

Black Fire

FALL 2019

BLACK FIRE
SPECIAL EDITION



PRIDE

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



In this 2019 edition of Pride magazine, we have sought to showcase the myriad voices which both speak to and demonstrate the diversity and complexity within blackness. The various contributions to this edition draw on different members of UVA's diverse black community, including long-time employees, artists, activists, and student-athletes; their words and stories in turn have shaped this project, bringing it to life. Through this work, we have only begun to piece together the ever-changing, complex mosaic that is the black experience, from meditations on the racialization of space to the convolutions of historical memory; and from artistic creation through song and music to love, to accounts of alienation as well as narratives of growth and ingenuity.

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FUN STUFF (4, 10, 14)

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THEY CALL ME ANG



"The name is Angela Breckenridge, B-R-E-C-K-E-N-R-I-D-G-E. But they call me 'Ang,'" Ms. Breckenridge warmly remarks, as she finds a seat in Newcomb Hall's ground-floor lobby. For almost three decades, Ang Breckenridge has worked for Aramark, the University's dining services provider. After clocking out from her shift as supervisor of the 1819 Supply convenience store, Ang chats with us about her career and extensive time at UVA since the 1990s. Hailing from Charlotte, North Carolina, Ang brings a touch of southern hospitality and wit to her role in Newcomb Hall, where she can be

frequently seen giving hugs and making small talk with students and families.

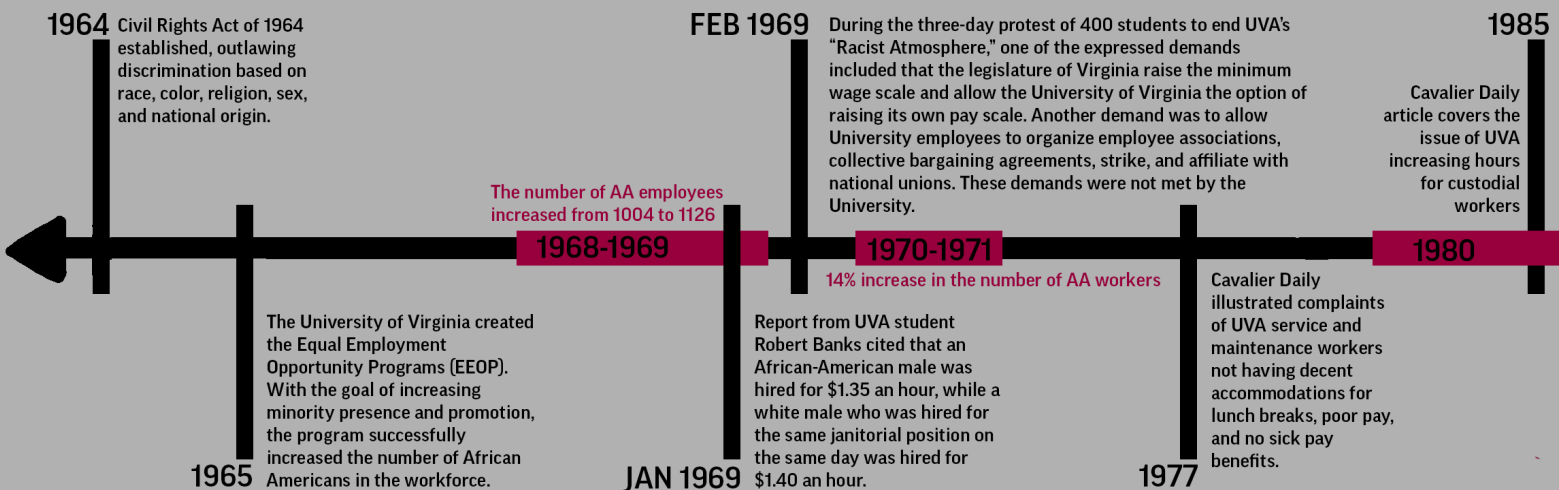
Don't let the test take you, take the test," she endearingly warns students as they purchase blue books for their various exams throughout the semester. Indeed, the mantra is in part a reminder to herself as a current student striving towards a certificate in discipleship and an eventual associate's degree: "I don't like writing essays—that's just me. So I know what y'all are going through," she quips. "I have to tell myself: Ang, you're taking this, it's not taking you."

Yet—this incident was not anomalous; in fact, it is part and parcel of the Aramark management's greater disregard for its employees. "We have to pay to park. We have to be at work. But we have to pay to park," Ang observes.

Luckily for her, she lives around the corner on Stadium Road and is able to walk to work. "So it doesn't really bother me, except in the winter when it's snowing." Then she worries about her coworkers—"the ones that live way out." Ang notes, for example, that while the University expresses concern for workers' safety, "it's mandatory we come to work even when it's snowing out—even when classes are cancelled for students. Y'all can be laying around all day in your dorms, and we still gotta be here," she remarks.

When considering what has changed since the '90s, Ang reminisces about the annual Christmas parties Aramark used to organize for their workers and the gift cards which she would receive. "I don't know why it stopped." On the other hand, she praises President Jim Ryan's implementation of a \$15 minimum wage for University workers, and recently contracted employees, though she acknowledges its limitations. "The cost of living is high here. So to be honest with you, I don't think \$15 will be enough. A one bedroom apartment here is \$1000 a month. \$15 an hour isn't going to cover that—especially when we are on break."

When asked why she returns every day, despite the various difficulties which her work presents, she responds: "the students." She recounts the story of a student who used to come into her store, wearing a frown from cheek to cheek. "I told him, I don't mean no harm nor disrespect, but you can't come into my store frowning like that." She began chatting with him and by the time he left he began sporting a great, big smile. "Oh my God," she exclaimed, "you've got a beautiful smile. Don't do that—don't you hold that smile back." She nicknamed him "Smiley" thereafter. And every day, he would come in to visit Ang with that great big smile until he graduated last year.



ELIZABETH WITTNER

The following is an edited interview with Elizabeth Wittner, the Academic Director & Coordinator of the International Teaching Assistant Training Program at the Center for American English Language and Culture (CAELC). CAELC is charged to provide leadership on issues related to ESL/intercultural communication and to help members of the University of Virginia community attain the level of linguistic and cultural proficiency needed for success at a research university in the United States. With increasing diversity within Black workers at UVA, many of CAELC's clients have immigrated to Charlottesville as a result of the contemporary African diaspora. Mrs. Wittner is also heavily involved in VISAS (Volunteers with International Students, Staff, and Scholars), as the director and program coordinator. While there are multiple sectors within VISAS, we focus on the workplace program--in which volunteers serve as English tutors for UVA workers and contracted workers.

Can you tell us more about your role in CAELC? And with VISAS?

Back in 2007-2009, one of the students who was working on the living wage campaign approached me and said, "Every day after lunch, I sit around at O'Hill and talk to a lot of the workers there who want to work on their English." These people are a part of our community, and we thought, "Why are we not doing this?". The workplace program emerged from that in 2009, starting with O'Hill workers. We envisioned it as just a conversation hour, but noticed that employees wanted more of a class. They felt like they needed to be able to speak, read, and write in English. Many of them came from backgrounds where they had not had access to formal education. At that time, many were from Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Later on, we expanded the program to workers from the Hospital and Newcomb Hall.

Two years ago, I wanted to open this up to facilities workers. Once we did, we found out that so many people wanted to work on their English. The volunteer program is so perfect because everyone comes to us with different backgrounds and goals, so we can tailor our program to those learners. I think we started with eight facilities workers two years ago. At our peak, we had 20 students. Now, we have 15 people in two classes.

How long have you been involved with VISAS?

Since 1999.

Who can volunteer with VISAS?

It's open to anyone in the UVA community. Some faculty members have volunteered, we have staff members who volunteer, there is a couple that graduated from UVA in 1952 who volunteers.

Could you speak on the differences between contract workers and UVA workers, and how they are treated?

Sure. I'm a little bit heated about it, actually. So we started at O'Hill in 2009 and we had a really successful beginning and there was a lot of interest. The Aramark HR director and the supervisor for the dining halls agreed that staff development services were important – workers needed to talk to students and coworkers, as well as be able to read safety protocols in English. So the HR director and dining hall supervisor supported VISAS - they bought books for the program and didn't make the workers clock out during the hour-long class time, which they considered staff development. So that was great. Then in the Spring of 2018, we started operating under the radar at O'hill, but word got out that workers were taking a class during their work hours, so they were forced to clock out during their English class. This meant that there was less support for them.

Aramark supports O'Hill, so when they made workers clock out, we went from 18 people who came twice a week to five workers attending class. Last year we asked Aramark, "If we decreased it to one day a week, would you support it?" and they said they would... CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

1987

Audacious Faith Report comes out. Self-study showed the idea of hourly employees suffering from "... a de facto two-tier labor system operated by the University." It also represented a lack of retirement, health, or insurance benefits. Furthermore, it showed the overrepresentation of African Americans in service and maintenance positions.

1989

African Americans employees in skilled crafts increased from 20 to 128.

Labor Action Group (LAG) was created, which advocated for allowing University Workers to create unions and implementing a living wage for these same workers.

1996

The Muddy Floor Report stated the need for equitable treatment of classified African-American employees. Furthermore, it illustrated the important facts of African Americans not being represented in higher-level positions and how they were disproportionately fired and written up.

1998

Labor Action Group held a press conference demanding the University increase its starting pay from \$6.37 an hour to \$8. A year-and-a-half later, the University's Board of Directors agreed to increase the starting wage for classified employees to \$8.19. This did not cover contract employees.

2006

Living Wage Campaign released the report "Keeping Our Promise: Toward A Living Wage at the University." In this report, the campaign demonstrated the need for a living wage and the impact it could have. They demanded a living wage of \$10.72 per hour. In this, they framed the living wage campaign as a diversity issue, which was a turning point in this history.

MAR 2019

UVA committed to raising the wage to at least \$15 per hour for full-time, benefits-eligible employees on January 1,

OCT 2019

UVA committed to additionally raising the wage scale for contracted employees.

WHO GETS IN?

THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT

"Have your student IDs out and ready with your regular IDs," I shouted from the front of the line outside of Trinity. Thanks to a new policy sweeping the Corner, gaining admittance to almost any bar was now two-fold: you had to be 21, but you also had to be a student. I worked as a bouncer at Trinity for barely a semester, and this policy was only in place for about a month. Yet, when I look back on my time there, this always sticks out in my head. It seems like every year this policy comes up at some point, and every year I question it both legally and morally.

"We're a private business. We have the right to turn down whomever we want." This was the legal rationale for the rule--and what Trinity management instructed its employees to tell anyone who brought up an issue with it. For the most part, this legal interpretation has held for these businesses, but that doesn't make it right. Sure, the Civil Rights Act does not have a caveat preventing discrimination regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or whether or not you go to UVA, but the ideology stands. Businesses cannot make sweeping declarations denying all members of a particular group. Having an incident that involves a non-student should not allow a bar to declare that all non-students are dangerous and ban them from the premises. While legally this idea is questionable at best, it's the enforcement of the policy that's concerning.

"We've been having some trouble with townies lately, so this is to keep the bar safe for students." This was the justification they gave me--a statement that may appear



FROM UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA NEWS

innocent, though is deeply problematic nonetheless. For one, it cements the divide between UVA and the Charlottesville community. Charlottesville citizens have long been victims of the University's presence, and this rule categorizes them as second-class citizens.

It defines them as the "other" in their own hometown which becomes overwhelmed by transplants during 10 months of the year. And it declares that their home does not belong to them. But perhaps the most troubling part of this statement is the word "townie." Who are these "townies" that bars are trying to keep out? Is it the recent UVA grad yuppies who have taken up jobs in Charlottesville? No, they get in just fine. "Townie" is a euphemism--a racially charged one. It's a way for bars on the Corner to discriminate against Charlottesville's

black population. It's also a way for them to discuss these groups without being overtly racist. When they say they have had some trouble with townies lately, what they mean is that a black man got in a fight and now they have to screen every black person through the door so the bar stays "safe." You see, it's still permissible to be racist--you simply have to hide it better.

This story isn't about bars on the Corner making a rule. It's a story about the Corner being a white establishment. It's a story about UVA's subjugation of the Charlottesville community. It's a story about the racist undercurrent in Charlottesville and at UVA. This story is not a new story--rather, it's the next chapter in a book that started more than 200 years ago.

THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

The Corner is not a space for everyone. This space is located adjacent to the University, situated between UVA and the greater Charlottesville area; however, it does not bridge the gap between these two areas, nor does it create a space in which both communities can coexist. While finding my place at the University, I explored the Corner and Rugby Road with a few different groups of new acquaintances. I quickly noticed that the way I was treated was contingent upon who accompanied me; I was not treated the same way with a group of black students on a night out as I was as a part of a diverse group that also included Asian and white students. When I arrived to fraternity parties with a group of black students, we were asked questions like, "Who do you know here?" and "Who are you?" These questions made me feel as if I did not belong there. It was obvious that what they really meant was: "What are you doing here?" Even when we had been invited to such parties, we had to contact someone to escort us past the gate while white students could simply be invited inside. When I arrived to fraternity parties with a diverse group, including white students, the determining factor of whether

or not we were admitted was our ratio. As long as the group had more women than men, we were normally good to go--without many questions asked. Sometimes, I have even made the guest list for fraternity parties, though fraternity members still remain reluctant to let me in, dumbfounded as to how I could be on the list in the first place. In one instance, I was even asked for my ID at a fraternity party, as the bouncer had assumed I was impersonating someone else. This is certainly not a standard procedure. In fact, all of my friends had gone ahead without a problem. When I presented my ID, the man seemed surprised, but he allowed me to proceed into the party nonetheless. It seems that my identity was scrutinized precisely because this bouncer could not fathom that I, a black person, would be on the list at his elite fraternity.

The bars on the Corner have taken less overt measures to cull their clientele. During my third year, I noticed a shift in the music that is played at some of the most popular bars. Trinity elucidates this change. This change, moreover, seemed to come out of nowhere. The bar abruptly stopped playing the popular hip-hop and rap songs commonly favored among party scenes and

instead replaced them with exclusively pop and electronic music. This change in music spurred a demographic change as well. I noticed a significant decrease in the number of black patrons at Trinity after the businesses had altered the music selection. Boylan Heights has been often called the "black bar." I suspect this has come to be because of the crowd attracted by the number of athletes who bounce and party at Boylan. Unfortunately, Boylan was acquired by executives of Trinity Irish Pub this past summer. The new management has made several changes to the restaurant and bar, but the most noticeable one has been the newly implemented music, which emulates that of Trinity.

Thus, the question remains: If black students do not belong on the Corner or on Rugby Road, where should we go to party? Ultimately, the Corner and Rugby Road are for white students who attend the University of Virginia. If you do not fit that criteria, it is likely that you will, at some point, be given a hard time by fraternity brothers, bouncers, or law enforcement. In the current moment, black students, as well as young members of the Charlottesville community, lack a safe, inviting place.

UNSCRAMBLE THAT WORD

1. LETARW LEIYRD
2. ETH MNNGFARIOT RISSIC
3. RIECAALV IADLY
4. IVAINV ODGNOR
5. LNIDA AULQRSE
6. DMDUY ROOFL PETROR
7. DRAEG ONNASHN
8. SDAAMERT OSNORNIB
9. SEEHAHD NEMIDR
10. BCKAKL UBS PTSO
11. RAMSTEE HSNJOON
12. GEOLCEL ATRBLFYFIDOAI



SACRED GROUNDS

The University of Virginia is an institution built upon tradition. Like many esteemed colleges and universities, such traditions have created a unique culture that is shared by their community. For example, students refer to themselves as first, second, third, and fourth years, as opposed to freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. There is an honor code that students and faculty abide by, giving students the ability to self-govern over honor-related offenses. Some of the most interesting traditions are related to space. The whole campus is called “Grounds.” The quad is called “the Lawn.” The main bar strip is called “the Corner.” Knowing these names is essential to living at UVA, for they identify such spaces as the University’s own.

However, the politics around such spaces are complex, as they go beyond distinct names. These spaces do not only represent the topography of the University, but also who inhabits it. Furthermore, some of the most centralized academic buildings on Grounds are named after controversial figures of the University’s history, such as Alderman Library which is named after former University president and eugenicist Edwin Alderman. As the demographics of UVA have diversified through race, gender, and culture, these spaces have come to mean different things to different people. This in turn causes tension when people analyze the history of these places, for they tell a story about the history of discrimination and oppression at the University, especially for black students and workers. The buildings that make up Grounds and the Corner demonstrate how injustice and division can exist and be accepted in spaces beloved by the majority.

It is important to step back and look at Grounds as a whole to clarify the historical context of these politics. Like most early institutions in the United States, enslaved people built the University from the ground up. After the Civil War, descendants of slaves continued to build the University and keep it alive. This means that even though a few African Americans were able to attend the University midway through the twentieth century, black people have always been here on Grounds, whether they were welcomed in this space or not. Furthermore, University buildings such as Nau Hall and Gibson Hall were constructed upon slave burial grounds. Although there are plaques to commemorate those sites, these cemeteries are largely forgotten due to the presence of the University itself. The physical installment of these spaces do not erase history, but they do conceal parts of the past that one may not see unless he or she looks.

Although the University is building a memorial to honor past enslaved laborers in front of the Rotunda (one of UVA’s most honored spaces), countless generations have passed through Grounds without this acknowledgment of its history of slavery. This helps explain the racial politics of other UVA spaces, for without a basic understanding of the school’s foundation, one cannot understand the consequential racial tension within the community.

The Corner is a vital location of UVA’s social scene. This area is home to popular restaurants, stores, and bars which cater to the University community. It is also where the restaurant Jaberwoke imposed a racist dress code to keep black and brown people out in 2007. In 2015, it was where Martese Johnson was brutally arrested outside of a bar called Trinity. Today, the bar Biltmore near the Corner continues to ask customers for UVA student ID cards along with normal IDs to keep the Charlottesville locals out, most of whom are black. These are not isolated incidents; they reflect the culture of UVA’s social life. This is a culture that blatantly discriminates against black people, whether they are students or locals, by overly checking their IDs. It is where black students fear police the most, for attending the University offers no protection against a cop’s racial bias. It is a place where many white, mainstream students are comfortable and at times reckless, while a greater proportion of black students feel as if they do not belong. This is not to say that all black students loathe the Corner and all white students love it; however, it shows that not all spaces are open to all or share the same significance within the University community.

Analyzing race within space is challenging because space is constantly changing. This change can be physical or imaginary, but regardless, it impacts where and how University students navigate their own lives. As the black student population progresses at UVA, it is important to recognize that the challenges presented by certain spaces do not determine the fate of the community as a whole. They may result in an experience at the University that is different from that of the majority, but this should not limit black students’ capacity to exist at this school. After all, their ancestors were the true founders of this institution. Space may be intertwined with old traditions, but there is also room for new ones to be created.

Trailblazers, Institution Builders, and Keepers of the Tradition; Al Drummond; James Roebuck; The Lambda Zeta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.; Edgar Shannon; Clarence Cain; Tom Gardner; 1969; Edwin Alderman; 1909; Joseph Washington; William Elwood; Frank Hereford; RUN DMC; A Different World ; Sylvia Terry; Martese Johnson; The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW); Adams vs. Richardson; Armstead Robinson; Vivian Gordon ; The Declining Significance of Race (1978) and The Truly Disadvantaged; Donna Byrd; 1997; Shaheed Minder; Public Enemy; Rodney King ; Ice cube, MC Ren, Eazy E, Yella, and Dr. Dre.; Paula McClain; Labor Action Group; 1975; 2014; Kwame Nkrumah; Jaberwoke; 2004; John Casteen, 1981 - 2006; Guian McKee; Paul Freeman; Leroy Hassell

FROM MERRITT TO HALL

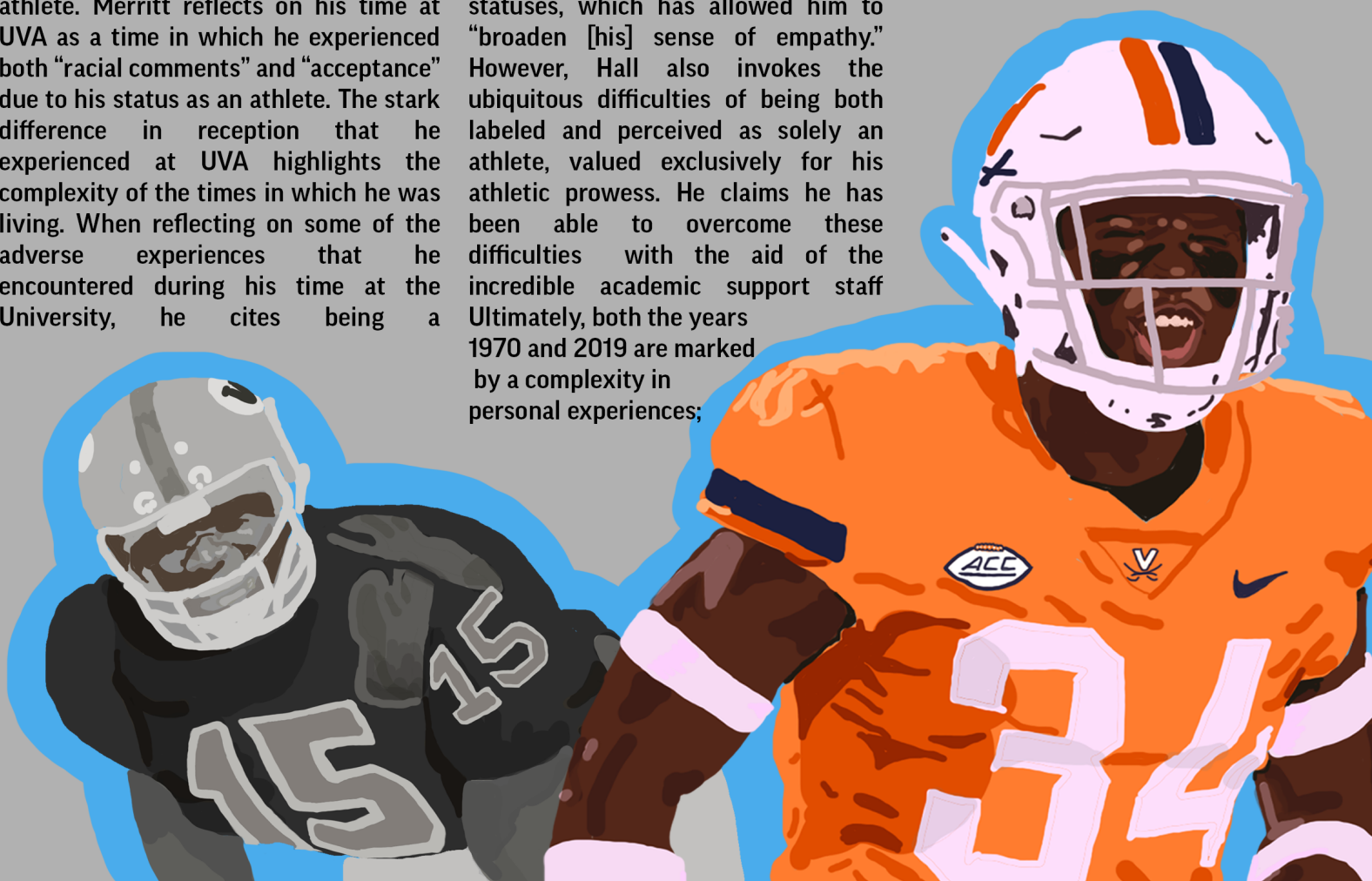
The year 1970 was highly significant in Virginia Athletics history. Notably, this year marked the arrival of the first black scholarship athletes to UVA, marking the last school in the Atlantic Coast Conference to commence the integration of athletic programs. The historic class included basketball player Al Drummond and football players Harrison Davis, Stanley Land, John Rainey, and most prominently, Charlottesville native Kent Merritt.

Undoubtedly, the 1970s were a complicated time at the University of Virginia, especially for athletes like Kent Merritt. He was breaking new ground at the University, looking to find and secure his place as both a student and an athlete. Merritt reflects on his time at UVA as a time in which he experienced both “racial comments” and “acceptance” due to his status as an athlete. The stark difference in reception that he experienced at UVA highlights the complexity of the times in which he was living. When reflecting on some of the adverse experiences that he encountered during his time at the University, he cites being a

Charlottesville native as particularly helpful because he could “get out and kind of get away from some of the frustrations.”

Fast forward to the year 2019 and we see a similar yet different experience of black athletes here at the University. Current UVA All-American defensive back Bryce Hall speaks fondly of his time and experiences as a student-athlete. He speaks of the strides that UVA football has made over the years and argues that the team is “one of the most diverse communities that [he’s] been a part of.” The diversity he speaks of comes in the form of different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses, which has allowed him to “broaden [his] sense of empathy.” However, Hall also invokes the ubiquitous difficulties of being both labeled and perceived as solely an athlete, valued exclusively for his athletic prowess. He claims he has been able to overcome these difficulties with the aid of the incredible academic support staff. Ultimately, both the years 1970 and 2019 are marked by a complexity in personal experiences;

indeed, we have witnessed major efforts to improve UVA Athletics over the past four decades, be it through efforts to recruit a more diverse pool of student-athletes as well as plans to bolster institutional levels of support for such students. Of course, however, struggles persist, albeit in different forms. Nevertheless, Kent Merritt and his fellow cohort of the first black scholarship athletes were pioneers, paving the way for student-athletes like Bryce Hall and his teammates for generations to come, while providing the institutional infrastructure on which current student-athletes continue to build—in order to create a more inclusive environment.



THE POWER OF ZYAHNA



Were you born and raised in Charlottesville?

Yes, I have lived in Charlottesville my entire life. I was born here, and so was my mother and grandmother.

How would you detail your childhood in Charlottesville?

Charlottesville is a very interesting place. It is very racially divided, but I didn't truly notice that until I started to transition into middle school. My grandma and my aunt own property in the 10th and page neighborhood, a historically black neighborhood in Charlottesville located near downtown and the district that was formerly Vinegar Hill. I come from a village of people who took care of me, neighbors, my church family, and family friends. I started to feel a shift when the neighborhood started to look less Black. Our neighbors on all sides of my grandmother's house were Black folks, and suddenly she only has Black neighbors across the street.

And thinking back on it, given the present day context (African-Americans being arrested four times more than whites), did you notice, or rather feel (as children may not always have the language to explain), injustice around you?

I think the George Zimmerman verdict in the Trayvon Martin trial was a wakeup call for me, for a lot of us. It was when I organized my first protest, I was 12. It was what made me realize how deep and complex the issue of American racism really is. The rise of #blacklivesmatter was a moment of community, it is almost indescribable.

Could you speak on your high school experience given that you were one of the founders of the BSU at your high school?

I founded the Black Student Union with my friend Keshawna serving as organizational support, as a way to bring the Black community together at CHS. I realized that there was no place for us to gather, and be us, we needed that. We received pushback and the principal of our school refused to meet with us until we reached out to the public via social media to bring attention to the issue. The news interview us, and magically we got the club started within a week.

What issues did you see in your community during this time?

I had just started high school, and I realized just how bad the achievement gap was. I began to see less of friends who I had known since elementary school and summer camp. I was one of two Black students in my honors and AP courses, and it felt like some of my closest friends and I were attending different schools. I realized this wasn't just the reality for my life in school, but also in extracurricular activities. In 9th grade, I was serving my 3rd year as a member of the city's youth council, and it became clearer and clearer just how different my life was from some of my fellow youth councilors. Life on Park street was different than life in 10th and Page. The way that I was experiencing Charlottesville as a Black student who had been marked as "exceptional" put me in a bubble. My experience of being "the opinionated Black girl who never got in trouble" was not representative of the experiences of those who looked like me. The miseducation of Black students in Charlottesville was generational. I knew that a shift needed to take place.

What was it like attending Charlottesville high school?

I always say that going to CHS, I felt like I was receiving a private school education at a public school. It was a tale of two Charlottesville High Schools. As a 9th grader I was a part of the STEM program, I had access to this million dollar science lab, I was taking AP and Honors courses, I was the president of my class. On the other hand, I had friends who have never stepped foot into the Sigma lab and never thought that they had a chance at running for student council. I was also an AVID student, which provided some balance for my time at CHS because I was able to be in a room full of other students of color, and I don't know where I would be mentally, without that. I took my role as a student leader very seriously because in a lot of those spaces I was the only Black student.

Do you believe schools in Charlottesville differ in quality based on race, specifically predominantly white schools being better and having more resources than predominantly black schools?

The city is racially segregated, and in the districts where there are more Black students, those schools lack cool programming and extra funding. Clark Elementary school is a good example of that.

In our class Black Fire taught by the Chair of UVa's History Department Professor Claudrena Harold, she wrote about your petition to take down the Robert E. Lee statue in her piece "Charlottesville 2017." What spurred that action?

I wrote a paper in AVID about something that I could change, and I chose Lee Park to research and write about. I also saw the organizing that was going on in other cities across the South to take down these racist statues and I was inspired.

How did you get into activism? Was it a book that you read, your adherence to your morals and values (and calling out wrongdoing), or the actions of another that inspired you?

Activism is in my blood. My family has always been active. My great-grandmother used to take in students and families to live with her so that they could attend the local Black school. My grandmother has always been active in our community and my two great-uncles were members of the Charlottesville 12, the first 12 students to integrate schools in Charlottesville in 1959.

As a native of Charlottesville, you had many options to attend college. Why did you choose UVa, as opposed to "the Mecca" Howard University?

I chose the University of Virginia because financially, it was the best option for me. Being first generation, I could not pass up a free education. However, had you asked me around this time last year, my heart was set on Howard. I have so much respect for the scholars who are at Howard and the legacy that is there. Attending Howard has been a goal since I first toured the campus in High School. I have also met some amazing activists and scholars here at UVA, and I am grateful to be in community with them at a place with such a complicated history.

How is your experience as a black female student here at the university? Do people recognize you? Know who you are? Do you experience discrimination or microaggressions?

See behaviors parallel to the discrimination in greater Charlottesville?

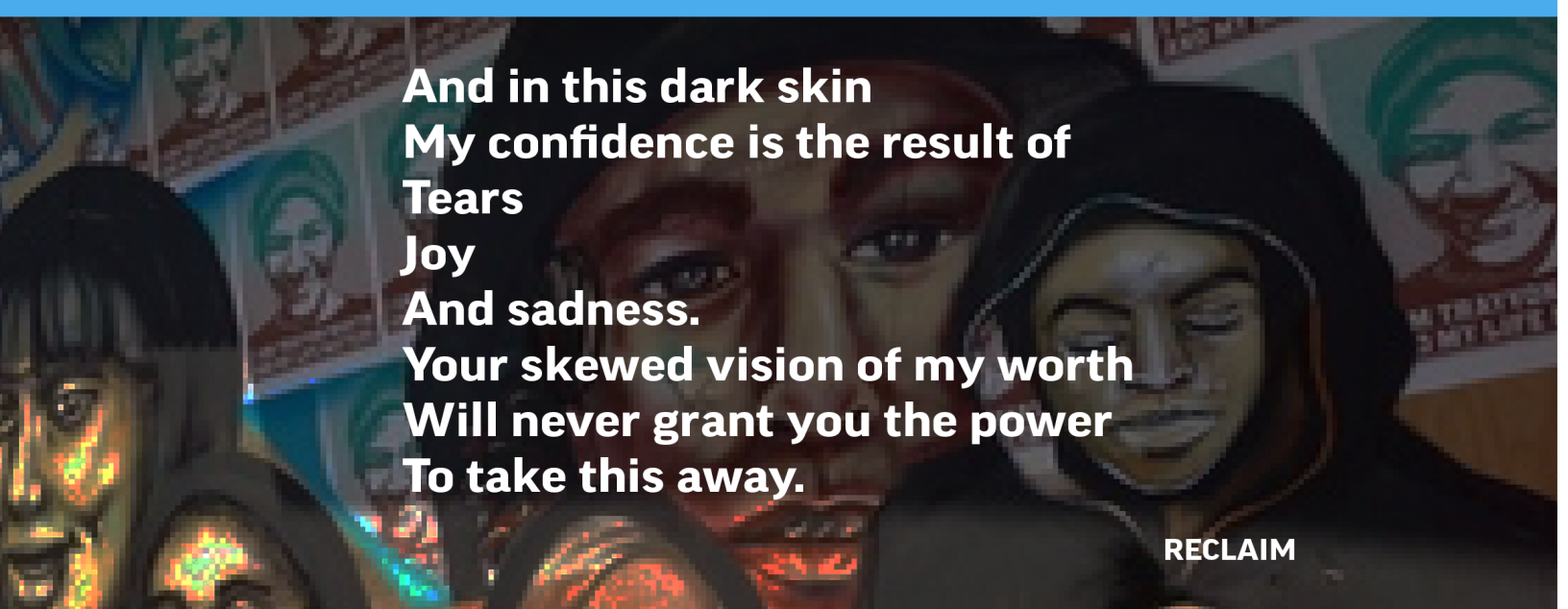
People recognize me from twitter or articles that they've read and it's always so weird. I am honored when people come up to me and meet me. I still have not fully adjusted to people knowing who I am. It makes my day better to see that I have an impact because anti-racist work is hard and some days I feel like stopping. It's a nice reminder of my purpose. I experience microaggressions at uva, and I feel somewhat protective of my community when people spread false narratives about what happened here during the summer of 2017. Charlottesville is very similar to uva and the classism, racism, and elitism screams.

I see you were recently on Teen Vogue's 21 Under 21 List for young adults and adolescents changing the world. What was that like? Having your hard work be acknowledged by arguably one the largest teen magazine?

I am humbled. I am honored. I haven't really felt it yet if that makes sense. I have been so busy this semester with adjusting and trying to find my way that it does not feel real. It never really does. Nevertheless, I am grateful and I hope that my community is proud. Black women continue to blaze trails for me, and everyday it feels like a great privilege to learn from and follow them.

Where so yourself in the future? Do you see yourself staying in Charlottesville, branching out, or are you undecided for now?

I hope to get out of here, but Charlottesville will always be my home and a place where I am deeply invested. I hope to branch out to other communities where there is good work going on, where I can learn and be challenged but also loved on. I have no clue what I will end up studying here at UVA, but I look forward to continuing to cultivate friendships and connections with those around me. There is much work to do, and I am ready.



**And in this dark skin
My confidence is the result of
Tears
Joy
And sadness.
Your skewed vision of my worth
Will never grant you the power
To take this away.**

RECLAIM

A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

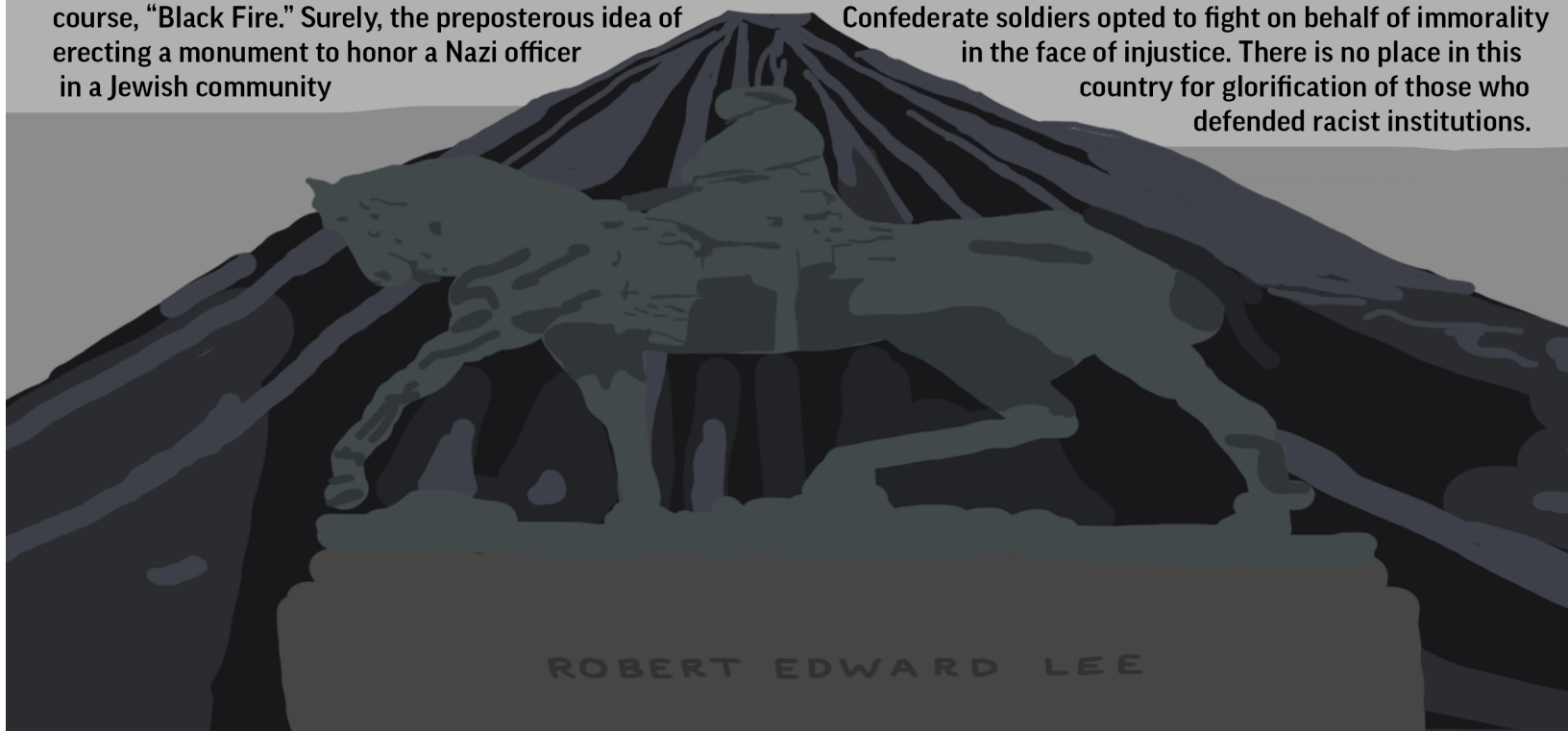
Erwin Rommel, “The Desert Fox,” was objectively one of the most talented commanders of a tank division during World War Two, rivaled only by General Patton and General Montgomery. Rommel, however, fought for Nazi Germany. Theories abound surrounding Rommel’s actual loyalty and belief in the Nazi cause, and so, for that reason, I do not allude to Rommel himself as a Nazi. This is not a defense of Rommel, and I will not be playing devil’s advocate. Yet--there are people who defend Rommel, citing various claims which assert that he was reluctant to fight on behalf of Hitler and the nefarious ideals of Nazism which perpetuated systematic genocide of European Jewry. Similarly, there are people in the United States, particularly the South, who praise Confederate generals like Robert E. Lee as reluctant, though honorable, fighters struggling to uphold a noble cause.

Now I know some of you may be reading this and rolling your eyes because I am making yet another political argument comparing the group with which I disagree to Nazis. Frequently, we see this in contemporary politics, where people proclaim, “[insert politician’s name here]’s beliefs and platforms are fascist which means they are literally Hitler!” To be clear, I believe drawing comparisons between a United States politician and Hitler is to seriously undermine the unprecedented tragedy which Europe’s Jewish communities experienced in the 1930s and 1940s. This leads me to the purpose of this article: a thought experiment.

Given the questionable reputation of Erwin Rommel, Wehrmacht field marshal and tank commanding legend, what if we were to erect a statue honoring him in a predominantly Jewish community? Now at this point, you may be thinking that I have just totally lost my mind and forgotten everything I have been taught at the University, be it from my “Second World War” class, “Coming of the Civil War” class, and, of course, “Black Fire.” Surely, the preposterous idea of erecting a monument to honor a Nazi officer in a Jewish community

would be nothing short of asinine and antisemitic. To place such a statue within a community of people whose ancestors were persecuted by the Nazi regime would be at best ignorant and antisemitic at worst. Nevertheless, this scenario appears all too familiar. If I were to visit downtown Charlottesville, I would see a statue of Robert E. Lee, General of the Confederate Army. Why? We know the monument was initially erected to intimidate the predominantly black community which inhabited that area of Charlottesville, but why is it still there? The Jim Crow era in the South should be long gone by now, but the statues remain, while black communities have been long since pushed out. What does this say about how we view history? Or how much, or indeed how little, we value those who have been systematically discriminated against, since the nation’s inception? Lee owned enslaved peoples, and regardless of his equivocation on the subject of slavery and its ethical dimensions, he ultimately fought for the Confederacy, and by extension, the institution of slavery. Confederates believed in establishing independence from the Union. Supporting Confederate monuments, furthermore, is analogous to supporting officers of a foreign country--to support traitors. As Civil War historians have argued, including our own Dr. Elizabeth Varon in Charlottesville 2017, the South seceded in order to preserve slavery as an institution.

Ultimately, if we would not erect a Rommel statue within a Jewish community, then we should not maintain our Confederate soldier statues. One can tout the “honor,” or “talents,” or whatever superficially admirable attributes an opposing officer may have demonstrated, but war is not a sport after all. One cannot revere a traitorous leader like a UVA basketball fanatic respects UNC’s Cole Anthony. Confederate soldiers opted to fight on behalf of immorality in the face of injustice. There is no place in this country for glorification of those who defended racist institutions.



RUGBY ROAD

The Contemporary Black Experience

This past Halloweekend, I encountered my fateful “black experience” on Rugby Road, the epicenter of Greek life at the University of Virginia. The night after Halloween (a Friday), my friend—a black girl—and I were dragged out to go fraternity hopping. That night we would attend two fraternity parties prior to arriving at the house where we were verbally accosted. A young white man in our group knew the bouncer for the night at this fraternity, and so, upon arriving, we immediately headed to the front. The bouncer proceeded to take a good look at all three of us and subsequently ordered us to enter through the side porch, since the party was already at capacity. We continued to the side of the fraternity house—my white friend leading the way, and the two of us girls following right behind. Yet—before we could even step onto the porch, the enraged bouncer swiftly obstructed the entrance, commencing a rant against the two of us, while permitting our white friend to enter the party.

He began to scream things like, “What the f**k do you think you are doing here? Who the f**k do you think you are? Why the f**k are you even here?” I anticipated an explicitly racist comment at any second. After all, each question directed at me felt racially tinged. It seemed as if he was upset that we dared to come so close to his fraternity, even though he had granted us permission two minutes before. My Filipino friend soon came outside to advocate for us, asserting that we were her friends, and that he had no reason to scream at us. He responded by telling her to “get the f**k out.” Eventually, we all left without uttering another word to him or to anyone else.



We were absolutely mortified. Normally, I consider myself to be courageous. I am highly capable of defending myself and others. However, for the first time I was speechless; I could not offer words. At the time, I was shocked that something like this could happen. For multiple days, I relayed the encounter to my black peers, who found this incident all too familiar. Ostensibly, my Halloween experience was part and parcel of the greater black experience on Rugby Road. Perhaps this really is the UVA status quo. Nevertheless, this begs the question: Are we all just complicit in letting this happen? And, further, will there ever be anything done to prevent this kind of behavior?

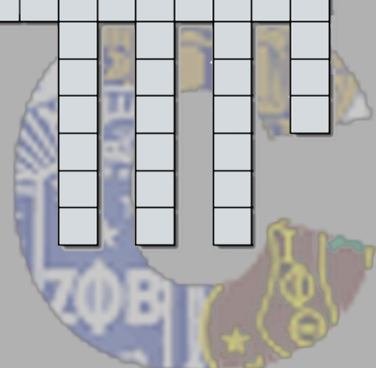
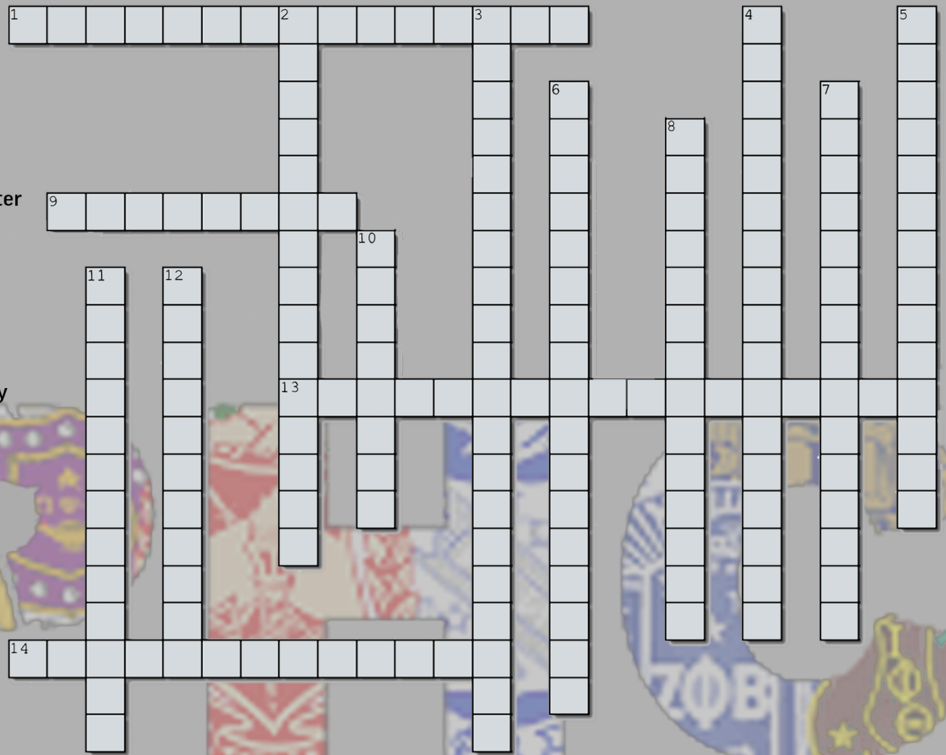
VERTICAL

2. Fraternity chartered at UVA on March 10, 1974
3. The official colors of Zeta Phi Beta, inc.
4. The first black greek sorority chartered at UVA
5. Member of Kappa Alpha Psi, first black UVA quarterback
6. The official colors of Delta Sigma Theta, inc.
7. First black frat to give a block show
8. Fraternity chartered at UVA April 17, 1974
10. A form of cultural expression
11. Its UVA chapter is Tau Theta
12. The first black fraternity chartered at UVA—name of the chapter

HORIZONTAL

1. Its UVA chapter is Theta Lambda
9. Another name for the the National Pan-Hellenic Council
13. A member was Debra Saunders-White
14. First black fraternity chartered at UVA—name of the fraternity

KNOW YOUR BLACK GREEKS





LÉO ZHANG

This piece represents the racial climate I experienced in Namibia—a country that is divided by skin tone. Post-apartheid Namibia is a diluted apartheid. Segregation still exists in schools and neighborhoods. Black people hate white people. White people hate Black people. And everyone hates Asians. But growing up around Blacks and white, while being neither of those races, I could see the blatant biases that each group had against one another. The yellow in this piece represents me: an Asian person who is out of place in his own home. The UFO symbolizes my otherness, my alien-ness. Most of the pieces are up for interpretation but if you view it through the lens of a racial outcast, it'd give the piece more meaning.

WAYVE ON THE TRACK

I interviewed my friend, and fellow 804 native, Wayne Barnes, also known by his stage name, "Wayve." Wayne "Wayve" Barnes is a 3rd year biology major at UVA. He is a rapper out of Richmond, Virginia with much potential. As a kid, Wayve wrote poetry and started playing the violin in middle school. He attributes his skill for melody to playing instruments. Wayve got into rapping by encouragement from his cousin, who got him into the studio. Wayve states that "music always came naturally to me." Support from his family and friends gave him the confidence to keep grinding and working on his craft.

Coming to UVA has had both positive and negative impacts on his music

music progression as far as creating new music and limiting studio time. However, on a positive note UVA has introduced him to other musicians and audio engineers. He hopes to get in contact with the Professor of Hip-Hop A.D. Carson at the University in order to open new doors for his career.

Another advantage is the well-equipped music studio in New Cabell Hall. UVA has not altered Wayve's pop culture perspective that much, however. Wayve has always appreciated many different genres of music including rap, hip-hop, classical, Latin, and pop. In fact, he still listens to the same artists he listened to before coming here. In his words, Wayve raps in a more northern flow, influenced

specifically by areas like Chicago and New York. He would not call himself a gansta rap type of artist, but more so a melodic type. He would compare himself to artists like Roddy Rich or Lil Tjay. Among artists which have influenced him include Lil Durk (Chicago), A Boogie (New York), and Polo G (Chicago).



*Check out Wayve's newly released single **Switch Lanes**, which is available on Spotify, Apple Music, and Soundcloud. Find Wayve on all of these platforms @Wavye. You can also follow him on instagram @4c.wayve.*

Kanye West is a living icon. The megastar rapper, producer, entrepreneur, and fashion mogul represents the quintessential modern-day Renaissance man. West's 21 Grammy awards and counting, multiple Man of the Year awards, and fashion deals with Nike and Adidas all point to his fame. Since 2014, Kanye has been married to Kim Kardashian, an arguably bigger celebrity, forming one of the most powerful and culturally influential couples in the modern era. However, as of late, Kanye has assumed confusing, contradictory, and oftentimes controversial stances on America's relationship with race, politics, and religion.

KANYE WEST

A Symbol of Black Resistance or White Supremacy?

West has explicitly endorsed President Donald Trump, as he has been seen donning a "Make America Great Again" hat, tweeting his love for the President, and even attending meetings in the Oval Office, as in October of 2018, when Kanye and Kim Kardashian's support for criminal justice reform prompted the push for the First Step Act. Kanye's relationship with Trump has sparked significant controversy, as have his puzzling remarks. Kanye's claims regarding enslavement and labor have caused harm, arguably deepening social and racial cleavages rather than mending them. In an interview with TMZ, he opined that 400 years of African enslavement "sounds like a choice." What's more, by endorsing Trump, who failed to unequivocally condemn the white supremacists in Charlottesville, Kanye's racial-political stance has been interpreted by many as echoing white supremacy.

Kanye's new album, *Jesus is King*, has again brought him back to the forefront of the pop culture scene after a nearly yearlong hiatus from Twitter and the limelight in general. Kanye has backtracked, claiming that his actions were an act of resistance against Democrats and white liberals who have allegedly brainwashed the black community for decades. Nevertheless, Kanye's legacy remains all the more complicated. While the lyrics of his songs speak to a mantra of black resistance, his political commentary, at times, reveals white racist ideals. Perhaps the question of whether Kanye is a symbol of black liberation or an emblem of white supremacy is a moot one; while his intent is ambiguous, his words speak for themselves. Indeed, words matter. Kanye's irreverent historical revisionism ultimately plays into the hands of white supremacists.



INDIYAH

AT A CROSSROADS OF IDENTITY

There could not be a more loving person to represent the essence of Black love in 2019. I met Indiyah while I was competing for UVA's Mock Trial team; I have never met someone so full of energy, power, and love. Not only is Indiyah--an Echols scholar--extremely intelligent, but she is also a first-generation college student, a Black female at Mr. Jefferson's University, and queer identifying.

Love is no longer nuclear, meaning that women can finally love themselves--even without a partner. Indiyah embodies this mantra of self-acceptance. She is both honest with herself and honest with anyone who listens.

Do you think in the places that you grew up you were expected to keep a particular appearance and felt that you couldn't come out?

Definitely. I grew up in a very Christian household. My family projected Christian values onto me. They wanted me to be a good girl, get married, and do well in school. And when they thought about me getting married, they wanted me to be married to a man. All of that had an influence on what I would say about my identity or who I was.

At UVA, do you have support from the school, other students, or staff for your sexuality? Or none of the above?

I have a great support system where I work--the LGBTQ center. And through my work, I have cultivated this support system of friends. I naturally gravitate towards people who are queer and people of color. I have a very short fuse. So, dealing with people with polar opposite identities is difficult for me to do. I definitely have the support of my friends. I am somewhat supported by other students in general. But, I have the privilege of being straight-passing. So that creates a weird dynamic when people feel comfortable saying homophobic things around me and I have to correct them in a way that shocks them.

Some staff members are very comfortable and support me in my sexuality. But surprisingly, others do not.

What does it mean to you to be at the intersection of race, gender, class and sexuality? And being that at UVA?

So, my race is Black. My gender is woman. My class is low-income. My sexuality--ha,ha--I would label it as maybe queer. But, to put it in easier terms, I guess bisexual. Now trying to put it all together, it's constantly weighing on me. Some days I am tired of being all of these things. And I have to constantly remind myself that I am beautiful being all these things and I'm not just one of them. It requires a lot of work to not allow the bullshit of being all those things--racism, sexism, classism--to get to me, and to have this heavy weight on me. Being at the intersection of

all of this makes me feel complicated. But I don't want complicated to be a bad thing. But it makes me feel like I am constantly navigating the world in a way that people don't have to. And yeah, that's tiring. But it is also beautiful in dealing with the complexities of life.

I have to put all my shit on the table once I walk in the room. People recognize that I am Black and a woman immediately. But I am also poor. I am also queer. I am constantly looking to use my identity to bolster myself. Because those identities typically lower my worth in the world. At UVA, trying to find the intersection of all those identities is difficult. Everything is so competitive.

Any poetry, songs, art, photos, books etc. that are your absolute favorite?

One of my favorite books is called *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide*, by Ntozake Shange. I love it--ha, ha. And any song that reminds me that Blackness is beautiful is my favorite. Because that's something that I am always trying to reconcile with. I guess my favorite song right now is "Shea Butter Baby." But I also really love slow songs--songs that make me feel something. And I am not saying that I like to feel sad, but I like to listen to songs that make me reconcile with my humanity.



Do you think that UVA is doing its best to support you—in any way, i.e. being a first-gen, sexually, or racially after the events of August 11th and 12th?

They definitely exploit being a first-gen student at UVA. We are at an institution and just because the nature of institutions, I am exploited. That's their jobs—to use me for donors and such. And I think that is tragic and toxic but that's the University. I feel bad using it to my advantage at times.

I connect with the events of A11 and A12. But I also came in a year after it happened. So it wasn't really my UVA that it happened to. I don't think UVA has properly dealt with the psychological impact this event had on many of its students. I think that they are just biting their tongue until the 4th year class (class of 2020) is gone and they can finally change the narrative since no current student would have been there to experience it firsthand.

Do you like UVA anyways? Do you love it?

Me saying that I love the University of Virginia would be the most laughable thing in the world. I love the community I made here. What's so powerful about being in a marginalized group is that we build community anywhere we go. That's so powerful. I found queer Black people who are like me. I found people who have the same values as me. I found that at UVA--great! But I think I could have found that anywhere. But I do think that UVA has given me a certain advantage, one that I neither hate nor love. That's the simple truth.

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

1. What are the 3 generations of black students at UVA?
2. Who was UVa's first black scholarship athlete for basketball?
3. Who was the first African-American president of the Student Council at UVa, who often led student protests in the immediate aftermath of Kent State?
4. What was the first black greek organization chartered on the grounds of UVa?
5. Who was the president of the University of Virginia from 1959 to 1974, who played a critical role in the integration of African Americans and women into the University?
6. Who was the UVa grad whose life story inspired the famous movie "Philadelphia"?
7. Who was an outspoken advocate for racial justice at the University of Virginia, who was actively involved in the Southern Student Organizing Committee?
8. What year was UVa's Transition Program started?
9. Who was the first president of UVa, from 1905-1931?
10. What year was the NAACP founded?
11. Who was the first director of the African American Studies program at the University of Virginia. He 13. was also a noted scholar of black religion.
12. Which professor in the English department founded and directed the Transition Program?
13. Which UVa president had a membership in the all-white Farmington Country Club, which led to the creation of the Office of African American Affairs?
14. What was the first hip-hop album to go platinum in 1984?
15. What is the name of the 1987 spin-off series from the Cosby Show that centered around the college experience of the Denise Huxtable?
16. Who was the founder of the Peer Advisor Program?
17. Who was the 3rd year African-American student who was brutally arrested on the corner of UVa on the night of March 18, 2015 in front of Trinity Irish Pub?
18. What department was given the responsibility for enforcing Title VI in educational institutions receiving federal financial assistance?
19. What was the name of the case in which the NAACP charged HEW with failure to enforce Title VI?
20. Who was the creator and director of the Carter G. Woodson Institute from 1981-1995?
21. Which professor of sociology at UVa in 1964 became the director of the Black Studies program, after taking over for Joseph Washington?
22. What are two books written by sociologist William Julius Wilson regarding the black underclass and the working poor?
23. Who was the first black female honor chair?
24. In what year did black UVa students have to deal with the relocation of Black Bus Stop?
25. Who created the Black Empowerment Association in 1995?
26. What was the A hip hop group that released "Yo Bum Rush the Show", "It Takes A Nation of Millions", and "Fear of a Black Planet".
27. What American construction worker was recorded being brutally attacked by the police for approximately 15 minutes after an 8 mile high speed chase. The results of this event would eventually lead to the LA riots?
28. Name the five members of the rap group N.W.A.
29. Who created the Ralph Bunche Society, an organization focused on training African Americans for grad school?
30. What group emphasized the importance of the University passing livable wage and a union to protect workers rights?
31. What year was Pride Magazine created?
32. What year was "Africa Day" started at UVa?
33. Who was the first president of Ghana who was educated in the United States?
34. Which restaurant on the corner imposed dress code in 2007 that directly targeted black people?
35. What year was Access UVa created?
36. Who created Access UVa?
37. In which years did the country see a 131% increase in student tuition costs?
38. Who wrote the article "Charlottesville, 2017" that focused on the University's relationship with Charlottesville.
39. Who was the president of the Student Council during the Farmington Crisis protests?
40. Who became the first African-American Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Virginia?

But, realistically, if the floor managers see there is a lot of work to be done, they will discourage workers from attending their class. Contrast that with the UVA workers, whose managers are given a reminder once a week saying that their workers are going to do staff development. The workers are given transportation to and from the class, and they are celebrated for doing it. I've done workshops with their managers. I've been blown away, actually, by managers at UVA in facilities. They're very aware that workers are coming from different cultures. You can feel that there is a support for inclusion. Many workers will go to their managers for help with different problems, like when they don't know how to talk to their child's teacher. So they're really involved. I think that's true at Aramark too, but there is no support for non-native speakers, which builds a culture. We've tried to engage Aramark, but as a corporation they're not as interested in the community aspect. Now that president Ryan has created some priorities with the committees he's formed, we are trying to push that with the contract employees

Are you referring to the minimum wage increase to \$15?

Yeah, so they are going to implement that for full-time workers in January. For part-time workers (most of the people we work with), they will be paid \$13 an hour, which is a big raise. To be honest, I didn't think that the contractors were going to follow suit, so I'm pleased that they are and hopefully they can follow suit with the other ways that employees should be supported as members of this community.

During the summer months, are workers paid?

Hours get cut when they need fewer people. For example, student attendance at the dining halls has declined so their hours have been getting cut more (through Aramark). They don't have job security. I think that there's employment with facilities in the summer months. And I think some of them have kids who are out of school, so it kind of works out for some people.

Would you say VISAS also functions as a way for workers to build their skills in order to seek other jobs? Therefore, would Aramark see it as hindering worker retention?

That's a great question. It's interesting how UVA has spun that. HR people and talent development specialists talk to managers about how it helps workers. For example, some of them want to work on getting a drivers' license or their US citizenship. Learning about the culture and the language is going to help communicating to co-workers, clients, or managers who only speak English. If someone learns how to drive, they have another driver in facilities who can take on that aspect of the work. If someone gets their citizenship, they're more permanently here – they're more dependable. At Aramark and at facilities, we always ask employers what they want to work on with their employees. So we build our conversation topics in the classroom around things that are important in the workplace, like health forms, how to talk to your boss, or safety protocols.

What are the biggest challenges and successes you've seen throughout your time volunteering with VISAS?

So, the biggest challenges are contract workers not showing up. They are also sometimes made to feel bad for leaving, so they're worried about losing their job or their hours being cut, and continuity has been a challenge. When volunteers don't show up, there's the lack of continuity there, but it always works out in the end. There are also benefits and challenges as the employees begin to feel comfortable with their volunteer partner. They'll talk about personal things or something they're really struggling with, which might be something the volunteer hasn't had life experience with. Like "I'm afraid my kid is failing out of school" or "My heat isn't working in my apartment" things like that. Sometimes the volunteers haven't had a chance to talk to somebody who's had such different life experience, you know. Maybe they grew up in a refugee camp, came here with three kids, maybe they come from a super religious background and the volunteer didn't. So there's a lot of differences with age and culture, and that's the biggest challenge in the beginning and it's also the biggest opportunity. By the end, they really get to know and respect each other and it's huge for the employees since they don't really get the chance to talk to students who they're working around, you know?

Do you think the university supports programs like VISAS?

We have recently gotten much more institutional support and I think that's because of the message that the new president is sending about building bridges. There is a lot of excitement. These workers and people from other cultures bring rich transformative local resources to UVA. So to finally recognize that and recognize them as part of our community is super important. And I love the fact that their classes are now being held at the Language Commons (Second Floor New Cabell Hall). You know, their cultures are represented on the map on the wall and they're adding to the language resources. There are people who have come in and heard Arabic being spoken by some of the facilities employees and they're really excited because they want to practice their Arabic that they're learning. We're trying to build those bridges.

Is there any difference between Jim Ryan and Theresa Sullivan's support for programs like VISAS?

No, I mean she was very supportive of the international TA program. She talked to me about that when she first came on board. I was just being protective of this tiny workplace program – I didn't want anything to happen to it. But when Jim Ryan came on and he started talking about the very thing that we were doing, I actually really wanted to talk to him. Before I could, a story came out in "UVA Today" about VISAS, and I got an email from Jim Ryan saying, "This is exactly what I'm talking about! This is building bridges – this is fantastic!" So I do think we're at a point in time where the lid is off. August 11th and 12th sort of showed us what we're dealing with. We had better be very deliberate about the welcome map that we roll out to those that come from other cultures and in dealing with all of the issues that have always been here. I have to say that we had this surge of volunteer applications after the Muslim Ban. That, to me, spoke to the fact that when things get more heated, there's a response – students want to do something.

**You may not control all the events
that happen to you, but you can
decide not to be reduced by them.**

Maya Angelou

