



# THE GRYPHON

The official newspaper of Leeds University

## India reels from second Covid wave as governance fails



Image: Ninian Reid via Flickr

**This article is by Manasa Narayanan and is part of a series called #IndiainRed, run in collaboration with The Gryphon (UoL), The Roar (KCL) and Strand Magazine (KCL).**

India is experiencing a major humanitarian and health crisis right now. Each day, it surpasses its own record high death toll. As of the start of this month, 400,000 new Covid cases were recorded in the country in just a span of a day. This happened not just once; India crossed the 400k+ mark thrice in just the first week of the month. According to official claims, there have been more than 3000 deaths each day since 27 April 2021. It has now crossed 4000. These figures, however, are a huge underestimation and the actual numbers seem to be much higher as several news reports from the country suggest.

After the end of the first wave and towards the end of last year, India went back to relative normalcy. During the first wave, in terms of cases, the numbers peaked in September (which was around 98,000) and then steadily declined well past the close of the year. In February and March of this year however, the numbers started to rise back up. But this was not followed by any concrete government action to prevent the spread of infection.

During these months, on the contrary, the messaging from the central government was one of triumph. Harsh Vardhan, the Health Minister of the country, gave out statements claiming the country's victory over the virus, saying India was "in the endgame" when it came to the pandemic. In fact, the government did not put a stop to the congregation of people for religious Hindu festivals during the past few months, and the Prime Minister himself was basking at political rallies in the presence of huge crowds.

It has now also been brought to light that INSACOG, an expert panel that was appointed by the government to study the variants in December 2020, warned the government (including the Health Ministry) of the risk of the new variant in early March. But, as the stronger variant spread across the country, the central government did not pay heed to the warning.

The timing of this cautioning coincides with the time when the government was painting a very different picture of the pandemic to the public, signalling to the gross negligence on their part. So, a combination of a far more infectious variant, a careless government with its misconstruing messaging, and a less vigilant public was what seems to have ultimately led to an explosion of cases at the end of April. The effect continues to ravage the country still.

While the government seems to have failed in its duties miserably, many common people have stepped up to help out each other. As the demand for hospital beds and oxygen cylinders grew with the supply falling short, people started creating databases with lists of places where one could access these resources. Social media feeds are now full of posts of people sharing, requesting and helping each other with supplies and hospital bed availability. Some are even preparing and transporting home-cooked meals to families affected by the virus and isolated at home.

Help has also been arriving from outside the country. According to India's foreign secretary, 40 countries are helping out India with oxygen and related supplies. But some are questioning if it is being effectively managed. Some state officials have claimed that the incoming aid remained at the airport for around a week before it was sent out. But, the central government has denied there being a delay stating in a press release that they have a "streamlined and systematic mechanism for allocation of the support supplies."

While most of the political leaders in the country have continued to show major apathy towards people's sufferings, some going to the extent of denying the presence of an emergency, and even threatening people not to report on oxygen shortages, it is the public that is saving the day by helping each other out.

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Issue 6

12/05/21

### Addressing sexual violence in Leeds with Sophia Hartley

Iona Tompkins speaks to LUU's Welfare Officer about the progress she's made to tackle sexual violence in the University and the city. (Page 8)

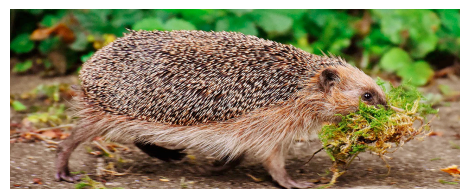


### LUU societies make a comeback

As lockdown restrictions ease, many LUU societies have been able to reunite in person. Hear Hiking Club, Skate Society, Karate Society and Leeds University Women's Rugby Union tell all. (Page 10)

### Killing the Bill on Mayday

Adam Abdalla shares the importance of the Kill the Bill protests and using one's privilege to speak out, from the perspective of a Palestinian Muslim. (Page 11)



### Hedgehogs on campus

Catherine Upex discusses the Sustainability Team's efforts to welcome hedgehogs on the University grounds. (Page 17)

**In the Middle -**  
Music and Clubs, Fashion, Arts and  
Culture, Blogs and Lifestyle (Midway)





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Editor’s letter



Dear readers,

Whewwwwww, it’s the last issue of the academic year and therefore the last of my tenure as Editor. I can’t really believe how quickly this year has gone, and how strange it has been. We’ve put most of the issues together remotely, we’ve only printed two out of seven issues and a lot of us have never even met!

Worst of all, we’ve waved goodbye to the iconic Gryphon sofas! Hopefully they’ll be back in time for when next term kicks off.

Though I’ve found this job and working from home taxing at times, it’s been a really special year for me. I’ve interacted with so many lovely and talented students and its been a pleasure to work closely with them all. A special shoutout here to Editors and Associates Michael, Eleanor, Owen, Faye, Morwenna and Katherine for the silly and sweet conversations- you’re absolute gems! Also, outs to Leo, LSR’s Station Manager, for all the chats, pints and cigs- you’re the best and the friendship we’ve crafted this year is a beautiful one! UTT!

There’s so much I feel is unfinished but I am proud to say I was able to achieve what I set out to do: first of all, to make the paper more representative through widening our roster of writers, diversifying the content we produce and introducing the POC mentorship scheme- big up Ruby and Nisha for all the help on this one. There’s still a long way to go but hopefully I’ve sown some seeds that can grow into something really special. Secondly, I wanted to serve our community and hold the University to account, and I feel we managed to do this by reporting on the Trans Equality Policy redraft and by voicing students’ concerns over assessments and grades in an academic year defined by the pandemic. I’m yet to beef the dodgy landlords of Hyde Park but I trust that my rowdy successor Alex Gibbon will do this for me. Finally, I wanted to make joining The Gryphon more worthwhile for contributors: whilst it’s been a challenge

to do this online, I’m pleased we have hosted some great workshops with guests, notably Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff of Gal-Dem.

To those who voted me in, and who supported me along the way, thank you for trusting me! I hope you’ve enjoyed reading and being part of the paper.

So, for our final (!) issue, we kick things off with Manasa Narayanan’s report on the the Indian government’s handling of COVID-19: she’s done an excellent job of highlighting the injustices that are all too easily forgotten by the Western press. News Editor Isabelle Thom follows with the final Campus Watch of the year, whilst managing to mention two of my favourite things on one page: ducks and Jarvis Cocker. For Features, Iona Tompkins interviews our very own Welfare Officer Sophia Hartley about the work she’s been doing to change how the University deals with sexual violence. Next, the Society section speak to those who have been making the most of the easing of lockdown restrictions, from LUU Karate Society to Leeds University Women’s Rugby League, before Views platform Adam Abdalla’s thoughts about the Kill the Bill protests, as a Palestinian Muslim. The Business section talk making the most of your summer, before Science continue their wholesome streak by exploring the Sustainability Team’s efforts to welcome hedgehogs on campus. Finally, Sport wrap things up with the topic on everyone’s lips at the moment: the European Super League. As always, catch our arts supplement In the Middle on Issuu too- I really enjoyed this one.

Happy reading and stay safe!

Yours,

Safi B x

Safi Bugel  
Editor-in-Chief  
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# Student Exec columns:

As the academic year draws to a close, we catch up with our Student Exec team for one last time...

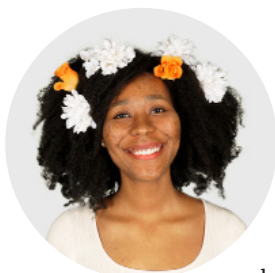


**Lotti Morton**  
Community

Hi everyone, I can't believe we're nearly at the end of the year! In our last few months,

Sophia and I are focusing on student safety and meeting with the other unions, the University, MPs and the Council to raise our concerns around student safety. We're hoping to submit a policy to Leeds City Council, and we are having conversations about a safety app for the University. I'm also working with Residences to ask them to remove their no visitor policy when restrictions lift, and we're writing an affordability policy with them which is great, because we really need to focus on limiting rent increases in both uni and private accommodation.

I hope everyone is looking after themselves during deadline season and enjoying things opening back up! I'm sad that this is our last issue - it's been a strange yet wonderful year and I've really enjoyed being on your Student Exec team. Take care!



**Laila Fletcher**  
Diversity

I can't believe it's the final Issue of the year! Thank you all so much for having me as your Equality and Diversity

Officer! To close off the year, I'll be focusing on writing a report on BAME sense of belonging and ethnicity within admissions! I really want to end the year doing something that will provide impact for students. I'm also heading LUU's second 'Working Class Representation' Week! Working with colleagues from the Union and University, and putting on panel events for POC, Women, Entrepreneurs. Highlights of the year have been working with our amazing Liberation Coordinators, starting our Anti-Racism Working Group within LUU and (of course) being a part of this passionate Exec team!

I hope exam and dissertation season isn't treating you too harshly. Be proud of all you've accomplished this year.

Thanks again for having me as your Officer and I hope you can benefit from the series of events we're putting on in June!



**Izzy Walter**  
Union Affairs

It feels pretty surreal knowing that this is my final update, I can't believe how quickly our term is coming to an end. I'm so

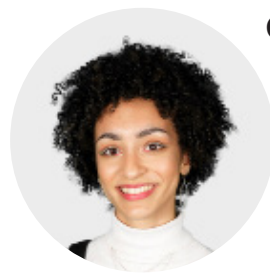
grateful to LUU and the students who have inspired, supported and motivated me over the past year.

I'm focusing on tying up my projects and priorities at the moment, to ensure we're prepared for handover and making the most of the remainder of our influencing opportunities.

A key part of this is a presentation and report which I am taking to the University Executive Group, to culminate our findings from the student experience during COVID-19 and make recommendations based on what we have learnt. Reflecting on the feedback from students this year has prompted me to challenge what the Leeds experience really means, based on what matters most to students and what you've missed. Whilst we have been operating under extreme circumstances, the pandemic has exacerbated and exposed some existing challenges within the student experience, providing an opportunity to develop as we emerge from the restrictions.

I've also been working with Lotti to evaluate the Student Sustainability Advisory Board and the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Week which we worked on with them, to make sure we hand this work over to next year's Officers in good shape and embed these new initiatives within LUU structures.

As always, my inbox is always open and I'd welcome any thoughts you might have. But that's a wrap on my final update... Take care, stay safe and THANK YOU!



**Carolina Rodriguez**  
Education

Over the past few weeks, a big focus of mine has been on my objective around

improving the experience of BAME students at the University. Laila Fletcher and I have recently started a podcast series in which we interview students who have been engaged in decolonising work and student-led campaigns within their schools. This has been extremely informative and rewarding so far and I hope will encourage other students and staff alike to get involved in decolonising the University. I am also in the midst of planning a networking event between BAME UG students and BAME PGRs to bring attention to the work of this underrepresented group and to encourage BAME undergraduates who may be interested in doing a PHD. The exam period is fast approaching and assessment is a key area of work, as ever. Last week I was delighted to welcome the Dean: Quality & Standards to the Education Assembly to speak with our reps about the development of a new assessment strategy which focuses on fairness, inclusivity, transparency and partnership. The past 10 months have absolutely flown by and it has been an honour to continually advocate for students and fight for the education they deserve.

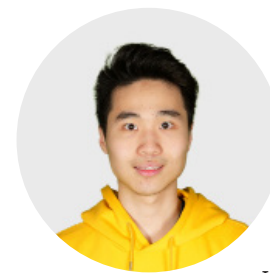


**Sophia Hartley**  
Welfare

Hello everyone. It turns out that this is the final issue of the year! I'm not crying, you are! It has been an

honour to represent you in one of the most challenging years Higher Education has witnessed for decades but now for the good stuff. I am happy to report that since our last update the proposal of a Reformed Institution-wide approach to Tackling Sexual Violence was very positively received by the Vice-Chancellor who is dedicated to seeing our recommendations on tackling sexual violence come to light. I continue to work closely with Chris Warrington and David Wardle on recruiting to new positions that will enable the vision of the proposal to become a reality. I am also working closely with Andrea Kerslake, Manager from Help and Support, to build a Report and Support Website for the University of Leeds to locate their reporting tools of harassment and hate crime in an accessible and friendly platform. To read more on this work you can find my interview with Iona Tompkins on page 8.

Student safety continues to be a priority for me as I go into my final months as Welfare Officer. Lotti and I relayed concerns to MP Alex Sobel that student safety seems to be an issue with regards to anti-social behaviour but not noted as victims of crime. We are now looking to work with Huddersfield and Bradford SUs, as well as the newly elected West Yorkshire Mayor, to influence the West Yorkshire Strategy so students are marked and prioritised as a vulnerable group.



**Franks Feng (Jian)**  
International

Hello all, I hope you all enjoy the last few weeks of this academic year.

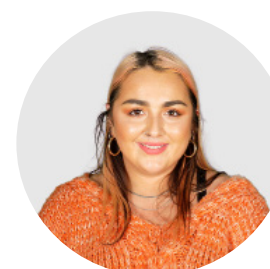
It is surprising to hear that my role is going to finish soon. However, my great work for an international university will never stop.

Me and my International Students Advisory Board were awarded for Leeds partnership award global category, which means staff and faculties, organization on campus recognize our work and effort to make positive change for our international community. Our board member @natnassonova will be a @leedsuniunion trustee too.

This September, international students at Leeds University should be able to pay the same price as home students to study abroad or complete a year in industry - this is a few thousand pounds cheaper! The pandemic helps us realise how much more international students are paying.

I talked to the University Sustainability Centre Manager and he agreed to set up more internship opportunities for our international students. Keep an eye on your email and don't miss it!

Even if this year was an unusual year, I have worked hard everyday to improve our diversity and inclusivity on campus. I hope more of you can join us together, to build up an ideal campus. Good job for Safi and the Gryphon this year, who inform us on what is going on and raise student voices.



**Lucy Murphy**  
Activities

It's the final issue of the year - madness! I hope exams and assignments have gone well.

Having under 2 months left means

your Student Exec have been busy trying to get some last-minute projects in! I managed to secure some outdoor space for our Clubs & Societies. It's so exciting to see them back in action and I can't wait for indoor space to return. My main projects now are working with Sophia to finalise our committee wellbeing training and celebrate week! I've been working with SPA on Sports Colours and a new event: The Gryphon Get Together. We have some amazing speakers confirmed to talk about different topics such as wellbeing, diversity & inclusivity and fulfilling your potential. The event will be hosted by Leeds Sport but is open for all so keep an eye out on our socials on how to sign up! The Riley's are on 11 June and the theme is 'Activism.' I wanted our students to use the Riley's platform to use their voice and keep momentum going on key social and political movements that have come to the forefront this year. I'm really looking forward to it. It's been a pleasure to represent the student body this year and I wish you all the best for next year!



# Campus Watch



## 1 University of Lincoln Graduation delay prompts student petition

Students at the University of Lincoln have started an online petition after being told their formal graduation would be postponed until 2022 due to the impact of Covid-19.

Citing ongoing social distancing measure as their reason for delaying an in-person ceremony, the University is offering a virtual ceremony instead. Despite the larger celebration being planned for April next year, over 5,000 students have added their name to the petition to show their concerns.

Harry Badman and Elise Fischer started the online campaign, having completed their degrees in Business and Marketing last year. "Our graduations were supposed to have been held last week, but obviously since the second wave of Covid this was pushed back," Badman said.

He emphasised the disappointment felt by the graduating students of both 2021 and 2022 as they realised their achievement would not be marked in the same way as their predecessors.

Fischer vocalised the confusion felt by many as to why summer graduation ceremonies could not go ahead if Covid restrictions are lifted, as planned, in June, stating "events like Reading and Leeds Festival are still going ahead, so it all seems a bit backwards to us why they are saying April 2022 is the earliest they can do."

Julian Free, the Vice Deputy Chancellor, said that concern remains about whether some restrictions, such as social distancing, may be in place after the final stage of the government roadmap in June.

Isabelle Thom  
News Editor

## 2 University of York "Tallest duck" named Long Boi goes viral

A post showing an exceptionally tall duck at the University of York campus has gone viral, making the much-loved campus resident an overnight sensation. Zoe Duffin, who runs an Instagram account dedicated to the animal affectionately named 'Long Boi', has expressed her delight with his new found fame.

She said: "I think everyone at York can say we are all very proud of Long Boi, our waterfowl are very loved and central to the university experience here at York."

"We believed that he had been dumped as an unwanted pet," she continued.

"We started feeding and taking photos of him, coining the name Long Boi due to his tall stature!"

"We did feel a bit sorry for him, as he didn't fit in with all the other ducks and was being shunned by them, he seemed quite lonely."

"Over time he's grown quite a following with York students, he's quite a campus celebrity, and has since flourished and integrated with the other waterfowl."

Isabelle Thom  
News Editor

## 3 Warwick University Protestors gathering on campus to promote women's safety egged

Students conducting a 42-day sit-in on Warwick University campus have had their camp egged. The main group of six students have been living in the Warwick University piazza and make up the group Protect Warwick Women.

The group aims to raise awareness of women's safety on campus and encourage the University to change their approach to sexual assault on university grounds.

The protestors were sitting in their tents at the time of the attack. Afterwards, they realised that their protest signs had also been damaged, and a number torn down. They received significant support online after a number of electrical goods and signs were ruined.

While Warwick University has previously engaged with the group on how to improve its response to sexual violence against students, the group remains unsatisfied with the compromise offered by the University.

Isabelle Thom  
News Editor

## 4 University of Bristol Conservative MPs call the University a "hotbed of antisemitism"

A number of Conservative MPs have spoken out against the University of Bristol after a member of staff allegedly made controversial comments about Israel and Jewish students. The University is currently investigating political sociology professor David Miller after allegations that he made remarks about Israel, including that it wished to "impose its will over the world" and that some Jewish students were being used as "political pawns by a violent, racist foreign regime."

During an education select committee meeting, MPs likened the atmosphere created at the University by these comments to "1930s Germany" and claimed it was a "hostile environment for Jewish students." While the University is conducting a "confidential" investigation into Miller's comments, there has been a wave of support for the professor, represented by the 'Support David Miller' campaign. An open letter from the group to the University contains the signatures of hundreds of noted intellectuals and academics, including Jewish linguist, philosopher and activist Noam Chomsky.

Isabelle Thom  
News Editor

## 5 Stars speak out against cuts to university funding for Arts subjects

Notable figures in the arts, including singer Jarvis Cocker, actor Maxine Peake and author Bernadine Evaristo, have spoken out in criticism of government plans to cut funding for creative degrees at universities.

The Department of Education has moved to reduce funding from £36m to £19m as, it claims, subjects such as music, dance, drama and performing arts, art and design, media studies and archaeology are "not among its strategic priorities."

Cocker has raised concerns over the impact this change will have on poorer students looking to break into the arts while others added their support to a campaign headed by the Public Campaign for the Arts which aims to encourage Education Secretary Gavin Williamson to reverse the decision.

The government instead wants the money to be redirected to "subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] subjects and/or specific labour market needs."

Isabelle Thom  
News Editor





Adam Abdalla at the Kill the Bill protest in Leeds, 1 May 2021, by Eva Mcquade



# Hyde Park's littering saga...

In late March, Woodhouse Moor, better known as Hyde Park, made local and national headlines for the disgraceful state it was left in by students.

Manasa Narayanan

The morning after a particularly sunny day, the park was found covered in litter. Soon, people began sharing articles and photos of the garbage-wrecked park on the Leeds' Student Facebook Group and a discussion ensued – largely concerning whether or not students were to blame.

Some felt that the park, being a spot mostly used by students, was in that state because of their irresponsible and reckless waste disposal. Others felt students were not the only ones to blame since other residents, like young professionals and older people, also use the park. Some placed the onus on the council, for not placing more bins. It all seemed to be a massive blame game. The news was largely critical of the students. Meanwhile, students themselves were divided on the issue.

In the midst of all this, there was some action taken that was more constructive: someone decided to create a bin bag dispenser and placed it in the park so people can use the bags to dispose of their litter. A student, Jack Colmer, was responsible for building it. He describes his dispenser as “a letter box, but for bin bags.”

Made of wood, this dispenser holds six rolls of bin liners. At the time, Jack posted a picture of it on the Facebook group and urged people to use and then refill it with more bags to help with the waste problem. While, as he also admits, this was a short-term fix, it still proved to be important since it led the conversation in a solution-oriented direction.

Since then, a student-led campaign has been launched to address the litter problem in Hyde Park. After Jack's efforts, two other students, Kiara and Maria, came up with an idea and started making posters to help raise awareness and discourage students from littering. In this process, the three of them have allowed students in the group to come up with funny and catchy slogans on the issue.

Talking about the after-effect of all these conversations and the campaign, Jack believes that it has “hopefully started a little bit of a trend where people are

**Although I believe the area doesn't provide enough bins, most people don't make the effort to bag their rubbish or put it next to a full bin – Charlotte**

trying and reducing (littering) as much as they can.” He pointed out that the day after ‘420’, littering seemed to be relatively lesser than on occasions before, when students have gathered in huge numbers. However, not everyone seems to believe the situation was any different on that day. There were still several complaints about cigarette butts and glass pieces lying around.

Since the incident in March, there have been increased efforts by various groups in the form of volunteer clean-up activities. I spoke to Scoop Leeds which is a “student-run zero-waste non-profit shop”, currently in the process of being set up for operation. After this incident, they decided to put their team to use and started a litter picking initiative, collaborating in the process with several other groups like Serve Society and the University Sustainability team. Their volunteers now pick up litter in and around Hyde Park, Monday through Friday, twice a day. They also have come together with other groups to form “an emergency litter pick group chat” which they use to quickly organise themselves after sunny day thrashings at the park.

After this particular incident in March, Scoop Leeds started a petition to request that the City Council place “big, labelled bins,” including recycling bins, at the

**I think that students were wrongly labelled as the sole culprits without evidence. We should be talking about sustainability and responsibility but instead it became an opportunity to moan about young people**



entrances of the park. This is to attract attention to the bins which they hope would remind people to dispose of the litter properly when they enter the park. At this point they have gathered more than 500 signatures and they plan to take it to the council once it reaches a 1000.

Student views on the issue are quite varied. Charlotte, who volunteers for Litter Free Leeds (a community group that brings together volunteers from around the city for clean-up activities) said, “I find it really disappointing and embarrassing that students make the majority of the mess but the local community end up cleaning the litter through volunteer groups. Although I believe the area doesn't provide enough bins, most people don't make the effort to bag their rubbish or put it next to a full bin.” Another student, Dylan, thought differently. He commented, “I think that students were wrongly labelled as the sole culprits without evidence. We should be talking about sustainability and responsibility but instead it became an opportunity to moan about young people.” When I spoke to him, he made it clear that he found the discussions to be overly simplistic. He believes the problem is complicated and that simply blaming students adds nothing to the conversation.

The matter is complicated and it is true that shaming students will not solve the problem. While students need to be more mindful of their actions, more could be done by the Council too. Both Jack (who approached the Council with his campaign) and those working at Scoop (who are getting a petition ready for the Council) pointed out that they had not been responsive. Furthermore, members at Scoop also weren't sure if their demands about recycling bins would be worthwhile since they weren't even certain that the council separates the garbage they collect, in order to take things for recycling. Their inquiry into this did not yield any answers.. It seems a combination of things need to be done to actually improve the garbage situation at Hyde Park and it would require concerted efforts from various parties.

To sign the petition to get the council to place more bins in Hyde Park, please visit: [www.change.org/p/leeds-city-council-labelled-recycling-bins-on-the-edge-of-hyde-park-leeds](http://www.change.org/p/leeds-city-council-labelled-recycling-bins-on-the-edge-of-hyde-park-leeds)



Posters designed for the 'Hyde Park isn't trashy' campaign. Credit: Kiara Hambali, Leeds Students' Group, Facebook



# Sine functions over sexual health: Should schools be better-equipping young people for life in the 'real world'?

In 2019, Andrew Moffat, an assistant head teacher at Parkfield Community School in Birmingham, created the 'No Outsiders' project – an initiative designed to teach his pupils about the 2010 Equality Act and encourage them to “be proud of who they are while recognising and celebrating difference and diversity.”

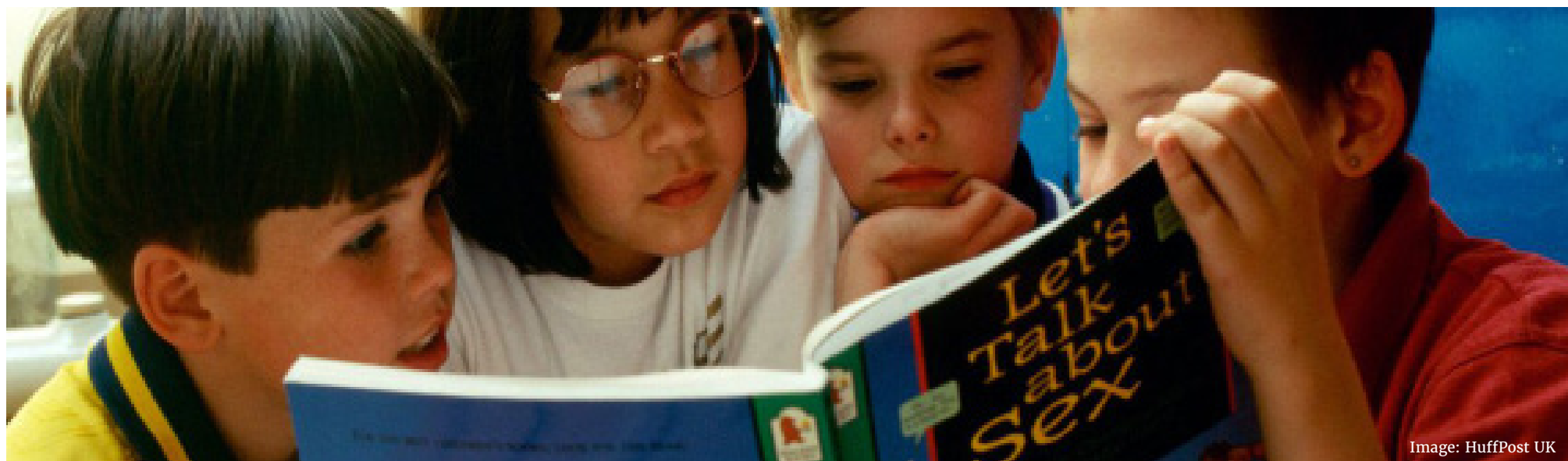


Image: HuffPost UK

Isabel Ralphs

However, Moffat's good intentions were quickly thwarted. For months, mobs of angry parents took to the streets claiming that a relationships education which was LGBT-inclusive contradicted their faith and was not “age appropriate.” The school unwittingly found itself at the centre of a very public protest scandal, that was ultimately quelled by a High Court ruling banning the protestors from demonstrating on school premises. Yet Birmingham City Council maintained that the legal action was taken solely on the grounds of the campaigners' disruptive behaviour, rather than the issues and content of the protests themselves.

The events that took place in Birmingham in 2019 raise an interesting question. Should the curriculum solely concern itself with Shakespeare and sine functions? Or should it be serving a broader purpose; to equip children with the kinds of skills and knowledge that they will actually need in the 'real world'? And, crucially in this case, to what extent does agreement with the latter infringe on the rights of parents to dictate their childrens' moral and ethical beliefs?

Personal, sexual, health and economic (PSHE) education has historically been under-valued and under-resourced in schools in this country. The memories I have of PSHE lessons, ones I think are emblematic of many others', are sparse and underwhelming. Pouring a Capri-Sun over a tampon with my girlfriends to see if it would hold (naturally, whilst our males peers were quarantined elsewhere), although hilarious, did little to equip me for the complex reality of actually having a menstrual cycle. Nor did trying to fit a condom over a banana in secondary school failed to educate me on the nuances of sex, contraception, relationships and consent in any meaningful way.

The result of PSHE lessons not being given the respect and air-time they deserve is that the knowledge of children and young people in such matters can be immensely variable. Although I came out of the education system with some nice grades and a University offer, I was altogether naïve about anything remotely useful when it came to actually operating as a young person in the 'real world.' Whilst I had the blessing of being landed with older and wiser flatmates in first-year to thank for my sexual health education, many others are not so lucky, and the results of this can be extremely damaging.

In recent months, shocking allegations against secondary institutions across the UK have come to light with the launch of Everyone's Invited – a website aimed at exposing rape culture through “conversation, education and support.” The site offers a platform for individuals to post anonymous accounts of misogyny, harassment and assault and, in the wake of Sarah Everard's tragic death in March of this year, pupils have been posting testimonies in their thousands. Although some of the posts have come from boys, the majority are tales of sexual harassment carried out against young women by male peers at their school or university. The revelations have prompted outcry about the toxic 'rape culture' that appears to have permeated our educational institutions.

Ironically, the origins of such a culture could partly lie in the approach to

teaching in the very institutions it pervades. If schools were teaching comprehensive, age-appropriate and well-delivered sex and relationships education, this might go some way to improving attitudes towards consent amongst the young boys and men carrying out the harassment detailed in these testimonies. In its absence, the message is that such matters are not important.

In addition to the patchiness of sex, health and relationships education, financial literacy is another gap that has long been glaring in school curriculums. Although financial literacy has actually been part of the National Curriculum since 2014, recent polling found that just 8% of young people said they learned the most about money skills in school. The result of this is, again, vast discrepancies in how well-equipped young people are to manage their personal finances in the future, and how much they appreciate the importance of doing so.

More worryingly still is that financial literacy is highly interwoven with privilege, meaning that this disparity often runs down the fault line of class. My – admittedly limited – knowledge of saving, interest rates, shares and mortgages is entirely attributable to the relative advantage of my upbringing and the good fortune of having a parent who watches financial asset performance vlogs as a hobby. For families whose sole focus is making their budget last until the end of the week, such matters are a luxury they cannot afford to prioritise.

The UK government does appear to have somewhat woken up to the significance of these problems, having recently updated the statutory guidance on PSHE education in 2019. Relationships and health education are now compulsory in all primary schools, and 'relationships and sex' education is mandatory in secondary schools. The new guidance also reinforces the importance of the teaching of issues ranging from wellbeing, mental health, healthy relationships and internet safety.

Although the new curriculum was due to come into force in September 2020, schools have been given an additional 12 months to turn plans around in light of the pandemic, so it remains to be seen how transformative the proposed changes will really be in practise. There is also the inescapable problem that the effectiveness of these lessons will always be primarily at the discretion of individual schools and teachers and how well they actually deliver them.

A broader culture of acceptance is vital too – and the lesson of the Birmingham protests is that this is not something that is easily achieved. Although the events at Parkfield Community School were extreme, they represent a friction that exists between parents and teachers – the two main sources of 'education' in a child's life. The question of whether 'real life' teaching should occur in the classroom, and to what extent this infringes on the rights of parents to take responsibility for it themselves, is not one with an easy answer.

The purpose of schools is to teach. Yet, the rigidity of our schooling system has created a culture where grades are valued more highly than equipping children with 'real world' skills. This priority system creates all manner of problems. Despite the valid claim that parents have over shaping their childrens' belief system, when the consequences are so severe, it does appear that a greater balancing act needs to be achieved.

# Addressing sexual violence in Leeds: In conversation with LUU Welfare Officer Sophia Hartley

Image: Healthline



Outgoing LUU Welfare Officer Sophia Hartley has made it her priority this year to create practical and sustainable solutions to tackling student sexual assault both on and off campus. The Gryphon spoke to her about the progress she's made so far, and what benefits these will have for students.

Iona Tompkins

1. Hi Sophia, thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to chat to the Gryphon about the work you have been doing addressing sexual violence in the student community. Whilst I'm sure many of our readers will recognise you as our current LUU Welfare Officer, could you please introduce both yourself and your role for those who don't?

Hello Gryphon readers, my name's Sophia and I am your 20/21 Welfare Officer. The job can sometimes be hard to explain because you tend to wear many different hats with many different responsibilities because, as an Officer, you are a representative, an activist, and a trustee!

However, the way I describe it is that I advocate for our students' mental and physical health to be prioritised while they are at university. The core aspect of the role involves representing students' welfare in university meetings. This can range from academic pressures and how this has knock-on effects for wellbeing to lobbying for further resource in our support services. Other exciting parts involve working on the objectives which the student body voted me in on!

This year, tackling sexual violence has been a priority objective for me as I firmly believe that was the pledge that won me the LeadLUU election.

2. You've recently published your paper 'A Reformed Institutional Approach to Tackling Sexual Violence at the University of Leeds' which details the ground you've already covered in making sure the University's approach to dealing with sexual violence is fit for purpose, as well as the changes that need to be made. Could you briefly outline the 4 key recommendations you have for ensuring we tackle sexual violence in the most effective way possible?

Yes, absolutely.

- Without investment, the work recommended in the paper will not leave the ground. It is therefore necessary to invest time, staff, and money into this area. The money would be used for staffing costs, education and awareness costs, supporting the capacity of those providing support and service in university and monitoring and evaluation. Finally, I am also aiming to create a new Sexual Violence Task Force within the Union.
- Sustainable and embedded policies and procedures dedicated to sexual violence and misconduct for students, Post-Graduate Researchers (PGR) and staff.
- Innovation and comprehensive approaches to prevent incidences of sexual violence and misconduct before it occurs.
- Complement reporting with timely and tailored support for victim-survivors.

3. How do you see the changes you propose integrating with existing projects such as Reclaim Headingley Alleyway (RHA) and Reclaim the Night Leeds (RTNL)?

As an activist and a staff member, I think we truly have to value student grassroots campaigns. They are experts at mobilising students and understanding student concerns. I believe that to create collective and cultural change, we need to work together. My number one goal was to have the University aligned on a centralised approach and for student campaigns, such as RHA and RTNL, to know about our victim-survivor centred approach. These campaigning groups



can then continue to hold institutions like the University of Leeds accountable for their actions, because until none of our students experience sexual violence, there is always more to be done.

**4. After the horrific death of Sarah Everard, there has been a huge increase in media attention on the issues of women's safety. How did this make you feel on a personal level, and did it galvanise or change your approach to any of the projects you are working on?**

I will be very honest in response to this question. The murder of Sarah Everard, like for many women, affected me emotionally for days. It rehashed traumatic experiences of my own and made me reflect on how far-reaching and systemic the problem is. The mixing pot of all these emotions made it a very overwhelming period.

However, at the time of Sarah's death, I was two days away from presenting our proposal to the University Executive Group, so I knew I had to channel these emotions into what I did have control over and how we could change our community first. The brave testimonies of women coming forward and sharing their truths in media reaffirmed the message that we needed cultural change that included education on consent, healthy relationships, and bystander intervention.

In this sense, the conversations surrounding the death of Sarah Everard demonstrated that we were proposing the correct approach in demanding for institutional change and financial investment in tackling the issue at the University of Leeds.

Gender inclusivity and intersectionality must be a guiding principle of our approach to tackling sexual violence. We must apply the work of Kimberle Crenshaw that race and gender are not experienced as separate identities but rather overlapping, which impact on oppression and privilege

**5. In your report you discuss the prevalent use of online student-led groups such as Leedsfess being used to report incidents, with an average of over 150 reports of sexual violence on these informal platforms per term. Do you think these platforms are fit for purpose, and if not why do you think students are turning to them in such high numbers?**

This is an excellent question. First and foremost, I think any platform that allows victim-survivors to feel comfortable enough share their experience is admirable and valid.

However, the fact remains that if a student is turning to a volunteer-led confession page to report an incident of sexual violence, the University is fundamentally not fulfilling its duty of care to support students in reporting sexual violence. The issue here is not that the University does not provide reporting tools for sexual violence- we have an excellent tool that was designed by students. The issue is that students do not know of its existence or do not trust it. This is down to two reasons: it is not located in an accessible place on the University website, and we have not created a culture on campus where reporting is the norm.

Therefore, I am currently working with LUU and the University to design a specialised Report and Support Website for the University of Leeds. It would be a landing page that is reassuring and validates your feelings while empowering people to make a report that is right for them and how they can find the best support. Once this Report and Support Website is built, we need an effective University-wide communications plan that enables every student on campus to know exactly how they report harassment, assault, rape and/or hate crime. In my proposal, this would be part of the compulsory consent training at beginning of every student's induction to the University of Leeds.

**6. Whilst sexual assault victims are overwhelmingly female, transgender individuals and cisgendered men face unique issues when it comes to reporting and experiencing sexual assault. What plans do you have to support these groups, and ensure they are not marginalised because they make up a minority**

**of the cases?**

Gender inclusivity and intersectionality must be a guiding principle of our approach to tackling sexual violence. We must apply the work of Kimberle Crenshaw that race and gender are not experienced as separate identities but rather overlapping, which impact on oppression and privilege. This is crucial in our approach in anchoring the issues of our diverse student body and understanding additional barriers they may face.

Best practise across the sector in this area has involved explicitly stating in their Sexual Misconduct Policy that they acknowledge that anyone can be subjected to sexual violence regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, age, (dis)ability, faith, ethnicity, race, nationality, and socioeconomic status. However, we need to have our own student-centred approach that involves consultations with marginalised student groups to inform how we remove any additional barriers to reporting.

Additional specialised support, such as the Leeds Survivor-Led Crisis Service LGBT Support Group AND West Yorkshire Survivors, SARSVL, should also be clearly signposted at any given opportunity. This would include the Report and Support website and any training students/staff receive. It all comes down to culture and we need to create open doors for reporting that can empower victim-survivor of any gender to access confidential support they need.

**7. For anyone who has read this interview and is wondering what support is currently available to them from the Union and the University, where can they find out more about what options, avenues and support is available to them?**

If you, or someone you know, has been subjected to sexual violence and/or harassment, we encourage you to report the incident. After reporting, you will get an email telling you about support available, from the University Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service, LUU Student Advice and/or the University Student Cases Team if your report concerns another student or member of staff.

I would also encourage any student who feels they would like to reach out to an external organisation to get in touch with Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds. They are an incredible charity that allows victim-survivors the safety to heal after an assault.

It is also deeply important to me that I extend this advice to students who may find themselves in abusive relationships or a victim-survivor of partner abuse. Somebody of any gender can be in an abusive relationship. If you think you are being treated badly, or someone like a partner, ex-partner, family member or friend is hurting you physically, emotionally or controlling you in any way, there is a wealth of confidential help both on and off campus.

**A University of Leeds spokesperson said:**

"The safety and wellbeing of our students is our top priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence. We actively address harassment and sexual misconduct, both through prevention and supporting the reporting and resolution of incidents. Understanding the needs of students is critical, which is why we always work closely with LUU, and we are grateful to Sophia and her colleagues for recent conversations. We are pleased to be working with LUU to develop a new website, and to continue to discuss how we can work in partnership on communications to help keep our students safe.

"We encourage complainants to report criminal offences to the police and support students and staff through our reporting procedure which can be used anonymously if preferred. Developed with LUU, this procedure triggers support from the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service and the LUU's Help and Support service, among other groups."

**Resources:**

- Information from LUU about abusive relationships
- Information from Leeds City Council about domestic violence and abuse
- National domestic abuse helpline
- Leeds University Union (LUU) have an huge range of articles on personal safety and welfare, including on forced marriage, sex work and other topics.
- Crimestoppers has information on the above topics, plus other guides to public transport, taxis and Ubers and looking after your belongings.
- [https://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/reporting\\_hc\\_sa\\_oh.html](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/reporting_hc_sa_oh.html)





# LUU societies make a comeback

As lockdown restrictions ease, many LUU societies have managed to finally meet in person

Due to the relaxation of lockdown rules, many societies have managed to meet in person for the first time this year over the past two weeks. It has been a tough year for societies who have had to battle on with online meetings, virtual

events and zoom socials. However, the latest easing of lockdown has allowed some to meet in person. Restrictions are still in place so they still have to be somewhat inventive about how they meet but it's a big relief for those social

secs who have run out of quiz round ideas. Here at the Gryphon we spoke to some of the societies about how it felt to see their groups in-person for the first time in a while.

## LUU Hiking Club



"We had our first club hike in fourteen months on Sunday 2 May. It was really exciting to be back in the hills together and it meant that a few members who we hadn't met at the virtual events came, so it was a really good reminder that the club has actually been quite successful in bringing in new members this year despite everything. We went on a day hike to Hebden Bridge, taking ten leaders and twenty other club members splitting off into groups of six. I think everyone was very glad to be out of Leeds, enjoying the countryside. We have since also run a hike to Horton-in-Ribblesdale.

Since lockdown began last March, we have been running weekly Zoom 'pub' socials to replace our usual Thursday pub social at the Eldon. Whilst turnout has fluctuated, we have managed to maintain a respectable level, including new members who we are now only just meeting in person. Other events we've been running have been online navigation training sessions, a winter hiking briefing, a talk on avalanche safety and two very popular mountain rescue talks. Whilst these would usually be more interactive, we were glad we could maintain a level of skill that could then be used when we got out and about once more."

## LUU Karate Society



"After spending much of the last academic year training via Zoom calls, returning to outdoor training has been a breath of fresh air - literally! A combination of luck with the weather and fantastic planning from our committee has allowed our society to train in person, in increasingly larger numbers. While we are still unable to engage in contact, our club has really appreciated being able to see each other face to face again. We definitely have a newfound appreciation for the little things; we will never complain about an intense session or burpees again!"

## LUU Skate society



"After what felt like a long and dark winter devoid of skateboarding and hanging out as a society, our first session back a few weeks ago felt better than ever. As a society inclusive to skaters of all abilities, it felt great to be reunited with some old faces looking to get back into it, but we were equally stoked to welcome some new skaters into the club looking to give it a go.

We did what we have always done, hired out LS10 skatepark for a Skate Soc exclusive session. These sessions run 5:45-7:45, 8-10 and can be booked on the link in our instagram @leedsuniskatesociety. Anybody is welcome, and the park can provide boards, helmets and pads for anyone looking to give it a go! We had our friends at Redbull provide us with a few crates of cans to keep us going too. Our Tuesday sessions will continue to run weekly, and we would love to see some new faces, so if you have ever fancied it please come along! We are also hoping to have a meet up with our Friends at Manchester Uni skate society and check out some of their parks, however we need to wait until travelling in larger groups is more feasible. We will also be hoping to have a summer social and book in a few tables at Brude for after our sessions."

## Leeds University Women's Rugby Union



"We have indeed regrouped and are currently running all our usual training sessions and match days. We were even lucky enough to invite our alumni back for our annual alumni! With the view reopening, we've been able to hold socially distanced post-match pints and provide match food for our members. We're loving being back and having some normality. After hearing from the Union that we were allowed teams from out of Leeds to play with us, the very first people we thought of were our lovely alumni! We were also lucky to make it a fab celebration to welcome in our new committee!"





# Killing the bill on Mayday: A Palestinian perspective



Image: Flickr

Adam Abdalla

When witnessing the brutal repression of protesters in London and Bristol over the last few weeks, I have been reminded of the violence now exercised daily against the Palestinian people in their own land by Israel, now officially an Apartheid regime, and its heavily militarised police force. Israel has enjoyed unwavering support from the UK Government and constant whitewashing in the mainstream media, which has often labelled any voices dissenting against this injustice as “antisemitic.”

Israel is home to companies such as Elbit Systems or Raytheon which export their lethal weapons and label them as “battle-tested” on the besieged Gazan population. Israel also provides cutting-edge surveillance technology, first trialled on Palestinians in the West Bank, then sold to Western governments such as the UK, to be used for the policing of their own populations.

Indeed, it is a proven fact of history, just like Aimé Césaire has shown, that the violence exercised by imperial powers in their colonies and occupied lands is eventually imported back home, carefully tailored, to police and surveil entire communities.

*The violence exercised by imperial powers in their colonies and occupied lands is eventually imported back home, carefully tailored, to police and surveil entire communities*

Anti-war activists, Muslims, people of colour, environmentalists and, as we have recently seen, women, all face violence which was first developed in the colonies. We saw this unfold in the 20th Century and we are now seeing it unfold here in the UK, in the US and in France.

This form of state violence, whether it is perpetrated in Jerusalem, London, Ferguson or Paris, is an expression of further curbing

of our freedoms to protest and organise. More importantly, however, it is also an attack on the intersectionality between struggles that we have long been fighting for. Intersectionality is our only weapon against the militarised machinery that we are facing globally and which is already impacting our lives directly through the policies of austerity and increased surveillance. If left unchallenged, these forces will eventually lead to the destruction of our ecosystems through climate change.

I don’t claim any false objectivity: I speak about this bill from the perspective of a Palestinian Muslim living in the UK. As someone whose expressions of identity and whose characteristics have been securitised and racialised in the UK, whose speech and political action has been delegitimised and curbed on multiple occasions by Israel lobbyists and Islamophobes, and as someone whose friends and comrades at Palestine Action and Extinction Rebellion have been unjustly imprisoned, brutalised and harassed by the UK police, I can tell you today that we cannot rely on the political class or the institutions to allow us to act against the crimes that they are complicit in and that they themselves perpetrate.

So, allow me to say that while this Bill is an attack on our freedoms by a political class that cheers as protesters are brutally beaten and smiles while shaking hands with war criminals such as Benjamin Netanyahu, we should not pretend that the UK was not guilty of state surveillance and violence against dissidents, Black people, women and Muslims on an institutional level before this.

We must, as the late David Graeber said, “when faced with structures of unjust authority act as if we were already free.” And indeed, here in the UK, we have the privilege to gather, to organise and to radicalise against these ongoing injustices by taking direct action on our campuses without the fear of being shot or kidnapped, like many

Palestinians have been just a few weeks ago in Jerusalem.

Now is the time for all of us in the UK, and especially students, whose politics are based upon anti-militarism, anti-racism, feminism and internationalism to take direct action against war criminals such as Elbit Systems, against this government and against its institutions. Otherwise, they will lead us to a climate disaster with the right hand, while brutalising and surveilling us with the left.

Now is also the time to decolonise our universities in real terms, by forcing them to divest from fossil fuels, the arms trade and companies that profit from human rights violations. It is also high time for the University to cut its ties with universities that employ oppressive policies and that are evidently part of an apartheid regime. Yes, I mean the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as the first instance.

I know that we all already care for each other, we are not indifferent to the struggles that we face and that none of us stands alone. But, as a Palestinian Muslim, a radical and a student, I call on you to transform your care and compassion into radical direct action today by joining Sisters Uncut, by joining Palestine Action and by using your privilege to support these movements. On our campuses, this will mean occupations, demonstrations, sit-ins and putting pressure on the administrations and the students’ unions until they listen to our demands. Don’t be mistaken, radical change never came through peaceful negotiations and radical change is what we desperately need.

We are the movement that will, within our lifetime, bring about real change in society and soon Kill This Bill and Shut Elbit Down for good, I do not doubt that, but we need to act now.



# What is the significance of Derek Chauvin's conviction?

Tasha Johnson

On Tuesday 27 April, Derek Chauvin, the police officer who killed George Floyd, was convicted of second-degree murder and manslaughter. George Floyd was an unarmed Black man and his needless, avoidable death led to international outrage and garnered support to the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement. This conviction has been seen by some as a landmark moment in the history of the US justice system, as a police officer is finally being held accountable for unnecessary use of force. Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for over nine minutes, despite Floyd's protests that he couldn't breathe, ultimately leading to his death. This conviction has led to investigations by the US Department of Justice into the practices of the Minneapolis Police Department, for whom Chauvin worked.

The debate around whether Chauvin's actions were deliberate or not is irrelevant as intentionality should not affect accountability. Leaving a baby in a hot car to die of heatstroke is unlikely to be deliberate – but just as a parent would be accused of gross negligence, so too should the police. While the conviction of Derek Chauvin was a step in the right direction, there is still much work to be done to ensure a fairer policing system for all. A crucial part of this is listening and truly understanding criticism. Take the acronym 'ACAB' – All Cops are Bastards. Understanding the sentiment behind this and dismantling the cause of it is vital. Many misunderstand this saying, and become defensive, calling it a gross over-generalisation. Is every single police officer in existence a bad person? Most likely not. But when the system giving orders is based on racism or promotes the normalisation of abuses of power, the individuals in that system must help to

enforce change.

There has been some progression apparent in the actions of the police officers who came forward to give evidence against Chauvin. The loyalty of the police must, above all, lie with the people they have sworn to protect, not their colleagues, no matter how difficult this may be. Holding those around us accountable is paramount for change to come about. In the case of George Floyd, the other two officers on site did not see an issue with Chauvin's actions and made little attempt to prevent them. Not only must this bystander culture be dismantled, but investigations into the police must be carried out by external parties, not colleagues or former police officers.

*The loyalty of the police must, above all, lie with the people they have sworn to protect, not their colleagues, no matter how difficult this may be*

Will the conviction of Derek Chauvin impact the UK at all? It is all too easy to point fingers at the American system, to forget that any racism present in America was born in Britain, and imported along with the enslaved people our country helped provide. There is far less awareness about the historical racial inequality in the UK – we all know about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, but how many of us can name a single person from the Black British civil rights' struggle? Despite what some may think, there is evidence that change must be enacted on this side of the pond as well. Black people in the UK are disproportionately tasered, put in handcuffs and even given COVID warnings. In an official 2015

report tasked by then-Home Secretary Theresa May, it was found that there was racial disproportionality in police restraint deaths and that serious reform needed to be made to decrease the risk of people dying in custody. The death of George Floyd and the conviction of Chauvin has created a ripple effect, and several investigations are now being made into UK police forces, such as the one being undertaken by the Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the one being undertaken by the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

But will these investigations or Derek Chauvin's conviction really change anything? Or are abuses of power within the police force to be expected? The recent murder of Sarah Everard by police officer Wayne Couzens is another haunting example. A famous psychology experiment, The Stanford Prison Experiment, found that participants placed in a position of authority behaved in a way they would not have in their everyday life, that wearing uniform removed their sense of personal identity and that their sadistic behaviour was not viewed with accountability as it had been a group norm. The number of rapes committed by soldiers is so high that there is an entire Wikipedia page dedicated to "wartime sexual violence", further demonstrating the abuse that often accompanies power. As the proverb states, "absolute power corrupts absolutely." Further academic research must be done on authority and power and how to wield it responsibly, while on a local level, we must continue to have conversations and educate ourselves on the unconscious power imbalances between races and genders. After all, we all deserve to feel safe and respected.



Image: Wikimedia Commons



# When will Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe return to the United Kingdom?



Image: Jonathan Brady, AP

Basia Jankowiak

Last week was supposed to be the end of the battle between the British-Iranian dual citizen Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, and the Iranian justice administration. After being arrested on 3 April 2016 and accused of unclear charges concerning a scheme to undermine the Iranian government, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was found guilty and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

In 2016, Zaghari-Ratcliffe travelled to Iran with her daughter to visit relatives. She intended to return to the UK on the 3rd of April but as she was about to board her plane, she found herself being arrested without any explanation.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe faced an unfair trial as the evidence supporting her crime was held secret. Detained in prison until March 2020, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was able to leave and continue her sentence as house arrest due to a widespread coronavirus outbreak in Iranian prisons. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's sentence was due to end on 7 March 2021, but immediately after the removal of her ankle tag she faced additional charges of "propaganda activities against the regime." A few days ago, she was found guilty, and banned from leaving Iran for another year.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has denied guilt to all of her charges and international human rights organisations suspect that she is being used as a bargaining chip. In 2016, Amnesty International stated that they believed

her arrest may have been related to the imprisonment of Iranian technology news websites employees. In 2014, technology news websites employees received sentences of up to 11 years for taking part in courses that were meant to provide training for Iranian citizen journalists. However, the Iranian government accused this project, run by BBC, of comprising plans that were supposed to connect anti-revolutionary Iranians abroad. Although Zaghari-Ratcliffe did work for the BBC World Service Trust between 2009 and 2010, her position was described as purely administrative.

*Nazanin-Zaghari-Ratcliffe has denied guilt to all of her charges and international human rights organisations suspect that she is being used as a bargaining chip*

Zaghari-Ratcliffe may also have been imprisoned as a result of the debt Britain owes Iran for tanks that were purchased in the 1970s but were never delivered. Although unofficially, the Iranian government is thought to have admitted that there is a linkage between these two cases.

In 2008, an international court agreed that the money had to be paid back. However, the UK placed the money in a frozen account where it remains to this day. The United Kingdom and Iran are engaged in an ongoing debate about the interest owed and who should receive the money. There is concern that branches of

the Iranian Government may use the money to fund activities associated with terrorist groups therefore, by paying back the money, sanctions would be broken. Additionally, the UK Government claims that it does not intend to reward Iran by showing that taking people hostage could result in achieving the desired effect.

On his Twitter account, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: "Iran's decision to sentence Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to another year in prison is cruel, inhumane and wholly unjustified. She must be allowed to return to her family in the UK and we will continue to do all we can to get her home."

Additionally, the Prime Minister claimed that: "We will be working very hard to secure Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release from Iran, her ability to return to her family, here in the UK. [...] The government will not stop, we will re-double our efforts and we are working with our American friends on this issue as well."

MP Tulip Siddiq believes that there is a correlation between the unpaid debt and imprisonment of Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Siddiq suggests that the UK should pay the money back because otherwise there is no room for negotiation. Although, it is not guaranteed that the repayment would result in the release of Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Siddiq believes the UK's position in the negotiations would be much stronger after the reimbursement. Perhaps, by undertaking such actions, the UK Government could help negotiate a release for other dual-citizens held in Iranian's prisons.



# Is Mr Johnson taking a tumble or a stroll down Controversy Street?

Cameron Thomas

Prime Minister Boris Johnson never appears to be shy from controversy, whether he is hiding in fridges from reporters, or saying inappropriate things in the papers about letterboxes and tank tops. So, what spot of bother has Mr Johnson gotten himself into this time? Especially considering the recent praise around his vaccine rollout, which has now seen over 33 million first doses issued.

Arguably, the most damning allegation is that Mr Johnson supposedly said “let the bodies pile high” regarding whether the UK should go into a second lockdown last year. This allegation came after the resignation of former chief aide Dominic Cummings, after a ‘briefing war’ between Mr Johnson and Mr Cummings. The allegation alone, if true, could spark a resignation and public apology from Mr Johnson.

Another allegation, concerning the leaked conversation between Mr Johnson and UK billionaire Sir James Dyson, has also recently come to light. Now of course, politicians are people, so Mr Johnson having a conversation with another person, Sir Dyson, is not an issue on its own. The issue here is what was said in the texts, as the leaks show Mr Johnson and Sir Dyson discussing the taxation of Sir Dyson’s employees, who would come to the UK to make the Dyson ventilators. This is because UK tax would be higher than what employees would normally be taxed in Singapore. Sir Dyson expressed his concern over the tax in his text exchange with Mr Johnson, whereby Mr Johnson assured Sir Dyson

by saying that “I will fix it.” The issue here is that no individual from the public, even one with as much power and influence as Sir Dyson, should be able to influence policy outside of the right to vote, with Sir Keir Starmer stating that it was “one rule for those that have got the Prime Minister’s phone number, another for everybody else.” Mr Johnson has also stated that there will be “absolutely no apology” from himself over the texts. This controversy has currently not led to any resignation or apology, making it unlikely much will come to pass.

*The chances of anything happening is unlikely, based solely on the Prime Minister’s prior record*

The last piece of controversy to grace Mr Johnson was over campaign funding and renovations of the flat above No 11 Downing Street, where Mr Johnson and Ms Symonds reside. Normally, Prime Ministers receive an annual allowance of up to £30,000, but the recent renovations are rumoured to have cost up to £200,000. The real controversy comes from the allegation that it was partly funded by Conservative Party Donors, which would break the rules around party fundraising, as all donations over £7,500 must be reported to the Electoral Commission. This has prompted the Electoral Commission to start an investigation.

The real questions arising from these three controversies are, what does this mean for the current Conservative government, and how will Prime Minister Boris Johnson fare from these events?

Firstly, the Conservative Party is much larger than any of its leaders, with the same going for any political party. For this reason, it will recover from any of these controversies with ease, just as it has done in the past.

Secondly, in the case of Mr Johnson, controversy has washed over him many times in the past surrounding areas such as discriminatory remarks. Therefore, the chances of anything happening is unlikely, based solely on his prior record. Even investigations from institutions such as the Electoral Commission will at most issue a fine to pay.

Ultimately, the current British government will endure the Prime Minister’s controversies due to the current success of the vaccine rollout. Additionally, YouGov’s opinion poll currently places Boris Johnson as the second most liked Conservative politician, just behind Rishi Sunak. Boris Johnson has a 38% positive opinion over opposition leader Sir Keir Starmer’s 24% positive opinion. This may mean that the vaccine rollout is overriding many people’s opinion, allowing citizens to forgive the controversies. With vaccines being the last piece of the pandemic puzzle, this means that the UK Government will most likely remain in positive light across the year, and maybe even in years to come.



Image: Niklas Halle/N





# How to be proactive during the summer and boost employability



**With summer holidays approaching, Leeds Finsights' Zachary Jammal explains how you can gain valuable experience and skills during your break.**

Zachary Jammal

Students often believe that internships and University experiences are the only ways to become more employable. However, the summer break could be a great way to take some time off, reflect on your career and even boost your employability. Ahead of the end of term, I have prepared some tips to help you make the most of your summer.

First, take some time off. After a long period of stress due to deadlines and exams, it is crucial to take a well-deserved break. As the American writer Anne Lamott said: "Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you." Travelling, playing sports, dedicating time to your hobbies, spending time with your family or simply relaxing on your own are all great ways to blow off some steam. This break will allow you to go back to University with a fresh mind and positive mindset.

The next one is to "stay ahead of the game." Waiting until the last minute and not planning your next move is a major mistake that many students make every year. With no university deadlines and exams, you're more likely to be relaxed and able to think clearly. This makes summer the perfect time to start planning ahead.

If you're going into your final year of university, this is the best time to start thinking about your major projects or dissertation by doing a bit of prep and reading. Also, thinking about firms and grad roles or internships you want to apply for would also be a good idea. Personally, I would suggest

creating a Word or Excel file with a list of roles you are interested in. This will allow you to save time during the university year and stay on top of application deadlines. It is crucial to keep in mind that applying early increases your chances of getting an offer. In this very competitive Post-COVID job market, you should do all you can to maximise your chances. On the other hand, if you're going into your second year, figuring out whether you'd like to go on a year abroad, do a placement or simply progress to the third year would be beneficial.

Another important avenue is to get some work experience. Doing a summer internship is great but it is not the only way to gain relevant work experience. Working in a restaurant, in a retail store, as a tutor or even volunteering would help you gain relevant transferable skills, making you more employable. Summer jobs will help you gain and demonstrate highly valuable soft skills such as communication, discipline and teamwork.

Needless to mention that this experience will enrich your CV and boost your chances in the job market. There are plenty of opportunities like these around the world, so there'll definitely be one out there that will suit your skills and interests. This is also an opportunity for you to see yourself develop and grow as a person.

The last tip I have is to learn new skills. This might sound like a chore, but it is definitely worth it. Learning a key hard skill will be a huge plus that could help you land your dream job.

## The top hard skills to know in 2021

**Computer skills:** this includes Microsoft Office (specifically Excel) but also Google Drive and other means of working virtually. This will not only help you in your working life but also at university.

**Data management:** such as Python. Although this might sound like a hassle and not the ideal way to spend your time in the summer, learning this accessible coding language will make you stand out in the application process (especially for Investment Banking.) Various beginner courses exist on platforms such as Udemy or Coursera.

**Languages:** As you may already know, in this globalized economy speaking more than one language opens doors as global firms are in constant needs of multilingual individuals. Speaking another language will not only boost your employability but it also comes with numerous cognitive benefits such as increasing creative thinking and enhance memory.

*Good luck and remember to enjoy your well-deserved summer break!*



# Biden's first 100 days: What has he done for the American economy so far?

**Achieving economic change in just 100 days is no easy feat. Nicolas Crittenden explains how President Biden is already making an impact.**

**Nicolas Crittenden**

The first 100 days have been obsessed over by newly elected US Presidents since the Roosevelt era, early victories serving as a barometer for the potential long-term successes of a fledgling administration.

President Biden's focus has been squarely on the economy since taking office in the wake of the COVID-19 recession, despite the strife that America's political institutions have also faced in that time. In signing dozens of executive orders and passing landmark legislation, Mr Biden has shown serious intent.

The American Rescue Plan Act formed the basis of President Biden's vision for economic recovery. This unprecedented \$1.9 trillion fiscal stimulus package worried the deficit hawks that have long circled over Washington and only passed through Congress thanks to special 'budget reconciliation' rules.

The most tangible and direct element of the package were measures to provide millions of Americans with cheques of \$1,400 signed by the US government. Previous distributions of stimulus cheques under the Trump administration struggled to make a positive impact on the economy when the pandemic was still rampant.

Spending pattern analysis in mid-2020 revealed serious reluctance from recipients. Northwestern University found that those with funds of \$3000 or more in their current accounts failed to spend a significant proportion of it and those with a balance of \$500 or less spent theirs mostly on food, rent and bills rather than durable goods such as electronics.

Sectors impacted most by the pandemic, such as

manufacturing and retail, reported little change in sales revenue, making the overall economic impact rather limited.

Thanks largely to the highly successful vaccine rollout, consumer confidence has improved dramatically. The Index of Consumer Sentiment rose by 7.5 points from January to April, the highest level since March 2020, justifying optimism that this time the stimulus measures will have a strong effect. Forecasts expect GDP to grow by 6.5% in 2021, a major contrast to the painful troubles facing Europe, where recession is continuing. This level of recovery is not simply a cyclical phenomenon.

Mr Biden has praised the creation of 1.3 million new jobs in his first 100 days, a record for any US president. When compared to the 13 million new hires that were made in Trump's last nine months, albeit from a low base, it seems less impressive.

It is here, the labour market, where cracks have started to appear in America's recovery. Vacancies are at a 20-year high, 8 million more people are still out of work than before the pandemic, but the number of hires is slowing down. Wages rose by a robust 1% in the first quarter, above what was forecasted, indicating that a labour shortage is starting to appear, creating potential for inflation.

This has been attributed by conservatives to an overly generous benefits program that Mr Biden's stimulus package has contributed heavily to. A regular but temporary \$300 weekly payment added to unemployment insurance, and monthly, as opposed to annual, child tax credit payments have given 4 in 10 unemployed Americans a larger income than they had in their previous job.

Low-paying retail and hospitality vacancies are where shortages have been observed most.

These jobs often involve high levels of person-to-person contact, and COVID-19 deaths have been disproportionately observed in these sectors. Workers are clearly still very wary of COVID-19 infection and therefore reluctant to fill these positions, but these fears should dissipate with the continuation of the vaccine rollout.

Murmurs of inflation concerns have been gradually getting louder and having to readjust an overheating economy would pour cold water on America's current economic rebound. But Mr Biden rightly remains relaxed.

Further spending plans are on the horizon. The Biden administration has proposed two more impressive stimulus packages: a \$2.25 trillion infrastructure plan and \$1.8 trillion worth of social security reforms, by including plans to kickstart the decarbonisation of the economy and permanently reforming tax credits for working families, Mr Biden has shown yet more ambition.

Execution promises to be a major challenge, and such setbacks were damaging for Obama's social care reforms. Failure in this regard risks setting progressive economic agendas back several decades. In pursuing stimulus measures of this size, Mr Biden hopes to prove that paying heed to deficit hawks is no longer required, easing the transition to a green economy and leading the charge for other advanced economies to do the same.

If President Biden is successful, his administration will potentially leave a legacy not just for 100 days, but for many decades to come.



Image: Politico





# Happy hedgehogs on campus



Image: Unsplash

Catherine Upex

The University of Leeds' Sustainability Team have been working tirelessly before and during the pandemic to make our campus a greener place for wildlife. Some of their previous projects include the renovation of Roger Stevens' pond, the sustainable garden outside the Faculty of Biological Sciences and tackling flood management in Bramley Park. Their latest endeavour focuses on accommodating one small animal in particular: hedgehogs!

You'll all be familiar with the resident rabbits on campus, found in just about every green patch, but the campus' hedgehogs are much more inconspicuous. They are nocturnal and naturally timid creatures so only really venture out at night. In the day, they can be found tucked away under piles of leaves & sticks or inside bushes.

Hedgehog survival is unfortunately threatened by various human activities, the biggest one being habitat loss due to farming. Hedgehogs aren't even truly safe in gardens. You may remember being told to check for hedgehogs before setting light to a bonfire since they provide the perfect habitats for hedgehogs. These animals can also fall victim to

bush shearers and lawnmowers.

So who would've thought an urban university campus would be a hedgehog refuge? Well, the University's Sustainability Team aim to make our campus as hospitable as possible for these tiny animals, achieving silver accreditation for a hedgehog friendly campus in the process. A team of volunteers routinely checks, maintains, and enhances campus for our resident hedgehogs, by planting the perfect flora and even learning how to spot an unhappy hedgehog in need of help!

Conversation efforts around the globe often choose a "cute" animal to be the face of their work, to help draw in attention and support from the wider public. Helping to protect this "poster animal" leads to benefits for all of the surrounding plant and animal species. Also, the abundance of "poster animals" often reflects the health of the ecosystem that supports them. Therefore, to save the public's favourite creatures, conservationists have to think about the bigger picture.

University of Leeds' Sustainability Team is no exception. Hedgehog protection is just the tip of the iceberg of a wider biodiversity project on

campus to help reduce pollution and improve the conservation of the resident birds and bats. This project transcends Leeds, with team members collaborating with the University of Warwick and hopes to grow to an international scale, working with youth groups world-wide.

So how can you get involved? The team has a Facebook group called "Biodiversity at the University of Leeds," which is open for anyone to join and receive updates on new projects. You can also sign up to their newsletter on their website. Despite on-campus activities being restricted at the moment due to the on-going pandemic, volunteers are open to do just about anything. If you need further incentive, a certain level of involvement in the Sustainability Team even earns you an extra accreditation at the end of your degree!

Future and ongoing projects involve the bold '2023 Plastic Free' project which aims to remove all single use plastic from campus in two years' time. With the gradual opening of lockdown, the team are hoping to double down on their efforts, with more volunteers on campus and hopefully we'll begin to see more hedgehogs running around very soon!

## Fast-tracked evolution or 'frog-cell' Frankenstein?

Pearce Curran

American researchers have produced novel lifeforms, which can be programmed to perform desired functions, using cells from the African clawed toad, *Xenopus laevis*. The aptly named Xenobot technology is proof of concept for increasingly sophisticated 'biological robots', with a range of applications in fields ranging from cancer treatment to cleaning up pollutants in our oceans.

The experiments focused on producing lifeforms from frog skin and heart cell arrangements that could predictably move like a motor. Technicians in Vermont used an 'evolutionary algorithm' to first generate millions of different heart and skin cell combinations in 3D block arrangements. Then, each design was simulated in a physics-based virtual environment to judge how well they performed a desired function – locomotion. 99 rounds of selection were carried out, and after every iteration the designs with the lowest performance scores were removed and replaced with modified versions of the more effective designs. Eventually, this exercise produced numerous highly effective

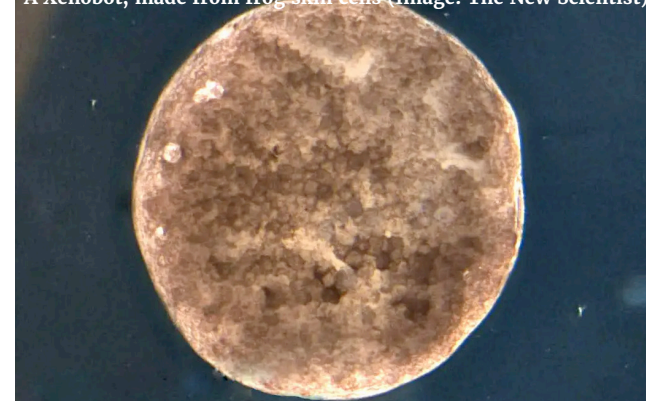
'motor-like' Xenobot simulations. This mimicks natural selection so well that traits present in earlier iterations of the process were no longer present by the end of the process – this process usually plays out over many millennia of evolution.

Next, the final designs were converted to real arrangements of living frog cells. Scientists reared embryos and painstakingly removed, and combined, pluripotent stem cells. These presumptive cardiac cells were surgically removed and fused to the epidermal cells according to the 3D designs using tiny cauterisation equipment.

This process was not without hiccups; the computer simulations initially could not replicate real-life conditions well enough to produce working Xenobots. However, the computer software was gradually improved by a process of trial and error until Xenobot behaviour was predictable, with some moving in straight lines and spirals.

Novel lifeforms like Xenobots could be produced from human stem cells to remove plaque from arteries, chisel off minute calcium deposits in joints, regenerate organs, and even diagnose and deliver

A Xenobot, made from frog skin cells (Image: The New Scientist)



drugs to cancerous tumours. Xenobots have been shown to heal when cut manually but also have a self-limiting lifespan of around a week, becoming an inert mass of dead cells that the body can easily remove. Xenobots could be deployed to collect and dispose of pollutants in water systems including microplastics, oil, algal blooms, and radioactive contaminants. This technology potentially has a bright future but there are understandably well-founded ethical concerns about creating these new lifeforms.





# US teen uses beets to beat wound infections

Phoebe Turner

At only 17 years old, Dasia Taylor has created colour-changing sutures that can detect whether a surgical wound is infected by simply using the dye from a common household vegetable: beetroots! The teen, from Iowa City, entered her project into the prestigious Regeneron Science Talent Search, where she was named one of 40 finalists. The other finalists voted for her to receive the Seaborg Award, guaranteeing her a prize of \$25,000 and making her spokesperson for the finalists.

Human skin is naturally slightly acidic, with a pH of around 5–6, but when infected, this pH increases to around 9, making it slightly alkaline. Taylor noticed that beetroot juice changes colour from a bright red at pH 5 to a dark purple at pH 9, making it an ideal natural indicator of changes in skin pH caused by infection. Using cotton-polyester thread stained with beetroot dye, Taylor showed that after five minutes, under

infection-like pH conditions, the thread changed from a bright red to dark purple colour. When left for three days the purple faded to a light grey. Whilst “smart” sutures that utilise smartphone technology to identify an infected surgical wound already exist, such technology is only accessible in countries with large smartphone access. This makes it difficult to implement in developing countries where there are higher rates of surgical wound infection according to the World Health Organisation. Taylor aimed to tackle this project from an equity point-of-view, to develop a technology that could be easily accessible by all.

Taylor is now undergoing work with microbiologists at the University of Iowa to further develop the sutures to avoid the harbouring of bacteria within the cotton thread, and turn her high school project into a procedure seen in the clinic. If implemented, this technology could catch surgical infections much sooner and prove lifesaving for many people across the globe.

# Why are there 60 minutes in an hour?

Lara Shoemaker

The process to get to how we measure time today has evolved with civilisations over thousands of years. It seems to come from human’s unique desire to manage time and categorise. Some things make sense, such as a day being one full rotation of the Earth and a year being the time taken for the Earth to rotate once around the Sun, which takes 365 and a quarter days. But why we have weeks and months seems a bit harder to comprehend, so here is a brief insight into how they came to be.

The first Roman calendar came about in the 700s B.C., and actually had 10 months named Martius, Aprilis, Maius, Junius, Quintilis, Sextilis, September, October, November, and December. Martius after Mars, Aprilis after the Latin word aperit (‘to open’), Maius after Maia; daughter of Atlas, and Junius perhaps meaning ‘young.’ The remaining latter months were derived from numbers. The months each had a purpose and there would be a change in attitude for each. The Romans based these months on the lunar calendar which they thought of as 29.5

days – so months were 29 or 30 days long. Since there were originally only 10 months, the remaining 60 or so days were unaccounted for until the later addition of Januarius and Februarius.

Large modifications to the calendar came with the reign of Julius Caesar in 46 B.C, who renamed the sixth month Julius and the fifth after Augustus Caesar. He also modified months to be either 30 or 31 days – making sure Julius and Augustus were 31 days – at the expense of Februarius. It is thought that February was made shorter as it was a month of honouring the dead; ‘februare’ literally means ‘to purify.’

Not every civilisation had a seven day week originally. Egyptians had a 10 day week and the Romans had eight. It was the Babylonians in the 600s and 500s B.C. who chose seven due to the seven celestial bodies that they could observe (the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.) The prominence of the seven day week spread across the globe and was adopted by the Romans in A.D. 321. Some days of the week retain their names

from Roman gods, whereas others have changed to Germanic Gods such as Tiu, Woden, Thor, and Fria.

In Christianity, Sunday as a day of rest has long been observed but the concept of a weekend, which also includes Saturday, is relatively recent. Weekends only became official in the UK in the 1900s, and was mostly centred around efficiency of the workforce.

Grouping into the base of 60 is called the sexagesimal system and is still used today for time and angles. It is thought 60 was used rather than 10, for example, simply because of how many numbers are factors of 60. This was especially useful in interpreting degrees in a circle as well as sundials, which is how time was first measured. Groupings of 60 made managing points in time or on a circle much easier and allowed humans to become more organised.

With regards to hours in a day, this likely came around 1000 B.C., much before seconds and minutes. Light and dark periods of time were considered two separate entities as it wasn’t possible to measure time at night with a sundial. This was, however, until people began observing which stars were visible at what points in the night. In total, 24 stars were used and divided into two groups of 12 based on equinox days. This is how the concept of 24 hours in a day began.

On a very long-term scale, there is constant astrological change that will affect our calendar system. Firstly, that the Moon is gradually pulling away from the Earth which means that the Earth’s rotation is slowing over time. Days will therefore get longer, albeit at a very gradual rate of 1/75,000th of a second a year. Furthermore, scientists have found that the Earth is rotating around the Sun faster than recent years making the average day this year 0.05 milliseconds shorter than usual.

Recently, there has been increased support for a four day working week in the UK. This is already being implemented in several countries, such as the Netherlands, and is likely to increase in popularity. It is thought that a reduced week is actually more efficient as it reduces burnout, reduces sick-days, and increases happiness.



Image: Unsplash



*This month, our Sports writers discuss the fleeting drama of football's proposed European Super League, as well as Lewis Hamilton's ongoing dominance of Formula One and the recent NFL Draft.*

# Fan power curtails owners' greed .....

James Clinton-Hunt

The launch and immediate crash landing of the 'European Super League' (ESL) has shaken the footballing world.

The ESL pitched fans against their own clubs, ex-players against their former employers and set into motion a cry of outrage which should have been predicted by anyone who had even the faintest knowledge about what constitutes 'the beautiful game.'

When Florentino Perez helped announce the European Super League on Sunday 18 April, he had probably not set himself the goal of uniting fans from every club around the globe – superseding tribal rivalries. However, by Monday evening he had evidently done so. The wave of condemnation of the proposed Super League came from all corners: Gary Neville and Jamie Carragher (for once) agreed on something and described the breakaway league as "a criminal act against fans" and "creating more greed." These sentiments were echoed by fans, ex-players and, before long, the players themselves.

So why did the ESL flop? Well, for one it had virtually no support. Polls run on social media and by independent organisation YouGov showed that 79% of fans opposed the league on all grounds, whilst 68% strongly opposed the new breakaway league.

This was hardly unexpected, as critics pointed

out; a league in which teams 'buy their way in', subsequently laying without fear of relegation, goes against the fundamental ethos of the game. Football is unpredictable (just ask anyone who bets on it) and the beauty of the game is that any team can beat any other team on their day. The super league would have prevented teams such as Leicester and West Ham from potentially achieving a well-earned European place for next season, despite those teams performing better than some of those who signed up for the league – Spurs and Arsenal for example.

Football in the past thirty years has seen an increase in funding that has in turn completely revolutionised the game. Billionaires own the big clubs and, due to their monetary value, a neutral would assume that they are the people who hold autonomy in decision – making at their respective clubs.

However, fan responses to the ESL announcement have proved that billionaire owners in Britain are not immune from scrutiny. Liverpool fans burned their (very expensive) team's kit outside Elland Road in a recent fixture against Leeds, thousands of Arsenal fans marched on the Emirates and the upheaval in Manchester caused prominent figure Ed Woodward to resign. Signs were made, flames of anger were kindled and, in the environment of the pandemic, those flames had all the fuel needed to cause even

those at the top of the clubs to feel the heat.

*Fan responses to the European Super League announcement have proved that billionaire owners in Britain are not immune from scrutiny*

And feel the heat they did. Within seventy-two hours, all of the English clubs who had signed up for the Super League withdrew, issuing grovelling apologies to their fans. If the owners thought this would quell any criticism then, once again, they drastically miscalculated.

Social media is replete with #GlazersOUT #FSGOUT and other such trends, aimed solely at removing the owners from the 'big clubs.'

The ESL gamble from the billionaire owners was the result of greed. This could be the domino to topple foreign influence in British football. One thing is for certain:

The European Super League has flopped – and that is down to football fans, plain and simple.

## ..... Now change the rules for Premier League club ownership!

Owen Mawer

Since the debacle of the European Super League (ESL), football fans of England's 'top six' (Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur) have questioned how their club is being run. The ESL process was an act of betrayal from the owners and undermined the importance of their supporters. Fan protests in the week that followed the ESL announcement were successful in bringing about change. Having realised this power, supporters' groups were buoyant in challenging their unaccountable owners, who were behind one of the biggest scandals seen in world football.

On Sunday 2 May, the desire of these fans to bring about change was epitomised by fans of Manchester United, who gathered in their thousands to protest against their American owners, the Glazer family – a group that United fans have tried to evict for many years. Calm protesting soon led fans to break into their stadium, Old Trafford, ahead of the team's fixture against Liverpool, which was later postponed. It marked the continuation of the argument – football is nothing without fans. Similarly, for followers of Arsenal and Liverpool, the ESL was just a new reason to call for more fan representation at

board level, with many looking to the Fifty plus One rule, as seen in German football, for inspiration.

The Fifty plus One rule was introduced to the German top-flight in the 1990s to formalise the original members association that was, up until then, the backbone of most clubs. Much like the 'socio' system in place at Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, German clubs agreed to this rule as it prevented any investor from purchasing a majority share of the club, which ensured that members (usually through a supporters' trust) retained shares and voting powers. This assures fans that they could continue to elect board members and directors of football. If a club were to disobey this rule, they would not be able to partake in the Bundesliga. However, some teams have found legal loopholes to increase the power of one investing entity, such as RB Leipzig and the role played by Red Bull in their ownership.

This model established a seat at the table for fans across Germany to affect the decisions made by their clubs, something that provides an attractive alternative for football fans in the UK. A Premier League without the fat cats of today can only be achieved with the restructuring of all clubs, more efficient business models and government backing

to help fans and supporters' groups in gathering funds together to reclaim their clubs. There is plenty to do, but changes to how football clubs are run look destined to change. At Arsenal, there is talk of Spotify owner Daniel Ek trying to purchase the London club and distribute power at board level to the fans. If achieved, it will be the first step towards more fan ownership in England's top-flight.



Image: Daily Star



# An offensive feast in 2021 NFL draft

Will Heaver

For the first time in seventy-five years of NFL draft history, the recent 2021 draft saw the opening seven selections being made on offense.

The first overall pick, Trevor Lawrence, was one of the worst-kept secrets in sport, regarded as one of the best quarterback prospects in the last ten years. Coming out of Clemson University, the Jacksonville Jaguars are placing their faith in Lawrence in the hope that they have their first true Franchise Quarterback.

The second and third overall selections, while both Quarterbacks, could not be more different to Lawrence in terms of career path. Zach Wilson, drafted by the New York Jets, is a Mormon from BYU who has only two years of starting experience and was not considered a draft prospect before his outstanding breakout year this year.

Trey Lance, drafted third by the San Francisco 49ers, has even less experience than Wilson having only started seventeen games at North Dakota State, with just one being this past year due to COVID-19. Lance is seen as a work-in-progress, with a Lamar Jackson-like ceiling and superb athletic traits that suit the faster modern-day game. The 49ers fooled everyone with this selection as it had been widely reported that they would take Alabama quarterback

Mac Jones, who would have been considered a safer pick if not as potentially exciting.

The Atlanta Falcons at fourth selected Kyle Pitts, arguably one of the most exciting athletes in the world at present. A wide receiver in a tight ends body, Pitts is 6ft 5 and 245lbs of athletic phenom, with the ability to run the forty-yard dash in 4.46 seconds. While the history of first round tight ends is not particularly positive – Eric Ebron and TJ Hockenson have failed to live up to expectations – Pitts is considered a “can’t miss prospect” with the potential to become a Hall of Fame talent.

Ja’Marr Chase is also regarded by pundits and fans alike as “can’t miss prospect.” He was selected at five by the Cincinnati Bengals out of Louisiana State University. Chase, at the age of 21 was one of the youngest players in the draft and will be reunited with last year’s number one pick and former teammate Joe Burrow. Chase opted out of the college season this year because of COVID and was part of the historic attack in 2019 that led to LSU winning a National Title.

Finishing off the offensive feast of players selected were Penei Sewell, a gargantuan left tackle from Oregon who will be playing in Detroit, along with

Jaylen Waddle, a rapid wide receiver from Alabama who will reunite with former teammate Tua Tagovailoa.

Rounding off the top ten were two cornerbacks – Jaycee Horn and Patrick Surtain Jr. These were the first two defensive players selected by Carolina and Dallas respectively. Pick ten was the Heisman Trophy winner and Wide Receiver DeVonta Smith, who was selected by the Philadelphia Eagles.



Image: nbcsandiego

# Hamilton wins in Barcelona after 100th career pole

Amy Sayce

Sir Lewis Hamilton claimed his ninety-eighth victory in the recent Spanish Grand Prix after achieving his 100th pole during qualifying, edging out championship rival Verstappen.

Since 2013, Mercedes have always been on pole in Barcelona. Max Verstappen brought RedBull close but was ultimately unable to match Hamilton being just 0.036 seconds off the pace of the expert pole sitter. With Verstappen’s teammate Perez complaining of shoulder pain and ending up in eighth, RedBull had to take comfort in splitting the two Mercedes drivers.

As the Grand Prix began, all eyes were on turn one as it has often proved the best opportunity for an overtake in the entire race. Verstappen was quick to take advantage of this, stopping at the farthest possible point in his grid position with rubber in front from the F3 race providing him with slightly more grip. During the drag race to the first corner, Verstappen passed Hamilton as the two came wheel to wheel, while Leclerc managed to overtake an overcautious Bottas to take third. At the time, this was highly costly for Mercedes’ strategy with Valtteri Bottas losing a second a lap behind the Ferrari. A curveball came from RedBull’s sister team AlphaTauri when their driver Tsunoda suffered an engine issue. This led to the safety car coming out so marshalls could safely remove car twenty-two. Like in Portugal, Verstappen had a successful restart after attempting to break the tow and keep Hamilton behind in second. The race was looking good for RedBull – although Perez was unable to help his

teammate if needed, Max looked largely confident out front with Hamilton close yet struggling to get within a DRS range.

It is worth mentioning here that every driver except Räikkönen started on the soft tyre, which was expected to last thirty laps (if not more with the safety car interval) with a one-stop strategy looking the best option. However, Verstappen pit on lap twenty-four for a new set of mediums as Hamilton finally looked set to overtake him. Five laps later Hamilton pit and came out in second place behind Verstappen. After a game of cat and mouse, Hamilton pit again on lap forty-three for a scrubbed set of medium tyres.

RedBull chose to keep Verstappen out with Christian

Horner dubbing it Hungary 2019 all over again.

In the end, Verstappen’s forty-two-lap old medium tyres were no match for the Mercedes of Hamilton. Having lost the lead, Verstappen pitted for a set of softs and gained a point for the fastest lap with the gap to Hamilton now fourteen points. This race showed once again how desperately RedBull needs two cars to fight the Silver Arrows, especially strategically. Bottas did appear to ignore team orders to let Lewis through, instead deciding to hold up his teammate. However, this did not stop Hamilton, who is having his best-ever start to a season, from securing his ninety-eighth victory and achieving five consecutive wins in Barcelona.



Image: actiworld



The Gryphon

Arts Supplement of

# IN THE MIDDLE



Fashion - Blogs - Lifestyle

ISSUE 6

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- Beanna Olding
- Georgie Wardall
- Lucy Abbott

### Front Cover

Illustration by Szuyu Chen  
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### Back Cover

Photograph by Elle Palmer  
@elle.palmer



## LISTEN



### Royal Blood - Typhoons

The Brighton rock duo return on full-throttle with their third album. This time around they have switched from the rip-roaring darkness of their first two ventures for a more dancefloor-friendly style of thrash.

## WEAR



### Rimless Sunglasses

I know we are all partial to a good rim but this summer's eyewear is all about ditching the frames. Channel your inner Anastacia while you're "Left Outside Alone" after forgetting to book a table for the pub.

## SEE



### Drag N Bass

There is nothing better than a match made in heaven: Fish and Chips; Rum and Ting; John and Edward. Now you can add Dnb and drag queens to that list as new club night Drag N Bass will have you skanking away with the biggest divas in Leeds on 9 July. Check the Facebook event for more details.

## DO

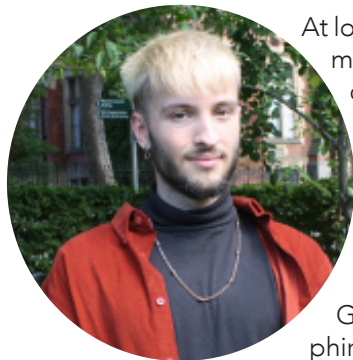


### Tune into NARR Radio

The station only launched this year and already boasts an impressive and varied roster of mixers. Broadcasting every weekend from Leeds' Corn Exchange, lock down your aerial for the very best tunes.

## FULL FRONTAL ALEX GIBBON

I always thought I would end up as LS6's answer to Miss Haversham.



At long last, a semblance of normality has returned as bars, cafes and restaurants have (partially) opened again and my bank balance is looking pretty depleted thanks to any gin menu I can get my hands on. Yes, I know I can buy Beefeater, Gordon's and Bombay Sapphire from any decent retailer at a fraction of the price and enjoy it at home. Yet, there is something special about freezing my tits off under a pergola in a pub car park that makes the drink taste so much sweeter. Also, is it just me or do the fellow patrons seem so much fitter nowadays? Perhaps a year of hermitry has set my bar lower than a limbo pole but for the first time in my life I am so so thankful that men exist.

As surreal as it feels to admit, I am now in the final month of my degree. For my last lecture I was expecting to go out in a blaze of glory - perhaps a High School Musical-esque leap from Parkinson steps - but instead I settled with scoffing shortbread under my duvet at near enough a 180° angle, staring down my reflection in a blank Zoom screen. It's not how I imagined it would go but I'm not mad about it.

Back in my halcyon days as a Fresher, armed with big dreams, a Wilko cutlery set and that same sodding mandala tapestry everyone has in halls, I thought I would never feel ready to go into the real world. I imagined myself as LS6's answer to Miss Haversham: cobwebs falling from my bucket hat as I corner uninterested first years in RPP and ramble on about the time TQD hosted a spontaneous pop-up day rave outside LUU. But, alas, there are only so many jittery Red Bull-fuelled all-nighters you can pull and so much DnB you can tolerate midweek from your neighbours before you realise it's time to move on. Having said that,

university has been the making of me and I will always be truly grateful for that.

The one thing that is keeping me going during this final push is Eurovision or, as I like to call it, homosexual Christmas. For those with absolutely no cultural standing whatsoever, I will give a brief explainer. An array of countries (most are European, some are Asian but, inexplicably, Australia is there too) enter one song each, no longer than 3 minutes, in an international song contest broadcasted for the viewers from each nation to vote via telephone for their favourites. However, the competitive element of the contest is arbitrary as it is the pure unadulterated camp people tune in to see. In the past two decades alone, we have seen a giant hamster wheel, a Babushka granny girl band, a warbling Irish turkey and whatever the hell was going on for Ukraine in 2007 - do yourself a favour and search it up on YouTube. It's absurd, it's beautiful, it's unpredictable and it's the best TV event of the year.

Well, I suppose that's it then. This is the last ever Full Frontal. We've covered dogging, sexy Waitrose dads, J-Lo, twins, the North-South divide and, most importantly, Bimini Bon Boulash. Newsnight eat your heart out! Of course, I will be seeing lots of you lovely people next year as Editor-in-Chief of this glorious publication but to those of you who are moving on I wish you every success in whatever you choose to do. And to those who have read and supported my incessant,



## MEET THE EDITORS

In each issue we will be getting to know a member of the team a little bit better. For our final feature of the year, we decided to ask the big cheese Editor-in-Chief herself, Safi Bugel, a few questions.

### What is your favourite drink?

Depending on context, I'm either a Fanta, Kronenbourg or tap water lady.

### What is your favourite word?

'Legend,' 'iconic' or 'yikes.' Someone recently told me I say 'formative' a lot, so maybe that too.



### What is the best compliment that you have ever received?

Someone once called me 'dynamite,' which I think is pretty great, haha.

### What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't stress so much! Everything will work out and the things that are getting you down won't matter at all in the near future. As I say to everyone, hang in there! Time is everything!

### What have you most enjoyed about leading The Gryphon?

Interacting with wonderful writers and people. Teaching and learning. Having a laugh and building a beautiful friendship with Leo (LSR Station Manager.) I'm gutted we haven't been in the office more this year, or able to catch on The Gryphon sofas, but it's been a pleasure. I'm sure I'll look back on it all fondly when the stress subsides!



# Squid

## INTERVIEW



*Ollie Judge and Louis Bolarase talk Nicolas Cage, being blinded by lasers and their wonderfully anarchic debut album **Bright Green Field**.*

Since singles like 'Houseplants' propelled Squid to the forefront of Britain's burgeoning experimental art-rock scene, the band have barely looked back. Their limitless take on music has left critics, journalists and other cultural predators desperately trying to pigeonhole them under a single genre. The cephalopd named 5-piece have sprayed back a range of projects that defy music classification into their faces, escaping any creative confines the industry tries to put them in.

They are, unquestionably, an act on the lips of every label executive up and down the country. Despite such status, Louis Bolarase and Ollie Judge, two of

the band's members, are living modestly. "I'm visitng my parents at the moment" Judge tells us, pitched up against a bright yellow, floral wallpaper that he claims to be far from his cup of tea. Bolarase is just down the road in Bristol, where the two live normally.

Ahead of **Bright Green Field**'s release, they are feeling a mix of nerves and excitement. "It all feels like it's building up to something, what that is though I'm not quite sure," says Louis apprehensively, before disclosing that his parents first met in our very own Hyde Park Pub. "Like Louis' parents meeting, it feels like young love I guess" chuckles Ollie to the camera.

Both members keenly enlighten me on their fondness for Leeds, noting



vivid stories of playing here. Gigs at Hyde Park Book Club and Headrow House with Black Country, New Road, were particularly memorable for them. “I can’t wait to be back up north again, we love it there” expresses Judge with a tone of sincerity. As a band known for visceral live sets, you can imagine that their current inability to tour has been frustrating.

Before the pandemic, Squid had gigs coming out of their ears. Live shows used to be a way for them to test out songs, and eyeball the crowd’s reactions to see if they were playing any worthy singles. Making their debut was a completely different process. “It all came pretty naturally, but I guess we had a lot of luck in 2020. The nature of when restrictions were lifted in the summer meant that we could strike while the iron was pretty hot,” explains Louis from his bedroom. And pretty hot it was.

Crammed into producer Dan Carey’s studio, the band recorded Bright Green Field in 35 degree heat. And this wasn’t the only battle that Squid had to overcome in the record’s creation. It turns out Carey had some pretty left-field techniques to get the best out of them. “Sometimes he turns on lasers and smoke machines” says Ollie with a bizarrely casual tone. “Dan likes it when you make mistakes, and the easiest way to do that is shine a laser in your eyes” confirms Bolarse.

The surreal recording settings Squid found themselves in for their debut inspired a range of peculiar sonics on the album. From scrap metal found in skips to medieval instruments like the racket, their eccentric choice of sounds epitomise the vigorous, idiosyncratic style they have carved out for themselves.



On lead single The Narrator, it’s Martha Skye Murphy’s erratic vocals that test the limits of listenability. They might not be everyone’s glass of milk, but they’ve made it onto just about every BBC 6 music show since its release. Steve Lamacq played the song one night whilst my family were having dinner, which resulted in the station being permanently banned in our house at tea time; the accumulation of Murphy’s screechy howls, an overcooked veggie chilli and a gruelling Tesco shift proved too much for my younger sister, who’s now enforced a strict regime of classic fm around the table. “I feel proud and guilty at the same time” laughs Louis hysterically as I tell them the story.

Long before the likes of Mary Anne Hobbs, Shaun Keivney and various other DJs on BBC’s roster were playing their singles, Squid were all students in Brighton. They formed the band in 2017, jamming in local venues on the South Coast of England. One night, after testing their neighbour’s patience with a characteristically noisy band rehearsal, Judge and Bolarse woke up to the unwelcome gift of a sharp knife and baby formula bottle on their doorstep. “What I gathered was the neighbours were trying to say ‘why are you two such babies making so much noise?’ And the knife was saying ‘I’m going to kill you’” reflects Ollie.

Standing next to Nick Cave in an art exhibition, who they claim could be seen frequently in Sainsbury’s, was another memorable university anecdote the pair were eager to tell me over Zoom.

A typical video-call technical glitch here led me to believe it was a certain Nicolas Cage that they saw in the art exhibition. As it turns out, Judge also had a story to tell about the Hollywood star. Walking down the backroads of Bath, the singer-drummer noticed a car suspiciously slowing down next to him. To his surprise, the puppety face of Cage, who was there that day to switch on the city’s Christmas lights, peered out of the window and grinned mischievously at him.

With the global pandemic preventing everyone from meeting one another, it seems Squid are craving collaboration now more than ever. “We are writing quite a lot of music at the moment that lends itself to people from outside the band coming in on it” reveals Louis with a quick scratch to the hair. From their forthcoming tour, you can expect plenty of on stage collaborations and improvisation, which takes influence from their time as students playing a jazz venue in Brighton.

Squid’s debut LP might not end up being for everyone, but its multifaceted blend of sonics reflect the chaotic year we have all experienced. If you can confide in the beautifully brash, David Byrne-esque vocals of Ollie Judge, and impulses of experimental jazz, punk, and just about any other genre, then Bright Green Field will be perfect for you. The album is to be released on Warp Records, a label known for bringing some of the most groundbreaking music into the mainstream. “They are a label we have always looked up to, and have always had a keen interest in music that goes beyond the confines of genre and style” explains guitarist Louis



proudly. The pairing, therefore, seems like a match made in heaven. Squid sonorously portray everything Warp have come to be over their 30 years of existence.

As our conversation draws to a close, I ask if they have any remaining remarks to let loose. “Don’t practice in your room too loudly or you might get threatened with coded messages from your neighbours that will haunt you for the rest of your life” says Louis matter-of-factly. It’s refreshing to see a band as talented as Squid not taking themselves so seriously, even in the run up to their debut album.

**Bright Green Field came out on 7 May 2021.**

Liam Cattermole



# Why Taylor Swift is re-recording her albums



Image: 'Look What You Made Me Do' music video

Fearless. Fearless (Taylor's Version). Two separate albums by Taylor Swift, the first released in 2008 - and the second only this year. At surface level, (Taylor's Version) is a faithful re-recording of the original, with the only differences being new 'From The Vault' songs, and vocal changes due to Swift's voice maturing over the last decade. So, why has she re-recorded this album? And why does Swift feel the need to clarify that her newest album is her own version?

The answers to these questions stem from years of industry turmoil; in 2004, Swift signed a record deal with the label Big Machine Records at the age of only 15. Part of this contract, as is often the case in the music industry, meant that Swift didn't own her 'masters' - the original recordings of songs. When this contract with Big Machine Records ended in 2018, Swift made a new deal with Universal Republic Records, this time making sure to include that she would own the masters for any future album releases. Her first album at Universal (but her seventh in total), *Lover*, was in this sense the only album Swift actually owned. Big Machine Records still owned the masters of - and rights to - to her previous albums.

In 2019, Big Machine Records was sold to Ithaca Holdings, a private-equity group, thus transferring ownership of Swift's early masters. Here we meet Scooter Braun, a music manager and the owner of Ithaca Holding, who Swift has said for years prior to this sale has treated her with "incessant, manipulative bullying" behaviour. Although Scott Borchetta, owner of Big Machine Records, claims differently, Swift wrote on Tumblr in June 2019 that "I learned about Scooter Braun's purchase of my masters as it was announced to the world." Swift worked to try and buy back her masters but tweeted in November 2020 that "Scooter's team wanted me to sign an ironclad NDA stating I would never say another word about Scooter Braun unless it was positive, before we could even look at the financial records." She also wrote that

her team had "never seen an NDA like this presented unless it was to silence an assault accuser by paying them off."

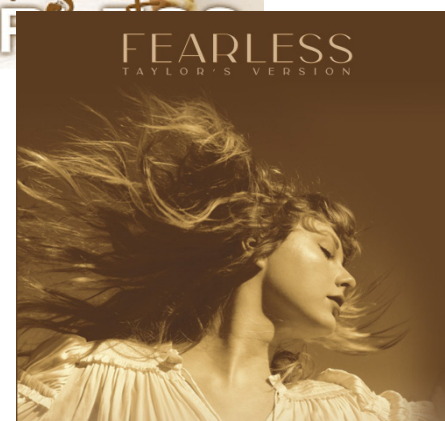
In 2020, Braun sold the masters of Swift's songs to Shamrock Holdings, an investment fund, for over \$300 million, which Swift tweeted she also only became aware of after the sale. Scooter Braun and Scott Borchetta, two men who had no hand in writing the music, have thus profited greatly from Swift's creative work. And this was legal. Those are the facts. Here we start to see a much darker side to the music industry, where artists can be manipulated and taken advantage of, and money is celebrated above everything else. Swift tweeted in November 2019, after discovering that Scooter Braun and Scott Borchetta were refusing to allow her to perform any of her earlier music at the American Music Awards, "The message being sent to me is very clear. Basically, be a good little girl and shut up. Or you'll be punished."

However, as part of her original contract, Swift was allowed to re-record her albums as of November 2020 - and this is exactly what she is doing. *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* is the first. These re-recordings will be owned completely by Swift, whilst also reducing the value of the original album recordings she doesn't own. Listening to *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* will not be putting money into Braun's pocket. Swift is clearly celebrating her ownership by reminding the world this album is (Taylor's Version). In an interview with Zane Lowe for Apple Music, Swift said "You don't know the music industry until you know it, and because I have learned what I've learned I really just want to make things better for other people, and I want that to start at the record deal in the contract. Artists should never have to part with their work."

With the power behind her name, Taylor Swift has the power to make change and continue the fight for ownership so many artists before her have fought. Without any context,

it is hard to understand the motivation behind Swift's plan to re-record, but shed in new light it becomes an act of defiance against the men seeking to control and profit from her life's work. This is a refusal to be silenced, which is now echoing throughout the music industry. So, whether you like her music and will listen to (Taylor's Version) or not, it cannot be disputed that this is an empowering move not only for Swift and other musicians, but for anyone who listens to music.

Eve Clark





# In The Middle with Wolf Alice

MUSIC & CLUBS

With four years gone since last releasing a full LP, and nearly two years without touring, Wolf Alice are eager to leave lockdown - and to launch their new album, *Blue Weekend*. "An empathetic endeavor," is how Wolf Alice's guitarist Joff Oddie wants fans to see the album (releasing 4 June 2021.) Prior to its release, the band will be performing at the livestream-only Glastonbury event on 22 May, which bassist Theo Ellis expects to be "quite special and fun." Joff adds that performing here this year will give them "a bit of a flavour of what could have been, maybe," if the pandemic hadn't impacted the gig and festival industry over the last year. It still looks like Glastonbury will be the band's only live performance in 2021. However, tickets for their 2022 UK and Ireland tour were on sale this March, with the majority of their original and extra added dates selling out within the hour. "It was absolutely mad," confesses Theo. That people are buying tickets for "something that's next year is so alien."

The new album's title comes from a band trip to Belgium - which, seeking good weather, they had planned for "the next blue weekend." "Me, Ellie and Joel were in an Uber somewhere in Brussels and it had one of those skylines, with a really big open top to the car, not a convertible but you could just see the sky and it was completely blue, and Joel said that and we were all like oh my God, 'blue weekend', that sounds so good," Theo recounts. He added that the band liked the abstract and subjective title as "it could be something bad, it could be something good" - either "mega" or "depressing."

In past albums, Wolf Alice have experimented, and at times switched genres from song to song; *Blue Weekend* is no different. Theo admits to preferring to play pop songs as he gets older, naming 'How Can I Make It Okay' as the song he is most excited

to play off the new album. Joff, on the other hand: "Playing rock songs is always gonna be the most fun for me... just jumping around making noise is never gonna get old- I hope," disclosing that he is most excited to play the track 'Play the Greatest Hits' off the new album, which is apparently "a headbanger." He also adds that "there is something a bit more measured about trying to make a pop song that I think is really interesting. It's not just a kind of throw everything against a wall and try and make it as vibey as possible, which is kind of some of the times the approach with a rock song, so it acquires a lot more thought and care and attention... making a really good, succinct pop song."

Joff particularly experimented with guitar sounds on *Blue Weekend*. "A lot of my experimenting in the past has always been with effects units and kind of creating non-guitar sounds out of guitars... a lot of that is still on this record. But, I kind of started fiddling around with how we can layer up acoustic instruments in a way that is a little bit left of center and that maybe would not live in this typical kind of song space." He questioned "how we can get banjo's and resonator guitars and things inside pop songs and inside rock songs to kind of add different layers and textures."

Back in February, Wolf Alice released the music video for their single 'The Last Man on Earth,' a title that could evidence the recent, common feeling of isolation. I asked whether the music video would differ in any way if lockdown had ended. "Do you know what, I don't know if it would be that different if it wasn't for lockdown," Theo states, with Joff adding, "We were really lucky. We could pretty much do what we were going to do anyway." On this topic, the pair also hint at more music videos: "There will be more visual stuff coming."

On the topic of releasing an album during lockdown, Theo speaks: "Having grown up as a band... doing so much live stuff, that you kind of, you put it out into the internet's ether, and see what happens, but you don't get any of that physical, kind of emotional connection with people and watching people react to songs and stuff like that." Joff adds that it will be "odd and frustrating" to release the album and not be able to perform it for over half a year. "Hopefully people can enjoy the album and be patient."

Due to the successes of their past two albums, both having reached the Number 2 spot on UK album charts and *Visions of a Life* scoring the band a Mercury Prize in 2018, there will be much weighing on this album's success. "I think there's obviously going to be subconscious pressure when something like that has happened, but I think the four of us have a kind of unwritten pressure to surpass our expectations of what we have musically achieved before, and that's usually the kind of healthy and daunting pressure we have when we're writing and figuring out," says Theo. Joff joked about always being the runner up in the UK album charts: "Fingers crossed for another number two" and hoping for a "runner's up hattrick." That would be "very Wolf Alice," says Theo.

As the interview was coming to a close, I asked them to describe what they think the next year will look like for Wolf Alice in two words. "Restricted joy," "delayed gratification" and "measured excitement" all came to the pair's mind. Although the release of *Blue Weekend* will be new and different for the band, it will definitely be worth the wait.

Lucy Barber



# THE RISE, FALL AND RISE AGAIN OF CROCS

How did they go from the world’s ugliest shoe to red carpet material?

Since their creation in 2002, Crocs have risen, fallen, and - thanks to the prioritisation of comfort in the time of Coronavirus - risen again. The well-known but often slagged off shoe is back, in a big way. Questlove surprised many when he turned up to the red carpet in a flashy, spray-painted gold pair of the classic rubber clogs. A few years ago, this would have been the ultimate fashion faux pas, so how has the ‘ugly’ Croc now infiltrated a world where haute couture rules?

The brand started as footwear targeted at boaters and gardeners thanks to their comfort, ease and durability outdoors. Their trusty design soon helped them rise up the ranks of best-selling shoes; revenue increased in 2007 to a huge \$847 million, thanks to a growing mass appeal. Everyone grabbed a pair - from medical and kitchen staff, to kids who could decorate their shoes any way they wanted with the creation of jibbitz charms. They may not have oozed elegance, but they were reliable, and it worked.

But their mass appeal soon became part of their downfall. Production in 2007 struggled to keep up with demand, and when it finally did, it went too far. Crocs were left with a surplus of shoes that they couldn’t shift when recession hit in 2008. Pair this with the fate of virtually any early 2000s trend, the novelty had worn off – crocs just weren’t cool anymore.

With everyone deciding Crocs were

objectively quite ugly, they lost \$185 million that same year and the company worried it would not be able to avoid bankruptcy. Somehow, they saved themselves with cuts across the business, followed by a new CEO, new stores and new ranges of boots, heels and trainers. Yes, I said heels.

Profits grew and stayed steady for several years until



Image: Crocs

disaster struck again in 2018 Crocs announced they had to close manufacturing facilities. The death of the company seemed pretty much inevitable this time. Again, they clung on for dear life and another newly appointed CEO Andrew Rees decided the only way to save Crocs was to go with their USP of trusty practicality - but make it fashion.

Retargeting to a more fashion-conscious market revived the brand and brought them back into the spotlight. Numerous collaborations and brands have

worked with Crocs to make unique designs that sell out in record times. Post Malone, Bad Bunny and, most recently, Justin Bieber have released their own pairs, as well as working with big brands like Balenciaga to let a pink platform pair loose on the runway. Recently came the announcement they’re expanding into the streetwear market, dropping a design in the newest Palace collection, out on May 7. The devil works hard but the Crocs marketing team works harder.

In 2021 they are inescapable, whether you like them or not. This shows in their sales figures, increasing by a huge 64%, and with share prices reportedly up 16%, it’s clear that everyone wants a piece of their unexpected comeback (apart from Victoria Beckham, who would “rather die”). It’s also hard to ignore that swapping from workwear to leisurewear whilst stuck indoors came just at the right time for the struggling finances of a shoe that revolves around comfortability.

Yet in the era of TikTok and the thousands of fashion trendsetters on there – and every other social platform – trends are appearing (and disappearing) faster than ever as everyone tries to keep up with their favourite influencer. Overconsumption and overproduction are commonplace. What is being gifted to everyone with over 10k this month might be mocked the next. For now, Crocs are enjoying their moment, but only time will tell if this will just be another blip in their unpredictable universality.

Tilly Salisbury

## SAVE THE PLANET WITH YOUR WASHING MACHINE

For those unaware: the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries. They say knowledge is power, but how many of us know how to mend a button, rehem some trousers or what the symbols mean on a garment’s care label? Instead, cheap fast fashion purchasing is triumphant.

It’s not that the occasional purchase isn’t allowed, in the knowledge that it will be well-loved. But I have an issue with brands who try to make us believe they’re eco-conscious, and ‘greenwash’ us through a stream of targeted marketing. Last year ASOS unveiled their Circular Collection. Fervently marketed across the website, it was pushed forward in order to alter its fast-fashion brand image to one with more compassion to the current eco zeitgeist. That ‘eco’ line was “0.035% of an 85000 product line” so ASOS hardly seem worthy of praise and a textbook example of where the consumer is greenwashed.

The pandemic highlighted a social sustainability issue, also. The #PayUp movement was launched in March 2020 with the aim of making large corporate brands pay-up after cancelling orders at the pandemic’s outbreak. The cancellation of orders meant many garment workers lost their jobs. This campaign however, managed to find \$15 billion

by July (out of \$40 billion of lost wages) as labels like Nike, H&M and Levi’s agreed to pay for those cancelled orders.

Responsibility lies on the shoulders of consumers and of conglomerates. It is said that 21% of emissions come from the user stage.



You may argue that it is the responsibility of the brand to change their unsustainable practices, but the consumer has the ability to shape change, too. Try washing more infrequently, below 30 degrees, and using open-air drying

more. Not only is this more environmentally friendly but will save you money. Additionally, it’s said that for every wash 700,000 micro fibres made of plastic may be released into water systems: a danger to water quality and aquatic life.

The fashion industry is one that is often met with condescension, a stereotype of silliness, perhaps. But listen to this: if its total emissions were totalled up, they would be comparable the that of Europe entirely. Surely this shows – amongst the other issues briefly identified here - that change is a necessity which is achievable both through a metamorphosis of consumer awareness and of company transparency.

No more do people darn their socks, or have their own sewing machine. No more – particularly as students – do people really care about looking after their clothes. It is universally acknowledged however, in order to tackle some of the issues outlined above, we must try to buy less and make our existing attire last longer.

Annabelle Smithson  
Image: Popular Mechanics

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# BILLIE BREAKS THE INTERNET

**Billie Eilish's first Vogue shoot broke Instagram records - Carmen Ghazi looks at the range of reactions the cover sparked.**



Image: Vogue/Craig McDean

Upon first glimpse of Billie Eilish's British Vogue shoot, many spectators may be surprised to see her embracing an aesthetic which is the complete antithesis of her signature style. A shoot which should have been celebrated for its luxe vibe, steeped in references to Old Hollywood (accompanied by a video where Billie, 19, responds to questions asked by other fellow celebrities and oozes wisdom that can only be expected from a 70-year-old yoga teacher), has been overshadowed by criticism of her artistic choices.

Having come into the limelight at 13 years old, Billie took the mind-bogglingly mature approach of remaining modest in her aesthetic and opting for baggy clothing – though you would be mistaken to confuse baggy with drab and dreary. Billie has never compromised style for modesty.

One article in particular, by two female writers at the MailOnline, skewed Billie's coming-of-age photoshoot as a "sell out" and going back on her "vow" to cover herself up. The Sun wrote "Proof that money can make you change your values and sell out - Billie Eilish shocks fans by swapping baggy clothes for lingerie in Vogue- despite years of vowing to hide her body." Let's not forget that as an under-age celebrity growing up under the harsh spotlight of relentless critics, choosing to cover herself up would have acted as a physical form of defence from onlookers, who have continued to impose unrealistic standards onto her anyway. Such are the misogynistic double standards that continue to police women's autonomy to appear as they choose to, let alone that of a child.

*Breaking down a young girl for choosing not to be sexualised whilst she took the time to understand herself, and simultaneously condemning her for growing up, is characteristic of the narratives the media pushes on consumers. And it's tedious.*

But Eilish's shoot represents another challenge to societal expectations of women and their sexuality. She shoulders the responsibility of breaking down sexist norms, all whilst still breaking records in her field, having been the youngest artist to record the James Bond theme tune and youngest Grammy winner for Album of the Year. Though this still sticks as an unrealistic standard that we hold women to, as Billie herself says "we're expected to know and do everything, and be everyone's mom when we're like, 15." Breaking down a young girl for choosing to not be sexualised whilst she took the time to understand herself, and simultaneously condemning her for growing up, is characteristic of the narratives the media pushes on consumers. And it's tedious.

Therefore, having indulged the dull narrative that the media has been successful in perpetuating since time immemorial, it is only right to discuss the shoot as an art form in itself and credit Eilish for her vision. The photos are stunningly shot, and the muted neutral theme emanates Hollywood boudoir glamour. Working with Gucci director Alessandro Michele, the two produce what can be described as Victorian-vintage-meets-edgy-Jean Paul Gaultier vibes. As an aesthetic, this is an exciting U-turn from her signature style and perhaps foreshadows a new style for her music too.

The 20-minute dream-like Ask a Legend video sees Billie answer questions from the likes of Halle Berry, Jodie Comer and Stormzy. Clearly yet to come to terms with how well-known and admired she is, she answers the questions with maturity and clarity. Ranging from her go-to karaoke song (songs by HER or Chief Keef, for those wondering) to how her style evolved, to which she credits thrifting from an early age and not being trapped by the boundaries of gender-specific clothing. Billie continues to awe her peers and her fans, and we await to see how she will continue to evolve.

Carmen Ghazi



# INCLUSIVE BUT DISCONNECTED: 2021 OSCARS ROUNDUP



The 93rd Oscars night came and went like the flash of the distanced cameras, despite their being unable to catch their favourite celebrities unless they were 2 metres apart.

It was not the best night for the Academy, with viewership down 58% on their usual numbers. Staying up on Twitter to watch announcements released by BFI and official film accounts on the unconnected celebrities positioned in various places such as BFI Southbank did not hold the same alluring glitz and glamour of one-location in LA's Dolby theatre.

The night was not all gloom and doom, however. Highlights included *Minari* actor Youn Yuh-jung's winning Best Supporting Actress with Brad Pitt waiting in the wings, in an impassioned and yet humble speech, Daniel Kaluuya thanked his parents for having sex. Glenn Close took away a well-deserved win, winning best ferocious twerk to 1988 dance move "Da Butt."

Social Distancing in  
Place



STAY 2  
Meters Apart

Much was said in the press about the inclusivity of this year's nominees and indeed small hops (not leaps) were made in this direction. The second of all-time, yes - that's right - second of all-time female director won Best Director and she was one of colour, Chloé Zhao. Her movie *Nomadland*, was praised by some for its abandonment of tropes of previous Best Picture winners, especially their Bechdel Test failures.

Other small victories were made - older actors were given more recognition; Anthony Hopkins eloquently dedicated his best acting Oscar to the late Chadwick Boseman despite the following controversy. Half of the acting awards were given out to people of colour (Daniel Kaluuya for *Judas and the Black Messiah* and the aforementioned Youn Yuh-jung for *Minari*.) Two of the Best Director nominees were also people of colour (Zhao and Lee Chang Isaac for *Minari*). *Sound of Metal*, *Falling Through* and *Crip Camp* were all praised for their representation of disability.



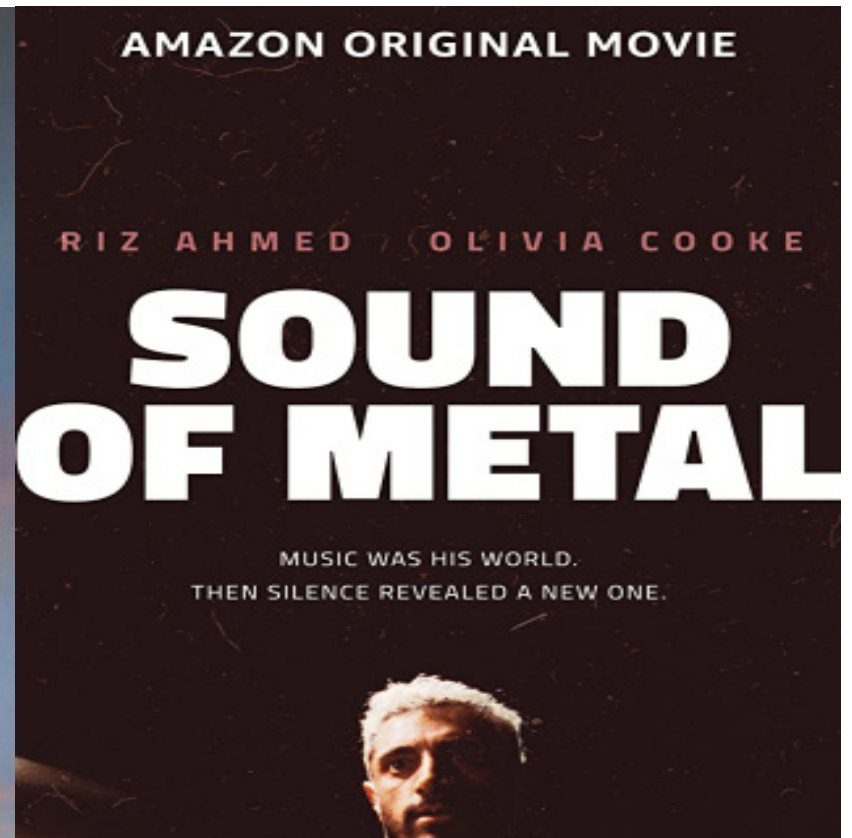
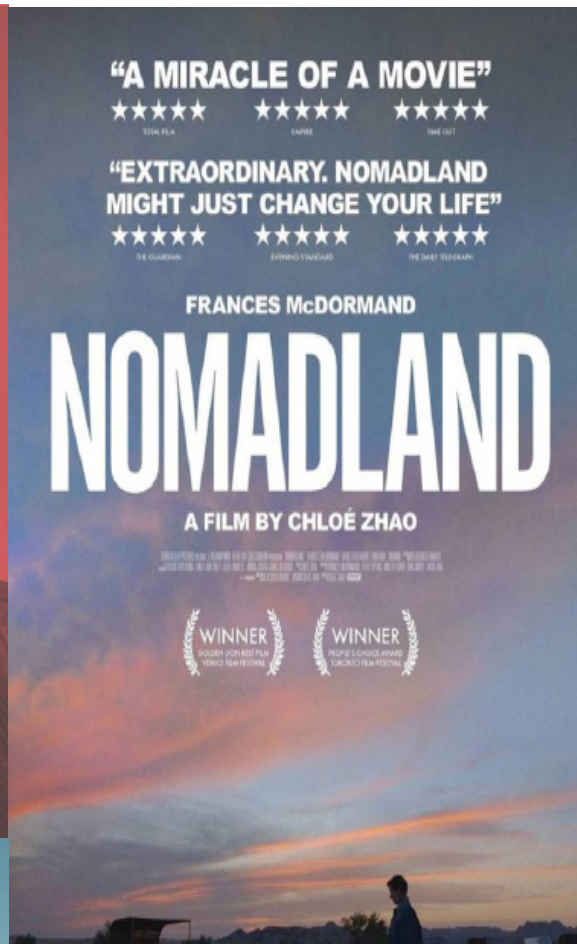
Despite these advancements, we must not forget that this year's Oscars were largely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is still devastating infrastructure in countries such as India and Brazil. Because of crucial restrictions in place in numerous parts of the world, many cinema-goers will not have been able to see many, if any, of the upper echelon of films chosen this year.

As we edge closer to a fully vaccinated nation here in the UK, it is crucial that, as Frances McDormand said, we end up going to see the cream of the crop films that we missed out this year in cinemas when all is more safe and sound. Equal to this, if not of greater importance, is that we support our local independent cinemas as the government seems intent on cutting them down. As we return to those popcorn smelling seats, I am hopeful that the magic of cinema that powers these awards ceremonies and their discussions of inclusivity, will return.

**OWEN FROST**



# OSCARS 2021







### Who runs the Oscars? Girls!

The Oscars was already shaping up to be one of the most inclusive in history, both in terms of gender and race, with a record-breaking 76 nominations for women across all categories. However, that means that women account for only 32% of all nominations, which is an increase from last year's 31.1%, showing how hopefully, if even small gains can be made during a pandemic, then the post-pandemic era promises to develop and continue to include women to a greater depth.

Chloé Zhao made history as the first woman of colour to win the Oscar for Best Director, and only the second woman to (ever!) win the award for directing. Interestingly, the award for directing this year is that it is the first year that two women have been nominated for Directing, with Emerald Fennell being nominated for directing Promising Young Woman. Whilst Fennell did not take home the award for directing, she did take home the Best Original Screenplay Category, beating out heavyweights such as Aaron Sorkin. Fennell became the first woman to win the award since 2008. What becomes apparent when observing this greater inclusion of women is that the stories become more diverse as well. Nomadland is a film centred around one woman's journey across America, and Promising Young Woman is a revenge/rom-com thriller. When there are more diverse voices behind the scenes, the

stories portrayed on screen become more interesting, diverse and inclusive. The fact that the Oscar's are now recognising these voices shows that women are finally getting the recognition they deserve. As women filmmakers have always been creating, there are now more, and their work is becoming more accessible. This is also the first year that women have dominated the top trifecta of awards, "the big awards", the Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay.

It was not just the behind the scenes that women dominated. Frances MacDormand proves that there are interesting and compelling roles for older women in Hollywood, especially when women are writing for other women. Youn Yuh-jung became the the first Korean woman to ever win an Oscar for her turn, as the scene stealing grandmother in Minari, again showing that there is a shift in the air as older women, who are normally shut out of Hollywood, were an active and dominating force in the stories nominated this awards season.

It will be interesting to observe whether this is a pattern that endures after the pandemic or whether the limited film releases of 2020 meant more room for women to be nominated.

Phoebe Walker



#### The Beatles' Music Videos

That's it. That's my online entertainment for the week. It's not a backstreet indie deep cut or anything. It's the music videos of the most famous band ever to existed. They're charming and give you that little taste of the 60s without the other issues that went along with it. I'd rather see the Fab Four singing Hello, Goodbye in pantomime costumes than go through seven seasons of Mad Men to get my fix of the era.  
Sinead



#### Twin Peaks

How to describe David Lynch's Twin Peaks? Not going to lie, it's a tough one. It begins as a seemingly standard murder mystery/detective show into who killed Laura Palmer, the homecoming queen with a lot of secrets. Agent Dale Cooper is sent to investigate the seemingly peaceful town, but is confronted by apparitions, dreams, and strange characters of both good and evil natures. It's suspenseful, addictive and will keep you on the edge of your seat so settle in with a slice of pie and a coffee.  
Phoebe



Image: Medium



# REFLECTING ON MY FINAL YEAR



Graduates always seem to note writing their dissertation as one of the most memorable university experiences. Stressful and repetitive, yes: but memorable all the same. Working into the night in the library, many a coffee break to pass the time and delirious walks home with friends when your brain has gone way past the point of rational thinking.

Sounds pretty dull, right? I suppose, but it is the lack of these little things that have made final year all the more challenging for the 2021 cohort. Studying has become an entirely solitary activity, with current third years spending more time on Lib-

Cal desperately seeking a study space than having a well-deserved study break in Café Nero.

Maybe we've had it easier – juggling a social schedule, the dreaded walk from the Business School to the Conference Auditorium and the climb up Royal Park Road before it had even hit 9am wasn't always plain sailing. However, there is something about spending Friday nights in bed by 10pm contemplating whether or not you can face another walk and takeaway coffee that is quite unique.

Arriving at university in September 2018, sharing awkward hugs with flatmates and pouring your vodka lemonade just that little bit stronger in the hope it'd give you a new-found confidence... I don't think any of us expected to be approaching graduation with a collection of facemasks and a TikTok addiction. In fact, quite the opposite – late nights in Edward Boyle and an end-of-term trip to Beaverworks sounded a bit more accurate.

So, it has been tough: packing our bags in March 2020, we said goodbye for a few weeks – we'd be back, right? Second year is the best year – everyone knows that. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case, and we completed end-of-term assessments in our childhood bedrooms without a Bobby's Disco or a Bakery 164 in sight.

It's not all bad, though. If anything, re-adjusting to life at home last March only emphasised just how much we've enjoyed our time at Leeds and just how desperate we were to return for our third and final year. It's been slow and steady, of course – but no doubt there has been something slightly comforting about going at our own pace. Birthday pre-drinks are a thing of the past as lockdown has brought a new sense of effort to household socialising, replaced with themed room-crawls and cocktail nights. The emphasis on daily walks is not only good for physical and mental health but has brought to light the natural beauty of the local area, with Ilkley Moor,



Image: Forbes

Chevin Forest Park and Meanwood Valley Trail now being visited on a regular basis.

So, as we walk down Royal Park Road now, we don't see people rushing to lectures: instead, they are sat around firepits and barbeques, enjoying the sunshine Spring has brought. The spirit in Leeds has lifted – we're close to the end and we don't have long to go. Drinks on Woodhouse Moor and the scramble for club tickets will return – we never thought we'd be so desperate to see anyone selling a Mischief? Studying at the University of Leeds has had many ups and downs, but it's also been a place of growth and happiness, one where life-long friends have been made. They'll last forever: Covid won't.

Heidi Shepherd



Image: The York Press



# HOW TO DEAL WITH REJECTION FROM YOUR DREAM GRADUATE SCHEME

Anna Whittaker

No one likes rejection. We don't apply to jobs hoping for the worst. However, what is even worse is rejection from a job that you've been dreaming of for years. It seems everything you have done and taken part in has been in preparation for that one all-important interview. Weeks and months and years of preparation, and then bam... one email: 'I'm sorry to inform you that you have been unsuccessful...' I don't know about you, but when I got rejected from my dream grad scheme, that's all I needed to read to know it was the end of that journey.

“It's okay to feel disappointed, to wonder what you could have done differently, to kick yourself for not being better.”

I'd always dreamed of working with vulnerable members of society, but never thought there would be a grad scheme that encapsulated everything I wanted from a job so well – a great salary, working as a prison officer, every day different, making a real difference to society, a fully funded masters... the list goes on. When I found out about the Unlocked grad scheme, I immediately applied to become a brand manager, thinking that would help my chances with the ultimate grad scheme. I was successful and started working for Unlocked at the beginning of my final year. Autumn came, and I applied for their grad scheme and got through to the final assessment centre. I had become complacent – 'I've visited prisons already, I've taken leadership roles at uni, had jobs and volunteering roles AND I work for the company. Surely the job is in the bag.' How wrong was I? You can go to all of the right societies, had all of the right experiences, but if you don't perform on the day, if you can't twist the experiences you've had into how it will make you the perfect applicant, they are not interested.



Tears were shed when that rejection email came through a few weeks later, and trust me, it's ok to feel sad. It's okay to feel disappointed, to wonder what you could have done differently, to kick yourself for not being better. But there has to be a point where you pick yourself up and ask: what next? If it is available, then reach out for feedback. Find out what went wrong, what you can do better next time, and to cater to the cliché, learn from it! An unsuccessful job is never a failure – it's a learning curve. Take time to make a plan of action. Think through what were the aspects of the job that really appealed to you? Think what your next steps are going to be. For me personally, it became clear that I wasn't going for the job for the prestige of the grad scheme, I wasn't going for it for the fully funded masters (although undoubtedly, they would have been amazing perks). I wanted to be working in a prison, as a prison officer, making a difference to the lives of prisoners. So, once I had come to that conclusion, I started looking for different routes into that same role. I applied through the conventional route to become a prison officer, and I'm sat here today with a job offer to start this summer.

There are so many options after a rejection. If you use your time wisely to reevaluate, you may decide to go into the job through a different route. You may decide to take a year out and reapply when you're a year older and wiser (and don't have the stress of deadlines at the same time as the applications). You may decide to go down a completely different route. And you may decide to put it to the back of your head for a while and come back to it at a later date. In my experience, things tend to work out for a reason. As I'm sat writing my dissertation, I am so so grateful that I don't have to do a masters alongside a full-time job next year. If I want to do a masters later in life, that is still an option. Life is full of possibilities and doors to open. Don't be too disheartened. Don't think that this is the end. There are always multiple ways to go about getting your dream job. I promise!



Image: The Guardian

“Life is full of possibilities and doors to open.”

Q Should I get into an open relationship at uni?

A It depends on what you are looking for in a relationship. If you want to explore other options whilst seeing someone you like, then go for it – just make sure your partner isn't putting pressure on you to do so AND make sure that you are ready for an open relationship and won't feel jealous seeing them with someone else.

Q How do I deal with the fact I think my housemate has a verruca and I'm scared I might catch one off them?

A This is something which only 'bezuka that verruca' can help you with. After a long Googling session, I think as long as you have cleaned down surfaces they have and don't press your faces together you will be fine.

EW!

Q Feeling the pressure to lose weight or have a glow up for June 21st – how can I stop feeling like this?

A I've seen these thoughts going around. If you want to lose weight it should be purely to feel healthier and most importantly, it should be for YOU! In a digital age, it is so easy to feel pressured into looking a certain way and following different exercise trends.

Q All my deadlines are looming, and I need advice on how to get motivated and stay concentrated?

A It is worrying how many of these confessions I relate to; what has been working for me is to write a to-do list at the beginning of the week with things I need to complete each day. Motivation levels are lagging, which is typical for the end of term, but we have just got to push through. We have done it before and can do it again.

Q I'm super worried about life after uni, any advice on looking for jobs post-covid?

A The final year stress is real. Although it's scary, I'm hoping that post-corona there will be a boom of jobs, especially in creative sectors which haven't been able to function over the past year. It is important to remind yourself that we are only in our early 20s and don't have to land our dream job straight away. It will take time and we just have to trust the process.

Q Really sad about finishing uni soon... How to make the most of it with the restrictions?

A I feel you! I'm hoping that after restrictions are lifted at the end of June, we will be able to make up for this rubbish year. I think you should just enjoy the freedom if uni and hang out with friends who will soon be across the country. Though of course it does suck.



Illustration by Molly Coathup





Image: Architizer

# WOULD YOU ACCEPT A JOB ON THE BASIS THAT YOU WERE FILLING A COMPANY'S POC QUOTA?

"You would be a great addition to the team," says the interviewer as you wrap up your interview for a job you've been pining for since you graduated. With a large smile on your face and a skip in your step, you leave the conference room, completely oblivious to the general office environment around you until, you hear a little whisper, "she's the new 'diversity' hire."

What does it mean to be a part of a company's affirmative action plan? Affirmative action refers to a set of policies and practices within a government or organisation seeking to increase the representation of particular groups based on their gender, race, sexuality, creed or nationality in areas in which they are underrepresented such as education and employment. Ideally, this sounds glorious, when you consider lack of inclusivity and explicit discrimination of minorities groups in history. In today's world, support for affirmative action has sought to achieve goals such as bridging inequalities in employment and pay, increasing access to education, promoting diversity, and redressing apparent past wrongs, harms, or hindrances.

But here's the catch... is there genuine sincerity in "affirmative action" and how does this leave POC feeling about entering the working world? A couple of weeks back, my close friend and digital creator @thebrowngirlrecommends posed a question to her followers after listening to The Receipts podcast: "Would you, as a POC, accept a job that you got purely for the colour of your skin i.e. to increase 'diversity' in the company?" I was immediately taken aback by this question. My response at the time was that I did not actually have an answer, nor any opinion for that matter. This is when I took it upon myself to find out how students and soon to be graduates, felt about the, rather metaphysical question, and topic in general.

The first group of people I addressed, was the University of Leeds ArcSoc (@uolArcSoc on Instagram and Twitter) – as a member of a rather diverse committee of Level 3 Architecture students, I thought they would be the perfect people to gather opinions from.

Our committee consists of five POC out of six members, and from these five, three are female. The responses and discussion to the posed question varied largely. ArcSoc president and Malaysian local Vinesh Ravindran's first response was: "The job would feel a bit cheapened, if I got it purely because of my skin colour, as I'd like to think I got it based on my engineering skills. However, if it helps to get my foot in the door, I wouldn't particularly mind."

Let's unpack: what Vinesh has said is that it's almost 'insulting' knowing that you got a job based purely on your racial demarcation instead of your actual potential as an applicant– however, he mentions that "if it helps to get my foot in the door, I wouldn't mind," - this is the reality of every graduate or anyone looking for a job. The 'desperation' (for lack of better words) often leads us to do, and agree to things, we wouldn't normally agree to – and in this case, maybe a loss of pride? I'm playing devil's advocate here- it's up to you to make the final consensus about the 'big question'.

ArcSoc industry secretary, DJ, and all round wonder woman Tanya Sanadze, posed a further question, "Are they doing it because they are actively trying to make positive changes in the industry?" Her question goes back to affirmative action, and addresses the grey area of how would you know if you were given a job based on an organisations affirmative action plan? After a little discussion, Tanya questioned "Would accepting the role have the added pressure of feeling like you need to prove your worth and that you deserve to be there?" In agreement, Vinesh responded: "This is a big one, what if I'm the sole representative of melanin at the company, would I need to prove them right for hiring me? And, if I am a bad employee, will they use me as a reason not to hire other POCs?" These points play on the decades of internalized mental degradation of POC and minority groups of people, and the constant need to prove your worth for not being, an able-bodied white male?

Being a South African POC woman, I've spent many years grappling with discrimination and how it is

addressed. However, there is always the differing opinion. In South Africa, because of apartheid, a quota system was put in place post democracy. This is called BEE - Black economic empowerment- and attempts to advance economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of Black people (African, Mixed-Raced, and Indian people who are South African citizens) in the South African economy. The problem with BEE is that in its efforts to increase employment of POC in business and in general (university acceptances included), the focus falls on meeting quotas rather than considering skills, which in turn means that someone who is a POC is more likely to get a job purely to fill the quota, which begs the question again, is affirmative action completely sincere and genuine?

This is why there are a large group of people who have an aversion to affirmative action – hiring someone for the sake of it. But, in theory, if we look at it, affirmative action wouldn't even be necessary if we rectified the racist structures in society.

To "answer" the question: in my opinion, it's bittersweet really. You would have to compromise your sense of self at the end of the day to secure your wellbeing. If I were to accept said job, do I contribute towards glorifying a performative strategy? Will I be respected and dignified within the workplace or will my value only be recognized when it pertains solely towards the embodiment of the token? We also look at it from the perspective that people would go out of their way to make it known that you have no place in the company other than to fill that specific role or quota. This comes with the stigma of „you didn't work hard to get here like the rest of us“ supervenes. The unfortunate reality is that it leaves the ultimatum of negotiating our morals verses our well-being. This in itself is an unfair ask, and basic violation of human dignity. I leave it up to you to formulate your own response to the question. There is no right or wrong response, it's purely based on personal preference, these are just some points to consider whether you're a person of colour or not.

Shaaziah Kolabhai (Level 3 MEng Architecture)





**IN THE  
MIDDLE**