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THE LEDGER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA

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UWT Denim Day 2023 Event

International Denim Day brings awareness to sexual assault and gender-based violence.



PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

By KATIE SCOTT
NEWS REPORTER

Content Warning: Sexual Assault and Rape

International Denim Day is April 26, 2023, and UWT will be hosting its second annual event recognizing this occasion.

At UWT, the annual Denim Day Awareness Event, facilitated by Madie Brown, UWT Health Promotion Specialist, will take place on April 26, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. in William Phillip Hall (WPH).

“Denim Day is an international awareness day of sexual violence. It seeks to raise awareness of sex and gender-based violence, and educate folks on consent and provide prevention strategies, as well as to just celebrate and empower survivors,” Brown said.

International Denim Day began in 1999 as an event to protest sexual assault and gender-based violence. Today, it serves as a beacon to promote awareness, advocacy and community support to protect survivors. The day has developed into a global symbol of how communities can bond together to prevent harm. The event began in the wake of a 1990s ruling by the Italian Parliament.

In 1992, Italian Parliament convicted a 45-year-old of the rape of an 18-year-old student. The student was enrolled in a driver’s education course that the perpetrator was instructing. Seven years later, in 1999, that same parliament overturned the rape conviction, citing the reason being what the victim was wearing. Italian Parliament concluded the victim must have helped her rapist remove her “tight jeans,” wherein, in the Parliament’s opinion, implied consent for sex.

With the ruling being overturned, the perpetrator, who was the victim’s driver’s education instructor, was cleared of all charges. The next day, female members of the Italian Parliament wore denim on the Parliament floor to show solidarity with the victim and to protest the ruling.

This act of protest sparked a global response and the International Denim Day movement caught momentum. 26 years later, Denim Day is now a global event used to spread awareness about sexual assault and gender-based violence.

Brown explains the second annual UWT Denim Day event will host student, school and community organizations in a fair-style event. In addition to hosting denim articles, organizations will offer information on their programming, upcoming events, ways to get involved and opportunities to meet organization representatives in attendance.

Attendees will have the option to sign the denim items with words of support to survivors, messages in solidarity of survivors and learn about sexual assault prevention. If they feel comfortable, attendees also have the option to share words and experiences of their own through writing on the denim clothing items.

Participation in this event is voluntary and welcome to all UWT students, staff and faculty. Brown says attendees are welcome to attend the event to learn about sexual assault prevention, and writing on the denim items is optional.

“I wanted (to create) something that served students but really had a full community buy-in,” Brown said of creating the UWT Denim Day event.

In addition to the annual campus event, Brown discussed fu-

ture plans for the UWT Denim Day Event to extend to providing community outreach, survivor support and to be a place to generate ways for the UWT community to actively and sustainably support survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence, while preventing the harm that is perpetrated against them.

If you are a student, school or community organization that would like to participate in the 2023 Denim Day event, you can email Madie Brown at madieb@uw.edu.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault,

abuse or other gender-based or relationship violence, the UWT confidential advocate is available to offer support, safety planning, resources and to connect survivors with providers if they choose. All services with the advocate are kept confidential and survivors using the service can choose what information they disclose to the advocate.

The UWT Confidential Advocate can be reached at uwts-va@uw.edu

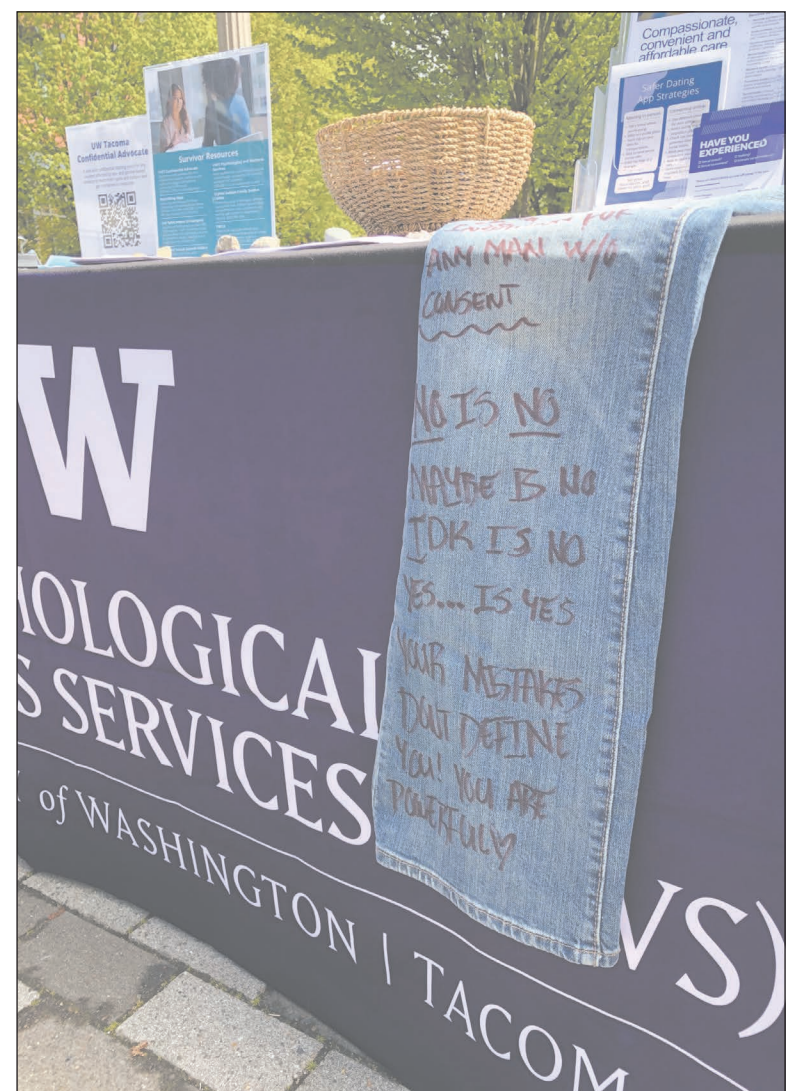


PHOTO BY MADIE BROWN

The 2022 UWT Denim Day even hosted student, university and community organizations to promote safety.

Weekly Weather

Monday

51/39 - Showers

Tuesday

51/38 - Showers

Wednesday

51/39 - Showers

Thursday

55/41 - Cloudy

Friday

60/43 - Cloudy

Saturday

60/44 - Cloudy

Sunday

57/43 - Cloudy

Upcoming Events

April 20

Career-Internship Fair

William Philip Hall
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

April 29

Dawg Bites
UWT Campus
12 - 5 p.m.

Real Lit Reads: ‘The Map of Salt and Stars’

Real Lit Reads get together for their 17th read of “The Map of Salt and Stars” by Zeyn Joukhadar.

By DESTINY VALENCIA
NEWS EDITOR

Join Real Lit Reads for their Spring quarter read of “The Map of Salt and Stars” by Zeyn Joukhadar.

Real Lit Reads is in collaboration with the Center for Equity and Inclusion and is a peer-based book club on campus that focuses on stories that raise awareness on a variety of topics such as anti-racism, identity and stories from the perspectives and experiences of others.

This quarter’s read, “The Map of Salt and Stars,” centers around the character Nour, a young Syrian girl who is living in New York City. The story alternates between the timeline of Nour and Rawiya, a young girl who is an apprentice to a mapmaker.

As described by the publisher: “This “beguiling” (Seattle Times) and stunning novel begins in the summer of 2011. Nour has just lost her father to cancer, and her mother moves Nour and her sisters from New York City back to Syria to be closer to their family. In order to keep her father’s spirit alive as she adjusts to her new home, Nour tells herself their favorite story—the tale of Rawiya, a twelfth-century girl who disguised herself as a boy in order to apprentice herself to a famous mapmaker.

But the Syria Nour’s parents knew is changing, and it isn’t long before the war reaches

their quiet Homs neighborhood. When a shell destroys Nour’s house and almost takes her life, she and her family are forced to choose: stay and risk more violence or flee across seven countries of the Middle East and North Africa in search of safety—along the very route Rawiya and her mapmaker took eight hundred years before in their quest to chart the world. As Nour’s family decides to take the risk, their journey becomes more and more dangerous, until they face a choice that could mean the family will be separated forever.”

“While we were picking a title for this quarter, we wanted to specifically choose one that focused on Muslim identities. We haven’t read a book for Real Lit before that focused on that specific identity, and we thought it was nice to time it up with Ramadan,” said co-facilitator of the group, Layne Gonzales.

A lot of thought goes into the selection of these books with facilitators carefully researching novels before the quarter. A big reason a book is selected may depend on who the author is and the identities that author may discuss, as well as how long the book may be and how easy it could be for busy college students to read.

“We come up with a reading schedule for the quarter with each week reading about 1-2 chapters and we discuss them in our meetings. Although Real Lit is more about commu-

nity and having good conversations, we try to tie in what we read in the book with real life issues. So, we emphasize that even if you fall behind on the readings, to still come and have conversation with us,” said Alisa King, another co-facilitator of the group.

Meetings for this quarter began on March 30, and are held on Zoom on Thursdays 12:30 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.. Students are still eligible to sign up where they will be asked if they would prefer a print or e-book version of “The Map of Salt and Stars.” Print versions of the book are provided out of the library’s operating budget. Print books will be handed out on a first-come first-serve basis with a preference given to students.

“I hope that our participants can read “The Map of Salt and Stars” and gain an understanding and empathy about people’s lives in Syria and be inspired to take action against Islamophobia and anti-refugee rhetoric,” said King.

If you have any questions about Real Lit Reads, you can email: alainac@uw.edu or jmjk@uw.edu or mailon@uw.edu or alisanj@uw.edu or lgonza3@uw.edu

To sign up for this quarter’s read, you can fill out this form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWVs a W-m9uo-81M9BiyiXaFk9IoX-ow5W0fLF-T4KO-OVt4U5w/viewform>



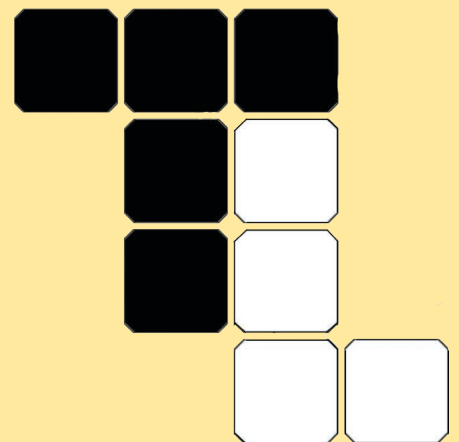
Book selections around the Real Lit Reads

PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

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Spring brings kitten season

We're raising awareness and educating owners to avoid unnecessary kitten season injury, illness and deaths.

By HEIDI ORTIZ
OPINION COLUMNIST

The change of seasons has brought forth one of the most challenging parts of the year for animal rescuers and animal lovers alike. As with every spring, mating season is fast approaching as animals begin their reproductive cycles with the warmer weather. Though this is usually a positive event for most animal species, it is not quite as joyous for cats.

The cat breeding cycle has been coined "kitten season" for the overwhelming number of kittens that are born in only a short span of a few weeks. This can also extend further, with the highest birth rates happening from April to June. During this time, non-spayed cats will be looking for mates and will become more aggressive and territorial. This is especially more prevalent in female cats.

So, you might be wondering – why do I care about this? Or why should I be concerned? Isn't pregnancy and birth a natural part of life? Well, of course. But circumstances are different for house cats. Because cats are domestic, they are not meant to live in the wild. Cats have been bred for centuries for domesticity, similar to most modern dog breeds. But cats are not endemic to any outside environment. Regardless of how much they might enjoy the outdoors, they directly affect nearby ecosystems when allowed to roam free. Cats regularly hunt for sport, which affects local flora and fauna. This has been single-handedly known to decrease certain bird populations, including near-extinct species.

The problems don't just stop with the local ecosystems, they also directly affect cats. Free-roaming fertile cats can mate multiple times if left unattended and can give birth to litters of anywhere between 3 to 10 kittens. Female cats can also

become pregnant immediately after giving birth. This accompanied by non-neutered strays and non-neutered free-roam cats creates an unprecedented number of births. This forces cats to give birth in unclean and sometimes unsafe areas, which can make both the mother and kittens sick. There is also a higher risk of contracting UTIs, upper respiratory and eye infections, which can be deadly if left untreated.

In Tacoma, kittens are being rescued almost daily since March, a month earlier than usual. Single kittens accidentally left behind by mothers, entire orphaned litters and mothers only a few months of age with their kittens have been the most common cases. Let it be known that a great percentage of these rescued mothers and kittens suffer from URIs and eye infections. A particularly sad case involved The Humane Society of Tacoma, where a small kitten was found with his abdomen sliced open. Being born in an unsafe location, veterinarians thought a sharp metal fence could have caused the laceration. After extensive care and emergency surgery, the kitten (now named Patches) has made a slow recovery. He was also found to suffer from internal fractures and osteoarthritis, which could require additional surgery.

This is only one of the thousands of cases where newborn kittens are born into sickness and life-long health conditions. All of this could be avoided with the proper care of domestic and stray cats. If you have your own cats, keep them inside! Only allow them to be outside on a leash or under careful supervision. Second, if you have no plans on caring for a litter of kittens, spay your cats! It will not only prevent unwanted pregnancies during kitten season but also prevent UTIs for the duration of their lives. Third, rescue your local strays! Even if certain cats are too feral to be



Adopting/fostering a cat is a rewarding and valuable experience.

PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

tamed, they will only be able to live healthy and full lives if they are spayed. So, make sure to contact your local pet rescue to ensure that they are treated for any potential illnesses and neutered. You might even help find them a loving home.

Lastly, if you encounter orphaned kittens during this time, contact local rescuers right away. Unless you are experienced in caring for kittens, you should always let professionals care for them instead. Kittens require around-the-clock care for the first few weeks of their birth. Including being fed milk every two

hours, simulated licks in order to help them go to the bathroom and help them bathe (a warm towel can be used for this), along with constant warmth until they are ready to open their eyes. Therefore, it's also encouraged to seek professional care when rescuing an entire litter.

The Humane Society of Tacoma & Pierce County has been extremely busy for the past few months rescuing and finding homes for over 200 kittens. If you are interested in this cause and would like to help, a donation page dedicated to gathering funds for the proper care of these

rescued kittens will be linked below. They estimate a total of about \$62,000 will be spent for the next few months in order to continue supplying the rehabilitation these kittens will need. Other than that, if you're a cat owner, be conscious of how your cat can affect the outside world.

Consider following the advice given above, and keep your eyes peeled for any stray kittens. Most importantly, spread the word, raise awareness & keep all kitties safe by practicing responsible fur-baby parenting!

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Mass/School Shootings in the United States

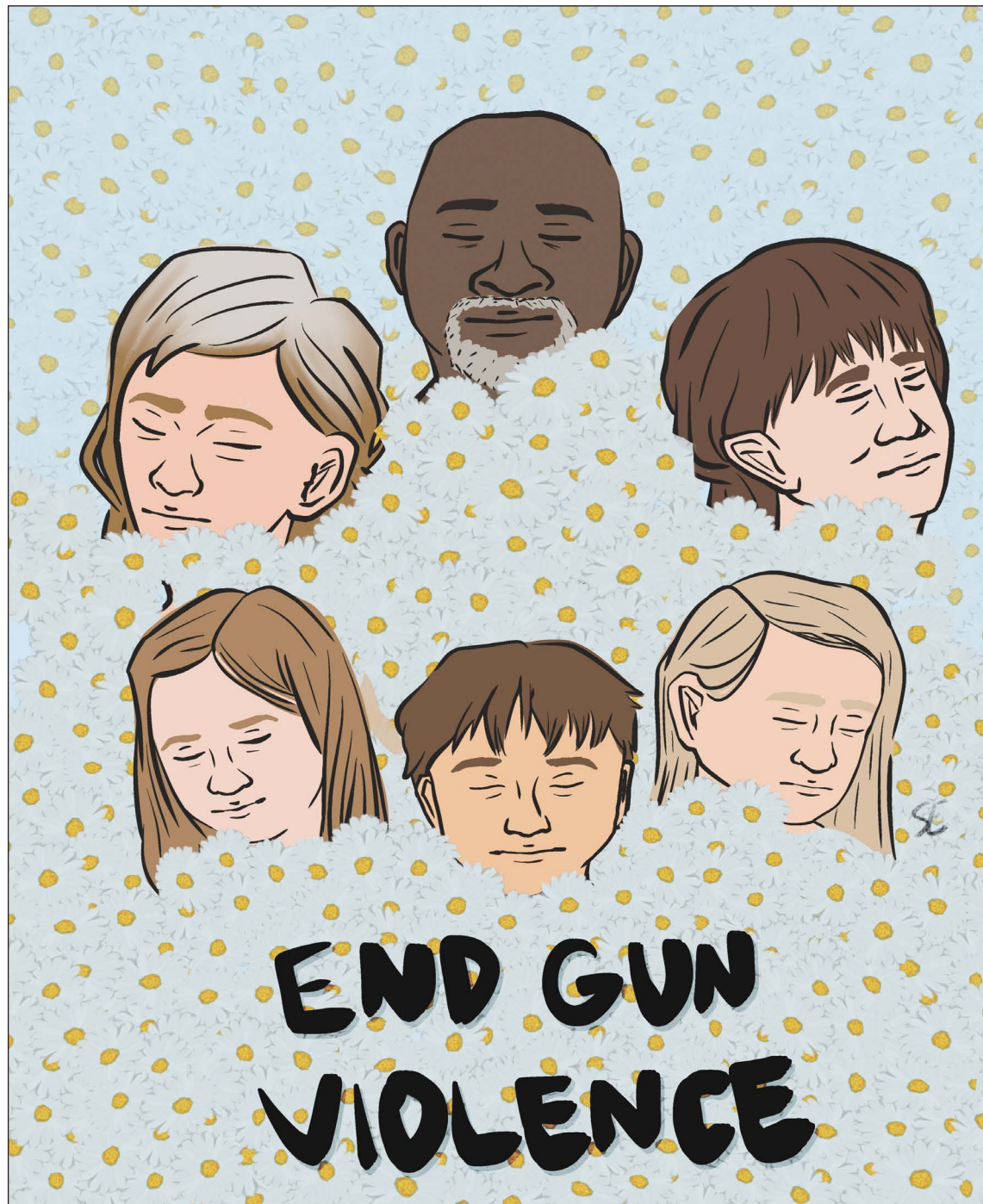
“Gun control laws are a NEED not a want.”

By CELIA WILLIAMS
OPINION EDITOR

In 2023 alone, we have had 131 mass shootings, even though there have barely been 100 days in the year. That is more than one shooting a day. These are schools, safe spaces and stores being turned into war zones. Like the weapons that inflict this pain and suffering, the shootings and their motivations are sporadic and all over the place. Gun violence has been more and more present, permeating both the conversation and media I consume. Every week, I see another shooting making the news, knowing it is only one of the many that had happened over the past few days. I have grown accustomed to the difference in sound between a car backfiring, a firework going off and a gunshot.

I asked a group of University of Washington students about their experience with gun violence, mass shootings and the astronomical number of them this year alone. The responses, while varying, all had the same idea; They all wanted change. They did not blame guns for the actions of the people who used them for horrible reasons and actions. Most think of guns the same way many do, as a form of protection, but also recognize that gun control is only one part of the answer.

A big part of the responses placed blame on mental health issues and the lack of access to and support with mental health care in the U.S., saying “mass shootings are mostly the result of a mental health crisis, but they wouldn’t



Gun violence affects everyone.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVIE ESTEBAN

be as commonplace if guns were harder to obtain.” As someone who has dealt with my own mental health issues, I can say it is way

too difficult for those without a certain socioeconomic status to access those resources. Then, once you have been able to get access to

the support, resources are still far and few between. I also think it’s important to remember that while mental health may explain the

actions, it does not excuse them. Especially when those actions are taking lives away from countless children, women, and men.

Students and teachers alike are sick of being afraid to go to school or be proud of who they are because of how dangerous the lack of gun control and access to health care here in the U.S. One student said “I honestly feel nervous coming to school sometimes, with the recent shooting at a university, I always hope and pray to make it home safely. Due to UW being open to the public, sometimes it’s scary to think that anyone can come into our classrooms and cause unnecessary damage to students.”

Another student said, in order to stay prepared for anything they are “more aware of [their] surroundings, sitting facing doors, knowing all exits, staying armed when regulations permit”

When asked why guns are so important, many say it is for protection. To that I ask, from what? Other people with guns? If gun control were as effective as it could be, then that would not be necessary. It does not seem like rocket science. Gun violence is not something we can continue to ignore. The problem has been growing and growing and unless we do something about it, nothing is going to change. Gun control is the first step, but access to mental health care and health care in general is part of that. We need to do something, because “nothing” is getting people killed.

Burnout: a societal norm

The experience of burnout and what UW Tacoma students have to say about it.

By CELIA WILLIAMS
OPINION EDITOR

Burnout: with spring quarter now in full swing I’m sure we are feeling it with the end of the school year and graduation nearing. As someone who has taken 60 credits this year after this quarter and works part-time, I can say I’m right there with you. If you are like me, then you take on a lot more than you probably should, or maybe just can’t say no when an opportunity comes up. This in turn leaves us little time for ourselves to recharge. Why is that? Why is there societal pressure to always be doing something?

I recently posted a Google Form asking UW students about their experience with burnout and what they do to recover or cope with it and there were a

variety of responses. Some students worked part-time jobs, some full-time jobs. Some were involved with extracurricular activities. But when asked about burnout, the responses were mostly the same. Many said they were burnt out or have been burnt out since autumn.

When asked if spring break had been long enough, it was agreed that it really had not been. Many had said they spent days sometimes sleeping, trying to recover from burnout or that they had not even been able to enjoy the break since they were too exhausted. It seems that one week is not enough time to recover from nearly three months of intense academic work and personal obstacles while also being able to enjoy life a little. Last quarter was filled

with them if you ask me; on campus alone there were issues with car theft, damage, attempted intruders and gas leaks in Court 17.

Burnout, without societal

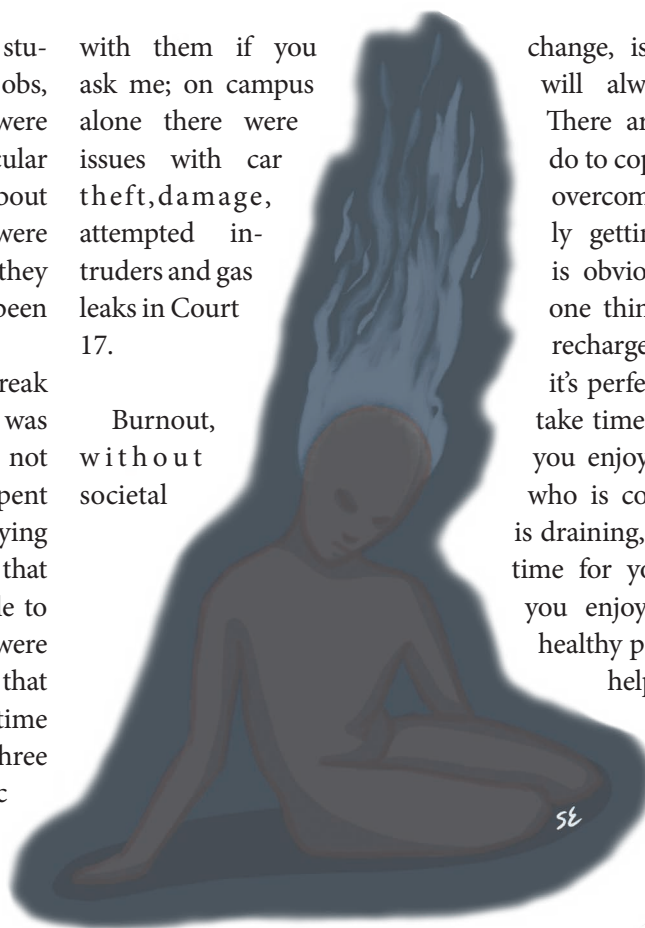


ILLUSTRATION BY STEVIE ESTEBAN

change, is something that will always be present. There are things we can do to cope with it and also overcome it. Consistently getting enough sleep is obviously the number one thing that helps you recharge, literally. Second, it’s perfectly acceptable to take time to do something you enjoy. Being someone who is constantly working is draining, you need to take time for yourself and what you enjoy. Hobbies are a healthy part of life and can help with other aspects of your life including mental health and physical health. Lastly, finding a balance between working

and working too much, or balancing your schedule to allow yourself time to just be is another way to keep from burning out. Taking on too much is the main cause of burnout, not that I’m one to judge.

Overall, burnout is something that has been normalized here in the U.S., especially with in college students. It’s important to find ways to cope and also recognize that it is not in fact normal. We need to be taking care of ourselves and also working towards our goals. Again, it’s all about balance.

PAWS - Psychological & Wellness Services:

(253) 692-4522

uwtpaws@uw.edu

to set up an appointment

Billionaires use charity to pay for PR

“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings.”
-Ursula Le Guin

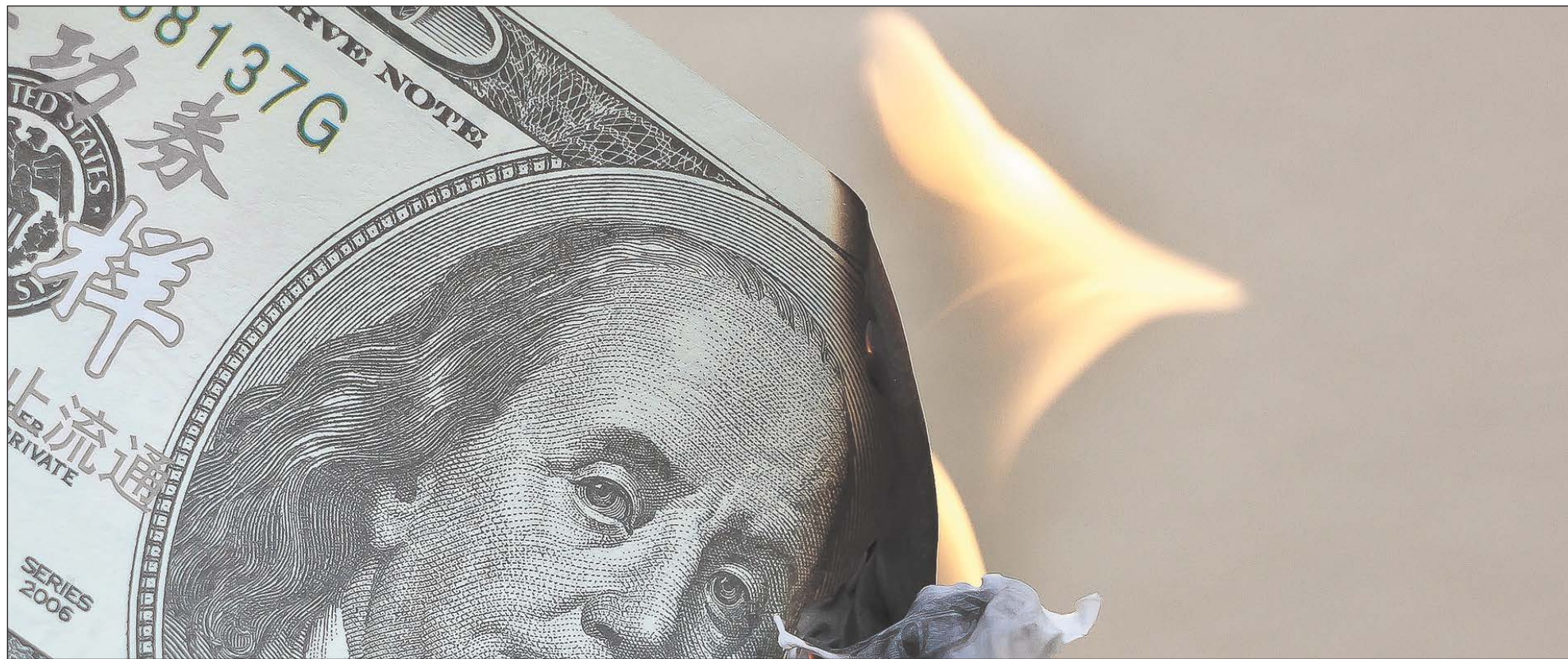


PHOTO VIA PIXABAY

Households with over a billion dollars are taxed at a rate of 8.2% households with over a billion dollars are taxed at a rate of 8.2%.

By RUTH OGDEN
OPINION WRITER

Billionaire charity is immoral - we need to cut out the middleman and just levy taxes on the 1%.

Why are so many people defensive of billionaires?

Unless you're already a billionaire, you'll never be one.

They're also a net deadweight in global society.

Billionaires do not earn their wealth. Arguing that heavy taxes on wealth over one billion dollars punish a hard work ethic simply does not hold water.

It is functionally impossible to become a billionaire in your own lifetime. Every "self-made" billionaire started with millionaire parents. That amount of wealth is only attainable if you start with an already unfair advantage. In fact, many billionaire families directly owe their wealth to historical forces such as imperialism, colonialism and slavery. These fami-

lies use their wealth to construct dramatically unfair advantages for their children. (This is one potential reason why Trump famously remarked that his father gave him "A small loan of a million dollars.")

Tesla's frontman, Elon Musk, hails from a family that once owned apartheid emerald mines in South Africa.

Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, just happened to attend one of the only schools in the Seattle area that had access to computers, during an era when this technology was incredibly rare and expensive.

But if your dad is a mechanic or your mom is a lawyer? You're working class in comparison, and you will never be a billionaire. No amount of labor, education, innovation, creativity or passion will move you up from working class to billionaire in one generation.

Others argue that billionaires already contribute enough to so-

ciety by giving away some of their wealth to charity. This straight-up isn't true.

According to Philanthropy News Digest, in 2020, fifty American billionaires donated a total of 24.7 billion dollars. That's an incredible amount of money, but most of them are donating to their own pet charities. Donating to charities is a way to shelter money from taxation while continuing to use their wealth to exert power to pursue their own agendas. Some of these can seem relatively helpful, such as The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a focus on global development, health and life expectancy. However, it is the Gates Foundation that decides what the top development priorities are, not the countries and regions to which they offer aid.

Charities like this remove agency from the people they're assisting, which is another way that billionaires use their wealth and power to shape the world as they

see fit. Sure, we all really appreciate vaccine distribution and their medical research, but what would the world look like if well-funded governments were doing this same kind of work?

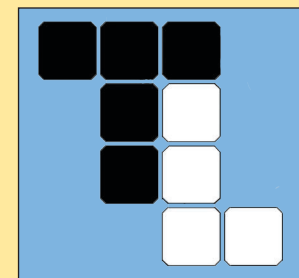
If we taxed billionaires at the same rate as the average American citizen, we would draw an incredible amount of money into a struggling economy. In 2021, White House economists released an analysis revealing that households with over a billion dollars are taxed at a rate of 8.2%, compared to the average non-billionaire household tax rate of 13.6%. It's worth mentioning that the vast majority of wealth generated by billionaire households is sourced from stocks, which are taxed very differently (if they're ever taxed at all!). It's also worth mentioning that the current median income for a household in the United States is \$31,000. The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family of four in 2023 is \$30,000.

Taxing billionaires would generate desperately-needed funds for universal healthcare, universal childcare, universal eldercare, pensions, schools and a variety of other social services.

If you're still licking Elon Musk's boots, ask yourself why. Does he care about your well-being? Do his values align with yours? Do you truly think he deserves the immense power he currently wields?

Praising a billionaire's work ethic sounds like a serf complimenting a king on his leadership skills. Neither work ethic nor leadership skills put these people where they are today. Like monarchies, one day, the people will have had enough.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



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10K KLVN performed two original songs on piano.

PHOTO BY KELLAN MOORAD

Open mic creates platform for students' artistic voices

Monthly open mic events showcase the diversity of UWT community's talent.

By **STEPH CARONNA**
A&E REPORTER

For any performing artist, getting experience in front of a live audience is indispensable. But it can be difficult to find the opportunity to do so, especially when first starting out. Whether one has dreams of performing at the Tacoma Dome someday, or simply wants to share their voice with anyone who will listen, participating in an open mic can be a great way to start an artistic journey and connect with other creatives.

For this reason and many more, the UW Tacoma community is lucky to have the Music Club, founded by Jadin Hawkins. In addition to performing under the stage name BLACKDISC, Jadin recently started organizing a monthly open mic, the most recent of which took place on April 5.

"We don't have very many arts-based classes or communities on campus so there are very few spaces for creatives to express themselves and connect with other creatives, which can feel isolating," Jadin said, "Through my work on the Student Activities Board as the Music & Performance Coordinator and the Music Club I hope to build community in UWT and infrastructure around the entertainment industry in the Greater Tacoma and Seattle area."

April's open mic was the first in partnership with ALMA cafe in Downtown Tacoma. The casual and comfortable setting made for a welcoming ambience, a plus for novice performers. A small stage in the corner of the room with a microphone and upright piano gave participants a proper yet non-intimidating performance space. Music Club member Muranga acted as the show's MC, and his warm energy and humor-laden enthusiasm set the stage for an enjoyable night for all.

The audience was treated to a variety of performances from UWT students and community

members with a diverse range of talents. Though artists of all kinds are welcome at these events, the performers at this open mic were all musicians, showcasing a blend of covers and original songs. Some of the highlights include a hauntingly beautiful rendition of the 1950s jazz standard "Cry Me a River," an incredibly moving cello performance and a piano ballad about a trans woman's experiences with a vampire.

UWT student Aidan and alum Abbi performed three original songs as their folk duo Skagit River Valley. The warmth of their lush harmonies and Aidan's folk guitar skills were evocative of the first sun of spring. They took the open mic as an opportunity to hone their performance skills and share new songs with their community.

"I think giving spaces for people to gain confidence in their act, art or themselves is a nice thing," said Aidan, "Selfishly, as a relative rookie to live performance, it gives me more practice, hopefully lending itself to other future performance settings."

As a musician myself, it was incredibly inspiring to watch my peers get on stage and showcase their talent. There was a part of me that wanted to do the same, but I felt a bit anxious and unprepared.

"I think the reality is that anxiety and stage fright don't ever truly go anywhere, they just reduce in intensity. The more you perform, the less you feel it," advised Abbi, "I used to shake when I got on a lit stage with everyone's eyes on me, but now I hardly notice the audience. It's about doing it again and again, until it feels less novel and scary. Anyone can get there."

"The truth is: no one is going to boo or throw tomatoes or heckle," added Aidan, "Open mics are for people who are getting out of their comfort zone, exploring their creativity. The waiting is the worst part. And then you're done. It all speeds by."

After the final performance,

Muranga ended the night on a fun note by leading the audience in rambunctious group karaoke. As we joined together to sing "Forget You" by CeeLo Green (making sure to stick to the clean version for families in the audience), I felt firsthand how successful the event had been in creating a sense of community and togetherness.

"These kind of events are great in terms of the opportunity they give to students - to have an audience, to get experience in live performance, and to share their art with others - but they also do a lot to create a sense of community and shared experience between students," Abbi pointed out. "Most of the attendees likely would not have been comfortable participating in [group karaoke] at the beginning of the evening. By the end, however, we felt less like strangers, so we could loudly participate in the group karaoke with fewer reservations."

By the end of the night, I realized there was nothing to be afraid of. The audience had been kind and encouraging to every performer, no matter their skill, experience level or preferred genre.

For anyone feeling similar to me—perhaps nervous to perform, but determined to push the boundaries of their comfort zone by sharing their artistic voice—the next open mic will be Wednesday, May 3, at ALMA cafe at 6 p.m.. I'll be there with my acoustic guitar, ready to play.

Those looking to help continue building up a supportive music and arts community at UWT can join the Music Club. Meetings are every first and third Wednesday of the month, in Carwein Auditorium (KEY 102). Students can also apply to join Jadin as a member of the Student Activities Board at the end of spring quarter if they are interested in planning events for UWT students.



PHOTO BY KELLAN MOORAD

Aidan and Abbi, also known as Skagit River Valley.



PHOTO BY COLBY FOSDECK

Muranga led the audience in a singalong to close out a successful open mic night.

Sakura-Con 2023 Recap

The pros and cons from my first conning experience.

By **COLE MARTIN**
A&E WRITER

Sakura-Con 2023 took Seattle by storm only a few weeks ago; the event was larger than ever before, spanning across the two Seattle Convention Center buildings. The streets were filled with cosplay, even on the rainier days. The event spanned three days total, two of which I personally made it to.

For those of you who are unfamiliar, Sakura-Con is an annual anime convention held at the Seattle Convention Center, with plenty of new releases, merchandise and so much more for anime fans to enjoy. Cosplay is huge at these events, with people this year dressed as charac-

ters from “Demon Slayer,” “TRIGUN: STAMPEDE” and many more shows and niches.

The panels and main exhibitor hall that held a large portion of the convention space were definitely the staples of the con, but for someone like me, the main event was definitely the artist alley. Hundreds of independent artists from across the country were selling their unique handcrafted merchandise. Last year’s artist alley had only about 80 artists; this year saw that number grow up to a whopping 300.

I got the full artist alley experience, being there for more than half of the time I was at Sakura-Con; I visited friends, met new

people and healthily stocked up on stickers. I also had the chance to talk to some of the artists there a little deeper about how their experience at Sakura-Con was from a lot of different angles.

“The crowd was also really nice here compared to other cons... [Sakura-Con was a] great experience and space for artists,” said @davanchiart, an artist who draws cute anime-inspired artwork.

“Great turnout, lots of space, and an audience that’s excited to support artists making fan works,” said @fancy_plantsy, an artist specializing in colorful anime-style illustrations. “It ended up being reasonably successful financially and definitely rewarding to see



Picture from the Artist Alley at Sakura-Con 2023

PHOTO BY COLE MARTIN

that people were willing to spend money on the things I made.”

There were definitely some negatives of the con experience though. The Wi-Fi was terrible in the artist building, costing \$80 per device to have any half-decent internet connection. This led to some big trouble with card scanners, getting in the way of a lot of transactions. The separate buildings weren’t fantastic either.

“I kind of wish we were in the same building as the big events. I had someone tell me they ran to buy a print here to get signed far away and I imagine what it could have been like if we were in the same building,” said @tsaiberpunk, an artist who makes stylized manga-inspired portraits.

All in all though, everyone I talked to did have a really good

time at Sakura-Con.

“Sakura-Con was an outstanding first tabling experience, primarily because of the artists who helped me through it, but also thanks to a fantastic gathering of attendees who shared many of the same passions for anime and manga as myself,” said @darkcore2943, an artist specializing in high-detail digital paintings.

The atmosphere was amazing; everyone I talked to was super friendly and enthusiastic about their work, passionate about their interests and made me feel super welcome regardless of my own interests. The people alone have cemented my Sakura-Con experience as something wholly positive and I would definitely come back next year; a sentiment reflected by the artists above as well.



Picture from the Artist Alley at Sakura-Con 2023

PHOTO BY COLE MARTIN

Review: ‘Paint’ paints a portrait of mediocrity

Bell bottoms, Owen Wilson’s fro and nods to Bob Ross aren’t enough to make this movie charming.

By **EMILIA BELL**
A&E EDITOR

“Paint” on the surface appears to be a Bob Ross biopic. Bob Ross (in case the reader has been living under a rock for the last 40 years) was a popular painter who had calming tutorials for painting on PBS. Known for his gentle demeanor and beautiful art, he was—and arguably still is—extremely popular. “Paint” follows Carl Nargle, played by Owen Wilson, who is a popular painter and has his own PBS show. Seems familiar, right? They even chose to mimic Bob Ross’ name by having an internal rhyme with the vowels. Apparently, Bob Ross’ name is not available for legal use, so some theorized the filmmakers decided to change the name. After all, Carl Nargle even has a permed fro just like Bob Ross.

However, after a few moments of watching the film, it becomes very clear that this is not a serious endeavor. It is likely not an attempt at any sort of biopic—serious or not—but rather a twist on a Bob Ross archetype. It shows Carl Nargle falling from fame and being replaced by a new painter, Ambrosia. Silly interactions and ridiculous scenarios ensue. It seems to be a spoof movie, in the sense that it has a lot of strange

jokes and doesn’t seem to be searching for genuine emotion. Owen Wilson is known for comedy and this is utilized in the film. Unfortunately, a lot of the jokes feel awkward.

There is a recurring bit that Carl Nargle has slept with all of the women who work at the PBS station, which gets strange and rather gross pretty quickly. These jokes in particular destroy a lot of potential charm the movie had. Throughout the film, Carl regrets losing out on love with Katherine (Michaela Watkins). The love story is awkward at best due to the humor utilized throughout; if it had committed harder to the bits then perhaps it would have been less cringy, but as it stands now, some jokes undercut emotions and feel unwelcome.

A few jokes do land, such as Carl stealing newspapers to avoid the public seeing his dwindling fame, but sadly these are few and far between. The most frustrating aspect is that this could have been a hit. It had all the pieces for it, but the picture ends up dull. Wilson is a talented comedic actor and there were moments where I was reminded of this in the film, but then annoyed that it wasn’t properly utilized. The film’s tagline is “Go to a special place,” but it’s just an okay place in reality.

The film itself felt oddly cheap. There was an abundance of obvious drone shots and weirdly composited establishing shots of buildings that looked like they were from a network TV show 10 years ago. The score was also incorporated strangely, with the music seeming to swell at inconsequential moments. When it doesn’t look terribly cheap, the aesthetic is actually pleasant; with warm autumn tones and Nargle’s ‘70s aesthetic.

It seems to be a spectrum of enjoyment; a man in the theater scoffed and guffawed joyously at every joke, while my fiancé left the movie frustrated with how bad he thought it was. I landed in the middle; it wasn’t terrible, but it was boring and I didn’t feel invested. The spoof aspect wasn’t dialed up enough for it to be effective and the genuine moments didn’t land, so the film ends up somewhere in between. Some people could easily watch this movie and not realize it wasn’t meant to be totally serious. It’s a shame it wasn’t executed better.

2.5/5



“Paint” poster.

POSTER BY IFC FILMS

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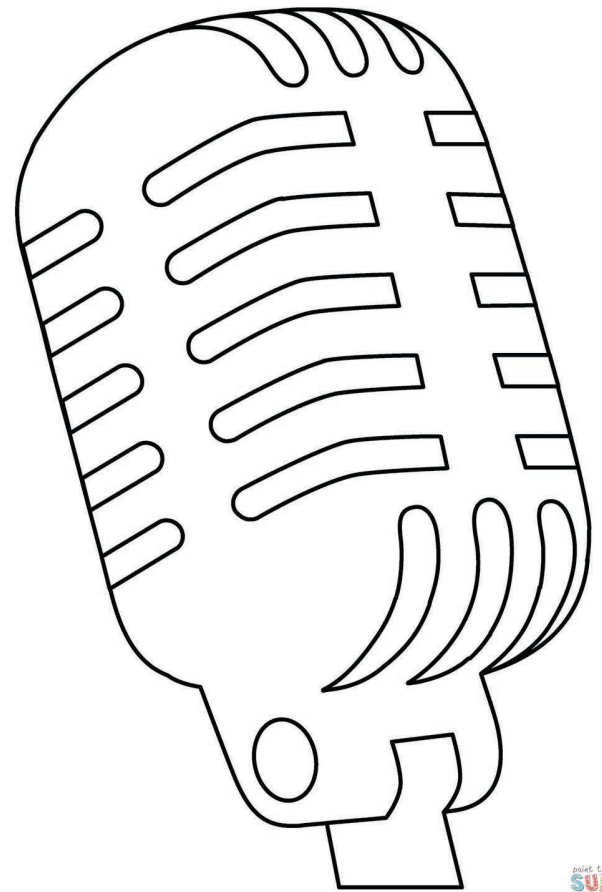


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The Tacoma Ledger Weekly Playlist

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