The-Hookah, a popular bar in Shockoe Bottom, where Chris' friends left while he stayed behind with another group of unidentified friends.

Ducic's body was found on the 100 block of East Canal Street, about one mile from Off-The-Hookah and a block from his residence on the 00 block of East Canal street. Police said Chris had been

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Transphobic violence hits historic high

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff Writer

Though Caitlyn Jenner made the cover of Vanity Fair and Laverne Cox prospered as a popular actress earlier this year, 2015 has been marked by historically high amounts of violence against transgender people.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, there have been 22 killings of transgender or gender-nonconforming people, 19 of which were black or Latina, in the United States this year.

More trans people have been killed in 2015 than in any other year, according to a tally kept by GLAAD, the organization behind the International Transgender Day of Remembrance. At least 81 transgender individuals were killed worldwide, and almost all of those killed were trans women of color.

The toll compares to 12 deaths in 2014 and 13 in the year before, and is the highest since advocacy groups began such tallies a decade ago.

Transgender Day of Remembrance occurs annually on Nov. 20

as a day to memorialize those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia, and to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester. Hester was a transgender African-American

woman who was murdered in her own apartment in Allston, Massachusetts on Nov. 28, 1998.

The community of the time responded by initiating the “Remembering Our Dead” web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester's

murder, like most anti-transgender murder cases, has yet to be solved.

Earlier in October, Virginia Equality hosted the Virginia Transgender Information and Empowerment Seminar (Virginia TIES) in VCU's Student Commons.

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ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH BUTLER

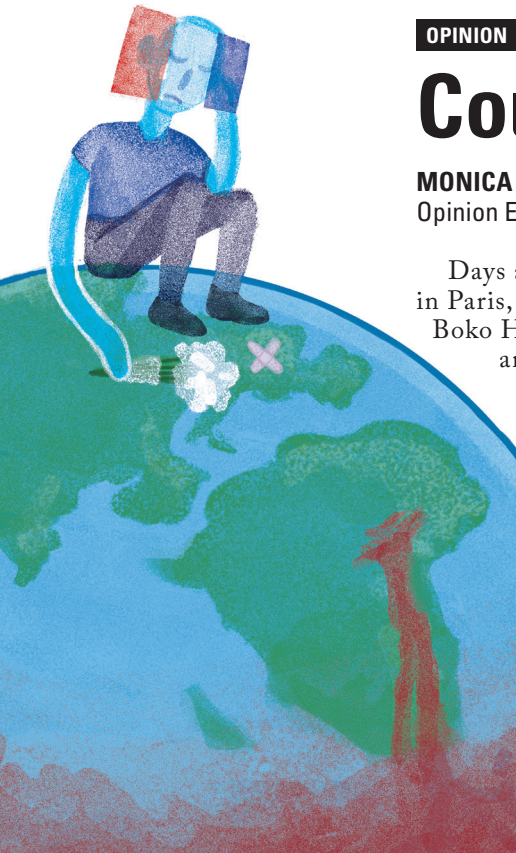


ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH BUTLER

OPINION

Countries in need of prayer come second to Paris attacks

MONICA HOUSTON
Opinion Editor

Days after the terrorist attack in Paris, Islamic State affiliate Boko Haram killed 32 people and left 80 dead in the city of Yola, Nigeria on Nov. 18. As the news of the attack in Paris overflowed media coverage and profile pictures on Facebook changed to the French flag, the citizens of Nigeria were left to pray for themselves.

According to the International Business Times, Boko Haram, now renamed Iswap, is on a mission to

fight against Western influences in Nigeria and aims to impose its version of Sharia law in the country. Boko Haram directs its attacks at three out of 36 states in Nigeria — Adamawa, Yobe and Borno — and northern Cameroon, with coordinated bombings also occurring in other parts of Nigeria, as well as Chad and Niger.

In recent months, Chad and Niger were forced to declare a state of emergency in areas that were affected by Boko Haram, which has been deemed the world's deadliest terror group, surpassing Islamic State. Maiduguri, where at least eight people were killed in a suicide bombing, is the epicenter of Boko Haram's insurgency and is the group's birthplace. The town

is attacked almost on a weekly basis.

“Nigeria was ranked third on the list of countries hit most frequently by terror attacks in the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, while Iraq and Afghanistan were ranked first and second consecutively.

According to the IBT, “Boko Haram has killed between 17,000 and 20,000 people since its insurgency became violent in 2009.” Militants forcefully kidnap civilians — mostly women

and children — to carry out the attacks.

The Nov. 18 attack in Yola was the second attack in Nigeria in less than a month. On Oct. 23, explosions at two mosques left more than 100 injured and 42 dead. Many have wondered why the copious amount of attention given to Paris was not given to Africa as well.

In April, a terrorist attack in Kenya killed 147 at Garissa University College and little to no coverage of the events made it to the U.S. media. The number of deaths that occurred in Paris compared to those in the Kenyan attack were incredibly close. Yet the number of Facebook profile pictures changed to the Kenyan flag were close to nonexistent.

It is ironic how the incidents in Africa fell to the bottom of the list of “newsworthy” coverage for a second time. Back in January 2015, according to Vibe, almost 4 million people went to the streets of France in protest after news that 12 people were gunned down at the headquarters of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and after a police officer was killed by a gunman who reportedly pledged allegiance to ISIS. Days before the events in France, 2,000 people were killed by grenades and assault rifles in Nigeria at the hands of Boko Haram.

Nigeria was ranked third on the list of countries hit most frequently by terror attacks in the 2015 Global Terrorism Index,

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briefs

NATIONAL

'No more baby parts': Reclusive suspect's words draw focus

Robert Lewis Dear was reclusive, and he seldom spoke to neighbors in a desolate stretch of land in rural Colorado where he lived.

Now, it's his words that are drawing the most attention as police try to discern his motivations for a shooting attack they say he carried out Friday at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs that killed three people, including a police officer.

After his arrest, Dear said "no more baby parts," according to a law enforcement official, who could not elaborate and spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly about the ongoing investigation.

Planned Parenthood cited witnesses as saying the gunman was motivated by his opposition to abortion.

Brief by the Associated Press

Wisconsin school nixes reading of book about transgender kid

A southern Wisconsin elementary school cancelled a planned reading of a children's book about a transgender girl after a group threatened to sue.

The Mount Horeb Area School District released a statement Wednesday saying it will not proceed with its planned reading of the book "I am Jazz," the Capital Times reported. The district said it would give the Board of Education the opportunity to address a situation, for which the district has no current policy.

In its statement Wednesday, the district said as it seeks to address the needs of the individual student, it will be mindful of the needs of other students and families. It also said families whose children may be affected will be notified of future actions, and the goal is to protect all students from bullying so they can learn together in a safe environment.

The school district was closed Friday, and emails to the superintendent, elementary school principal and others were not immediately returned to The Associated Press.

Brief by the Associated Press

Images, analysis released of Cleveland officer shooting boy

Prosecutors in Ohio on Saturday released a frame-by-frame analysis of the surveillance camera footage first made public a year ago that shows a white Cleveland police officer fatally shooting a black 12-year-old boy who had a pellet gun.

The additional images taken from surveillance video at a recreation center where Tamir Rice was shot and killed don't appear to contain any new or substantive information. The new footage was released in the "spirit of openness," said Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Tim McGinty.

The analysis also doesn't show whether Tamir, as police officials have maintained, was reaching into his waistband for the pellet gun when then-rookie patrolman Timothy Loehmann shot him less than two seconds after getting out of the car.

The enhancement by a video expert will be presented to a grand jury that will decide if Loehmann or his field training officer should be charged criminally for Tamir's death. Loehmann shot Tamir outside Cudell Recreation Center on Nov. 22, 2014.

Brief by the Associated Press

LOCAL

Richmond police investigating homicide on city's south side

Police say they're investigating the death of a man in south Richmond.

The Richmond Police Department said Saturday that a person who heard a gunshot fired in the Southwood Apartments Complex flagged down an officer early Saturday. Police say the officer then found a Hispanic man lying in a drainage ditch.

The department says it will release the victim's identity once next of kin have been notified. It says that the medical examiner will determine the cause of the man's death.

Brief by The Associated Press

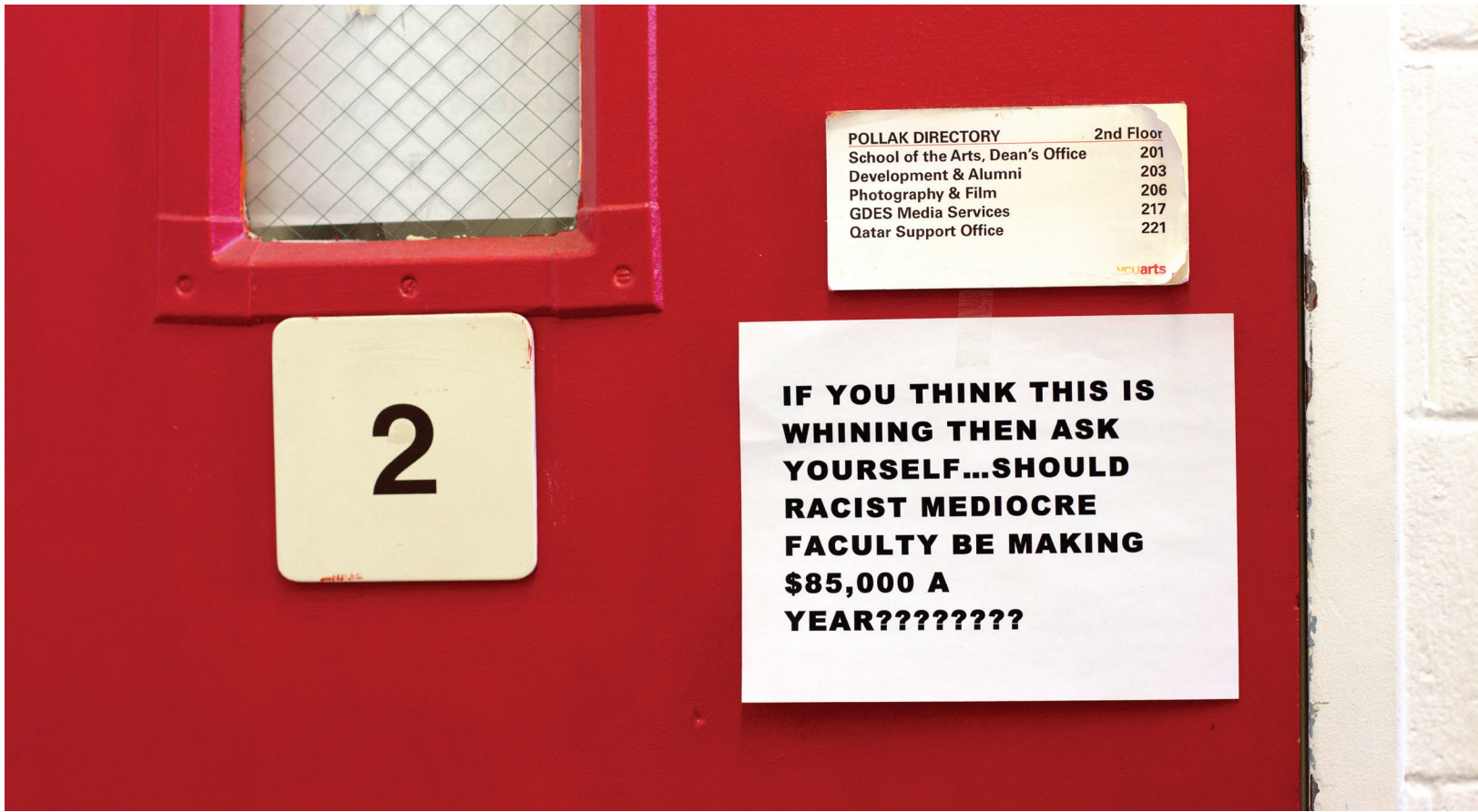
Former Virginia House speaker, Norfolk treasurer dies at 87

A former speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates and treasurer of Norfolk whose political career spanned decades has died, his wife said Friday.

Thomas Moss Jr. died Thursday after suffering a heart attack while visiting family in South Carolina, said his wife, Norma Moss. He was 87 years old.

Moss, a Democrat from Norfolk, entered Virginia's House of Delegates in 1966 and served for 36 years. He became speaker of the House in 1991 and remained at the lower chamber's helm until 2000, when Republicans wrested control away from Democrats. Moss later became Norfolk city treasurer until he retired in December 2013.

Brief by The Associated Press



PHOTOS BY BROOME MARSH

Protest fliers tell VCUarts dean to address racist faculty

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

Students covered VCUarts facilities, including the Pollack building, the Singleton Center for Performing Arts and the Fine Arts building, with fliers directed at their dean the morning of Nov. 23.

VCUarts dean Joseph Seipel had several fliers specifically taped to his office door. Some of the fliers stated "remove racist faculty right now" while others read, "Dear dean, what is more important to you ... protecting money or upholding students' rights?"

"(The) protest was extremely necessary," said Malcolm Peacock, a senior painting and printmaking major.

Peacock said personal experiences prompted his participation. He said one example was when two professors stopped talking to him about the content of his work because it pertained to issues of black identity and history.

Furthermore, Peacock said acknowledging black rights made some faculty feel uncomfortable, and during a critique he was told there are other issues more important than the focus of his work.

Peacock said he met with the dean and his department chair on separate occasions, but saw a lackluster response on Seipel's behalf.

After several classmates wrote letters to the dean addressing similar issues in the classroom and received no response, Peacock said he tried to file a complaint through VCU's Office of Equity and Access Services but the proper form was not available online.

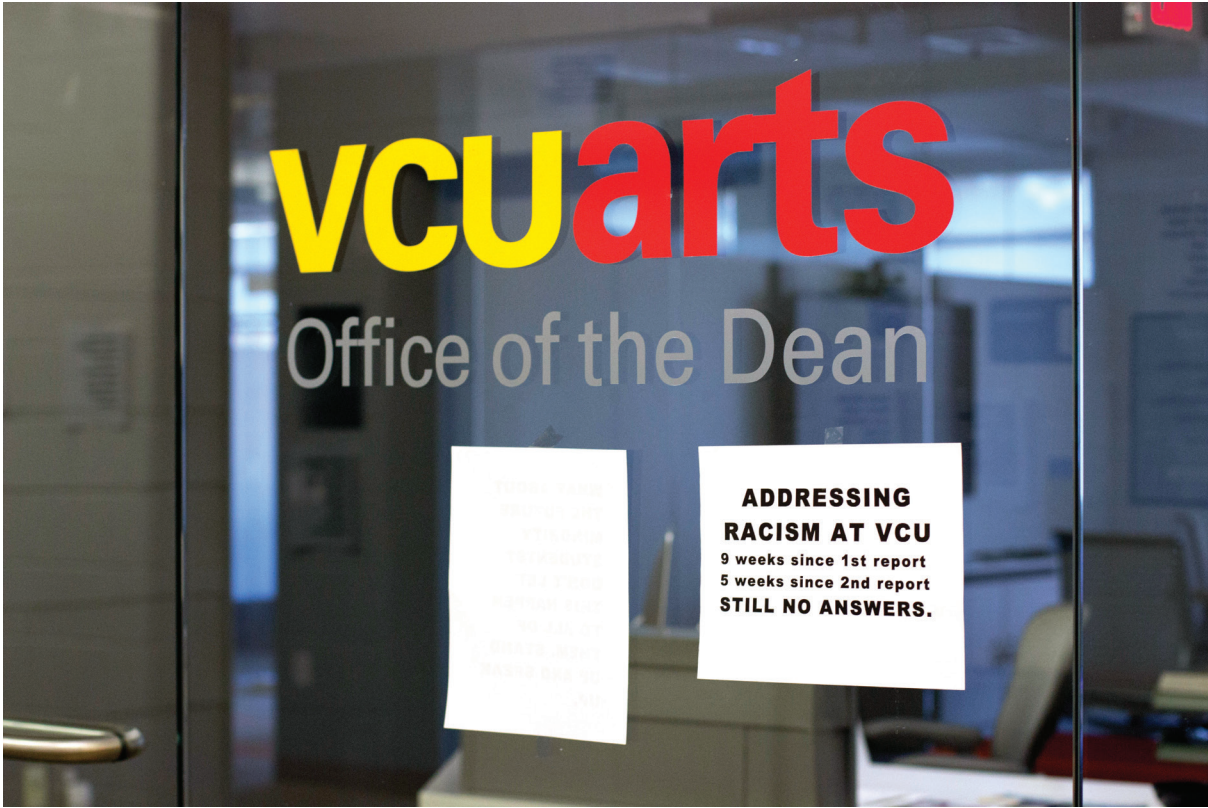
"When I called and asked about a form to file with they simply told me they would email it," Peacock said.

A few hours later, Peacock said the Office of Equity and Access Services called him back to say they couldn't find the appropriate form, but he could email them his report.

"Obviously there is just a huge lack of organization and lack of care for civil rights issues and the protection of those issues at VCU," Peacock said.

After the fliers posted last week, Seipel sent an email to the VCUarts community the same day addressing the display.

"It's common for us in the School of the Arts to say what we really think, to include it in our



Several VCUarts facilities and the dean's office were covered in fliers the morning of Nov. 23.

work, and to show it in public," Seipel said in the email. "It is in this spirit of open dialogue and communication that we work; and it is a critical aspect to the work that we do in the arts."

The dean then listed several ways the School of the Arts is working to better integrate diversity initiatives, including mandatory cultural competency training in the spring.

"The racism at VCU/VCUarts is deeper than classroom injustices, and our organizing will go further than hanging up posters," said Taylor Manigault, a former VCUarts student.

According to Manigault, current students will not be pacified by emails; they are ready for a real change in both the classrooms and on campus.

"The response from the VCUarts administration is unfortunate, vague, and underwhelming. Student action was incited because there is an overwhelming number of students of color who have faced discrimination in the classroom not only by professors but by their peers and no one wants to address it," said Zaira Qureshi, a senior graphic design student.

Qureshi said this is a problem because students feel their voices are not heard while having to endure mental and emotional abuse by white colleagues.

"As a school that uses our bodies and identities to market diversity, can someone tell me why they do

not care about our rights, well-being or trauma? Are we valuable entities to this institution or just bodies for a marketing technique we never consented to?"

—ZAIRA QURESHI

discussion by sharing remarks.

"It's clear that diversity at VCU does not include Blackness," said junior Angelique Scott to the audience of more than 400 attendees.

The forum was held in response to students' demonstrating in the Compass and the president's office in solidarity with their peers at the University of Missouri, and to address issues of race on VCU's campus including cultural incompetency, the low number of underrepresented faculty and staff and lacking counseling services and safe spaces specifically for students of color.

In Seipel's email, he stated each faculty position at the School of the Arts will have a recruitment plan with enhanced resources and strategies focused on recruitment of underrepresented candidates.

"I will be personally reviewing the makeup of all candidacy pools for new hires at the School of the Arts and will not certify a search to continue unless I am assured that we have done everything possible to recruit underrepresented candidates," Seipel said in the email, adding there are currently eight searches in progress.

The fliers went up less than a week after VCU President Michael Rao led an hour-long diversity forum in the student commons on Nov. 18.

During the forum, Rao and a group of collective black students, Black VCU Speaks, opened the

In this section:

VCUarts fliers.

Deceased student's father asks for help. EncephalApp. VCU PD bias training.

Virginia mayor apologizes for refugee, detention comments

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS WIRE

A Virginia mayor apologized Friday for invoking the mass detention of Japanese-Americans during World War II in comments about keeping Syrian refugees out of the region.

Roanoke Mayor David Bowers called his comments "unwise and inappropriate" and said he plans to continue in office despite calls for him to resign.

In a statement Wednesday, Bowers cited the government's internment of Japanese-Americans. He said the threat to the United States from the Islamic State group "is just as real and serious as that from our enemies then."

The U.S. government issued a formal apology more than four decades after World War II and paid reparations to former Japanese internees and their heirs.

At a special City Council meeting Friday, Bowers said the comparison was "a mistake." He apologized specifically to Japanese-Americans.

"It's just not in my heart to be racist or bigoted," Bowers said. "My statement was intended to be respectful, measured and moderate in tone and substance. But it fell short obviously."

Bill Bestpitch and other council members criticized Bowers for using his office letterhead to issue Wednesday's statement. Councilman Ray Ferris, who called the special meeting, said the council received the letter two hours after it was reported in the media.

“Apologizing, while I appreciate it and I believe it is heartfelt, I feel that it is not enough.”

—JACOB SMITH

"I think the press release demonstrates a lack of full understanding of some of the things that we have suffered in this country and certainly the things that were suffered by the Americans of Japanese descent back in World War II," Ferris said. "And that really seems to have been what has ignited this and started the ball rolling."

Two dozen members of the public later spoke at the meeting. Some called for Bowers to resign.

"Apologizing, while I appreciate it and I believe it is heartfelt, I feel that it is not enough," Jacob Smith said. "Apologizing is not taking responsibility. Action is taking responsibility."

Bowers' comments Wednesday came in the wake of the Paris terrorist attacks and the Oct. 31 bombing of a Russian airliner. They were part of his call to ask government and non-governmental agencies to suspend relocating Syrian refugees to the area. Islamic State militants have claimed responsibility for both attacks.

Individual states do not have the legal authority to block refugee placement.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE

Roanoke Mayor David Bowers apologizes for comments made on keeping Syrian refugees out of the region.

Father of deceased student asks public for help, information

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drinking the night of the fatal fall, but had yet to determine whether he was alone at the time he fell.

Paul Ducic told CBS6 that because his son's body was found in close proximity to the fence, he presumably fell while trying to get over the fence.

Paul questions the reason his son had tried to get over the fence, although he told the network he does not believe any foul

play was involved.

"Chris was one of the most intelligent people I've ever met, and he buried none of it," said Shannon Minnich, a senior at Christopher Newport University who was close with Ducic in high school. "He was generous and kind, taking time out of his days and nights to help teach his friends and classmates."

Minnich said her friend also had an innate ability to make anyone laugh, regardless of his

or her sense of humor; his bright smile was contagious; on any given Monday or dreary morning, he would walk into the cafeteria and lift spirits with his presence; his propensity to love others was exceptional.

"Most significantly, Chris ensured that every single person he came into contact with felt included," Minnich said. "Throughout the tough transitions of middle and high school, Chris Ducic's capability to remind you of your

personal value was unmatched."

About a month after his son's death, Paul Ducic is still looking for information regarding the death of his son. He said he hopes someone with additional information will provide him the closure he desperately seeks.

"I accept the fact that I probably won't know what happened until I see him again, but I figured I would give this a shot," he told CBS6.

vcu briefs

Digital map shows spread of KKK across United States like 'a contagion'

A joint project between a Virginia Commonwealth University history professor and VCU Libraries shows for the first time how the Ku Klux Klan spread across the United States between 1915 and 1940, establishing chapters in all 50 states with an estimated membership of between 2 million and 8 million.

The project, "Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1940," is an animated, on-line map that illustrates the rise of the second Klan, which was founded in Atlanta in 1915 and spread rapidly across the country to total more than 2,000 local units, known as Klaverns.

"The project is using technology to demonstrate, and make available for people to contemplate, the nationwide spread of the Ku Klux Klan," said John Kneebone, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of the Department of History in the College of Humanities and Sciences. "This map shows that you can't just say 'Oh, it was those crazy people in the South.' The [KKK] was in the mainstream."

Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs

'Tis not the season to forgo healthy eating

As the holiday season draws near, so does the abundance of season-specific foods our palates crave. For those with health ailments triggered by certain delicacies, however, 'tis not the season to throw caution to the wind. Nicholas Fischetti, a nutritionist with Virginia Commonwealth University Health, offers advice on how to enjoy holiday sumptuousness, without going overboard or jeopardizing your health.

During the holidays, people tend to add special foods to their regular diets without subtracting anything. The result is increased intake that can lead to added weight. Try to substitute holiday treats to better balance out your intake. The suggestion of "never grocery shop on an empty stomach" holds true for holiday eating.

If you are able to have a healthy snack before a holiday party, this will help reduce the urge to overindulge. While we all feel like we tip the scales after the holidays, the average American only adds one to two pounds during the holidays. However, if we don't lose the extra weight, over time this will really add up. Just because it is the holidays doesn't mean that you have to gain weight.

Leha Byrd, University Public Affairs

New center at the School of Nursing emphasizes quality, safety and innovation

During a presentation at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Nursing last week, American Academy of Nursing immediate past president Diana Mason, Ph.D., challenged attendees to envision a health care model that puts patient safety and quality care at the forefront.

Mason was speaking at the grand opening of the Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation, a new center housed within the School of Nursing that promotes patient-centered, population-focused and cost-effective quality and safety initiatives designed to improve health care.

She said the new center at VCU exemplifies the innovative model of care she described. "The Langston Center is on the right track," Mason said. "I see innovation and vision in its goals and I think it can be a leader for the rest of the nation."

Anne Dreyfuss, University Public Affairs

With help from VCU class, five Richmond-area immigrants sworn in as U.S. citizens

Twelve years after leaving their native country of Mexico and settling in the Richmond area, siblings Giancarlo Orsatti and Ariadna Rendon became U.S. citizens this week, having been guided through the naturalization process by a service-learning course at Virginia Commonwealth University that assists the local immigrant population.

Orsatti and Rendon took part in a class taught by Anita Nadal, an assistant professor of Spanish, and her students at VCU that teaches Richmond-area immigrants English and prepares them for the U.S. citizenship test.

Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs

Students create artwork and books to benefit children in need

Last year, three Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts students created an online shop, DoDream, to raise funds for a child in poverty. Proceeds from the sales of art such as calendars, note cards and clocks go to their surrogate brother Adolof Imbiri, a 10-year-old in Indonesia.

The DoDream team — communication arts majors Woojin Ahn and Jane Lee, and graphic arts student SongYae Han — enlisted English students from the College of Humanities and Sciences to write stories aimed at 6- to 12-year olds about overcoming suffering. The art students are illustrating the books.

Leila Ugincius, University Public Affairs

Professor develops app to screen, diagnose symptoms of minimal hepatic encephalopathy

MAURA MAZUROWSKI
News Editor

VCU has gained recognition for their research yet again — this time, in the form of a smartphone application.

VCU School of Medicine associate professor Jasmohan Bajaj developed the EncephalApp now available on iTunes and Google Play.

Physicians recently cleared the EncephalApp for use in diagnosing minimal hepatic encephalopathy (MHE), a common brain condition in people with liver cirrhosis caused by the accumulation of toxic substances in the bloodstream.

The condition impairs a patient's quality of life and their ability to work and, over time, can lead to confusion and possible death.

"MHE is difficult to diagnose," Bajaj said in a press release. "Specialized tests are needed to diagnose affected patients who may appear normal to clinicians on rou-

tines physical examination."

The EncephalApp employs psychological evaluations for cognitive function called Stroop tests to screen and diagnose patients.

Thus, when a patient's MHE

“Our biggest and probably the most interesting finding is that within the final model I saw that insomnia appears to be more heritable for women.

—MACKENZIE LIND

condition improves, their performance on the app improves as well. Because MHE has such a strong effect on a patient's ability to drive, the app's results correlate to a patient's potential performance in a driving simulation.

"The existing tests are hard to come by and also need trained personnel," Bajaj said.

Bajaj said the EncephalApp was developed to significantly simplify the diagnostic process, and he is excited about its ability to quickly identify MHE patients.

"The strength of this app could increase treatment rates and hopefully result in better patient outcomes," Bajaj said.

Bajaj is not the first VCU Health researcher to conduct groundbreaking research this year.

In October, VCU collaborated with the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to conduct an ALS research program. The effort utilized stem cells and 3-D modeling to seek new therapeutic approaches to the fatal neurodegenerative disease.

According to the ALS Association, ALS first restricts patients from speaking, eating, moving or breathing.

"If we do this right, we can make these connections and make them work functionally," said Jerome Strauss, dean of the School of Medicine, regarding the ALS research.

Graduate students are contributing to important medical research as well. This fall, third-year graduate student Mackenzie Lind concluded females may be more predisposed to developing insomnia than males.

Lind examined a database of pre-existing data from the Virginia Adult Twin Studies of Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders. The VATSPUD has data on approximately 7,500 adult male and female twins that Lind was able to utilize in her research.

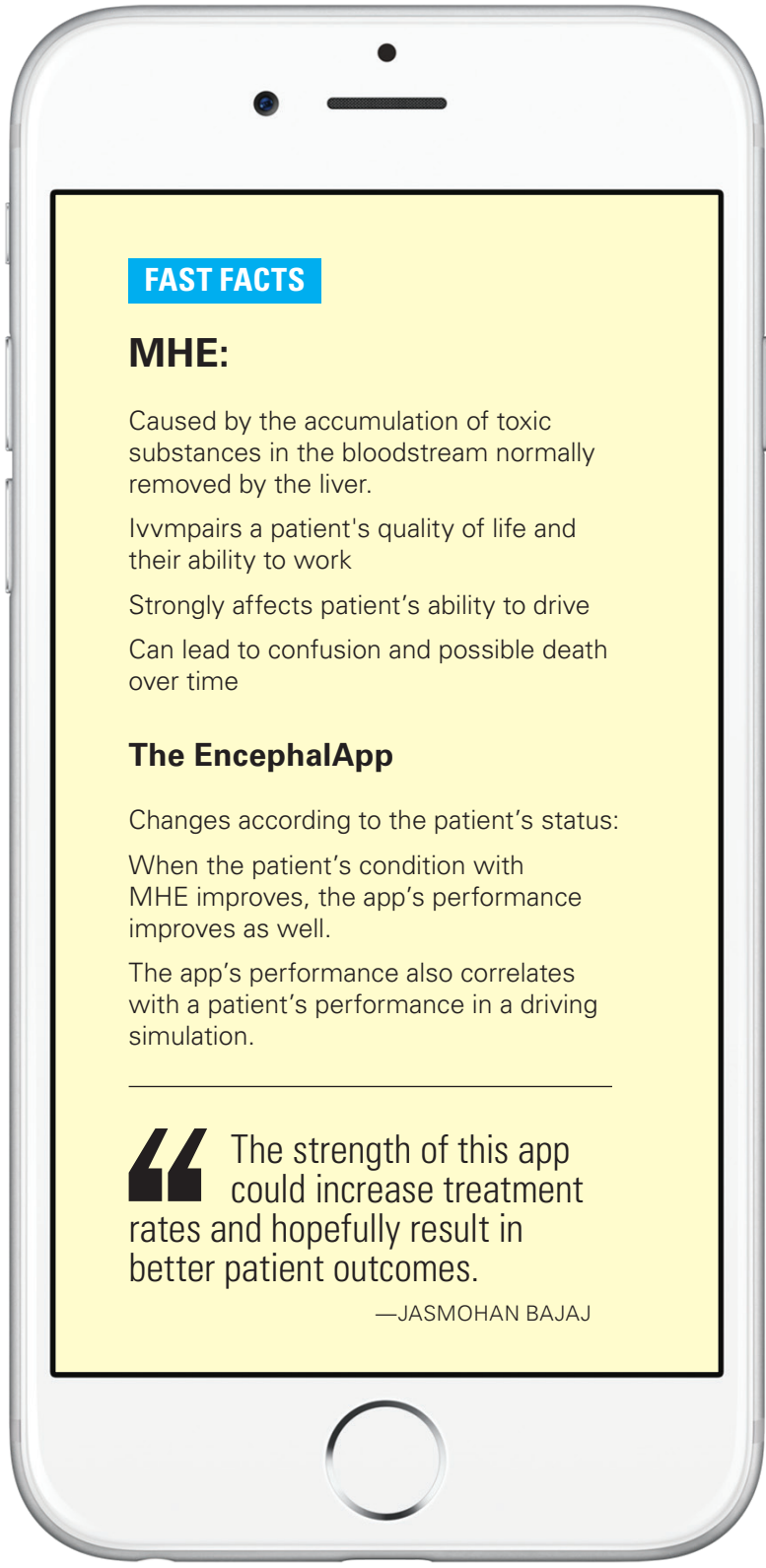
According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 30 percent of adults have symptoms of insomnia while 10 percent have insomnia so severe it interferes with their daily lives.

Lind said nobody had looked at the sleep items in the VATSPUD, but by using the data from twin studies, researchers are able to examine differences in people who share the same DNA. Examining twins helped Lind see how genetic and environmental factors affected certain traits, like sleep.

"Our biggest and probably the most interesting finding is that within the final model I saw that insomnia appears to be more heritable for women," Lind said. "That means theoretically that genes may be playing more of a role for women than for men in terms of developing insomnia."

As a major public research university, VCU is both nationally and internationally ranked in sponsored research.

So far, the only other medical center where the EncephalApp Stroop has been evaluated at is the University of Arkansas Medical Center and Cleveland Clinic.



INFOGRAPHICS BY MIRANDA LEUNG. PHONE GRAPHIC COURTESY OF FACEBOOK DESIGN RESOURCES

VCU PD complete internal bias training

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff Writer

Police departments across the country are taking classes to recognize bias and to minimize the use of unnecessary force — including the officers at VCU.

Anna Laszlo is the chief operating officer of Fair & Impartial Policing (FIP) LLC, a corporation that studies the psychology behind people and their biases. Laszlo recently spent three days with her staff teaching fair and impartial policing to the 92 sworn officers of the VCU Police Department.

"It is critical in our environment to treat members of this community fairly and equally with each and every encounter that we have," said John Venuti, VCU Police Chief.

During the 2009-2010 school year, VCUPD used force in 74 incidents. In 2010, Venuti began his tenure as chief and the following year, there were 16 fewer incidents involving force. Each year the number of cases has significantly decreased and during the 2014-2015 school year, only 14 incidents required force by officers.

"If we don't know an individual as an individual, we stereotype people based on group characteristics," Laszlo said. "If you spend time with people outside of your 'in' group, stereotypes wear down because you see people as individuals, and not the stereotype."

All VCU police officers were required to participate in the eight hour, classroom style training session that included lectures and group discussions. Laszlo said bias is a normal human attribute, and even well-intentioned people have biases.

An ordinary night for a VCU police officer includes driving through Richmond, walking or riding a bike around campus and looking for any activity that may seem unusual. At any given moment bias may affect how a police officer handles the situation.

Lieutenant Nick Hill of the VCUPD sat in on this class alongside police officers from

other agencies that had been trained on the course material.

"We talked about people's biases and different biases people might have and how to recognize them," Hill said. "Everytime you go on any sort of call, it's about making sure you're being fair to this person and you're treating them based on the facts and not on any characteristics you could be judging them on."

The course taught VCU police officers how to recognize human biases, how those biases affect perceptions and behavior and how biased policing impacts a department and the community.

Venuti said he is proud both of those strides and the continued focus on training.

"It's a proactive and frankly necessary training on our part to mandate it for officers," Venuti said.

A large focus of the class was spent discussing the difference between implicit and explicit biases. Hall said it's less about implicit biases being hard to control and more about whether a person is recognizing them or not when they're interacting with other people.

"It's the implicit biases where people have good intentions but subconsciously maybe think (in a certain way)," Hill said. "The training talks a lot about interacting with different diverse groups because the more you interact with people that are different, the more you realize that any subconscious stereotype you might have probably isn't based on any sort of fact."

Laszlo's goal is that through this training, police officers will be able to recognize when bias is kicking in and override it with controlled behavioral responses.

Laszlo left the officers with the message: "Beware: Gut reactions might be based on your biases."

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sports



STAT OF THE WEEK
Senior Melvin Johnson is now sixth on VCU's All-Time scoring list.

Lady Rams send Camels home in time for hump day

RICHARD PASCHALL
Contributing writer

Coming off of a two-game road trip and a heartbreaking one-point loss to Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, VCU women's basketball looked to get back on track with a home match-up against Campbell University (Big South, 3-2) — and rebound they did. The Lady Rams took down the Camels 57-34 to start the season at 3-1.

"It feels great to be back in front of all of our fans and family," said senior forward Adaeze Alaeze. "There's no place better than playing at VCU."

Though the final score favored VCU, the beginning of the game was anything but favorable. While the Camels scored on their first possession, the Lady Rams fell into a scoring drought, before getting on the board with a layup from senior guard Isis Thorpe nearly half-way through the first quarter. VCU went into the half with a 23-8 lead.

While VCU's offense got off to a sluggish start, the defense came out aggressive, limiting Campbell to just three points in the first quarter and eight points in the half. The Lady Rams stifled the Camels, limiting them to 22 percent shooting as Campbell also turned the ball over 23 times to the Rams' six.

"I always tell them be an athlete, try to get a tip, try to get a deflection and let's run, and I think our depth really helps us,"



Beth O'Boyle and the Rams have started the season 3-1.

said Head Coach Beth O'Boyle. "We're playing a lot of people and we can keep that tempo. I don't think you can do that if you don't have confidence in all of your players, and I really do."

Perhaps most key to the defensive effort, the Rams held Campbell's star junior forward Amanda Coffey scoreless from the floor. Coffey fell into foul trouble early, with her two points coming on free throws in the fourth quarter.

"We do take a lot of pride in our defense and I think that really set the tone from the start, even though our outside shots weren't falling," O'Boyle said. "The defense kept us going."

Though they started slow, the offense began clicking behind strong performances from Alaeze and junior forward Camille



Senior Melanie Royster is the oldest Ram on the team serving a leadership role for a thriving underclassman-heavy roster.

Calhoun. Alaeze, named to the Atlantic 10's Preseason All-Conference Third Team, led the team with 12 points on 6-9 shooting, while Calhoun racked up 10 points and seven rebounds, also drawing a number of crucial charging calls against the Cam-

els. Thorpe added 10 points on 4-14 shooting with two 3-pointers, putting her career 3-point total at 142, just 54 away from the all-time record of 196 set by Anna Pavlikhina in 1993. Adding important production off of

the bench, junior guard Chadaryl Clay tallied 10 points, six rebounds, and five assists with a pair of key 3's to extend the lead in the fourth quarter. Up next for the Lady Rams after a brief Thanksgiving break, they take on Furman University

at the Siegel Center on Nov. 29. "I am a big believer in rest, and I think we were traveling a bunch and with the tempo we play at their legs need a little bit of rest," O'Boyle said. "So the break comes at a really good time for us."

The necessary grind for gameday at the Stu



Coach Wade is off to an undefeated record at the Stu, 4-0.

CAMERAN GARLAND
Contributing Writer

As the first basketball game approached, many students, alumni and VCU s braced themselves for the first game of the season on Nov. 6 against the University of California (Penn.) at the Siegel Center under the new Head Coach Will Wade, his new staff and the six new players. Much anticipation awaited the fans, but also the staff preparing for the first game of a brand new season with many changes.

Wade is the most prominent switch up to the season. Many VCU basketball fans want to form their first opinions about him, but the most important opinion about him comes from the basketball team.

"Coach Wade brings a blue-collar mentality to us. I would describe us under him as brought in, success driven, and hard-working," said junior point guard Torey Burston.

Fans may not think about what it takes to make a game day run to its full potential. A lot goes into pregame preparation that most fans at the Stu are unlikely to notice.

At 3 p.m., the pregame preparations are intense for those setting up for the game at the Stu and from the actual team. Senior leader and shooting guard Melvin Johnson shared his extensive pregame preparations.

"I usually eat a big breakfast, try and really focus in class and not think about the game. Then I head to shoot around, after shoot around I head to pregame meal," Johnson said. "I call my mom and talk to get my mind off of basketball, then I come to the arena two hours early to do a few shooting drills then finally start to think about the game."

As for the facilities, the staff arrives about two-and-a-half hours prior to the doors opening at 5:30 p.m. and prepares the tables and chairs. These tables and chairs are placed throughout the lobby for vendors and information, in the auxiliary gym, parlors and board rooms.

After setting up the equipment, employees run through a risk-management checklist for the game. That checklist includes checking the railings to make sure everything is sturdy and screwed in, checking

to make sure that all cords from the camera crew are secure and in place. They also make sure of the padding on the scorer's tables and under the baskets are secure. This is major because many head injuries are prevented by having those barriers.

At 5:30 p.m., after making sure that everything is ready to go, the doors are open and it is the hour-and-a-half countdown until tip-off. These next 30 minutes are essential. At this time, people are beginning to enter the arena, getting their first impressions for the game, and things are most likely to go wrong in this time. The donors and season ticket holders are especially catered to as much of the basketball's team success relates to them, so the clubs that provide food and beverages for these people have to be perfect.

7 p.m. has finally arrived and it is the moment that everyone has been waiting on, tip-off. The game is underway and everyone is enjoying themselves, but the work for the staff is still not over. Turnover and clean-up for halftime is still required for each of the clubs, plus two more for food and beverages for donors and season ticket holders. Everything has to look like it has never been touched.

By about 8:15 p.m., it is half-time. The clubs and the lobby are full once again, and so is the lobby. People are enjoying food and beverages and continuing to talk about the game and what they think about the team so far.

"We tried to make a statement that we were still good, but we are trying to focus on ourselves and not what other people say," Johnson said. "It was important that we came out and played well because of the fans, but it was more of a learning experience for us."

The Rams went on to defeat Cal. (Penn.) 96-60, as the inaugural exhibition match was a success. The gameday atmosphere was electric and the players took note as their preparation in the offseason was for good use.

As for the facilities staff, the hard work is just getting started as complete breakdown and transformation of the Stu is required for the event on Saturday. All of the tables that had to be placed out have to be put away, all of the food and beverages have to be put away and the auxiliary gym has to be cleared — the daily perils of gameday.

VCU baseball: A-10 champs prepare for upcoming season

GRACE MURDEN
Contributing Writer

The VCU baseball team kicked its preseason into high gear in preparation for its first home game of the season, taking place on Feb. 19, 2016, where they will take on Kennesaw State University at the Diamond.

The baseball team has been in Richmond since August working hard to achieve its goals for the upcoming season.

"We are practicing just like every other team in the country, however we are lifting and training harder than any other. That I promise you," said Walker Haymaker, a senior catcher from Orlando, Florida. "Every day the team meets up for lifting, conditioning and practice before they have a winter break, but the players are expected to work out just as hard on their own during their time off."

Players were encouraged to work on their development in the offseason, especially in the weight-

room, translating into a more efficient team capable of lasting throughout the season.

"We just finished our fall team practices and are now focusing our work in the weight room and on our individual skills leading into the winter," said junior infielder Matt Davis.

The team split into small groups to work even further to lift and bulk up for the season. The teammates cheer each other on for encouragement and help each other to strive for nothing less than the best. Each and every day, the team works together to get stronger.

After a successful 2015 season, the team said they are feeling better than ever.

"We are all very proud of our previous success, however it has only made us hungrier to do even better this next upcoming season," Haymaker said.

VCU finished last season with a 40-25 record before suffering defeat to the University of Miami in the NCAA Super Regionals.

"I feel extremely confident.

Knowing exactly what it takes to get there, and win it. It definitely wasn't easy with how we started the year off, but it was unbelievable how we finished," said Cody Acker, a senior outfielder and first baseman.

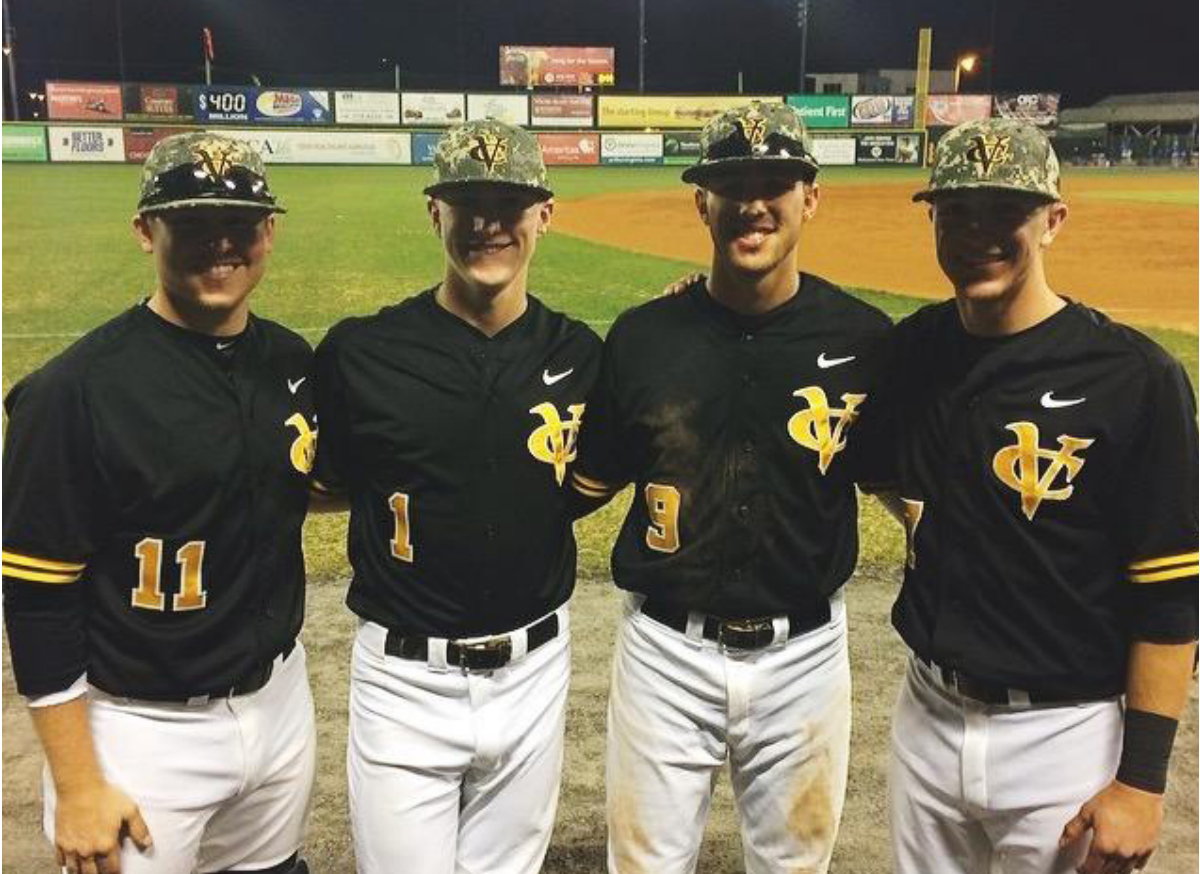
The players acknowledge Head Coach Sean Stiffler and the program as one on the rise. The players have bought into the system completely.

"His experience is closely related to the senior class as a team because we were with him since his first year of head coaching. So he has won an A-10 championship and regional just as we have," Haymaker said.

Stiffler's extensive knowledge for the game is trickling down to his players. His ability to equate situations and the players ability to apply what was taught had much to do with the 40 wins last season.

"He knows the game of baseball very well. He played college ball and has had a lot of success coaching the Rams," Gransback said.

Last year's success is a building block for the future. The Rams will have their work cut out for them if they want to improve on last season's success.



The Rams finished the season 40-25, ultimately winning the A-10 Tournament Championships.

Students get payback against faculty in flag football game



The students defeated the faculty 47-0 in the Rectacular Spectacular VCU Homecoming flag football game.

MICHELLE LEE
Contributing Writer

Tensions were high at the faculty vs. students flag football game held on Oct. 8 at Rectacular Spectacular for VCU Homecoming at Cary Street Fields. Students and faculty gathered around the field to see the faculty team duke it out against the Intramural All-Star team for the title of best football team here at VCU.

“It gives those less physically active a chance to compete

against fellow students and get bragging rights to some degree if they win,” said Bob Fankhauser, assistant director for the Intramural Sports Department.

VCU offers a wide variety of intramural sports such as soccer, basketball, water polo and volleyball, etc. Students can choose to play any sport, but football brings the largest crowd. Students against other students each week until playoffs.

Within the three flag football leagues, 10QComeAgain (Thank You Come Again) came

out victorious in the B league. Fankhauser gave the winners of each division’s championship games the chance to play against faculty. Delta Chi and Pi Kappa Alpha also brought members to play on the All Star team against faculty. Together they formed the Intramural All-Star team.

“Intramural sports is a positive impact because it brings people in the VCU community together,” said Angela Nguyen a VCU junior on the Intramural All-Star Team. Nguyen played quarterback on the All-Star team.

The Big Game

The start of the Faculty vs. Intramural All-Stars had people at the edge of their seats. The crowd was ready to see what each side had to bring to the field. When the whistle was blown the All-Star’s offensive line got into position, staring down their competition. The faculty’s defense took their places while the rest of the team cheered as loudly as they could. The line was set, ball was hiked and the game officially started.

The Faculty team put their heart and soul into every play. They brought out a side of them that most students rarely see. The crowd screamed and cheered whenever a pass was completed. Even with every ball thrown and caught, the faculty couldn’t beat the All-Star team, they wanted to see the Faculty team score at least once so the All-Stars all “mysteriously” fell to the ground for them to have a chance at a touchdown. It was the students turn to hand out zeros for the faculty not showing up.

The Intramural All-Stars crushed the Faculty team with a whopping score of 47-0.

“I felt bad for the faculty but then again they were very competitive,”said Sonny Borja, VCU senior on the Intramural All-Star Team. “They didn’t give up and they ran a lot of good plays. All in all it was really fun. You can see that they had a lot of fun. It was great playing against them.”

Fankhauser said he hopes to continue giving students and faculty the chance to play against one another. Intramural sports

“It was fun playing with them but Faculty, step it up.

— ANGELA NGUYEN

has been growing in number of sports since the beginning. The department plans to introduce new sports as the season changes.

“Overall I think this has made me a better person,” Nguyen said. “It helped me play the game better and let me make long lasting friendships with people I wouldn’t have met elsewhere.”

Nguyen wants to see the Faculty team improve over the year. She said she hopes to play against them in her senior year with more of a challenge.

“It was fun playing with them but Faculty, step it up,” she said.



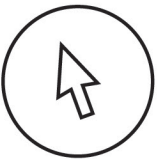
Angela Nguyen (center) was the winning quarterback for the students.

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After a trip to the Big Apple, Rams find more success at home



The team celebrates another victory courtside.

— Continued from front page

“That was me, you can put that on me,” Wade said. “We had some bad matchups out of the diamond press and we were running around like chicken with our heads cut off, that one was on me.”

After stifling the Monarch attack, junior point guard JeQuan Lewis and the Rams backcourt went to work, constructing a 10-0 run to uplift the Ram faithful displeased by the early start.

The Monarchs kept it close; they consistently found an answer to a VCU run, and the two teams went into the locker-room at halftime deadlocked at 35.

In the second half, the Rams came out stronger defensively, presenting challenges for ODU to find good looks. VCU’s backcourt was able to stop drivers from getting to the rim, sending traffic to defensive specialist Mo Alie-Cox.

“We buckled down in the half court,” Lewis said. “Getting stops just gives us momentum, because you know, if they can’t score we going to win.”

Not until the 10-minute mark in the second half were the Rams able to build a lead. Senior Melvin Johnson cashed in on back-to-back 3-pointers

extending the lead to 49-40. Johnson continued his sharp shooting, totaling 13 points on the night, connecting on three 3-pointers.

Lewis was the star of the night, as the Dickinson, Tennessee native had his best performance of the season. His 16 points, three assists and three-rebound performance proved pivotal on a night where the concern of the Monarch defense was centered on shutting down Johnson.

No play had a bigger impact than Lewis’ made field goal attempt to spark a 7-0 VCU run to give the Rams a 68-56 lead with three minutes left to play.

“Tremendous, I thought he (Lewis) was great,” Wade said. “If he plays like that, we have Mel playing at a high level and we have KB playing at a high level, we have an unbelievable backcourt.”

Bacote managed to still score 21 points on an efficient 8-13 from the field, but the Monarchs shooting 8-17 (47.1 percent) from the charity stripe was too much to overcome.

The ODU win was VCU’s best performance of the season, set-up by their play four days prior against American.

Dominating the visiting Eagles this past Tuesday, the Rams picked up

a much-needed victory from the 2K Classic debacle. Surprisingly, sophomore Justin Tillman had his best performance of the season in 24 minutes of action, beating Eagles defenders to the ball and cashing in on easy put-backs on his way to his first career double double with 10 points and 14 rebounds.

“I’m happy I got it,” Tillman said. “I think I could have had more down the line, so not really proud of myself I still have a lot to improve on.”

The Rams were shared the wealth on the offensive end, besides Tillman, only Johnson who led all scorers with 13 and senior Korey Billbury, who finished with 12 points, scored in double figures.

Wade did not shy away from the media after losses to Wisconsin and Duke, calling attention to the team’s effort and consistency in a stern manner.

“I am who I am, so I’m going to tell you like it is,” Wade said. “Some people like honesty, some people don’t. I was honest with them and I thought our effort was better.”

VCU, now 4-2, will travel to Murfreesboro, Tennessee to play Middle Tennessee State University at the Murphy Athletic Center Dec. 2 at 8 p.m.



JeQuan Lewis brushes past an opponent during the ODU game at the Stu on Saturday.

“Taking 15 credits a semester not only saves money, but time. I’ll be in my career sooner.”

– Myles Sully

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ON THIS DAY
in 1989, Aileen Wuornos, “America’s First Female Serial Killer,” claims her first victim.

Transphobic violence hits historic high

—continued from page 1

Sara Simone, a transgender woman, was a guest speaker at Virginia TIES. She honored transgender individuals who lost their lives due to hate crimes or bullying-induced suicides with a moment of silence. She acknowledged the increase in transvisibility, but continued to emphasize that visibility is not enough.

“It’s been a tough year for the trans community,” Simone said. “The fact remains this has been the most violent year in our community. As many as 21 folks, our people, have been murdered so far this year as a result of transphobic hate and violence. Nearly all victims have been trans women of color.”

Simone continued by sharing her own personal experiences as a transgender woman. Since her transition, she has faced multiple battles of homelessness for the first time in her life due to housing and employment discrimination. She also said she has faced experiences of violence and sexual assault. Simone continued by assuring the audience that her decision to transition was the best choice she had ever made.

“(My transition) was the happiest day of my life. My friends were my biggest supporters,” Simone said. “I saw a different world, it was a world of bright colors.”

In honor of Transgender Remembrance Day, several events were held throughout RVA including a film festival and open mic. Remembrance will continue into December with a “Trans Town Hall and Dinner” on Dec. 11 hosted by Diversity Richmond.



ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH BUTLER

VA Comicon saw smaller turnout than in previous years

TAYLOR KNIGHT
Contributing Writer

Fewer cosplayers and fandom enthusiasts than usual clamored into the Richmond Raceway for the VA Comicon the weekend of Nov. 21.

The convention has new competition — this summer, the Wizard World ComiCon attracted thousands of enthusiasts from around the state to the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Typical cosplayers won’t attend multiple conventions, as the ticket prices can cost hundreds of dollars or more.

Vendor and Wolverine cosplayer Cameron King said that the lacking turnout may have also been due to the way tickets were sold this year.

“They could have sold two-day tickets instead of just a pass a day,” King said. “It made the con not as big. I’m a vendor, so it was kind of shocking.”

At times, the aisles would be completely devoid of people except for vendors. This scene was a far cry from the bright, lively images that one would usually associate with the idea of comicon.

Those who did attend ComiCon, though, had the rare opportunity to meet and get signatures from key figures from multiple fandoms.

Among the famous presenters was the creator of the classic ’80s movie “Back to the Future,” Bob Gale. Also at the events were three models of the DeLorean car, which was an iconic symbol from the film. The “Back to the Future” memorabilia was very fitting for this year’s comic con considering the fact that 2015 was the year that Marty McFly travels to in the movie.

Other guests included actors Trini Nishimura, who voices Mikasa on the anime “Attack on Titan”; Marina Sirtis of “Star Trek: The Next Generation”; and Walter Jones, who played the black Power Ranger on “Mighty

Morphin Power Rangers.” Artists of the “Spider-Man” Sunday strip and “Steven Universe” were also in attendance.

On the final day of Comicon, cosplayers could enter into a costume contest for the chance to win

cash money. The categories were best adult comic book character, best non-comic book character and best group cosplay. Winners received \$200 and a trophy.

The event also included the option for attendees to bring their

comic books and have them certified and graded by representatives from CBCS Comics. The process involved verifying the comic book’s authenticity and quality, which are crucial pieces of information to have especially when

trying to resell the comic.

The next fan convention coming to Virginia will be Star City Anime Con in Roanoke on the weekend of Feb. 5. Tickets are being sold as weekend passes, rather than for individual days.



Attendees and vendors in costume participated in the 2015 VA ComiCon at the Richmond International Raceway. Costumes varied widely in genre and fandom.

PHOTO BY TAYLOR HANKINS

Freshman self-publishes book on race relations, identity and family history



Self-published freshman Canaan Kennedy (center) with his father and brother. Kennedy credits his father as inspiration for his book “Struggles to Victory — Over Racism in America,” which is available at Barnes and Noble online.

FADEL ALLASSAN
Staff Writer

Although today’s generation of college students is far removed from the civil rights movement of the 1960s, race relations have returned to the forefront of the discussion in the enduring movement for social justice. Canaan Kennedy, a freshman English and African-American studies major, has self-published his first book relating to race rela-

tions and growing up as a mixed-race person in the U.S. Along with issues of race, Kennedy says he was given a well-rounded education both at home and school. His first book, “Struggles to Victory — Over Racism in America,” was self-published this year. He credits his father’s commitment to his education, as well as his experience growing up in a biracial household, for the accomplishment.



Canaan Kennedy’s father shakes hands with Nelson Mandela.

As the son of a black father and white mother, Kennedy admits that people tend to look at him and recognize him as white. In the book, Kennedy recounts struggling with his identity as a child. “For a while, I thought that being different than my peers was a bad thing because different is strange,” Kennedy writes. “Through these experiences and learning of my family’s history, I have learned to embrace my black side and to always strive to hold my head high when expressing who I am.” Kennedy said he hopes young people who struggle with knowledge of their identity can find some common ground in the book’s focus. He said the book is comprised of interviews with his grandmother, mother and father, Adam, who has never been distant from the issue of race relations. Kennedy said his father was randomly and brutally beaten by a police officer in Arlington, Virginia in 1991. After the officer charged his father with assault, he was acquitted and later won a civil lawsuit against the Arlington County Police Department. Kennedy’s father and grandmother combined their written accounts of the experience into their own book, which was later turned into a full-length play “Sleep Deprivation Chamber.” Kennedy said he believes America today still exists with the vestiges of more than 300 years of black-American oppression. He

said it’s also the reason that stories similar to his father’s ordeal, which predated the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles by about three months, are still common. This is what Kennedy said inspired him to write a book. “I got the idea to write this book when Michael Brown was in the news. We’ve had over 250 years of slavery, 90 years of Jim Crow south. Race relations are not getting much better,” Kennedy said. “We saw this recently with the protests in Missouri, where students felt the university’s president was not representing the black community as he should have been.” Kennedy admits writing a book is no easy task, although it does seem to run in his family. His grandparents have all authored books, and he said when he first decided to write a book as a 17-year-old, he looked to his family as models. “I saw their published work and I wanted to have a book of my own,” Kennedy said, adding he was fortunate to have a grandmother who taught at Harvard, Stanford and Yale to help him learn about literature and writing. “That taught me lessons that led to this book,” Kennedy said. “Balancing writing and high school was tough. Having patience was the hardest part.” In the future, Kennedy hopes to become a professor of either English or African American Studies, or join the Diplomatic Corps and eventually become an ambassador.

VCU Opera performs “Mostly Magic”

KRISTEN LAIR-BAKER
Contributing Writer

VCU Opera performed their anticipated fall collection of scenes from some of the world’s most renowned compositions and operas. On Nov. 21-22, Melanie Kohn Day and Kenneth Wood co-directed “Mostly Magic,” a concert of opera scenes including “La Cenerentola,” a variation of the classic “Cinderella,” “The Consul,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Romeo et Juliette” and other similar scenes.

The gala was performed by the VCU Opera class, composed of roughly 20 students who have spent the past semester focusing on this fall performance.

Day accompanied the performers on piano while Wood narrated each scene. They said they tried to tailor the performances to what the singers voices are suitable for within two to 10 years.

“When casting, we work very hard to assign roles that are appropriate for each student,” Wood said. “We have a little more latitude when casting scenes, because a student might not yet be ready to sing the entire role, but they are perfectly capable of performing a scene from it.”

Day also states that she and Wood consider students’ past performances when determining the variation they should take this semester.

For the first five weeks the students focus on the music of the performances then go on to completing acting exercises with Wood and begin staging.

“We begin by doing generalized acting and improvisation exercises, followed by specific character study,” Wood said.

He went on to explain how he also has to work the role of a theatre director, as opera encompasses both

singing and acting. One of Day’s favorite scenes, “The Consul,” is a direct parallel to the recent events concerning refugees in Syria. The scene is set in a totalitarian European country, where displaced citizens are waiting to receive passports to leave the country. Having to confront an unsympathetic receptionist, played by Margaret Mayes, these people are faced with excessive paperwork and unreasonable qualifications for a passport to leave the country. Other scenes, such as “Rigoletto” and “Romeo et Juliette,” are sung in Italian and French. This goes to show the necessity of opera vocalists to study other languages as well as the difficulty in signing opera. Day said that working as a teacher at VCU has been an enlightening experience. “Because it is just one scene, we are available to develop it in much more depth than you would ever be able to do in the context of a full show,” she said.

Wood said he holds similar sentiments towards his job at the university. “My teaching experience at VCU has been extremely rewarding,” Wood said. “I feel fortunate to be part of a well-developed opera program with such a rich history, and to work with such a talented group of students and a dedicated faculty.”

VCU Opera celebrates 65 years this season and is credited for the longest-running tradition of annual full-scale productions in Virginia. Current students Forrest Glass and DeVonte Saunders were both accepted to the University of Vienna in Austria last summer to study German. VCU Opera’s full-scale spring production will be presented April 29 and May 1.

Poe’s secrets between the lines

SAMUEL GOODRICH
Contributing Writer

Edgar Allan Poe, one of the most famous and celebrated American writers, has confounded enthusiasts who believe he hid his deepest secrets within his own poetry. The Poe Museum is hoping to shed some light on these encrypted secrets with their event “The Poe Code: Cryptograms and Puzzles in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe.” Poe’s affinity for cryptography, the art of writing or solving codes, can be seen in many of his works. His short story “The Gold Bug” is about a group of people trying to decipher a secret message that could lead to a buried treasure. He was also the editor for “Graham’s Magazine” and challenged readers to send in ciphers for him to solve. For many years, deciphering code was reserved for specialists in the armed forces, but Poe was

one of the firsts to popularize cryptography. The Poe Museum aims to educate visitors on cryptography by having them solve simple codes and even form their own. Founded in 1922, the Poe Museum is housed near the poet’s home when he lived in Richmond. It boasts one of the largest collections of Poe’s artifacts like his clothing, bed, letters, and even a lock of hair. They have his manuscripts and original publications as well. The museum also portrays the life of Poe through pictures and relics. Many of his poems and general prose are used to document his accomplishments in life. The Poe Code is just one of the many events held at the museum. There’s a recreation of the catacombs from “The Cask of Amontillado,” and even a celebration of Poe’s birthday in January. The Poe Code will be at the museum until Dec. 31.

Shaferbird Feature

Shafer Bird is part of the Mesh Media Network, a division of VCU Student Media. The Shafer Bird team works to bring the VCU community menu updates and original content, including reviews of on- and off-campus restaurants. www.shaferbird.com

New Urban Farmhouse Location Strikes Out

Coffeehouse / Cafe



“This location of Urban Farmhouse, while useful as a study spot, lacks in their ability to make simple snacks and meals. Their aesthetic for providing fresh wholesome products is diminished by the execution of their dishes. For anyone looking for a wholesome and delicious breakfast, lunch, or snack, I recommend their downtown location, or anywhere else.”

— KATY STANLEY



A bagel topped with salmon with a side of fruit slices at Urban Farmhouse.

PHOTO BY KATY STANLEY



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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“It will be a cold day in hell before the U.S. found any type of sympathy for the countries in Africa.”
— Monica Houston

THE CT **opinion**

The hypocrisy of GOP Candidates

RACHAEL WOJCIECHOWKI
Contributing Columnist

Controversial statements made by various GOP candidates ranging from Ben Carson's statement that a Muslim should not be a president to Ted Cruz and Mike Huckabee's support of our favorite converted Christian rights advocate, Kim Davis, have been heavily publicized in the media. While these comments make it very difficult for anyone other than the far right to sympathize, it also shows a total lack of awareness of their own problems, especially when it comes to their inability to stop contradicting themselves.

The Italian Mobster-esque candidate from New Jersey, Chris Christie, who claims that "after decades of gross mismanagement and shortsighted budgeting practices," he saved the state of New Jersey's finances. In actuality, he literally ate a pretty large sum of his budget. According to the Washington Post, a sum of \$95,000 was given to Christie as his state allowance; in order to fund various business or senatorial functions, he spent around \$82,000 of this on concession stand food. This was all taxpayer money and the only saving grace for Christie was that the NJGOP refunded the state for the lost funds.

Ted Cruz and Mike Huckabee take the cake as the two most religiously fanatical choices available. While Huckabee became the object of Survivor's lawsuits for playing their song "Eye of the Tiger" at a Kim Davis rally, Ted Cruz is hosting a "Rally for Religious Liberty." Both have also attended the Kim Davis rally, which is ironic because she is not a true religious icon for breaking every law on marriage the Bible has to offer and for lying about the private one on one meeting with Pope

Francis (who was instead met with an old gay student).

Cruz and Huckabee attended a rally hosted by a preacher who spoke of homosexuality being punishable by death. The irony of the support of these beliefs is the fact that Ted Cruz advertises himself as "a passionate fighter for ... the Constitution," and Huckabee pledges to "adhere to the Constitution" and while supporting Kim Davis, have essentially shown that they believe that the right to be Christian stands above all other laws. Both forget, as supporters of the Constitution, that the concept of religious freedom extends to not only Christians but to all religions as well as the fact that the founders of America were escaping religious oppression, the same kind of oppression being directed towards the LGBT population.

The top two most hypocritical candidates are, as always, Ben Carson and Donald Trump. While the stoic, silent neurosurgeon becomes the figurehead for the Anti-Muslim movement as he heavily appeals towards Christian conservatives with his story of finding Jesus after trying to stab a close relative, he also falsified his biography, claiming acceptance into West Point. Whether that and other false statements were attempts to pander or were just a moment of idiocy on his part is unknown, but what is truly confusing is his lack of a specific platform. Carson is running on absolutely nothing. His platform for a balanced budget is a four-paragraph proposal of less than two hundred words. The real issue is whether or not he should even be considered a candidate, as he seems to not be taking it very seriously.

The number one candidate of contradictory statements, no one can surpass the marshmallow-haired Donald Trump. His love



ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL TORRICCA

of women far outweighs his compassion for the many immigrants who work at his company, despite especially vicious comments about Carly Fiorina's face and his stance against Planned Parenthood. While stating that there will be a "great and beautiful wall" along the Mexican border, Trump is also quick to forget his German and Scottish heritage, two of the many groups of immigrants allowed through Ellis

Island. He also blames Obama for the crisis in the Middle East while completely forgetting who the major players were which was very evident by his mixing of the Kurds and the Quds, and trying to cover for it by saying he will learn them when he's in office.

Trump also continuously states that he has never gone bankrupt, despite four of his companies going bankrupt, and citing this business knowledge

as a reason for why he would be fiscally responsible. At this point, Trump has lied more times than Hillary Clinton while still managing to insult every other candidate out there, and commends himself on his imminent friendship with Vladimir Putin.

While there are problems with all of the candidates, especially Clinton, there is a point where the lying is too much and the instability of their platforms

seriously leads to doubt as to whether or not they should be considered viable candidates. They all agree that there is a problem with the U.S. that needs to be fixed. While they think that they might be the solution, most of them certainly are not. We can only hope we get the proper president for the time being and that they will do the least evil.

Islam is not synonymous with terrorism

MIKAELA REINARD
Contributing Columnist

"Islam" has become a word of fear in our daily language solely for the negative connotations associated with it. In Arabic, "Islam" means "submission" or "surrender," and it derives from the word "salaam," which holds meanings such as "peace." In Christianity, surrendering to God is putting your life in God's hands. So why is the word "surrender" automatically turned negative when referring to following the prophet Muhammad and Allah's commands and wisdoms? Despite Islam's etymology and

roots, people still misinterpret the teachings of Islam and use them as an excuse to persecute. Presidential candidate Donald Trump has stated countless times that the persecution of Muslims is imperative to the security of our nation.

"I want surveillance of these people," he stated. "I want surveillance if we have to and I don't care. I want surveillance of certain mosques, OK. I want surveillance."

Is Trump interested in seeing a congregation of people pay devotion to who they believe is their holy God and savior? If that is not the case, then there is no reason for Trump

to spy on the Muslim population in the United States. According to PBS Frontline, an estimated 5 to 12 million Muslims live in the United States.

If the entire nation of Islam posed a significant threat to United States security, we would have seen threats turned into action countless times. Instead, we have only seen a few actions taken by extremist groups like the KKK. In fact, most terrorism in the U.S. is perpetuated by white men.

People are always quick to judge the entire nation of Islam, stating that all people who follow the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam are ter-

rorists; however, they find a myriad of excuses to bury the fact that the KKK is a domestic terrorist group in the United States. They're quick to say anyone who has Middle Eastern facial features and has a large beard or wears a hijab, and anyone who speaks an Arabic-sounding language is a terrorist, but they refuse to look at anyone else as such.

When will the persecution of the Islamic population end? Islam is not synonymous with terrorism, and anyone who thinks that such an allegation is true is absolutely misinformed. Those who practice Islam are peaceful, and the minuscule sliver of those who claim to practice Islam that are violent are extremists. According to a study released by the Pew Research Center in 2010, an estimated 1.6 billion people follow Islam. Extremists should not be the face for such a large group of people who promote peace when extremist groups such as ISIS, Al Shabaab, and Boko Haram promote violence and terror.

Such a large and prosperous group of people could not possibly exist if their sole purpose was to annihilate enemies. People need to stop generalizing based on what they know. Islam is just as acceptable of a religion to follow as its counterparts, and it's time that it is treated as such. Religion is no more than a personal relationship between the follower and their divine figure and people need to stop being harassed for engaging in an intimate relationship with Allah. The followers of Islam are here in peace and it's time to recognize that following a different faith is not a means to persecute or an excuse to hate. Instead, it is merely an opportunity for acceptance and to learn and expand worldly knowledge. Rather than looking at a follower of Islam and using that as terms of judgment, look at their character. Look at how they treat people, not how someone thousands of miles away that doesn't follow the teachings of the Qur'an treats people. Practicing Islam is not synonymous with practicing terrorism. Stop attempting to make a connection that was never meant to exist.

Countries in need of prayer come second to Paris attacks

—continued from page 1

while Iraq and Afghanistan were ranked first and second consecutively. Findings suggest that Nigeria experienced the largest increase of deaths from terrorism in 2014, with at least 7,512 people killed in terror attacks by Boko Haram and the Fulani militants; the latter are believed to have killed some 1,200 people in the past year.

It should be obvious why the U.S. feels such urgency to cover the events in Paris over the events in Africa. Africa has never been a high priority for Western nations other than stealing labor and goods. It will be a cold day in hell before the U.S. found any type of sympathy for the countries in Africa. We can pretend racism no longer exists and "all lives matter," but historical and recent facts prove otherwise. If parts of white Africa were being terrorized, U.S. media coverage would be all over it.

The only sympathy coverage Africa ever receives from the States are those

"feed a child in Africa for just \$10 a month" commercials. Not to say everyone is not sympathetic, but the U.S. and France have had alliances for centuries. While those who are not blatant white supremacists are paying attention to France, they should be praying for Africa too. Other countries are in need of prayer and support, including those from the motherland.

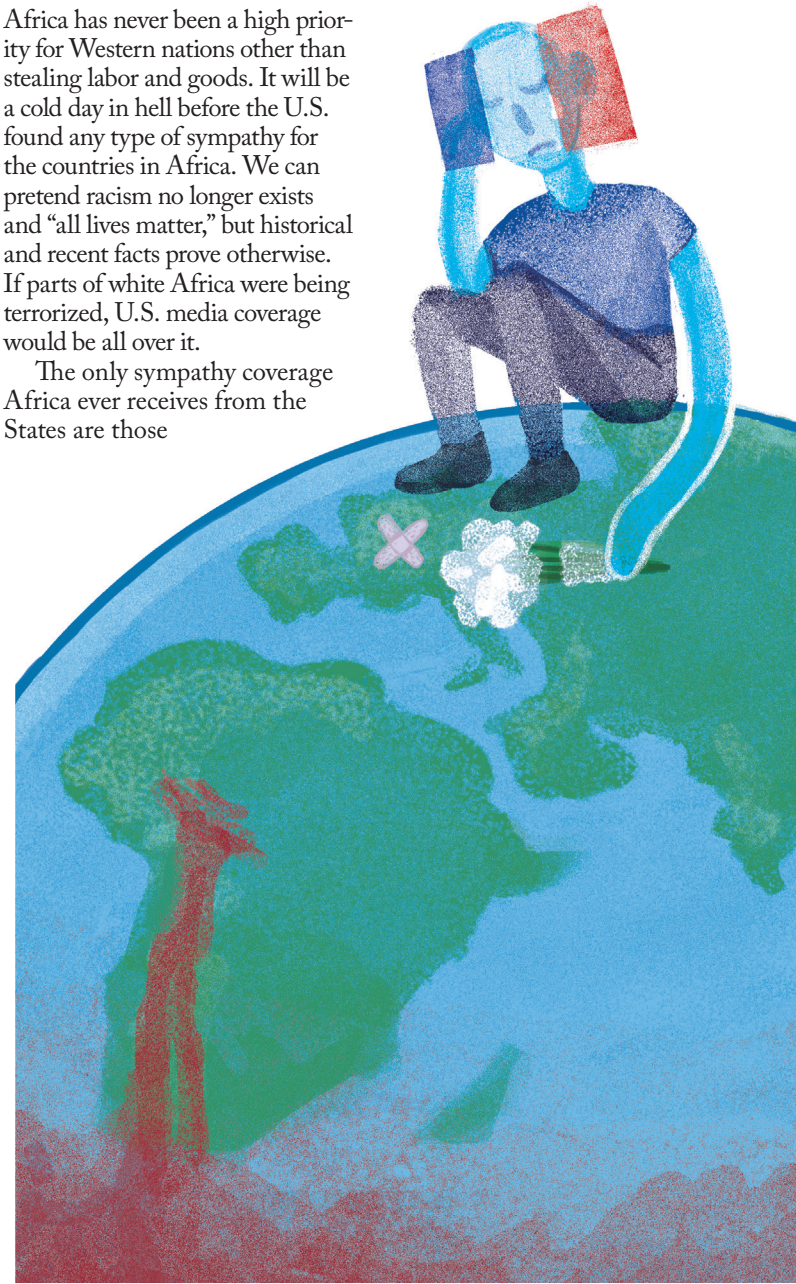
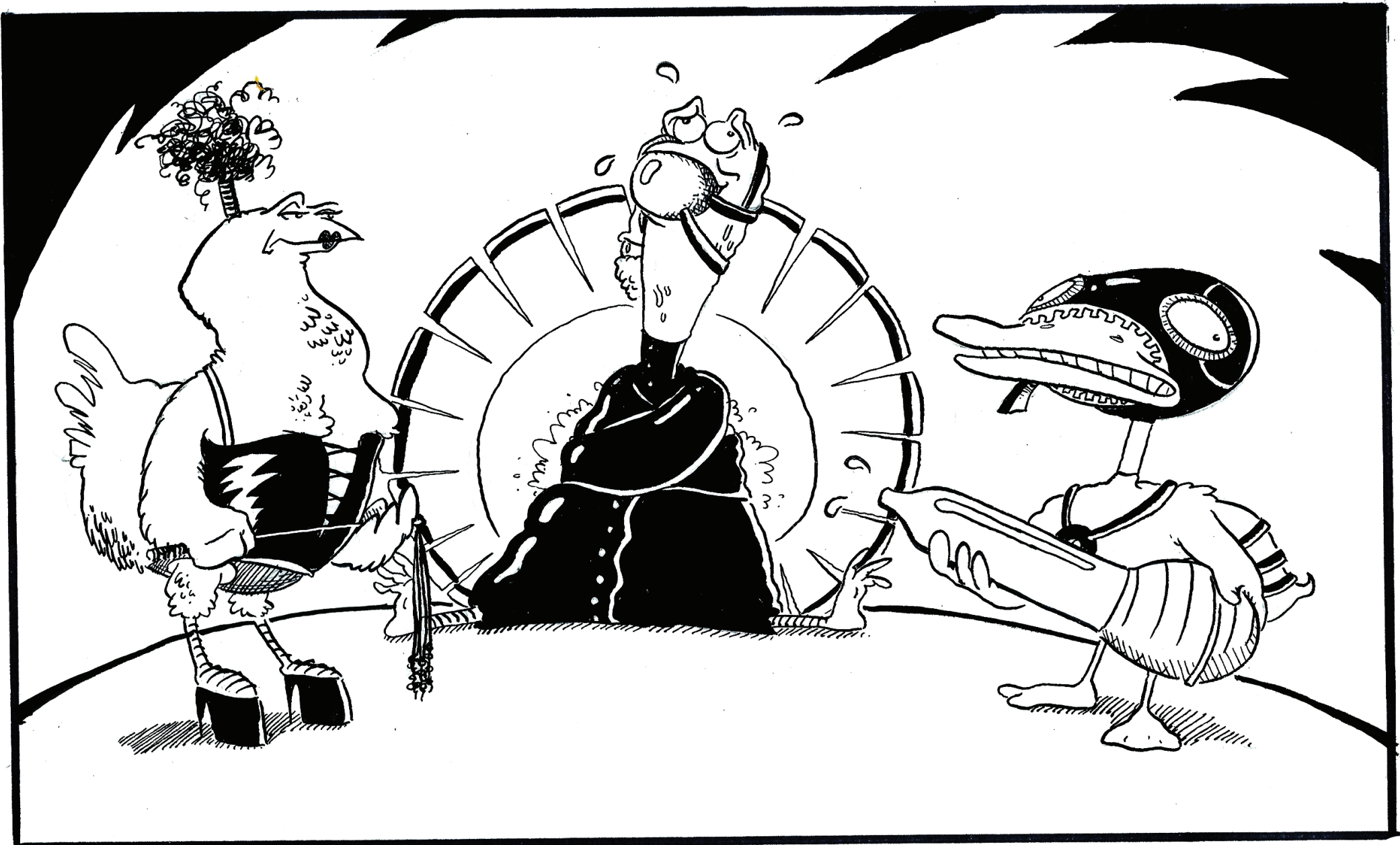


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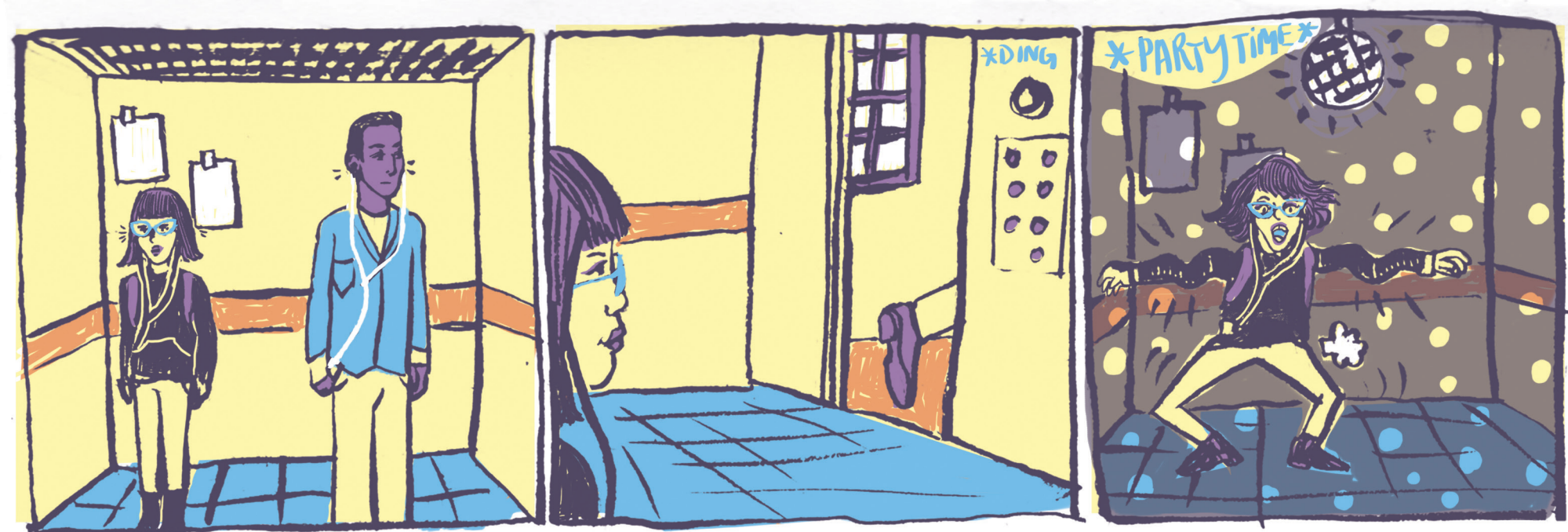
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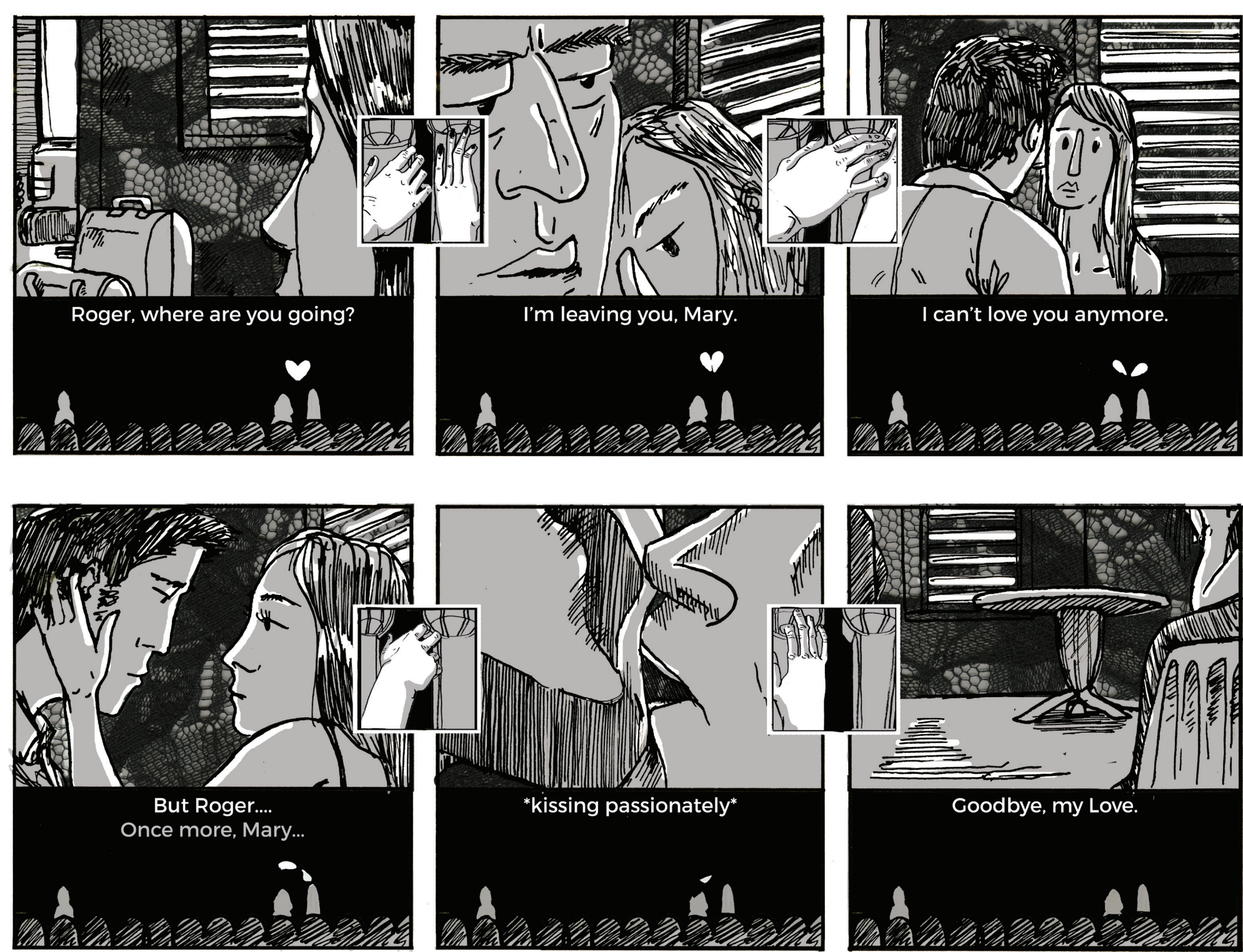
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Between Floors and Closed Doors by Kelli Moore



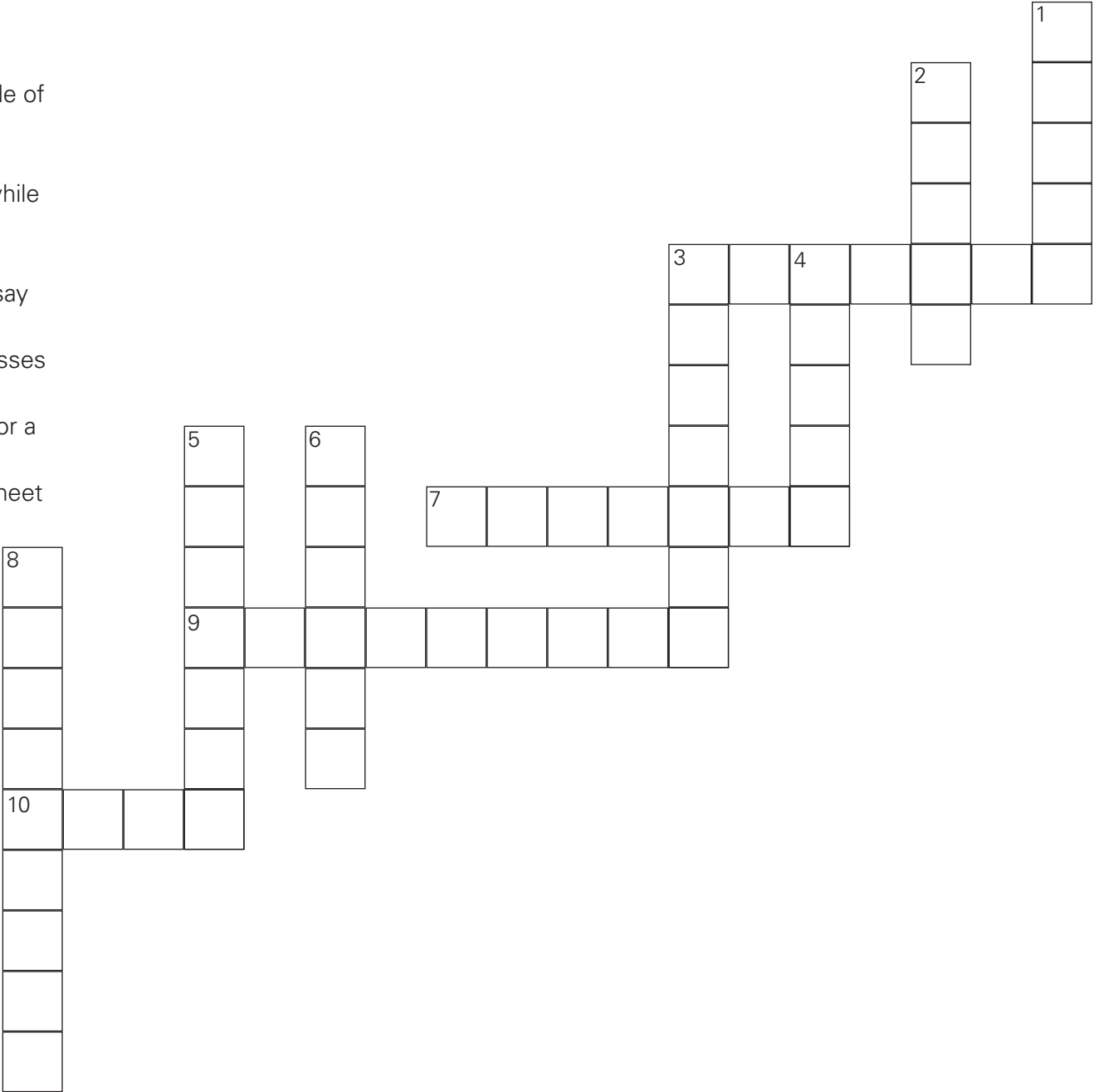
Movie Theater by Daniel Torraca



PUZZLES

Across:
3. The last name of the man VCU's library is named for
7. Some classes have sessions before an exam to do this
9. A brand of "smart drug" used to study
10. The number pencil used on answer sheets

Down:
1. Test
2. Making below a grade of D
3. A drink used to help students stay up late while studying
4. The color of a book commonly used for essay responses
5. The week where classes have their last tests
6. A way of preparing for a test
8. A brand of answer sheet



THE CT STAFF

Executive Editor
Sarah King
kingsa@commonwealthtimes.org

Print Managing Editor
Matt Leonard
leonardmt@commonwealthtimes.org

Copy Editor
Meagan Dermody
dermodymb@commonwealthtimes.org

Print News Editor
Maura Mazurowski
mazurom@commonwealthtimes.org

Online News Editor
Muktaru Jalloh
jallohmm@commonwealthtimes.org

Sports Editor
Bryant Drayton
draytonbo@commonwealthtimes.org

Spectrum Editor
Austin Walker
walkeraw@commonwealthtimes.org

Opinion Editor
Monica Houston
houstonm@commonwealthtimes.org

Illustrations Editor
Shannon Wright
wrightsn@commonwealthtimes.org

Photography Editor
Brooke Marsh
marshba@commonwealthtimes.org

Multimedia Editor
Margaret Carmel
carmelm@commonwealthtimes.org

Social Media Specialist
Jasmine Roberts
robertsjm@commonwealthtimes.org

Staff Writers
Fadel Allasan
allasanfg@commonwealthtimes.org

Sophia Belletti
bellettisr@commonwealthtimes.org

Marcus Blackwell
blackwellm@commonwealthtimes.org

Staff Photographer
Julie Tripp
trippjm@commonwealthtimes.org

Staff Illustrators
Erin Bushnell
bushnellef@commonwealthtimes.org

Christine Fouron
fouronco@commonwealthtimes.org

Distributor
Grace Hoffman
distribution@vcustudentmedia.com

Graphic Designers
Miranda Leung
Anya Shcherbakova
Ashley Moody
Sarah Butler
designers@vcustudentmedia.com

Advertising Representatives
Katie Gallant
Taylor Hankins
Shaun Jackson
Abigail Keatinge
advertising@vcustudentmedia.com
804-828-6629

Outreach Coordinator
Nicolas Desouza
smc_outreach@vcustudentmedia.com

Student Media Director
Greg Weatherford
gowweatherfor@vcu.edu
804-827-1975

Production Manager
Mark Jeffries
mjeffriesVCU@gmail.com

Business Manager
Jacob McFadden
mcfaddenjc@vcu.edu

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Amendment Literary and Art Journal is now taking submissions for our writing contest!

Submit as many submissions as you'd like within the three categories:

- Poetry
- Short Story/Prose
- Essay

Each category will have one winner and a prize of \$100.

All topics are fair game as long as they fit Amendment's motto of "Social Progression through Artistic Expression." Therefore any piece that discusses a topical social issue will do.

Submissions must be in no later than Nov 30 at 11:59 pm.

Must be a VCU student to enter.

Submissions may also be published in the 2016 Amendment Journal or the Amendment website (amendmentvcu.com) even if they do not win their category.

Email your submissions and/or questions to amendmentvcu@gmail.com