

THE LEDGER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA



Controlling COVID on campus: Husky Testing

P3

Fourth Annual PSO forum

This year’s Professional Staff Organization forum was centered around building and embracing diversity, equity and inclusion on campus through policies, procedures and budgets.

By GARRETT YAEN
News Editor

Last week over 350 students from across all three UW campuses gathered together via Zoom with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee to highlight the challenges faced by students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The hour-long event consisted of several discussions related to discrimination in higher education. It started with Professional Staff Organization members discussing how they’ve worked on alleviating the inequities faced today by students and faculty alike.

PSO board member and DEI Committee Chair Deci Evans discussed specific actions taken, such as creating an anti-racism group, a diversity book club and the diversity council website.

“One of the things our department has done is that we have created an anti-racism group and the mission of that group is to brainstorm ideas and pathways for education awareness and actions and to create an anti-racist work environment,” Evans said.

Evans explained that the diversity council website would help outreach and recruitment for underrepresented minority residents and faculty. It will provide specific tools, hiring practices and procedures to offer to staff. A DEI staff training program is also in the works.

Ebonee Anderson, a Diversity Recruiter at UW Human Resources, explained that a primary focus for UW HR at the moment is examining current policies and practices.

“One of the things we understand about HR is that we help set the standards,” Anderson said. “So we should model the practices, the procedures, and the culture that we want to see



PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY

The PSO discussed past and future plans for creating a more inclusive campus across the university.”

She then talked about helping set a foundation for a more inclusive campus by establishing a transparency standard. They’ve recently published workforce data, which Anderson says is the first step to creating an inclusive campus culture.

“When it comes to increasing diversity, we first have to understand who’s here and how do we continue to create environments and cultures that are going to attract diversity and help retain and thrive diversity,” she said. “We have a lot of work to do in terms of looking at the system ... it needs to be revisited and revamped

to better serve the diverse communities that are on campus.”

She then passed the discussion to Mariasol Hill, a Global Intern Program Manager at Microsoft.

As someone who sits on the Global Diversity and Inclusion committee, Hill said she had a first-hand account in seeing the array of experiences faced by students once they leave an academic setting. She went on to explain how tech intersects with diversity and inclusion and harbors a space where workers can learn from each other.

“We’re working with students who are forming their own identities and sort of focusing on what DEI means

to them and what it means in a corporate setting,” Hill said. “That population is such an important part of our community for us to implement cultural change through.”

Board Chair for Sustainable Seattle, Jamilah Williams, expressed her journey into DEI work as a Black woman and the work she’s done to make the journey less difficult for others.

“I feel like I came to DEI work kind of just by existing as a Black woman, and especially as a Black woman in a non-profit space,” Williams said.

She further explained that her work on committees, putting togeth-

er plans and strategies, and pushing leadership to take action in meaningful ways allowed her to get involved on a systemic level.

After covering these topics, the event shifted into a Q&A session consisting of discussions about what they define as culture and how they utilize their budget to achieve their goals.

Hill spoke of her work at Microsoft and how the quick cultural change in leadership inspired her to keep on working there.

“Speaking from my experience at Microsoft, I think that culture is really defined by the values that are espoused by the people there and are working there and are contributing to the culture,” Hill said.

“It’s no secret that [Satya Nadella] who is our CEO, in the 5-6 years he’s been here has really led cultural transformation for Microsoft,” Hill said. “So that was one of the things that drove me there, just the quickness that was able to happen because if that can happen so quickly, there’s a lot of things that can happen quickly.”

Wrapping things up, members of the PSO spoke of their respective budgets and how funds could best be utilized to support the growing number of racial equity programs and initiatives. They gave advice to those who wish to support them.

“Looking at what other groups are doing on campus and looking at how you can support them fiscally is a great way to [help],” Hill said. “A lot of time with our budgets if you don’t use the money you end up losing it and there’s ways to invest in your own community in programs that you’re not personally responsible for and you can be helpful in that way.”

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BSU demands action by Spring Quarter 2021

“From platitudes and pleasantries to action”: The Black Student Union at UW Tacoma has been waiting for their demands to be answered by Pagano and other university leadership since 2016.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BSU TWITTER

By TALIA COLLETT
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Back in 2015, the Black Student Union at UW Tacoma composed a list of demands to the university to ensure diversity, equality and inclusion on our campus. This document was brought to Chancellor Pagano’s attention in 2016 and since then, stating that there have been no substantial strides taken towards addressing these needs, the Union has revised the document and brought it back to Pagano’s attention.

The Ledger was able to speak with the President of the BSU, LaKymbria Jones, Secretary LaKeisha Morris and Dr. Gillian Marshall, a professor in the School of Social Work & Criminal Justice here at UWT to address these demands, uncover some context, and explore their hopes for the near future.

When asked about the motivation to revise these demands, Jones iter-

ated that the revision was not only necessary due to the shortcomings of the school’s response, but also because of the current climate and prevalence of injustice in our community.

“Of course, after the time of a lot of social injustice, such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, we felt it was very necessary to speak our voice currently and revise what we see is best fit for the BSU in today’s time,” said Jones.

The original document consisted of demands surrounding programming, coursework and training that should be required for all faculty and students on the campus. Key suggestions highlighted in the document included propositions for more diversity, equity and inclusion training for all and the expansion of diversity requirements for students.

The document also laid out a call for the inclusion of diversity in coursework as well as an adjustment of hiring practices to seek out candidates that can relate to the Black population.

Per the document in 2015, these steps were established to address the fact that the “Inconsistency and lack of programming that supports Black students is one of the reasons the UW Tacoma struggles to retain them, evidenced by the 58% retention rate of 2008 freshman and 28% retention rate of first-generation Black students the same year.”

Moreover, the original policy presented — which is reiterated in the new document — calls for zero tolerance of the discrimination of and

biases against Black students and faculty on campus.

Keeping the same format as the original list, the BSU has added new demands they believe to be necessary for the group.

“We’ve added an emphasis on wanting more art that resembles African American culture made by African American artists that really give us a sense of home on our campus at UWT,” Jones said. “As you see on our campus, [there are] a lot of different artists from different ethnicities and time periods that are very inclusive, so we also want to be included in that inclusivity on campus.”

Not only this, but after attending meetings with the Chancellor, there have been discussions about enabling RSOs to expand and provide more space for RSOs in different library buildings. With these discussions in mind, the BSU has found it necessary to have its own space.

“We wanted something that was very specific for BSU to be able to thrive in,” said Jones. “To have our own space in which we can take full advantage of and kind of not be shadowed or pushed away in a sense in a group that is for all RSOs.”

And lastly, the third new demand they have included takes the form of monetary funding. They are requesting \$1,000.00 annually for the next three years to help them get back on their feet to become self-sufficient in funding events, training and development.

When given the chance, BSU opted out of a meeting with Pagano.

They’ve met with him in the past about similar issues, and by declining the meeting with the Chancellor and his board, Jones noted that the BSU decided they wanted a written response seeing these needs being met.

“We felt that [the written response] would be more respectful of our time and our efforts for him to provide something in writing that solidifies this is what’s going to be done and have a deadline for that. To pretty much show him that we are truly serious about what we believe in,” Jones said.

If these demands aren’t met by Spring Quarter, Jones mentioned they will need to hold the school accountable.

“Ultimately, if we don’t see any progression in these demands, we will have to hold higher ed. and the Chancellor accountable for basically failing their students,” Jones said. “We presented him with this list of demands that isn’t really new to his desk, it’s been there for about a good five years. Still, if nothing has been done, we can go back and say, ‘Okay, we have been failed with our requests to make this campus more inclusive and more supportive of their black students.’”

Both Jones and Lakeisha Morris echoed sentiments regarding the stonewalling of student voices when facing injustice. Together, they urge students to speak out, or continue to do so, to show solidarity and highlight the strength of power in numbers.

In discussing these experiences at UWT along with the prevalence of anti-Black racism, Morris pointed to

the necessity of the campus to better support the Black community at our university and beyond.

Because the university has historically been made aware of these issues on campus and has been provided with this information, Morris set out what she hopes to see now.

“Given that this new list of demands has extra details on just what the school can do as an institution to better itself as, you know, a place that has failed black students again and again. I would hope that, whatever happens, going forward they will actually finally take into account what students, staff and faculty have been telling them over the years,” she said.

Considering this iteration of demands goes into more depth about direct actions that can be taken with succinct guidance and instructions to fight anti-Black racism on campus along with taking into account what faculty, staff and students have told them, Morris noted their priorities have been made transparent.

Dr. Marshall ended the conversation on this note: “I would just like to say that we would like to see some movement from platitudes and pleasantries to action.”

Demands viewable at:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEYq_iPiEU/1zn3beNzYT8-AUmnJaIXw/view?utm_content=DAEYq_iPiEU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

Controlling COVID on campus: Husky Testing

Infectious Disease Doctor, Ana Weil, speaks about the process behind Husky testing for students, staff and faculty.

By ROSIE MENDOZA-BAUTISTA
NEWS REPORTER

The Ledger had the privilege of speaking with Infectious Disease Doctor, Ana Weil. Her experience in this field has led her to tackle COVID-19 at the university level.

“There’s new tasks that need to be done with COVID that I’m taking on,” she said. “This is a new position that I’m adding to my usual workload, working in running the University testing.”

As UW Tacoma transitions into the spring quarter, COVID testing has become available for all UWT students, staff and faculty.

“There’s nothing you need to do to prepare. Be engaged with daily check-ins and sometimes community testing. If people get a text mes-

sage about testing, we just ask that they get a kit right away,” she said.

The process of testing takes place with self-administered kits that are provided when requested and made available through contactless means.

“For UW Tacoma, if you get a testing notification, sign up to receive a kit in the mail. [Then] follow the instructions in the kit on how to do your own swab, put it into a tub and leave it outside your door for the courier to pick up in a couple hours,” she said.

The expected wait time for these swab results varies but Weil speaks confidently about the process of such testing taking place.

“Expect to wait two to three days, but they usually come back in one day. We think that testing at home is

convenient and we’ve had success with it in other studies too,” she said. “It’s provided by the University of Washington, free of charge.”

According to Weil, there are three specific reasons one should use the testing services available for them.

“In the daily check in, if they report any symptoms of having a fever or a cold. We also test someone if they know someone who has COVID. And we also test people if they have been in a group with more than ten people,” she said.

Dr. Weil highly recommends that even if someone doesn’t meet these three reasons, they should still get tested for COVID.

“We test people in the community just to be aware. No matter if they have symptoms or not, just as a

way to look at symptoms that are unknown,” Weil said. “It’s important to participate in the testing, even if you feel well.”

Aside from student, staff and faculty safety, Weil also reassured the safety of those helping with the process of COVID testing.

“A sample itself is unlikely to transfer a disease in the lab,” Weil said “The lab wears PPE, but infection is extremely low. When you come to testing sites, you do your own swab. And the person at the kiosk supervises you. The staff have full PPE and Flexi shields.”

With these reassurances in mind, Weil spoke further about the challenges she and others have had to face in regard to COVID-19.

“All of us in the field of infectious

diseases have taken on additional work. Some people are doing more work on testing trials or taking care of patients,” she said “We have all taken on responsibilities to help.”

As students, staff and faculty at UW Tacoma, it is encouraged to take part in testing and do our part in preventing the spread on campus, especially as a future on campus nears.

FAQ website:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/chancellor/coronaviruscovid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

Visit a new country, learn a new language

We are in a big world with hundreds of countries and languages, let's use this to broaden our knowledge of the universe.



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Take the first step to explore.

By BENGISU CICEK
OPINION COLUMNIST

There are over 190 countries in the world and 6,500 languages spoken today.

We have deserts to snowy mountains, stretching landscapes to the tallest buildings and tropical islands to green forests. We should celebrate the diversity of our world and enjoy the many benefits it gives to us and our health, from its fruit to the oxygen we breathe.

How many countries do I know of? This is a question we should ask ourselves. Open up a map and try to pin all of the countries you know. If you have never been out of the United States, there are so many beautiful places in the world to explore.

There are also many ways to go to these places. One would be to study abroad. As a UW Tacoma student, you are able to apply for a study abroad program through any of the UW campuses, we have a study abroad website with many resources regarding the programs — such as how to apply to the programs as well as how to financially assist your trip. If you're from another campus,

utilize your school's study abroad website to see which countries and programs it has, how to be eligible for it and ways it can be financially assisted!

If you've ever learned a language in high school or college, then you may have been able to experience the culture of that language through your classes. There are many languages being offered at college and university. And at our UW campuses specifically, such as Russian, Arabic, Turkish, German, Greek, Persian and Swedish.

Learning a new language helps you connect with people who also speak that language, and in this way it can be so beneficial for your work life as well as your personal. For instance, if you are in the medical field, you can speak with patients who speak one language and may not know another. If you are in law, you can speak with other countries' representatives on international affairs.

Learning a new language while we have the motivation to do so is so important to take action on. We may have classes, work and other priorities that make it hard to find the time. But utilizing language apps — such as Duol-

ingo or Drops — for five, 10 or 15 minutes a day can make a big difference. Also, finding someone or even a group who wants to learn the same language is great motivation too!

I have two identities. I'm Turkish American and celebrate the diversity in my DNA and culture. I speak Turkish at home, and English when I'm out. Sometimes when I'm out in the market or elsewhere, I stumble upon people speaking Turkish and get excited to connect with them, showing I speak Turkish as well.

When I went to Mexico for the first time, it was a different experience for me. It was so beautiful but I didn't know the language, so I was unable to speak with locals. The food, textiles and architecture were all things I enjoyed learning and experiencing while I was there, as it increased my knowledge of the culture. The hospitality and the positivity of the area we visited was very welcoming. I felt close and warm towards Mexican culture especially after this trip.

Being able to connect with others through culture is one aspect, another is language. Knowing Turkish fluently, it is similar to Turkic languages such as

Azeri and Uyghur, so I am able to bond with people who speak these languages.

Improving our own language as well as learning conversational words and sentences in other languages is so important. When I want to connect with an elder or someone who does not know English well, I feel a bit down as I don't know that language but want to show respect and would like to have a conversation. In my Turkish culture, respecting our elders is a very significant aspect because it shows the value our elders hold.

Learning new languages and going to different countries opens up so many new doors.

By learning a new language, the person who benefits most is yourself, because you open different opportunities. When visiting a different country, your viewpoint and mindset of the world will change, because the way that many countries are portrayed on the news is not even close to how they are in real life. When I first visited Russia, it was a lot different from what I had learned before visiting. The experience I had will stick with me forever, as I discovered

a new part of the world.

After visiting one or multiple countries, you will have that experience for the rest of your life and engage in so many different dialogues with people concerning politics, culture, food, architecture, and more because you will be able to share that experience and knowledge you have from traveling. When you learn a new language, it will go with you everywhere. You will start recognizing that language on billboards, in stores, in books, in shows and in people's conversations.

It's 2021, we are still at the start. Make a goal for yourself. What's a country and language that always sparked your curiosity? What's a language and country that you felt hesitant towards? Take this opportunity to learn it, the resources for learning that language is out there, find it, learn it, use it.

While we are in a pandemic, a great way to utilize this time is to choose a language we always wanted to learn or that we think is hard, and set a goal to learn it. By the time the pandemic is hopefully over, you may have the opportunity to visit the country that language is prominently used.

Protests: Organizing for a better world

The demands for change and justice do not stop at our borders, they can be heard across the seas and in the wind.

By **ANDREA NADAL**
OPINION EDITOR

FIRST ARTICLE IN A SERIES ON PROTESTS AROUND THE WORLD

It has been almost a year since the start of massive protests for Black lives in response to the murders of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, Breonna Taylor by Louisville police officers, and so many other Black, Indigenous and persons of color around the nation by police departments. It is important that we keep the pressure on and continue to demand justice, to continue to demand a change in our system. It is especially important as the Derek Chauvin trial progresses that we let the state know that we have not forgotten and we will not stop until there is accountability and a new system that no longer threatens BIPOC lives.

We have seen certain police de-

partments face defunding, or new training requirements, or new accountability measures, but none of this has come close to meeting the demands of the people. None of these things do what needs to be done to protect BIPOC lives. They are the bare minimum done in an effort to placate those with less radical demands and water down the movement as a whole, and they need to be treated as such.

As we continue this fight, however, I find it is just as important to realize that we are not alone in it. Not only are we seeing these battles across the United States of America, but all over the world, people are organizing uprisings and demanding change within their countries. While each of these uprisings have their own unique context and demands, there is still power in finding solidarity with those fighting for change any and everywhere.

One very famous example from 2020

were the Hong Kong protests demanding full democracy and an inquiry into police actions. These protests inspired many tactics that we saw adopted in our own protests here in the US, including the use of umbrellas to shield protestors from cameras and pepper spray, using traffic cones and water to extinguish tear gas canisters, as well as the important principle of "be like water" — a phrase used to reinforce the necessity of being fluid while also sticking together in order to evade arrest and protect each other.

Back in Oct. 2020 in Nigeria, there were massive protests that demanded an end to SARS, or the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, which has operated with little to no accountability "regularly engag[ing] in extreme brutality, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, armed extortion and kidnapping," according to the Washington Post article "The massive protests in Nigeria, explained," from Tarila Marclint Ebiede.

And this year in Myanmar a massive

civil uprising is taking place after the military seized control of the government on Feb. 1 following the general election where "Ms Suu Kyi's NLD party won by a landslide," as stated by Alice Cuddy in her article "Myanmar coup: What is happening and why?" from BBC News.

Cuddy goes on to explain that "The armed forces had backed the opposition, who were demanding a rerun of the vote, claiming widespread fraud. The election commission said there was no evidence to support these claims." In a collective effort to preserve their rather new democracy and avoid total military control, people took to the streets in impressive numbers to demand their voices be heard.

Looking around the world we can see that we are not alone in this fight for justice. Every day people are rising up and coming together to take the streets and demand change risking their lives, physical and mental well-being. There is an overwhelming call

for state powers to do what is right by the people, and even though we are separated by sea, by borders, by language, by religion we are connected in our humanity and our demand for this humanity to be recognized.

Each article that follows in this series will take an in-depth look at a specific protest from the past year, highlighting the context of the protests — the demands, tactics, and how the state has responded. By creating a better understanding of what is happening beyond our own borders we can begin to see the universality in the fight for freedom and justice.

We can learn from what we see abroad and find ways to support those fighting their fight wherever it may be. By finding solidarity with others doing this work all over the world we undermine those that would silence our fight for radical change and we further empower our communities and our efforts towards liberation.



BLM Protest on the Brooklyn Bridge, New York City. June 9, 2020.

COURTESY OF FLICKR



ILLUSTRATION BY LORE ZENT

St. Patrick's Day: What's it really about?

How learning my heritage made me want to learn more about my ancestors and the origins of holidays.

By MADI WILLIAMS
OPINION COLUMNIST

A couple of years ago I took an ancestry DNA test because I was curious about my heritage. When I first got the results back they had Ireland and Scotland together as one, but after recently looking at it again, they separated the two. And according to my results, I am about a quarter Irish. Knowing where my heritage comes from was important, but learning the history that comes with it was even more so.

With this in mind and St. Patrick's Day just around the corner, I felt like I needed to actually learn what this holiday is all about. In the United States of America, St. Patrick's day is celebrated on March 17 and typically characterized by wearing green, eating corned beef and cabbage and drinking. But

What is the origin of the holiday, and how do they celebrate it in Ireland?

what is the origin of the holiday, and how do they celebrate it in Ireland?

In the article "History of St. Patrick's Day," the History.com editors explain that St. Patrick, whom the holiday is named after, was not born in Ireland, he didn't even get there until he was 16. However, he "was credited with bringing Christianity to its people." So, when he died on March 17, 461 the Irish decided to celebrate him.

As stated in this article, "The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for over 1,000 years. On St. Patrick's Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink and feast on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage."

It's interesting to know that even a holiday like St. Patrick's day, which is seen today as a day of drinking, is rooted in religious origins, like many other holidays. When you are learning about your own heritage and where you came from, learning about these kinds of

things feels more personal because it is something you are connected with.

The religious founding of the holiday is also reflected in one of the most iconic symbols of the holiday, the shamrock. As the editors from History.com explained in their article, the "most well-known legend of St. Patrick is that he explained the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) using the three leaves of a native Irish clover, the shamrock."

Another interesting aspect of the holiday that I learned was that the first St. Patrick's Day parades actually took place in the U.S., not in Ireland. In 1845 a wave of Irish immigrants came to the U.S. due to the Great Potato Famine. So, when St. Patrick's Day came around "Irish Americans in the country's cities took to the streets on St. Patrick's Day to celebrate their heritage, newspapers portrayed them in cartoons as drunk, violent monkeys."

What happened to the Irish immigrants is something that happened to many immigrants not seen as "good enough" to be in the U.S. The media attempted to do everything they could to make Irish individuals look so bad that living day to day life became dif-

ficult, instead of being open to people who are different. This is something that should never have happened because the U.S. is supposed to be open for anyone and everyone, no matter their background — yet this divide of who was good enough would continue, and still happens to other communities.

Personally, I feel that part of the reason this happened was due to the fact that people did not understand the meaning behind St. Patrick's Day, and did not take the time to learn about it. If people took the time to ask what they were celebrating, then maybe this divide and discrimination towards Irish immigrants may have not been as dramatic as it was.

A step toward this understanding and acceptance was taken by President Truman when he attended a St. Patrick's Day parade in New York in 1948. As explained in the History.com article, this was "a proud moment for the many Irish Americans whose ancestors had to fight stereotypes and racial prejudice to find acceptance in the New World."

Understanding the significance behind any holiday is incredibly impor-

tant. It allows you to understand why a group celebrates and what is important to them. For some, it is a way to celebrate and share the religion they practice with others. It is also a way for individuals to pay homage to their heritage.

Learning about your heritage, and the history it carries, knowing that you are a part of something greater than yourself is so interesting and being able to stand up for your ancestors and continue to spread the truth of a holiday is a very rewarding feeling. I myself have not dealt with the backlash of being Irish other than not being Irish enough to technically count, but that's not the point. The point is to spread the knowledge of a holiday that is part of my heritage.

Learning about your heritage, and the history it carries, knowing that you are a part of something greater than yourself is so interesting.

26th annual Seattle Jewish Film Festival

This year's lineup featured a diverse amount of films portraying many facets of the Jewish experience.

By **LORE ZENT**
A&E COLUMNIST

Marking the 26th annual celebration of Jewish Film, the Seattle Jewish Film Festival (SJFF), put on by the Stroum Jewish Community Center, is taking place over a two week period spanning from March 4-18.

While they are unable to present films in theatres due to COVID-19, they are selling virtual 72-hour viewing window tickets on the SJFF's website. They offer a variety of passes, such as a full access pass for the general price of \$180, allowing viewers to stream all 19 of their full-feature films selected for this year.

They also provide a six-movie "6-pack" deal for \$80 and a single movie viewing ticket for \$15. There are also applicable discounts presented on their website. As some of the films have a viewer cap, ticket sales end two hours before the viewing window closes or if a film is sold out.

The opening night featured a pre-recorded discussion between director Barry Avrich and actor, comedian and producer, Howie Mandell. Opening night also featured a documentary piece directed by Avrich titled "Howie Mandell: Enough About Me." The documentary navigates Mandell's life and career, touching upon his struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), his early years and his breakout role. "Howie Man-

dell: Enough About Me" pieces this story together using a variety of mediums such as archival footage, on-stage recordings and interviews.

A variety of other Zoom conversations were held throughout the two weeks from different talents and academic crowds. On March 9, viewers heard from director Michelle Paymar and historian Brendan G. Goldman on the film "From Cairo to the Cloud." The film followed the telling of the 1896 finding of centuries-old documents shaping Jewish history in Cairo, and how through modern technology, the documents were digitized and distributed to the masses.

Writer Barbara Lahav, realty founder Joe Schocken, and director Noemi Schory, spoke upon the topics embedded in the film "Shchocken." This film is centered around Schocken's uncle, a department store tycoon before World War II. These are just some of the few zoom discussions they offered besides their film screenings.

I had the opportunity to watch one of the SJFF's films "American Birthright." The documentary follows millennial Jewish-Israeli refugee Becky Tahel who, despite her open view on life, struggles with the judgement of her young sister being the first in her family to intermarry.

In the film's opening scene, Tahel attends a Hollywood spoken word night. She speaks, "[I] Somehow found myself standing before this complex debate, on



COURTESY OF AMERICANBIRTHRIGHTFILM.COM
American Birthright is one of the nineteen featured films selected for the Seattle Jewish Film Festival.

one side stands the inclusiveness of love conquers all and marry whoever you want and somewhere across the spectrum of anything but black and white controversy about intermarriage is the deep seeded fear of the disappearance of the Jewish people which scares the [profanity] out of me."

Currently there are 14 million declared Jewish people in the world (.2%), compared to 2.3 billion Christians (31%), 1.8 billion Muslims (24%) and 1.2 billion Hindus (15%) — according to World-populationreviews.com.

Throughout the documentary, she assesses her own reactions to her sister's engagement as well as the various reactions of her friends and family members toward intermarriage and the survival of their people. This includes Jewish schol-

ars, their grandmother — who is a survivor of the Holocaust — and their childhood rabbi.

Besides centering on the topic of intermarriage in Jewish faith, Tahel explores her own connections to her Jewish faith and her truth, how she defines Judaism and why. This includes her upbringing in both the Persian Gulf War in Israel and Philadelphia; highlighting her experience further in terms of what she considers to be a cultural Jew and having to conform to fit in at a young age.

As Gal — Becky's sister — states towards her marriage and lifestyle, "I believe in a lot of things that are not Jewish a hundred percent but I am Jewish. And I have my traditions, and I know the stories and I love all of our biblical stories and what they mean so on and so forth.

But there's more, to me it's all leading to the same place. Every religion has different stories and different ways, no one is right and no one is wrong. These are just our paths to follow."

While many of the films have passed their viewing period these past 11 days, there are still quite a few films available to watch for those interested. From musicals, comedies and rom-coms to documentaries and historical dramas, this year's festival has presented us with a diverse amount of films touching on several different topics. The diversity exemplifies to others that the Jewish experience is not monolithic, nor does Jewish film have to be rooted in trauma, while parallely providing solidarity for the Jewish community, giving them an outlet to convey their truths.

The unexplainable crimes of the Cecil Hotel

Shows like Netflix's "The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel" have captivated our attention and created an independent genre: true unexplainable crime.

By **MADELINE HILLER**
A&E EDITOR

In this day and age, true crime shows have drawn a huge audience across demographics and age groups. There is a sort of morbid curiosity in us as humans that pulls us toward these documentaries with various films and series, such as "The Ted Bundy Tapes."

However, Netflix's "The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel" has a different feeling to it. Going for the genre of true crime, it has characteristics that give it a different, eerie presence. First, there is the history of the hotel itself. The Hotel Cecil in Los Angeles, California was a hotel that offered cheap rates on a daily and weekly basis. This made the hotel appealing to people with a lower income or homeless communities as an option to be used as long term or permanent housing.

Another appeal that the hotel provided was housing criminals. Serial killers, like the night stalker, stayed at this hotel. With that said, it is pretty safe to say there was a fair share of

murders and other causes of death that plagued the hotel. From overdoses to suicides, it darkened and tarnished the name of Hotel Cecil.

The other event that veers this docuseries from being a strictly "true crime" show is the well known disappearance of Elisa Lam. "The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel" is a four chapter/episode series covering this woman's disappearance. Lam traveled from her home in Canada to Los Angeles, on her own, and eventually wound up at the Hotel Cecil. Her mysterious disappearance and death that are investigated throughout the series gives the viewers a sense that something more happened.

After watching it myself, I have my own ideas about everything that happened. Different people who both watched the show and were aware of the incident at the time in 2013, formed their own opinions of what happened and some even started their own investigations. Some say that Lam was having a mental episode that resulted in her death, others say she couldn't have done this on her own.

Today, there are even the few that say it was the hotel's negative energy, and maybe even some of its past residents that had died there. Regardless of what actually happened, it's definitely one of those documentaries that will leave you thinking for a while after watching it.

Formatted the way most documentaries are, the series features multiple interviews with the people who were present during the time of the incident in 2013 and pairs them with eerie yet beautiful shots of the hotel. And rated for mature audiences, there were some images containing drugs and minor gore. I felt like the creators did a thorough job with the interviews as well as explaining the story. The holes left unanswered seemed almost intentional for viewers to think on.

Currently, the hotel is closed down. There are a few tenants who still reside there and call it their permanent home, but the hotel status is no longer active. However, people are still wildly interested in the story of The Cecil and its modernized counterpart, Stay on Main.

One man, Ryan Murphy, based the fifth season of his well known horror show, "American Horror Story," on the hotel.

With all of the events that occurred in the hotel, both AHS season five and this docuseries on Netflix feel like they approach the events the same way, as if they're creating their own genre of

true supernatural crime.

By definition, true crime is the genre of pieces that are based on or inspired by an event that really happened at some point in history. It is safe to say that "The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel" strays from true crime into this unexplainable, almost supernatural, area.



COURTESY OF NETFLIX
The Cecil Hotel casts an eerie shadow through its history in downtown Los Angeles.

Surviving middle America in “Nomadland”

Chloe Zhao’s latest work, “Nomadland,” offers an intimate exploration of the American west in the years following the great recession.

By **HENRY NGUYEN**
FILM CRITIC

Independent filmmaker Chloe Zhao’s work is filled with the fascination and wonder that surrounds the American west, and her newest release takes this fascination in a more intimate direction. Adapted from the 2017 non-fiction book “Nomadland” written by Jessica Bruder, this film adaptation by the same name is directed by Zhao and takes us on a journey to neglected places in America.

The story starts with a title screen that describes the impacts of the great recession. Beginning with our main character Fern — played by Frances McDormand — selling her things off to a storage facility, we learn that she lives out of her van and then follow her on a journey to become a modern day nomad.

The main focus of the film is the people, most of whom were heavily affected by the market crash in 2008.

The main focus of the film is the people, most of whom were heavily affected by the market crash in 2008.

Many lost their livelihoods due to it and became forgotten to a certain extent, they ended up having to take menial seasonal jobs that are hardly enough to keep them alive until the end of the month.

The film features a few “characters” that play themselves. Swankie and Linda May play themselves in the film and they actually do an amazing acting job. When they tell their stories it’s obvious that it’s coming straight from the heart and is incredibly moving to watch them perform.

The film makes great use of its Arizona set. Highlighting the best parts of rural America that are, more often than not, neglected. The far wide shots create endless landscapes, each of which are aesthetically pleasing. These shots are then contrasted with the vast industrial and almost dystopian look of the Amazon facility where Fern has to work.

With that being said, it is worth bringing up the conversation on whether or not the film romanticizes the economic hardships of the people who are barely scraping by on working in places out of pure necessity. Thankfully the movie avoids this. It does so by making their stories integral to the plot and vital to learning about their character, rather than just displaying their stories as a means to move the



COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES
Frances McDormand plays a traveling nomad in this unique drama.

story forward.

While the story is unique in the sense that it doesn’t follow a conventional structure so you can’t predict what’s going to happen next, the narrative and message itself, however, is one aspect that I wish packed more of a punch.

The depiction of places like the Amazon workplace appears like they are trying to send some kind of anti-capitalist message or theme about the exploitation of workers. However, whatever message the movie tries to portray becomes very subtle as the film doesn’t spend much time to fully real-

ize these ideas.

As a result, the film spends more time with Fern’s journey and her exploration of rural America while meeting other people along the way, which starts to meander from time to time.

“Nomadland” is an amalgamation of a fascination of the American west, the exploration of modern day nomads and the effects of economic disparities within the U.S. It takes the viewer on a journey that plays out more like a documentary or a group rather a dramatic narrative. If you’re looking for a truly unique movie, then I definitely recommend a viewing of “Nomadland.”

REVIEW

"Nomadland"

★★★★★

The Good:

- Great casting
- Beautiful Cinematography
- Unique Narrative

The Bad:

- Overall themes could be more clear
- Message could be clarified

Mariners season preview

With a young core of players with potential, Mariner fans have a lot to be excited about in 2021 and future years.

By **BROOKS MOELLER**
SPORTS COLUMNIST

The 2021 MLB season is here with all 30 teams officially reporting for spring training and preparing for the upcoming year. After a shortened 2020 season along with the ongoing pandemic, there were doubts about whether this year’s season would start on time. But teams are competing in their annual spring training games and the season is on track to start on time, with or without fans in stadiums.

The Mariners find themselves in a very optimistic position heading into 2021. Last season, their young core of players showed significant growth and if these players continue to grow into the potential they have, then this team could surprise some people.

Leading this young core is center fielder and 2020 American League rookie of the year, Kyle Lewis. Lewis finished with a slash line of .262/.364/.437 to go along with 11 home runs and 28 RBIs. It has been a long time since Mariner fans have had a player to be as excited about as they should be for Lewis. He brings energy wherever he

goes and will likely be in the Mariners lineup for years to come.

Two other young players who made an impact and showed promise in 2020 were shortstop JP Crawford and first baseman Evan White. This was Crawford’s second full year as a Mariner where he significantly improved his batting average while also winning a Gold Glove award for his outstanding defense. This season will act as a make or break year for Crawford as the club may search for other options at shortstop if the improvement does not continue. However, I like what I saw from Crawford and I expect to see him continue to be in our future plans.

White has been labeled as the first baseman of the future and flashed this potential during his rookie season. White struggled at the plate for the majority of the season, finishing with a .176 batting average but there is reason to believe this will improve. His exit velocity of batted balls shows that he is making hard consistent contact, so if he can cut down his strikeouts, then improvement is almost guaranteed. White would also join Crawford to win a Gold Glove as well, who

was the first rookie first baseman to do so since 1957.

Returning to the lineup in 2021 is catcher Tom Murphy and right fielder Mitch Haniger. Murphy missed the entire 2020 season due to a foot injury but has fully recovered and hopes to build off a breakout 2019 where he hit .273 with 18 home runs.

Haniger has not seen action since the first half of 2019 due to a variety of injuries. Hopes were high after being named an all star in 2018 and Haniger looks to get back to this level of play now that he is healthy. He is one of the players that has stood out to me in Spring Training and looks to be back to his old self.

Along with this promising lineup is a young and upcoming pitching staff that showed a lot of improvement in 2020. Leading the starting rotation is Marco Gonzales. Gonzales had a career year in 2020 posting a 3.10 ERA and would have likely set career highs in wins and strikeouts, if not for the shortened season.

Returning to Seattle is veteran starting pitcher James Paxton, known around here as “The Big Maple.” Paxton was

extremely valuable in his first stint in Seattle and solidified himself as one of the league’s best pitchers. This led the Mariners to trade him to the Yankees during their rebuild but he struggled with injuries in New York and was never the same pitcher he was in Seattle. Paxton hopes to bounce back in a familiar setting this upcoming season while also bringing good veteran leadership to a young rotation.

Even with all the promise the major league roster is showing, the Mariners also have the no. 2 farm system in all of baseball including the #3 and #4 overall prospects in Julio Rodriguez and Jarred Kelenic. Both Kelenic and Rodriguez are predicted to make massive impacts on the team once called up where we could see Kelenic as soon as opening day.

Overall, there is a lot to be excited about this year with the Seattle Mariners. With a promising and young core group of players along with one of the top farm systems in baseball, this team will be in contention for a playoff spot this season. The future is now in Seattle.

PROJECTED LINEUP

JP Crawford	SS
Dylan Moore	2B
Kyle Lewis	CF
Kyle Seager	3B
Mitch Haniger	RF
Ty France	DH
Evan White	1B
Tom Murphy	C
Jake Fraley	LF

PROJECTED ROTATION

Marco Gonzales
James Paxton
Justus Sheffield
Chris Flexen
Yusei Kikuchi
Justin Dunn