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The Matthew (2019 Sep)

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the matthew

JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 2019



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QUEER ALLIANCE

Letter from the editor

Dear JCU Community,

I am thrilled to present to you the first issue of the 2019-2020 school year.

This issue was originally intended to come out May 2019, but due to various complications, was never published. Therefore, we are happy to showcase the contributors who so generously submitted their articles last semester and did not have the chance to be seen.

As of now, The Matthew is undergoing many changes in order to be the best platform we can be to share the diverse and informed voices of our community. However, what remains the same is our dedication to being a free and independent space for our students to be heard.

In this issue you will find articles concerning the usage of plastic in JCU, last year's Fuller Prize winner, articles on Allyship and more.

If you are interested in submitting your articles, poetry, or photography to The Matthew, please email your submission to newspaper@johncabot.edu, or on our website, thematthew.org.

Adriana DeNoble
Editor in Chief



The faces of this issue:

THE QUEER ALLIANCE

Kathryne Fedele, Former Advisor
Alice Costantino, President
Micayla Mirabella, Vice President
Rosella Gangi, Secretary
Ian Graham, Treasurer
Djuna Carlton, Social Media Manager

Photo by Adriana DeNoble

Plastic Cups at JCU: Students Call for Action

By Elena Percossi

Around 1,300 students enroll every semester at JCU. That means that every single day, hundreds of plastic cups are dumped into the bins after being used once for only a few seconds.

Single-use plastics are a large part of the 7.72 trillion kilograms of plastic that flow into the oceans every year. Many of us may think that plastic gets recycled so we don't see the problem. Well, think again, because according to recent estimates from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2018), "79% of the plastic waste ever produced now sits in landfills, dumps or in the environment, while about 12% has been incinerated and only 9% has been recycled." Plastic waste also creates huge economic damage, as in Europe, where "cleaning plastic waste from coasts and beaches costs about €630 million per year," as UNEP reports.

By 2050, it is estimated that there will be more plastic than fish in our seas. Studies have shown that, as the UN states, "most plastics do not biodegrade, but instead photodegrade, meaning that they slowly break down into small fragments known as microplastics." These unnoticeable bits of plastic are ingested by the sea creatures we end up eating; entering our bodies and creating massive health consequences.

Isn't it a shame that plastic is still widely and freely dispensed from John Cabot University without any major concern for our environment? Recently, Roma Tre University, a state-owned university in Rome with 34,040 enrolled students, started distributing reusable bottles to all of its students for free. It seems to be the

right time for John Cabot to become more environmentally friendly and, at least, get rid of its plastic cups by the fountains spread around the campus. One first step towards a plastic-free campus has already been achieved at the Tiber Cafè, with the help of Iva Dragolova, the Tiber Cafè manager, who agreed to discontinue the use of straws, plastic cups, spoons for the fruit salad, and other single-use plastic items.

The solutions are easy to implement and economically-convenient: either bring your own reusable bottle or drink from the fountain itself. If you are worried about tap water quality and prefer to pay for a water bottle, keep in mind that what you'll be drinking is plastic-tainted water, as proved by scientific analysis from the Department of Geology & Environmental Studies in Fredonia State University of New York. Besides, water quality in Italy is great and constantly monitored, as reported by Gruppo Acea (a leading Italian water supply and energy company). Finally, the rumor around tap water being the cause for kidney stones has no scientific basis, as demonstrated by countless studies across the globe.

Our everyday decisions will not only affect our future but also our present. Let's get out of our comfort 'plastic' zone.

Email me, epercossi@johncabot.edu, or Grassroots, grassroots@johncabot.edu, if you are interested in helping us raise awareness at JCU.

Elena Percossi
Class of 2019

The Matthew is an independent, student-run, submission-based newspaper at John Cabot University. We seek to be a platform for the voices of the JCU community, but honor the responsibility not to publish articles that include hate speech, defamation, unethical journalistic standards, or that are in disagreement with the University Mission (which can be found at johncabot.edu). All articles published are the responsibility of the writers and editors. For more information on ethical journalistic standards, please refer to our website thematthew.org.

Learning Languages Around the City

By Arleigh Rodgers

“Okay, girls. Tell me,” says the brunette waitress to the group of seven French teenagers squeezed around a small, brown table. Her English vowels sound like they’re curling up at the ends, like the spirals that exude from the scalp of the girl closest to her. The waitress is wearing a V-neck black shirt with a red “O” in the left corner, the “O” standing for Ombre, the first word in this restaurant’s name.

Ombre Rosse is the place where women place their many-ringed fingers over clear wine glasses and dig their forks deep into bowls of pepper and cheese and meat and pasta, and men wipe their mouths with tomato sauce-stained napkins. It’s difficult to land a table at the restaurant any night of the week, especially with Trastevere as its backdrop. The Roman neighborhood’s cobblestone streets and vivacious attitude only amplify when the sun goes down, and effervescent conversation filters through the night air between the tongues of flames licking the insides of the tall silver heaters.

When Ombre Rosse opens for the night, two handsome poster boys stand guard just beyond the restaurant’s entrance. They speak charming Italian with their white-toothed smiles dancing naturally over their youthful faces. They open their arms wide to invite passersby — particularly young and attractive girls — into an embrace, though it seems they intend to seat them quickly after.

A group of these young and attractive girls, all of whom are speaking rapid German, passes by the restaurant. Their arms are tightly interlocked like their limbs had loosened and formed a protective braid around their long torsos. One of the men in front of Ombre Rosse approaches them, gleaming teeth and all. “Ladies,” he exclaims “Come on in!” He calls this out in English, but they respond in brisk, dismissive German.

It seems like characters from every walk of life filter into Ombre Rosse tonight. Men and women huddle close while teenagers guzzle down a cheap bottle of house wine, and servers navigate the chaotic pathway from kitchen-to-table and back-to-kitchen. When the food comes out (it can take about 20 minutes for a bowl of pasta to emerge from beyond the swinging doors at the back of the restaurant) it is tender and piping hot. The dishes taste even better when you know they cost so little. Maybe that’s one reason why the restaurant fills up with college-aged men and women gorging on cacio e pepe and carbonara on a Tuesday night. Not much about Ombre Rosse indicates it’s a gathering spot of students of the local university — John Cabot — except for the €10 ravioli.

The waitress’s introduction to the French girls at the

nearby table (“Okay, ladies. Tell me”) might have been of a different variation had the girls owned darker features. The waitress might have said, “Allora, ragazze. Ditemi,” the Italian translation for her spoken words. Her English words strike the French girls — as would any language they aren’t entirely familiar with. They order a few appetizers and several bowls of tonnarelli and two liters of red wine, all in English, before resuming their familiar dialect.

It’s both nerve-wracking and invigorating to visit a destination where you do not speak the country’s native tongue. Coming to Rome as a very basic-beginner Italian speaker, I knew my knowledge was limited to greetings and food vocabulary, but after taking a secondary beginner-level class, I found more comfort in speaking Italian than I did in English. Part of this was because I didn’t want to put the burden of my language on those whose country I had inserted myself into, and part of this was because I wanted to learn as much as I could. I quickly learned restaurants were the place to put my language skills to the test. And since it was so ingrained in Italian culture, it was always easiest to start with food.

But on days when I wanted to be comfortable — lazy is, in fact, the better term — I knew it was easy to take advantage of a restaurant’s ability to cater to me in English. Most servers in Rome will speak English when English-speaking tourists talk to them in their native language. It is a testament to a Roman’s patience with travelers — and perhaps the city’s adopted defense against rampant tourists through all months of the year — that they do not think it disastrously rude when we English-speakers ask Italians to speak a language secondary to them for our own comfort.

However, it seems more often than not that these servers are happy to oblige. They are flirtatious with this transition in language, which every passerby can see in full display through the attractive men stationed at the restaurant’s entrance. Soaring like a butterfly around Ombre Rosse — and many restaurants in Rome too — is the tourist’s possibility to speak the language they desire, whether they are lazy, like I have been too many times, or whether they are intrigued to speak a language they do not know. And so tonight, when the sun dips into the Tiber River and the stars begin to appear like diamonds in the inky sky, the servers at Ombre Rosse are practicing their languages. They are twittering sparrows conversing with robins and eagles on the ledge of a fence.

But languages are not the only words spoken here tonight. Servers and customers speak in laughter and well-brandished smiles, brightly colored additions to the hot and

fast-hopping environment that serves an experience along with a cuisine. Family members and friend groups place kisses on each others’ opposite cheeks in greeting and circle their arms around each others’ bodies in farewell. The handsome men are just as excited to see them go as they were when they saw them arrive, for now, they are flushed red and have bellies full of carbohydrates, dairy, salt, and pepper. It’s sad to see the plates cleared so soon and glasses emptied so fast. Often they order dessert and more wine and hope the night will stretch on into the morning. But when the customers do leave, they always pull at the belt loops on their pants and let their stomachs pudge out a little. Happiness at Ombre Rosse is feeling uncomfortable in your jeans.

When the French girls finish their pasta they order tiramisu and espresso, and they pass around small shiny spoons when the waitress drops them off a few minutes later. They select their next cigarette from an emptying pack and circulate it smoking around the table, their gold earrings twinkling and full-body laughter echoing in the night air. The wind picks up a bit, unusual for an April evening, and the cigarette smoke wafts over in my direction. I imagine it sinking into the empty bowl before me through the crevices of porcelain and into the ground, where it will settle among the dirt and grime and, ironically, squashed cigarette butts. I try to listen to their conversation, but despite the five years of French I studied in high school, I can really only remember some verbs and how to say the days of the week. Italian is much easier to listen to, I’ve found; it feels too easy to eavesdrop when you’re trying to learn a new language.

But it’s also too easy to think, express, and breathe in English. Even going between my pidgin Italian and fluent English is hard, and when Italian’s patterns go fuzzy and its vocabulary slips my mind I want to feel less ashamed than I do when I start speaking English on instinct. I’ve gotten better since I arrived in Rome in January, and three months time here has forced me to become more acquainted with this slippery, melodic language. I wonder, as I bid farewell to the smiling men outside the restaurant, whether they thought it would be just as hard to adjust to English as I did to Italian — and did they know, in their ability to switch between languages to make the tourist’s life that much easier, just how their words, no matter the language, would make so great an impact?

Embrace Diversity

By Irene Crestanello, Winner of the Fuller Prize

John Cabot University is an international university. Call it American, say that it is in Rome; still, the international dimension prevails. We can sometimes forget about the precious reality we live every day, but as soon as someone asks us about our student life, we proudly share our experience.

The global aspect of our environment is reflected by the huge number of languages spoken by the student body, and this is what I want to focus on. Languages can shape our brains, influencing the way we think and act. The linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf knew well about this: they theorised that each language provides a different structure that fixes itself in the subconscious, and therefore, different native speakers will have different mind architectures. This is due to the fact that each idiom, focusing on disparate components of being, creates diverse ways of thinking about the world. It does not mean that languages determine what we think, but how we think about what we think instead (Sapir). To make myself clear, here is an easy example: the word “Sun” in German is feminine (Die Sonne), while in Italian is masculine (Il Sole); therefore, the

conception of the “gender” of the Sun is different.

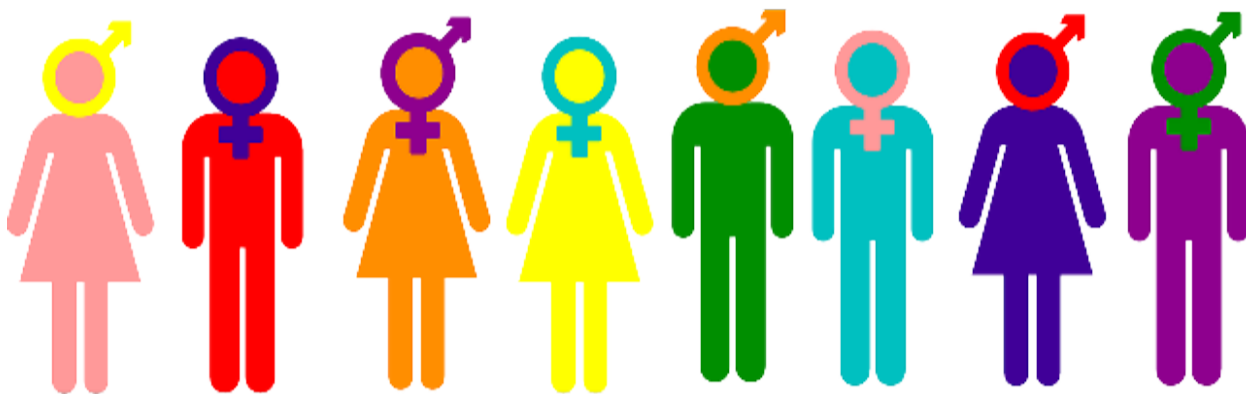
If you think this is banal, you may have not got the concept entirely, so here is a more interesting example. The Australian aboriginal population “Kuuk-Thaayorre” speaks a language that lacks the words “right, left, in front and back”. If they have to describe the position of any object, they use the cardinal signs. Having said this, if we have to write down facts in chronological order on a timeline, we will most probably move from left to right. But if the Kuuk-Thaayorre are asked to do the same thing, they will always move from east to west, no matter where they are in the world (Broditsky). Their language made them develop a sense of direction unexcelled by anyone else. Incredible, right?

So, what can the coexistence of so many languages in a relatively small place such as our university result in? The chances we have in this university to open ourselves to new languages and new cultures are countless, we cannot waste them. Spending time with our fellow countrymen while abroad is the easiest and most natural approach to a new experience, however it does not improve our life.

We need to stop looking for our own traditional life style whenever we go to a new place; but encourage the promotion of intercultural initiatives and relations within our environment, our city and the world, for we have the amazing opportunity to become citizens of the world without even crossing Ponte Sisto.

Taking Charge

By Wanjiru K.



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Ever since I can remember, I identified as a girl. Largely because I was born with the corresponding organs and thus given this label, but also because as I grew up, I had no problem identifying as such-girl. However, even before I had properly mastered my ABCs, I could tell that there was more to it. Being a girl became not only descriptive but also prescriptive. It meant different things, gender came with a sort

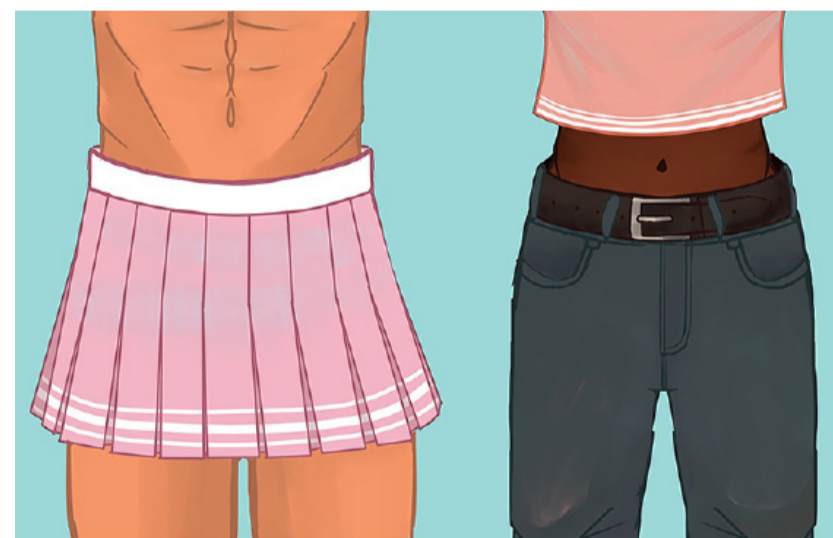
definition of the ideal Kenyan girl. I loved to wear pants, to rough it up, and I absolutely loved to swing on the back of pickup trucks. Surely enough, before long, I had earned the dreaded nickname, “wanjakihi” which loosely translates to: a very ill-mannered girl who acts like a boy.

I began to view most things through this lens of do’s and don’ts, but never quite understood where it came from or why this list seemed to be different for girls and for boys. Was that one different organ that important?

Growing up, do’s and don’ts ranged from silly things like, boys drank Coke and girls drank Fanta (yes, soft drinks were also gendered!), to the not so silly: girls should watch what they wear while boys, well, will be boys.

However, the older I got, the more consequential these norms became and the angrier

they made me. Beyond the choice



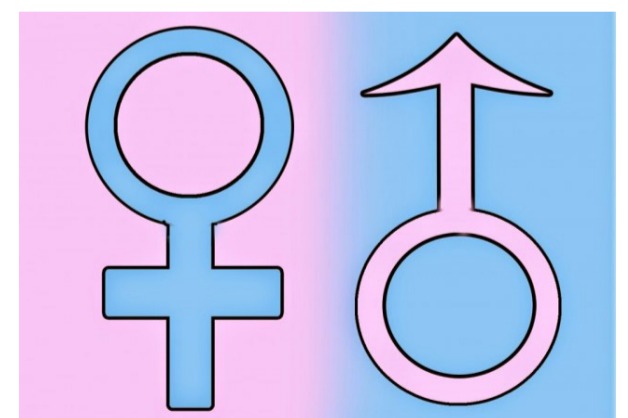
Nataly Serrano

of instruction manual, the do’s and don’t. Do: wear dresses, be soft, love barbies. Don’t: play rough, be loud, and definitely don’t swing on the back of pickup trucks. However, I never quite fit the cookie cutter

of a soft drink, they went into more serious realms of life. In middle school, it meant being congratulated for outshining the boys. In high school, it meant aiming to be a doctor and never an engineer. In college,

it means being careful, always, to not get harassed or roofied or raped. The more I learned, the uglier it got. I learned that to be a desirable woman, I had to be ambitious but not too ambitious. I learned that to be successful, I had to work twice as hard; but to remain desirable, I had to maintain a hint of submissiveness. I learned about glass ceilings and glass walls! Society had carefully constructed boxes and expected everyone to assimilate to them perfectly. Well, you know what? Those norms and their creators can shove it. The time has come to challenge these norms.

Gender norms may seem descriptive or even prescriptive, but what they really are is restrictive. It’s time we challenged why things are as they are, and work towards how we know they should become! No one else should get a say in what you can or cannot do, should or should not. Gender is a social construct that has limited us for too long— all of us. It is a redundant, repugnant order that we have the power to change. Everyone should have the power to make their own choices in life. At the very least, the autonomy to choose a damn soft drink!



Bust Magazine, Gender Symbols

Visibility and Support: A Letter

By Micayla Mirabella

Dear Readers,

How many people in the LGBTQ+ community do you know? Here's the truth about us: our sexuality and/or gender can be an invisible identity. This means you could know someone personally but not know that they are queer until they tell you. So, you probably know more LGBTQ+ people than you think.

Let me start off with a little disclaimer: I am a queer woman. My views, opinions, and experiences represent me, and me only. I do not wish to speak on behalf of anyone in the LGBTQ+ community, nor is it my intention to do so. Each and every experience is unique to each and every person's individual reality.

Additionally, sexual/gender identity is private to each individual unless they choose to share it with others. (Also, it is not cool to out people. Please don't do that.)

Here's the thing about coming out of the closet: many people do it, but every coming out story is different and personal to them and their unique situation. The whole idea of "coming out" used to seem silly to me. I used to feel frustrated that my straight friends did not have to do this. But in a society that is still very much heteronormative, it is something that many queer people do at some point or another.

I grew up in a liberal, accepting, and loving household so I'd say I was pretty lucky when I decided to come out. Not everyone's coming out story

is positive. Not everyone is safe to come out at all. All students at JCU should step on campus feeling safe—no matter how they identify.

The truth is, this is not always the case. Despite JCU's overwhelmingly accepting and non-discriminatory atmosphere, I've heard homophobic and transphobic slurs, comments, and full discussions throughout my time here at JCU—either from others or directly in front of me.

When these things circulate, queer people become more and more invisible and this is both unacceptable and heartbreaking.

Visibility is so important. It is important to shine a light on this community of people who are so often in the dark. If we are quiet, we will not be heard, or worse: we will become invisible. Listen to your LGBTQ+ friends and family. Don't speak for us, give us a chance to speak. This gives you an opportunity to learn from us and start a dialogue.

Education is such an important part of this conversation and I intend to learn more, myself, so I can be better informed to support my fellow queer friends in the community. Attending events held by the JCU Queer Alliance is a great way to meet people, get involved, and learn more!

We live in a society that is not only extremely heteronormative but also operates in a binary system regarding gender. So, basically, anyone who is not straight and cisgender is oppressed in some way,

shape, or form.

Oppression takes many forms and it can be as basic as simply misunderstanding.

The LGBTQ+ community is a celebration of beautiful, strong, hopeful individuals who want (and deserve!) positive visibility, love, and most of all, understanding. We want to be treated with respect, no matter who we are, who we identify as, and who we love.

There are so many things that straight allies can do to support their LGBTQ+ peers, like sitting down and respectfully asking questions and trying to understand their experiences, or not inviting a certain prime minister of a certain xenophobic government to speak at Commencement. You know, basic acts of courtesy that can create a more inclusive and less divisive community at JCU.

Whew! That was a lot of information. Guess what? We have barely scratched the surface on this topic. That's why I think opening a dialogue can lead to more understanding and empathy. And I think that is a beautiful thing.

Best,

A slightly concerned queer person who still holds on to hope that the future is more inclusive
(aka Micayla Mirabella)

Allyship

By Djuna Carlton

For this month's Hot Topic, Queer Life on Campus, it is important to discuss the roles of allies to the LGBTQ+ community. As for a quick definition, an ally is a person who supports the LGBTQ+ community and actively works to ensure a safer and more welcoming environment. Many people, when asked if they support the LGBTQ+ community, will respond with an affirmative, and with some sort of anecdote of a family member or friend who is gay and their support of this person. This, of course, is great, but it is extremely limited. This is passive, and while that friend or family is loved, this does not impact or support the larger community.

Allies, as people who fit easily into societal conventions, must actively carve out spaces to include LGBTQ+ people, who otherwise often exist as a fringe community. This can be as simple as not assuming an inter-gender friendship between children is romantic, or it can be as harsh as stepping in and defending a person's right to use the bathroom that they belong in.

The LGBTQ+ community is strong and resilient, but as every marginalized community does, they need inside help to become normalized and accepted. This does not mean only advocating for your own family members or friends, but it means to carve out a space even when no LGBTQ+ person is around, and normalizing that. This can be uncomfortable, such as asking a family member or a friend to change their choice of words, regardless of the company or the reaction.

Allyship is about paying attention and listening to the community, and allowing them to share their experiences without the filter of your own understanding of how things work. Young men who were born female will have had a very different understanding of locker rooms, especially if they were confident enough to advocate for their gender identity as a child or young adult. This is, quite frankly impossible for a cis-gender person to fully understand, but it is the role of an ally to embrace and trust the experience as valid, and advocate to alter that reality. It is difficult to represent a reality that we ourselves have not experienced—but it is necessary.

Much of the world is shifting and thankfully LGBTQ+ people are increasingly accepted and brought into the fold of "normal." However, there is still a lot of work to be done, and passive acceptance simply does not

cut it. Allyship extends beyond one's family and friends; you have to support complete strangers, and do what you can to facilitate a safe environment for them to be honest with their identity. For the LGBTQ+ community to gain social and environmental security, allies must help carve out that space. Allyship is not only about showing up for the LGBTQ+ community in times of abuse or discrimination. Allyship is, more importantly, the consistent act of re-shaping environments to ensure that abuse and discrimination are not allowed to flourish.



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MEET THE TEAM



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Adriana is an English Literature Major and a Creative Writing Minor. She has studied Creative Writing at Columbia University and The University of Oxford.



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Hope is a Humanistic Studies Major with a minor in International Affairs. She has been published in Brookdale Community College's first edition of Global Read.



Caitlyn Davis
Staff Writer

Caitlyn is a Communications Major and Creative Writing minor at John Cabot University, and is currently in her second semester. She is a military brat (go Army), and has lived most of her life in Stuttgart, Germany.



Janet Kimani
Staff Writer

Janet is from Nairobi, Kenya. She has a passion for writing and literature, but more recently has been drawn to journalistic writing. She has also participated in various writing competitions and won prizes for her opinion pieces.



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Layout Designer

Gabrielle is Communications major at John Cabot University with a concentration in Digital Media Arts. She has studied a semester of Communications at New York University and a semester of Art History at Instituto Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence.



Federica Gandolfo
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Federica is an Italian Senior taking a double degree in Art History and Marketing. She took a graphic design course at John Cabot and fell in love with the subject. She spent the summer as a graphic design intern for AIESEC.



Giorgia Rifaldi
Copy Editor

Giorgia is an English Literature Major with a minor in Creative Writing and Communications. She started writing when she was seven and has wanted to work for a newspaper ever since.



Chryssi Soteriades
Copy Editor

Chryssi is an English Literature Major with a minor in Psychology and has worked on the board of the Theatre Society. She has four years of experience editing and adapting scripts.

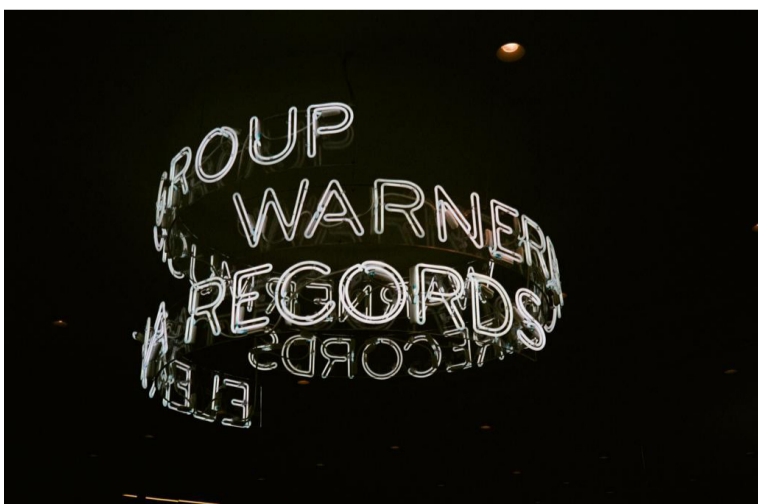
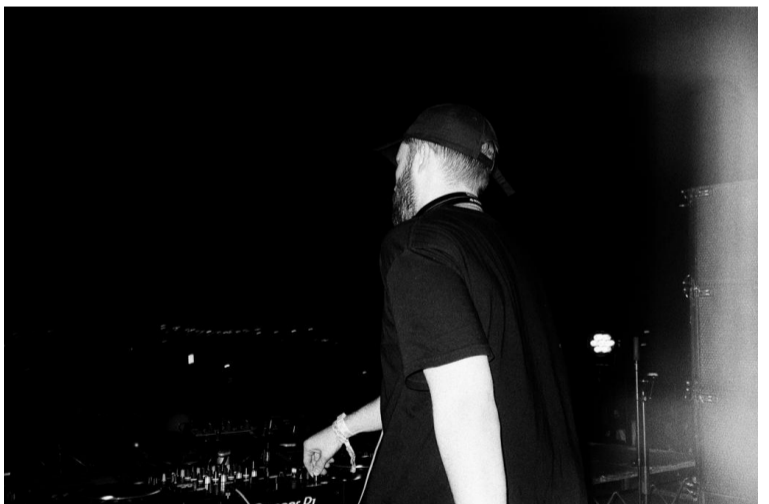
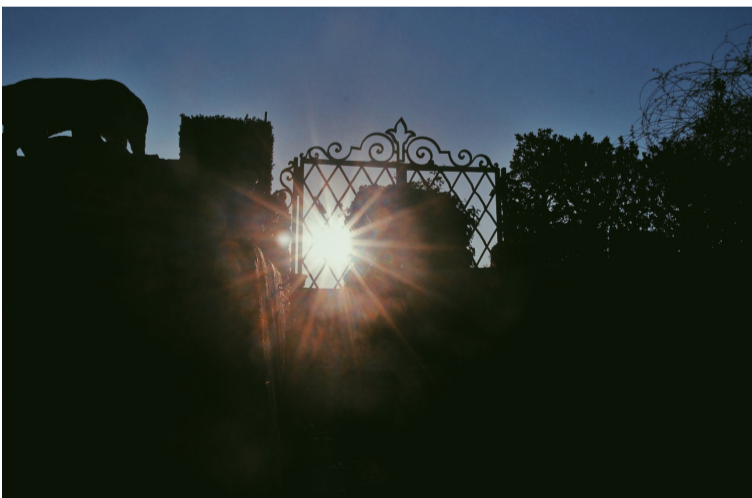
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creative voices

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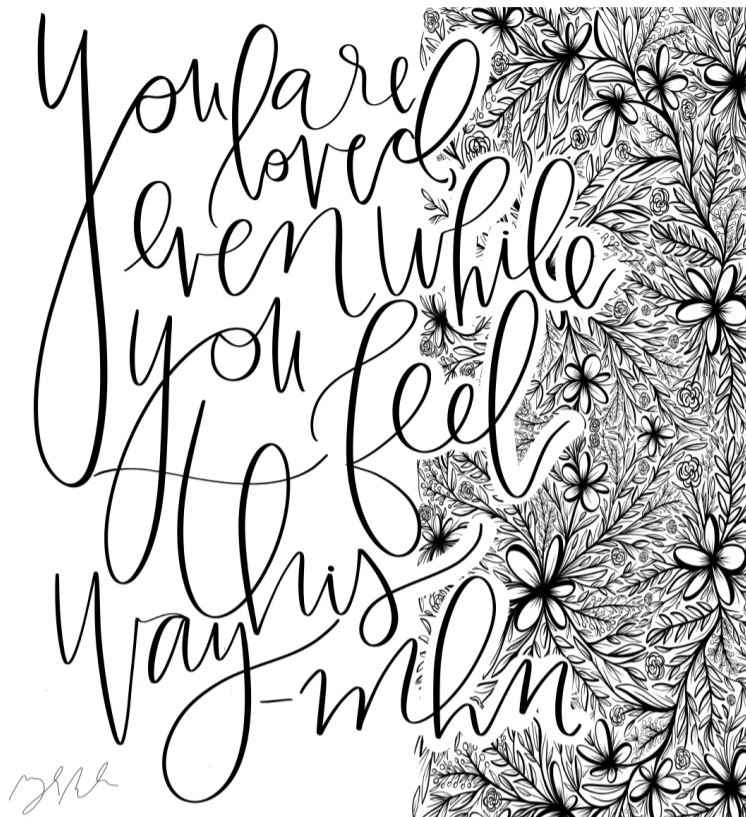
Photography by Giorgia Rifaldi



Film Photography by Gabrielle Small

creative voices

DIGITAL ART, POETRY, AND ILLUSTRATIONS



Digital art by Micayla Mirabella

viii-

i've been daring to dream
and laugh
and fall
and cry

i've been daring to love
and be loved back
and not be loved at all

i've been daring to live
even if all my bones tell me not to
even if my eyes would rather stay shut
even if my heart would rather rest

i've been daring
since i was born
and until i die

and i will not go without a fight.
{g.p.b}



Illustration by Kathy Beth Benz

vii-

to be stuck on earth
while other creatures can fly away
to be obliged to face all of god's creations
and our own wrong doings

to be bound to how far our legs can take us
and for how long our lungs can make it

to be so defenseless
so useless
so small
so beautifully fragile

it's the downfall of humankind
but also god's greatest gift to us.
{g.p.b}



Film photography and digital collage by Gabrielle Small